

THE INFLUENCE OF TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE TOURIST SATISFACTION IN OHRID

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to stress the importance of permanent improvement of tourism infrastructure in advancing tourism satisfaction on destination. It is empirical research of influence of tourism infrastructure on destination on tourist satisfaction in Ohrid city in R of Macedonia. Tourism infrastructure is a range of devices and institutions constituting material and organizational basis for tourism development. It comprises four basic elements: accommodation facilities, gastronomy facilities, accompanying facilities and communication facilities. Policies are needed to improve infrastructure, promote the integration of tourist services, maintain visitor numbers and encourage guests to stay longer, visit additional locations and increase their spending. Ohrid city is famous tourist destination in Republic of Macedonia. Despite historical and cultural treasures located in Ohrid, it is most famous for the Ohrid Lake. The city has strong attractive factors – natural and cultural monuments that attract tourist. The subject of this paper is the tourism infrastructure in Ohrid city, the current status and perspectives in order to attract more foreign and domestic tourists. Ohrid city in cooperation with government of R. Macedonia should improve permanently tourism infrastructure in destination. This paper presents an action research conducted on a sample of 200 foreign visitors in Ohrid city period of 01 July till 01 august. 2017. Tourist infrastructure has huge influence of tourist satisfaction from destination. Local municipality of Ohrid city with join efforts with the government of Republic of Macedonia should permanently develop tourist infrastructure.

Keywords: Tourism infrastructure, foreign tourists, tourist satisfaction, Ohrid City.

Jel Classification: M13; Z33; L83

INTRODUCTION

According Coviello, Winklhofer, and Hamilton (2006) tourism infrastructure is a range of devices and institutions constituting material and organizational basis for tourism

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development. It comprises four basic elements: accommodation facilities, food and beverage facilities, accompanying facilities and communication facilities. Adebayo and Iweka (2014) point out that tourism infrastructure can be regarded as the physical elements that are designed and erected to cater for visitors. The strong relationship between tourism development and infrastructure has been theoretically established by a number of authors. Singh, Saini, and Majumdar (2015) emphasize that the structure of tourist infrastructure consists of following elements: Typically tourist infrastructure (accommodation facilities, facilities for arrivals servicing, tourist information and trails), Paratourist infrastructure (transportation facilities – roads and transport points), local facilities – communal and public transport, trade and service facilities), Gastronomy and accompany facilities (sport, leisure, entertainment).

Zeithaml (2000) point out that tourism has been a major growth industry globally for over five decades. Factors underpinning this growth include the growth of incomes and wealth, improvements in transport, changing lifestyles and consumer values, increased leisure time, international openness and globalization, immigration, special events, education, information and communication technologies, destination marketing and promotion, improved general and tourism infrastructure and so on (Zhang 2015).

Conejo and Wooliscroft (2015) highlights that policies are needed to improve infrastructure, promote the integration of tourist services, maintain visitor numbers and encourage guests to stay longer, visit additional locations and increase their spending.

Some authors point to the difference between tourism infrastructure and superstructure, claiming that superstructure depends on infrastructure (Correia, Kozak, and Ferradeira 2013).

Donthu and Yoo (1998) underline the fact that tourism infrastructure includes ancillary and complementary facilities, equipment, systems, processes, and resources necessary for the functioning of every tourist destination. This primarily includes roads, railways, airports, and the like, which make a tourist destination accessible for tourists. In addition, infrastructure includes health care systems, services, and public services (Raajpoot 2004). Building on infrastructure, superstructure includes building facilities, which exist only because of tourism activities (Loveman 1998). Their main purpose is accommodation and meeting the needs and desires of tourists, in the form of hotels, campsites, restaurants, sports facilities, and the like (Tse and Ho 2009).

Anyway, tourism infrastructure has very important role to tourist satisfaction from destination (Susskind et al. 2000). According Malthouse et al. (2004) satisfaction with accommodation, outdoor activities, and attractions has the strongest impact on overall satisfaction with the holiday.

The main point is the tourists to recommend destination to other friends and relatives, to share positive story about destination (Moscardo 2017). Mikolon et al. (2015) emphasis that stories do play a significant role in encouraging mindful visitors and supporting more positive tourist experiences.

Tz-Li et al. (2017) point out that destination perceived quality has significant, positive and direct effect on tourist satisfaction. Word-of-mouth is positively influenced by destination perceived quality and tourist satisfaction (Persson and Ryals 2010).

Tourist expectations are very important for destination (Meyer, Gremler, and Hogreve 2014). They have some picture on their thoughts about destination (Gambetti and Graffigna 2015). Rodríguez et al. (2009), underline that tourist expectations are a second-order factor based on inter-correlations among several first-order factors (i.e. past

experience, external communication, word-of-mouth communication and destination image). In addition, image can be considered as the main factor generating expectations of a destination.

The tourism infrastructure can be powerful in anchoring, even changing a destination image (Kim and Ok 2010). Major steps in the development of tourism have been linked with advancements in transport, the system that creates the structural linkage between origins and destinations. Tourist infrastructure in Ohrid city is not on desire level. It is necessary to improve tourism infrastructure as a destination to compete with other destinations in the region.

1. TOURISM FACILITIES AT OHRID CITY

Ohrid city is located south-western part of the Republic of Macedonia and it is famous tourist place for domestic and foreign tourist especially during summer period. Archaeological finds indicate that Ohrid is one of the oldest human settlements in all of Europe. The lake itself is over three million years old. Ohrid town is first mentioned in Greek documents from 353 BCE, when it was known as Lychnidos - or, “the city of light.” Only much later, in 879 CE, was it renamed Ohrid. During the Byzantine period, Ohrid became a significant cultural and economic center, serving as an Episcopal center of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Along with Preslav, it became the site of the first Slavic universities in the 9th century. At the beginning of the 11th century, Ohrid Lake is the oldest and deepest lake in Europe.

About communication infrastructure, road infrastructure connect Ohrid from Western Europe – road E 8. It is not highway. Ohrid is connect to Albania and Greece. Ohrid has international airport which is located 5 km away of the center. In 2010, international company TAV from Turkey has renovated the airport. There is no train connection from Ohrid.

Ohrid has various objects of accommodation. According to data of Municipality of Ohrid, Sector of Tourism, accommodation infrastructure of Ohrid has: 33 hotels with 1586 rooms and 3194 beds. There are 1912 categorized objects from small scale (apartments, rooms, villas) with 12085 beds.

Ohrid is the best tourist destination in Macedonia. Cultural and leisure tourism are most common forms of tourism in Ohrid. The most tourist in destination come in July and august each year.

According to data from Ohrid Municipality, Sector of tourism in 2017, Ohrid has been visited by 275 613 tourists, 115 025 domestic and 160 588 foreign tourists. They generated a total of 937 041 overnight stays. Domestic tourists realized 657 569 nights while foreign tourists generated 379 472 overnight stays.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research presented in this paper is conducted on the tourism infrastructure in Ohrid city as a tourist destination. It includes survey by random choice on 200 foreign visitors of Ohrid in 2017. The survey was made from 01 July till 01 of August in 2017. Data for this study were collected through a self-administrated questionnaire distributed to 200

foreign visitors. Respondents were approached face-to-face in hotel Desaret (hotel resort on the Ohrid Lake with capacity of 600 beds) in Ohrid.

The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions: 3 questions concerning the trip characteristics (first-time or repeat visit, number of visits, length of stay); 3 socio-demographic (nationality, gender, age); and 7 questions concerning the current situation of the tourist infrastructure in Ohrid city. The questions have positive, negative or neutral answers.

3. TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE OHRID CITY

Foreign tourists have negative attitude for the communication facilities — road communication of Ohrid city with Europe. Question that is addressed to the foreign tourist about affinity for the road communication of Ohrid city has negative answer of the visitors, 81%. Only 11% of respondents answered that they have positive affinity for the road communication with Europe. The quality of the road (no highway connection, driving to the mountains) are the main reasons of negative attitude of the visitors.

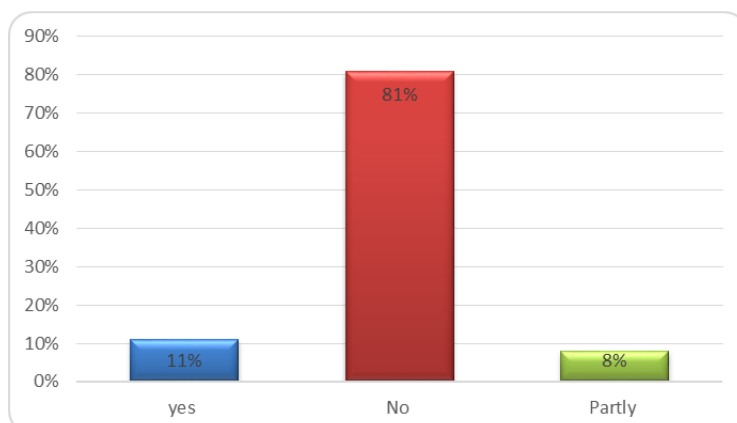


Figure 1. Customer satisfaction of the road communication in the Ohrid city

Ohrid has different types of accommodation facilities. The quality of the hotel facilities is not on the level of categorization. The high percent of the respondents 48% answered negative. Only 34% of respondents agree that hotel facilities respond of the level of categorization. It is an indicator that shows that Ministry of economy of Macedonia which is responsible for categorization of hotels should make strong rules about hotel facilities.

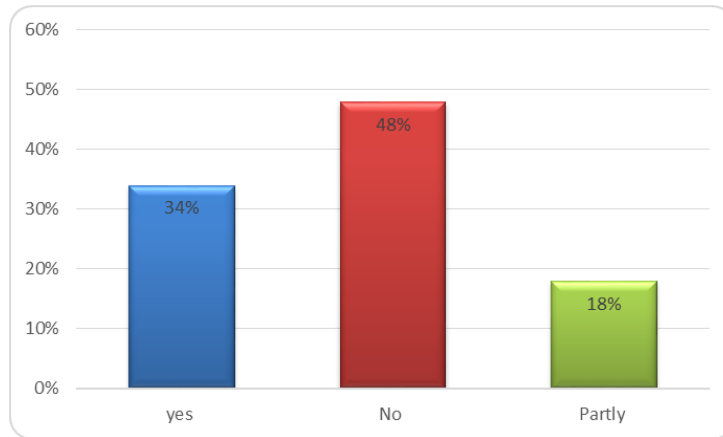


Figure 2. Accommodation facilities respond of the level of categorization

On the question of local facilities about tourist info centers Do the tourists can get information by Tourist info center in the cities?, yes answered 16% of the respondents. Negative answer get 61%. It show that the city has no tourist information center where they can find information about Ohrid. They recommend that the municipality should establish tourist info center.

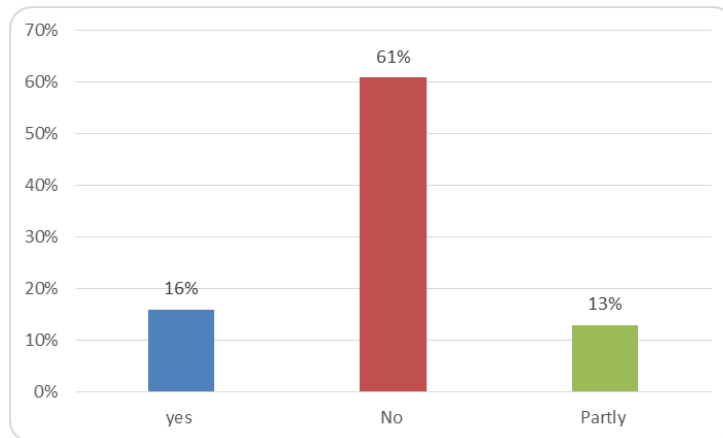


Figure 3. Tourist info centre in the city

On the question of local facilities about Public transport on the city as a part of tourism infrastructure. The respondents 38% answered that public transport in Ohrid is not good quality. Positive answer has 27% of respondents. There are no time table for arrivals and departures from hotels to Ohrid city and back. Bus station and bus plant for local transport are terrible. Local busies for public transport are desperate.

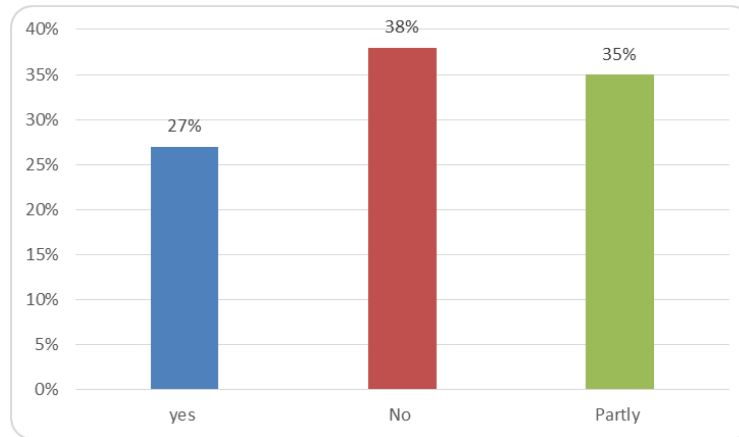


Figure 4. Quality of public transportation in Ohrid city

On the question about gastronomy facilities in the city respondents have different opinions. The respondents 53% answered that the city has developed trade with wide range and quality service, 24% of respondents don't agree and 33% has neutral answer. That shows that trade should have more diversity and the restaurants should improve their gastronomy service.

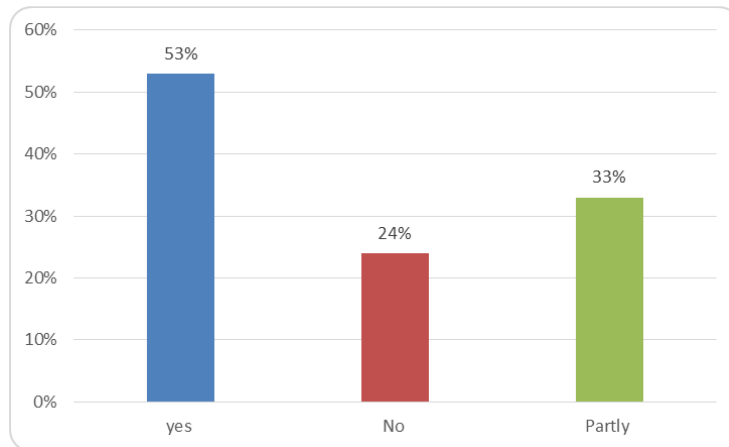


Figure 5. Gastronomy facilities in Ohrid city

On the question about accompanying facilities in the city respondents have different opinions. The respondents 41% answered that the city has accompanying facilities (sport and leisure activities), 37% of respondents don't agree and 22% has neutral answer. That shows that on the last year government invest in sports places in Ohrid and entertainment activities are going well but anyway it should be approved that trade should have more diversity and the restaurants should improve their gastronomy service.

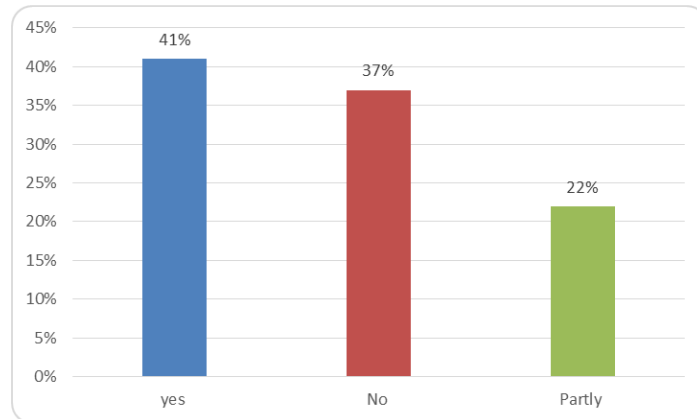


Figure 6. Accompany facilities in Ohrid city

Foreign tourist have positive opinion about increasing number of tourist in Ohrid if the road communication will be improve. On the question Does improvement of the tourist infrastructure of the city and highway connection to Europe will get more tourist in Ohrid?, respondents 67% of them answered yes only 9% have negative answer.

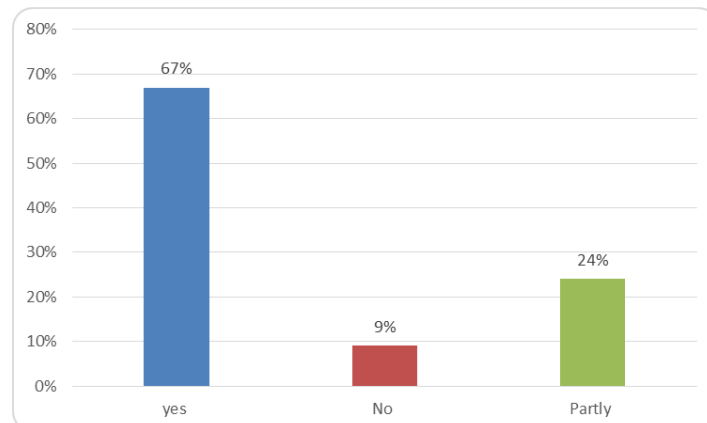


Figure 7. Improvement of tourism infrastructure in Ohrid and highway connection will increase the number of foreign tourists

Tourist infrastructure is important factor for visiting destination and tourist satisfaction on the spot. Ohrid city should improve tourist infrastructure in aim to attract more foreign tourist. The government start to build highway of the part of the road communication E 8 which is very important for the tourist who arrive from the region especially Serbia, Bulgaria and other countries. It should be ready in 2021. Anyway, the tourist infrastructure should be permanently improve in the city.

CONCLUSION

Ohrid as a famous tourist destination has a problem with tourist infrastructure. Increasing the number of foreign tourist on the spot is not result of tourism infrastructure and road communication. Positive signal is reconstruction of Ohrid airport and increasing of charter flights to Ohrid. Many of the foreign tourist who came in Ohrid use road communication especially tourist from Poland, Turkey and neighbors country such as Bulgaria and Serbia.

The presented results indicate the following conclusions:

- Foreign tourist has strong affinity for Ohrid as a tourist destination which is results of the natural and culture heritage.
- The air connection of the city with different destinations through the airport in Ohrid is unsatisfactory and incomplete utilized capacity. It is necessary to open new direct routes to new destinations. Positive example was opening direct flight Ohrid – London by Wiz air company this year during the summer period.
- Highway connecting of Ohrid is more than necessary. The Government of R.Macedonia start the process of building the highway on road section E8 which is planned to be completed by 2021. However, it remains the most difficult mountains part (named Straza) to be solved by highway.
- The categorization of accommodation facilities do not match with actual conditions. This problem should be immediately reconsidered. Ministry of Economy which is responsible of the categorization to hotel facilities in the country should urgently adopt rules compatible with European rules of categorization.
- The local infrastructure in the city has not good quality.
- The opening of the Tourist info center in the city is a necessity where tourists will get all information about the city.
- Public transport in Ohrid city especially bus transport is in very poor condition. The buses which transported passengers have poor quality and there is no timetable driving to and from the hotels to city center. The local government to all bus carriers licensed for city line to impose strict rules of conduct. Branded buses, quality buses for transport and timetables are asked by tourists in Ohrid.
- The quality of service in gastronomy facilities should be constantly improved by continuous education of the staff.

Tourists are sure that highway connection of the city with Europe, especially road section E8 will contribute to increasing the number of foreign tourists from the region.

Local municipality of Ohrid in cooperation with private sector and governmental institution should work together and intensively to improve tourist infrastructure in Ohrid as a tourist destination. Tourist infrastructure will give new impulse of tourist satisfaction in destination.

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