

Development of Diversified Tourism Destination Products – A Case Study of Tourism Destination, Municipality of Sofia, Bulgaria

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Abstract: In this paper, it is argued that there is a variety of products and accordingly a diversity of types of tourism in the municipality of Sofia, Bulgaria: urban and "non-urban", mass and specialized, tourism based on natural and anthropogenic, on tangible and intangible resources. In this regard, diverse tourism products of the destination may be offered to its visitors, which to a greater extent meets their various needs and contributes to the sustainable tourism development. Thus, the aim of the paper is to reveal whether tourism professionals in Sofia are aware of the possibilities for combining various types of tourism and promoting the diversified destination tourism product among local and foreign visitors.

Key words: *tourism product, destination, Sofia, Bulgaria*

1. Introduction– the importance of the diverse tourism product for the sustainable destination development

The tourism product diversification is a marketing strategy of a destination (country, region, etc.) that requires the simultaneous development of several kinds of tourism on its area, such as mass and specialized, urban and "non-urban", tourism based on natural or anthropogenic, tangible or intangible resources.

This strategy is similar to the marketing strategy diversification and differentiated growth where the organization adds new products to its existing product mix in order to diversify its product offers and attract new customers:

"One way companies grow is to launch new businesses into product markets where they have not previously competed" and "corporate grow to the addition of new businesses has received further impetus from 'product portfolio' concept, which argues that if a company is both to grow and to allocate resources wisely, it must mix established with new businesses"(Biggadike, 1989: 177).

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There are numerous advantages of applying the marketing strategy of diversification and diversifying the product mix; for an individual organization, some of the more important ones can be summarized as follows:

Diversification offers some advantages for the single-business organizations as it allows them to spread their risks in many markets. More importantly, it allows organizations to improve and use more actively their management, technical and financial resources (Pride and Ferrell, 1994).

Concerning the destination, on the one hand, the strategy of diversification of tourism products leads to greater satisfaction of tourists, as different types of tourism meets their various needs. Thus, tourists extend their lengths of stays and recommend the destination to others, giving rise to the increase of revenues of tourism companies and the creation of new jobs for local people. In its turn, this enhances the standard of living of the local population. Moreover, the diversified product mix may attract various (including new to the destination) market segments with similar positive effects. On the other hand, tourism product diversification reduces the possibility of the intensive utilization of one and the same resources on the same territory at the same time, thus leading to preservation of the environment. When different types of tourism based on various resources on the vast territory of a destination are offered, these resources and the environment are preserved for a longer period of time and they can serve the needs of the future generations. Moreover, the different types of tourism can be developed at different times, which lead to a more even utilization of the destination facilities during all the seasons throughout the year.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the vast diversity of tourism types contributes to the sustainable tourism destination development. This statement is based on the very essence of sustainable tourism development, which according to World Tourism Organization (WTO) can be defined as follows:

"Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems" (WTO, cited by EC, 2003: 13).

Sustainable tourism development allows visitors to enrich their knowledge of cultural, historical and natural features of the destination, be aware of their significance and understand that these resources should be perceived. Only in this way, the environment of the destination will attract tourists in the future and will provide benefits to the local community. In this regard:

The main aim of sustainable tourism is "to enable people to enjoy and obtain knowledge about the nature, historic and cultural characteristics of a unique environment with the protection of the integrity of a place and the encouragement of

economic development and welfare of local community" (Petrovic and Markovic 2013: 32-33).

However, in order that the tourists can gain understanding of the various cultural and natural characteristics of the destination, they should be involved in various types of tourism based on using different resources during their stays.

That is why, in order that sustainable tourism development at destination level to be achieved, a number of scientists recommend a combination of mass and specialized (alternative) types of travels:

"The alternative types of tourism are increasingly seen as the key to sustainable development. The relationship comes from the fact that contrary to mass tourism and its negative impact on the visited sites, alternative tourism causes a form of a balanced growth, which is in harmony with the environment and socio-culturally" (Bichurova, 2011: 130).

The significance of specialized types of tourism can be summarized as follows:

- "In theory and practice these forms extend and enrich the tourism sector " and "create better opportunities for sustainable tourism development in various countries, regions and resorts". Therefore "the socio-economic characteristics of these types of tourism are related to the utilization of all natural, geographic, economic, social and other resources for sustainable and effective development over the world and in the individual countries" (Tonchev and Mileva 2006:44).
- "The increasing number of differentiated tourism products and the variety of destinations is considered as a main source and potential for economic development and growth". Specialized forms of tourism "enriching the experience and/or better spend of time, leisure and recreation trips are becoming the key to meeting the needs for recreation" (Mileva, 2006: 192).
- Specialized tourism is directly related to the increase of the economic efficiency of tourism as it intensifies the tourism activities, does not require huge investments, redirects and redistributes the tourist flows to other geographical regions, enhances the employment and is associated with sustainable and promising forms of development, which in turn have an impact on increasing the tourism revenues (Mileva, 2004).

For these reasons, it is necessary that the local authorities in a destination to develop and promote a diversified tourism product by encouraging the combination of various forms of tourism, while ensuring the compliance with the core principles of sustainable tourism development, such as:

- "Integrity of economic development and environment protection goals"; and "fair distribution of the wealth created by tourism product sales and also of the costs for the tourist resources preservation" (Vodenska and Assenova 2011: 269-270).

- "Binding the quantitative growth with the environment's quality improvement which is in the mutual interest of the local population and tourists, looking for attractive and unspoiled holiday environment" (Assenova, 2013: 46).
- "The concept of sustainable tourism should compromise all the activities carried out within the framework of tourism economy, which would be ecologically allowable, economically viable and socially desirable - from the point of view of tourism companies and local communities..." (Szymanska, 2013: 65).
- "The loss of stock of non-renewable resources available for future generations should be kept to a minimum, and the rate of utilization of renewable stock should not exceed the natural regenerative capacity" (Curtin and Busby, 1999: 136).

In order sustainable development and successful application of diversification strategy that includes launch and combination of various products designed to meet the diverse needs of customers to be achieved, some certain conditions should be met, such as:

Diversified development explores the opportunities outside the existing marketing system. ... It is justified in cases where the organization has no reasons to hope for further opportunities to increase its profits within the existing marketing system or where the opportunities outside the existing marketing system are more attractive (Kotler, 1993).

Another important condition is such a sphere of activity (new product) to be chosen, which will result in taking advantages of diversification strategy: increasing the value and reducing the organizational risk. In this regard analytical method for assessing both the attractiveness of an opportunity area as an investment and the extent to which it will match a company's current operations and their strengths and weaknesses should be applied (Younger, 1989).

Specifically, in order that a diverse product mix of a destination to be developed and offered to visitors, while ensuring preservation of the environment, the vital role of the local authorities should be realized. The decision of applying the marketing strategy of diversification is a part of the tourism development strategic planning process. The strategic planning is the process of development of tourism strategy at the destination level done by local authorities, usually based on both available resources and tourism demand. The main tool of strategic planning of tourism of the destination is the analysis and management of its product mix. That means estimation of all current and perspective products and accordingly types of tourism, done by local authorities - their state and development potential, the level of their variety and their attractiveness. It also requires assessment of the overall benefits and costs of tourism development and of the individual types of tourism and decision what should be done about each one of them - whether funds should be invested or their development should be limited due to the fact that these types of tourism are not considered as attractive by the promising

tourist markets or in order that the resources required for their development to be protected.

2. Study area

In the paper, an analysis of the tourism product of a specific destination of Bulgaria - Sofia - is revealed. Sofia is the capital and the biggest city of the country with a population of over one million people. The largest shares of public institutions and business enterprises of the country are located there, creating opportunities for business tourism. As the city has existed since ancient times, a number of cultural and historical sites are also available there, creating opportunities for cultural tourism development. As a major city, there are opportunities for development of other typically urban types of tourism like events, entertainment, sports and shopping tourism.

However, the visitors of Sofia have the opportunities to take part in some "non-urban" types of tourism, which is due to the close proximity to the Mountain (in particular Vitosha Mountain) and the availability of mineral springs:

"There is hardly a European capital, which is so beautifully close to the mountain the way Sofia is. Less than 10 km away from the city center, Vitosha Mountain offers various possibilities for recreation and fun, being the closest place for hiking, skiing, climbing and other outdoor activities"... . "Trekking routes and skiing facilities attract millions of visitors"... "In Vitosha's lower parts suggests the exciting opportunity of climbing nature-based activities with visiting noteworthy historical sites."..."Vitosha is known for its unique rock formations and preserved biodiversity"... "Vitosha is easily accessible from Sofia by car or by bus" (Dogramadjieva and Marinov, 2013: 5-6).

Despite those advantages of tourism destination of Sofia, there are some problems as well. They are related to the fact that the urban types of tourism are developed and promoted especially, while the potential of Vitosha with regard to the development, supply and promotion of tourism products and offers is not fully utilized. Proof of this are the statistical data in recent years showing a decline in the number of tourists and primarily development of domestic tourism:

"Despite the favorable resource potential and the leading position of Vitosha District in the volume of accommodation supply, tourist demand is relatively low"..."While incoming tourists strongly predominate in the capital city (more than 60%), the district of Vitosha relies mainly on domestic market, which accounts for nearly 70% of the overnight visits and 62% of all the nights spent" (Dogramadjieva and Marinov, 2013:10-11).

To solve these problems, the various natural and anthropogenic resources of the destination should be used for diverse tourism products development and promotion among the promising tourists. To achieve these objectives, the stakeholders in tourism

(local authorities, tourism businesses, etc.) should recognize the potential and the capabilities of the municipality on development of various tourism products.

3. Methodology

It is argued that there are opportunities for development of diverse types of tourism in Sofia Municipality, namely: urban and "non-urban", mass and specialized, tourism based on natural and anthropogenic, on tangible and intangible resources, i.e. diverse tourism products may be offered to the visitors, which more closely meet their different needs and contribute to the sustainable development. Thus, the aim of the study is to reveal whether the tourism professionals, working at the destination of Sofia, are aware of the opportunities for combining the various types of tourism and promoting the diverse tourism product among local and foreign visitors.

Data from a questionnaire survey conducted by the authors with the representatives of the accommodation sector in the Municipality of Sofia in 2013 as a result of an assignment (project) by the Capital City "Tourism Service" Enterprise are used (Marinov et al., 2013). The research project has included a wide range of questions but in this study only two, which correspond to the topic of the paper, are used.

The planned sample of the survey includes the priority hotel establishments in the accommodation sector of Sofia. As a result 173 hotel establishments with a total capacity of 8561 beds were included in the survey, which represents 46% of the categorized hotel establishments of Sofia and 51% of their bed capacity. There is sufficiently high similarity between the structure of the general population and the sample and therefore the results are representative for the opinion of the accommodation sector in Sofia, revealing the full range of statements and contradictive assessments. The survey was conducted from the end of April to the end of May 2013 by the method of personal interview, followed by the distribution of the questionnaires by e-mails. The respondents were mainly owners (43%) and general managers of hotel establishments (30%), and in rare cases – managers at lower levels (19%) or employees (8%).

The data were broken down by different criteria (specifics, characteristics of hotel establishments), which provides a comprehensive and detailed picture, and facilitates the explanation of the findings, opinions and assessments. One of these criteria is the location. According to the location (the districts of Sofia Municipality), the hotel establishments are classified as located in three main areas:

- Center (central areas, downtown): covering the central business district and the historical core of the city (area 37km²);
- Urban periphery (suburban areas): including the rest of the city within its construction boundaries with prevalence of neighborhood and residential quarters (area 216 km²);

- Rural areas, including small parts of the actual city (districts), small towns and villages and major agricultural and natural districts, including mountains (area 1138 km²).

Firstly, the estimates of the actual state and the potential of the key kinds of tourism of the Municipality of Sofia by the respondents are revealed. The respondents had the opportunity to assess the actual state and the potential of each of the main kinds of tourism and give an estimate from 1 to 5, as 1 being the lowest and 5 - the highest estimate. The estimates are presented by mean values. Then, in the next question of the survey, the respondents were able to point out up to five of eleven options that they considered priorities with regard to the development and promotion of Sofia as a tourist destination - separately for domestic and international market. The point of the question is to assess what - according to the respondents - should be developed and promoted. The results are summarized, as the percentage share of the respondents who indicated each option as a priority for future development of the total number of respondents.

As a result, two groups of tourism products of tourist destination of Sofia could be identified: "urban" and "non-urban". The "urban" products include the event, business, cultural and entertainment tourism, which are based primarily on tangible and intangible anthropogenic resources and with regard to the territory to a larger extent are related to the city center (especially cultural tourism). "Non-urban" products include ski, spa and wellness, green and pilgrimage tourism that are largely based on natural resources.

4. Results and discussion

The estimations by the representatives of the accommodation sector reveal that all kinds of tourism, developed in the Municipality of Sofia, have significant potential (Table 1). This is not surprising, since there are a lot of resources and prerequisites for their development.

Based on the average estimates and in terms of their potential for growth three main types of tourism could clearly be identified. According to the respondents, the municipality has the highest potential for event tourism (mean value 4.3), cultural tourism (mean value 4.2) and business tourism (mean value 4.2). Entertainment (3.9), ski (3.6) and green (3.6) tourism also have significant potential. The potential of the other kinds of tourism (pilgrimage and spa and wellness) in the municipality is estimated as more limited by the respondents, corresponding to the average level (mean values 2.9 and 3.3).

Table 1. Estimation of the tourism product of Sofia with regard to its current state and potential for future development (1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest estimation)

| | <i>Potential/ perspective</i> | | | | <i>Actual state</i> | | | | <i>Gaps</i> |
|--|-------------------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Total | <i>cen-ter</i> | <i>sub-urban</i> | <i>Rural</i> | Total | <i>cen-ter</i> | <i>sub-urban</i> | <i>rural</i> | |
| <i>Urban types of tourism</i> | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Cultural tourism</i> | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 4.1 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 1.3 |
| <i>Event tourism (concerts, shows, festivals, competitions, etc.)</i> | 4.3 | 4.4 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.4 | 1.0 |
| <i>Entertainment tourism (entertainments, nightlife, shopping, etc.)</i> | 3.9 | 4.0 | 4.1 | 3.3↓ | 3.1 | 3.4↑ | 2.8 | 2.7↓ | 0.8 |
| <i>Business tourism (MICE) (conferences, seminars, fairs, exhibitions, etc.)</i> | 4.2 | 4.2 | 4.4 | 4.0 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 1.1 |
| <i>"Non-urban" types of tourism</i> | Total | <i>cen-ter</i> | <i>sub-urban</i> | <i>Rural</i> | Total | <i>cen-ter</i> | <i>sub-urban</i> | <i>rural</i> | <i>Gaps</i> |
| <i>Ski tourism (in Vitosha)</i> | 3.6 | 3.6 | 4.1↑ | 3.2↓ | 1.9 | 2.0 | 2.1 | 1.7 | 1.7 |
| <i>"Green"tourism (hiking, ecotourism, etc.)</i> | 3.6 | 3.9 | 3.5 | 3.4↓ | 2.0 | 2.3↑ | 1.7↓ | 1.8 | 1.6 |
| <i>Spa and wellness tourism</i> | 3.3 | 3.6↑ | 3.3 | 3.0↓ | 2.1 | 2.3 | 1.9 | 2.0 | 1.2 |
| <i>Pilgrimage tourism</i> | 2.9 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 2.6↓ | 1.9 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 1.1 |

A study of the opinion of tour operators and travel agencies in the Municipality of Sofia in the same year indicates similar results: all the major kinds of tourism, developed in the Municipality of Sofia, have significant potential; and cultural, event and business tourism have the highest potential. There are more significant differences between tour operator and hotel sectors in terms of ranking the three products with the highest potential: unlike accommodation facilities, travel agents rated first the cultural tourism (4.4), second – event tourism (4.1) and third – business tourism (3.9) (Marinov et al., 2013).

There is some differentiation in the estimates for the potentials according to the type of the hotel establishments that is evident from the mean values. However, the differences are not significant - there is rather a consensus than large deviations in the estimates of the development potential. Surprisingly, accommodation establishments, located in the rural areas give the lowest estimates for the types of tourism that are primarily developed in rural areas (ski, spa and wellness, green, pilgrimage), as well as entertainment tourism. However, this is explained by the low level of estimates for all tourism products by rural hotel establishments, while the ranking of the estimates is similar to the average of all respondents.

The estimates for the actual state of the individual types of tourism in Sofia Municipality are significantly lower than the ones for the potential - about and below the average. The highest estimate (slightly above the average according to the 5-point scale - 3.3 -3.1) is given for the actual state of event, business and entertainment tourism. Near to the average (2.8) is the estimate for cultural tourism. The respondents give the lowest estimates for ski, green, pilgrimage and spa tourism (about 2).

In comparison, the estimates given by the travel agencies are similar to those of the hotel establishments. However, the travel agencies are more critical and give lower estimates for some kinds of tourism, whose estimates are the highest according to the representatives of the accommodation sector - event tourism (-0.4) and business tourism (-0.3). At the same time, travel agencies give higher estimates for some types of tourism that hotel establishments give the lowest ratings - pilgrimage (+0.2) and ski-tourism (+0.1) (Marino et al., 2013).

The differences in the estimates for the actual state of tourism kinds according to the types of the respondents are smaller than the ones about the potential and are explained by the varying level of criticism of the different groups of hotel establishments. The representatives of the hotel establishments, located in the suburban areas show the largest deviation from the general pattern. Generally, they estimate lower the state of the nature-oriented tourism (0.3-0.5 below the average). Considered by the type of tourism, the differentiation of answers is the lowest in ski, cultural and pilgrimage tourism. The differences are the highest in entertainment tourism - its state is estimated significantly higher than the average by the hotel establishments located in the center (+0.3), and significantly lower - by the ones located in rural areas (-0.4).

On the whole, "Urban" products have higher potential (3.9-4.3) and higher estimate of the actual state (2.8-3.3). In contrast, "non-urban" products have lower potential (2.9-3.6) and received lower estimates for the actual state (1.9-2.1).

Estimates for the actual state of all types of tourism are lower than the ones for development potential, and the differences are about and above 1. According to the estimates given by the respondents, the greatest the gap is between the actual state and the development potential of ski and green tourism. Next, insufficiently is realized the potential of cultural, pilgrimage, spa and wellness tourism, followed by business and event tourism. Closest to the potential is the actual state of the entertainment tourism. Generally, two major groups are formed: first, ski and green tourism, whose estimates for the potential and the actual state significantly differ (the gap is about 2 points); and second, the other types of tourism - cultural, event, business, spa, pilgrimage and entertainment, whose estimates for the actual state and the potential differ significantly less (the gaps are about 1).

According to the travel agencies, the gaps between the potential and the actual state of all types of tourism in Sofia are also significant and the values of the gaps vary between 0.9 and 1.6. The ranking of both types of organizations is identical and the differences between the two groups are in the range of 0.1-0.2 (Marinov et al., 2013).

According to the representatives of the hotel establishments, the two groups of tourism, mentioned-above - "urban" and "non-urban" show significant similarity regarding the levels of gaps and the degree of realization of the potential, as follows:

- Mainly "urban" types of tourism show smaller gaps (between 0.8 and 1.3) and a higher degree of realization of the potential. The greatest gaps are shown by cultural tourism (1.3), and the lowest - by entertainment tourism (0.8).
- Mainly, "non-urban" types of tourism show larger gaps (between 1.1 and 1.7) and correspondingly, lower levels of realization of potential.

The priorities for development and promotion of Sofia as a tourist destination are different, depending on the markets – domestic or international -, in particular in terms of promotion (not of the development of the product). The results reveal significant differences in the preferences for the activities of promoting the tourism products of Sofia Municipality for the domestic and international markets (Table 2). The answers of the respondents confirm the initial hypothesis that there are significant variations between domestic and foreign tourists regarding the preferences and the level of knowledge of the different products.

The events and activities (cultural, sport, and business), archeological, historical and cultural sights and ski tourism are considered as priority areas regarding the efforts of development and promotion of Sofia. They are assessed as priorities for both markets by about half or more of all respondents. The main difference between the markets is related to cultural events and historical, archeological and architectural sights. The sights (tangible culture) are considered to be more important for foreign visitors (76% versus 62% for Bulgarians), and cultural events (intangible culture) – for Bulgarian market (78% versus 48% for foreigners). The significance of the other priority areas (sporting events, business events, and ski-tourism) is similar in both markets – 50-57%. The second most important group of types of tourism, chosen by about 30-40% of the respondents, includes monasteries and churches outside of Sofia, entertainment and nightlife, nature-oriented activities and mineral water, spa and wellness. Differences between domestic and international markets concern the monasteries and churches outside Sofia, which are considered as a priority in terms of the international market by 54% of the respondents compared to only 29% in terms of domestic market. Little importance the respondents attach to activities related to shopping (about and below 20%).

Table 2. Priorities for promotion and development of Sofia as a tourist destination on domestic and international market.

| | Domestic market | | | | International market | | | |
|--|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| | Total | <i>Center</i> | <i>Sub-urban areas</i> | <i>Rural areas</i> | total | <i>Center</i> | <i>Sub-urban areas</i> | <i>Rural areas</i> |
| Urban types of tourism | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Archeological, historical and architectural sights</i> | 48% | 45% | 60%↑ | 44% | 78% | 80% | 92%↑ | 62%↓ |
| <i>Cultural events (concerts, festivals, shows, etc.)</i> | 76% | 84%↑ | 77% | 67%↓ | 62% | 67%↑ | 61% | 52%↓ |
| <i>Sporting events (competitions, tournaments, etc.)</i> | 54% | 53% | 57% | 52% | 52% | 50% | 64%↑ | 48%↓ |
| <i>Shopping</i> | 22% | 29%↑ | 26% | 8%↓ | 15% | 14% | 14% | 19% |
| <i>Entertainments and nightlife</i> | 30% | 34% | 29% | 23%↓ | 39% | 46%↑ | 31%↓ | 33%↓ |
| <i>Business events (conferences, seminars, fairs, exhibitions, etc.)</i> | 51% | 42%↓ | 66%↑ | 54% | 50% | 41%↓ | 64%↑ | 55%↑ |
| "Non-urban" types of tourism | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Ski tourism (in Vitosha)</i> | 52% | 48% | 51% | 58%↑ | 57% | 58% | 50%↓ | 62% |
| <i>Other nature-oriented activities (hiking, ecotourism, etc.)</i> | 32% | 36% | 11%↓ | 40%↑ | 28% | 32% | 11%↓ | 38%↑ |
| <i>Mineral water, spa and wellness</i> | 26% | 29% | 14%↓ | 31%↑ | 29% | 34%↑ | 17%↓ | 31% |
| <i>Monasteries and churches outside Sofia</i> | 29% | 30% | 26% | 31% | 54% | 54% | 56% | 50% |

Note: Each respondent had the opportunity to indicate up to five options in every column - considered as the most important

Regarding the different markets, the most significant priority development areas in Bulgarian market are related to cultural events (according to three quarter of the respondents), followed by sporting events, ski tourism, business events and archeological, historical and cultural sights (pointed out by nearly half of the respondents). In terms of the international market, the priority areas of intervention include primarily archeological, historical and architectural sights (according to 78% or above 3/4 of the respondents), followed by cultural events, ski tourism, monasteries and churches outside Sofia, sporting and business events (between 50 and 62%).

There are also interesting differences about domestic and international markets priorities according to the type of the accommodation. In terms of domestic market,

differences by location are relatively small but still indicative: hotel establishments located in the centre rely to a larger extent on cultural events (+7%) and shopping (+7%) and less on business events (-8%). Respondents from suburban areas more often point out business events (+15%) and archeological, historic and architectural sights in the city (+ 12%) and less - nature-oriented activities (-20%) and mineral water, spa and wellness (-12%). Rural hotel establishments rely more on nature-oriented activities (+8%), ski-tourism (+6%) and mineral water, spa and wellness (+5%) and less - on cultural events (-9%), shopping (-14%) and entertainment and nightlife (-7%).

The data about international market is more complicated and difficult to be generalized. The most significant differences in answers according to the type of the accommodations with regard to the priority development and promotion activities of tourism destination Sofia for international market are: hotel establishments located in the city center more often than average recommend development and promotion of cultural events, entertainments and nightlife and mineral water, spa and wellness, and less - business events. Representatives of the hotel establishments located in suburban areas more often than average recommend promoting of some "urban" types of tourism, such as archeological, historic and architectural sights, sporting and business events, and less - entertainments and nightlife, as well as some "non-urban" types of tourism - ski tourism, other nature-oriented activities and mineral water, spa and wellness. Accommodation, located in the rural areas, to a larger than the average extent recommend the promotion of nature-based activities and business events, and to a lesser extent - some "urban" types of tourism, such as archeological, historical and architectural sights, cultural and sporting events, and entertainments and nightlife.

The estimates by the representatives of hotel establishments for the priority products of tourist destination Sofia Municipality to be promoted and developed are similar to the ones of the travel agencies. However, there are larger differences in comparison to the estimates for the potential and actual state of the major kinds of tourism. It should be borne in mind that travel agents are asked in a slightly different way: they should have estimated the meaning of the development and promotion of products in the market overall, but not separately for domestic and international market. In order the results to be compared, the data of hotel establishments are calculated as mean values of the answers for domestic and international market. The most important differences are: archeological, historical and architectural sites of the city (88% versus 63%), monasteries and churches outside of Sofia (62% versus 41%) and business events (68% versus 50%) are of larger importance for travel agencies, while sporting events (35% versus 53%), ski tourism (44% versus 55%) and the other nature-oriented activities (18% versus 30%) - are of lesser importance for them.

The comparison of the two questions - about the estimate for the actual state and potential and about the development and promotion of the types of tourism - is interesting. Generally, the representatives of the accommodation sector prefer the priority activities for development and promotion of the "urban" types of tourism, which have a higher potential and a higher estimate of the actual state (despite the lower gaps). However, there are two exceptions. Of the "urban" products of lower priority are entertainments and nightlife, and of "non-urban" products of higher priority is ski tourism in Vitosha. Furthermore, though the potential and the actual state of the pilgrimage tourism are estimated relatively low, the activities of development and promotion of monasteries and churches outside Sofia are of relatively high importance - especially with regard to the international market.

5. Conclusions

It can be concluded that the representatives of the accommodation sector are aware that Sofia Municipality has potential for development of various types of tourism (the estimates of all kinds of tourism are about and above the average 2.9-4.3): "urban" and "non-urban"; mass and specialized; tourism based on natural and anthropogenic, tangible and intangible resources. However, they think that "urban" types of tourism have a slightly higher potential than "non-urban".

The actual state of all types of tourism has not yet reached its potential and is about or below the average (3.3-1.9). According to the respondents mainly the "non-urban" types of tourism have not reach their potential (in comparison with the "urban" types of tourism).

The "urban" types of tourism that have about or above the average significance for both domestic and international markets are archeological, historical and architectural sights, cultural, sporting and business events. Archeological, historical and architectural sights are more important for international, while cultural events - for domestic market. The "non-urban" type that is a priority for both markets is ski tourism. Monasteries and churches outside Sofia are a priority for international but not for domestic market.

It can be concluded that Sofia has potential to develop a diverse tourism product (urban and non-urban, cultural and natural forms) and tourism professionals are aware of this fact. However, they think that some of the types of tourism should be promoted with priority over others.

Based on the analysis above, the following recommendations to Sofia Municipality for the development and promotion of priority tourism products in order to ensure sustainable development and more fully respond to various requests and needs of tourists can be made:

- Sofia Municipality should pay enough attention to the development of all major types of tourism, as they have a substantial (though different in terms of quantity)

potential and together provide diversified product mix, a wider range of possible activities and opportunities for complementarity.

- However, based on the responses of the participants in the study the following priority areas for public intervention with regard to the development and promotion of Sofia as a tourist destination (priority products) could be outlined: (1) archeological, historical and architectural sights (cultural tourism) in the city – in particular for Bulgarian market; (2) churches and monasteries in the vicinity of Sofia – especially for foreign markets; (3) events, including (a) cultural events (concerts, festivals, shows, etc.) – especially for Bulgarian market; (6) sporting events; (4) business tourism - business events (conferences, seminars, fairs, exhibitions, etc.); (5) ski tourism (in Vitosha).

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