

A Review of the Impact of Public Relations on Tourism Industry: Developed Model of Public Relations in Macedonian Tourism

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Abstract

This article refers to touristic economy of the Republic of Macedonia, particularly to the meaning and necessity of tourism in the creation and development of applicable PR model in the touristic economy of the country. From subject-concept point of view, the focus of research in this study is oriented towards the PR influence on Macedonian tourism, in terms of achieving better results in touristic economy as an important economic branch and the necessary development of applicable PR model in Macedonian tourism.

This analysis establishes a conceptual frame, empirical criteria and measures of better results in touristic industry.

The frame of this study is based on three wide theoretic concepts: (1) tourism and structural features of Macedonian tourism with all the (used and underused) opportunities, perspectives and conditions that Macedonia offers as underused but exceptionally attractive touristic destination; (2) public relations and (3) strategic management of PR and the theory of applicable PR model in Macedonian tourism.

This research suggests that the process of public relations modeling, which is organized and achieved according to the latest practices of public relations in tourism, enables the Macedonian tourism to become productive, profitable, cultural and socially beneficial profession.

This study provides a method of developing public relations model in Macedonian tourism.

Key words: *public relations, tourism, public, two-way communication, image, touristic destination, touristic potential, modeling, model, strategies and strategic management.*

JEL Classification: *L83, M31, M37, M140*

1. INTRODUCTION

Macedonia is small, attractive country, located at the southern part of Balkan Peninsula with surface of 25,713 square km and population, in 2010, of 2 million. Macedonian's neighboring countries are Albania, Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. After the collapse of Yugoslavia, Macedonia from a state of Federation turned into independent, sovereign country. The country is rich with natural beauties and rarities, well-known for its cultural-historical heritage and traces of ancient cultures and civilizations, including the artistic achievements. The touristic economy in Republic of Macedonia started to develop after World War II but its significant results appeared after 1970's. Touristic activities in Republic of Macedonia have achieved noticeable success in the late 80's. However, the political crisis that shook the Balkan, drastically have influenced on tourism development both in the region and Macedonia. The last few years, there was a certain improvement in the field of Macedonian touristic economy, but that's not enough taking into account all the opportunities and capacities the country offers.

Macedonia has open economy, while trade with abroad covers 90% of GDP. Since the independence, the country faces economic crisis but later the economy started to grow again after 1996. However, according to the official statistics, the level of unemployment is very high- 38%.

Republic of Macedonia has natural resources, cultural, historical and touristic goods and untouched unique beauty.

Over 6,202 cultural monuments have been registered on the territory of the country, of which 729 are under legal protection of the state. Macedonia also has valuable archeological localities of the Classicism, Roman, Byzantine and Middle-age period. Many Churches and monasteries originate from Byzantine period, 18th and 19th Century.

SWOT analysis of Macedonian tourism, which was created for the need of National strategy of tourism development 2009-2013, shows more valuable comments on advantages, possibilities, insufficiencies and threads to Macedonian tourism (Flanner, 2009). The general condition in the country demands great flow of foreign investment. The entire touristic machinery puts the stress on the countries with significant natural and cultural-historical monuments that are interesting for many tourists. Republic of Macedonia as infinite source of natural beauties, historical, cultural and touristic capacities is a country that should work on developing the touristic economy. Although it has great touristic potential, still there're many underdeveloped and unvisited parts of the country. Partially, that's due to the failure and not knowing how to manage tourism and which way should characteristics, advantages and attractions be presented. Variety, originality and beauties of the lakes, mountains, rivers, villages, cultural monuments and archeological findings are great advantage for Macedonian tourism. But in order for a touristic destination to be successful, good approach and architecture as well as accommodation and catering capacities adapted to tourists' demands, touristic attraction, excursions, entertainment and activities like hiking, mountaineering, fishing and etc. are quite important. Rich religious heritage comes as great advantage but monastery

accommodation and development of religious tourism need to be further developed.

Total touristic economy in Republic of Macedonia needs a further development but also promotion and affirmation of its natural and cultural heritage. The meaning and the role of public relations regarding affirmation and promotion of the attractions and touristic potentials and capacities of Republic of Macedonia is immense but also for the creating, building and taking care of the Macedonian profile as an attractive touristic destination. In future, Macedonia should work on that field more seriously.

Due to the appropriate PR modeling of Macedonian tourism, the study is guided by the available literature and strategic managing of public relations as well the possibility to apply the existing forms of PR in Macedonian tourism, taking into account the statistic data on touristic capacities, touristic turnover of foreign and home tourists, data on GDP, data on World touristic organization of world trends and world touristic map, past experience in PR experience in neighboring countries tourism, that is available knowledge of strategic PR elements in touristic economy.

1. MEANING OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN MACEDONIAN TOURISM

In modern social-economic context, public relations are considered to be an important factor in the process of development and growth of tourism. They transfer the consumers messages about attractiveness, traffic infrastructure and accommodation capacities of a touristic destination, at the same time following the pulse and needs of the target group and surrounding so that the touristic economy can adapt to the changes and needs of the public.

Public relations are an interactive form of communication through which organization, product or service build their strategies of getting close to their target by using special methods of research and poll of public opinion. Also, PR forms offer wide opportunities and techniques that the organization, product or service need to build, maintain or improve their image (Broom, 2010).

Tourism and touristic industry have important influence on the economic life of a country. For that reason, tourism development of a country and its growing into attractive touristic destination is directly connected to quality standards of touristic product, accommodation capacities, tourism, on one hand and prestige, public legitimacy, image, informing, promotion and lobbying on the other. Henceforth derives the important place and role of PR in tourism development of one country. The most significant factor for successful realization of this process is communication with the public and usage of appropriate means of communication. The main goal of the use of PR in tourism as in any other industry is continuous transfer of messages and information for certain touristic offer, touristic attraction and opportunities; building and image of attractive touristic destination (image based on identity); as well as providing feedback- when public information reach the doers of touristic economy and in that way providing further evaluation.

In the content, this research is guided by Renate Fox's perspective who defines public relations as:

“Two-way communication between the organization and public, in which organization informs the social community (customers, suppliers, parties involved, shareholders, government, media and citizens) for their intents, deeds and views contributing the creation and sustaining the positive image. Also, public relations

follow relations and processes in the social community and in that way facilitate the adaptation of organization to social conditions and surroundings” (Foz,2006, p.200)

Therefore, this study tries to answer the following question: How can touristic economy identify the need of building and establishing public relations? What is the practice of public relations in Macedonian tourism? What are the forms of public relations in Macedonia? What should the applicable model of PR in Macedonian tourism consist?

Originalities of public relations are based on originalities of touristic product. During the creation, projection, planning and establishment of PR in tourism, generally it's important to take account for economic functions of tourism (employment, profit advantage of economy, international economic relations, investments, regional development, not-economic flow(and social functions (health-recreational , entertainment, cultural, scientific, teaching, sports, technical, social, and political function). When it comes to Macedonian tourism particularities, it's economic, organizational, and staff structures are to be respected. Since public relations deal with real conditions and processes and their representations is based on those facts but also the segment that stresses the social benefits and stimulates adaptation to work according to the society demands and development imperatives of the tourism.

In other words, on one hand is tourism, as an exceptionally complex phenomenon of the 21 Century and industry that was predicted as top economic growth in the future and, on the other hand is public relations as relatively new discipline in Republic of Macedonia. The condition Macedonia faces is quite paradox in terms of tourism and touristic economy. For its structural features, Macedonia is rich region, which, undoubtedly can be touristic attractive but in reality tourism has

marginal role. At the same time, we face fast development of public relations (which in Macedonia are seen as trend rather than need, among else for development of democracy) that in the further on will enliven in the sphere of tourism. That's why Macedonian tourism has to build an applicable model of public relations.

2. THESIS DETERMINING PUBLIC RELATIONS MODEL IN MACEDONIAN TOURISM

The etymological meaning of the term model with Latin root and meaning form/measure and implies material and mental reproduction of an original that can be an object, process, phenomenon or opinion. The main characteristic of the modeling method consists of a thin union between theory and scientific practice (Šešić, 1982).

In the attempt to model public relations in Macedonian tourism, the study is guided by past practice and information about public relations in tourism, theoretical basis of public relations and opportunities for application and efficiency PR forms in the tourism of Republic of Macedonia.

The process of building PR model is determined by the following thesis:

A) Identification and valorization of Macedonian touristic product with the purpose of gaining quality touristic products, attractive-motivational factors and offer. They're the point of reference for building an image of an attractive touristic destination that is crucial for placing the country at the world touristic market.

B) Appropriate institutional hierarchy and tourism organization through forming special ministry responsible for the entire conditions, development opportunities, perspectives, activities and strategies for Macedonian tourism and touristic

economy, including separate bodies and organs for enforcement for strengthening public relations in the field of tourism.

C) Two-way symmetrical model of public relations, applicable for tourism, through concrete forms and instruments with purpose of drawing attention, building social profile and credibility, increasing the placements and lowering promotion costs.

D) Identification of strategic elements of managing PR model determined by strategic development lines of Macedonian tourism with special strategy of PR (by using complete project cycle) as integral part of National strategy of touristic development of Republic of Macedonia.

E) Strategic managing of PR in Macedonian tourism with clearly identified and projected steps (research, planning, taking action and communication, assessment) for building, developing, sustaining of PR in touristic economy.

F) Implementing strategic and sub-strategic documents as integral part of PR modeling in Macedonian tourism and implementation of crucial (financial, material, organizational, professional, personnel) issues regarding public relations in Macedonian tourism as basic for touristic development of Republic of Macedonia.

G) Changes in tourism as determinant of changes in PR are the results of products and services development, road infrastructure, human resources, and protection of environment, investments, organization of touristic economy and awareness of tourism.

2.1.IDENTIFICATION AND VALORIZATION OF MACEDONIAN TOURISTIC PRODUCT

When it comes to modeling and application of modern PR concept which serves for building and developing program and practice of PR in tourism, adapted to the conditions and tendencies of Republic of Macedonia's touristic

economy, the main step is improvement and innovation of attractive-motivational factors influencing on Macedonian tourism, identification and valorization of the existing and potential touristic products, building an image (based on identity), defining the priorities of certain touristic products development, foreseeing the growth of Macedonian tourism in the middle of great progress and changing environment, improving the touristic offer, providing advantage over the competitors of touristic product, vision of future development of touristic destination, product and touristic organization as well as adapting the touristic economy on the new market values. By improving the attractive-motivational factors of tourism, identity (on which the image is based) is provided so that the desirable identity of Macedonia as an attractive touristic destination can be shaped. In order to achieve the comparable touristic advantage of Macedonia, it's necessary to present the touristic product to the world touristic market. Quality touristic offer and superior values have the need of proper representation before the home and foreign target public, which demands development of communication strategy for asserting public relations in tourism and Macedonian touristic offer which will present the advantages, identity and image of Macedonian tourism, in a good light, on one hand, and lower the promotion costs on the other. Therefore, the modern conception of PR in Macedonian tourism implies application of all the PR forms (relations with media, marketing publicity, subject management, lobbying, crises management, relations with internal public, creating and developing identity and image of tourism), in accordance with the proportions between features and capacity of Macedonian tourism. Those are determinants in the process of building the strategic documents of Macedonian tourism development.

2.2. INSTITUTIONAL HIERARCHY OF MACEDONIAN TOURISM

The development of Macedonian tourism depends on its organizational hierarchy, which is the base for further development of Macedonian touristic economy. The distinction of managing Macedonian tourism development in macro level implies the need of special organization in that level. Hence, the cooperation among the related unions: government sector, NGOs, private sector, public private partnership and national level, regional level and local self-government is necessary. The key issue in terms of tourism depends on the need of individual organs as carriers of the touristic politics on one hand, and organizational form the accordance the different subject interests, while defining and performing touristic politics on the other. In a hierarchy like that one, it's quite important the relating of interests, where tourism comes as integrator of the activities. Due to the complexity of tourism and its complex hierarchy of functioning, the "integrator" of all the Macedonian touristic activities to flow in the Ministry in charged for tourism and touristic economy in Macedonia. Practically, the existence of an appropriate organization presents the basic precondition for achieving strategic touristic goals and in that way, communication strategies. Organizational hierarchy of Macedonian touristic economy has main role in modeling PR in Macedonian tourism. Therefore, there're two ways of organizational hierarchy of Macedonian tourism and touristic economy: (1) forming new Ministry of tourism and catering service; (2) upgrading the authorities, rights and obligations of the Ministry of culture and its transformation into Ministry of culture and tourism.

2.3.FEATURES OF PR FORMS IN APPLICABLE TWO-WAY SYMMETRICAL MODEL OF PR IN MACEDONIAN TOURISM

Taking into account that PR functions act as daily operational planning, on one hand and long-term strategic planning on another, building a PR strategy in Macedonian tourism as complementary part of National strategy of tourism development, is quite necessary. If National strategy gives the basic directions about the vision, mission and goal of Macedonian tourism, then the modeling of PR would be based on PR strategy, high-quality touristic product, high-quality touristic offer (attraction-motivational, communicational and receptive factors) as well as specific positioning of touristic product, service and touristic organization which is result of research and analysis, taking into account all the target groups identification.

According to the view of Renate Fox (Fox, 2006) public relations, as a two-way communication between the organization (product or service) and public have their goals (attracting attention, building social prestige and credibility, enlargement of placements, lowering promotion costs), achieved with the help of PR instruments (events, news drawing attention promoted by media, public individual performances) through several stages (research, defining the goal, defining the target, defining the media in accordance with target, defining interest area, creating events, creating message, communication, action and result marks). The forms of public relations contain wider view (Fox, 2006). More precisely, tourism in Republic of Macedonia could practice the following PR forms:

- Relations with media
- Identity and image building of touristic destination
- Developing publishing

- Lobbying
- Maintaining PR crisis situation
- Relations in touristic organizations
- Relations with potential and real investors, financiers and donors.
- Paid advertising

2.4.STRATEGIC ELEMENTS OF DEVELOPED PR MODEL IN MACEDONIAN TOURISM

The foundation of successful strategic managing of communication of Macedonian tourism is the good planning and forming communication goals and activities with objectives in Macedonian tourism. That's the final goal of PR-contribution to social and individual goals. Therefore, it's quite important to draw a difference between strategy (long-term planning) on one hand and tactics (that is focused on action and is also short-term according to efficiency) on the other.

Strategic solutions determine the direction of Macedonian tourism and it's sustainability in the altering surrounding. According to the fact that PR should contribute to shaping and achieving the vision and goal of tourism, then they have to deal with the strategy, both as position and perspective. Their job is to take care of the internal relations between the touristic organizations and their surrounding, but also of the internal and external crucial target groups and on that way present bridge between internal perspective of Macedonian tourism and its external positioning. Precisely these two elements are crucial for the position and prosperity of Macedonian tourism, and that's why the strategy implementation is unthinkable without developed PR model.

Professor Henry Mintzberg (Blek,2003) suggests five possible interpretations (five P) of the strategy which, in practice as strategic element should be united in PR model of Macedonian tourism. According to the five Ps (Blek, 2003), strategy can be

interpreted as plan, perspicacity, procedure, position and perspective.¹

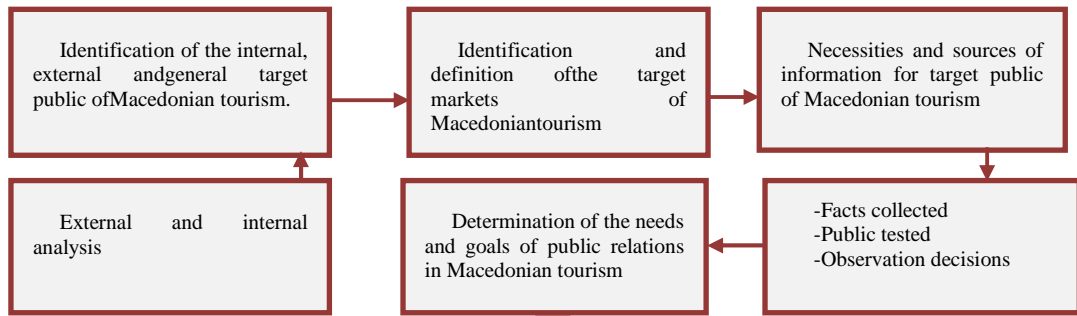
John Marston in 1963 in his work “Nature of Public Relations offers a management model of public relations which implies the strategic RACE process that consists of four stages- Research, Action, Communication and Evaluation. *The model derived from modeling PR in Macedonian tourism would be much more efficient if it's based on four-stages of strategic managing: defining the problem, planning and creating program, taking action and communication and estimation of the program.* The systematic plan consists of application of complete project cycle- from the analysis of situation through setting up the goals, defining and achieving activities, evaluation with continuous following and achieving the projected goals.

2.5.MANAGING PUBLIC RELATIONS IN TOURISM OF REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Managing public relations in Macedonian tourism implies a strategic managing that unites the stages: (1) defining the issue through research, (2) planning and creating the plan and program, (3) taking action and communication and (4) estimation of program (Tomic, 2008).

¹As a plan (aware planning of the flow of the action); keenness/cleverness (to outplay the competition) as a process (implies special actions oriented towards the goal. It can be coincidental or on purpose), as a position (mean for location the organization, product or service in the surrounding and presents intermediary among organization, product or service and its environment) and as a perspective (mean with which organization, product or service is monitored from the inside and the way the officials see their world and competitor's world.)

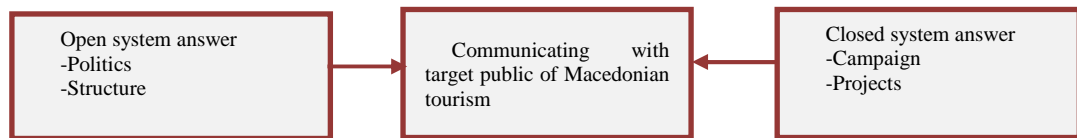
RESEARCH



PLANNING



OPERATION/ACTION



EVALUATION

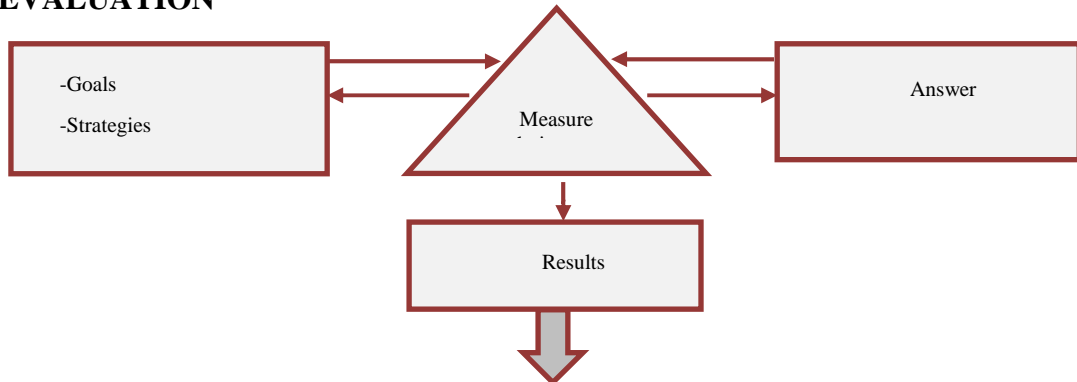


Illustration 1: Adapted to Macedonian tourism by Tomić, Z.(2008): Odnosi s javnošću – teorija i praksa, Synopsis, Zagreb – Sarajevo.

The first stage of PR managing process (research) starts with internal and external analysis of micro and macro surrounding and collecting useful data and information about the identification of Macedonian tourism

target public, target markets, the need of information as well as information source. Based on the collected data and information, the issues, needs and goals of PR are being identified. The goal of objective and systematic research is

detailed describing the issue and the causes. The analysis consists of: analysis of the actual condition of destination; description of target public- internal; description of the target market; determining the goals of public relations (long and short term); marketing communications for each target market (economic propaganda, marketing); defining the role of economic propaganda in promontory mix.

The second stage of PR managing process is the *planning and preparation of concrete programs and strategic plans* with solutions for facing and defining the needs and issues regarding public relations in Macedonian tourism. The planning has to be thorough and to include definition of the general and specific objectives of PR in Macedonian tourism program, carrying out strategic goals and plans in the terms of what should be done and in what order the solutions would be offered for surpassing the needs and issues.² The communication program is a support of action strategy with several basic principles. Forming the messages in this stage is an important activity because of which PR experts have to know the complete condition, strategy and attitudes for certain issues and the entire process of planning.

²This stage implies: mission and role determination (nature and surrounding of work) in the area where crucial results are expected (demanding time, energy and capability), identification and specification of indicators (with measurable factors for placing the goals), choice and placing the goals (determining the result that Macedonian tourism should accomplish) preparation of action plan (ways to achieve certain objectives, program-determination of action agenda realized due to accomplishing the goal, preparation for implementing action plan, budget- determining the necessary means of accomplishing the goal, delegating obligations, revising and harmonization- testing the plan before action implementation), strategy of action and implementation (necessary to provide accordance by all the cruel people regarding the important issues, the choice which approach functions best, who should take part in action and which actions come first) and communication program (planning and forming the targeted public and market messages, naming people responsible for determining internal communication due to better understanding and engaging).

Besides forming the message for targeted public, what is quite necessary is the process of transferring the messages to the media in form of news in order to attract media's attention.³ Since the message is formed, the communication plan provides ways to spread the message to the target public. During the choice media which would spread the message, knowledge, ascertain and way in which decisions of target public are made, the applicability of touristic service being offered and confirmation that they'll get the best touristic offer for the price paid, are also taken into account.

The third stage of action (communication) requires adjustment between the action and communication since it doesn't only matters the way something is said but also what should be done about that certain issue. Helped by the stage of action, a new open system of the so called two-way symmetric model is introduced, on which is based the offered PR model in Macedonian tourism. This approach is founded on the assumption that changes are equally probable for both external and internal public and that those changes will contribute for both parties to end up like winners so that touristic economy and public will make use of it and it also should work on improving the image. Public relations in Macedonian tourism affect on the forming mutually beneficial relations between targeted public and tourism, necessary for survival and success of Macedonian touristic economy and at the same time creating strategy of

³In the process of forming the communication program, it's necessary to take into account the preparedness of the public to receive the message appropriately, bearing in mind the semantics, meaning of symbols, possible obstacles and stereotypes. Therefore, the message needs to be formed so that the receiver can understand it as relevant for its interests to encourage the receiver in the action (that's the feedback that makes two-way communication). In order for the communication to be effective, words and symbols of the sender should give the same meaning both to the sender and receiver.)

action and its adjustment with the following communication efforts.⁴

The fourth stage of PR managing process in Macedonian tourism is an estimation of the program. The research for estimating the program could be implemented during the stage of implementation of the program (formative research) or after it to ascertain the progress and document the action of the program (summation research). This stage shouldn't be avoided because the research, measure or estimation of the program has the purpose of investigating what happened and why but not to prove or justify. If the research is implemented during the planning and implementation of the program then it's possible to realize and solve the eventual problems and use the new chances. If the process of estimation is done by the end of the implementation, the chances for error are lower, which may jeopardize the efficient goal achievement.

The estimation of the program, except the complete program and process, could refer to separate stages that make up the process of PR managing in Macedonian tourism: preparation, implementation and effects.

2.6. NEED OF STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS MODELING IN MACEDONIAN TOURISM

The fact that Macedonia is still unknown touristic destination for the world public⁵ presents one of the identified weaknesses in the National

strategy for Macedonian tourism development, 2009-2013, and proves the lack of wide promotional activities, public relations and marketing for creating recognizable and attractive image of touristic destination. In the past strategic documents of Macedonian tourism, in the acts and activities of both the Agency of promotion and support of Macedonian tourism and Sector of tourism, the need of promoting Macedonian tourism is transferred mechanically. Hence, the term marketing is used for describing the promotional mix, despite the fact that the elaboration contains elements of public relations. In other words, what it lacks is drawing a line between the forms, functions, methods and techniques of the marketing on one hand, and forms, functions, methods and techniques of public relations on the other. Also, in Macedonian tourism (Agency of promotion of tourism and Sector of tourism and catering industry in the frames of Ministry of economy) does not contain preparation and application of strategic documents for public relations and marketing, communication tactics, product promotion, advertising financial construction of projects regarding annual level promotion, like the developed touristic systems.⁶ Creating such type of documents implies that public relations are planned component of Macedonian tourism as a whole, in long-term (10 years) middle-term (1-5 years) and short-term (1 year or for concrete projects or for certain periods of the year). In addition, comes the necessity of preparing special statutes in terms of the particular segments of PR as well as creation of authorized sectors in the frames of particular parts of touristic economy, direct PR

⁴Modified according to Broom, M.G. (2010): *Cutlip&Center's Učinkovitodnosi s javnošću*, Mate, Zagreb, pp.3

⁵This is confirmed by the research from Institute of statistics of Republic of Macedonia for foreign visits of the countries.

⁶Example of Croatian touristic organization is an appropriate example of reorganizing Macedonian Agency of tourism promotion and growing into Macedonian national touristic organization.

implementation as part of a general promotion strategy of the complete tourism in Republic of Macedonia.

Therefore, in certain segments of Macedonian tourism (in the process of creating Macedonian tourism development, activities for attracting tourists, research of targeted public and so on) could be introduced special acts (declarations, statements, views, claims, conclusions and recommendations) of public relations, whose basis and content is part of a general strategy for public relations in Macedonian tourism. At least, in these documents should be determined:

- a) Concept of public relations accepted and applied by the concrete subject of touristic economy.
- b) Dimensioning public relations as necessity in exiting and surviving that is the success or failure of Macedonian tourism.
- c) Defining public relations as an integral part of each concrete activity of Macedonian tourism (offer, project, promotion, event, lobbying).

In strategic documents of public relations in Macedonian tourism, besides the general goals of public relations, which are valid and should be applied for economic subjects, government and political parties as well as citizen's organizations, they should be more précised which means to contain the following elements:

- wide and confirmed explanation of the marks, quality of offer, mission, vision, legal base and social role of tourism;
- re-affirmation of the culture-human function of tourism as long term and regular practice in public relations;
- Fundamental and well-argued ascertain and convicting the public for profitable working (the economic

function of the tourism) and socially responsible behavior (social function) of the touristic organizations;

- accomplishing truthfulness, punctuality, completeness and understanding of the informational content to the public and separate targeted groups;
- economic justification and rationality in working and achieving the total activities and concrete projects.

During the analysis of the Strategy of tourism development of Republic of Macedonia 2009-2013, according to which the vision and development policy of Macedonian tourism confirms, the discordance of the vision with plans and actions of implementation leaves a negative impression.⁷ It seems that such a bad coordination, the creation of the vision of Macedonian tourism, is deprived of the developing component in PR managing and also appropriate creating and presenting the image of Macedonian tourism before target public which is one of the basic functions of public relations. That's why, in strategic documents of tourism development in Republic of Macedonia is emergent building in the crucial (financial, material, organizational, expert and staff) issues regarding PR with defined conception and activity. Expertise trained and high-quality personnel in the field of touristic economy, on one hand and for public relations in tourism on another. Financially- material, projection and determining of financially-material conditions for implementing public relations in Macedonian tourism as a whole and definition of the budget for support of separate tourism projects with PR program. Namely, separate segments of Macedonian tourism

⁷According to the Strategy of tourism development of Republic of Macedonia, the vision of Macedonian tourism is Macedonia to build an image of attractive touristic destination to 2013.

require to pass acts for public relations and participate in the wider strategy of public relations in Macedonian tourism.⁸

2.7. CHANGES OF TOURISM OF REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA AND CHANGES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN TOURISM OF REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Today tourism faces with the changes in all the working sectors. The older market competition, environment changes, adaptation on the new system of market value and change of tourist tendencies, seriously affect the change of the ordinary, traditional offer. The point is continuation of touristic destination life cycle, products and services that mean their presence and functioning. Therefore, the changes of Macedonian tourism, that are necessary and imperative, are going to affect the changes of public relations. In the dynamic surrounding, Macedonian tourism insists on defining the mission, goals, strategy and portfolio plan. According to the SWOT analysis of Macedonian tourism, the development concept provides series of crucial initiatives and recommendations⁹ for tourism development. They refer to the development of touristic products and services, improvement of roads and available infrastructure, human resources, management and protection of environment, marketing, statistic

data, government and foreign investment, inter-sector communication, organization of touristic economy and raising tourism awareness.

The projected changes in Macedonian tourism development would cause changes in the communication strategies of promotion and presentation of the complete touristic economy, on one hand, and separate types of tourism in Macedonia, on the other. First of all, they refer to communication channel changes, in the forms and instruments of public relations as well as organizational hierarchy of the touristic economy in Macedonia as a whole.

In the end, the estimated changes of conception and development of Macedonian tourism, in the section of promotion and development of touristic economy, improvement of touristic product, attractive-motivational factors, human resources, investment, inter-sector communication and tourism awareness are projected to cause changes in the organization and institutional hierarchy of Macedonian tourism. It would provide putting the strategy, mission, vision of Macedonian tourism, all the issues, queries, development lines, strategic, communicational and action plans of tourism in one place. That would lead to strengthening the institutional role, organizations, bodies and institutions responsible for Macedonian tourism,¹⁰ their improved expertise, professionalism, transparency, sustainability and responsibility in working and the results achieved. Then changes in the organization of Macedonian touristic economy,

⁸There, it's necessary cooperation and connection between touristic economy and experts and scientific public which would define and regulate question about public relations in Macedonian tourism resulting in preparation and adoption of corresponding acts (rulebooks, decisions, resolutions, projects) for organization and manner of PR developing in Macedonian tourism. The same process is used with: (1) achieving theoretic and practical training of touristic workers for implementation of public relations and (2) providing (creating, materializing and using) the scientific research of targeted public opinions which presents part of PR managing in Macedonian tourism.

⁹Integrated in the National strategy of Macedonian tourism development of Republic of Macedonia, 2009-2013.

¹⁰To form Ministry of Tourism and Catering services or transform the existent Ministry of Culture into Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Republic of Macedonia can significantly contribute to finding a solution for the obstacles of Macedonian tourism development.

functioning as future development, would cause shifts in the promotion and presentation of Macedonian touristic product and hence changes the PR in Macedonian tourism.

3. MODEL OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN MACEDONIAN TOURISM

The offered premises leading the process of PR in Macedonian tourism modeling, determine the model of strategic management of public relations in Macedonian tourism which is the main goal of this research and at the same time is platform for possible researches in this area. This model integrates the role of PR in

Macedonian tourism managing so that public relation gain exceptionally important role in the process of strategic management, identification of the parties involved, target public and issues about the possible crisis situations and consequences in Macedonian tourism with stressed need of following the external surrounding and the intensive changes of touristic market with constant adaptation to its mission and vision.

The model offered consists of eight basic levels: management, communication programs, parties involved, public, issues, crisis communication, image and prestige and development of Macedonian tourism. Its structure is presented in the following illustration:

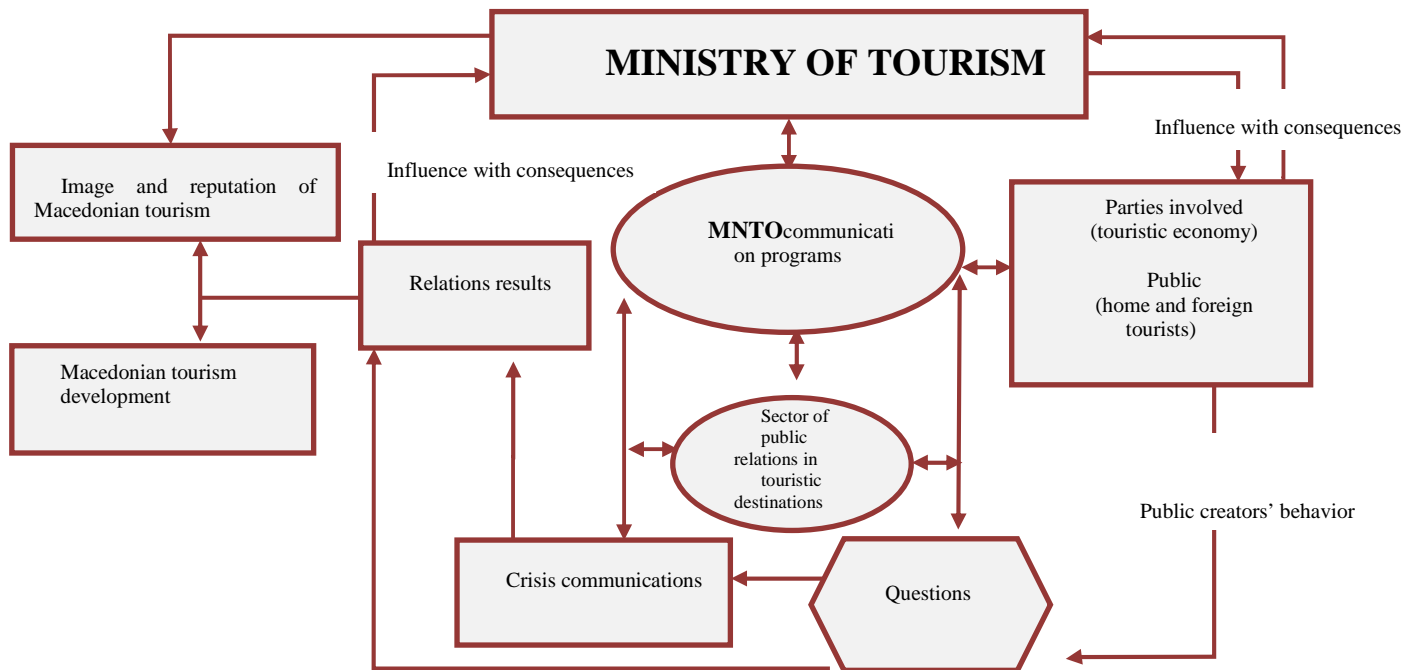


Illustration 2: Graphic chart of the Model of strategic management of public relations in Macedonian tourism

According to the model, Macedonian national touristic organization and Sector of PR management of touristic destination should be in a functional level, with programs focused on the target public, precisely planned, implemented and evaluated. In the level of the parties involved, greatest value goes to the continual communicational policy between Macedonian tourism (presented through Ministry of tourism, Macedonian National Touristic Organization (MNTO) and Sector of public relations in touristic destinations) and subjects of touristic economy, in order to build good and long-term relations and moderate the possible conflict potentials. The behavior of the Ministry and parties involved (touristic economy) affect each other. That's why it's necessary that public relations implement formative research (during the implementation of communication programs for implementation of certain touristic destination on the world or home touristic map, then during program development implementation of priority

types of tourism, or programs of attractive-motivational factors development of a certain segment of touristic offer of the country and so on) in order to identify the possible consequences made by the decisions of Macedonian tourism (Ministry of tourism) and decisions of parties involved, that is touristic economy. The next step of the model is public stage where different interest may come as "potential" conflict between the Ministry and target public (home and foreign tourists/external and internal public). At this stage, the goal of the research of public relations is identification of the target public and facilitation of the conflicts. The Ministry should include the public in the process of making decision through communication while MNTO in cooperation with the Sector of PR management of touristic destinations, should develop communication campaign with the purpose of convincing the public for using Macedonian tourism services. At the next level, public relations organize and produce questions in order to foresee

the issues and develop corresponding programs for crisis communication. At this stage, communication programs often include mass media but also provide interpersonal communication with public which is directly or indirectly connected to the crisis, as to be solved the open questions through dialogue or negotiations. It's crucial that public relations design communication programs for the various parties involved and different targeted public for each of the projected levels but also this includes developing the goals, tasks and vision of Macedonian tourism, to suggest and prepare programs and campaigns as to achieve those goals, tasks and vision, their implementation and evaluation. The model of strategic management of public relations provides two-way symmetrical channel of communication among the Ministry and management decisions, parties involved and public, questions and results of the relations. All of them are mutually dependable. Hence, the cooperation between the makers of strategic decisions in Macedonian tourism and the public due to decisions' effect on the public are crucial. The offered model of strategic management of public relations in Macedonian tourism comes as a result of PR in Macedonian tourism modeling, liable to further research and additions, according to the demands of Macedonian tourism development.

CONCLUSION

The application of modern PR concept demands PR modeling in Macedonian tourism, as a manner, form and formula which would help to concept, materialize and develop the applicable program and PR practice in tourism, adapted to the conditions and tendencies of touristic economy in Republic of Macedonia. Therefore, the Macedonian tourism can

become real productive and profitable culture and socially beneficial profession.

The offered PR modeling in this research is a platform for building developed model of strategic management of PR in Macedonian tourism. Hence, one shouldn't conclude that the modeling of PR in tourism is once and for all and thus unchangeable. The opposite, it's necessary that the model follows and keeps up with the changes, trends and oscillations both in national and international level. But in that case, the model is able to respond to the touristic challenges of the new era and successfully avoid the trap-being its own target.

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