

SPECIALIZATION OF TOURIST OFFERING BY MODELING A PACKAGE TOUR FOR GAMBLING TOURISM

Mariana Ianeva*, Nikola Gaydarov**

Introduction

The subject of this study are best casino practices and casino products offered by world leaders in this subsector, systematized in the form of evaluation criteria and indicators to give tour operators the tools to choose suppliers by selecting best offers and including them in casino tour packages. The subject of this study are casinos and casino products in Sofia. The specifics of the offerings in this field are studied in order to develop a model to be applied by the Bulgarian travel agencies.

The economy is now driven by the impact of prices, the force of potential sales and human needs, and therefore even further, initially transformed, marketing activities are developing. Under the new market conditions, the emphasis is placed on the experience the product brings and its impact on consumers rather than on its quantitative and qualitative characteristics. Companies want to invoke moods, emotions and feelings and this can be achieved best through an absolute immersion. Recently, the concept of experience economy has become particularly emphasized and analyzed, probably due to its invasion in a large number of sectors of the economy.

For the purposes of this report, we assume a number of positions according to which the experience economy is associated with setting up a sustainable competitive advantage in order to establish a specific image of the product and the destination. (Рибов, 2011). Destinations associated with entertainment and casinos also form part of the experience economy.

A discussion on the experience economy shows that the added value in terms of experiencing a product has become key factor influencing consumer decision-making. Experience is an added value to the tourist product for this type of consumption (Сулева, 2010). In casinos or destinations offering casino

* Mariana Ianeva, PhD, Assoc. Prof., Department of Economics of Tourism, UNWE – Sofia, email: m_janeva@abv.bg

** Nikola Gaydarov, PhD Student, Department of Economics of Tourism, UNWE – Sofia, email: gaidarov_unss@abv.bg

services, guests usually participate actively in most of the activities and are immersed in the experiences they offer. (Yaneva, Toncheva, Boycheva, 2015)

Main text

Before discussing its impact and influence, it is necessary to clarify what, according to the various authors, experience economy means. According to Pine and Gilmore (Pine, Gilmore, 2005), companies offer an experience whenever they engage and involve users in a personal and memorable way. The value or attractiveness of a product or service is increasingly based on the specific “experience” that the purchase or use will bring to the consumer. According to Rifkin (Rifkin, 2000) and other authors, this is closely related to the technological advances. They prove that in our times the entertainment industry is the driving force for further development. He classifies travel and entertainment as “experience industries”, and predicts that they will dominate the modern global economy.

In the context of the experience economy and what is happening in society and the economy, tour operators’ specialized casino products form part of the experience economy, as their management and staff offer packages that include events, experiences in the outcome of various games and entertainment, emotions and memories to their clients.

When choosing suppliers for a gambling product, it is extremely important to choose and select hotels that are equipped and furnished according to customer’s expectations, as well as such that offer a number of specialized complementary services for tourists’ stay. From this perspective, tour operators are exploring the relevant standards that satisfy customer’s expectations. Thus, tour operators refine the supply of similar products. (Янева, Гайдаров, 2017)

Practically gambling tourism can be practiced anywhere, where there is a hotel and a casino nearby. However, world practice has set **standards** that **customers** have already accustomed to. To implement this type of tourism it is necessary to have hotel facilities with gambling halls in it or in the vicinity. Preferably, they would be located in the same building, but this is not required. In order to be able and competitive to practice gambling tourism, it is necessary for hotels and gambling clubs to comply with certain standards and generally accepted norms (Георгиев, 2006). Of course, even in these standards there is a big difference between the minimum and the maximum, respectively.

The article contemplates two studies. The first is of the world’s leading casino sites, whose experience shall be implemented in the model developed at the end of the survey study. The second study is of some sites in Sofia, which are evaluated and after some recommendations, their products are bundled by a potential tour

operator in order to differentiate their product offerings through a specialized tourist package for incoming gambling tourism.

The purpose of this study is to determine the need to identify specialized tourism packages by modeling competitive tourism bundles related to the satisfaction of the motivation for experience.

Sites are specialized gambling tourism sites offered as a part of the bundle pack by a tour operator.

The subject is the modeling of a bundled product of a tour operator under specialized programs related to gambling tourism.

The aim of the **thesis** is to demonstrate that the provision of specialized products by the tour operators on pre-identified and pre-selected criteria and indicators based on the casino industry leaders' experience will diversify their product offerings and enhance their competitiveness. Proving the objective through developing a model of criteria and indicators, and evaluation of projects in Bulgaria is done by establishing tasks as analysis of best practices in casino tourism, methodological framework of research on specialized sites for gambling tourism determined through identified criteria and evaluation indicators and modelling of specialized gambling products to an inbound tour operator based on the results of the study.

1. Analysis of best practices in casino tourism

In the experience industry, it is extremely important for tour operators to choose and select suitable providers for accommodation or destinations or to select destinations with multiple leisure facilities. (Янева и ко, 2011)

When tour operators differentiate their profile with regard to the products offered in the field of experiences and more specifically related to the gambling business, it is very important for them to select a similar type of destination or a similar type of high-end class hotel.

In this regard, it is necessary to identify the specifics and particularities of the accommodation places and the opportunities offered by them and other specific tourist services. (Емилова, 2011)

A number of authors explore gambling sites and services they offer in the destinations, as large part of the publications are related both to the relationship between the development of gambling tourism and the economic development, as well as to human resources management studies in order to increase the quality of the service. Authors publishing on the topic are Wan Yim, King Penny, ChanSow Hup Joanne (WanYim, Penny, 2014, p. 78). Based on their research, indicators related to increasing organizational efficiency are identified. According to the surveyed managers, the job descriptions on the basis of which they are appointed are of utmost importance – the human resource management policy in the respective site, the working group relationships as well as the physical working

environment. According to similar research study results in a number of casinos in Macao, strategies are being developed to improve the casino employee service process and qualifications specifications.

Authors as Billy, Yu and M. To (Billy, Yu, To., 2014, p.145) discuss the relationships and dependencies between human resource management and the dissemination of inside information, as well as the practices of disseminating this information and its impact on employee's behavior regarding the quality of the product offered. They are based on the theory of marketing management (Цонев, Янева, Василева, Басмаджиева, 2018 (2), pp. 89-108). The topic of human resources management can be used to derive a criterion for staff rating at casino sites.

The particularities of offering of a gambling product in the present work are identified on the basis of an initial research studying best practices of leading sites in the casino industry. Ten industry leaders have been selected, based on a selection of casinos in terms of their size, area, halls, number of gambling machines and tables, hotel rooms, bars, etc., but also taking into account their extravagance, development and attendance rate (See: [top10casinowebsites](#)).

Best practices in terms of exterior and interior, including design, equipment, furnishings, location, luxury and more, can be drawn as a result of exploring and analyzing the world's most famous casinos, such as: *Casino Baden-Baden (Germany)*, *The Atlantis Hotel (The Bahamas)*, *Bellagio (Las Vegas)*, *Casino de Monte Carlo (Monaco)*, *Sun City (South Africa)*, *The Venetian (Macau)*, *The Ritz Club (London)*, *The Mirage (Las Vegas)*, *The Borgata (Atlantic City)*.

- **Casino Baden-Baden** is famous not only for the mineral springs that are notoriously popular in the area, but also due to its history and traditions. It is preferred by the old European aristocracy, unlike the one of Monte Carlo, whose clients are people who have recently acquired their wealth. The first mention in an official document of the Baden-Baden casino dates back to 1748. There Dostoevsky writes „The Roulette Player“, among its regular visitors are Turgenev, Tolstoy and Hugo, and Marlene Dietrich called it once „the most beautiful casino in the world“. That's why his halls are inspired by Versailles' splendor and some of them are named on French celebrities who have not visited it. The casino gets its license provided that 90% of its profit goes to charity for government-funded social projects and public activities.

Studying the competitive advantages for attracting consumers, it can be highlighted primarily by its recognizability from the point of view of history and popular figures, as well as the luxurious interior. Additional extras offered by the site are the complementary tours with a tour guide for showing the history of the casino. Such good practice is extremely relevant to tour operators as it shows that casino sites can attract not only classic players but also ordinary tourists who have chosen identical destinations and specialized casino tours in them.

- **Atlantis Resort & Casino** is located on an island on the Bahamas. The attractiveness of the site is determined not only by its location, but also by the extravagance of the Bridge Suite – an apartment in the air between the two 23-floor buildings of the hotel. It is among the most expensive in the world with its \$25,000 per night. However, it is busy 250 days a year due to its free use by some tourists. The condition for free use is that they have a \$ 1 million credit line in the casino. With its 4,500 square meter area, the casino is the largest in the Caribbean. Competitive features of the site are the classes offered on different types of gambling, as well as the organization of tournaments for the more advanced user with large prizes. Unlike the typical casinos in Las Vegas and Atlantic City, where there are no windows, here windows are huge and reveal a fabulously beautiful view of the exotic beaches and bays on the Bahamas. The casino is incredibly splendid and resembles the interior of the palaces of oil sheiks: expensive materials, fantastic decors and luxury. There are also masterpieces such as the crystal entrance doors made by Dale Chihuly (the world's best glassmaker) of more than 2,000 pieces of handmade glass.

In summary, the competitive advantages of this site can be distinguished, from the point of view of a unique natural resource, extravagance in terms of interiors, as well as complementary tourist services related to specialized classes and tournaments.

- **Bellagio (Las Vegas, USA)** opened in 1998 and at that time it is the most expensive hotel and casino complex in the world. Ten years later Bellagio remains the most elegant casino in Las Vegas with its interior. The casino equipment fascinates with its 200 gambling tables, such as roulette, baccarat and blackjack, more than 2,000 slot machines and a bookmaker center with 150 monitors where visitors track the results of all bets on sports such as horse racing, basketball, baseball and hockey matches, American football matches, and more. Besides the casino, the hotel also features a fine art gallery, a botanic garden, a boutique shopping boulevard, two 5-star restaurants – Le Cirque and Picasso, and a splendid SPA center.

As competitive features of the analyzed site can be pointed out the investments made in terms of luxury, elegance, security, range and assortment of games, as well as additional online visualizations related to participation and sports games betting. As additional advantages of the site, potential customers can visit galleries, gardens, boutiques, restaurants and a SPA center.

- **Casino de Monte Carlo** is typically European in its spirit. It opened doors in 1866 and saved the state from bankruptcy. At the moment the entrance fee to the casino is 10 euros and another 10 euros are paid for access to the so-called private salons. It is divided into four lounges: a European lounge where European and English roulette is played, an American lounge with blackjack tables, craps and American roulette, Private lounge with European roulette, Punto Banco, Black Jack, Chemin-de-fer, where tourists are required to place higher bets and an Asian lounge where multiple slot machines are housed.

The distribution of the premises and the product supply are systematized according to specific requirements based on the segmentation of the potential clients. This model is suitable for casinos within a variety of tourist offerings located in major gambling destinations and would be applicable in some of the Bulgarian resorts with similar potential.

- **Casino Sun City** was opened in 1979, after that the complex quickly became a popular gambling destination for rich South African tourists. One after another, world-class attractions appeared. All 6,230 seats in Sun City's big concert hall, called the Sun City Super Bowl, were filled during Queen's, Tina Turner's, Sara Brightman's and Julio Iglesias' concerts. Tourists have the opportunity to play golf on the two superb playgrounds (up to the 13th hole there is a pond with thirty real crocodiles), mothers spend their time walking and shopping, while their kids are having fun at the Waterworld Aquapark or at the miniature reservation with giraffes, elephants, rhinos, African buffaloes and leopards.

The presence of concert halls, golf halls and other entertainment facilities help in meeting the diverse needs of tourists.

- **The Venetian Macao Resort Hotel** opened in 2008. With its 980,000 m² it is the world's largest hotel, the biggest casino in the world, and in fact the world's third largest building after the Aalsmeer (Netherlands), a wholesale flower market, and the new Terminal 3 at Beijing Airport. The entire tourist complex includes 7 hotels with 3,000 apartments, a shopping center with 350 shops, a hall with 15,000 seats, a casino with over 1,000 slot machines and 600 gambling tables. All this is maintained in the Venetian Renaissance style: ranging from gondolas, the Saint Mark's tower and the Doge's Palace, to typical Italian frescoes on the corridors' and foyers' arches. The construction of the complex amounted 2.4 billion dollars, and the luxury is difficult to describe. The area of the casino is 46,000 square meters (equal to two Sofia Malls), divided into four thematic areas: Golden Fish, Emperor's House, Red Dragon and Phoenix.

The specific styles in architecture and thematic areas can be pointed out as positive practices for this type of tourism.

- In England, anyone who wants to visit a London casino needs at least 24 hours to apply for a membership in the respective private club, as casinos there are private clubs. In London there are two elite casinos, enjoying great popularity among wealthy tourists. One is **The Clermont Club** and the other is **The Ritz Club**. The second, placed in the former ballroom of the famous hotel, opened in 1978. Membership in this exclusive club costs £ 1,000 and this privilege can be claimed by candidates over 18 years but they also have to comply with a bunch of conditions. The casino is not large: it has 4 American roulettes, 4 blackjack tables, 2 poker tables and 1 table for Punto Banco, but the glamorous setting reminds Versailles during the heyday of the French absolutism. The luxurious interior, complemented by impeccable service and discretion, is raised in cult.

The high standards of service and the discretion provided to the guests are one of the main features of these sites.

- **The Mirage** is the first large and luxurious hotel complex built on the mythical Strip Boulevard in Las Vegas. It dictates a new fashion trend, raising the notion of wastefulness at unprecedented heights. In the huge atrium of the hotel a real jungle emerges, in its garden ram incredibly rare and expensive tigers and albinos lions, behind the reception desk appears an aquarium with over 1,000 marine creatures swimming in 100,000 litres of water. It is remarkable that the windows of The Mirage gleam in a golden hue, as pure gold is added to the glass during its foundation. The number of slot machines in the casino is 2,245, the bookmaker's center has 296 seats, and on the 135 tables avid gambling enthusiasts can play roulette, baccarat, blackjack, various types of poker, craps and more. Among other tourist attractions, tourists are captivated by the Dolphinarium, the Polynesian-style pool and the shopping center with luxury boutiques.

The combination of a unique natural park and diverse attractions stand out in this leading site.

- **The Borgata** opened in 2003. The construction of the super luxurious entertainment complex took \$1 bln., but the profits made over the years surpassed all expectations and allowed its renovation in the 20s for another \$200 mln. The hotel has 2,000 super-luxurious rooms, the smallest of which is 40 square meters, and the casino boasts 4,100 slot machines, 200 gambling tables and 85 poker tables (the largest poker room in the Atlantic City). In addition, the bookmakers' point is enormous and is packed with huge screens and personal monitors to help customers track all kinds of

racers where casino tourists place multiple bets. Moreover, Borgata has 14 restaurants, 9 bars, 2 nightclubs and a huge SPA center.

On the basis of the research and analysis of some of the leading casino sites in the world, a model including criteria and indicators for evaluation of casino sites / hotels is drawn in order to be included in a tour operator's package for inbound specialized tourism, as well as additional activities, to be offered if there are not any in the sites.

Thus, the interaction between the casino industry and the tour agent business would be effective and useful both for business and for the development of the regions, as tourist destinations having the potential to offer a specialized gambling product.

2. Methodological framework of study of specialized sites for gambling tourism

The model offered in this study includes the development of seven criteria with relevant indicators and characteristics based on best practices around the world for the assessment of specialized casino sites with the potential to be included in a bundled gambling product. The criteria and indicators set are as follows:

1. Natural resource availability, with indicators: attractive natural location, view from the site of the authentic natural resource, visibility and contact with the resource;
2. Anthropogenic resource availability, with indicators: historical popularity of the location, concentration of publicly significant locations, events held in the location;
3. General hotel superstructure and infrastructure, with indicators: hotel location, hotel exterior (gardens, golf courses, aqua parks, miniature reservations), hotel interior (luxury, elegance, security, galleries, boutiques, SPA center, ballrooms, exclusive clubs);
4. Specialized superstructure of the site, with indicators: quantitative – number and area of gambling rooms, number of tables, number of games offered, number of slot machines, application of online gambling in the site of different types of sports games; qualitative – style of gambling rooms, online visualization for participation in different games, distribution of casino halls in thematic areas;
5. Additional products offered by the site and/or the tour operator included in the package, with indicators: additional active specialized products (poker classes, poker tournaments), additional passive specialized products (casino tours);

6. Specialized staff skills, with indicators: to encourage consumers to excite the participants, to find unexpected needs and desires, to educate consumers and to encourage them;
7. Evaluation of the experience when using the product, with indicators: feeling of cheerfulness, sense of control of the situation, absolute concentration, pleasure from the activity itself, loss of sense of time, balance between challenges and human capabilities.

In this study, the Sofia area and casino sites are selected for conducting the survey of experts and potential tourists. The reasons for the choice are based on the following factors: the development of the Sofia region as a potential area for the development of gambling tourism in terms of tourist zoning in Bulgaria (Velikova, Yaneva, Portarska, 2016, p.165). There is no specific differentiation in the extended specialization for this specialized type of tourism in the concept of tourist zoning in Bulgaria (see Ministry of Tourism). In the opinion of the experts, it could develop alongside business and urban leisure tourism.

Another reason for the selection of sites in the Sofia region is the opportunity to implement such special packages of tour operators all year round, as casino tourism is not seasonally conditioned. There are also regular and charter flights for casino tourists from Israel and other destinations, availability of many low-cost air carriers from different European airports as well as, of course, many regular flights of different airlines to Sofia and tour operator opportunities offering a variety of entertainment for casino tourists like cultural and historical tours, shopping tours and many more.

From the point of view of the specifics of the tour operator activity for contracting, we consider that for the present study the appropriate model, which we will develop and apply according to the market specificities in Bulgaria, is that of the indirect organization of the tours (Stankova, 2010) for a specialized gambling/casino product.

As the inbound tour operators (ITOs) predominate in Bulgaria with no clear product specialization, it is necessary to identify a leading European specialized outbound tour operator, which shall ensure the availability of an inbound tourist flow for casino tourism. As a result of the surveys, it has been established that "Poker Travel" has been the leading European tour operator with best practices in Europe. By exploring its best practices, we could develop inbound tourism casino packages for Bulgaria, which could be targeted at some potential inbound tour operators (ITOs).

Based on these criteria, indicators and performance for evaluation of casino sites, five leading casino hotels in Sofia are selected and studied as providers of inbound tour operators in order to create a competitive bundled tourist product

for gambling/casino tourism and a model to develop such products in the future. These are:

1. Casino Ramada at Hotel Ramada Sofia City Center
2. Casino Sofia at Hotel Intercontinental
3. Casino Viva at Hotel Balkan
4. Casino Royal Palms at Hotel Anel
5. Casino Efbet at Hotel Hemus

Table 1. Criteria and Indicators for Complex Assessment of Specialized Sites / Gambling Tourism Products

No.	Criteria	Indicators	Factor of relevance
1.	Natural Resource Availability	1.1. Attractive natural location; 1.2. A view from the site of the authentic natural resource; 1.3. Visibility and contact with the resource;	0.05%
	Anthropogenic Resource Availability	2.1. Historic location popularity; 2.2. Concentration of publicly significant sites; 2.3. Events held in the location;	0.05%
	General Superstructure and Infrastructure of the Site	3.1. Hotel location; 3.2. Hotel surroundings; 3.3. Hotel interior;	0.10%
	Specialized superstructure of the site	4.1. Quantitative; 4.2. Qualitative;	0.25%
	Additional products offered by the site and/or the tour operator included in the bundle	5.1. Additional active specialized products; 5.2. Additional passive specialized products;	0.20%

	Specialized staff skills	6.1. Encouraging consumers; 6.2. Exciting participants; 6.3. Detecting unexpected needs and desires; 6.4. Training consumers; 6.5. Stimulating users;	0.20%
	Evaluation of the experience when using the product	7.1. Feeling cheerful; 7.2. Sense of control of the situation; 7.3. Absolute concentration; 7.4. Pleasure from the activity; 7.5. Sense of time loss; 7.6. Balance between challenges and human capabilities;	0.15%
		Factor of relevance	1.00

Source: Systematization by the author

The criteria and indicators are designed for the tour operators and for the assessment of the specialized tourist product offerings by the tourists, as well.

The allocation and selection of the sites is done in terms of the following indicators: specialization of the gambling/casino tourism (casinos and gambling halls in the hotel, specialized product offerings), market share, volume of sales of the specialized gambling products, domination of the customers, consuming a gambling product, turnover structure, attendance rate, and geographic location.

For this evaluation hotels have been selected because they have been working for a long time, have a strong presence on the market, have a large market share and permanent customers, and also have worked with inbound tour operators (ITOs) for many years.

The turnover structure represents the activities performed by the hotel. They offer basic hotel accommodation, special events with optional poker tournaments, various business events (meetings, conferences), weekend gambling offers, additional services in the form of SPA and wellness centers, rent a car, additional cultural and entertainment tours in Sofia and the country, etc. *Some of the hotels provide their clients with catalogs and brochures of various tour operators to*

help them purchase a sightseeing tour during their stay, as well as a package trip according to their personal preferences and attitudes.

The tourist product offered by the sites (hotels) can be formed also according to preference: a group of tourists can formulate their own request specifying their specific requirements (dates of stay, type and quantity of rooms, food preferences, additional services and other) and *the hotel manager can either accept or reject the offer, or direct it to a travel agency with which he works to **model it further.***

The main activities that are encountered in the travel agencies (“inbound”), which are the subject of the present dissertation, are the activities of a host organization, through contact with a foreign (sending) tour operator and working with local (Bulgarian) suppliers, i.e. hotels, restaurants, attractions, and transport companies for internal transfers, companies offering guides to tour operators and others.

The staff in the listed hotels has a different structure, education and qualification. It is well trained, based on internal business standards, as evidenced by their strong presence on the market.

Most of the hotels are located in the center of Sofia. One of the factors influencing the geographic location of the hotels in question is the possibility of offering not only a basic tourist accommodation product but also a specialized one for gambling tourism. It is also a prerequisite for the increasing percentage of accommodated tourists in the sites.

The study conducted on Sofia’s leading gambling casino hotels aims to implement a model for the comprehensive assessment of specialized gambling sites as well as to identify the expectations and requirements of potential and real customers of this type of tourist product.

The purpose of the survey is to identify opportunities for improvement and development of this type of sites and their inclusion in the tourist offering of the Bulgarian travel agencies developing bundled gambling products, with the purpose of specialization and differentiation of their product portfolio. Also, based on the results, as well as on the best practices by the world’s leaders, a technological prescription related to the introduction of competitive standards for building sites (hotels) specializing in this type of product offering in Bulgaria is to be developed.

Subject of the study:

The expectations and requirements of the customers of the travel agencies regarding the parameters of construction, operation and servicing of specialized sites/hotels in gambling tourism.

Subject of the survey:

Customers of the following casinos: Casino Ramada at Ramada City Center Hotel, Casino Sofia at Intercontinental Sofia Hotel, Casino Viva at Balkan Hotel, Casino Royal Palm Palace at Anel Hotel, Casino Efbet at Hemus Hotel.

Goals of the study:

- To evaluate selected sites based on the criteria with regard to the specificity of gambling products;
- To explore and analyze the experts' and consumers' opinions with the aim to improve gambling tourism products;
- On the basis of the analyzed results, to create a model of a tourist product offered by an incoming Bulgarian tour operator for gambling tourism, which includes selected sites / hotels with competitive specialized equipment, furnishing and programs satisfying specific consumer needs;
- To summarize the results and formulate contributions on theoretical, methodological and applied level.

Period of the study:

The survey was conducted in February-April of 2017 in the central part of the capital, where most of the hotels are located, and the respondents were easier to find.

Scope of the study:

The assessment of specialized gambling sites was held at the Ramada Casino in Ramada City Center Hotel, Sofia Casino at Intercontinental Sofia Hotel, Viva Casino in Balkan Hotel, Royal Palms Casino at Anel Hotel and Efbet Casino at Hemus Hotel. Due to the fact that these sites have been working for a long time, they have a strong presence on the tourist market, a large market share and permanent customers in this segment of the specialized tourist offering.

Empirical indications of expectations, attitudes and requirements to sites and services in this type of specialized sites.

The socio-demographic characteristics of customers are essential for the analysis of expectations and requirements to the sites. Knowledge of the age structure of the clients is an important condition for the appropriate definition of the tourist service offerings.

Service expectations and attitudes are individual, determined by personality, temperament and character. They also depend to a large extent on the social status and occupation of tourists. In addition, the solvency of customers also influences their expectations and requirements towards the site. Those with

their own businesses and highly paid employees and professionals have higher requirements as their expectations are based on their past experiences.

A wide range of methods have been used in the study methodology. The methods we differentiate separately are as follows:

Using the survey method

A) Studying the opinion of managers/hotel experts (casino sites) on the importance of the individual specialized indicators for the assessment of gambling sites;

B) Studying the opinion of users of gambling products in specialized sites/hotels on the importance of the individual specialized indicators for the assessment of gambling tourism sites;

Use of a (semi) structured interview with experts in terms of benchmarking of factors of relevance;

For the purpose of the study, 3 complex methodological tools have been created, such as: 1) self-assessment methods with criteria and indicators for accurate assessment (questionnaire): two different surveys for the two sub-samples; and 2) a semi-structured interview with key questions: for each of the two instruments examined.

3. Modeling of a specialized gambling product of an inbound tour operator based on survey results

After summarizing and analyzing the results of the empirical study from the studied sites in Sofia, it is necessary to develop a model in the form of a bundled proposal by a tour operator. This model concerns the selection of sites and services related to casino sites to be included to the product of the Bulgarian tour operator as service providers. This in turn will lead to the creation of new product offerings for this type of specialized tourism and the Bulgarian tour operators will differentiate their supply in order to satisfy the specific consumer needs of this target group of tourists.

In the development of the model, different weight and relation to the type of criteria and indicators in the process of reaching a high standard in the management of sites/hotels of gambling tourism and formation of competitive packages by the tour operator have been taken into account. As a result of the analysis of the survey, three of these criteria are of greater importance in the process of reaching a competitive gambling package - general superstructure and site infrastructure, specialized superstructure of the site and experience when using the product. In addition, in the course of the preliminary study of a particular gambling site the following criteria are also used - natural resource availability, anthropogenic resource availability and specialized skills of the staff. The less relevant criterion is additional services. Regardless of the overview of the survey in regards to the question of the different weight of each criterion, we assume that the expertly

defined higher weight of 3 of the criteria can be a prerequisite for the validation of the innovative model.

The emphasis in the present part on the innovative model (inbound gambling package) is to expose in the process of developing and shaping the package tour, which criteria are subject to innovation by the inbound tour operator in order to develop a competitive tourist program for the sites/hotels as a gambling product.

This model is aimed at assisting the work of tourist managers in identifying and improving the parameters in the selection of suppliers as well as in the implementation of the best practices in the tour package tour and also in advertising in the brochure of the competitive characteristics of each one of the sites /hotels, included as an accommodation option and use of gambling programs according to the individual requirements by the different casino tourists.

In order to create a *package tour for gambling / casino tourism* it is necessary that it meets the requirements of the current potential tourists of inbound tourism in Bulgaria. The evaluation of selected sites corresponds to the most important components of modern casino site, and through it to determine which features need to improve and which features of the package are competitive. Also the assessment made can aid the creation of new investment projects in the field of specialized gambling/casino tourism in Bulgaria in the form of building new facilities, which is not a subject of this study, but could be made in subsequent projects applied in practice.

As in Bulgaria inbound tour operators (ITOs) without a clear product specialization predominate, a leading specialized European outbound tour operator is being identified which can ensure the availability of incoming tourists for casino tourism in Bulgaria. As a result of the studies, it has been found that “Poker Travel” is considered a leading agent in Europe having best practices, and it is a tour operator that operates on the Bulgarian tourist market, as well. However, there are not any Bulgarian inbound tour operators (ITOs) with diversified product offerings having such specialization. This creates the opportunity for the study to be applied as a model in the activity of a particular travel agency for the purposes of differentiation of their product offerings and to increase their competitiveness.

As a result of the study a package could be created in the form of a technological prescription for an incoming casino tourism program for Bulgaria, which could be directed to the attention of some potential inbound tour operators (ITOs).

In this model, the results on specialization in tourism supply through the modeling of tourist packages for gambling tourism need to emphasize on the innovative model in shaping the tourist package, which criteria are subject to innovation by the incoming tour operator in order to develop a competitive tourist program on the sites / hotels for gambling product. In this connection, the following are more significant – “product use experience” and “specialized

superstructure of the site”. Neutral significance is – “Superstructure and Infrastructure of the Object” and “Specialized Staff Skills”. Criteria – “natural and anthropogenic resource provision” and “additional services” need to be further refined and subject to innovation by the tour operator in order to increase the satisfaction of tourists.

In this model, the results related to the specialization in tourism offerings through the modeling of tourist packages for gambling tourism need to emphasize on the innovative model in shaping the tourist package, which criteria are subject to innovation by the incoming tour operator in order to develop a competitive tourist program for the sites/hotels offering a gambling product. In this connection, the following are most significant – “product user experience” and “specialized superstructure and infrastructure of the site”. Neutral significance have the following – “superstructure and infrastructure of the site” and “specialized staff skills”. Criteria – “natural and anthropogenic resources” and “additional services” need to be further refined and they are subject to innovation by the tour operator in order to increase the satisfaction of tourists.

Conclusion

Of the specific recommendations for improvement of the casino tourism sites as well as the specialized package tours of the tour operators in Bulgaria, it is necessary to draw conclusions regarding the modeling of a tourist program for an inbound tour operator.

In conclusion of this study, a number of **conclusions** can be drawn regarding the achieved results, namely:

- Best practices in casino tourism have been analyzed;
- A methodological framework for the study of specialized sites for gambling tourism has been established through identified criteria and indicators for evaluation and assessment;
- An option for modeling of a specialized gambling product for an inbound tour operator based on the study has been proposed;
- The opportunities for implementation of the results of the evaluation in order to differentiate the product offering of inbound specialized tour operators has been described.

The usefulness and novelty of the results contemplated in this study are related to the many processes that have been active in the past years in the public sphere, both in Europe, related to its development priorities, as well as in Bulgaria. Different organizations share the need to look for new forms of business development that correspond to the country’s strategic priorities. From the point of view of the new needs of the modern man and the demand for new forms

of experience, it is necessary to create new business products that will enable competitiveness and adequate development of the society in the 21st century.

References:

Великова, Е., Янева М., Портарска В. (2016), Приложни аспекти на планирането и управлението на туристическите дестинации, Авангард Прима, София

(Velikova, E., Yaneva, M., Portarska, V., 2016, Prilozhni aspekti na planiraneto i upravlението na turisticheskите destinatsii, Avangard Prima, Sofia)

Георгиев, Г. (2006), Хазартната дейност: разочарования и прозрения, сп. „Икономически алтернативи“, София.

(Georgiev, G., 2006, Hazartnata deinost: razocharovania i prozrenia, sp. “Ikonomicheski alternativi”, Sofia)

Емилова, И. (2011), Мениджмънт на развлекателната индустрия, Авангард Прима, София

(Emilova, I. 2011, Menidzhmant na razvlekatelnata industria, Avangard Prima, Sofia)

Рибов, М. (2011), Конкурентни предимства в туризма, Тракия-М, София

(Ribov, M., 2011, Konkurentni predimstva v turizma, Trakia-M., Sofia)

Станкова, М. (2010), Туроператорска и агентска дейност: операционализирани, УИ „Неофит Рилски“

(Stankova, M., 2010. Turooperatorska i agentska deinost: operatsionalizirane, UI “Neofit Rilski”)

Сулева, Д. (2010), Управленски модели на тематичните паркове в контекста на икономиката на изживяванията, Авангард Прима, София

(Suleva, D. 2010, Upravlenski modeli na tematichnite parkove v konteksta na ikonomikata na izzhivyavaniyata, Avangard Prima, Sofia)

Цонев, Н. (2017), Маркетинг в туризма, Авангард Прима, София

(Tsonev, M. 2017, Marketing v turizma, Avangard Prima, Sofia)

Цонев, Н., Янева, М., Василева, М., Басмаджиева, С. (2018),

Повишаване на конкурентоспособността на продукта в туристическия бизнес чрез управление на маркетинга на здравния туризъм, Издателски комплекс УНСС, София

(Tsonev, N., Yaneva, M., Vasileva, M., Basmadzhieva, S. 2018, Povishavane na konkurentosposobnostta na produkta v turisticheskia biznes chrez upravlениe na marketinga na zdravnia turizam, Izdatelski kompleks UNSS, Sofia)

Янева, М., (2011), Хармонизиране качеството на продукта на туристическите агенции в България с Европейските добри практики, Авангард Прима, София

(Yaneva, M., 2011. Harmonizirane kachestvoto na produkta na turisticheskite agencii v Bylgariq s Evropeiskite dobri praktiki, Avangard Prima, Sofia)

Янева, М., Гайдаров, Н. (2017), Икономиката на изживяванията и ролята ѝ за развитието на креативния туризъм, списание „Education, Science and Culture”, София.

(Yaneva, M., Gaydarov, N. 2017, Ikonomikata na izzhiviyavaniyata i rolyata i za razvitiето na kreativnia turizam, spisanie “Education, Science and Culture”, Sofia)

Янева, М., Тончева, Т., Бойчева Х., (2015), Туристически дестинации, Издателски комплекс УНСС, София

(Yaneva, M., Toncheva, T., Boycheva, H., 2015. Turisticheski destinatsii, Izdatelski kompleks UNSS, Sofia)

Billy, T., Yu, W., To., M. (2014), The effect of internal information generation and dissemination on casino employee work related behaviors, International Journal of Hospitality Management, vol. 69, p.145.

Billy, T. (2014), The effect of internal information generation and dissemination on casino employee work related behaviors, International Journal of Hospitality Management, vol. 69, p.145.

Pine, B., Gilmor, G. (2005), The Experience Economy, Denmark Press.

Rifkin, J. (2000), The Age of access, Penguin Group, USA.

Wan Yim, K., Penny, H. (2014), Casino employees' perceptions of their quality of work life, International Journal of Hospitality Management, vol. 56, p. 78.

Internet sources:

<https://www.top10casinowebsites.net> (as of 15.12.2017).

<https://www.casino-baden-baden.de/de/> (as of 15.12.2017)

<https://www.atlantiscasino.com/> (as of 15.12.2017)

https://www.bellagio.com/en.html?icid=GMB_Hotel_Bellagio#/ (as of 15.12.2017)

<http://www.casinomontecarlo.com/casinos-2/casino-monte-carlo-2/about-casino/> (as of 15.12.2017)

<https://www.suninternational.com/sun-city/> (as of 15.12.2017)

<https://www.mayfaircasinos.com/london/the-clermont-club/> (as of 15.12.2017)

<http://www.theritzclub.com/> (as of 15.12.2017)

<https://www.mirage.com/en/casino.html> (as of 15.12.2017)

<https://www.theborgata.com> (as of 15.12.2017)

<https://pokertravel.com/> (as of 12.02.2018)

<https://www.wyndhamhotels.com> (as of 12.02.2018)

<http://www.radissonblu.com> (as of 12.02.2018)

<http://www.sofiabalkan.com/?SWAQ=958C> (as of 12.02.2018)

<https://www.hotelanel.com/> (as of 12.02.2018)

<http://www.hemushotels.com/> (as of 12.02.2018)

SPECIALIZATION OF TOURIST OFFERING BY MODELING A PACKAGE TOUR FOR GAMBLING TOURISM

Abstract

The importance of the issues subject of this study is determined by the fact that Bulgarian tourism is looking for new forms of diversification of the tourism.

The aim of the article is to explore and prove basic steps that correspond to the achieved contributions (results), such as:

- analysis of good practices in casino tourism;
- methodological framework for research of specialized sites for gambling tourism identified through determined criteria and evaluation indicators;
- modeling of a specialized gambling product of an Inbound Tour Operator (ITO) based on survey results.
- In order to achieve the objectives and tasks the following research methods have also been used:
 - Overview of theoretical research;
 - Review of materials from international and European organizations;
 - Review of company surveys;
 - Empirical research.
- Other contributions (results):
- The model is aimed at assisting the work of tourist managers in identifying and improving the parameters in the selection of suppliers as well as the implementation of good practices in the package tour.

At present, the possibilities for diversification of the product offering of the tour operators are not sufficiently explored in Bulgaria, according to the basic and complementary specialization of the tourist regions and the opportunities for development of all-year-round forms of tourism.

Key words: experience economy, specialized tourist product, casino tourism, and bundled product of a tour operator.

JEL: L83, L21, O26