

## **Opportunities for the development of wine and SPA tourism in the southeast systematic region in the Republic of Macedonia**

Marija Ljakoska, Anita Todorova, Mirjanka Madjevikj, Biljana Apostolovska Toshevska

*Ss Cyril and Methodius University, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics,  
Institute of Geography, Skopje, Macedonia*

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### **Abstract**

The southeast systematic region of the Republic of Macedonia covers Strumica-Radovish, Gevgelija-Valandovo and Dojran tourist region and it is characterized by its great potential for wine and spa tourism development.

The thermo mineral water sources in the Southeast region that until now are mainly used for medical needs, offer excellent opportunities for spa and wellness tourism development, through an insertion of contemporary modern spa and wellness services in the spa of "Banja BANSKO", as well as in "Negorska Banja".

On the other hand, the large number of vine plantations allows this region to be inserted in the wine tourism map of the Republic of Macedonia. In terms of representation and diversity of the vineyards and the few wineries, this region can be counted as one of the regions with the outstanding quality of grape and wine, and as a region with great potential for the development of wine tourism worldwide.

In this paper will be presented, all the great opportunities for wine and spa tourism development that southeast tourism region in the Republic of Macedonia offers. Through a good marketing and management strategy, this region can become a new and a very attractive tourism destination that will be a challenge to wine and spa tourism lovers to visit this region and enjoy the benefits. Also, the spa and wine tourism development can contribute to social and cultural vitality of the region, which combined with other socioeconomic segments will reflect positively on the demographic stabilization and economic prosperity of the region.

**Keywords:** *Banja BANSKO, Negorska Banja, spa and wellness, wine regions, tourism.*

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## **Introduction**

The southeast region is situated in the far southeastern part of the Republic of Macedonia and covers the area of Strumica-Radovis and Gevgelija-Valandovo Valley IE the river valley of Strumica and lower flow of the river Vardar (SSO RM, 2014). Within these borders, it covers an area of 2835 km<sup>2</sup> or 10.9% of the national territory. Administratively it is organized into 10 municipalities and a network of 188 settlements, out of which 5 (Radovish, Gevgelija, Strumica, Valandovo and Bogdanci) have the status of a city settlements<sup>1</sup>. According to Statistical State Office estimates, the number of the population this region in 2013 had recorded 173 383 inhabitants (171 416 inhabitants according to the 2002 census), or 8.4% of the total population in the country. The region has seen a population density of 63,2 in/km<sup>2</sup>, with an emphasized concentration of population in urban settlements and major rural settlements in the basins (SSO RM, 2014). Regarding to the economic characteristics, the region is interesting to be researched because although it is at a larger distance from the state capital and has a circumferential position, still, in some economic segments it has favourable characteristics compared to other regions. Just to emphasize the economic structure of the population, where the rate of activity ranks before other regions because it is the highest and in 2013 amounted to 69.9% and at the same time is above the national average of 57.2%. The region has the highest employment rate of 56.8%, compared to the unemployment rate of 18.8%, which is the lowest in the country (SSO RM, 2014). In terms of gross domestic product, the Southeast region in 2012 amounted to 244 207 per capita, compared to the national average, the region has an index of 109.7 and it is right behind the Skopje region with an index of 149.4 (SSO RM, 2014).

Of a spatial planning aspect, the region lies on one of the main defined axes of development in the Republic of Macedonia, and that is the north-south axis which is of great importance for its integration in the overall spatial development.

In this paper the accent of the research is placed on spas and wineries in the Southeast region, in the context of their placing in function of an integral development. The presence of thermal mineral springs whose use has a long century tradition, gives the possibility of building two spas in the region by which this region is recognized in the country and beyond for a long period of time. At the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.mls.gov.mk](http://www.mls.gov.mk)

same time, the physical-geographical conditions, expressed by the favourable climatic, hydrological and pedological features represent a solid basis for a development of many activities of the primary sector through ensuring subsistence of the population. From an economic point of view, the region is known by its intensive agricultural production, emphasizes the role of the early vegetable crops, large vineyards, orchards and more. The developed viticulture, with a long tradition of growing high quality grapes, it is a solid base which relies on the existence of several wineries that appear in the role of processing capacity for the domestic resource. The viticulture absorbs one part of the workforce, but it has a seasonal character, and the existence of production and processing facilities that rely on viticulture such as wineries and the possibility of developing other activities such as tourism, meaning better utilization of the workforce and thereby enhancing the economic situation of the population. In this particular paper, emphasis is placed on the study of spas and wineries, and thus the opportunities for development of the spa and wine tourism, although it is difficult to be considered as separate entities for development, because in all forms of tourism more than evident is the functional symbiosis of the development in the area. Highlighted is the role of the spas "Banja BANSKO", near the town of Strumica and "Negorska Spa" near Gevgelija, as well as the vineyards and wineries that are located in this region.

### **Working methods**

In this paper the focus is placed on the study of spas and wineries that are located in the Southeast region. This region is one of the eight statistical regions in the Republic of Macedonia that are classified at the level 3 by NUTS<sup>2</sup>. For a detailed study of the selected object of interest several methods have been applied. On the basis of so far published papers their historical development is studied and their basic features are presented. The first researcher that in its papers mentions the spas was Cvijic in 1898, but at that time there were no facilities for spa water use. As further researchers appear Miholich (1955), Chanev (1975), Stojmilov (1975/1978) and Milenkovski (1982). In the detailed research of the water quality that had been committed by a team of Croatian experts from "Industroproekt"-

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<sup>2</sup>Official Journal of the Republic of Macedonia "no. 158, since 28.12.2007/www.slvesnik.com.mk

Zagreb, in the sixties and seventies of the last century, were highlighted the medical properties of spa water.

In order to show the number and the structure of visitors and overnight stays in spas statistical database is used on which are processed through the application of mathematical and statistical operations. In circumstances when we faced a lack of certain information and data on wineries, field studies have been made where every winery has been respectively visited and by applying techniques such as survey and interview, relevant data have been obtained. These are then processed and used as a basis for the analysis of the situation with the wineries and the adoption of specific synthetic conclusions. Based on all of that, the opportunities offered by the Southeast Region for the development of spas and wineries have been perceived, and in this context the development of the spa and wine tourism and putting it into a function of the development of the region and beyond.

## **Research results**

### **1. Spas in the Southeast region, accommodation and number of visitors**

#### **1.1. General characteristics of spas**

To see the meaning of spas and the role they can play in the overall development of the Southeast region and its spatial and functional links with other regions in the country and beyond, it is necessary to recognize their basic characteristics, current situation, the advantages they have, but also the weaknesses that need to be overcome. "Taking into consideration the difference of motifs, activities and goals of the guests visiting spas (number of guests are there for wellness, others for rehabilitation and medical treatments with necessary medical care) the health tourist service in contemporary spas has two parts, medical and wellness"<sup>3</sup> and therefore, we can analyse the opportunities that the spas in the region offer and their use in function of the development along with other benefits of the Southeast region.

All of the features related to water and air temperature in the spa complex, the capacity of the springs and the chemical composition of water, as well as the medical properties of spa water can be seen in Table 1.

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<sup>3</sup> Belij M., Milosavljević J., Belij J., Perak K. (2014): Indicators of touristic development of spa centers of Serbia, Collection of papers – Faculty of Geography at the University of Belgrade, Vol. LXII, Belgrade, Serbia, pg. 178-196

**Table 1. Characteristics of spa complexes**

Spa	Springs and surface water source	t °C	Chemical composition	Medicinal properties
<b>Spa "Banja Bansko"</b>	13 springs with a total yield of 54 l/s, and the greatest among them is the source Purana that has surface water source greater than 40 l/s	Puralo is at 173 m. above sea level, with a 72°C water temperature, juvenile waters. The spring at 130 m. above sea level has a temperature of 31°C	Sodium and sulphate, rare minerals (fluorine, rubidium, calcium, and lithium), radiation between 7.8 and 8.5 I Total mineralization between 905 and 1105 mg/l. Mineral waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Degenerative rheumatism,</li> <li>- Stomach and intestine illnesses,</li> <li>- Duodenum</li> <li>- Inflammation of the gallbladder,</li> <li>- Heart diseases</li> <li>- Blood vessels</li> <li>- High blood pressure,</li> <li>- Hormonal disorder,</li> <li>- Allergies</li> <li>- Illnesses of the bones and joint system</li> <li>- Anemia</li> <li>- Conditions after contracting hepatitis and malaria</li> <li>- Gynaecological diseases</li> <li>- Inherited blood diseases</li> </ul>
<b>Negorska spa</b>	The total surface water source of sources is 1,8 l/s	The temperature of the water in the springs is between 36 and 43 ° C, so because of the different water temperature, they are divided into hyper and homeothermal	The water contains sulphates and chlorides, rare mineral (lithium, cesium and rubidium). Because of the small presence of minerals (less than 1 mg / l), the water can not be put in the category of mineral waters. Slightly radioactive only 1,788 iu	<p><b>By bathing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rheumatic diseases,</li> <li>- Diseases of the locomotor system (bones, muscles and joints),</li> <li>- After surgery diseases</li> <li>- Peripheral nerve diseases</li> <li>- Disease of the female genital organs and osteoporosis.</li> </ul> <p><b>By drinking:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disorders of the urinary tract and prostate,</li> <li>- Diseases of the oesophagus system,</li> <li>- Menstrual disorders</li> <li>- Cardiovascular system disorders</li> </ul> <p><b>By peloid therapy:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chronic rheumatic diseases</li> <li>- Conditions after fractures or bone of joint surgery</li> <li>- Some gynaecology diseases and</li> <li>- Neurological diseases.</li> </ul>

*Source: Miholich, Chanev, Manchev through Stojmilov, 1975*

From Table 2, we can see that the distance from spas to the highway E-75 is not large at all, especially of Negorska Spa. Negorska spa is adjacent to the crossing border Bogorodica, with neighbouring Greece, while Bansko is near Novo Selo border crossing with neighbouring Bulgaria. This means that spas can be visited not only by domestic visitors, but also by foreigners, especially in the neighbouring countries, (Bulgaria and Greece), but also for the transit tourists that pass through Macedonia.

**Table 2. Distance of the Spas in the Southeast region to highway E-75 and the closest border crossings**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Spa</b>	<b>E-75/km</b>	<b>Border crossing Novo Selo/km</b>	<b>Border crossing Bogorodica/km</b>
<b>1</b>	Spa Banja Bansko	38,4	22,4	62,5
<b>2</b>	Negorska Spa	4,2	73,3	9,2

Source: [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps)

"**Banja Bansko**" is situated at the far eastern part of the area of village Bansko, on the southeast of the town of Strumica, in the foothills of the mountain Belasica and the contact with the Strumica basin. The spa is located at 12,5 km<sup>4</sup> distance from Strumica, and to the spa leads the asphalt road which is actually a branch of the regional road Strumica-Valandovo. With a regional road is linked with the city of Berovo but also the border crossing Novo Selo, at Macedonian-Bulgarian border. This location allows easy and convenient access to the spa as for the visitors from the immediate surroundings, also for the visitors from the country and abroad.

The ambience of the area and climate represent a great complement to the primary health function of the spa. Mild winters and warm summers, the average annual air temperature of 13,4 °C, 2400 sunny hours per year (Stojmilov, 1975), give the opportunity of building outdoor pools, which complemented with some entertainment facilities represent a great opportunity to invest in aqua park. By implementing some of the modern world spa and wellness programs and by using

<sup>4</sup> [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps)

the resources available in the spa complex, except for medical purposes, it could be used for recreation and relaxation. In this way, the age structure of the visitors will be changed, the reasons of the visit and of course the calendar of annual attendance.

The proximity of the mountain Belasica not only contributes a constant circulation of air in this section, but it captivates with the beautiful landscape and the thick forest. The construction of paths for walkers and rest areas, it could represent an excellent basis for the development of picnic tourism and recreational tourism. At the same time there are opportunities to highlight the past and the history of the spa, which for certain categories of visitors could be an important historical dimension. Specifically, according to the remains of the old spa, which were found in 1978, when digging the foundations of the hotel "Tsar Samoil" it is estimated that the spa "Banja Bansko" originates from the Roman period, from the reign of the Roman Emperor Caracalla (211-217 A.C.) (Stojmilov, 1975).

Today, the archaeological site with the remains of the thermal spa are one of the few preserved Roman monuments in Europe.

With the uptake of the Turks in this area, there were built pools and accommodation sites, specifically, three spa objects were built. One on the greatest spring that exists nowadays, the second at the spring called Sinandzha (water temperature of the spring is 56° C) and the third in the centre of the village, (Stojmilov,1975).

The spa was destroyed during the First World War, and its reuse in tourist purposes was recorded in 1920, when the first accommodation buildings were built. The spa is used for medical purposes since 1974, when the Public Health Organization – Natural SPA “BANJA BANSKO” – Strumica was built. The institute owns 20 rooms and 60 beds. The total number of beds in this period was 386, of which only 186 were in hotels and at the Public Health Organization, and the rest were in the little camp houses that were part of the camp settlement around the spa<sup>5</sup>.

Today, close to the spring are located some accommodation capacities. As the largest stands Hotel "Tsar Samoil", initially built in 1978, that possesses 91 rooms and 165 beds. This hotel is ranked in the B category accommodations, it has facilities for rest and recreation and, in this building is located the Public Health

Organization which has a section for balneo therapy and medical rehabilitation.<sup>5</sup> Then, the hotel "Dukat", ranked in the C category, which has 16 rooms and 44 beds, as well as the hotel "Spiro Zahov", which has 26 rooms or 78 beds<sup>6</sup>.

For the development of this area, it is necessary to complete the road Kuklish-Bansko as soon as possible, which would significantly facilitate the access to the spa, and that, it would bring greater numbers of visitors by itself. This spa complex, "Banja Bansko" could become a regional centre.

**"Negorska Spa"** is located at the far western part of the Gevgelija valley, at the contact with the mountain Kozhuf. It is also a spa located at the lowest altitude the Republic of Macedonia, only 60 meters above the sea level (Stojmilov, 1978).

Negorska Spa is the only spa in the country which has a thermal mud of plant origin. Mud belongs to the group of thermal mineral because their composition contains aluminium and iron oxide, and its temperature is between 34 and 38 °C (Stojmilov, 1978). The colour is almost black, with light-dark particles, and the texture is diced and grainy. Thermal mud is a great opportunity to enrich the supply of spa with peloids therapy, which today is a worldwide hit, and as an additional benefit is the fact that the mud may be dried and packaged so to be transported to consumers.

In the Negorska spa there is a centre for continued treatment and rehabilitation of patients that offers all types of therapy in the field of physical medicine and keeps a team of medical professionals specializing in physical medicine and rehabilitation. As part of the rehabilitation centre besides the medical treatments also are offered and electrotherapy, phototherapy, lasers, biotron lamps, vacuumed, magnet therapy, physical therapy, extension of the spinal column, paraffin, underwater massage, detoxification, treatment for weight reduction and anti-cellulite massages<sup>7</sup>.

Due to the proximity of the Gulf of Thessaloniki (60 km<sup>8</sup>) and the protection of continental influences from the north, the area around the spa has favourable climate. Average annual temperature is 14,5 °C, and up to five months a year, the average monthly temperature is higher than 18 °C, that creates conditions for the

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<sup>5</sup> [www.carsamoil.com.mk](http://www.carsamoil.com.mk)

<sup>6</sup> [www.strumica.gov.mk](http://www.strumica.gov.mk)

<sup>7</sup> [www.negorskibanji.com.mk](http://www.negorskibanji.com.mk)

<sup>8</sup> [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps)

construction of outdoor pools. The spa complex occupies an area of 36 ha, mostly forested and the green (Stojmilov, 1978). At some part of the surface there are greenhouses extending, and in some part the land is processed and the products are of use in the kitchen which is a part of the spa complex. This can be used for the production of organic food and the visitors can be given the opportunity to consume food that they will pick by themselves.

An interest in exploring the spa has existed since long time ago and compared to other spas in the country, Negorska Spa belongs to the spa that have been quite studied throughout history. The spa revives during the reign of Shukri Pasha, who in 1903 built a building residence, two pools, one of which the largest with round shape, and the other smaller with square shape, as well as rooms for accomodation. After the Second W.W., it was built a spa with pool, two boarding rooms and a living room (Stojmilov, 1987).

For a larger number of visitors in the Negorska spa, we can speak only in the period after 1970. In that period, most of the visitors come during the summer, usually it were domestic tourists.

Accommodation near the spa are the three hotels that were last renovated in 2007 and they offer the most general conditions. The Hotel "Bozhur", which has 68 beds in double and triple rooms, the hotel "Ilinden" with 88 beds, also in double and triple rooms and hotel "Jasen" which is also the largest accommodation near the spa that possesses 126 beds, 6 suites and 13 single rooms, with the full equipment. Within the hotel there are 2 restaurants, one of which is commercial and therefore the hotel offers HB and FB accommodation<sup>9</sup>.

## **1.2. Number of visitors and realized overnight stays**

The utilization of the waters of the spas in the Southeast region of the Republic of Macedonia has a long tradition, in literature, is mentioned that the spas originate from the Roman period, however, we can not say that it is a massive visits, nor does the development of spa tourism. This was mainly due to the lack of appropriate accommodation, and the short, seasonal period of the spas in the past. The situation began to improve significantly with the construction of accommodation facilities, thereby creating conditions for longer stays at the spas. A period in which

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<sup>9</sup> [www.gevgelija.com.mk](http://www.gevgelija.com.mk)

appeared an increased inflow of visitors in the spa in the past is the period around the seventies of the last century, which coincides with the period of construction of hotels and other accommodation facilities near the spa. How the number of visitors changed through the times, we can see from Table 3.

**Table 3. Number of visitors in the spa centre in Southeast region of the Republic of Macedonia, in the period 1968-1973 year**

Year	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Visitors	3539	2028	5223	4913	4100	4746

*Source: Stojmilov, 1975/1978*

From the table, we can observe that from 1968 to 1973, the largest increase in the number of tourists is between 1969 and 1970, when the number of visitors has increased by more than twice. These are also the years in which are recorded the biggest and the lowest number of visitors during the analysed period. However, it must be emphasized that the figures do not represent the real situation, because a large number of visitors were accommodated in the cottages, camping cottages and houses in the village and were not entered in the records. In the last few years, spa tourism, especially spa and wellness tourism take a swing. The Republic of Macedonia is trying to follow the world trend, which can be seen from the number of visitors in the past years.

**Table 4. Number of visitors in the spa centre in the Southeast region of the Republic of Macedonia, for the period 2008-2013**

Year	Domestic		Foreing		Total	
	Visitors	2008=100	Visitors	2008=100	Visitors	2008=100
2008	11669	100	2460	100	14129	100
2009	11125	95.3	1303	53.0	12428	88.0
2010	11956	102.5	958	38.9	10998	77.8
2011	9938	85.2	895	36.4	10833	76.7
2012	10934	93.7	706	28.7	11640	82.4
2013	10589	90.7	965	39.2	11554	81.8

*Source: State statistical office of the Republic of Macedonia, 2015*

In the period from 2008 to 2013, the largest number of visitors is marked in 2008, while the lowest number in 2011. During the period from 2008 to 2011 we have continuously been reduced in the number of visitors, resulting mainly because of the economic crisis, but then again we have increased the number of visitors in 2012 and 2013.

In all of the years, the number of domestic tourists is far greater than the number of foreign ones. In percentages, the share of foreign tourists in the total number of tourists is between 6 and 17%. The largest number of foreign tourists 2460 is noticed in 2008, while the lowest number was in 2012, IE 706 tourists.

As for the number of realizing overnight stays during the period from 1968 to 1973- the largest number of overnight stays were released in 1971, while the lowest in 1969. On average, during this period, every tourist stayed approximately 6 days.

**Table 5. Number of realized overnight stays in spa centres in Southeast Macedonia in the period 1968-1973**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1968</b>	<b>1969</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>1973</b>
<b>Visitors</b>	21396	10140	31942	35385	29633	31553

*Source: Source: Stojmilov, 1975/1978*

In the period from 2008 to 2013, the largest number of overnight stays were released in 2011, or on average, each tourist realized by 7.1 overnight stays, while the lowest in 2009, with an average of 2.3 overnight stays per person. The average number of overnight stays realized throughout the year in the period from 2008 to 2013 is about 6. The number of realized overnight stays by foreign tourists in this period, has averaged 3.2.

**Table 6. Number of realized overnight stays in spa centres in Southeast Macedonia in the period 2008-2013**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Domestic</b>		<b>Foreing</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>Visitors</b>	<b>2008=100</b>	<b>Visitors</b>	<b>2008=100</b>	<b>Visitors</b>	<b>2008=100</b>
<b>2008</b>	60982	100	7178	100	68160	100
<b>2009</b>	61994	101.7	3701	51.56	65695	96.4
<b>2010</b>	70314	115.3	2793	38.91	73107	107.3

Year	Domestic		Foreing		Total	
	Visitors	2008=100	Visitors	2008=100	Visitors	2008=100
<b>2011</b>	74765	122.6	2883	40.16	77648	113.9
<b>2012</b>	74322	121.9	2615	36.43	76937	112.9
<b>2013</b>	71831	117.8	3437	47.88	75268	110.4

Source: State statistical office of the Republic of Macedonia

The largest number of visitors in both analysed periods comes from our neighbouring countries, i.e. Serbia and Bulgaria. In the period from 1968 to 1973, apart from Serbia and Bulgaria, visitors came from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and a very small number of visitors coming from countries that are not part of our surroundings, from Switzerland, Germany and the USA. In the last analysis period, after Serbia and Bulgaria, according to the number of visitors, followed Greece, Montenegro, Slovenia, Turkey, the Netherlands, USA and Austria. Serbia participates with 24% of the total number of foreign tourists, Bulgaria with 22%, followed by Greece with 19%, Montenegro and Turkey 5% to 4%.

Out of collected data a dynamic serial has been made, which describes different states at different times and on a specific area. Analysis has been made in order to form the structure, factors of influence and dynamic of processes. By comparative method certain similarities and differences between the indicators of spa tourism in Macedonia in different inventory years have been defined in order to discover cause and effect relations<sup>10</sup>. Length of the stay represents the correlation between the number of stays and numbers of tourists. Functionality index is a correlation between the number of beds and the number of local inhabitants. The index of usage of the very capacities defines the useful and significant measure of tourist statistic by which the usage of accommodation capacities has been tracked (Vukovikj and Chavlek, 2001). It stands for a relative indicator that is based on comparing of two coordinated units, the number of stays and the number of beds, and defines accommodation capacities overall turnover. (P > 60% - positive turnover; P 40-60% - marginal turnover; P < 40% - negative turnover). The intensity

<sup>10</sup> Belij M., Milosavljević J., Belij J., Perak K. (2014): Indicators of touristic development of spa centers of Serbia, Collection of papers – Faculty of Geography at the University of Belgrade, Vol. LXII, Belgrade, Serbia, pg. 178-196

of tourist turnover (functionality) is the number of tourist turnover made in a certain touristy place, region as well as the tourist turnover that relates to certain time interval. It can be measured regarding premises, a number of local inhabitants and the size of accommodating capacities (Bakikj and Nikolikj, 1966).

**Table 7. Similarities and differences in the ratios of spa tourism in the period 2008-2013**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Length of the stay</b>	<b>Functionality index</b>	<b>The index of usage</b>	<b>The intensity of tourist turnover</b>
<b>2008</b>	4,8	0,72	32,8	18,0
<b>2009</b>	5,3	0,72	31,6	15,8
<b>2010</b>	6,6	0,72	35,2	13,9
<b>2011</b>	7,2	0,72	37,4	13,7
<b>2012</b>	6,6	0,72	37,0	14,7
<b>2013</b>	6,5	0,72	36,2	14,5

*Source: individual calculations based on SSORM data and equations by Vukovikj, Chavlak, Bakikij and Nikolikj*

Based on the results of the research which is made, it can be concluded that most spas in Macedonia operates not profitably, that stay in spas decreases which coincides with the tourism trends in the world. The parameters obtained on the basis of this research can be used to obtain qualitative assessment, but only with the knowledge of the real situation in the field. Modernization of the content in spas and following of world tourism trends is a requirement that the creators of tourism products in this area must meet in order to develop tourism, in accordance with potentials which already exist<sup>10</sup>.

## **2. Wineries in the Southeast region of the Republic of Macedonia**

The climatic conditions and pathological composition are contributing the Republic of Macedonia to have quality vineyards and quality wine production. In the Republic of Macedonia, there are three wine regions, and they are: Povardarie-Vardar Valley, Pelagonija-Polog and Pcinja-Osogovo region. These wine regions are divided into 16 vineyards. The largest of all wine regions is the region Povardarie-

Vardar valley that covers about 83% of the overall production of wine grapes and wine. This region includes the following vineyards: Skopje, Veles, Gevgelija-Valandovo, Strumica, Radovish, Ovche Pole-Vinica, Kochani-Vinica and Tikvesh<sup>11</sup>.

**Table 8. Distance of the wineries in the Southeast region to highway E-75 and the closest border crossings**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Vinery</b>	<b>E-75/km</b>	<b>Border crossing Novo Selo/km</b>	<b>Border crossing Bogorodica/km</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Vizba Valandovo</b>	12,5	60,5	27,3
<b>2</b>	<b>Arvin</b>	19	63,1	28,1
<b>3</b>	<b>Rigo-Impex</b>	2,5	86,3	5,9
<b>4</b>	<b>Jostela</b>	4,5	88,5	8,1
<b>5</b>	<b>Dalvina</b>	46,9	38,9	60,9
<b>6</b>	<b>Grozd</b>	41,7	44,6	56,6
<b>7</b>	<b>Dehri</b>	8	68,1	12,5
<b>8</b>	<b>Vinasa</b>	45,8	57,7	78,3

Source: [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps)

According to data from Table 8 may be noted that the winery "Dalvina" is farthest from the highway E-75, while the winery "Rigo-Imepks" is nearer to the highway. Anyway, they are all less than one hour driving away of the highway E-75. The nearest winery to the border crossing Novo Selo is the winery Dalvina, only 38,9 km away, and the nearest winery to the border crossing Bogorodica is the winery Rigo-impeks, only 5,9 km away. Taken as a whole, all of the wineries are near the most frequent highway in the Republic of Macedonia, and near to one of the two above mentioned border crossings.

Considering that the subject of interest are wineries in the Southeast region, it is necessary to bear in mind the resource base available to the region. According to the size of the area under vineyards, this region takes a significant place in the Republic of Macedonia, (Milenkovski, 1982). Areas under vineyards in the region, according to data for 2013 are extending the 5222 ha, which represents 23% of the total area under vineyards in the Republic of Macedonia, and that is just nearby

<sup>11</sup> [www.vino.mk/mk/makedonija/vinski-regioni](http://www.vino.mk/mk/makedonija/vinski-regioni)

Vardar region, with a participation of 48.4% in the total area under vineyards. The Southeast region is just behind the Vardar region in terms of the number of stumps vines (10910916 or 15,5% of the total number in the country), (SSO RM, 2015). Viticulture in the region is an intensive and highly profitable activity. Incomes from 1 ha area under vineyards in average is 3-4 times greater compared to other agricultural crops (Milenkovski, 1982). The grape production, which in 2013 amounted to 83 268 tonnes, or 28.5% of total production (SSO RM, 2014).

Attention will be given to vineyards that fall in the Southeast region, IE wineries Valandovo-Gevgelija and Strumica wine region. In the Southeast region are being established eight wineries, two wineries in Valandovo (Valandovo Winery and Arvin), in Gevgelija also two wineries (Rigo Impex and Jostela), and in Strumica are Grozd and Dalvina wineries, in Bogdanci, the winery Dehri and the winery Vinasa in Radovish. The above mentioned wineries have a total production capacity of about 55,5 million<sup>11</sup> litres of wine per year and significant producers within the country. The following table presents data on the area under vineyards and the production capacity of each of the wineries separately.

**Table 9. Wineries, area under vineyards and production capacity**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Wineries</b>	<b>Area under vineyards, in ha<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>Capacity, in litres<sup>13</sup></b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Vizba Valandovo</b>	450	12.500.000
<b>2</b>	<b>Arvin</b>	/	2.500.000
<b>3</b>	<b>Rigo Impex</b>	130	14.500.000
<b>4</b>	<b>Jostela</b>	0.4	10.000.000
<b>5</b>	<b>Dalvina</b>	400	4.000.000
<b>6</b>	<b>Grozd</b>	700	12.000.000
<b>7</b>	<b>Dehri</b>	20	35.000
<b>8</b>	<b>Vinasa</b>	/	25.000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1.700,4</b>	<b>55.560.000</b>

<sup>12</sup> Individual area research

<sup>13</sup> www.vino.mk

The winery, "**Vizba-Valandovo**" is located in the very downtown area. This winery today is on private property and began working in 2004 as a continuation of the former winery "Anska Reka". The winery has a 975 ha area (Individual area research). The area is reappointed on five plantations in which are represented by wine and dessert grapes. The biggest plantation planted with vineyards is the Pirava plantation with approximately 250 ha located in the area of the village Pirava (Individual area research). From the wine grape varieties most common are: Zilavka, Zupljanka, Riesling, Vranec, Smederevka and Cabernet. While of the dessert varieties most common are: Cardinal Avus Ali Rebier, White Winter, Italy Muscat, Victoria and Michelle Palermo<sup>14</sup>. The winery produces about 7,000,000 litres of wine in average (Individual area research). The wine is stored in special casks made of American oak. As long as the wine is kept in the casks, as more superb and distinctive quality it gets. The wine is bottled in glass bottles and Bak in Box packaging from 3 to 5 litres. Dessert varieties of grapes and produced wine are mainly intended for foreign markets, mostly in Serbia, Croatia, Ukraine and Moldova. Within the Vizba Valandovo, there is no restaurant where you can arrange tasting and sales of producing wines. In future it is planned this winery to become a part of the route of wine tour.

The "**Arvin**" winery is located near the village of Dedeli. The winery was built in 2009 and it is privately owned in full. The winery does not possess its own vineyards. Grapes for wine production is purchased from about 350 subcontractors mainly from Valandovo, Strumica and Tikves region (Individual area research). In future, it is planned to increase the capacity by another 500,000 litres (Individual area research). This winery puts greater emphasis on the production of red bulk wine. The produced wine for the most part is placed on the foreign market, mostly in Germany, Romania, Czech Republic and Serbia. The winery "Arvin" does not own any tourist and catering facility in which you can taste the flavour of the wine produced. Besides the introduction of tasting wine in some restaurant, the entire process of handling, filtration, stabilization and packaging of wine should be seen. Due to the proximity of the tourist centre Dojran it has the potential for the development of wine tourism.

The winery "**Rigo Impex**" also known as "Markudovi" is located near the town of Gevgelija. This winery began operations in 2000 and is in full private ownership.

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<sup>14</sup> [www.vizbavalandovo.com.mk](http://www.vizbavalandovo.com.mk)

The winery has its own vineyards, but because of the needs of the wine production of the winery, the rest of the grapes are purchased from subcontractors. Generally, the winery produces: Vranec, Cabernet Sauvignon, Smederevka, Merlot, Frankovka, 'Rkatsiteli, Chardonnay, Riesling and Rose. The current production is about 10 million litres. About 98% of the wine produced is in bulk and the rest of the wine is in bottles<sup>13</sup>. Most of the wine is sold to foreign markets, of which the largest percent in Germany, then in Serbia, Czech Republic and Canada. In the domestic market, mostly is marketed in Gevgelija. This winery does not have a particular premise in which you can taste and experience the delicious taste of the wine.

The winery "**Jostela**" is located on the road from Gevgelija to the ski resort Kozhuf. Its beginnings date back to 2004 and this winery is privately owned. The first wine produced in this winery is in 2005 but they were not produced by their own grapes, but the grapes purchased from subcontractors. In 2008 the winery begins to use its own grapes for wine production. Mainly, from the red wines the winery produces Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Vranac. The harvest of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon in 2011 was placed in oak casks in order to gain top quality wine.

The winery "**Dalvina**" is located in the village Hamzali in the municipality of Bosilovo. It was established in 2007 and it is privately owned. The winery "Dalvina" has an area of about 800 ha (Individual area research). This winery produces 15 different wines which are produced from its own grapes. The most famous varieties of wine that are represented in this winery are: Smederevka 'Rkacteli, Chardonnay, Riesling, Zupljanka, Temjanika, Muscat, Vranac, Merlot, Cabernet and others<sup>15</sup>. The winery is fitted with modern equipment for winemaking and about 80% of the produced wine bottles into glass bottles of 0.75 l. and 1 l. A novelty in this winery is topping wine into Bak in Box packs of 3.5 and 10 litres. The remaining 20% is exported as a bulk wine (Individual area research). Wines from the winery "Dalvina" in a large percentage are included both in the domestic market, but also on foreign markets, mostly in Croatia, Poland, America, Australia, China and India. It is planned a construction of a hotel with a wine cellar, a restaurant and spa centre that will use thermal mineral waters from the spa "Banja Bansko". With pleasure we can conclude that when this project will be fully realized in a large percentage will be able to talk about the development of wine tourism.

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<sup>15</sup> [www.dalvina.com.mk](http://www.dalvina.com.mk)

The winery "**Grozd**" is located in the municipality Vasilevo IE between villages Vasilevo and Gradashorci. The winery was founded 60 years ago, and privatized in 2005. Such is the example of the plantation Shapkar. The most famous wines produced by the winery "Grozd" are: Chardonnay, Smederevka, Cabaret Sauvignon, Merlot, Vranec, Aber (Vranec) and Thais (Muscat Hamburg)<sup>16</sup>. At the beginning, the winery mostly produced wine in bulk that was bottled in 5-litre plastic bottles and distillate which served for making Mastika. Since 2011 it has started bottling wine in glass bottles of 0.75 l. and 1 l. The wine produced is mostly placed on the foreign market. Mainly in Serbia, Germany and Russia. Part of the wine is available on the Macedonian market, mostly in the Strumica region. The winery "Grozd" is best known by the production of so called Mastika, known as "Strumichka Mastika". There are not an object specifically designed for wine tasting as part of this winery. The excellent location allows to consider to open this type of facility or a restaurant where could be exposed to the products of the winery tasting in the future.

The winery "**Dehri**" is located in Bogdanci. Since 2006 is in private ownership. The winery "Dehri" produces 5 red and 2 white wines. Red wines are produced: Merlot, Shiraz, Vranec, Aminta-Cabernet Sauvignon Syrah, Aminta Barik (Cabernet Sauvignon Syrah) and, Riesling and Smederevka of the white wines. As a brand name, the winery uses the name "Aminta." The wine production reaches only 25,000 liters<sup>12</sup>. Wines produced by the winery "Dehri" are sold only on the domestic market, especially in Bogdanci, Gevgelija, Strumica and Skopje.

The winery "**Vinasa**" is located near Radovis. This winery is in private ownership. The winery "Vinasa" does not possess its own vineyards and therefore, the grapes needed are generally purchased from subcontractors from the Tikves region. "Vinasa" produces red and white wines with high alcohol percentage and complex aromas. Of high quality red wines we will mention Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Vranac, and from the white wines Chardonnay, Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc. Special kind of Vranec that is produced in this winery is called Gajret, which means "favour to someone" in Macedonian. The winery "Vinasa" produces 25,000 litres of wine<sup>12</sup>. The wines from this winery can be purchased at the winery or in the markets around Radovish.

## Discussion

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<sup>16</sup> [www.grozd.mk](http://www.grozd.mk)

The results obtained from the research of spas and wineries in the Southeast contribute to the consideration of their current situation and the role that they have in the economy, but at the same time looking at the possibilities for their improvement and transformation into significant factors of development. The analysed area has facilities that rely on their own resources and are put into function for a long period of time.

There are solid conditions for the development of already existing Bansko and Negorci in modern spa complexes. Their total accommodation capacity of approximately 570<sup>17</sup> beds is rugged, but is below the one that can be. The representation of only specific content and the relatively modest offer, the insufficient wider affirmance and more, appear as one of the most limiting factors in their use. Serious efforts are needed and a number of activities leading to the improvement of this situation. Investments in the enlargement and modernization of accommodation, enrichment of the remaining content, their promotion in the country and abroad, attracting various categories of users of their services throughout the year and intensive work on their inclusion in the tourist offer of the region and neighbouring regions are only part of the activities to be taken. All of this should be supported through the implementation of concrete measures and strong support of all interested stakeholders seeking to invest in the development of spas and related activities, at local, regional, national and international level. The role of spa tourism and activities complementary to it is important and the region has excellent conditions for this to flourish. The location in the southeast of the country and immediate proximity to neighbouring countries should be treated as benefits that may affect attract more visitors. Also significant is the demographic factor, the local population and its education on the opportunities offered by the spas and how to put towards the integral development of the region, its promotion and affirmation.

The obtained results show that the Southeast region has excellent conditions for wine production. This is confirmed by the fact that this region in the period after the World War II has reached an intense social and economical change. From a typical agricultural region, it had been gradually transformed into an area in which, besides the agriculture, rapidly were developed the non agricultural activities,

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<sup>17</sup> [www.stat.gov.mk](http://www.stat.gov.mk)

(Milenkovski, 1982). The solid base is excellent for the development of viticulture, and in that point of view, this region it is behind the Vardar region. From the produced amount of wine grapes, as well as from the less quality dessert sorts of grapes in the region, a great quantity of wine that is produced by its quality is well known in the domestic market, but also in the market abroad, (Milenkovski, 1982). This should be improved and it must be used to develop processing and manufacturing facilities. The wineries are still relying on the long tradition of the region and they further on remain as important subjects for the growth of the economy of the region. Their future development, modernization of the manufacturing and monitoring of modern economic trends along with other convenience that the region has, they will contribute to their gradual transformation not only the wine producers, but to open as circumstances allow and attract tourists who are interested in familiarizing with the production and storage of wine is wine tourism. This kind of tourism can be turned into a strong ring to the development of the region, absorbing the labour force, expanding opportunities for management and thereby improve the social and economic situation in the region. In fact, one word said, the local potential that has this region with activities designed to put in function of its improvement.

Overall, the spas and wineries are seeing as a solid basis on which he can rely on the economy, and therefore the social progress of the region and its integration in modern economic trends in the country and beyond. In an effort to achieve faster development, leaning on their rich and diverse resources and absorbed part of the working population, an important role can play the promotion and development of these economic activities that have a long tradition of existence in these areas. Strengthening of the awareness about the opportunities and problems that occur in the region can contribute to highlighting certain economic entities as a tool for building economic and social cohesion, reducing disparities in development within the region and between regions in the country, towards achieving policy for balanced regional development. In this context, tourism occupies an important position. To emphasize that when it comes to tourism is sometimes difficult to be considered as separate entities for development, because in all forms of tourism more than evident is the functional symbiosis of development in space. Linking spas and wineries together with the other attributes of space in a complex tourist offer is an excellent example.

The potentials of the Southeast region have significance in achieving integral development. The possibility of inclusion of population from rural activities in areas that are outside of agriculture, or are attached to it in the spirit of modern development trends. In this context, spas and wineries play a role in enriching the economic capacity, enrichment opportunities in the region, tourism development and expansion of the tourist offer, because tourism increasingly appearing as a moving force in the development of regions, especially in rural areas, and giving greater importance to the rural area in the spirit of contemporary development processes.

### **Conclusion**

Taking into account the resources available, the Southeast region has rich potential for future dynamic socioeconomic development. Nowadays, these two examples of spa complexes in some extent are slaves of the past and medical feature in action, although possess attributes that allow the realization of various activities dedicated to the improvement of the quality of life through vocational services for mind, body and spirit rehabilitation. There are real opportunities for the realization of the three functions of spas: health, social and economic function (Milaku, 2012). Lately, starting from modern needs of living and the definition of quality of life, mentioned spas in the region need to suffer modern transformation and escalate in locations for realization of medical wellness and simple wellness tourism, because wellness is a concept that today is closer to the need of modern man. The situation can be even better if the possibility of multipolarity of spas or their connection with other forms of economic activity is potentiated, which would have changed the concept of annual attendance spas.

One of the forms of greater attractiveness of spa facilities and their immediate surroundings is linking with other economic entities in the region, as wineries that rely on the age-old tradition of producing quality grapes and wine. Today, viticulture in the region is the leading agricultural sector, particularly in the social sector. Its products are required in all consumer centres in the country and some quantities are placed on foreign markets (Milenkovski, 1982).

Spas and wineries should be identified as one of the development priorities of the Southeast region. They should play an important role in increasing economic activity and to contribute achievement of more development effects. These forms of

trading, which mostly are naturally predisposed and incorporate the labour force of the region in itself, it can link in the strengthening of the economic identity before the tourist recognition of the Southeast region. Also provides greater diversification of activities and jobs, allowing greater economic activity, with an emphasis on agriculture, the agro-industrial sector, and other sectors. The enrichment of content related to spas and wineries is seen as activities that are dynamic and have the support of their own resources, contribute to increase of employment and open possibilities for comprehensive development. Upgrading of primary and secondary sector activities that the region is recognized by, with its tourism activities and its identification as an important tourist area can be extremely important for the development of the region, especially its rural area. In fact, the system of causal connection strengthening of the spa and wine tourism can contribute to social and cultural vitality of the region, which combined with other socioeconomic segments reflects positively on the demographic stabilization and economic prosperity of the region. Their support means the stimulation of the development on local and regional level. Thereby it is necessary to emphasize the rational use of resources that is congruent with the principles of sustainable development.

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