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Feasibility of Alternatives in Rural Tourism in Strandja Region

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Strandja Mountain as specific rural part of Bulgaria and Turkey is a popular tourist destination. Strandja Region has a different tourism potential and for the purposes of this measure under rural tourism we must understand "tourism based in rural areas".

The main focus of this survey is to create feasibility of alternatives that have emerged from interviews with farm based rural tourism entrepreneurs. The aim of the article is to develop understanding of improvements in rural tourism business. It means special facilities for:

Accommodation in farm based rural houses – farm produce promotional stands for the relevant household produce. Provision and improvement of outdoor areas, leisure time and recreation facilities – horse riding, sport fishing, eco-paths etc. Renovation of buildings for rural tourism purposes, i.e. buildings of historic and cultural interest {old cellars, mills, etc.} Well kept tradition and Balkan Folklore

Farm based rural tourism in Strandja Region has a lot of potential benefits, especially when the area is economically less developed.

Keywords: Strandja, rural tourism, alternative tourism

Istranca Bölgesinde Çiftlik Turizmi Alternatifinin Uygulanabilirliği

Istranca Dağları Bulgaristan ve Türkiye'nin özel bir kırsal bölümü olup turistler için popüler bir gidilecek yerdir. Istranca bölgesi farklı bir turizm potansiyeline sahiptir ve bu potansiyel çiftlik turizmi altında değerlendirilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Kırsal bölgelerde turizmden çiftlik turizmi anlaşılmalıdır.

Yapılan bu çalışmanın ana amacı ise çiftlik turizminin bölgede bulunan çiftlikler ile yapılan görüşmeler sonucunda ortaya çıkan alternatiflerin olabilirliğini göstermektir. Ayrıca araştırmada kırsal bölgelerde çiftlik turizminin geliştirilmesinin önemi vurgulanmıştır. Bu şekilde sağlanabilecek faydalar aşağıda verilmiştir.

Çiftlik evlerindeki kalma koşulları – çiftlik evinde ev halkının ürettiği çiftlik ürünlerinin sergilenmesi. Açık havada gezinti, boş vakitlerin değerlendirilmesi - yeni bazı hobilerin geliştirilmesi at binme ve sportif balık avcılığı gibi.. Çiftlik turizmi amacına uygun olarak binaların yenilenmesi – tarihi ve kültürel binaların korunması ve restore edilebilmesi. Balkan folklorunun ve geleneklerinin korunmasının sağlanmış olması

Istranca bölgesinde bulunan ve çiftlik turizmi yapan çiftlikler yüksek seviyede fayda sağlayacaklardır. Özellikle bu bölgenin ekonomik olarak az gelişmiş olduğu unutulmamalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Istranca, Çiftlik Turizmi, Alternatif Turizm

Introduction

Rural tourism is the industry that can help our country overcome economic difficulties and facilitate a steady economic growth (Burr, S.W.). The growth of the tourist flow as a whole in 2002 in comparison to 2001 by 9.41% for Bulgaria and 10.07% for Turkey respectively is a good precondition for searching of alternatives for development of the increasingly growing rural tourism in the

Strandja region (<http://mi.government.org/tourism>).

Strandja Mountain has a specific climate formed under the influence of three seas surrounding the region – the Black Sea, The Sea of Marmora and the Aegean Sea. Due to the stronger influence of the Mediterranean climate on the Strandja region it has mainly transitional-Mediterranean character with a

comparatively higher average of year temperature. Strandja has been an attractive tourist center for the past till present times because it is rich in cultural and historical heritage and combines the beauty of our Black Sea coast and the unique nature of Strandja Mountain.

The main targets of the alternative solutions for developing farm based rural tourism in Strandja region are focused on:

Increasing the supply of tourist services in this region, developing tourist information centers in towns and villages to help attract local and foreign visitors and provide high quality services (Strandja).

Opening to the Balkan tourist market and attracting more visitors by means of alleviating the visa regime and formalities at customs and passport control. Offering a variety of rural tourism products by means of motivating the agencies in the region which are involved in cultural, ecological, rural, hunting, touring and other types of tourism (Atanasava, L) . Modifying the tourism products on offer according to their actual potential and resources as well as offering new tourist services and attractions associated with the Balkan traditions and lifestyle. Introducing mandatory classification and licenses for tourist activities and tourist sites in order to raise the standard of the tourist products and bring it closer to international standards (Butler, R.W).

Material and Method

First of all a SPSS file was created including cells for the answers of the respondents in their words (string variables) and cells in which the codes for the groups that came up with the answer could be inserted. Answers from one group referred to the same topic (Bruce, Davit). The groups were labeled differently according to both topic and code. The definitions of the groups and their codes were translated into English.

When the process of data collection began, it was necessary to ascertain the addresses of

existing farm based rural tourism enterprises in the chosen area – the Strandja region. These informative materials about all the existing different types of enterprises are accessible mainly in two ways – through tourism catalogues of region, telephone inquiries and verbal communication. There are some problems in the chosen region with respect to finding typical places, especially farm based tourism enterprises.

Questionnaire has been obtained from 49 rural tourism enterprises in Strandja region. Of all tourism enterprises 20 are in the sphere of accommodation, 16 operate in gastronomy, 7 deal with leisure activities and 6 are purgative enterprises.

The interviews were conducted face to face in the presence of two interviewers. One of them was reading the questions, being the dialogue partner of the interviewee, while the other one was writing the answers. This method worked very well and was accepted.

The certainty of the feasibility of alternatives can be examined to the largest extent within a questionnaire structure observing the following chronology (Henning, S.A).

Type of the enterprise and questions about details regarding the nature of barriers, cooperation as an alternative for efficient business activity, changes in the existing legal requirements as a way of ensuring business freedom. Feasibility regarding the use of marketing environmental factors in the rural tourism. Feasibility regarding price policy in rural tourism. Alternatives regarding financing and the existing fiscal system.

Results and Discussions

Type of enterprises

Almost 60% of the entrepreneurs consider that fiscal barriers determine the activity of the tourist enterprise.

Table 1. What kind of barriers do you consider basic in the activity of your enterprise?

			Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Fiscal barriers	29	59.2	10	50.0	11	68.8	4	57.1	4	66.7
Institutional barriers	20	40.8	10	50.0	5	31.3	3	42.9	2	33.3
TOTAL	49	100.0	20	100.0	16	100.0	7	100.0	6	100.0

Table 2: Which elements are the most important of the macro environment do you think could determine the efficient development of your business?

			Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Economic factors	17	34.7	8	40.0	5	31.3	1	14.3	3	50.0
Legislative regulation	17	34.7	6	30.0	7	43.8	4	57.1	-	
Executive power	12	24.5	5	25.0	3	18.8	2	28.6	2	33.3
Political focus	3	6.1	1	5.0	1	6.3	-		1	16.7
TOTAL	49	100.0	20	100.0	16	100.0	7	100.0	6	100.0

Table 3: What management scheme of the market environment factors could you point as a successful alternative?

			Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The product of rural tourism	22	44.9	9	45.0	6	37.5	5	71.4	2	33.3
Prices of products	21	42.9	8	40.0	9	56.3	1	14.3	3	50.0
Advertising	3	6.1	1	5.0	1	6.3	-		1	16.7
Forms supplying tourist srv.	1	2.0	1	5.0	-		-		-	
Advantages/disadvantages	2	4.1	1	5.0	-		1	14.3	-	
TOTAL	49	100.0	50	100.0	16	100.0	7	100.0	6	100.0

Table 4: Which of the solutions could boost the efficiency of your sales?

			Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Examining the strong and weak points of the product offered	12	26.7	3	16.7	5	33.3	2	33.3	2	33.3
Seeking opportunities for introducing new	8	17.8	3	16.7	3	20.0	2	33.3	-	
Determining the possible life cycle of the new product	2	4.4	1	5.6	-		1	16.7	-	
Quality parameters of anticipated customer demand	6	13.3	2	11.1	2	13.3	-		2	33.3
Competitiveness in relation to leading competitors	4	8.9	3	16.7	1	6.7	-		-	
Price research/level of competitive price	2	4.4	-		1	6.7	-		1	16.7
Direct marketing and sales	9	20.0	4	22.2	3	20.0	1	16.7	1	16.7
Sales via tour operators?	2	4.4	2	11.1	-		-		-	
TOTAL	45	100.0	18	100.0	15	100.0	6	100.0	6	100.0

The opinion of the entrepreneurs most strongly confirms the above in terms of organisations related to the rural tourism business. Entrepreneurs confirm that the changes on a national level (61.7%) and on a regional level (23.4%) could most strongly boost the efficiency of the rural tourism activity.

The direction is which the entrepreneurs envisage legal changes to abolish related limitations and to extend freedom of the rural tourism activity:

- Fiscal system in tourism (42.6%)
- visa requirements (21.3%)
- Legislation for encouraging employment (12.8%)

Feasibility of alternatives concerning the use of marketing environment factors in rural tourism

Almost 70% of the entrepreneurs working in rural tourism consider that economic factors and legislative regulation are the two most important factors of the macro environment

which could determine the effective development of the rural tourism business (Table 2).

With respect to a market environment factors management scheme that enterprises could point as a successful alternative, entrepreneurs respond that the product of rural tourism (44.9%) and product prices (42.9%) are most important in the business.

As for the solutions that could boost the efficiency of sales of rural tourism enterprises, respondents give various answers (Table 4). The most important solutions are examining the strong and weak points of the product offered (26.7%), direct marketing and sales (20%), seeking opportunities for introducing new products (17.8%) and other solutions.

With respect to the most important indicators which are used in the future activity to obtain efficient results from promotional activity, entrepreneurs indicate quality label for holidays on farm (25%), trade shows (22.7%), and month-to-month promotion (22.7%) (table 5).

Table 5: Which is the most important indicator /advertising/ would use in its future activity to obtain efficient results from promotional activity?

	Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Quality label for holidays on farm	11	25.0	5	26.3	6	42.9	-	-
Trade shows	10	22.7	4	21.1	3	21.4	1	16.7
Advertisement in guide	7	15.9	5	26.3	2	14.3	-	-
Mouth to mouth promotion	10	22.7	4	21.1	2	14.3	1	16.7
Internet	3	6.8	-	-	-	-	3	50.0
Advertise in newspaper	3	6.8	1	5.3	1	7.1	1	16.7
TOTAL	44	100.0	19	100.0	14	100.0	6	100.0

Feasibility concerning the price policy in rural tourism

To the question what is the most important indicator (sales promotion) that they would implement in their future activity to obtain effective results from promotional activity,

respondents most often mention protective prices (with a discount) (30.2%), also variable prices (25.6%) and temporary prices (23.3%) especially in gastronomic enterprises, accommodation and leisure activities enterprises (Table 6).

Table 6: Which is the most important indicator /sales promotion/ would use in its future activity to obtain efficient results from promotional activity?

			Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Variable price	11	25.6	4	21.1	4	28.6	2	40.0	1	20.0
Price type" all inclusive price"	7	16.3	4	21.1	3	21.4	-		-	
Protective price/with discount/	13	30.2	5	26.3	3	21.4	3	60.0	2	40.0
Temporary price	10	23.3	5	26.3	4	28.6	-		1	20.0
Psychological price "odd –even"	2	4.7	1	5.3	-		-		1	20.0
TOTAL	43	100.0	19	100.0	14	100.0	5	100.0	5	100.0

Table 7: What feasibilities with respect to the tools of price formation do you see in the short and mean term?

			Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Analysis and evaluation of price elasticity	6	13.0	3	16.7	1	6.7	1	14.3	1	16.7
Analysis and evaluation of profits	25	54.3	9	50.0	8	53.3	5	71.4	3	50.0
Costs according the life of the products	8	17.4	3	16.7	3	20.0	-		2	33.3
Analysis of the relation price/cost	6	13.0	3	16.7	2	13.3	1	14.3	-	
Analysis of the price dynamics in period	1	2.2	-		1	6.7	-		-	
TOTAL	46	100.0	18	100.0	15	100.0	7	100.0	6	100.0

Table 8: What main goals of the financial planning do you set in the future activity of the enterprise?

			Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Conformity between the goals and its financial capacity	16	34.8	5	25.0	6	46.2	3	42.9	2	33.3
Determining the sources and possibility of financing	20	43.5	12	60.0	3	23.1	2	28.6	3	50.0
Optimization of the financial flows of the enterprise	8	17.4	3	15.0	2	15.4	2	28.6	1	16.7
Maintaining an optimum dynamic liquidity or solvency	2	4.3	-		2	15.4	-		-	
TOTAL	46	100.0	20	100.0	13	100.0	7	100.0	6	100.0

As for the feasibilities with respect to the tools of price formation enterprises envisage in the short and mean term, more than 50% of them consider analyses and evaluation of profit. Other important criteria that take shape in the research are analyses and evaluation of price elasticity and analyses of the price/cost relation (Table 7).

Feasibility concerning financing of the enterprise and the existing fiscal system

The main goals of financial planning that entrepreneurs set in the future activity of their rural tourism enterprises are determining the

sources and possibilities of financing (43.5%) as well as conformity between goals and financial capacity (34.8%), especially in accommodation and pluriactive enterprises (Table 8).

As for investment during the past years respondents referred to renovation (30.26%) and enlargement (13.16%).

Suggestions about preparing the documentation for a loan basically point to simplification of the required documentation (26.5%), less bureaucracy at submitting the documentation (18.4%) and help from consultation firms (10.2%) (Table 9).

Table 9: Suggestions / preparing documentation/ for loan.

			Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Simplification of the required documentation/facilitated	13	26.5	6	30.0	4	25.0	1	14.3	2	33.3
Less bureaucracy at submitting the documentation	9	18.4	3	15.0	6	37.5	-		-	
More information and assistance by the credit institution	4	8.2	1	5.0	3	18.8	-		-	
Consultations firms which helps	5	10.2	4	20.0	-		-		1	16.7
Additional instructions by the credit institutions	3	6.1	1	5.0	-		1	14.3	1	16.7
Missing value /-9/	15	30.6	5	25.0	3	18.8	5	71.4	2	33.3
TOTAL	49	100.0	20	100.0	16	100.0	7	100.0	6	100.0

Table 10: Suggestions / determining the amount of the loan/ .

			Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
More information	10	20.4	3	15.0	5	31.3	1	14.3	1	16.7
Less bureaucracy	8	16.3	4	20.0	2	12.5	1	14.3	1	16.7
Helpfulness and support	6	12.2	3	15.0	-		2	28.6	1	16.7
Positive attitude	5	10.2	2	10.0	1	6.3	2	28.6	-	
Consultancy agencies for helping	3	6.1	2	10.0	-		-		1	16.7
Missing value /-9/	17	34.7	6	30.0	8	50.0	1	14.3	2	33.3
TOTAL	49	100.0	20	100.0	16	100.0	7	100.0	6	100.0

As for suggestions about the amount of the loan entrepreneurs most often wish to have more information in advance (20.4%) and recommend less bureaucracy (16.3%) and positive attitude (10.2%) (Table 10).

The security of the loan is a problem of utmost importance to the entrepreneurs in the

rural tourism. Their suggestions are mainly directed towards facilitation of the procedure (32.7%), decreasing volumes of mortgages for the loan (26.5%) and credit corresponding to mortgage (14.3%) (Table 11).

Table 11: Suggestions / securing of the loan/

			Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Facilitated procedure	16	32.7	8	40.0	-		5	71.4	3	50.0
Personable mortgage requirements	3	6.1	1	50.0	2	12.5	-		-	
Volume of credit to correspond to the mortgage	7	14.3	2	10.0	5	31.3	-		-	
Include full specters of mortgages in securing the loan	5	10.2	2	10.0	3	18.8	-		-	
Missing value /-9	5	10.2	2	10.0	1	6.3	1	14.3	1	16.7
TOTAL	49	100.0	20	100.0	16	100.0	7	100.0	6	100.0

Table 12: What kind of taxes do you consider as a barriers concerning normal functioning of your enterprises?

			Accommodation		Gastronomy		Leisure activities		Pluriactive	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Direct property taxes	3	6.3	1	5.0	2	12.5	-		-	
Direct income taxes	37	77.1	17	85.0	11	68.8	6	85.7	3	60.0
Indirect taxes	1	2.1	1	5.0	-		-		-	
Public charges	1	2.1	1	5.0	-		-		-	
Local charges	5	10.4	-		2	12.5	1	14.3	2	40.0
Interests, fines, confiscation	1	2.1	-		1	6.3	-		-	
TOTAL	48	100.0	20	100.0	16	100.0	7	100.0	5	100.0

In relation to the kind of taxes that are barriers for the normal functioning of the rural tourism enterprise, the respondents' most frequent answer is: - direct income taxes (77.1%) and also local charges (10.4%) (Table 12).

Due to rural location of Strandja region most respondents encountered problems with their business (67.8%). The difficulties respondents encountered most often were financial strains (15.93%), bad prices (11.5%), the general economic situation (14.16%) and not enough visitors (6.2%)

Conclusion

Effective rural tourism in Strandja region requires careful planning and development and typically employs well thought-out marketing approaches. Even well designed tourism strategies can have potential negative side effects, including higher taxes for local residents, escalating real estate prices, increased sprawl, and a degradation of local natural resources. Frequently, effective rural tourism requires regional or State-level coordination since many rural areas, especially those that are more isolated or more sparsely populated, lack the resources required to establish a successful tourism program.

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