



Original Contribution

MARKETING ON FARM BASED RURAL TOURISM IN BULGARIA

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ABSTRACT

In marketing way rural tourism supply represent volume and structure of rural tourism products, which can be used on tourism market. Rural tourism is under high pressure of high speed of tourism supply on national and international dimensions. In this sense constant speed of development of farm based rural tourism can be saved only on the bases of varieties of rural tourism products and its individualities at definite entrepreneurs in this type of tourism. The survey emphasis on alternatives concerning the use of marketing environment factors in rural tourism - most important factors of macro environment which could determine the efficient development of farm based rural tourism, management schemes in this type of business, factors of tourism demand, the most important indicators /advertising/ which could give the efficient results from promotional activity

Key words: Rural tourism, marketing, promotion, research areas

INTRODUCTION

“Balkantourist” orders the first after war research of consumers’ demands in 1962 concerning foreign tourist’s preferences. Only in 1973 the first in Bulgaria system and comprehensive marketing research of tourism product was made including rural tourism product by Swiss marketing agency “Turistconsult” (Bazel). In 1974 the first advertisement conception was made for developing of Bulgarian national tourism for the period from 1975-1980 (Doganov, D.). In 80s some significant publication concerning different aspects of rural tourism appeared including marketing of rural tourism products. (4).

The nature of rural tourism product and its quality depends strongly on such a inconstant as climate and seasons and few outer factors (atmosphere conditions etc.) exists in spite of will and activities of person offering the product and consumer of tourism product (Peev, P., 1994). This nature and specific of rural tourism as activity and service reflects in the most popular definitions of marketing in tourism.

Tourism demand including rural tourism demand is a form of social need of tourism goods and services including specific activities of rural tourism (attractions- horse riding, hunting, fishing etc.).

Rural tourism demand has high level of crossed elasticity i.e. there is substitution competition between different factors of demands. So-called horizontal substitution exists concerning

- the type of tourism (rural tourism, ecological tourism, balneology tourism, culture tourism and so on);
- tourism place as destination;
- time of staying;

One of the goals of rural tourism is to force individual feature and uniqueness of objects of this type if tourism and of complete rural tourism product. (7). Significant problem for tourism demand of rural tourism product is traditional concentration of demand in time (pointed season character) and in objects of appearance (tourism localization).

In marketing way, tourism supply represents volume and structure of tourism product that can be used on tourism market. (7). At rural tourism regarding tourism supply its definite elasticity characteristic. Rural tourism is under high pressure of high speed of tourism supply on national ad international dimensions. In this sense constant speed of development of rural tourism can be saved only on the basis of varieties of rural tourism

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product and its individualities at definite entrepreneurs in this type of tourism.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The four research areas are chosen according the criteria “near to a big city – remote from a big city”, “upland – lowland”, “well

developed tourism infrastructure – less well developed tourism infrastructure”. Four research areas are chosen in Bulgaria – Rodopa mountain, ForeBalkan, Dibrudja and Strandja.

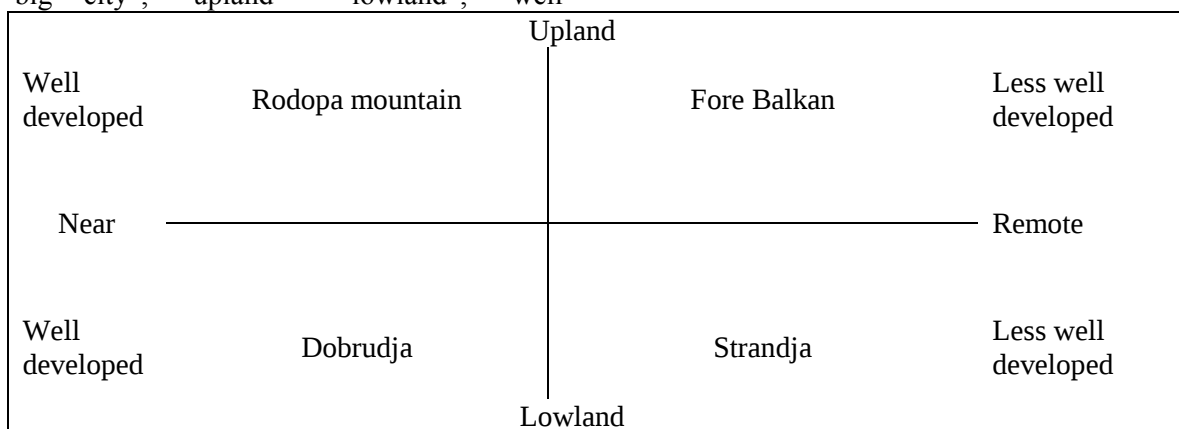


Figure 1. The four Bulgaria Research Areas

After review of existing literature concerning rural tourism form an entrepreneur’s perspective a questionnaire was constructed. In the literature review also is included materials concerning rural tourism enterprise regional development programs, studies evaluating the effects of those programs, adverse selections and behavior in combination with investment assistance programs and of sectorised analyses regarding the contribution of rural tourism to regional development.

Because of the fact that it is difficult to find more information and many cases about rural tourism entrepreneurs and their everyday problems in the business the decision was taken questionnaires to be made with a lot of questions. The answers of these questionnaires are direct by the owner of rural tourism enterprise. That’s why in questionnaires WPZ many “open questions” are included to assess personal opinion of rural tourism entrepreneurs. It means that the questionnaire was used in a structured “face to face” interview.

The interviews were taken in four regions for each country, for Bulgaria these regions are Rodopa, Fore Balkan, Dobrudja Region and Stranja Region. The regions had to fulfill the criteria “near- remote from big city”, “well- less developed tourism infrastructure” and “upland- lowland”. After running a pilot field study to test the questions, the questionnaires was evaluated and improved as quality and quantity of the questions.

First of all a SPSS file was created including cells for the answers of the respondents in their words (String variables) and cells where the codes for the groups to which the answer belonged could be inserted. Because of the fact that respondents answered more than just one topic to one question there is space for three mentioned topics for every question. After revising the SPSS file several times it includes at the end 1034 variables.

The answers from all questionnaires to every question were grouped together with German partners. Answers belonging to one group had to regard the same topic. The groups got new names according to the regarded topic and a code. The defined groups and their codes were translated into English and sent out to all partners including instructions where the codes had to be inserted in the SPSS file. In three rounds groups and their codes were send out to all partners.

The answers had to be put in the defined groups by all partners. All non-fitting answers were sent back to the German partners and they had to review all non-fitting answers of all partners together and define new groups. The remaining answers which did not fit in one of the defined groups had to be grouped in the group “others” by all partners.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Most often respondents do not use a quality label (60.2%), and of another part of the respondents (who use a quality label) 46.6%

use a paid quality label and 22% use a non – paid quality label (Table 1).

Table 1. Use of Labels

			near, upland		remote, upland		near, lowland		remote, lowland		accommodation		gastronomy		leisure activities/attractions		pluriactive enterprises	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
use of a paid quality label																		
Yes	55	46.6	22	59.5	9	30.0	13	52.0	11	42.3	29	51.8	12	52.2	6	22.2	8	66.7
No	63	53.4	15	40.5	21	70.0	12	48.0	15	57.7	27	48.2	11	47.8	21	77.8	4	53.4
TOTAL	118	100.0	37	100.0	30	100.0	25	100.0	26	100.0	56	100.0	23	100.0	27	100.0	12	100.0
use of a not-paid quality label																		
Yes	26	22.0	-	-	-	-	10	40.0	16	61.5	11	19.6	5	21.7	8	29.6	2	16.7
No	92	78.0	37	100.0	30	100.0	15	60.0	10	38.5	45	80.4	18	78.3	19	70.4	10	83.3
TOTAL	118	100.0	37	100.0	30	100.0	25	100.0	26	100.0	56	100.0	23	100.0	27	100.0	12	100.0
no use of a quality label																		
Yes	47	39.8	16	43.2	20	66.7	10	40.0	1	3.8	25	44.6	8	34.8	12	44.4	2	16.7
No	71	60.2	21	56.8	10	33.3	15	60.0	25	96.2	31	55.4	15	65.2	15	55.6	10	83.3
TOTAL	118	100.0	37	100.0	30	100.0	25	100.0	26	100.0	56	100.0	23	100.0	27	100.0	12	100.0

Respondents who pointed out that they used a paid quality label use stars (66.67%) and ecological labels (14.81%). Quality labels with stars are most common in the near upland area (95.24%) and are used by respondents running gastronomic enterprises (90.91%) and pluriactive enterprises (75%).

Respondents using non – paid quality labels estimated that “the enterprise is recommended by visitors” (72.73%) or that “it is a family friendly enterprise” (22.73%).

The most common reasons for using, and respectively not using, quality labels are “we don’t need it” (38.14%) and “duty” (25.42%). That the quality label compels

people to make a choice was often not pointed out in the near upland area (56.76%). The use of the quality label as a promotion media was most common in the near lowland area (16%).

The most common promotion materials are homepages (34.31%) and leaflets (25.49%).

Other promotion materials used are visit cards (41.38 %), events (24.14%) and guide books / catalogues (10.34%).

As for the availability of promotion materials in a foreign language 43.2% of the respondents gave positive answers (Table 2)

Table 2. Existence of Promotion Material in a foreign Language

			near, upland		remote, upland		near, lowland		remote, lowland		accommodation		gastronomy		leisure activities/attractions		pluriactive enterprises	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Yes	51	43.2	17	45.9	17	56.7	15	60.0	2	7.7	27	48.2	8	34.8	10	37.0	6	50.0
No	67	56.8	20	54.1	13	43.3	10	40.0	24	92.3	29	51.8	15	65.2	17	63.0	6	50.0
TOTAL	118	100.0	37	100.0	30	100.0	25	100.0	26	100.0	56	100.0	23	100.0	27	100.0	12	100.0

Promotion materials in a foreign language are most often available in the near lowland

area (60%) and in the remote upland area (56.7%).

Respondents pointed out that they considered verbal communication to be the

most successful way of national promotion (96.6%) (Table 3).

Table 3. Importance of mouth-to-mouth-promotion

			near, upland		remote, upland		near, lowland		remote, lowland		accommodation		gastronomy		leisure activities/attractions		pluriactive enterprises	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Yes	114	96.6	36	97.3	30	100.0	22	88.0	26	100.0	52	92.9	23	100.0	27	100.0	12	100.0
No	4	3.4	1	2.7	-	-	3	22.0	-	-	4	7.1	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	118	100.0	37	100.0	30	100.0	25	100.0	26	100.0	56	100.0	23	100.0	27	100.0	12	100.0

Verbal communication was most often referred to in the remote upland and lowland areas (100%), as well as by respondents running gastronomic, pluriactive, and leisure activities based enterprises (100%). It really means that for these four chosen areas in Bulgaria promotion by means of verbal

communication is the most successful way of promotion.

More than 70% of the respondents pointed out that there was no problem with promotion (Table 4), especially in the near upland area.

Table 4: Existence of a Problem with Promotion

			near, upland		remote, upland		near, lowland		remote, lowland		accommodation		gastronomy		Leisure activities/attractions		pluriactive enterprises	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
there is no problem	84	71.2	35	94.6	28	93.3	13	52.0	8	30.8	40	71.4	18	78.3	16	59.3	10	83.3
there is a problem encountered	34	28.8	2	5.4	2	6.7	12	48.0	18	69.2	16	28.6	5	28.6	11	40.7	2	16.7
	118	100.0	37	100.0	30	100.0	25	100.0	26	100.0	56	100.0	23	100.0	27	100.0	12	100.0

Points in the promotion material and other points identified in the promotion materials. The most important points in the promotion materials are the location of the business (40.95%) and nature / landscape (19.78%).

The most successful way of promotion (national) is verbal communication and television (13.68%). Respondents consider

trade fairs as the most successful way of international promotion. (31.58%)

Promotion problems most often affect costs (31.91%) and cause lack of support (29.79%), especially in pluriactive enterprises (100%).

More than 60% of the respondents pointed out that there was no solution to promotion problems (Table 5)

Table 5: Solution of promotion Problem

			near, upland		remote, upland		near, lowland		remote, lowland		accommodation		gastronomy		leisure activities/attractions		pluriactive enterprises	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Yes	14	38.9	-	-	1	50.0	3	25.0	10	47.6	10	66.7	3	37.5	1	9.1	-	-
No	22	61.1	1	100.0	1	50.0	9	75.0	11	52.4	5	33.3	5	62.5	10	90.9	2	100.0
TOTAL	36	100.0	1	100.0	2	100.0	12	100.0	21	100.0	15	100.0	8	100.0	11	100.0	2	100.0

Almost 70% of the respondents running gastronomic enterprises estimated that there was a solution to promotion problems.

Respondents said that they solved their promotion problems most often via the Internet (25%), using common marketing

(16.67%) and spending money on promotion (12.5%).

“Cooperation with others” (8.47%), “well directed promotion” (4.24%) and “a lot of promotion in the beginning” (5.08%) is the most common advice regarding offer promoting. Unfortunately, 29.66% of the respondents gave the answer “no advice possible”.

CONCLUSIONS

Rural tourism is the industry that can help to overcome the economic crisis and facilitate a steady economic growth. Bulgaria has a considerable potential for development of tourism. There are favourable circumstances for development of all kinds of modern tourism. The Bulgarian tourism is favoured by Bulgaria’s geographic location, climate and spas, sand coast line and varied mountains, unique cultural and historic heritage, preserved ethnic peculiarities and traditions, the existing recreation facilities and trained personnel, and the available areas in eco-regions.

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