New Knowledge Journal of Science

Списание за наука „Ново знание”

Academic Publishing House - “Talent”
University of Agribusiness and Rural Development - Bulgaria

Академично издателство „Талант“
Висше училище по агробизнес и развитие на регионите - Пловдив

http://uard.bg

DIVERSIFICATION OF TOURIST PRODUCT - HISARYA MUNICIPALITY

Zlatka Grigorova

University of Agribusiness and Rural Development – Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Key words:
tourism
alternative forms
diversification
competitiveness

Abstract

This report has for an objective to identify the possibilities for integrated development of Hisar municipality through diversification of the tourist product. Based on the analysis of tourist flow for the period 2008-2014 are outlined the opportunities for offering of alternative forms of tourism in the aim of increasing the competitiveness of the tourist product in the region.

INTRODUCTION

The world top tourist destination today is Europe and tourism plays a key role in the development of many European regions. This is particularly true for underdeveloped rural regions because of the significant economic benefits and the potential for job creation, particularly for young people. Tourism proved its flexibility and steady growth even during the crisis. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) supports competitiveness, sustainability and quality of tourism at regional and local level. Of course, tourism is closely linked to the usage and development of natural, historical and cultural resources, with the attractiveness of regions and cities as a place to live, work and visit. Successful tourism depends on the development, innovation and diversification of products and services that the visitors will benefit from.

The tourism industry is one of the leading in the country's economy and it is an objective need for its modern development. Tourism is connected with qualitative changes in the system of regulation and management of the sector at both international and national, regional and local level. The emphasis today is placed on the integral nature of tourism policy, its system characteristics and peculiarities. The tourism sector accounts for a significant portion of GDP, contributes to the activation of the balance of payments and ensure employment. It should be developed based on the best European practices and standards.

Over the past decade an important role in developing the theory and methodology in the field of tourism have a number of Bulgarian authors: Peev (2008), Hadjinikolov (2003), Neshkov (2011, 2012), Tonchev (2004), Tonchev & Mileva (2006), Tadarakov (2011) and others. With priority to the development of the sector are directives and EU documents. Great interest at present are European strategies aimed at inclusion of Bulgaria in the field of tourism - a regional tourism development in Europe, highlighted by the Union.

The economic prosperity of the EU Member States and a decent standard of living for all citizens are among the main objectives of the European community (Peev & Timareva, 2012). They are achieved through:

- effective use of available resources;
- innovation in the production and trade of goods and services;
- efficient management of the economy and specific social activities;
- solidarity and mutual assistance between the EU Member States.

For the development and the promotion of tourism in the community the European Commission (EC) adopted directives on the basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism with an agenda about "sustainable and competitive tourism".

The sustainable development strategy of the EU has three main objectives: economic prosperity; social equity and cohesion (cohesion); environmental protection. Later in the "Strategy 2020" is paid

considerable attention to issues related to tourism development through EU funding. The strategy was developed for the period 2014-2020 year in the five areas:

- development of maritime and coastal tourism;
- development of rural tourism;
- tourism for the elderly;
- extend the tourist season through exchanges outside peak periods;
- diversification of tourism through, “themed products”, including itineraries related to "different" (alternative) types of tourism.

The strategic priorities for next-year development as given to increase economic, social and territorial cohesion for sustainable balanced regional and municipal development are in regard to the new interrelations and interactions between urban and rural regions based on the use of strengths of both and joint development of mutual benefit through encouragement of sectors having the best potentials in connection to available resources and market realities (Terziev & Arabska, 2015c). Destination management is the coordination and integration of all of the elements of the destination mix in a particular geographic area based upon a defined tourism strategy and plan (Timareva et al., 2015).

Among the main challenges before the humanity in the 21st century are educational and capacity building problems interlinked to globalization processes and information society development imposing the permanent existence of an educational environment and learning skills in times when information is rendered along with the general resources of well-being and sustainable development of future generations (Terziev & Arabska, 2015a, b, d). For sustainable development first of all there is a need of assuring encouraging environment through businesses development and targeted investments in specific “green” activitities increasing capacities for better financial performance (Terziev et al., 2015).

Studies show that in tourism development in Bulgaria the problems prevail and impede sector development. The most important among them are: predomination of mass seasonable tourism in sea and winter resorts giving the image of the country. The marketing shortcomings in alternative tourism and the absence of advertisement and trademarks are among the most important problems. The differences in tourism development on regional level presented in analyses in the strategic documents examined are very prominent besides the great potential in all regions for tourism development (Shopova & Arabska, 2013).

Current study on diversification of the tourist product is motivated by the objective needs of the modern theory and practice of tourism and it is associated with qualitative changes in the system of regulation and management of this important socio-economic phenomenon. The focus of the study is placed on the integral nature of tourism policy, tourism resources and available material-technical base with a time range from 1998 to today. The aim of the study is connected to the relevant new opportunities for diversification of tourist product in the municipality of Hisar.

Emphasis is placed on alternative forms of tourism in the municipality as a key element of diversification and sustainability activating industrial production, agriculture, forestry, transport and infrastructure. This determines the relevance of the study and contribute to the diversification of the tourist product of the municipality of Hisarya. The summarized results of evaluation of tourism resources could contribute to the implementation of municipal management tasks.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To clarify the purpose of the study a complex of methods is used: time, comparative and predictive methods. In studying and analyzing the opportunities for diversification of the tourist product of the municipality of Hisar methods were used to determine the index of utilization of tourism resources, and in order to achieve quality results: various ways and means for processing text and maps sources; to determine the current status; to identify the major problems of nature and sustainable development of the region. Mathematical and statistical methods were used in the creation and processing of base statistics about the municipality; from questionnaires; from monitoring studies.

Hisar municipality is situated in the central part of the country, on the southern slopes of the Central forest (Sredna gora) with transitional relief to Upper Valley at an altitude of 364 m. The climate is continental with 280 sunny days a year. The warm and mild winter has snow cover on average 27 days (average January temperature - 1^0C). Spring is early and relatively warm, the summer is characterized by high temperatures (average July temperature 23^0C), low humidity and weak winds. Autumn is sunny, warm and long. The average annual temperature is 11.5^0C.

The most characteristic feature of the municipality is the thermal field of 22 springs - located in a small area, they have a total capacity of water 45 l / sec., and temperature between 27^0C and 53^0C, different physical and chemical characteristics and proven medicinal qualities.

An interesting fact is that the first organized spa in Bulgaria started in Hisarya. In 1882 the government of Eastern Rumelia issued "Regulations for the operation of Hisarya baths" and the Czech chemist Sosterzhonek performed in the laboratory of "Sanitary Board" in Plovdiv chemical analysis of water from five Hisarya spring.

Hisarya differs from other Bulgarian resorts on the abundance of its hot springs and their diverse chemical composition, temperature and healing properties. Each source has its own application, name and romantic legend... Mineral waters in Hisarya town

and villages of Staro hardware and Krasnovo are used for drinking and treatment of kidney and urological, biliary, gastrointestinal and liver diseases, diseases of the musculoskeletal system (http://www.hisar.bg/new_web_sait/news.php).

Hydrological system in the area of the municipality is determined by rivers Stryama, Kalavashtitsa, Pikla and Pyasachnik - they have a relatively constant flow and a large catchment area. The total number of water reservoirs in the municipality is 57, of which public municipal property are 51, state owned are the dams Sinyata reka (The blue river) and Pyasachnik (Sandstone).

The municipality of Hisarya has three protected areas: "Dabite – Konska polyana" in the village of Krastevich "Barricades" in the lands of the village of Starosel, and "Chivira". Natural landmark "Twelve pedunculiflora oaks" is located in the "Gerenya" in the village of Panicheri. The forest area is 202 km^2 and fauna according to zoogeographic zoning is part of the Mediterranean subregion – inhabitants are Euro-Siberian and Central European species of Trans-Mediterranean fauna complex.

The municipality includes the following settlements: Hisarya, Belovitsa, Krasnovo, Krastevich, M. Krusevo, Mihiltsi, Matenitsa, N. Zhelezare, Panicheri, S. Zhelezare, Starosel, Chernichevo - Figure 1.

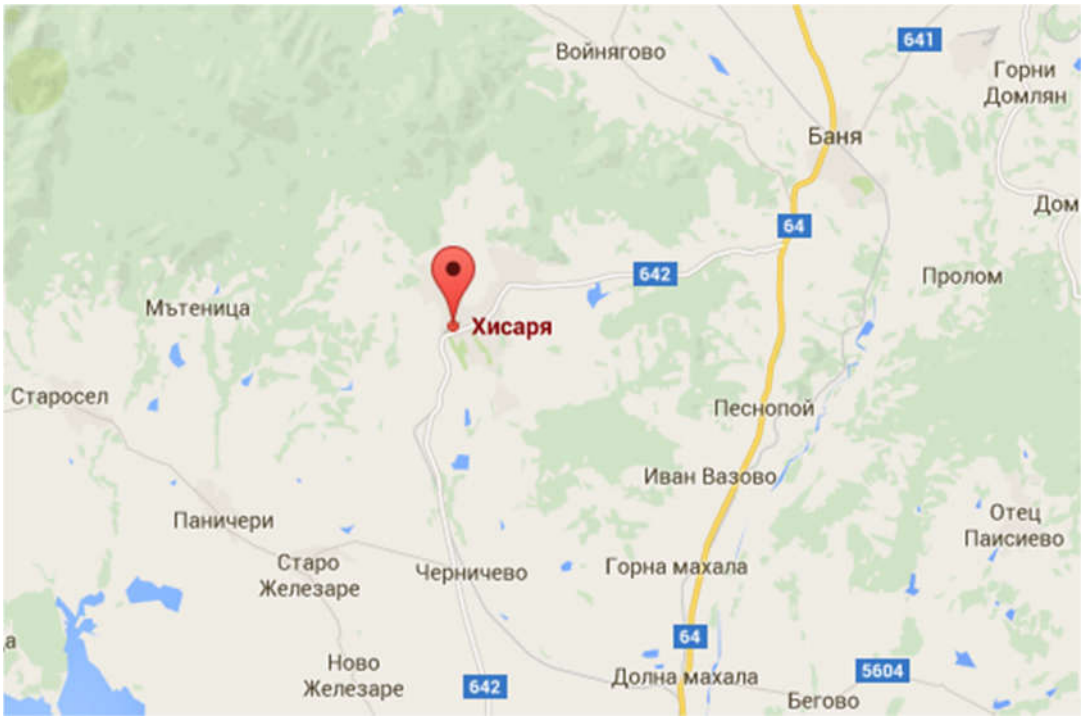

Fig. 1. Hisarya Municipality

The rich cultural heritage of many Thracian and Roman archaeological sites, authentic folklore and traditions, relaxed and cordial communication with the local population, the cozy recreation, mineral water in the municipality make it a preferred destination for tourists from all over the country and abroad.

Hisarya fortress walls – the majestic witness to the history of the city, exist till today sunk in pastoral greenery of the many beautiful parks, filled with Nightingale songs. The ancient city was declared an archaeological reserve - here you can see the tomb excavations of Roman baths, barracks and administrative buildings. In the municipality the village of Starosel is located where in 2000 Thracian temple was discovered from V-IV c. BC., one of the largest Thracian royal complexes in Southeast Europe. With its monumentality and rich royal burial, gold and silver jewelry, armor and painted pottery, the temple is an attractive destination for tourists from all generations. In 2005 in the "Goats heap" at an altitude of 1100 meters a huge complex was discovered which is dated V c. BC. This Thracian settlement has had a very long life - till V-VI century. The proof of this are the remains of an early Christian church found near the complex.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The diversification of the tourist product in the municipality of Hisarya is directly connected with both natural and anthropogenic resources and the available facilities - beds, the average number of nights, length of stay, type of tourists by questionnaire method and information from the National statistical institute (NSI) are studied (1998-2013). The study has found that the municipality has sufficient beds which for the period from 1998 till today has changed its appearance and methods of operation repeatedly.

Following the allocation of beds for the period 2003 - 2009 there is a significant increase in the number of hotels in the municipality - 86 for 2009, while in 2003 the figure was only 59. For comparison, in 1998 the beds have the following structure in percentage between hotels, cabins and rooms 59:30:11. In 2013 the percentage of beds in other means of shelter and accommodation (mainly pensions) is only 14%.

In the last decade more and more foreigners come to Hisar. The increase is not great - 3% increase in foreign tourists in 2009-2011 compared to 1998, which shows a slight increase in the popularity of the resort among the tourist contingent from abroad. For the period 1989-2011 the volume of tourist arrivals represented by the number of arrivals in Hisarya fluctuates, the weak activity is observed up to 2003, followed by a stage of growth by 2009 and decline in 2011. The division of Bulgarians and foreigners is in favor of the Bulgarians - only 6% foreigners arrivals in the resort last year. The reasons for this are the strong competition in balneology and spa services from other resorts. Velingrad and Sandanski significantly outrun Hisarya in number of visits and tourism revenues – Table 1. We have to take into account the fact that data from NSI and questionnaires from the conducted study do not recreate the real situation. Gathering accurate and objective economic information is hampered by the reluctance of businesses to give such to the municipality. And without real data for beds, the municipality cannot justify the need for investment in road infrastructure, water supply, sanitation and others.

Table 1. Hisarya Municipality Hotels Activity

Hotels	Beds		Rooms		Total nights	Local	Foreign	Total individuals	Local	Foreign	Total revenues	Bulgarian	Foreign
	Base	Additional	Total	Used									
14	1637	80	850	710	247011	189632	57379	85655	78222	7433	9483065	8028199	1454866

After exploring the theoretical formulation of the problem, analyzing the resources' status and available material-technical base, we should summarize the following: the municipality of Hisarya possesses a unique combination of natural and anthropogenic resources, clean environment, mineral waters and rich cultural heritage, contributing to the development of tourism as a priority in the local economy since the beginning of last century.

The analysis of the tourism product today substantiates the following segments:

- ***Balneology, medical spa and wellness tourism***

The segment includes the widest range of users of mineral water with a proven therapeutic effect (adults, families with children, young people, athletes, businessmen). It is a perennial, with good facilities but not enough highly qualified medical staff. Needing rest, prevention and treat guests / tourists receive the requested service in a wide range (both socially vulnerable and higher purchasing customers) but dozens of spa buildings do not operate (over 1500 beds, including beds in Krasnovski mineralni bani resort) mainly due to the lack of a business initiative.

- ***Rural and Ecotourism***

These alternative forms of tourism in the clean and preserved environment and/or in rural areas are related to environmental protection and knowledge of nature, lifestyle, traditions and culture, with bird watching, observations on the behavior of wild animals, interesting and useful plant species. The segment has an excellent resource base in the whole municipality (4 protected areas) but still not well developed. Chalets need updating and advertising. There are places with difficult access, and marking is old and insufficient. There are no attractive trails, view places for rest and observation of birds and animals. There are no adequate and well-trained mountain guides.

The tourism product is bound to stay in preserved rural environment (reserved life, traditions and customs of the local population); with the study of traditional crafts, folk songs and dances; with tastings of domestic wines and Bulgarian cuisine; participation in household chores farmers, but human resources and entrepreneurial spirit lack.

Specialized types of tourism are not yet well developed but there are very good prerequisites for development - beautiful villages in the foothills of the Central Forest (Belovitsa, Krasnovo, Krastevich, Malo Krusevo, Mihiltsi, Matenitsa, Novo Jelezare, Panicheri, Staro Jelezare, Starosel, Chernichevo) with old houses, preserved traditions and rich history. In Staro Jelezare there is a "house of traditions" – an exposition and demonstration center for local traditions and crafts.

The strategic location of the municipality (the tourist flow from Hisarya for Starosel and Koprivshtica) serves as a basis for the promotion of patriarchal Bulgarian spirit. It is envisaged that part of the local population will participate in specialized training under the European programs providing opportunities for additional income and employment situation of young people in the municipality.

- ***Cultural and cognitive tourism***

The presence of the archaeological reserve from the Roman period in Hisarya and the Thracian temple in the village of Starosel are the basis of this type of

tourism. Additionally, there should be also added other archaeological sites, churches, folklore and traditions. Much of the objects need conservation, proper exposure and publicity measures to enhance their attractiveness. As new elements of cultural tourism stand winery and picking in Starosel.

- ***Congress tourism***

Congress tourism suitable and profitable for comprehensive resource facilities. Hisarya offers very good conditions for congresses, seminars and business meetings - shelter, meals, extra services. The segment needs to attract international organizers of constant congress events; improve the organization of protocol requirements and the quality of service; as well as additional proposals for accompanying sports and entertainment programs.

- ***Hunting tourism***

This part of the tourism product is represented by hunting and fishing associations. They have a very good hunting grounds, equipment and guides. The municipality has over 50 water reservoirs which offer excellent conditions for fishing. For the successful development of the hunting tourism it is necessary to combine this with other segment of the tourist product of the municipality, as well as to organize an active information and advertising campaign on domestic and international markets.

SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis is designed to present a comprehensive picture of the state of tourism in the municipality of Hisarya.

STRENGTHS	***WEAKNESSES***
• Stored local customs and rituals - (Potentially attractive for guests of the municipality) • Excellent organization and experience in the local market for the usage of cultural heritage (to a large extent - archaeological monuments and to a lesser extent - local customs and folklore); • A significant degree of scientific certainty (long fruitful contacts with leading archaeologists and ethnographers with accumulated extensive research and a large database of local history, customs and culture); • Rich history and stored famous archaeological sites (national and international importance) built and stored material, organizational and personnel basis for the usage of archaeological heritage; • Forming reputation of the municipality as a place of interesting archaeological and cultural sites (and as a tourist destination of national and international importance).	• Poor communications to the archaeological monuments of the Thracian heritage - (missing fully developed technical infrastructure for visitors); • Insufficient state funding for archaeological monuments of the Roman heritage; • Fast decrease of the rural population – fading of the community center activities in the villages due to financial and personnel crisis • Lack of trained personnel to work on new sites of cultural heritage in Hissar (strong dependence on institutions and personnel from Sofia and Plovdiv);
OPPORTUNITIES	***THREATS***
• Enhance project activity under the Operational Programmes for access to EU funds for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage (especially - OP "Regional Development"); • Increased interest in archaeological, ethnographic and folklore tourism at home and abroad (including - in relation with the growth of the international spa tourism and the development of new forms of interaction with hotel and tour operators); • Any discovery of new archaeological sites and spas in the municipality; • Increased interest in buying property and for construction of housing in remote but interesting history and lifestyle sites;	• Enhanced advertising and public campaigns in favor of territorial settlement systems with similar cultural and historical potential and competitive tourist product (Koprivshtitsa, Strelcha, Sopot, Kazanlak, Kalofer, etc.); • Delay or denial of the project for the preservation, development and use of cultural and historical fund Hisar dependent on external global factors (units of central executive power, the administration of EU funds, hotel and tour operators, scientific institutions and public organizations and etc.); • Discredit of the individual monuments of cultural heritage (due to inappropriate advertising, commercial exploitation or investment and construction activity, etc.); • Significant damage to monuments (from treasure-hunting or natural disasters);

Based on the analysis we can deduce the following key and accompanying development priorities:

Key new tourist products of the municipality are:

- Folk, ethnographic, festival tourism;
- Cultural, archaeological and historical tourism;

Accompanying tourism products:

- Balneotourism;
- Ecotourism;
- Rural tourism;

Priority tourist products:

- Cultural tourism;
- Ecotourism;
- Rural tourism;

Accompanying tourism products:

- Alternative Tourism;
- Hunting tourism;
- "Valley of the Thracian kings and rulers" (along with Kazanlak, St. Zagora, N. Zagora)

Priority tourist products:

- Cultural and educational tourism;
- Archaeological tourism;
- Historical tourism;

Accompanying tourism products

- Urban educational tourism;

CONCLUSION

On the basis of all the presented data on key indicators and resources availability it can be summarized that:

- Hisarya municipality has serious interests in the diversification of its tourism products through rural and ecotourism, culinary, hunting and more alternative forms and through international programs for further training in tourism;
- The image of the tourist destination is built slowly and with difficulty in a fierce competition, but it is collapsed from the poor infrastructure and the low quality of services, and that cannot be compensated by the beautiful scenery and unique cultural heritage and folklore.
- The diversity of the tourist products and the quality of services should be a top priority for the sustainable development of tourism.

By 2020, the municipality of Hissar has to build a new vision of the tourist market - an advanced and sought after destination for domestic and international tourism, offering high quality tourist services in various forms of spa, congress and cultural-historical, rural, mountain, ecological and hunting tourism - with modern technical and social infrastructure, with preserved natural environment and cultural heritage, with rich cultural life and good standard of living for its citizens.

References

1. Communication from the Commission - Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism /*COM/2007/0621 final*/.
2. Europe 2020: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_bg.htm
3. European Regional Development Plan: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/erdf/
4. Hadzhinikolov, H. Ikonomika na hotelierstvoto i restorantyorstvoto. Sofiya, 2003.
5. Municipal plan for development of the Municipality of Hisarya: http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=237
6. Municipality of Hisarya: http://www.hisar.bg/new_web_sait/news.php
7. Neshkov, M. Krizite v turizma i vazmozhni protivodeystviya. //Turizmat – predizvikatelstva v usloviyata na ikonomicheska kriza. NBU, Sofiya, 2011.
8. Neshkov, M. Turisticheska politika - istoricheski transformatsi, savremenno sastoyanie i nasoki za razvitie v Balgariya. UI Varna, 2012.
9. NSI //Natsionalen spravochnik za oblast Plovdiv – ot 1998 do 2011.
10. Peev, P. Ikonomika na turizma, UI „P. Hilendarski”, Plovdiv, 2008.
11. Peev, P., S. Timareva. Evropeyski sayuz za razvitieto na turizma v Republika Balgariya za perioda 2007-2013 godina //VUARR, Plovdiv, 2012.
12. Ribov, M. Turizmat v erata na kachestvoto. Trakiya-M, Sofiya, 2003.
13. Shopova, I., Arabska, E. 2013. Sustainable tourism development in rural areas, 4th International Conference of Economic Sciences; Quality of Life, Sustainability and Locality; 9-10 May 2013 – Kaposvár University - Kaposvár – Hungary, 535-546.
14. Tadarakov, D. Biznes turizmat i delovite komunikatsii. //Ikonomika na infrastrukturata – UNSS, br. 4, Sofiya, 2011.
15. Terziev, V., Arabska, E. 2015a. Encouragement of lifelong for capacity building and development of mountain regions. Прорывные экономические реформы в условиях риска и неопределенности. Сборник статей Международной научно-практической конференции 31 января 2015 г. Уфа АЭТЕРНА 2015, 14-26.
16. Terziev, V., Arabska, E. 2015b. Contemporary challenges of building competences through life-long learning in mountain regions. International Conference Sustainable mountain regions: make them work, May 2015, 110-116.
17. Terziev, V., Arabska, E. 2015c. Opportunities of establishment of destination management and marketing organizations in Bulgaria. Journal of economic development, environment and people (JEDEP), Volume 4, Issue 2, 49-60.
18. Terziev, V., Arabska, E. 2015d. Application of the concept of lifelong learning in Bulgaria. Seventh International Scientific Conference KNOWLEDGE FOR CAPABILITIES AND SKILLS, 4-6 December, 2015, Bansko, Bulgaria, International Journal Knowledge, Scientific Papers, Vol. 11/1. 2015, 44-55.
19. Terziev, V., Arabska, E., Grigorova, Z. 2015. Sustainable practices in agriculture and tourism activities in mountain regions. International Conference Sustainable mountain regions: make them work, May 2015, 19-24.
20. Timareva, S., Arabska, E., Shopova, I. 2015. Role of destination management and marketing organizations in regional development. Trakia Journal of Sciences, Vol. 13, Suppl. 1, 96-102.
21. Tonchev, Ts., S. Mileva. Planirane i razvitie na turizma. Tiliya Buks, Sofiya, 2006.
22. Tonchev, Ts., Strategiya za ustoychivo razvitie na balgarskiya turizam za perioda 2005-2010 g. Sofiya, 2004.