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Original Contribution

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SOME SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to compare the growth of rural tourism in some selected European countries and to describe opportunities for increasing the efficiency in transition countries and especially in Bulgaria. To achieve this the following tasks will be carried out: focusing on changes; problems in developing the business in recent years; problems caused by rural location; solutions of problems and the future of the industry. Based on the different trends in development, a comparative analysis and conclusions have been made and some suggestions given.

Key words: Evaluation of correlations, Rural tourism development, European countries

INTRODUCTION

There are many opportunities for and barriers to development of rural tourism (1) Rural tourism is quite often seen as a solution for the problems of rural areas like, for example, the impoverishment of the rural population and the migration into cities. Over some decades rural tourism has developed very significantly in many rural areas in Western European countries. After the political changes in Central and Eastern European Countries the marked economy has begun to develop in many areas including the rural areas. Using the experience of Western European countries the countries in transition could develop rural tourism business more efficiently.

The aim of this paper is to compare the development of rural tourism in selected European countries and to describe opportunities for increasing the efficiency in transition countries and especially in Bulgaria. To achieve this the following will be done: focusing on changes; problems in developing the business in recent years; problems caused by rural location; solutions to problems and the future of the industry.
The primary method is comparative analysis of selected countries. The basis of comparisons was ranks of frequent response and correlations between them. Kendall's coefficient of concordance and Spearman correlation coefficient were the analytical tools. Correlations measure how variables or ranks orders are related. SPSS software was used.

The reality of rural tourism entrepreneurs depend much on the type of enterprise they are running, the area and the country where the enterprise is located and many other circumstances which have an influence on the enterprise in many different ways. This was the reason the questions had to be formulated in a way that they were understandable and answerable for all entrepreneurs in all countries and all areas. The questionnaire used in project was a structured "face to face" interview. The questionnaire was tested in a pilot study and improved before starting the survey.

This paper considers 108 questions, which were divided into 6 parts covering the following topics:

- The characteristics of the enterprise;
- Main change of business since 1990;
- Problems in developing the business since in recent years;
- Problems caused by rural location;
- Solutions of problems;
- The future of the enterprise.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Characteristics of the Enterprise

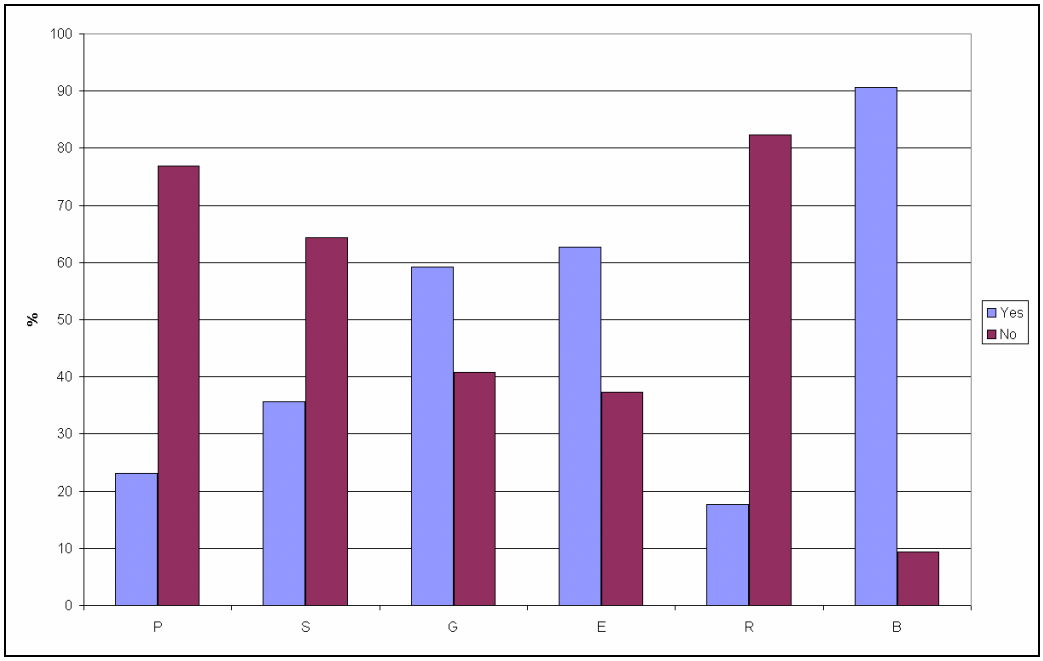
Rural tourism is the industry that can help overcome economic crisis and facilitate a steady economic growth. The rural tourism is favoured by geographic location, climate and spas, sand coastline and varied mountains, unique cultural and historical heritage, preserved ethnic peculiarities and traditions, the existing recreational facilities and trained personnel, and the available areas in eco-regions (2).

Economic benefits for entrepreneurs of rural tourism can be found in the trend of diverse visitors; additional activities exist also, like attending and participating in local folk holidays, riding, visiting architecture and ethnographic complexes, monasteries and churches, organizing picnics (3).

Most of all respondent entrepreneurs were between 31 and 44 years (38.2 %) and between 45 and 59 years (38,0 %) old (age of the respondents (102)). In Romania the biggest age group, compared with the age of the respondents in the other countries, was younger than 30 years (20.0 %). In the UK more respondents were older than 60 years (21.3 %) compared with the age of the respondents in the other countries.

Main Changes to Business since 1990

About half of the enterprises changed. Most often enterprises in Bulgaria changed since 1990 while Romanian enterprises changed a lot fewer in all types of areas and all types of enterprises. Enterprises in the old European countries changed more often than enterprises in the new European countries (**Figure 1**).



Note: P – Portugal, S – Spain, G – Germany, E – England and Wells, R – Romania, B – Bulgaria
Source: OPTOUR
Figure 1: *Implementation of Changes*

The enterprises were most often enlarged (24,6 %) and renovated respectively modernized (23,6 %). In Romania enlargements were never mentioned as a change. Renovations and modernizations played a more important role as changes of the enterprise in Portugal and Spain than in other European countries. The most often undertaken kind of change in Romania was to give the enterprise a new legal organization (40.0 %) (**Table 1**). The reasons for the changes were most often that the offer was antiquated, that it was the demand of the guests (trend and capacity) and that the attractiveness of the enterprise should be increased to resist the competition. In the CEEC and Portugal the reason for the undertaken changes was less often that the offer was antiquated than in the other countries. Also the increase of attractiveness to resist the competition and the demand of the guests (capacity) did not very often play a role for the changes in the CEEC. The most often mentioned reason for the undertaken changes in Romania is the demand of the guests (trend) and in Bulgaria the general economic situation.

Table 1: *Main Changes to Business since 1990*

	Portugal		Spain		Germany		England and Wells		Romania		Bulgaria		Total Ranks
Changes	F*	R**	F	R	F	R	F	R	F	R	F	R	
Conversion/modification	0	13.5	1	6	13	3	7	4	0	13	8	4	43.5
Enlargement	10	2	8	2	26	1	22	1	0	13	33	1	20
Renovation/ modernization	11	1	21	1	25	2	11	2.5	2	4	25	2.5	13
New business unit	3	4	0	14	7	5	2	11.5	0	13	3	7	54.5
Quite business unit	0	13.5	0	14	4	6.5	0	19	0	13	0	18	84
New location	0	13.5	0	14	3	9	0	19	0	13	0	18	86.5
New additional offer	8	3	0	14	10	4	11	2.5	0	13	1	12	48.5
Reduction in staff	0	13.5	0	14	1	15.5	4	7.5	0	13	4	6	69.5
New legal organization	0	13.5	0	14	2	12	1	15.5	6	1	0	18	74
Specialization	0	13.5	0	14	4	6.5	1	15.5	0	13	5	5	67.5
Changed the structure of offer	0	13.5	1	6	3	9	2	11.5	1	5	1	12	57
Reduction of the offer	1	6	0	14	3	9	2	11.5	0	13	1	12	65.5
Increased the staff	0	13.5	0	14	2	12	1	15.5	0	13	1	12	80
New building	0	13.5	1	6	1	15.5	0	19	0	13	0	18	85
Improvement/ standard increased	2	5	7	3	2	12	6	5.5	3	2.5	1	12	40
Change of target group	0	13.5	0	14	1	15.5	4	7.5	0	13	1	12	75.5
Customers flow decreased	0	13.5	0	14	0	19	3	9	0	13	25	2.5	71
Experience increased	0	13.5	0	14	0	19	2	11.5	0	13	2	8	79
Buying of business	0	13.5	0	14	0	19	1	15.5	0	13	0	18	93
Others	0	13.5	2	4	1	15.5	6	5.5	3	2.5	1	12	53
Total Ranks		210		210		210		210		210		210	1260

Note: F - Frequent Respond, R** - Rank*
Source: OPTOUR and own calculations

Relation between ranks of selected European countries was evaluated. Kendal's coefficient of concordance was 0,094. It showed very weak relations between main changes since 1990 in analysed countries.

Ranks were estimated using the Spearmen's correlation coefficients of selected countries (**Table 2**). The highest correlations between Western European countries were Portugal and Germany (0,626), Portugal and England (0,597), Spain and England (0,534). But the most significant correlation (0,679) was between Bulgaria and England. The correlations between changes in Bulgaria and all Western European countries were relatively high but were negative only with Romania. It means that during transition period the changes in Bulgarian rural tourism followed those in Western European countries more closely than did Romania.

Table 2: *Matrix of Spearmen's correlation coefficients of main changes to business*

		Portugal	Spain	Germany	England and Wells	Romania	Bulgaria
Portugal	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.401*	.626**	.597**	.126	.387*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.040	.002	.003	.298	.046
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
Spain	Correlation Coefficient	.401*	1.000	.339	.534**	.527**	.303
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.040	.	.072	.008	.009	.097
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
Germany	Correlation Coefficient	.626**	.339	1.000	.333	.004	.333
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.002	.072	.	.076	.493	.076
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
England and Wells	Correlation Coefficient	.597**	.534**	.333	1.000	.218	.679**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.003	.008	.076	.	.178	.000
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
Romania	Correlation Coefficient	.126	.527**	.004	.218	1.000	-.125
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.298	.009	.493	.178	.	.299
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20
Bulgaria	Correlation Coefficient	.387*	.303	.333	.679**	-.125	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.046	.097	.076	.000	.299	.
	N	20	20	20	20	20	20

*· Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed).

**· Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed).

Source: OPTOUR and own calculations

Problems in Developing Business in Recent Years

The proportions of business that experienced problems in their development in recent years was: Portugal 69%, Spain 25%, England and Wales 63%, Germany 37%, Bulgaria 70%, and Romania 33%. The most often encountered problems were to do with finances and the lack of guests as shown on **Table 3** while across all the countries the three main problems identified (in terms of frequency) were: financial strains, few guests, and the staff situation.

Table 3: *The problems in developing the business (percentage of respondents in brackets)*

Portugal	Spain
The staff situation (20%) The seasonal variations in the number of guests (16%) Finances (10%)	Stress and the workload (19%) The seasonal variations in the number of guests (19%). Lack of guests (15%)
England and Wales	Germany
The pressure of costs (20%) Lack of guests (14%) Natural disaster (13%)	The staff situation (11%) Lack of guests (19%) Stress and workload (9%)
Bulgaria	Romania
The general economic situation (14%) The bad prices (12%) Finance (16%)	Finances (63%) Competition with other areas (4%) General economic situation (4%)

Source: OPTOUR

According to frequent responses and ranks the Kendal's coefficient of concordance was very weak (0.064). The correlations between ranks of problems are shown on **Table 4**.

Table 4: *Matrix of Spearmen's correlation coefficients of problems in developing the business*

		Portugal	Spain	Germany	England and Wells	Romania	Bulgaria
Portugal	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.495**	.254	.132	-.089	.146
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.004	.100	.257	.329	.234
	N	27	27	27	27	27	27
Spain	Correlation Coefficient	.495**	1.000	.560**	.263	.049	.354*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.004	.	.001	.092	.404	.035
	N	27	27	27	27	27	27
Germany	Correlation Coefficient	.254	.560**	1.000	.225	.297	.409*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.100	.001	.	.130	.066	.017
	N	27	27	27	27	27	27
England and Wells	Correlation Coefficient	.132	.263	.225	1.000	.111	.010
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.257	.092	.130	.	.290	.480
	N	27	27	27	27	27	27
Romania	Correlation Coefficient	-.089	.049	.297	.111	1.000	.472**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.329	.404	.066	.290	.	.006
	N	27	27	27	27	27	27
Bulgaria	Correlation Coefficient	.146	.354*	.409*	.010	.472**	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.234	.035	.017	.480	.006	.
	N	27	27	27	27	27	27

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed).

Source: OPTOUR and own calculations

The problems in developing the business were closer in Spain and Germany (0,560), Spain and Portugal (0,495). The most significant correlations of problems in Bulgarian development of business were with Romania (0,472), Germany (0,409) and Spain (0,354).

Problems of Rural Location

In all countries, apart from Romania, the rural location of the business was seen as a problem by the majority of the respondents: Portugal 76%, Spain 54%, England and Wales 74%, Germany 57%, Bulgaria 68%, and Romania 31%.

The problems, caused due to the rural location of the enterprise, were most often indicated as problems with regard to the infrastructure and the traffic, that the enterprises were too distant and a range of other problems as shown on **Table 5**.

Estimated concordance of problems caused by rural location in selected European countries (**Table 6**) was weak (0.045). Bulgaria has high correlations of problems with Spain (0.543), Portugal (0.468) and Germany (0.431).

Table 5*: Problems caused by rural location (percentage of respondents in brackets)*

Portugal	Spain
Roads (12%) Staffing (14%) Promotion needed (10%)	Too distant (16%) Far from suppliers (33%) Price level (9%) Infrastructure traffic (9%)
England and Wales	Germany
Building restrictions (20%) Infrastructure traffic (15%) Remoteness of roads (13%)	Infrastructure traffic (10%) Short of offers (4%0 Too distant (3%)
Bulgaria	Romania
Infrastructure traffic (18%0 Too distant (7%) Reduction in guest numbers (8%)	Infrastructure traffic (25%) Promotion needed (9%) Financing (6%) Variation in guest numbers (6%) Authorities/bureaucracy (6%)

Source: OPTOUR

Table 6: *Matrix of Spearmen's correlation coefficients of problems caused by rural location*

		Portugal	Spain	Germany	England and Wells	Romania	Bulgaria
Portugal	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.496**	.378**	.053	.327*	.468**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.001	.010	.376	.023	.002
	N	38	38	38	38	38	38
Spain	Correlation Coefficient	.496**	1.000	.378**	.255	.400**	.543**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	.	.010	.061	.006	.000
	N	38	38	38	38	38	38
Germany	Correlation Coefficient	.378**	.378**	1.000	.174	.348*	.431**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.010	.010	.	.148	.016	.003
	N	38	38	38	38	38	38
England and Wells	Correlation Coefficient	.053	.255	.174	1.000	.162	-.003
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.376	.061	.148	.	.165	.493
	N	38	38	38	38	38	38
Romania	Correlation Coefficient	.327*	.400**	.348*	.162	1.000	.174
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.023	.006	.016	.165	.	.148
	N	38	38	38	38	38	38
Bulgaria	Correlation Coefficient	.468**	.543**	.431**	-.003	.174	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.002	.000	.003	.493	.148	.
	N	38	38	38	38	38	38

**. Correlation is significant at the .01 level (1-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed).

Source: OPTOUR and own calculations

Solutions of Problems

The ways that the entrepreneurs most often solve such problems were to work by themselves and to do promotional work (**Table 7**).

Table 7: *Solutions to problems caused by rural location (percentage of respondents in brackets)*

Portugal	Spain
Promotion (19%) Own work (21%) Look for qualified staff (10%)	Get the goods myself (44%) Own work (33%) Dispute (11%)
England and Wales	Germany
Promotion (17%) Infrastructure (14%) Construction (19%)	Maintain contacts (12%) Promotion (18%) Get goods myself (9%) Our own offers to guests (9%)
Bulgaria	Romania
Own work (28%) Price policy (12%) Promotion (9%) Construction (9%)	Get goods myself (33%) Financial expenses (22%)

Source: OPTOUR

The Kendal's coefficient was 0,076, i.e. the concordance of solutions was very week but was relatively higher than concordances of problems in developing the business and caused by rural location. The Spearmen's correlation coefficients were significant between Spain and England (0,424) and Romania (0,355). The coefficient between Bulgaria and Romania was significant too but negative (-0,371). Bulgarian solutions of problems were closer to Germany, Portugal and England (see **Table 8**).

The Future of the Enterprise

In the next years only about 20 % of all entrepreneurs will retire. Most often owners or managers in Bulgaria will retire in the next years and less often owners or managers in

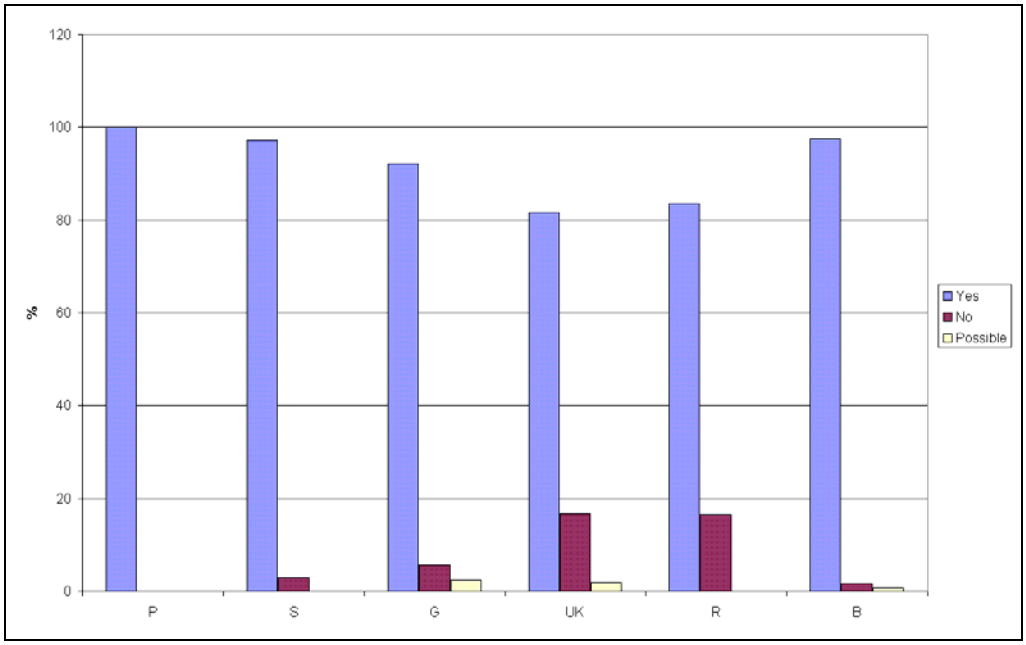
Spain will retire. Those owners or managers who will retire in the next years do mostly have no successor. Most of all enterprises will be continued in the next years. In the UK (81,5 %) and in Romania (83,5 %) fewer entrepreneurs than in the other countries will continue with the enterprises in the next years (**Figure 2**).

Table 8: *Matrix of Spearmen's correlation coefficients of solutions to problems*

		Portugal	Spain	Germany	England and Wells	Romania	Bulgaria
Portugal	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.218	.067	-.096	.046	.285
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.159	.381	.332	.417	.094
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23
Spain	Correlation Coefficient	-.218	1.000	.096	.424*	.355*	.034
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.159	.	.332	.022	.048	.438
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23
Germany	Correlation Coefficient	.067	.096	1.000	.205	.278	.306
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.381	.332	.	.174	.099	.078
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23
England and Wells	Correlation Coefficient	-.096	.424*	.205	1.000	.065	.242
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.332	.022	.174	.	.384	.133
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23
Romania	Correlation Coefficient	.046	.355*	.278	.065	1.000	-.371*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.417	.048	.099	.384	.	.041
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23
Bulgaria	Correlation Coefficient	.285	.034	.306	.242	-.371*	1.000
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.094	.438	.078	.133	.041	.
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (1-tailed).

Source: OPTOUR and own calculations



Note: P – Portugal, S – Spain, G – Germany, E – England and Wells, R – Romania, B – Bulgaria
Source: OPTOUR

Figure 2: *Continuation of the Enterprises in the next years*

The reasons, which were indicated most often for the continuation of the enterprises, were as follows: 1) because the enterprise runs well and 2) because of fun. That the enterprise runs well was the most often indicated reason in Portugal, the UK and Bulgaria; it was the second most often mentioned reason in Spain. The most often mentioned reason in Spain was that the respondents do not have an alternative. The fun was the most often mentioned reason in Germany and the second most often reason in Portugal. In Germany the

second most often mentioned reason was that the respondents do depend on the receipts of the offer while in Bulgaria the second most often indicated reason was the tradition. In Romania the most often mentioned reason was the developing potential. In the UK and Romania second most often reasons, which were grouped into the group "others", were indicated.

The most often mentioned reasons why the entrepreneurs will not continue with the operation of the enterprises were the financial tightness, the developing potential, the personal reason and some reasons, which were grouped into the group "others". In Portugal no reason was mentioned why the respondents will not continue with the operation of the enterprises. The most often mentioned reasons in Spain were personal reasons, in Germany the financial tightness as well as in Bulgaria, in the UK the developing potential, in Romania reasons, which were grouped into the group "others", were mentioned most often.

CONCLUSIONS

In European countries there have been many changes in rural tourism enterprises since 1990 and the most significant were in Bulgaria while Romanian enterprises changed a lot fewer in all types of areas and all types of enterprises.

The concordance of selected European countries was very weak in general, i.e. the coefficients of concordances showed that differences among countries were high. During decision-making process it is necessary to estimate and consider differences between them.

The correlations of main changes in business, problems in development, problems caused by rural location and solutions of problems for some of selected countries were significant. They showed common trends of rural tourism development.

In reference to Bulgarian rural tourism development the correlations of changes of business and problems of location were closer to Western European countries. Bulgarian enterprises had similar problems in development as Romanian but solutions of problems were too different. Responses from Bulgarian entrepreneurs have often given opposite solutions, i.e. they look for right decisions, which are closer to Western European countries.

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