

Coastal Tourism in Bulgaria in the Years of Transitional Economy

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Abstract

Bulgarian Black Sea coastal area is very important sector of Bulgarian economy. From geographical point of view, Bulgarian coastal zone is situated at the middle latitudes and due that has the mild continental climatic conditions. The coastline is comparatively straight one, the underwater relief is characterized by mild bottom slopes, but the shore is quite varied - lowlands, plains, dunes, benches and steep rocky cliffs. The golden beaches mainly composed of middle grain size sands, and favorable summertime wave climate supplies good conditions for developing of coastal tourism for a time period of about 110 days per year.

Nowadays at the Bulgarian coastal zone the interests of almost all-economic branches are focused. There are two main coastal cities with their industrial areas and commercial ports situated on the Black Sea Coast; they are Varna and Bourgas. Governmental interests in the coastal zone are mainly related with coastal resources exploration, as well as with border security measures.

The coastal tourism in Bulgaria has more than 100-years history. The first sea baths are equipped in 1890. In 1926 about 1,100 foreign tourists visited Varna. But coastal tourism in Bulgaria reaches the international standards and attains importance for the Bulgarian economy in the last 30 years. This result is obtained due to long term and large-scale governmental policy, having in mind that the export potential of country can be really extended by developing of quantitative tourist production.

In the beginning of transitional economy period (i.e. around 10 years ago), the situation with Bulgarian coastal tourism was as follows:

- coastal tourism operates with about 60% of the national hotels capacity, and gives about 80% of financial profit of the branch;
- there were 8 well developed resorts (one of them for children tourism) with capacity about 70,000 beds, mainly directed to serve the foreign tourists;
- Bulgarian citizens can spend holidays in another resort villages and children camps where conditions significantly differed from these for foreign tourists.

Analysis of the reasons, factual information, tendencies, practice, and problems in coastal tourism in the years of transitional economy is presented in the report. It is indicated that a number of international, as well as internal economic causes lead to dropping out of major governmental tourist corporations in parallel with changes of tourist market structure. Another problems are related to lack of high investor's interests, and the need of increasing of recreation facilities, as well as improving of qualification of peoples, who work in tourism industry.

The problems arose find decision in number of measures adopted by Bulgarian Government, local regional administrations, commercial companies - direct or indirect participating in tourist service, and NGOs.

Special attention is paid to the attempts of private tourist company "M & 999" in realization of the new principles of management by children coastal camps. The common features, as well as the specific problems are analyzed in the report in comparison with a model for management of coastal hotel - club, addressed to family recreation.

The children camp "Obzor - Ug" was developed as an international youth and children center, where so cold "all inclusive" kind of service is applying. In organizational work (in comparison with model of hotel - club) the main peculiarity finds expression in existing of a large developed department, named "Educational Activities and Entertainment". The goal of it is to supply various amusements for the guests of children camp in parallel with educational activities, including ecological education.

Common and specific problems and barriers accompany activity of private tourist companies in the years of transitional economy. The decision of few of them was obtained due the establishment of the NGO "Bulgarian Coastal Association" (BCA). Established in 1996, BCA develops the library and database concerning coastal zone management problems. Two international conferences "Port, Coast, Environment" and "Care for nature is care for future population" were held in 1997 and 1998 respectively. The BCA members took part in national and international conferences and "Coastal green school" activities. A handbook for animations in a children camp is prepared. The practical results of BCA elaboration in coastal tourism are implemented in the operation of "M & 999" Co.