

## Models of Rural Tourism Development in Mountain Villages

### *Dağ Köylerinde Kırsal Turizm Gelişim Modelleri*

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**Abstract:** *The approach to derive models of tourism development in three studied villages in a border mountainous region of Bulgaria adheres to some known literature models - the tourism system of tourist destinations (Marinov, 2003) and other models of tourism development - Vodenska (2004), Gunn (1998) and others. It is based on a comparison against a set of 25 characteristics for which it is assumed they may show differences. The leading factors that determine the specificity of development are the basis for the distribution of characteristics selected for analysis in the following groups: status of the village and population characteristics, tourism supply, tourism demand, local environment, management and marketing of tourism. Despite the similar stage of tourism development in the three villages they demonstrate differences that point to the existence of three different models relative to tourism development in terms of current business practices: 1) Visiting the locals – combination of elitist commercial tourism (in the houses of locals) with commercialized, institutionalized and professionalized tourism; 2) Typical hotel - commercialized tourism in collective accommodation establishments, tourists' contact with local people is minimized; 3) First stage of diffused hotel - non-institutional (non-commercialized) tourism, detached houses for accommodation of different ownership, with a common reception and servicing.*

**Key words:** *tourism development models, tourism development life cycle, tourism business practices.*

**Özet:** *Yaklaşımımız bazı bilinen modellere bağlı kalarak - turist destinasyonlarının turizm sistemi (Marinov, 2003) ve turizm gelişiminde diğer modeller - Vodenska (2004), Gunn (1998) ve diğerleri - Bulgaristan'ın dağlık bir bölgesinin sınırındaki üç köyde turizm gelişim modelleri üretmek şeklinde olmuştur. Farklılıkları yansıtacağı düşünülen 25 özelliğin karşılaştırılması temel alınmıştır. Kalkınmayı yansıtan başlıca faktörler, analiz için seçilen başlıkların özellikleri temel alınarak saptanmıştır. Bunlar, köylerin statüsü ve nüfus özellikleri, turizm teşviği, turizm gereksinimi, yerel çevre, turizm pazarlaması ve yönetimidir. Turizm gelişimi bakımından üç köy aynı aşamada olmasına rağmen günümüz iş uygulamaları bakımından üç farklı modele göre değişiklikler göstermektedirler. Bunlar: 1) Yerel halkı ziyaret - profesyonelleşmiş, kurumsallaşmış ve ticarileşmiş elitist turizm kombinasyonu (yerel halkın evlerinde); 2) Tipik otel - toplu konaklama tesislerinde ticarileşmiş turizm, turistlerin yerel halkla ilişkisi en düşük seviyededir; 3) Yaygın otelleşmenin ilk evresi - kurumsal olmayan (ticarileşmemiş) turizm, ortak resepsiyon ve hizmetleri olan farklı kişilerin sahibi olduğu konaklamaya ayrılmış evlerdir.*

**Anahtar sözcükler:** *turizm gelişim modelleri, turizm gelişiminin yaşam döngüsü, turizm iş uygulamaları.*

### 1. Introduction

The three surveyed villages – Kovachevitsa, Leshten and Dolen, are situated in the southwestern corner of the Bulgarian part of the Rhodope Mountains in Blagoevgrad administrative region, near the boundary with Greece. They are located in two neighboring municipalities (Garmen and Satovcha) and a short distance from one another, which explains the similar context of their tourism development (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Geographical location of Kovachevitsa, Leshten and Dolen

The three villages fall in the border area with Greece, which has long been in a deep socio-economic exclusion and has no tradition in tourism development. Its potential, however, radically changed since the early 90's, especially after the opening of the Ilinden-Exohi border check-point at the end of 2005, Bulgaria's membership in the EU since 2007, and the expected drop of border control between Bulgaria and Greece after Bulgaria's integration into the Schengen zone. The favorable assessment of the tourism prospects of the settlements in the region is also due to the improvement of the road infrastructure along the Mesta River valley and the dynamic development of international resorts in this part of the country (Bansko, Dobrinishte etc.).

However, the surveyed villages are far from large cities - centers of tourism demand. They are located in a rural area with mountainous nature of the terrain, which determines their economic backwardness and the leading role of agriculture and forestry in the local economy. Another consequence of the location is the decrease and aging of the population, the trend of depopulation being particularly characteristic for the settlements with Christian population, including the surveyed villages, especially Leshten.

All the three villages have preserved their outlook from the Revival period and are rich in cultural heritage. For that reason two of them (Dolen and Kovachevitsa) are declared architectural and historical reserves. At the same time they are all located among the picturesque, well-preserved natural environment of the Western Rhodopes. Their specific appearance, combined with the development of small and medium businesses lead to their gradual transformation into tourist centers with a regional identity, offering a blend of cultural, rural and eco-tourism product not only for domestic but also the international market.

Despite their growing popularity and the overall impression of successful business development and interesting management practices there have been no surveys of the quantitative and qualitative parameters of supply and demand in the three tourist centers, as well as of the approaches and attitudes

of stakeholders towards the management and marketing of tourism at the destination to provide the necessary information for identifying the models of their tourism development.

The aim of the paper is to develop (adapt) and test a research model for identifying models of rural tourism development – in terms of life cycle phases and current business practices.

The starting hypothesis is that despite their clear similarity in available resource potential, the three villages show specific differences in the pattern of their tourism development and are in various stages of their lifecycle.

## **2. Material and methodology**

The scope of the study is based on existing models of the system of tourism and tourism destinations (e.g. Marinov, 2003; Vodenska, 2004; Gunn, 1988, etc.) as well as destinations' lifecycle and the related impacts of tourism (Butler, 1980; Buhalis, 2000, etc.).

The approach applied to derive models of tourism development is based on comparing a set of 25 characteristics for which it is assumed that the three villages may show differences. Leading factors which determine the specifics of the development are the basis for the distributing of characteristics selected for analysis in the following groups:

- *Status of the village and demographic characteristics - the status of the village (whether reserve or not) is the reason for attracting attention and provoking interest to visit and is responsible for the boost in their tourist development, while the number and characteristics of the population identify viability of the settlements, tourism development opportunities and the availability of labor force or the tourist sites.*
- *Tourism supply - this group of characteristics is set to highlight the main types of tourist resources, respectively the potential types of tourism to be developed in the three villages, the available accommodation facilities, their ownership and management and the fulfilled investments in the development of supply.*
- *Tourism demand - the characteristics of tourism demand should give an idea of the number of tourists and nights spent by them and would help to identify the type of tourists who are the main users of these settlements and their origin, purpose and motivation to visit the villages, length of stay and other parameters of the segments.*
- *Local environment - the local environment from the point of view of the tourists is part of the local tourism product. With particular importance to product quality are the degree of urbanization of villages and the state of general infrastructure in order to ensure key components of tourism supply.*
- *Management and marketing of tourism - the interaction of all local actors (individual owners, businesses, non-governmental and public sector) are the basis for successful tourism development, so their joint activities (including marketing of villages) and especially the support on behalf of local administrations stimulate or inhibit its development.*

The chronological approach is applied to study the path of development in comparative terms and the key points in the tourist development of the three villages are tracked by years (periods).

The methodology of the study is based on the combined use of different methods of collection, processing and analysis of information on the development and management of tourism at the local level, taking into account their strengths, weaknesses and limitations. The specific methods that have been applied in the study include:

- *Review and systematization of the literature and internet resources, planning documents, official statistics at regional and municipal levels, collecting information from local authorities and organizations involved in the development of tourism in the three villages;*

- *Questionnaire survey among entrepreneurs in tourism to establish the quantitative and qualitative parameters of tourism supply and demand in the studied villages, and also the applied business practices in product development and marketing (Dogramadjieva, 2012);*
- *Interviews with "key informants" (primarily local tourism development entities representatives), to study the perceptions about tourism development, the experience in managing tourism on public level and the attitudes of different actors towards cooperation and partnership (Marinov, 2012);*
- *Mathematical and statistical methods for processing quantitative information;*
- *Scientific analysis and synthesis of primary and secondary information.*

### **3. Research findings**

Summary overview of past and current tourism development in Kovachevitsa, Leshten and Dolen is presented chronologically (Annex 1) and on comparative basis against the set of 25 characteristic features, discussed above (Annex 2). Among the three villages differences are identified, but they have one thing in common – famous persons have “discovered” them to the public and played an important role in their tourism development.

Kovachevitsa gained its popularity in the early 70s when prominent persons of arts and culture, including writers (Georgi Danailov), scriptwriters and cameramen (Radoslav Spassov) use the village as a natural background of emblematic Bulgarian movies. At the same time, university lecturers and students in architecture began visiting the village every summer to sketch and photograph its unique houses. Gradually many intellectuals started buying and restoring houses for second homes. The announcement of the village an architectural and historical reserve in 1977 served as an impetus for tourism development. An old house after restoration was converted into an accommodation facility, which functioned until the late 90's. Since the mid-90s a number of other houses were restored and adapted for tourists. Buying houses either for villas or for investment purposes continues to this day, and in recent years the interest is not only from Bulgarians but also from foreigners.

Leshten appears on the tourist map in 1994, when the non-resident entrepreneur Michael Marinov bought a total of 15 houses in the depopulating village and turned them into a tourist village. A few years later the famous Bulgarian writer and poet Boris Hristov and his wife – the artist Darina Hristova settled in Leshten. They founded a small art gallery and built an amphitheater for outdoor performances, which often hosts famous art representatives. In recent years many of the houses were purchased by Bulgarians and foreigners for second homes, retired residents are also returning to their inherited houses.

Dolen, similar to Kovachevitsa, became popular in the 70s, because of its use as a natural decor for famous Bulgarian films, and was also declared an architectural and historical reserve in 1977. Short after that an old house was restored for tourist purposes and was in operation as a guest house with a tavern. Restoration works were launched in other houses as well, but they ceased in the 80s after the death of Lyudmila Zhivkova (Minister of Culture and daughter of the communist leader Todor Zhivkov). Since the early 90's, many of the houses in the village were bought and restored by intellectuals, most of them for personal use, but some are developed to serve tourists.

Along with the differences in their historical development, many common features of the three villages are identified in terms of current tourism demand and supply (Dogramadjieva, 2012):

- *Small volume of tourism - in 2010 Leshten, Kovachevitsa and Dolen are visited by about 3,600 people who used commercial accommodation and have spent nearly 7,500 nights;*
- *A very small number of employees are engaged in tourist services: in Leshten - 11 people, in Dolen - 14 people and in Kovachevitsa - 29 people. In cases where the owners are involved in the provision of tourist services, the share of recruited staff is low, as is the case in*

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*Kovachevitsa (only 34% of the staff is recruited) and in Dolen. In Leshten where the facilities are only two, but relatively with more beds, the recruited staff is 91%. The above data suggests that in the three settlements tourism is still not seen as a serious occupation, despite the fact that for 40-60% of the employees in Dolen and Kovachevitsa, and for all employees in Leshten tourism is the main source of income.*

- *Over 60% of people employed in tourism in Dolen and Leshten are over 30 years of age, and in Kovachevitsa this share is 93%, with 15% of employees being over 65;*
- *Only 5-10% of the expenditure of the facilities for supply remains in the municipalities, where the villages are located. Purchase of goods occurs primarily in Gotse Delchev, less - in Blagoevgrad, Sofia and even Greece;*
- *Very low occupancy rate and utilization of the available accommodation facilities - from 3% (in Dolen) to 8% (in Kovachevitsa and Leshten);*
- *All officially categorized facilities in the three villages - both family-run hotels and guest-houses are categorized as "one star" facilities;*
- *The stay of foreigners in the settlements is usually part of a round-trip in Bulgaria (91-100%) or weekend trip (9 %). Bulgarians visit the villages and stay overnight mostly on weekends - 100% of the tourists in Leshten, over 80% of the tourists in Kovachevitsa and around 50% of the tourists in Dolen. In the last village about 40% of the visitors come for extended mountain vacation;*
- *Short average length of stay - about two days; only in Leshten, where apparently some tourists remain for three nights the average stay is 2.5 days.*

The lack of quantitative data for the entire historical period of tourism development in the three villages does not allow tracing precisely the dynamics of supply and demand. The curve of the number of tourists drawn on the basis of data for individual years, provisionally allows to determine the phase of the life cycle of tourism development of each of them (Figure 2). Generally for the three villages it can be said with certainty that in the middle of the 90s there was an increase in tourism demand, accompanied by the development of tourism supply. Some fluctuations are observed after 2007 in connection with the general stagnation caused by the economic and financial crisis. The graph also presents the potential number of tourists in the three villages, at the current length of stay if 30% annual occupancy rate of available beds is achieved (which is the average value of this indicator for the country). In this potential situation, the number of tourists in Kovachevitsa should reach at least 7,500 people, in Leshten - about 3,150 people, and in Dolen - about 6,200 people, which far exceed the current volume of demand.

Given the large investment for reparation and restoration of houses, including those adapted to provide tourist services, at the identified by the study levels of occupation and prices, it can be concluded that the payback period of this investment will be quite long. This also speaks for alleged excess of investment (cost) over income, which, along with the highlighted chart of trend sets the three villages in the initial phase of their life cycle - introducing and imposing on the market.

This conclusion is confirmed by the comparison with the features of the initial phase of the life cycle of destinations, defined by Buhalis (2000): the relatively small number of tourists, low growth rate of tourists and overnight stays, small capacity of accommodation facilities and low employment, entry of non-resident investors, circling unorganized visitors are welcomed as guests, low levels of employment and income, negligible use of intermediaries, less established socio-economic and environmental impacts - both positive and negative.

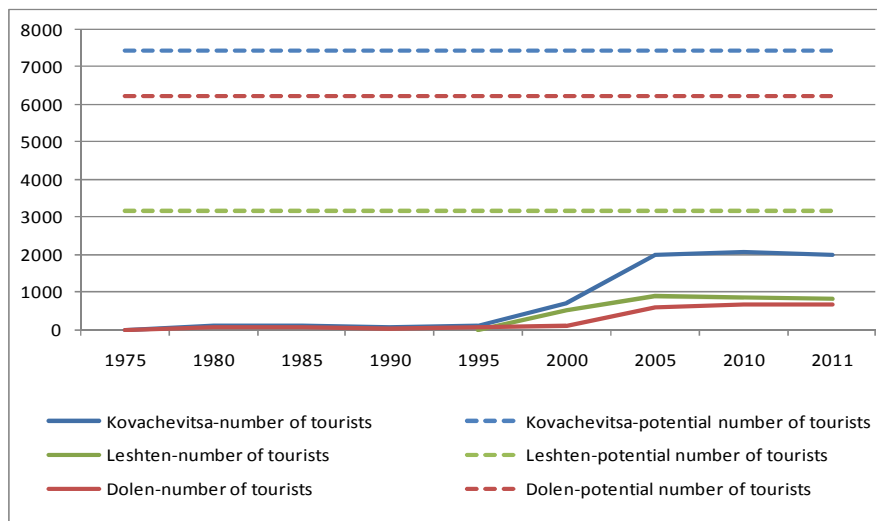


Figure 2. Number of tourists in Kovachevitsa, Leshten and Dolen (1975-2011)

#### 4. Discussion

The comparative analysis of tourism development of Kovachevitsa, Leshten and Dolen revealed a number of common characteristics: general context of development (periphery location, similar environmental conditions and tourist resources, etc.), low volume of tourism, low occupancy rate of accommodation facilities, negligible use of intermediaries, short stay of visitors, limited impacts of tourism, and similar phase in their life cycle. However, during the study some features were identified in the three villages that point to the existence of three relatively different models of tourism development in terms of current business practices. Generally, they can be presented by the following leading characteristics, which consequently determine the specificity in product development, pricing, use of intermediaries and their promotion (Table 1).

Table 1. Models of tourism development in Kovachevitsa, Leshten and Dolen

Kovachevitsa	Leshten	Dolen
<i>Visiting the locals</i>	<i>Typical hotelier business</i>	<i>First stage of diffused hotel*</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The suppliers of tourist services are mainly local individuals (physical bodies) and companies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The suppliers of tourist services are commercial enterprises only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The suppliers of tourist services are mainly non-local individuals (physical bodies) and companies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct involvement of owners in servicing tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The establishments operate as typical hotels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The owners are not present, employees are hired in limited cases</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tourists are treated like guests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no contact of tourists with local population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A few local hosts are delegated the right to manage the guest-houses and serve the tourists</li> </ul>

Kovachevitsa is in a process of forming as a place for elitist non-commercial tourism (in owned houses), combined with commercialized, institutionalized and professionalized tourism. Most of the restored houses are for family use as second homes/villas. There are 11 identified houses that are available to travelers. In 50% of the guest houses, the owners are engaged in servicing the guests. They carry out tourist activities as individuals whose receipts from tourism are considered as

\* diffused hotel - detached houses for accommodation of different ownership, with common reception and service

additional income. The other half of the guest houses are run as commercial enterprises, but again with the direct involvement of owners in tourist services provision. This allows visitors to feel like guests, becoming part of everyday life of local residents.

In Leshten the acquiring and restoring of houses in the village is for investment purposes or for their use as second homes. Two tourist facilities (hotels) of bigger capacity are identified – they both operate as commercial companies. The employees are not residents of the village. The hotelier service model is introduced - commercialized tourism in collective accommodation establishments, in which the contact of tourists to locals is minimized.

The tourism development of Dolen is exogenously determined and less commercialized model of development is evident. The restored houses for personal (family) use predominate. Tourists are accommodated in 16 houses – in two of them serving tourists engages owners, but there is recruited staff as well. The remaining houses are managed by three local residents, whom house owners have delegated the right to welcome, accommodate and provide other services to the tourists. The emergence of the model of diffused country hotel is witnessed, where accommodation is in separate family homes owned by different non-resident persons, but for which there is a general reception and service.

## **5. Conclusions**

As a result of the conducted survey of the three villages the following conclusions regarding the characteristics of tourism development can be made:

The results confirm the starting hypothesis that, despite the similarity in the location, resource potential and other factors of context and in several characteristics of tourism development, all three villages – Kovachevitsa, Leshten and Dolen, have specific patterns of tourism development. The most important common features include: peripheral position, changing evaluation of tourist-geographical location, economic backwardness and negative demographic trends, resource potential (a combination of cultural and natural resources favoring the development primarily of cultural, eco- and rural tourism), low volume of tourism (measured by the capacity of accommodation facilities, visitors and overnights), low occupancy rate of accommodation facilities, negligible use of intermediaries and the dominance of unorganized tourism, short stay of visitors, limited economic, social and environmental impacts of tourism. Similar is the importance of individual personalities (intellectuals and entrepreneurs) who "discovered" the sites and gave an impetus to tourism development. The main differences are related to emerging business practices. Kovachevitsa shows an interesting combination of elite commercial tourism (in owned houses) and commercialized tourism where servicing is carried out by the owners, tourists are treated and feel as guests, a very high proportion of repeat visits is registered (regular guests) and the village is considered a "prestigious site". Leshten developed as a place for commercial tourism with typical hotel service model and tourists have minimal contact with the locals. In Dolen tourism development is largely exogenous (non-resident owners of both houses and commercial sites for tourism), and in the provision of tourism services the diffused country hotel is emerging as a model, where a small number of local people welcome, accommodate and service guests in houses owned by different persons.

However, the results from the survey do not confirm the hypothesis that all three villages are in various stages of their lifecycle. Despite the different starting point and driving forces, the quantitative parameters and trends since the early 90's are similar and set the three villages in the initial phase of their life cycle - introducing and imposing on the market.

Differences found in tourism development are strong arguments for "caution" and evidence-based treatment of the typology of tourist sites and the need for carrying out detailed field studies of individual cases. It is advisable to test the developed study model in other areas of the country to see whether in other areas the same patterns of development will repeat or new versions of the discussed or entirely different models will be outlined. The further findings would help to develop a conceptual framework about rural tourism models in Bulgaria and compare them with the internationally recognized ones.

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Annex 1. Historical review of tourism development of Kovachevitsa, Leshten and Dolen	
Year	Kovachevitsa Leshten Dolen
1960	<p>Migrations of locals mainly to bigger towns – Plovdiv, Pazardzhik, Velingrad, Batak and others, because of lack of employment opportunities, many houses are abandoned.</p> <p>Migrations of locals, many houses are abandoned.</p> <p>Till 1960 the village has 2800 inhabitants, but gradually begins to decline.</p>
1970	<p>Metropolitan intellectuals start buying village houses for second home dwellings.</p> <p>Migration of locals and abandonment of the houses in the old part of the village.</p>
1975	<p>Discovery of the village for the movie industry and by the architectural community.</p> <p>Discovery of the village for the movie industry and shooting of many famous Bulgarian films.</p>
1980	<p>Announcing the village a reserve in 1977 and opening of an accommodation facility.</p> <p>Announcing the village a reserve in 1977. Construction of a hotel in local style began, which was discontinued in the early stages. A house was refurbished by Sofia Municipality and converted into accommodation facility.</p>
1990	<p>Lacks of substantial tourism demand, houses are bought mainly by intellectuals from Sofia. Abandoned houses start crumbling.</p> <p>Abandoned houses start crumbling; no further tourism development is traced.</p>
1995	<p>Opening of the first private guest-houses.</p> <p>The process of buying abandoned houses started, mainly by intellectuals from Sofia and the region.</p>
2000	<p>Increased tourism demand, joint efforts of local entrepreneurs, raised awareness of the village in Bulgaria and abroad.</p> <p>Restored houses are used by the new owners entirely as second homes. In rare cases the houses offer accommodation to tourists.</p>
2005	<p>Interest of businessmen to invest in the purchase, renovation and sale of properties, increased buying of real estate property, including on behalf of foreigners.</p> <p>In about 40 houses repairment began. Some of the houses were adapted to accommodate tourists. .</p>
2010	<p>Stagnation of tourism development due to lack of infrastructure improvement and worsening of the economic and financial environment. In total about 60 houses are restored.</p> <p>Completion of construction projects funded by companies and individuals from all over the country, some of them do not keep to the architectural style of the reserve.</p>
2011	<p>Stagnation in development, desire of some entrepreneurs in tourism to give up the activity; people serving the tourists (providing rooms and houses), are mostly adults (14% over 65 years); of about 20 guest-houses in operation few years ago, in 2011 only 11 are still open; very few abandoned houses haven't changed their owner; in rare cases new owners haven't yet begun to restore the houses.</p> <p>Decline in urbanization of the village and in attracting tourists; retention of the level of tourism demand; lack of basic tourist services and attractions. In 16 houses tourists are accepted.</p>

Annex 2. Comparative review of current tourism development of Kovachevitsa, Leshten and Dolen

№	Village		Dolen
	Characteristics	Kovachevitsa	
		<b>Status of the village and demographic characteristics</b>	
1	Status	In State Gazette № 73 of 1977 the village was declared a historical and architectural reserve.	In State Gazette № 73 of 1977 the village was declared a historical and architectural reserve. The reserve includes 70 monumental buildings.
2	Number and dynamics of population	The permanent population in 2011 was 42 people. The trend over the last 10 years shows reduction by 30%.	The large number of Bulgarian Muslims, characterized by high birth and occupation rate, is the reason for the higher number of population - about 370 people in 2011. The trend over the last 10 years shows reduction by 8.4%.
3	Ethno-confessional structure	The village has Bulgarian Christian population. In recent years in connection with the development of tourism Bulgarian Muslims from neighboring villages also settled here.	The village is ethnically mixed and dominated by Bulgarian Muslims. The village has both a church and a mosque.
4	Willingness for tourism development and assessment of the potential economic impact	Great willingness to develop tourism. Major economic contribution of tourism is expected.	Moderate willingness for tourism development. Moderate economic contribution of tourism is expected.
		<b>Tourism supply</b>	
5	Start up of tourism development	The village became famous in the early 70s when prominent intellectuals discovered it for cinema productions. Declaring it a reserve in 1977 gave an impetus to the development of tourism.	In the 70s, using the preserved distinctive houses as background, a lot of Bulgarian movies were shot here. In 1977 it was declared a reserve, followed by opening of some tourist facilities.
6	Driving forces of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Architects and filmmakers who explored the local architecture or used it as natural décor;</li> <li>• The announcement of the village as an architectural reserve;</li> <li>• Local and non-resident entrepreneurs developing tourism supply;</li> <li>• Bulgarians and foreigners buying houses for second homes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The announcement of the village as an architectural reserve;</li> <li>• Opening for movies shooting;</li> <li>• Local and non-resident entrepreneurs developing tourism supply;</li> <li>• Bulgarians and foreigners buying houses for second homes.</li> </ul>

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<b>№</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Village</b>	<b>Kovachevitsa</b>	<b>Leshten</b>	<b>Dolen</b>
7	Type variety and state of tourist resources	Bulgarian Renaissance houses, an old church and old school, street fountains. In the vicinity – chapel, Thracian sanctuary, river pool, "Dark Forest" nature reserve, eco-trails to Ribnovo, Dolen and Beslet. Some of the houses are crumbling, the eco-trails are not well maintained, the church needs restoration and the school-museum is closed.	Bulgarian Renaissance houses, old church and art gallery. In the vicinity – river pool, "Dark Forest" nature reserve, eco-trail to the river pool. Some of the houses are crumbling, others are under suspended reconstruction and streets are not well maintained.	Bulgarian Renaissance houses, an old church and street fountains. Eco-trail to Kovachevitsa. Marked trails from/to Trigrad and Dospat. The cobblestone streets are not well maintained, some of the houses are crumbling, the central square of the town hall is in bad condition and the church needs additional conservation.	
8	Livelihood and opportunities for rural tourism development	In the past – agriculture, animal breeding and construction. Today - logging, tourism, agriculture and animal breeding (goats, chickens). Only in some guest-houses tourists may engage in agricultural activities.	In the past - masonry, blacksmithing and mining of gold sand. Today - mainly tourism. Lack of inclusion of tourists in rural activities.	In the past - golden jewelry, transportation, weaving. Today - logging, mining tiles, tobacco growing, animal breeding, construction and tourism. Tourists may participate in certain local everyday activities.	
9	Leading types of tourism	Cultural, rural and eco-tourism	Cultural and eco-tourism	Nature-oriented (walking tours), rural and cultural tourism	
10	Capacity of accommodation facilities and occupancy rate	11 accommodation facilities with 129 beds in total. Occupancy rate – 8 %.	2 accommodation facilities with 72 beds in total. Occupancy rate – 8 %.	16 accommodation facilities with 119 beds in total. Occupancy rate – 3 %.	
11	Structure of the accommodation facilities	Two family-run hotels, the rest are guest-houses. 65 % of the facilities are with less than 10 beds.	One tourist village and one hotel with a tavern. The tourist village is with about 50 beds and the hotel falls in the group with 10-20 available beds.	One family-run hotel, the rest are guest houses. Almost 90 % of the facilities are with less than 10 beds.	
12	Price level 1 EUR = 1,95583 BGN (fixed rate)	The average minimum price per bed is 35 BGN, the absolute minimum price is 10 BGN and the maximum - 200 BGN. Strong polarization of pricing, orientation towards fundamentally different market segments.	The average minimum price per bed is 25 BGN, the absolute minimum price is 25 BGN and the maximum - 60 BGN.	The average minimum price per bed is 15 BGN, the absolute minimum price is 10 BGN and the maximum – 75 BGN.	
13	Ownership and management of the accommodation facilities	The majority of the houses have been bought by residents of Sofia and other cities. 10 to 12 houses are owned by foreigners. The majority of homeowners, accommodating tourists, lives here year round and directly engage in servicing their guests.	About 10 houses were purchased by foreigners. 3 houses were bought by a company that restores them for later sale. The rest of the owners are either from the capital of Sofia, or represent former residents, who have returned to live in the village after retirement. The tourist facilities are generally managed as trade company.	Most of the houses are owned by Bulgarians, only about 5 houses were bought by foreigners. House owners, providing tourist services stay in their houses only for short periods during the year. Three local residents are delegated the right to manage the houses and act as hosts. Only two of the facilities have recruited permanent staff.	

№	Characteristics	Village	Kovachevitsa	Leshten	Dolen
14	Investments in tourist facilities and origin of funds		30% of the tourist facilities are the result of new investment over the last five years. Overall investment in the last five years has been aimed primarily at improving living standards and less to increase capacity and provide additional facilities and services. Half of the investment is through bank loans and 30 % - under project financing.	The hotel with the tavern is constructed in the past two years with own funds. In the tourist village no investments were made in the last five years.	Every fifth tourist facility in the village is the result of entirely new investment in the last five years. About 30 % of the facilities have made no investments in the same period. In all other cases, money is invested mainly for capacity enlargement and facility improvements. Poor use of financial instruments is identified – primarily own funds are used.
	<b>Tourism demand</b>				
15	Number of tourists and overnights, average length of stay		About 2050 tourists (22 % foreigners); about 4000 overnights (20 % from foreigners); average stay – 1.9 days	About 850 tourists (5 % foreigners); about 2100 overnights (4 % from foreigners); average stay – 2.5 days	About 670 tourists (7 % foreigners); about 1500 overnights (3 % from foreigners); average stay – 2.1 days
16	Profile of visitors		Bulgarians are mostly from Sofia, Plovdiv and Blagoevgrad, almost completely unorganized; foreigners are from France (42%), Great Britain (27%), Germany (9%), the Netherlands and Greece, and almost 90% of them are unorganized.	Almost all Bulgarian tourists are from Sofia and 55% of them are organized. Foreigners are from France (70 %) and Great Britain (30%) and they are totally unorganized.	Bulgarian visitors are from Sofia, Varna and other major cities of the country and 90 % arrive in an unorganized way. Foreign tourists are dominated by those from France (40%), Israel (20%) and Japan (20%); 90% of foreign tourists are organized and follow a route (on horse, by bicycle or motorcycle).
	<b>Local environment</b>				
17	Development and state of the general infrastructure		Problems with the water supply (water regime), the grid, the maintenance of streets and the collection and transportation of waste.	Problems are identified with the water supply (water regime), the grid and the maintenance of streets.	Problems with sewage system, waste collection, condition of streets; no street lights in the old part.
18	Remoteness from centers of demand and major tourist attractions		Away from the main roads and centers of demand, the only access road passes through a Roma neighborhood. Bansko international mountain resort is about 70 km away.	Adjacent to the spa in Ognyanovo and the Roman town Nicopolis ad Nestum; closest to the municipal center of Garmen and the regional center - Gotse Delchev. About 50 km from Bansko ski resort.	Aside from the main roads and in comparison with other villages - farther to the other tourist attractions in the area. About 80 km from Bansko international mountain resort.
19	Transport provision		Difficult access by public transport.	Closest to the main roads in the area, to the border checkpoint with Greece – "Ilinden", and to the Aegean Sea.	Difficult access by public transport. The section from the main road Gotse Delchev - Dospat to the village is in poor condition.
20	Evaluation of the effect of the opening of the border checkpoint "Ilinden" with Greece		No significant impact on tourism development, in particular on increasing visitors from Greece (or tourists vacationing in Greece). The effect of diversifying the daily activities of tourists in the area (one-day excursion or going to the beach in Greece) is outlined.	Increased transit traffic (visitors passing through without overnight stay) of Greeks and even more Bulgarians.	Impact is not identified. Expected potential impact in terms of the possibility of combined holidays.

*Models of Rural Tourism Development in Mountain Villages*

№	Village		Kovachevitsa	Leshten	Dolen
	Characteristics	Tourism management and marketing			
21	Joint actions of local entrepreneurs	In 2002 local association was founded under the name "Historical and Architectural Reserve Kovachevitsa", which was officially registered as NGO in 2003. It started to develop the resources and to promote the village, but due to disagreement with the local government soon ceased operation.	There is no formal structure for collaboration, but the need for targeted joint efforts is pointed out.	There is no formal structure for collaboration. There is an informal association of Sofia residents, who own houses in the village, which supports the restoration of the church.	
22	Involvement of local authorities and support (public projects)	Misunderstanding and lack of interest from local authorities, mainly due to the small number of permanent population and unclearity about the contribution of tourism. The role of local government is underestimated.	Misunderstanding and lack of interest from local authorities, mainly due to the small number of permanent population. The role of local government is underestimated.	Municipal authorities show restraint to help but not interfere. The role of local government is underestimated.	
23	Marketing activities	About half of the entrepreneurs work with intermediaries, most often to attract foreign tourists. Half of the sites do not advertise in any way. There are two information brochures issued about the village. In addition to brochures, accommodation possibilities are promoted on the Internet.	The tourist village works with tour-operators entirely on the domestic market. For both accommodation sites information is available on the Internet, and one of them distributes printed leaflets as well.	Only two guest houses work with intermediaries, both for the domestic and the international market. No common brochure about the village is issued and leaflets are printed only for two sites. About 75% of the sites provide information on the Internet.	
24	Limiting factors of development	Deficiency of tourist infrastructure and proper healthcare, impaired natural environment and lost traditions, difficult access from the village to the main attractions.	Lack of permanent local populations.	Insufficient information and advertising, difficult access to the village, limited supply of tourist services, lack of knowledge and skills to deliver tourist services, lack of attractive sights and events, state of the village environment.	
25	Priority future activities	Improvement of general infrastructure, protection and maintenance of tourist resources, creation of new attractions and development of additional services.	Preservation and maintenance of tourist resources, creation of new attractions and development of additional services, enhancement of advertising activities.	Improvement of general infrastructure, protection and maintenance of tourist resources, improvement of quality of services in restaurants and accommodation facilities.	

