

UNIVERSITY OF PÉCS
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

**The role of tourism in rural development through a comparative analysis of a
Greek and a Hungarian rural tourism area**

Anestis Fotiadis

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ABSTRACT

The rural regions occupy a largely extended part of the European Union and they are characterized as vital for economic growth and social cohesion. Agriculture and forestry represent activities which occupy large fields of land and play a primary role in the managing of the rich natural resources and in the formation of the landscape in the rural regions, where they constitute an essential part of the natural environment and cultural heritage.

Rural development is a crucial tool for the redevelopment of the agricultural sector and the promotion of differentiation and innovation in the rural regions. The enlargement of the European Union has changed the map of agriculture and an appropriate redevelopment procedure is essential for the development. The rural development policy can contribute decisively to the proper orientation of this process towards a more flexible economy of higher value added, taking always into consideration the cultural, social and environmental singularities of the rural regions.

An integrated policy on countryside development should always consider the potential that each region, has the needs and the potentials of the rural sector for increase in value added, as well as the productive singularities regarding the cooperation and the sustainability of operations, and finally the rural families strategies as expressed through the liveliness in the search for complementary activities and for the ensuring of essential social services. Actually, the rural community has already proceeded towards a union of the rural and the non-rural activities in a way that ensures a worthy primary production, as well as simultaneous business action in commerce and gradually in the industrial sector and in the services.

At the same time, the small country town becomes the centre of these developments constituting thus, an unquestionable social, cultural and economic centre. However, this role is not institutionalized nor reinforced by supportive mechanisms. Although spatially the organization of the supportive mechanisms at the level of a prefecture's capital seems to be right, their operation does not highlight nor support the potential and the advantages of their regional economies which are organized around the town. This results from the inadequate operation of the unions, the lack of specialized executives and also from the contrasting interests which are developed between the capital of the prefecture and the town, regarding the claim of the local commercial market and the investments for the formation of employment posts.

The present study begins with the need for new ideas and complementary activities in the rural sector, which will suggest methods that will lead to sustainable development and also the formation of the necessary conditions for the fulfillment of the needs and prospects of the residents of the rural regions, so that extended urbanization will be suspended or limited. In this study we present the importance of marketing and management as a strategic procedure contributing to rural tourism development and competitiveness. Our aim is to recommend the appropriate strategies and techniques that need to be implemented for successful solutions to the problems. We examine Greek and Hungarian villages that display different levels of rural tourism development, where with the help of personal field research, questionnaires and interviews of the local citizens and entrepreneurs working in rural tourism, we could answer some questions. Moreover, we evaluate the similarities and differences that we discovered during our research and we recommend the positive and negative steps for each country. We investigate, in an extensive bibliography, the way in which rural tourism is developed in each country and which good practices are followed.

The analysis of these points proves that the two countries are full of natural beauty, mountain areas, rivers, lakes, biotopes and cultural traditions that may even derive from the ancient times. The planning and development of rural tourism depends on the geographical location and the existence of the previously mentioned characteristics, the architectural infrastructure of the region, the natural, cultural and traditional heritage. After the selection of the appropriate region, the status of the infrastructures and settlements is examined in order to ensure that they are environmentally-friendly, they offer comfort and cleanliness and are specialized in quality services. It is very important for the success of rural tourism that the internal structure is based on the continual training of the owners and their specialization in the offering of qualitative services. The services offered include accommodation and food, the sports and tourism facilities, as well as the participation in rural activities and the informing of the visitors on issues of rural life. An essential specification is the offering of qualitative services which will be certified by qualified organizations, which will determine the quality criteria. In conclusion, the use of technology contributes to the saving of time for the materialization operators and for the general public. The use of the internet, the reservation system, even the tourism agents contribute to the promotion of rural tourism in both countries and its wider expansion, too.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism constitutes a multidimensional phenomenon, which has followed the evolution of man. Nowadays, it constitutes a social necessity or even a social right as this is recorded by the increasing number of tourists. Tourism has played a determinative role in the developmental course of many regions, in the developed as well as in the developing world. Tourism has been studied for its economic (Martin and Uysal, 1990; Mathieson and Wall, 1982), environmental (Farrell and Runyan, 1991), cultural (Chambers, 1997; Smith, 1989), and social (Milman and Pizam, 1987; Wyllie, 2000) impact. Initially, it was presented as a direct developmental outlet for regions endowed with natural and cultural resources. However, nowadays the promotion and the evolution of tourism often constitutes a target of high priority and also an alternative option for any region, even for the ones that lack significant wealth-producing resources.

The contribution of tourism to the development is marked by the fact that a system of activities, products, production units, enterprises and organizations is involved in the tourism net. The study of tourism does not represent an independent science, as it requires the analysis of a considerable number of human and other natural parameters that are connected with different scientific fields. Even from the pre-war period, sciences such as economy and history, as well as the sciences of sociology, anthropology, ecology and architecture have contributed greatly to the analysis of the tourism phenomenon and also to the conduct of the consequences that the tourism development has brought about. (Tsartas, 1996)

The trends of the world market, the consumer needs, the revision of the viewpoint regarding what defines life quality and primary goods, the awakening of ecological consciousness and the global tourist experience that has been accumulated throughout all the years that followed the recovery, during the fifties and the sixties, have led to the revision of the policies and strategies that have been implemented in the field of tourism up to the present.

The need to find a new developmental process, which will not exhaust the environment and the natural resources of the tourist destinations, but will exploit them in a viable way, so that they can be profitable to the forthcoming generations, acquires

the dimension of a promising evolution which is able to enrich tourism with new products that can satisfy the satiated consumer public. Several regions, usually mountainous or semi-mountainous, which are plagued by devastation and desertion, develop a new kind of tourism which seems to offer them a second chance of development, along with the social, cultural and environmental advantages which it entails.

The increasing environmental awareness of the population in general or the tourist market specifically, and the targets for a viable and ever profitable tourist development that various agencies(international, government, academic, business)are aiming at, are considered to be the primary promotional factors of Rural Tourism which almost all policy – makers are now aware of and anxious to develop. Rural tourism, as a category of the broader category of “Alternative tourism”, is now a major pillar of the nascent tourism strategy for many countries. Rural tourism strategies in various countries have in common that they are major growth areas that can be used to boost local communities, and aid the seasonal and geographic spread of tourism (Richards, 1996)

1.1. Background of the study

Recent studies about rural tourism have focused on identifying the characteristics, development, marketing and management of rural tourism, as well as on investigating demographic and travel behavior characteristics of tourists who visit rural destinations. There have been many studies that focus on the rural tourism development of countries in Europe. Other studies are about countries that did not belong to the Soviet Union such as Spain, (Perales, 2002), Cyprus (Sharpley, 2002), Portugal (Kastenholz et al., 1999), Austria (Embacher, 1994), Germany (Opperman, 1996) and England (Gilbert, 1989; Unwin, 1981; Alexander and Mckenna, 1998). Some others are about ex communist countries such as Lithuania (Ramanauskiene et al., 2006), Slovenia (Koscak, 1998; Verbole, 1996), Slovakia (Clarke et al., 2001), Romania (Nita and Manolescu, 2005; Turnock, 1990) and Czech Republic (Cihar and Stankova, 2006). Of course, there is a large amount of other national studies throughout the world such as in Israel (Fletcher and Pizam, 1997; Reichel et al., 2000), Japan (Murphy and Williams, 1999; Knight, 1996) the USA (Luloff et al., 1994; Gartner, 2004), New Zealand (Ryan, 1997; Pearce, 1990) and Taiwan (Hong, 1988), but unfortunately there have been few comparable studies between countries.

In particular, there has been only one comparison study between an ex communist country and a member of the European Union (Hegarty and Przezborska, 2005), but there has not been any study up to now that compares Greece and Hungary. These two countries seem to share many common characteristics such as population, unemployment but also many differences such as ground morphology, lifestyle, etc. There have been very few studies on rural tourism development for these countries and most of them are not directly related to rural tourism, but they include it in their research. For Greece, there are studies about women partnerships and their role in rural tourism development (Iakovidou and Turner, 1995; Karasavoglou and Florou, 2006), the role of local communities (Andriotis, 2005; Erotokritakis and Adriotis, 2006), small enterprises (Kornilaki, Thomas and Font, 2006) and local authorities (Adriotis, 2002a). For Hungary, there are studies directly related to rural tourism by Cartwright, 2007; Rátz and Puczkó, 1998; Fletcher and Cooper, 1996; Kovacs, 1993; Szelenyi, 1982; Szabo, 2005 and studies that are related to rural tourism to some extent such as the relation of rural tourism with the hosts (Povedak and Povedak, 2003), guests and visitors (Flaisz, 2003), and development tools like festivals (Gerhath, 2003) or invented traditions (Pusztai, 2003).

1.2. Research purpose and hypotheses

The beginning of the present dissertation was characterized by the wish to investigate rural tourism in general and identify the relationship between rural destinations in old EU and new EU members by analyzing the similarities and differences in Greece and Hungary. Rural tourism in these countries is a rapidly growing niche market which is sustained by an increasing number of domestic and international tourists. Therefore, this study has as a starting point four specific hypotheses to investigate and verify:

1. There are differences and similarities between a new European community member and an old European community member concerning how they develop rural tourism activity. Thus, we will suggest the best way of implementation through a long-term plan.
2. Factors can be considered to be the main driving forces behind economic development in rural areas in the EU during the last decades, and policy makers should successfully implement measures to encourage economic development in rural areas.

3. Rural tourism plays an important role in sustaining rural cultures and contributing to sustainable rural development. The images of rural tourism as perceived by rural tourism hosts and visitors and as projected in rural tourism brochures and websites are very important, as well as, the comparison between perceived and projected images with ideal rural images.
4. It is crucial for sustainable regional development to stimulate and promote entrepreneurship in rural tourism.

1.3. Structural model of the study

One of the most crucial problems that everyone who investigates rural tourism activity faces is the definition and the accurate comprehension of what rural tourism is. Therefore, in order to succeed in the comparison between the two countries, we will examine a large number of articles, books and magazines in order to reach the specification of the concept of rural tourism. In the second chapter, as an introduction, we will investigate the wide category of alternative tourism and the generation of rural tourism. With the examined bibliography we attempt to comprehend the concept of rural tourism and develop a definition which will be appropriate for the explanation of the term. Then, we will examine the evolution of rural tourism in Europe and we will prove the significance of this activity. Moreover, we will focus on the positive and negative impacts of rural tourism, the way of management and marketing development in rural regions, and also the importance of the co operation among the various stakeholders and the development of sustainable rural tourism.

At the end of this chapter we will investigate in detail the various problems that inhibit the development of rural tourism activity and sometimes results in unsuccessful sustainable development. Afterwards, we will demonstrate the appropriate tactics for the development of this activity and we will try to predict the future through the development of various scenarios and hypotheses about future rural tourism development.

In order to succeed in the comparison between the two countries we will use secondary data such as statistical data from each country's statistical services, websites and advertising brochures. Additionally, we will develop a primary research through the use of questionnaires and interviews for the conclusion of crucial results

regarding the similarities and differences in rural tourism activity between the two countries.

Three study areas were examined in each country. The Hungarian villages Kárász, Magyaregregy, Szászvár and the Greek villages Vria, Ritini and Elatochori were selected for this study. The choice of these areas was based on several criteria, including: significant employment declines in natural resource sectors such as agriculture and forestry, and their location in areas characterized by the presence of mountains, rivers, valleys and other natural amenities. The dominant forms of tourism in these communities are closely linked to natural amenity features, with all three areas exhibiting a transition towards tourism-based economy. At Vria and Magyaregregy rural tourism has just started to develop, at Ritini and Szászvár rural tourism is at a secondary development stage and at Kárász and Elatochori rural tourism development is at an advanced level. Conclusively in the last chapter, we analyze the outcome of our study and explain its contribution to the educational and research community.

1.4. Study contributions

This study will explore potential differences and similarities in rural tourism development between Hungary and Greece using geographically similar Greek and Hungarian territories as a paradigm, as a possible theoretical framework. We believe that this study will examine the way in which rural tourism is developed in each country and in the future, it can be employed by the public policy office as a useful tool. Through the establishment of the differences and similarities, we are able to recommend the positive elements and eliminate the negative ones in the two countries' ways of rural tourism development. We also hope that with the definition of the term "rural tourism" we will help the research and academic community in the continuing debate about this issue. Further research on the core family viewpoint and values will be useful, especially because it relates to constrained entrepreneurship. There might be considerable unrealized potential for growth within this business sector which will emerge when specific barriers are identified and countered. Moreover, a lot of weaknesses are inherent in such small tourism businesses, especially in areas characterized by seasonality of demand, and therefore, solutions must be found to assist owners to cope, and where possible, to overcome the limitations. The field needs more systematic comparisons among the various settings

in which family businesses occur, particularly along a continuum from peripheral to urban. Rural and peripheral areas are especially influenced by family business, so research directed at those settings should be a priority.

1.5. Limitations

Unfortunately, all studies have limitations. One restrictive factor was the difficulty in finding statistical data. In Greece in particular there are no statistical data about the development of rural tourism and therefore, the study is based on oral elements that we elicited from interviews with the involved operators. We could, of course, claim that the term “private accommodation” is approved for the study on rural tourism development, but we believe that it has statistical value only if there are data per geographical region. Thus, there are data for the three villages in Hungary, but unfortunately there are no corresponding data for the three villages in Greece. A second restrictive factor was the lack of knowledge of the Hungarian language. Although we have found plenty of articles and websites in English and Greek, unfortunately we could not obtain information in Hungarian due to the lack of knowledge of the language. This is a restriction because in a website of FATOSZ, for example, there were much more information in Hungarian than in English at the same website. A third restriction was the fact that when you examine three regions of a country, you cannot be sure that the situation is the same in the whole country. We tried, of course, with the use of the existing bibliography to eliminate this restrictive factor as much as possible.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Need for new models of tourism development

Due to the negative consequences of mass arrivals, during the last decades there has been a need for finding new models of tourism development. Specifically, the interest of many investors, development agencies and researchers, is focused on the promotion of softer forms of tourism development that do not exclusively aim at financial profit, but take into account and show great respect for the environment and for the culture, as well as for the satisfaction of the local society’s needs. This means that a milder approach to the development of tourist destinations has started, creating thus a new philosophy, the philosophy of alternative tourism as a type of active tourism which is opposed to the model of mass development. The formation of this

new model, objecting to the massiveness of tourist traffic, has gained various followers and supporters in a wide range of social groups and movements, who support in different ways the search for a different model of local development (Tsartas, 1996).

Rural tourism relies heavily on environmental attractiveness and healthy outdoor pursuits. It might be expected that tourism and hospitality operators would be especially motivated to adopt sustainable development practices (Getz and Carlsen, 2005). Additionally, the definition of “rural” is associated with the assumption that countryside life is what urban life is not, which means that the attraction of countryside lies in what city life cannot provide. (Hall, 2001) Rural tourism has developed significantly worldwide and has acquired an important role for the development of each country’s rural territories. (Reichel et al., 2000; Kneafsey, 2001; Thomson, 2004). It is argued that rural tourism can provide economic, social and cultural benefits and dangers as well. Regarding economy it can serve to diversify the local economy, offer new markets for local products and services, to provide new sources of income for farmers and promote the formation of new businesses and enterprises (Papageorgiou and Fouli, 2002).

As far as the definition of rural tourism is concerned, an agreement has not yet been reached and therefore it ranges from a simple definition such as “tourism that takes place in the countryside” (Rátz and Puczko, 1998) or “Rural Tourism is a mild form of sustainable tourism development and multi-activity in the rural region”¹ to a broad one such as “a range of activities, services and amenities provided by farmers and rural people to attract tourists to their area in order to generate extra income for their businesses” (Gannon, 1994). This matter has been the subject of many debates in the literature without arriving at any firm consensus (Pearce, 1989; Bramwell, 1994). The confusion becomes even greater when someone tries to find out what the difference is between rural tourism, farm tourism and village tourism. Some researchers believe that these two types of tourism are subcategories of rural tourism (Kornellia Kiss, Interview 2007) and others believe that they are autonomous categories. Some researchers define rural tourism as a development tool like Webster in 1975 and Villiers in 1997 who claimed that rural tourism is a tool which raises the

¹ www.agrotour.gr AGROTOURISTIKI S.A., is a specialized sector controlled by the **Ministry of Tourism Development**, tries to fully develop **alternative tourism forms in Greece** by establishing services for the support of relevant businesses and sectors.

capacity of rural communities to control their rural milieu in a more gainful way or that rural tourism is a kind of sustainable tourism that takes advantage of the resources having just few harmful impacts but at the same time increasing significantly the benefits (Rattanasuwongchai, 2001).

In fact, a simple definition of rural tourism, such as the one previously mentioned, does not cover all its aspects, but it is equally difficult to give a more complex definition which includes all its features. The right definition should be more futuristic since, as the World Tourism Organization claims in its publication “Tourism 2020 Vision”², rural tourism has a great potential and it is expected to increase significantly in the next five or ten years.

One of the most “acceptable” definitions is the one given by Lane, (1994). Lane said that rural tourism is tourism located in rural areas i.e. areas that are rural in scale, character and function reflecting the unique patterns of the rural environment, economy, history and location. The problem is that not every kind of tourist activity which takes place in rural areas is strictly “rural” (Petric, 2003). According to Lane, any activity that is not an integral part of the rural fabric and does not employ local resources cannot be considered as rural tourism (Tchetchik, Fleischer and Finkelshtein, 2006). Perales (2002) made an effort to solve this definition problem by claiming that there are two types of rural tourism. The traditional one, which is based on farm accommodation and the modern one, where the visitors expect to make a much deeper and profitable use of the landscaping, environmental, natural and architectural resources. Some countries are still on the traditional mode and some are on the modern type.

The Organisation for Economic Co- Operation and Development, (1994) also tried to investigate this matter and it pointed out that if someone wants to define rural tourism should first define rurality which is the central and the unique selling point in the rural tourism package. According to this study rural tourism cannot be developed everywhere but it should have the following characteristics:

- Be located in rural areas

² *Tourism 2020 Vision* is the World Tourism Organization's long-term forecast and assessment of the development of tourism up to the first 20 years of the new millennium. www.unwto.org

- Have specific features such as being small-scale, always in open space and having a close relationship with nature, heritage and "traditional" practices
- Be rural in scale, both in terms of buildings and settlements and, therefore, usually small scale
- Growing at a small rate, traditional in character, and connected tremendously with local families which decide how the territory will be developed. Many times they take decisions with a scope to develop the long term profit of the area
- Be sustainable, in the sense that its development should help sustain the special rural character of an area. Sustainability is the only method to make a good use of the resources and it is also a tool which is recognized by all the different rural tourism stakeholders.
- Have many different forms, representing the complex pattern of rural environment, economy, and history.

Moreover in the present study by O.E.C.D. there is an analysis of the difference between urban and rural tourism, which is defined by Breiling, (2005) as all non urban tourism. We can see the differences between urban and rural tourism in the following table (1).

After a detailed examination of the relevant bibliography, along with our personal impressions by interviews and our personal experiences and judgments, we have reached the conclusion that rural tourism could be defined as a tourism activity which consists of other smaller subcategories such as farm tourism, village tourism etc which is growing in order to help, to develop and promote the “rurality tourism milieu” of each rural region through a sustainable procedure that sets out to be consistent with natural, social and community values. “Rurality” can be simply defined as “the state or quality of being rural”³. The notion “milieu” can be defined as the socio-cultural and the geographic environment of the individual and their subjective psychological implications (Michalkó and Rátz, 2006a) and tourism milieu may be understood as a meta-level of the destination as a tourist product: “it contains the abstract components of tangible reality, and while each milieu element may be

³<http://YourDictionary.com>

perceived individually during the routine consumption of the site, it is the elusive totality of all the elements that is able to create a feeling of attraction in visitors” (Michalkó and Rátz 2006b:100). By blending these definitions we can say that “rurality milieu” is the state or quality of being rural and its elements are able to create a feeling of attraction to visitors.

Urban Tourism	Rural Tourism
Little open space	Much open space
Settlements over 10.000	Settlements under 10.000
Densely populated	Sparsely populated
Built environment	Natural environment
Many indoor activities	Many outdoor activities
Intensive infrastructure	Weak infrastructure
Strong entertainment	Strong individual activity base
Large establishments	Small establishments
Nationally – Internationally owned firms	Locally owned firms
Much full time involvement in tourism	Much part- time involvement in tourism
No farm involvement	Some farm involvement
Tourism interests self supporting	Tourism supports other interests
Workers may live far from workplace	Workers often live close to workplace
Rarely influenced by seasonal factors	Often influenced by seasonal factors
Many guests	Few guests
Guest relationships anonymous	Guest relationships personal
Professional management	Amateur management
Cosmopolitan in atmosphere	Local in atmosphere
Many modern buildings	Many older buildings
Development – growth ethnic	Conservation/ limits to growth ethnic
General in appeal	Specialist appeal
Broad Marketing operation	Niche Marketing

Table 1. Urban and rural tourism differences. Source (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 1994)

Through the previous definition of rural tourism we have specified what rural tourism means for us. We hope, of course, that this definition can be applicable wherever needed, although it is very difficult as there is not a unified product. Even in Europe, for example, there are crucial differences in the way rural tourism is developed.

3.DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research method

Depending on the sources of data collection, there are two basic types of research:

- ❖ The secondary research which is based on the collection of data that already exists and they have been collected for another purpose.

- ❖ The primary research which displays an especially wide field of applications in the tourism market research.

In particular, if the essential elements cannot be found in secondary sources, their collection is conducted by the tourism market itself. These elements are original and they are collected for the solution of a specific problem. In the particular case of the two countries, both types were selected. In order to compare rural tourism development between Hungary and Greece, we employed the tools that we considered as important. In particular, we employed secondary data from any available source and primary data from questionnaires and interviews taken.

3.2. Primary data

The primary data came from three researches. In the first research we compared how rural tourism was developed in Greece and in Hungary in order to find out the similarities and differences between them. The methodology applied for the collection of valuable data was the questionnaires. A part of this research was presented successfully in 2006 at an international conference in Crete - Greece⁴. The second research examines the reaction of the local society to the forthcoming changes. That is what the society considers as likely to happen or what has already happened as a result of rural tourism development. This research took place only in Greece, because we diagnosed that there was a gap in research in Greece about the serious matter of cultural interactions which occur from rural tourism development. We selected three areas in Pieria prefecture which are situated in different mountains and they display different levels of development. We presented a part of this research at an international conference in Siofok – Hungary⁵. We did not conduct a corresponding research in Hungary, because other researchers had already explored that issue, such as Rátz (2002), Rátz and Puczkó (1998), Puczkó and Rátz (2000). The third research examined the two countries in order to establish the various rural tourism stakeholders

⁴ Michalkó G. and Fotiadis A. (2006) The role of the rural tourism in assuring the sustainable development of the agrarian territories: comparing the Greek and Hungarian prospects.. *International Conference of Trends, Impacts and Policies on Tourism Development*, Heraklion, Crete. Greece 15-18 June 2006

⁵ Fotiadis A. (2006) Cultural Interactions in the Rural Tourism. *2nd International Conference Tourism as a Meeting Ground of Cultures*, 4-6 September, 2006. Siofok. Hungary

and find out the differences regarding their views and opinions. The methodology applied for the collection of data was personal interviews. This research was presented in an international conference in Athens – Greece⁶. Moreover we conducted a comparison between the websites and the advertising brochures that the two countries use and also the rural milieu that the two countries outflow to their present and future tourists (Fotiadis, Michalkó and Rátz, 2007, 2008).

3.3. Study region

In our first and second study, we examined three Greek and three Hungarian villages. The examined Hungarian villages are Kárász, Magyaregregy, Szászvár and the Greek villages are Vria, Ritini and Elatochori, as we firstly wished to comprehend who take part in the rural tourism activity. The choice of these areas was based on several criteria, including: significant employment declines in natural resource sectors such as agriculture and forestry, and their locations in areas characterized by the presence of mountains, rivers, canyons and other natural amenities. Therefore, we formed a stakeholder's map which was the result of interviews and personal estimations by the writer. The second study examined the hosts in both countries and its aim was to find out how they developed their activity, what their mistakes were as well as their similarities and differences. In our third research we studied three Greek villages in the prefecture of Pieria (Agios Dimitrios, Litochoro and Elatochori). This research approached the local society of the region through the use of a questionnaire, as well as of personal interviews. The study of the local society in Hungary was based only on literature review, personal interviews in the examined villages and personal visits of the writer to rural tourism regions.

3.4. Secondary data

For a complemented research about rural tourism in Hungary and Greece we used different statistical data sources. Firstly, the Hungarian Central Statistical Office and the National Statistical Service of Greece, secondly the World Tourism Organization and thirdly, the European Statistical Office. In the cases we collected data about tourism in general in Hungary and Greece and specific data about private

⁶ Fotiadis A. and Michalkó G. (2007) Rural tourism stakeholders and their difference in approaches. *Atiner. 3rd International Conference on Tourism*, July 5-6, 2007. Athens. Greece

accommodation and rural tourism in Hungary and Greece, wherever that was possible. Moreover, we used different articles that were published by the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development (MARD, 2007) or Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and other published articles by different authors which were directly or indirectly connected with rural tourism in Hungary. Additionally, we used articles and researches related to rural tourism in Greece and to the way in which it has been developed during the last decades. Hungarian Central Statistical Office had the ability to provide us with the necessary data for rural tourism development. Unfortunately, the National Statistical Service of Greece could not provide us with the necessary data. For that reason we applied to every Greek organization which could provide us that data. We send a written application to Pan-Hellenic Hotelier Federation⁷ , Business Confederation of Rented Rooms and Apartments⁸, Pan-Hellenic Tourism Entrepreneurs Federation⁹, Agrotouristiki S.A.¹⁰., Hellenic Chamber of Hotels¹¹ , Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises¹², and National statistical Service of Greece¹³ and from all we received the answer that they did not keep any data at that moment relevant to rural tourism. Due to this lack of statistical data, we conducted an interview with the president of the municipal enterprise of the municipality of Pierion (Mr. Drougkas) who gave us a very significant study by the municipality in collaboration with the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki regarding the development of the mountainous region of the municipality of Pierion (Stamos, 2000)

Information on tourism in Hungary is available from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office and is based on border crossing and provides statistics on border crossing to neighbouring countries and on the number of Hungarians who leave the country through the Budapest airport and a small number of temporary airports. We used the following secondary data from Hungarian Central Statistical Ooffice The one is “Hungary in Figures, 2006” (HCSO, 2007b) which presents in different tables the general characteristics of every sector in Hungary and the other is “Hungary, 2006”

⁷ www.pox.gr

⁸ www.familyhotel.gr

⁹ www.poet.gr

¹⁰ www.agrotour.gr

¹¹ www.grhotels.gr

¹² www.sete.gr

¹³ www.statistics.gr

(HCSO, 2007a) which describes in detail the situation in each chapter of the Hungarian life.

4. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Based on data and information collected in the field research, the rural tourism development in Hungary and Greece are contrasted. Although there are many similarities in the rural tourism contexts between the two countries, the contrast between them reveals astonishing differences in their processes and outcomes of rural tourism development. In this conclusive chapter we will refer to the similarities and differences in rural tourism development between the two countries based on personal interviews and questionnaires, and we will mention which are considered positive and which negative in each country's development. These similarities and differences will be classified into some large categories. Particularly, we will classify them into:

- ❖ General similarities and differences, such as climate.
- ❖ Similarities and differences in management.
- ❖ Similarities and differences in marketing.
- ❖ Similarities and differences in Public Policy

In each category there are more differences than similarities. Public Policy is the only category where the similarities are more than the differences.

4.1. General similarities and differences.

Rural tourism cannot be the same all around Europe since the rural regions in Europe obviously differ in character. Climate, landscape, history and population density differ in some cases significantly and the first differences and similarities that we observe between Greece and Hungary are the ones related with the above characteristics (table 2). Through the historical examination of the two countries we can ascertain that both of them have been in the foreground for hundreds of years. Definitely, Hungary falls short on ancient history in comparison to Greece, but Hungary excels in history related to the Middle Ages. This happens mainly because while the Austro-Hungarian kingdom was flourishing, Greece was under ottoman occupation. This difference normally affects rural tourism as someone who visits a rural village is interested in sightseeing in the near villages and towns. The two countries differ considerably in

the architecture of the houses in rural tourism regions, too. In Greece they are basically of old Macedonian style, while in Hungary of 1960 structured style.

Religion is considerably developed in both countries and one similarity that we observe is that in each village in both countries there is a dominating church in the central square, which can be employed as a tourism resource. There is, of course, the difference between the type of church since in Greece there are orthodox and in Hungary catholic churches.

	Differences	Similarities
Climate	√	
Landscape	√	
History	√	
House Style	√	
Religion	√	
Society Type	√	
Morphology	√	
Background of Rural Hosts	√	
Reasons for rural tourism development	√	

Table 2. General similarities and differences between Greece and Hungary

An important similarity is related to the population of the two countries as they both have almost 11 million residents. However, the difference is that in Hungary the population tends to decrease, while in Greece it tends to increase. Another small difference in the examined rural villages as regards the rural tourism stakeholders is that the Greek rural communities are much more masculine than the corresponding Hungarian ones. Therefore, in Greece there is a social need for the development of rural tourism so as to improve the status of the woman in the rural society.

There are various similarities and differences in the basic indicators. We can notice differences on overnight visitors, arrivals from Europe, arrivals by air, rail and sea (table 3). We can also remark that there are significant differences in tourism expenditure in each country by inbound tourism and tourism expenditure in other countries by domestic tourists. We can perceive similarities on visitors, on arrivals from America and East Asia. The arrivals by road, the Gross Domestic Product and the export of services are also similar.

	Basic Indicators	Differences	Similarities
1.1	Visitors		√
1.2	Tourists (overnight visitors)	√	
1.3	Same-day visitors		√
1.4	Cruise passengers		
2.1	Arrivals by region: Africa		
2.2	Arrivals by region: Americas		√
2.3	Arrivals by region: Europe	√	
2.4	Arrivals by region: East Asia and Pacific		√
2.5	Arrivals by region: South Asia		
2.6	Arrivals by region: Middle East		
3.1	Arrivals by means of transport used: Air	√	
3.2	Arrivals by means of transport used: Rail	√	
3.3	Arrivals by means of transport used:		√
3.4	Arrivals by means of transport used: Sea	√	
6.1	Tourism expenditure in the country	√	
6.2	Travel	√	
6.3	Passenger transport	√	
8.1	Departures		
8.2	Tourism expenditure in other countries	√	
8.3	Travel	√	
8.4	Passenger transport	√	
10.1	Gross Domestic Product (GDP)		√
10.2	Exports of goods	√	
10.3	Export of services		√

Table 3. Basic indicators similarities and differences between Greece and Hungary

Morphologically there are crucial differences. Greece is extensively washed by the Mediterranean Sea; it has got some high mountains and a few plains. Contrarily, Hungary is not washed by the sea, it doesn't have high mountains and it is characterized by large plains. Moreover, in Hungary there are long rivers, such as the Danube which is dominant, and a huge lake (Balaton), while in Greece there are small rivers and lakes. These differences affect significantly the rural tourism development in each country, since their morphology compels them to provide a different product. Therefore, in Hungary rural tourism is more easily offered in combination with rural activities, while in Greece it is easier to provide a product which combines rural tourism with other forms of tourism such as winter sports, climbing, etc.

Greece has a Mediterranean climate and the levels of temperature are usually higher than in the continental climate of Hungary. Thus, in Hungary there are more rain and snow than in Greece. This results in a longer period of mass tourism in Greece than in Hungary. That is why the importance of rural tourism is much greater for Hungary than for Greece, from our point of view. Greece as a country manages to gain income from tourism for a longer period regardless of the resources. Rural tourism can help the two countries in extending their tourism period and finally their incomes.

A crucial difference is the background of the rural tourism hosts. In Greece, the ones who are occupied with rural tourism are mainly entrepreneurs or public servants, while in Hungary they are mainly pensioners or private employees and approximately 15% farmers. This is a very interesting element from the point of Public Policy, because it reveals that both countries fail in what rural tourism defines, which is the support of farmers mainly so as not to abandon their property. This means that the farmers of the six villages almost had not realized that there were chances for them and these chances were seized by entrepreneurs or private employees who knew how to operate in the business environment. This is a positive element, as the hosts are applying the good practice and attitude they have acquired there. However, a serious problem for the Public Policy of both countries is that the providers were mainly motivated by their wish to feel security or because they had a spare place; so that only 17% of them work for extra income. This is something that the two countries should take into consideration, because in this way, one of the objectives of rural tourism is not achieved, occupation as an extra income.

4.2. Supply, demand and management

The two countries have a rapid rate of development. However, in the case of Greece we are based on the speculations of the persons questioned, while in the case of Hungary we are based on actual statistical data. The positive element is that as concerns supply and demand, both countries have an important rural tourism development. Moreover, as regards demand, there are similarities in the fact that the tourism period is short, regardless of the fact that in both cases the houses are offered for the whole year.

One similarity in supply is the fact that in both countries most of the rural tourism accommodations were formed during the last three years, and that in this process mainly the European Union helped through its subsidies. Additionally, there is similarity in the offered product concerning what is offered along with the accommodation. The Hosts in both countries either do not include in the price any other offer apart from the room or they include only breakfast. It is even more surprising that most of them are able to offer all the meals in case the client asks, for an extra price.

Another similarity in supply is that the hosts who offer meals, offer it in the place where the visitors stay and not in other places. This means that the customers do not have to eat and spend their money somewhere else. However, it is negative that in both countries the tourists do not have the same meal with the local community, but something that is specially cooked for them. Thus, the tourists are not provided with the opportunity to taste the local gastronomic habits, which is one of the reasons someone visits a place. The two countries also have some similarities in the traditional products that they sell to the visitors. In particular, they both offer traditional drinks, such as tsipouro or paliga, homemade marmalade and honey, but they differ in the amount of sausages and wine they provide.

In their majority, the offered rooms are in the same land site and in the same building with the Hosts' house, but the visitors use another entrance. Moreover, many rooms are found in a different land site. This is interesting, because although a different product is provided, there is similarity in this part. Maybe the Hosts in both countries know that in this way the visitors feel more comfortable and hospitable and that is why they have a high percentage of revisiting.

One difference concerning demand and management is related to the length of the tourism period. In Greece we observe that the rural tourism activity is mainly available during the winter months, but in Hungary during the summer (table 4). This may be the result of the fact that each country's rural tourism product addresses a different market. Hungary attracts more foreign tourists than Greece. Greece attracts basically Greek tourists. We believe that both countries can improve their effectiveness, if they manage to attract the tourists they lack. Hungary could attract visitors in the winter through its domestic tourism and Greece could attract visitors in the summer through the foreign tourists.

One important difference in supply between the two countries is that the average of rural tourism hosts has been active in Hungary for 7 years, but in Greece for only 3 years. This is very strange because Greece has been a member of the European Union for many years, while Hungary is one of its recent members. Moreover, we have to point out that in Greece they do not stop the rural tourism activity, although there are no visitors in the summer, while in Hungary a small percentage has stopped this activity for at least one year.

	Differences	Similarities
Rural tourism development rhythm		√
Small tourism period		√
Rural tourism best period	√	
Rural host product		√
Type of rural tourism product	√	
Creation of rural tourism accommodation		√
Continuing rural tourism entrepreneurship	√	
Type of accommodation	√	
Limitations in rural tourism management		√
Traditional products		√
Rooms	√	
Modulation		√
Rural tourism markets	√	
Rural tourism average	√	
Revisiting		√
Work during holidays	√	

Table 4. Supply, demand and management similarities and differences between Greece and Hungary.

Another difference in supply is the size and the type of the offered product. In Hungary there are usually small houses to rent with one, two or in some rare cases three rooms. In Greece rooms in hotels are rent. Each host usually rents 10 to 25 rooms and thus, the activity is exercised in a professional way which is close to mass tourism. If someone visits the rooms in Greece, he/she will find out that they are closer to luxurious suites with a fireplace and luxurious and expensive materials than to the rooms related with rural tourism activity. On the contrary, in Hungary the houses are simple and the management and marketing in general seem to be more amateur. This difference affects the management, the marketing and the Public Policy that each country has to follow. This difference explains also the fact that in Greece the tourist is not given the opportunity to work, if he/she wishes, or even watch a rural activity, but in Hungary this opportunity is provided extensively.

4.3. Marketing

In the sector of marketing we observe very few similarities and mainly differences. The two countries have similarities in the way they advertise their enterprises. They basically use the internet, advertising brochures and tourism offices. Of course, the crucial point is what they advertise through these means and who they address. Usually before the application of a promotional policy by an enterprise or an organization, the target should be specified. Greece and Hungary seem not to have specified who they address, since they employ the same, let us say, advertising strategy, but they actually differ in the product, the price and their current access to some markets. The two countries differ in the offering product since Eastern Europe is

generally more rural than Western Europe (in terms of levels of urbanisation, and socio-cultural characteristics) and the product in Greece has similarities with village tourism while in Hungary with farm tourism. The difference in prices is an important factor in relation to who it addresses. In Greece it is quite expensive to rent one of the houses, but in Hungary the prices can be characterized as satisfactory. Hungary as mentioned before, addresses mainly foreign tourists from the near countries, while Greece addresses Greek tourists. Many foreign tourists want to visit Hungary because in the past they could not and the prices for them are extremely low. Greece attracts them because it is now a trend.

This explains the similarities and differences between the two countries as regards how the visitor spends his/her spare time. In Greece, visitors in their spare time read, watch TV, make strolls to the countryside, walk in the village or visit the near villages or towns. On the contrary, in Hungary these activities take place rarely. The visitors in Greece paradoxically do not exercise activities such as riding a bike or horse, manual activities, etc. Hungary is famous for its horses and these activities are very usual. There is a similarity between the two countries as regards the visitors' wish to participate in activities such as festivals and others either in or outside the village.

The Brochures which are related with tourism have differences between the two countries firstly in the language, since the Greek ones are written only in Greek, while the Hungarian ones use the English language, too. Secondly, the Greek brochures are related with a certain region, while the Hungarian ones are more general compared to the Greek ones. The Hungarian ones relate mainly to location, different types of tourism and different tourism products (table 5). The colours are totally different and in the Hungarian brochures there are additional elements, such as advertisements for hotels, car rental offices, etc.

	Differences	Similarities
Promotion style		√
Internet		√
TV	√	
Brochures		√
Radio	√	
Tourist offices		√
Product	√	
Price	√	
Market	√	
Tourist behavior	√	
Tourist participation in Festivals		√
Colours in brochures	√	
Promoting via brochures	√	
Websites		√
Sponsoring via websites	√	
Promoting via websites		√

Table 5. Marketing similarities and differences between Greece and Hungary

Through an examination of the websites mainly used for the advertising of the enterprises, we can find some similarities and a few differences. In the websites of Agrotouristiki S.A. and Fatosz we observe that someone can find general information about rural tourism and specific information about rural tourism accommodation. The Greek website mainly addresses the Greek tourists, while the Hungarian the foreign tourists. The Hungarian website does not mention any ways in which someone can be subsidized by the European Union, but in the Greek one, through a hyperlink, someone can easily learn all the necessary handlings.

A negative similarity between the websites is that they do not advertise all the hosts. This happens probably because they have to pay for their promotion. This is negative from the point of Public Policy and we believe that the two countries, as they know the serious problems that rural societies face, should have provided the potential for free promotion of accommodation.

Source	Backpacker	Visitor's	Tourist's
Internet	77.3%	70.7%	64.0%
Family and friends	66.8%	72.3%	74.5%
Travelers book	60.5%	29.9%	19.1%
Travel agency	28.5%	36.3%	43.1%
Previous Visit	21.7%	33.3%	27.8%
Newspaper magazine	20.6%	24.1%	23.9%
Brochures of tour operators	12.3%	11.0%	15.9%
Tourist offices	11.5%	11.8%	11.3%
TV – Radio	10.2%	9.9%	12.3%
Airlines companies	8.6%	10.6%	13.1%
Travel exhibitions	1.4%	1.4%	1.8%

Table 6. Travelers information sources according to the type of traveler (%). Source: Richards and Wilson, 2007.

According to Richards and Wilson (2007), the internet, the family and friends contribute significantly to the decision of a travel, no matter which kind of. It is

positive that the hosts in both countries use the internet as their basic advertising tool (table 6), but it is negative that the websites are not as functional as they could be. Loyalty is developed and therefore the hosts are advertised probably really well by families and friends. Hosts should cooperate better with travel agencies, if they want to extend their customers since it is a significant traveler's information source.

4.4. Public Policy

Greece as an old member of the European Union normally displays more intense activity in the sector of Public Policy. Particularly, we observe that in Greece 63.6% of the Hosts have been subsidized by the European Union, but in Hungary only 26.7%. Of course, if we consider the fact that Hungary has been a member of the Union for a short period of time, we realize that it is getting on well, even though it is behind Greece.

A serious problem in Greece which is directly related to Public Policy, is the fact that it does not collect statistical data about rural tourism. Therefore, someone cannot safely judge whether a policy is successful or not, unless there is some way to compare a past and a future situation. On the contrary, in Hungary there are statistical data, even about the contribution of rural tourism to a community's incomes (table 7). Therefore, it is easier in Hungary to activate a statistic and elicit countable results.

	Differences	Similarities
European Union sponsoring	√	
Reason for sponsoring		√
Statistical data	√	
Need for Public Policy help		√
Successful Policies		√
Relationship with social environment		√
Good relationship with local government		√
Relationships with other entrepreneurs	√	
Local society	√	

Table 7. Public policy similarities and differences between Greece and Hungary

Although we do not have statistical data, it seems from our study, as mentioned before, that the policies are successful since they lead, according to the answers of the interviewed, to continuous development and high levels of revisiting. The policies in both countries have also managed to develop some similarities and differences in the relationships with the social environment. The Greek and the Hungarian hosts have good relationships with the entrepreneurs and the local government. However, they have differences in their relationships with the local community, the tourism offices and the restaurants and entertainment enterprises in and outside the village. The

Greeks have a better relationship with the local community and restaurants and entertainment enterprises in and outside the village, while the Hungarians have a better relationship with the tourism offices.

4.5. Suggestions

In the new millennium, which rises, it is obvious that the needs, the preferences and the demands of a considerable share of tourists, on one hand, and the image of the rural society on the other, gradually change. The tourist wishes to see new landscapes and wishes to fulfill not only needs such as recreation, resting, calmness and revitalizing, but also learning about nature and the rural sector. Life in the city along with the well-known problems of environmental pollution, noise and stressful way of living, intensifies these needs. Thus, the tourist starts seeking for contact with the nature, as he/she realizes that there they will find everything that the city life deprives them of. Mass tourism cannot satisfy the ones who wish for this type of calmness, contact with nature, knowledge and mixing with the region's culture and tradition. Concerning these elements, rural tourism can offer more than other forms of tourism. European regional policy and EU environment policy in general have undoubtedly had a strong impact on the processes of formal institution building and on spreading a new culture of coordination and/or cooperation among actors involved in policy making. Thanks to rural tourism, tourism becomes accepted as guest in agricultural development, while its host does not only operate as its manager, but he/she is the one who welcomes and guides the visitor so as to feel close to the hosting environment. For the present and future development of rural tourism in Greece and in Hungary, it is essential that a series of measures and initiatives are taken. Some of them are the following:

- Recording and formation of the natural and cultural map of each country, which will include the existing rural tourism regions and all the socio-economic elements that may contribute to the development of rural tourism.
- Participation in the managing and control of the development by the local authorities and residents, so as to maintain the local character and keep the added value of the providing services on the local level.
- Promotion of rural tourism as a complementary activity for the reinforcement of the rural income, which is characterized by a specified frame of principles for its development.

- Promotion and advertising of rural tourism initiatives, which have been well-organized and effective.
- Building the appropriate infrastructure, e.g. roads, so as to facilitate the access of the visitors to the regions, to provide medicare to the sensitive groups, such as the elderly, the children, etc., improvement of the means of transport, electric power supply, water supply etc.
- Expansion of the tourism period throughout the whole year, so as to provide the potential for improvement of the hospitality services, along with a parallel depression of their providing cost.
- Fulfillment of the visitors' demands not only at the level of accommodation (clean and comfortable rooms), but also of their interests in rural life and tradition.
- Development of national and regional rural tourism programs according to the European Union guidelines, so that they can be subsidized.
- Formation of priority measures for the development of rural tourism in mountain and disadvantageous regions.
- Collaboration of the residents with the local authorities and ensuring of a consensus on the development of rural tourism in their region and realization of the essential changes.
- Development of mechanisms that can predict or even try to discourage uncontrollable tourism development activities in the countryside (e.g. mass tourism activities).
- Formation of a framework of measures for the protection of the environment and for the maintenance of the cultural and tourism heritage.
- Taking measures for the restoration of the traditional settlements which attract the visitors (renovation and maintenance of traditional houses, churches, monasteries etc.)
- Publication and circulation, even out of the limits of the Municipality or the Community, of tourist guides and brochures about the rural tourism of the region and the traditional products.
- Programs of professional training for the residents of the rural regions and of foreign language learning at a basic level, so as to be able to cope with the

demands of the parallel rural tourism activities (mainly for the young people and the women, so that they can take more initiatives).

- Resettlement motives for the domestic emigrants regarding the undertaking of business initiatives.
- Systemization of checking by qualified agents concerning the guidelines about the operation of rural tourism enterprises.
- Establishment of an organization that can co-ordinate the rural tourism initiatives.
- Formation of an international network between the two countries, aiming at the information about rural tourism issues, the expansion of knowledge, the offering of advice to the interested ones, etc.

4.6. Conclusion

The contribution of rural tourism to developed economies and to the economic restructuring of the weak European economies is unquestionable. The activities associated with travel, tourism and recreation affect people in many different ways and have a profound impact on social, cultural and economic perspectives of life in any society. The rural tourism industry encapsulates multiple sectors, for example hospitality, food and crafts, and can have significant benefits for local rural areas. Yet rural tourism instigates change in employment or customer protection, health, new technology, transport and culture. European tourism authorities and policy advisors generally believe that rural tourism can offer a “development path” for rural Europe. By contrast, central and eastern European countries have experienced different structural conditions to those of Western Europe and did not participate in the processes of agricultural restructuring accompanying the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (Hegarty and Przezborska, 2005). Greece and Hungary could not be indifferent to the incoming changes, since the emphasis on rural development today is to provide greater equality for all rural people in incomes, housing, health care and other goods and services. Public policy is being used to disperse population and alter economic growth patterns.

In each country different kinds of rural tourism industry were created and since there was a lack of research we decided to investigate which differences and similarities we could observe. We formed four research questions, and through the research we managed to obtain significant results. These results were the outcome of sub-

researches between the different rural tourism stakeholders in three villages in Greece and three villages in Hungary.

The first hypothesis was investigated and we observed that there were forty-two differences between the two countries and twenty-seven similarities. These differences and similarities were grouped in four different categories in order to be used as a starting point for further research in the future. The main difference was the way rural tourism is developed. In Greece it is illustrated in luxurious lodging houses or hotels which only provide rooms with village style furnishing. In Hungary rural tourism is unique and closer to country life. Of course, in both cases there are disadvantages such as short-length tourist period and the unconventional way of development. That unconventional way of development is the main problem why the local economy in both cases is not strengthening as much as it could.

Our second and fourth hypotheses were answered after examining our literature review. We explained how rural tourism was defined, how it is developed in Europe and how entrepreneurship, management and marketing should be illustrated. Moreover, we analyzed the different steps for successful rural tourism development strategy which will achieve the optimum goal which is sustainable rural tourism development. Rural regions display differences concerning their character, geographic location, etc. and that is why they vary greatly in their capacity to attract and absorb tourism. This indicates that there are no standard solutions in rural tourism development. Additionally, the policy framework which affects rural development and consequently rural tourism was also presented. Moreover, to complete the brief picture of rural development and rural tourism, several concepts were introduced helping understand the challenge of rural development. All these concepts must have a focus on society, economy and the environment and are based on collaboration and cooperation with involvement of local community, as a basis for sustainable rural development.

The third hypothesis was also answered. We point out during our research that unfortunately rural tourism enterprises tend to be small-scale and supply a highly seasonal market and they have limited marketing knowledge. Our method there was to compare brochures and the national websites of Greece and Hungary. By comparing the differences between the Greek and Hungarian National websites, we reached some interesting findings and we confirmed that the destination image, which

was represented online by the tourist authorities, was not so easily accessible and not very successful. Moreover, we wanted to present a new element, which is called “rural milieu”. The perception of the rural milieu depends on the tourists’ background and their tendency to develop a preconception of “the countryside” as expressed in their home culture. We compared the rural milieu the two countries express and we indicated that a network between marketing plan and rural milieu is useful, since it provides additional market knowledge and may improve the understanding of rural tourism. Rural tourism marketing agencies have an opportunity to use rural milieu conducted on a continuous basis to track and understand changes in the behaviour and profiles of tourists over time.

We can claim that what is needed is a resource guide that proposes different methods of tourism development and provides tried and true scenarios. Rural communities should be given the opportunity to obtain the resources that will assist them in developing tourism. Tourism development tools include research, resource guides, “how-to” guides from successful communities, case studies, workshops, conferences, and training for rural leaders. The tourism development process must be delineated so that it can be illustrated and explained to rural community leaders. It is impossible to spend money on rural tourism and expect it to grow by itself. The two countries should take the warning and follow the appropriate practices mentioned in the bibliographical references or the effective practices which have been distinguished by the two empirical studies. They should implement a local rural tourism awareness and educational program to increase the involvement of area business owners, residents and youth, with the benefits associated with rural tourism. As regards the Public Policies in both countries, they should organize meetings with rural tourism entrepreneurs in order to begin to establish connections between them and to identify needs and proposals. They should coordinate support from universities, state agencies and private consultants to help area residents and businesses to develop business plans. They should implement a central facility in each rural area with high quality standards where local artisans can work and sell their wares and where local and state-made or grown products can be sold. They also have to work with state agencies and a professional marketing company to conduct regional marketing activities. The study of the consequences of rural tourism should proceed, before some countries elaborate local or national programs, which will have negative impact instead of a positive one.

Hungary as a new member of the European Union should be warned by the consequences in Greece. Hungary should upgrade its rural tourism activity to the professional level of the Greek hosts and should not make mistakes such as the lack of statistical data. Greece should contemplate the reasons that cause the delay in the implementation of corrective actions which have been successful in other countries such as Hungary. Additionally, both countries should realize that future specialized studies could determine the regions where rural tourism can be developed, its characteristics and the minimum standards of a qualified enterprise.

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