

THE BULGARIAN NATIONAL BLACK SEA RESORTS IN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC TOURISM

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Abstract: Stimulating domestic tourism is a priority in the development of the tourism industry in Bulgaria. The share of the population's expenditure on travel within the country averages 69% of total travel expenditure. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyse the attractiveness, effectiveness, and significance of the national Black Sea resorts for domestic tourism. The data used in the present paper are published and accessible at the web site of the National Statistical Institute of Republic of Bulgaria. To examine the main tendencies in the yearly time series, concerning the Bulgarian Black Sea resorts, we have used statistical analysis of the trend cycle. The selected indicators used for analyses are bed-places in the accommodation establishments in the Bulgarian national Black Sea resorts, arrivals in accommodation establishments, nights spent, revenue from the nights spent and average daily rate per person. The results of the present analysis confirm some trends regarding tourists' attitudes towards domestic tourism and that the resorts offer a pricing policy to attract Bulgarian tourists. The analysis shows the potential of domestic tourism to recover the tourism industry in crises.

Key words: national resorts, domestic tourism, Black Sea, attractiveness, statistical analysis, trend cycle

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the priority sectors of the Bulgarian economy. The effect of the tourism industry on the local economies is reflected mainly by increasing employment in this sector, growth of the taxes received by the state, ensuring consumption in tourism-related industries. Stimulating domestic tourism is one of the main goals in the development of the tourism industry in Bulgaria. In the period 2008-2021, the share of the population's expenses for travel within the country averaged 69% of the total travel expenses, which shows the importance of this type of tourism for the economy. During the same period, the share of personal travel spending in the country averaged 71% of total personal travel spending. The highest share is marked by the expenses for travel in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. They reach 88% in 2020 and 2021, and the personal trips spending achieve 90% of the population's travel expenses. These data show the extreme importance of domestic tourism in times of crisis and the untapped potential that this type of tourism has. In some destinations, there is even a preponderance of domestic tourism over incoming international tourism in economic terms (Kvítková et al., 2021). That is why this article examines domestic tourism with an emphasis on domestic leisure tourism. Leisure tourism includes all travel for the purpose of recreation during vacation. In Bulgaria, it is practiced in two main forms - summer (at the sea or in the mountains) and winter (usually in the mountains). Eight resorts of national importance have been announced in the country, of which six are on the Black Sea and two are mountain resorts. The six Black Sea coasts resorts with national importance defined by decision № 45/25.01.2005 of the Council of Ministers were chosen as the object of study. In this study, basic tourism indicators such as bed-places in the accommodation establishments in the Bulgarian national Black Sea resorts, arrivals in accommodation establishments, nights spent in accommodation establishments, revenue from the nights spent in accommodation establishments, average daily rate per person are discussed. Based on the significance of the domestic tourism for the economy of Bulgaria, the main aim of the paper is to

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analyse the attractiveness, effectiveness, and economic significance of the biggest national Black Sea resorts for this type of tourism. For this purpose we use basic tourism indicators and examine the main tendencies in them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term “resort” has different significance in North American and in British English. In the first case resort is used as a hotel complex or property that offers recreational activities. In British English language resort has the meaning of a town that offers appropriate tourism resources for leisure and recreation and has good conditions and infrastructure for tourism. At the present paper the term “resort” is used in the British English context.

In Bulgaria, as early as 1987, the term resort was defined in the Regulation №14 on resort resources, resort areas and resorts. According to the normative act, a resort is a resort area in which resort facilities and establishments are located and are in use. A resort area is an area where there are declared and categorized resort resources and opportunities for the construction and operation of resort facilities and establishments. Mineral waters, healing mud (lagoon-estuary, spring and lake sediment mud, bentonite clays and peat) and areas with favourable factors for treatment, prevention and rest are defined as resort resources (Regulation №14, 1987). Resort areas and resorts are categorized according to their importance into resort areas and resorts of national importance and of local importance. Very often, however, resorts acquire the status of being of national or international importance primarily according to the proportion of domestic or international tourists who visit them (Kasagrandá and Gurňák, 2017). In Bulgarian legislation, the term "national resort" is understood as a resort of national economic importance, usually visited by both domestic and foreign tourists. In 2012, the idea of defining national resorts was further developed and, in addition to the above, the following categories were created: spa resorts of national importance, climatic mountain resorts of national importance, climatic sea resorts of national importance. From 2020, the announcement of national resorts is carried out by a decision of the Council of Ministers after a proposal made by the Minister of Tourism (Tourism Act). National resorts in Bulgaria can be considered in two main directions: as destinations for domestic and destinations for international incoming tourism. Despite their economic importance due to the strong international inbound tourist flow to them, the role of domestic tourist flows to national resorts also turns out to be extremely significant.

According to UNWTO “Domestic tourism comprises the activities of a resident visitor within the country of reference, either as part of a domestic tourism trip or part of an outbound tourism trip” (UNWTO, 2011). Domestic tourism has a number of advantages. Domestic tourists do not need additional documents such as international passports, visas, vaccinations, and other health documents, do not need to pay for expensive transportation to remote destinations, in most cases save time on transportation, etc. Mazhande et al. (2020) point out some of the main advantages of domestic tourism such as it is not that sensitive to international trends of terrorism, global financial crisis and politics. Some of the main advantages of domestic tourism during global crises are significantly fewer restrictions on the accessibility of tourist resources and the possibility of traveling by personal means of transport (Chan, 2021). It also recovers faster than international tourism after crises (Gyimóthy et al., 2022). From another point of view, domestic tourism is an opportunity for the development of territories with attractive tourist resources in countries where, due to security risks, visa restrictions, inadequate air connectivity and/or insufficient infrastructure or weak advertising, international tourists find it difficult to visit (Chebli et al., 2021). The advantages of domestic tourism are most noticeable during crises - health, terrorism, etc. Health is one of the factors considered when choosing a travel destination (Widmar et al., 2017). In case of epidemics, the authorities of some countries recommend their citizens to limit their trips to destinations where epidemics are developing, which inevitably affects the expected intensity and direction of international tourist flows. In some regional disease outbreaks, such as Ebola, for example, both international and domestic arrivals decline in affected areas. (Kongoley-MIH, 2015; Maphanga and Henama, 2019; Widmar et al., 2017). Without underestimating the seriousness of the epidemics, however, it should be noted that the most drastic impact on tourism and effect on domestic tourism has the COVID-19 pandemic. While in epidemics, diseases are characterized by a regional character, for example 99% of Ebola cases are in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia (WTTC, 2018), the pandemic is affecting tourism worldwide.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of domestic tourism has been felt. Many destinations have been closed and the international tourism decreased significantly (Korinth, 2022). In similar conditions domestic tourism supports the resilience of hotel demand and local tourism (Boto-García and Mayor, 2022). In a situation of global crisis, a significant part of outbound international tourism can be redirected to the domestic tourism market (Arbulú et al., 2021). In a study conducted in Bulgaria at the beginning of the pandemic, over 60% of Bulgarians are more inclined to domestic tourism (Naumov et al., 2020). Similar are the results of another research when 70% of the respondents in the beginning of the health crisis say they plan to travel in the country (Terziyska and Dogramadjieva, 2021). Although there is a significant reduction in international demand during global crises, domestic tourist flows could support the local economies (Kvítková et al., 2021; Duro et al., 2022; Falk et al., 2022; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2022,) but only partially mitigate losses from reduced international tourist flows (Allan et al., 2022).

However, the economic importance of domestic tourism is not only seen during crises. It is one of the industries that generate a high economic effect at the local level (Benchaib, 2022). Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic tourism generated higher revenue than international tourism (UNWTO, 2020). The economic and social role of tourism, including domestic tourism, are decisive for the development of resorts. In a study carried out in Bulgaria on the impact of tourism on the national resorts, the local population living in the municipalities where the six national Black Sea resorts are located express a positive attitude towards the development of tourism in them, and also believe that tourism in general contributes to economic development in their municipality (Vodenska, 2019). Therefore, the main goal of this article is to analyse the importance of domestic tourism for the national resorts in Bulgaria, where mass leisure tourism is mainly practiced.

STUDY AREA

The development of modern tourism along the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria dates to the 1940s and 1950s. In this period, the massive construction of accommodation began, initially in the resorts of Sv. Konstantin i Elena (St. St. Constantine and Helena) and Zlatni Piyasatsi (Golden sands), and later in Slanchev bryag (Sunny Beach), International Youth Centre Primorsko and Albena. According to the Act on territorial planning, settlements are of national and local importance, and the Council of Ministers defines these of national importance. On this basis, a decision was made to designate nine resorts and holiday villages as settlements of national importance. These are the Black Sea resorts Albena, Zlatni piyasatsi, Sv. Konstantin i Elena, Slanchev briag, International Youth Centre Primorsko, the Black Sea holiday villages Elenite and Dyuni, and two mountain resorts: Pamporovo and Borovets. Later in the same year, the Elenite Holiday Complex was excluded from the List of Resorts of National Importance by Decision No. 9799 of November 9, of the Supreme Administrative Court. Albena, Dyuni, Zlatni piyasatsi, International Youth Centre Primorsko, Sv. Konstantin i Elena, Slanchev briag are declared of national importance by a decision of the Council of Ministers in 2005. Three of them – Albena, Zlatni piyasatsi and Sv. Konstantin i Elena are located at the North Black Sea Coast, and Dyuni, International Youth Centre Primorsko and Slanchev briag – on the South coast (Figure1).

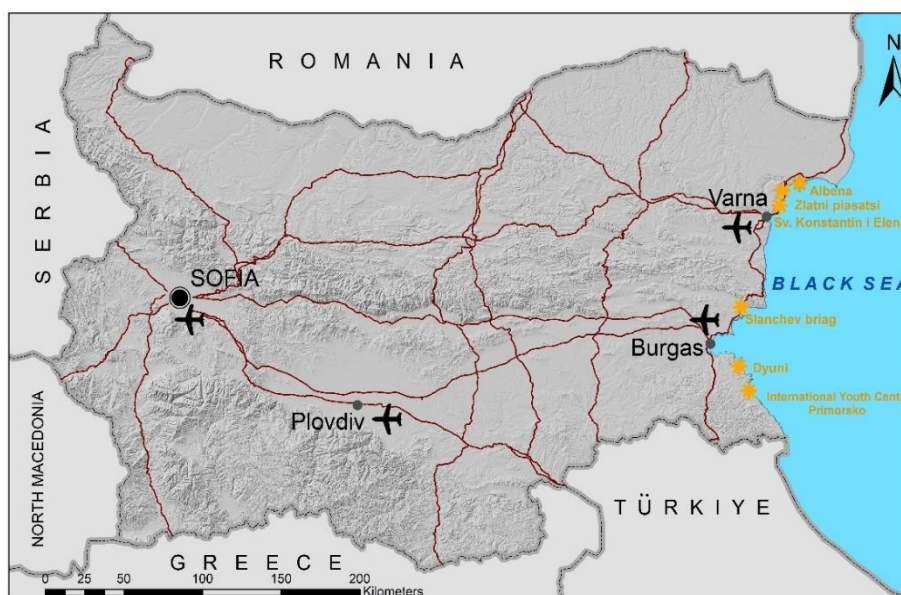


Figure 1. Bulgarian national Black Sea resorts

Albena is located 30 km north of the city of Varna. The resort complex is managed by “Albena” JSC. The beach strip is more than 6 km long and up to 150 m wide, with 21 beaches located on it (Official website of Albena JSC, 2023). It is certified with the “Blue Flag” environmental award. 36 accommodation places (with a capacity of more than 10 bed-places) and a bed capacity of almost 20,000 beds operate annually in the complex. The revenue from the nights spent reach over BGN 92 million per year (NSI). Zlatni piyasatsi is the second largest resort in Bulgarian Black Sea coast, after Sunny Beach. It is located in the northern part, 17 km north of the city of Varna. It has a 3.5 km long sandy beach. Annually, more than 110 accommodation establishments with a capacity of more than 10 bed-places, function there. The total bed capacity in them is over 43,000 bed-places. The revenue from the nights spent reach more than 230 million BGN per year (NSI).

Sv. Konstantin i Elena is the oldest Bulgarian Black Sea resort. In the period 1958-1992 it was known as “Druzha”. It is located 8 km north of the city of Varna. There are 7 hot mineral springs in its territory. The beach is 3.5 km long. 55 accommodation establishments (with a capacity of more than 10 beds) operate annually in the resort. They provide more than 9,000 bed-places. The revenue from the nights spent reaches over BGN 32.5 million per year. Slanchev briag (Sunny Beach) is the largest Bulgarian Black Sea resort. It is located 35 km from the city of Burgas. The beach of the resort is over 5 km long. About 180 accommodation establishments with a capacity of more than 10 beds function there annually. Their total bed-places are more than 64,000. The revenue from the nights spent in the resort reach about 313 million BGN per year (NSI). Dyuni holiday village is located 5 km south of the city of Sozopol and 10 km north of the Ropotamo reserve. There are 5 accommodation establishments in the resort with a total capacity of 3916 bed-places. The revenue from the nights spent in the resort reaches about 26 million BGN per year (NSI).

International Youth Centre Primorsko is located in a bay between the towns of Primorsko and Kiten. Its construction began in 1957. Until 2001, it was owned by the youth tourism agency “Orbita”, and after an auction it was purchased by “Albena” JSC. It has 1527 bed-places in 3 accommodation establishments as of 2021 (NSI).

METHODOLOGY

The data used in the present paper are published and accessible at the web site of the National Statistical Institute of Republic of Bulgaria. According to the Institute’s methodology the available results cover all accommodation establishments with capacity of 10 and more beds, operating during the analysed period. On Figure 2 the methodology steps flowchart is presented.

The selected indicators used for analyses are bed-places in the accommodation establishments in the Bulgarian national Black Sea resorts, arrivals in accommodation establishments, nights spent in accommodation establishments, average length of stay in national Black Sea resorts, revenue from the nights spent in accommodation establishments, average daily rate per person. Their definition is based on the methodology used by the National Statistical Institute of Republic of Bulgaria who is responsible for collecting the data for each of them. Bed-places in the accommodation establishments in the Bulgarian national Black Sea resorts is an indicator that shows the bed capacity and includes total number of beds that are on offer (occupied or non-occupied), available at the accommodation establishments.

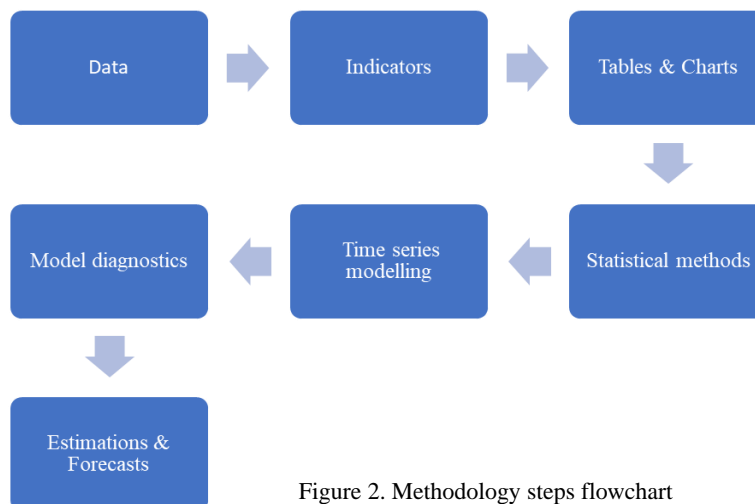


Figure 2. Methodology steps flowchart

The indicator “Arrivals in accommodation establishments” shows the registered arrivals in all operating accommodation establishments in the referenced resorts for the respective period. Nights spent in accommodation establishments include all nights spent in short-time accommodation establishments with capacity of 10 and more beds, operating during the referenced period. The average length of stay in national Black Sea resorts is calculated on the basis of the total nights spent divided to the number of arrivals in accommodation establishments. Revenue from the nights spent in accommodation establishments includes all sums that are paid by the guests for accommodation. The extra services expenditures are not included. Average daily rate per person is an indicator calculated dividing the revenue from the nights spent to the nights spent in accommodation establishments. The indicators have been selected to assess several key aspects of the performance of the Bulgarian Black Sea National Resorts. These are the bed capacity of the resorts (through the indicator “bed-places in the accommodation establishments”), the attractiveness for Bulgarian citizens, expressed through the volume of the domestic tourist flows (the indicators “Arrivals in accommodation establishments”, “Nights spent in accommodation establishments” and “The average length of stay”) and price attractiveness through “revenue from the nights spent in accommodation establishments” and “average daily rate per person in accommodation establishments”.

Data sources: The main data source for the forthcoming analyses (including: charts, tables and estimated models) is the website of the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria where these data are publicly available: <https://www.nsi.bg/en/content/1983/annual-data?page=29>. In order to examine the main tendencies in the yearly time series, concerning the Bulgarian Black Sea resorts, we have used statistical analysis of the trend cycle.

The main trend in each of the yearly time series we have analysed using the general equation form: $y_t = f(t) + \varepsilon_t$,

Where: y_t are the values of each time series for a given year t using certain trend cycle model, $f(t)$ is the trend model type as a function of the time variable t and ε_t is the error term.

During the trend cycle analysis, the models that we have used are summarized as follows:

Table 1. Trend cycle analysis models

No.	Model type	Equation
1	Linear	$y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot t + \varepsilon_t$
2	Power	$y_t = \beta_0 + t^{\beta_1}$
3	Logarithmic	$y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \ln(t) + \varepsilon_t$
4	Polynomial of 2 nd order	$y_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot t + \beta_2 \cdot t^2 + \varepsilon_t$

Where: $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2$ are the parameters of a given trend-cycle model. During the process of the selection of the best-fit trend-cycle model for each time series we have considered only the adequate models with the highest R-squared and those with the statistically significant model parameters. The parameters of each model are estimated using the ordinary least squares (OLS) method and the calculations are executed in the R programming language environment. As a result of the best-fitting procedure we have obtained the following estimated model: $\hat{y}_t = f(t)$

Where: \hat{y}_t are the estimates for each time series for a given year t using certain trend cycle model

It should be noted that model parameters and forecast estimates, concerning the usage of the trend-cycle models, are subject to stochastic processes and contain a certain amount of forecasting errors (at 95% confidence level).

RESULTS

Bed capacity of the Bulgarian national Black Sea resorts

According to National Statistical Institute (NSI) data, as of 2022, the largest national Black Sea resorts are Slanchev bryag, Zlatni piasatsi, Albena and Sv. Konstantin i Elena. Almost 80% of the bed capacity in the Black Sea national resorts is in Slanchev bryag and Zlatni piasatsi. 11% of the beds are located in Albena, and in Sv. Konstantin i Elena - 5.4% (Figure 3). With the smallest share are Dyuni with less than 3% and International Youth Centre Primorsko with only 1%. That is why the object of further research in the paper are the resorts of Slanchev bryag, Zlatni piasatsi, Albena and Sv. Konstantin i Elena, which have greater economic importance.

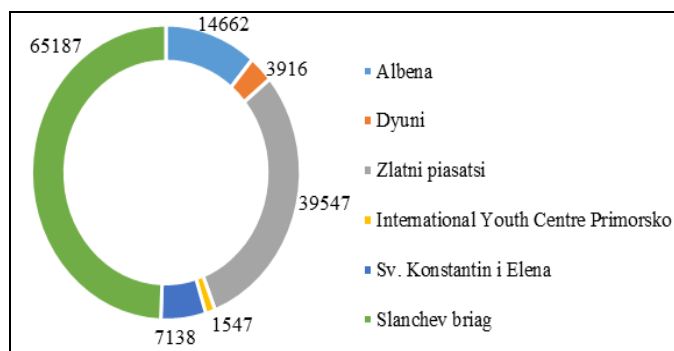


Figure 3. Bed-places in the accommodation establishments in the Bulgarian national Black Sea resorts

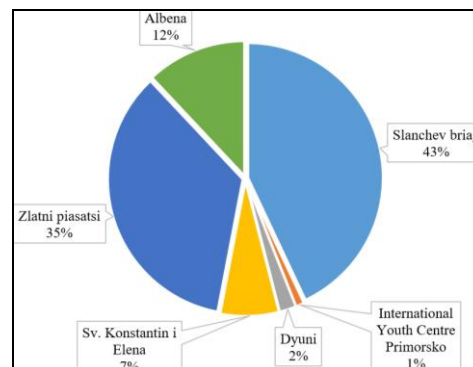


Figure 4. Share of the arrivals in accommodation establishments in 2019 (%)

Arrivals at the national Black Sea resorts in Bulgaria

The attendance of the national Black Sea resorts in Bulgaria is important for the investment processes in the general and in the tourist infrastructure and superstructure. For investments and the development of the transport network (international airports, ports, road network), for regular and seasonal air lines to the interior of the country and to important global emitting markets, it is of great importance what part of the visitors are Bulgarians and what part of them are foreigners.

Figure 4 shows the share of arrivals in each of the resorts, compared to the total number of arrivals in all Black Sea national resorts. The calculation is made for 2019, as this is the last year for which there are no resorts with confidential data for the recent years. Bearing in mind that the largest national Black Sea resorts are Slanchev bryag and Zlatni piasatsi, it is logical that about 80% of the arrivals are realized in accommodation establishments there.

In 2022, the biggest recovery following the decline caused by the pandemic in terms of arrivals in accommodation establishments is recorded by the largest seaside resort – Slanchev bryag, with almost 100% compared to 2019. Albena is the slowest to recover, which in 2022 still cannot reach 50% of arrivals in 2019 (Table. 2).

Table. 2 Arrivals in accommodation establishments (in number) (Source: NSI)

Resort	2019	2020	2021	2022
Albena	246231	70617	99933	118871
Zlatni piasatsi	713440	281096	468268	588081
Sv. Konstantin i Elena	134198	63384	94049	113654
Slanchev bryag	894206	285866	603773	887513

Table. 3. Arrivals at the national Black Sea resorts in Bulgaria by domestic tourists (Source: NSI)

	2019		2020		2021		2022	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
Albena	69673	28%	30363	43%	30326	30%	40994	34%
Zlatni piasatsi	80347	11%	93103	33%	102571	22%	96787	16%
Sv. Konstantin i Elena	67805	51%	44748	71%	57697	61%	62237	55%
Slanchev bryag	71567	8%	118161	41%	168977	28%	177326	20%

Arrivals at the national Black Sea resorts in Bulgaria by domestic tourists

Not only the volume of the total tourist flow to the national Black Sea resorts is important for the development of tourism, but also the volume of the domestic tourist flows. Based on the NSI data shown in table. 3 the following results are observed. As an absolute value, the number of Bulgarian citizens who spend the night in Slanchev bryag is the largest. According to the relative share of domestic tourist flows compared to the total number of tourists traveling to the national Black Sea resorts, however, Slanchev bryag was the least preferred by Bulgarians before the pandemic, and in 2022, when tourism partially recovers, it displaces Zlatni piasatsi. The relative share of Bulgarian citizens among all visitors is the largest in Sv. Konstantin i Elena as annually it is over 50%, and in 2020 it even reaches 71%. On this basis, the resort can be rated as the most preferred by Bulgarians among the national Black Sea resorts. During the pandemic years - 2020 and 2021, the number of arrivals by Bulgarian citizens increased in all analysed resorts, except for St. Constantine and Elena and Albena, where it doubles down. In 2022, however, both resorts show an increase in domestic tourist flows. In the conditions of a pandemic in 2020 and 2021, compared to 2019, the share of arrivals of Bulgarian citizens has grown significantly in all resorts. The biggest increase is observed in Slanchev bryag - from 8% in 2019 to 40% in 2020. The reasons for the obtained results are

reflection of the national and international restrictions related to travel, such as vaccination requirements, the closure of the borders of some countries at the peak of the pandemic, the fear of infection in the population when traveling long distances by public transport, increased sanitary requirements, etc. Considering the time series specifics, concerning the number of arrivals of Bulgarian tourists during the 2019-2022 period, the following representation can be formed:

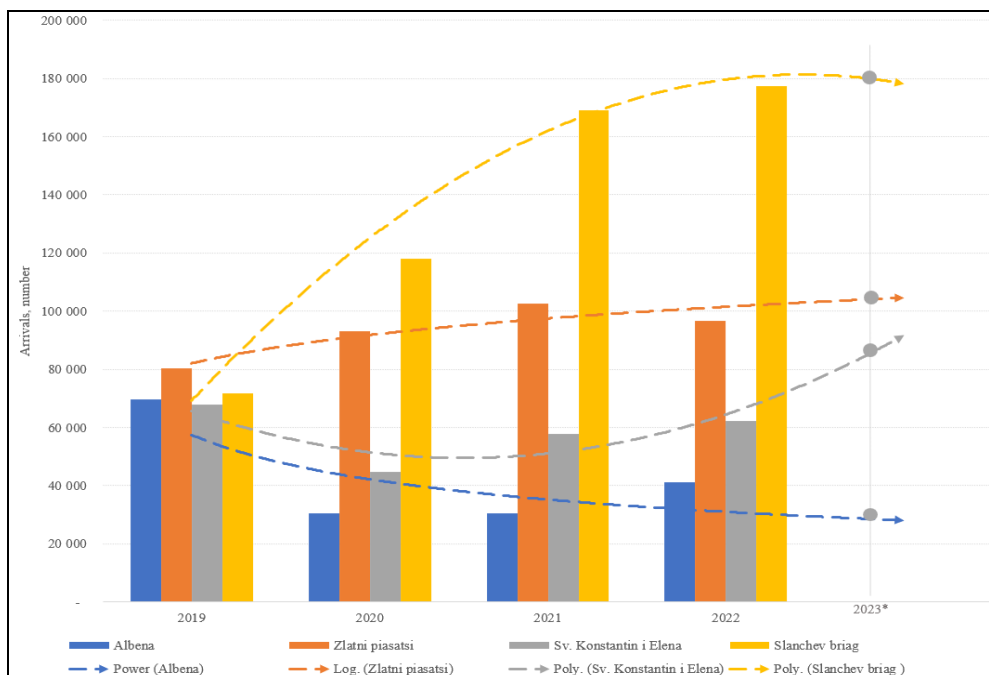


Figure 5. Arrivals in accommodation establishments by Bulgarian tourists 2019-2022 and forecast for 2023 (number)

Using the above-mentioned models, we have estimated the following best-fitting models for each time series (Table 4): Analysing the results presented at Figure 5 and Table 4, concerning the time series of the arrivals in accommodation establishments by Bulgarian tourists for the period 2019-2022, we can conclude the following:

- The Albena time-series show decreasing trend which could lead to even lower number of arrivals in 2023 – approx. 28 thous.
- The trend in number of arrivals at the Sv. Konstantin i Elena resort at the beginning of the period shows decrease followed by an increase which is expected to result in approx. 92 thous. arrivals in 2023.
- The number of arrivals at the Zlatni piasatsi resort follows overall mild increase during the 2019-2022 period which could result in approx. 105 thous. arrivals in 2023.
- The number of arrivals at the Slanchev briag resort follows overall steep increase during the 2019-2022 with ‘slowing down’ growth rate which could result in approx. 178 thous. arrivals in 2023.

Table 4. Estimated trend-cycle models for the time series of the arrivals in accommodation establishments by Bulgarian tourists (Source: Authors)

Time-series	Model	R-squared
Albena	$\hat{y}_t = 57357 \cdot t^{-0.445}$	$R^2 = 0,638$
Sv. Konstantin i Elena	$\hat{y}_t = 93557 - 34872 \cdot t + 6899,3 \cdot t^2$	$R^2 = 0,659$
Zlatni piasatsi	$\hat{y}_t = 82068 + 14014 \cdot \ln(t)$	$R^2 = 0,801$
Slanchev briag	$\hat{y}_t = -5821,8 + 84616 \cdot t - 9561,3 \cdot t^2$	$R^2 = 0,985$

Table 5. Nights spent in accommodation establishments by Bulgarians and foreigners (in number) (Source: NSI)

	2019		2020		2021		2022	
	BG	Other	BG	Other	BG	Other	BG	Other
Albena	290198	1100186	133571	213045	130721	388751	155422	427725
Zlatni piasatsi	252251	3469287	304416	858642	311558	2367690
Sv. Konstantin i Elena	255691	343607	167980	88403	215707	188127	229418	272718
Slanchev bryag	247663	5016304	442922	921086	657148	2350647	685126	4078085

Nights spent in accommodation establishments by Bulgarians

The highest share of nights spent is registered in Slanchev bryag both in terms of the total number and of domestic tourists. Realized nights spent by foreigners exceed those by Bulgarians in the resort. The largest number of nights spent by Bulgarian citizens before the pandemic was recorded in Albena, and in the following years their number significantly decreased. The trend is opposite in Zlatni piasatsi and Slanchev bryag, where nights spent by Bulgarians increase annually during the analysed period. The data for Zlatni piasatsi in 2021 are confidential due to the low number of nights spent in some of the indicators - for Bulgarians or for foreigners (Table 5). Focusing on the dynamics and the tendencies in the duration of the vacations spent at the four Black Sea resorts by Bulgarian tourists we can build the following graphical representation (Figure 6). Using the models described in the methodology section of the present

article we have estimated the following best-fitting models for each time series (Table 6). Considering the graphical representation (Figure 6) and the estimated models (Table 6) we can make the following conclusions:

- The number of nights spent at the Albena resort follows overall decrease during the 2019-2022 period which could result in approx. 112 thous. nights spent in 2023.
- The number of nights spent at the Sv. Konstantin i Elena resort follows overall increase during the 2019-2022 period which might result in approx. 336 thous. nights spent in 2023.
- The number of nights spent at the Zlatni piasatsi resort follows overall mild increase during the 2019-2022 period which could result in approx. 338 thous. nights spent in 2023.
- The number of nights spent at the Slanchev briag resort follows overall steep increase during the 2019-2022 with decreasing growth rate which might result in approx. 681 thous. nights spent in 2023.

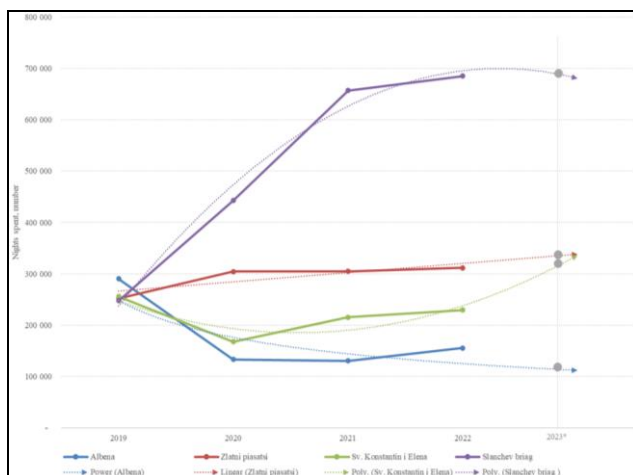


Figure 6. Nights spent in accommodation establishments by Bulgarians 2019-2022 and forecast for 2023 (number)¹

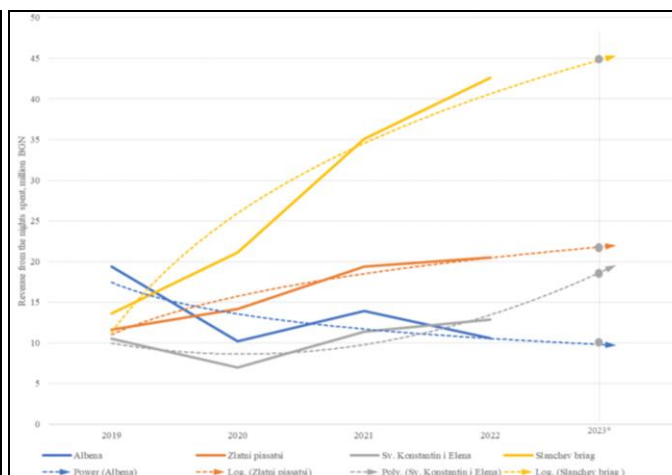


Figure 7. Revenue from the nights spent in accommodation establishments by Bulgarian tourists 2019-2022 and forecast for 2023 (million BGN)

Table 6. Estimated trend-cycle models for the time series of the nights spent in accommodation establishments by Bulgarian tourists (Source: Authors' calculations)

Time-series	Model	R-squared
Albena	$\hat{y}_t = 247638 \cdot t^{-0.492}$	$R^2 = 0,758$
Sv. Konstantin i Elena	$\hat{y}_t = 351750 - 129887 \cdot t + 25356 \cdot t^2$	$R^2 = 0,646$
Zlatni piasatsi	$\hat{y}_t = 248680 + 17833 \cdot t$	$R^2 = 0,699$
Slanchev briag	$\hat{y}_t = -82540 + 361763 \cdot t - 41820 \cdot t^2$	$R^2 = 0,983$

Table 7. Revenue from the nights spent in accommodation establishments by Bulgarians and foreigners, in millions of BGN (Source: NSI)

	2019		2020		2021		2022	
	BG	Total	BG	Total	BG	Total	BG	Total
Albena	19.4	88.1	10.2	25.6	13.9	43.9	10.6	38.3
Zlatni piasatsi	11.6	230.5	14.2	70.6	19.4	154.9	20.5	213.6
Sv. Konstantin i Elena	10.5	32.7	7.0	13.4	11.4	26.5	12.9	34.4
Slanchev bryag	13.6	313.4	21.1	77.6	35.1	196.6	42.6	339.6

Revenue from the nights spent in accommodation establishments

Before the pandemic in 2019, revenues from Bulgarians in the two largest resorts are only about 4-5% of total revenues. In 2020, this share increases sharply, reaching 27% in Slanchev bryag, after which it gradually decreases. In 2022 it is around 10-13%, which is still twice as much as in 2019. The years after the pandemic will show whether Bulgarians will permanently show a greater preference for the Bulgarian Black Sea coast and whether interest in Slanchev bryag and Zlatni piasatsi by domestic tourists will increase. In the two smaller resorts - Albena and Sv. Konstantin i Elena the revenue by Bulgarians is between 20 and 40% of their total income. In 2020, 52% of the revenue in Sv. Konstantin i Elena are generated by domestic tourists. The changes in the revenue from the nights spent in accommodation at the four resorts can be presented graphically (Figure 7). Using the models described in the methodology section, we have estimated the following best-fitting models for each time series (Table 7 and Table 8). Considering the graphical representation (Figure 7) and the estimated models (Table 8) we can make the following conclusions:

- The revenues from the nights spent by Bulgarian tourists at the Albena resort gradually decrease possibly resulting in approx. 9,7 million BGN revenue in 2023.
- The “earnings” at the Sv. Konstantin i Elena resort progressively increase which could lead to 19,6 million BGN revenue in 2023.
- The revenues from the nights spent by Bulgarian tourists at the Zlatni piasatsi resort increase with slowing rates which will probably result in approx. 22,0 million BGN revenue in 2023.

¹ For the modeling purposes the value for the nights spent in accommodation establishments by Bulgarians for “Zlatni piasatsi” resort for 2021 is an interpolated one

- The incoming monetary flow in the Slanchev briag resort is in expanse mode which could bring a revenue reaching 45,3 million BGN in 2023.

Table 8. Estimated trend-cycle models for the time series of the revenue from the nights spent in accommodation establishments by Bulgarian tourists (Source: Authors' calculations)

Time-series	Model	R-squared
Albena	$\hat{y}_t = 17,44 \cdot t^{-0,363}$	$R^2 = 0,644$
Sv. Konstantin i Elena	$\hat{y}_t = 13,8 - 5,09 \cdot t + 1,25 \cdot t^2$	$R^2 = 0,690$
Zlatni piasatsi	$\hat{y}_t = 11,02 + 6,8025 \cdot \ln(t)$	$R^2 = 0,934$
Slanchev briag	$\hat{y}_t = 11,29 + 21,158 \cdot \ln(t)$	$R^2 = 0,936$

Average daily rate per person

The average daily rate per person for Bulgarians in the considered period is lower in all resorts, except for Albena. There it is higher by about 5-7%. Since the average length of stay of Bulgarians is the same for all resorts (3-4 nights), the reason can be assumed to be in the preference for higher categories of hotels. Unfortunately, there is no such kind of statistics and this is one of the limitations of the study. The lowest average daily rate per person for accommodation for Bulgarian citizens, both during the pandemic and before it, is offered by the resort of Sv. Konstantin i Elena (Table 9).

Table 9. Average daily rate per person, in BGN (Source: NSI)

Resorts	2019		2020		2021		2022	
	BG	Other	BG	Other	BG	Other	BG	Other
Albena	67	62	76	73	106	77	68	65
Zlatni piasatsi	46	63	47	66	n/a	n/a	66	82
Sv. Konstantin i Elena	41	65	42	73	53	80	56	79
Slanchev bryag	55	60	48	61	53	69	62	73

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis in the present paper confirm some trends regarding tourists' attitudes towards domestic tourism. In the first summer season during the pandemic, a significant increase in the share of domestic tourism is shown in all national Black Sea resorts. It is also observed as a trend in tourists' preferences for local destinations at the beginning of the health crisis (Chan, 2021; Naumov et al., 2020; Terziyska and Dogramadjieva, 2021; Varadzhakova et al., 2021). That proves the potential of domestic tourism as an alternative for revitalising the tourism industry (Chan, 2021). The largest resorts – Slanchev bryag and Zlatni piasatsi have seen significant growth in domestic tourism during the pandemic. Unlike them, Albena and Sv. Konstantin i Elena, lose some of their attractiveness for Bulgarian tourists during the same period.

Despite the good results in terms of domestic tourism in the largest Bulgarian national Black Sea resort, Slanchev bryag, the trend, according to the applied models, is for the share of Bulgarian tourists to decrease in 2023. This shows that during the pandemic the resort has not been able to positively influence its image among the local population enough to reverse the trend from the period before 2020, when it was the least preferred by domestic tourists compared to the rest of the national summer resorts. Based on the registered revenue from accommodation in the analysed resorts and despite the available limitations in the data presented by NSI (data for 2021 for Zlatni piasatsi is missing), it can be concluded that the resorts offer a pricing policy to attract Bulgarian tourists. Based on the used prognostic models, only Albena in 2023 is expected to lose revenue from nights spent by Bulgarian citizens, although before the pandemic it was the most preferred resort by domestic tourists compared to other national Black Sea resorts.

In order to strengthen the image of domestic tourism, it is necessary to analyze the target groups of tourists by resorts and to use adequate marketing strategies to attract them. Age specifics, marital status, the presence of children in families and other factors that determine the use of different marketing communication should be taken into account, such as the implementation of an advertising campaign through social media influencers (Raafat et al., 2023), specific digital marketing tools (Chamboko-Mpotaringa and Tichaawa, 2023). The motivation of domestic tourists is also relevant (Bayih and Singh, 2020; Rehman and Alnuzhah, 2022), which can be the subject of future research.

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