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Modern specifics in the development of tourist infrastructure and superstructure in Bulgaria and directions for improvement

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Abstract: *Tourism infrastructure and superstructure are key implementation factors in tourism. Without their construction and renovation, it is difficult, even impossible, for the tourism development and development of the territory. The construction of the material base of tourism requires significant investments. Their return is guaranteed by the increase in the attractiveness of the respective tourist destination. The majority of innovations in tourism are related to the tourist infrastructure and superstructure.*

Bulgaria is a tourist destination that has invested significant funds in the improvement and expansion of the material base of tourism in recent decades. However, there are still a number of shortcomings and problems in the material base that provides for the tourism industry in the country. The purpose of this publication is to highlight the contemporary specifics and trends in the condition and use of the tourist infrastructure and superstructure in Bulgaria, as well as to outline guidelines and prospects for improvements.

The paper examines the theoretical framework of the concepts of tourism infrastructure and superstructure. It briefly introduces readers to the specifics of Bulgaria as a tourist destination. The largest part of the presentation is focused on the contemporary specifics of the material base of tourism in Bulgaria. Special attention is paid to the needs and prospects in this direction.

Keywords: tourism infrastructure, tourism superstructure, Bulgaria, new attractions, trends

1. Introduction

Modern tourism no longer relies solely on natural beauty or cultural and historical heritage. Tourist resources are important, but increasingly insufficient for tourists when choosing a destination. The tourist superstructure and infrastructure are becoming increasingly essential elements of the tourist offer. The majority of innovations in tourism are related to them. Innovative solutions regarding the tourist infrastructure and superstructure create competitive advantages and are an important prerequisite for the "emergence" of new tourist destinations. In this regard, the question of the state of the tourist superstructure and infrastructure is relevant.

The purpose of this publication is to highlight the contemporary specifics and trends in the development of the tourist infrastructure and superstructure in Bulgaria, as well as to outline directions and prospects for improvements. The object of the study is Bulgaria as a tourist destination. The subject of the study is the contemporary specifics of the tourist infrastructure and tourist superstructure.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Study of the problem

The material base is one of the main “production” factors for the development of the tourism business. In general, the material base of tourism includes tourist infrastructure and the tourist superstructure.

Infrastructure (as a whole or as elements) is a key factor for achieving sustainable development in the era of globalization and depends very much on its ability to transform [1]. Tourist infrastructure is an element of the overall infrastructure. It “is built with the aim of developing the resort territory, the tourist place and ensuring communications and access to them” [2]. However, the tourism industry also uses the elements of the general infrastructure to establish interconnection with other territories, other economic sectors, as well as with the emissive markets.

Jovanovic [3] considers tourist infrastructure in a broad sense, including in the concept “auxiliary and additional means, equipment, systems, processes and resources that are necessary for the functioning of each tourist destination”. According to Kosmanev [4], tourism infrastructure is an interdisciplinary problem, the subject of attention from geography, regional economics and regional planning and represents “a complex built of networks and enterprises for servicing tourists and ensuring the functioning of the tourism and recreation system”. Panasiuk [5] points out that “tourism infrastructure is a set of devices and institutions that constitute the material and organizational base for tourism development”. The same author includes in the concept accommodation and catering facilities, transport in the destination, services for active recreation of tourists (skiing, sailing, golf, etc.), the retail network and other services (information services, equipment rental, etc.). Tourism & Transport Forum in 2008 [6] notes that tourism infrastructure is the result of joint investments of

the private and public sectors, and that “these assets are economic infrastructure that generates income from visitors, contributing to employment and independent regional development”. It is noted that tourism infrastructure has a multiplier effect on regional, and hence on overall socio-economic development.

According to Bulgarian authors, the tourist infrastructure is the carrier of the general material conditions, without which the development of tourism is impossible. According to Vodenska & Asenova [7] “it encompasses the totality of these facilities located on the territory of tourist sites and enterprises and is intended to serve primarily tourists” or “facilities that closely serve primary resources and correspond directly to specific tourist needs and motives such as ski slopes, mountain route paths, bridges, tourist markings, etc.”. The tourist infrastructure often uses the elements of the general infrastructure, providing access to the tourist site and inside it. It can be summarized that the tourist infrastructure includes three main components [2]:

1. Elements providing access and communications to the tourist site;
2. Elements serving the tourist site and creating suitable conditions for staying there;
3. Elements that are part of the general infrastructure (water supply, electricity supply, etc.), without which a complete tourist product cannot be formed, which is why they are also used by the tourism industry.

Specifically, “tourism infrastructure includes, for example, the street network and lighting in resorts, yacht ports and their facilities, mountain transport vehicles, internal transport and sports facilities in tourist complexes, etc.” [7]. According to Tourism & Transport Forum in 2008 [6], tourism infrastructure includes accommodation establishments, retail trade, all types of passenger transport, education, tourist attractions and events, intermediary activities in tourism, communications, etc. The above definitions are unanimous in their general part, defining tourism infrastructure as a set of elements, facilities, etc., which generally serve the tourist territory. Differences exist regarding the specification of these elements. In the most comprehensive definitions, in addition to material components, tourism services are also included. Elements of general infrastructure are often mixed with those of tourism. Another debatable issue is whether tourist attractions and events are tourism infrastructure or anthropogenic tourism resources. The tourism superstructure flows into the tourism infrastructure, which makes the definitions more suitable for defining the more general concept of the material base of tourism. Because of all this, the available definitions can be considered too broad and cannot be used literally, which imposes the need for a new look at the concept of tourism infrastructure. Based on the critical review of the available definitions, we can derive a narrower definition: “Tourism infrastructure includes various material elements located above and below ground, which are usually not the purpose of the tourist trip, but are necessary for the “production” of the tourist product, as well as for creating suitable living conditions primarily for tourists” [8, 9]. These are tourist transport and communications, as well as other specific facilities and elements forming the product of various types of tourism. Tourist events are not tourist infrastructure, but

they have a need for such. Specially built facilities such as conference halls, museums, sports facilities and others, which are the purpose of the tourist trip, are more correctly considered as anthropogenic tourist resources.

The tourist superstructure is also a fundamental element in the tourism system and also provides the material basis for the “production” of the tourist product. Therefore, most authors do not distinguish between tourist infrastructure and tourist superstructure and the available definitions of tourist superstructure are significantly fewer. For example, according to Verma [10], tourist infrastructure is an all-encompassing term that includes the general infrastructure and the superstructure. Other authors [2], however, distinguish between the two concepts and consider them as the two components of the material base of tourism.

The concept of superstructure was introduced relatively recently (2003) in tourism science by Ritchie and Crouch [11]. Unlike tourist infrastructure, which mainly uses elements of the general infrastructure, the tourist superstructure concentrates facilities that are built specifically to provide appropriate conditions for the needs of tourists and their activities, i.e. for the needs of the tourism industry [12]. According to the author, these are accommodation, catering, convention centers, theme parks, health resorts, car rentals, and other tourism services and facilities. Verma [10] also adds to them historical landmarks, shopping malls, tourism organizations, transport facilities, financial centers, sports facilities, airports, and even human resources. In their pursuit of comprehensiveness, the authors intertwine the tourism superstructure with other implementation factors (e.g. human resources), with tourism resources (e.g. historical landmarks), and with tourism services (e.g. car rentals). Another view is that “the tourism superstructure unites the specific material conditions for the production and implementation of all basic and additional services” or these are “material and technical elements and the connections between them, which are functionally profiled and specialized for the implementation of a specific production tourism activity” [2].

We can summarize that “the tourist superstructure includes various material elements located above the ground, which are usually not the purpose of the tourist trip, but are necessary for the “production” and realization of the tourist product, as well as for creating good and attractive living conditions primarily for tourists” [8, 9]. Such elements are the buildings of accommodation facilities, catering and entertainment establishments, offices of tour operators and travel agents, tourist information centers, airports, ports, train stations, congress, sports, gambling and SPA centers, commercial facilities, etc. The concept of superstructure should also include the furnishings and equipment of the aforementioned facilities, because without them their functioning could not be carried out. From the definition thus indicated, it can be seen that the tourist superstructure is a broader concept compared to the tourist infrastructure and, accordingly, is the main component of the material base of tourism. The main elements of the tourist superstructure are accommodation and catering and entertainment establishments, the revenues from which form about 40% of tourism revenues.

The tourist superstructure can be either publicly or privately owned. In Bulgaria, it is primarily the business sector that invests in it.

2.2. Case study area

Bulgaria is a country in southern Europe, located entirely on the Balkan Peninsula with access to the Black Sea and the Danube River. The development of international tourism in Bulgaria has a centuries-old tradition, starting in 1921, when the first foreign tourists arrived. 0.5% of international tourists in the world travel to Bulgaria and the country generates 0.26% of the world's international tourism revenues. Various types of tourism can be practiced in Bulgaria. The leading tourism products in the country are summer seaside holiday tourism and winter ski tourism. Cultural tourism, balneological and SPA tourism, ecotourism, rural, hunting, gambling, sports tourism, etc. are also preferred. In 2024, the World Economic Forum ranked Bulgaria 40th among the 119 countries in the world considered according to the level of tourism development. The country received the highest scores for the criteria Health and Hygiene, Safety and Security and use of information and communication technologies (ICT Readiness). The lowest scores are for the criteria related to the material base of tourism (Cultural Resources, Non-Leisure Resources). In this regard, we can define them as a problem area of Bulgarian tourism, which determines the relevance of this article.

3. Methodology

To achieve the study's primary objective, a comprehensive methodological approach was employed. It combines quantitative and qualitative methods, implemented across the following four sequential stages:

- Systematic literature review: An analysis was conducted of scholarly publications (monographs, articles in peer-reviewed journals), regulatory acts, and strategic documents regarding tourism development in Bulgaria and the EU. This method served to refine the theoretical framework of the concepts of "infrastructure" and "superstructure" and to define their specific characteristics within the national context;
- Statistical data analysis: Official empirical data from the National Statistical Institute (NSI) of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Ministry of Tourism, and international sources were used. The study tracked trends, capacity, and bed occupancy rates, as well as the number of overnight stays and accommodation revenues. The data were processed using descriptive statistics and comparative analysis;
- Field research: Long-term observations of numerous sites across the country. The focus of the observation was the state of transport and information infrastructure, as well as the quality and renewal of physical facilities (hotels, dining establishments, and attractions);
- Logical methods and interpretation: The collected theoretical, statistical, and field data were synthesized using methods of scientific analysis. This enabled the identification of latent defects and issues

within the physical infrastructure, the outlining of current trends, and the formulation of scientifically grounded prospects for innovation and improvement in the sector.

4. Modern features

4.1. Use of common infrastructure

The tourism industry in Bulgaria uses all elements of the common infrastructure such as transport infrastructure, electricity supply, water supply, gasification, communication systems, etc. This leads to their significant load and depreciation during the tourist season. On the other hand, the capacity and quality of the common infrastructure lag behind when tourism develops at a rapid pace. Situations arise in which the common infrastructure, which is state and municipal property, cannot meet the needs of the business. This is a significant problem in large resorts and tourist centers.

A well-developed transport infrastructure is a basic prerequisite for effective, efficient and sustainable transport [13], which in turn is crucial for ensuring the transport accessibility of the destination and servicing tourists. Petrov [14] emphasizes that accessibility should become a main priority from an insignificant element, on which the sustainable establishment and development of the destination depend. Looking at the capital Sofia, he notes that “the identified problems are mainly related to the lack of coordinated planning, financing and implementation” and emphasizes that “since mobility and accessibility require large investments, it is important to plan everything so that these investments are used to their full potential”. These conclusions apply to the importance and use of transport infrastructure for the needs of tourism throughout the country. Petrov [15] emphasizes the opportunities for implementing e-government in the development of transport infrastructure in Bulgaria.

Almost all of the large and large-scale infrastructure facilities in Bulgaria (bridges, tunnels, etc.) were built more than half a century ago. Progress is being made in the construction of highways, but they are concentrated mainly in southern Bulgaria, which leads to the lagging behind of northern Bulgaria not only in tourism, but also in overall socio-economic development. The tunnels under Shipka and near Makaza have been talked about for decades. The Hemus and Black Sea highways have also been under construction for decades. The railway transport system needs a complete renovation. Airports need to intensify regular flights. All these and many other undertakings require large-scale investments, which can only be ensured with an active state investment policy.

Kabakchieva [16] draw attention to the growing importance of tourism on the Danube River and the need for an integrated approach to joint initiatives and partnerships to promote tourism along the river to achieve sustainable development of the tourism industry in this region. However, the port infrastructure for servicing passenger transport stands out as the weakest link in the overall transport infrastructure. After the modernization

of the sea stations in Varna and Burgas, the ports of Vidin, Svishtov, etc. still remain without modern terminals with the necessary capacity. Gutovski [13] also notes other existing problems such as poor navigation conditions at low water levels on the Danube River, fog or icing, the need to integrate systems to improve safety and security, etc.

The main problems related to the general infrastructure that directly affect the tourism industry can be highlighted [17]:

- Low share of highways on the territory of the country, which slows down transportation, including tourist transportation;
- More limited development of the regional and municipal road networks, which hinders communications between smaller settlements outside the scope of first-class roads, respectively, limiting access to a number of tourist sites;
- Depreciated water supply network, which adversely affects the water supply to accommodation facilities;
- Insufficiently developed sewage network in small settlements, which is a problem, for example, in rural tourism;
- Limited access to the Internet in small settlements;
- Incomplete treatment facilities;
- Insufficient processing of household waste.

4.2. The uneven territorial distribution and use of the material resources of tourism

Bulgaria has the accommodation base necessary for the development of the tourism industry, but it is extremely unevenly distributed across the country. This is due to the uneven distribution of tourism resources, especially those providing mass tourism, as well as the varying degree of their research and utilization.

According to data from the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, in 2025 there were a total of 4102 places for accommodation in the country, with nearly half of them located on the territory of the two Black Sea regions (Southeast and Northeast), and with the lowest share in the Northwestern and North Central regions (Table 1). Similar differences are also observed within the regions themselves. The tourist agglomeration of the largest seaside resort, Sunny Beach, contrasts sharply with the poorly utilized Dobrudzha coast, for example. The longest beach (Shkorpilovtsi-Kamchia) is also poorly equipped with tourist facilities. This gives rise to environmental and/or social problems, both in overcrowded territories and in those that are poorly utilized.

Regarding the number of beds in accommodation facilities, the data show that 2/3 of them are again in the two planning regions with developed sea tourism. The districts of Burgas, Varna, Smolyan, Blagoevgrad, Plovdiv, Dobrich and Veliko Tarnovo stand out with the largest number of accommodation facilities,

respectively beds. Class A accommodation facilities are mainly located on the territory of the Black Sea municipalities and regional centers, while class B facilities are mainly in the semi-mountainous and mountainous areas, as well as in smaller settlements.

After the pandemic, all planning regions in Bulgaria, except the North-East, have increased the number of accommodation facilities and the number of beds offered in them. The most significant increase is in the accommodation facilities in the South-Central region. All less represented regions have increased their share in providing the country with accommodation facilities, which marks a positive trend for a more even territorial distribution of the tourism industry.

Table 1. Accommodation in the country in 2025 (according to data from the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria - NSI and own calculations)

Planning regions	Number of accommodations	Share in %	Number of beds	Share in %
Northwestern	293	7,14	11 073	2,96
North Central	397	9,68	14 684	3,91
Northeastern	700	17,06	94 397	25,20
Southeastern	1158	28,23	161 315	43,06
South Central	872	21,26	42 318	11,29
Southwestern	682	16,63	50 878	13,58
Total for the country	4102	100	374 665	100

This distribution also reflects on the indicators of realized overnight stays and tourism revenues. In terms of realized overnight stays, their number is highest in the South-East (37.85%) and North-East (24.23%) regions. The majority (77.41%) of foreigners visiting Bulgaria preferred the regions with access to the sea (table 2).

After the Pandemic, all planning regions, except the North-East, reported a higher number of realized overnight stays. This trend is best expressed in the South-Central and North-West regions. However, the total number of realized overnight stays by foreigners has decreased, despite the increase reported by some regions (North-West and South-West).

Table 2. Realized overnight stays (total and by foreigners) in accommodation facilities in the country in 2025
(according to NSI data and own calculations)

Planning regions	Number of overnight stays	Share of realized overnight stays in %	Number of overnight stays by foreigners	Share of overnight stays by foreigners in %
Northwestern	747 226	2,59	80 973	0,50
North Central	862 260	2,99	184 790	1,15
Northeastern	6 983 344	24,23	5 249 659	32,64
Southeastern	10 906 746	37,85	7 200 873	44,77
South Central	4 030 034	13,98	750 361	4,67
Southwestern	5 286 991	18,36	2 616 630	16,27
Total for the country	28 816 601	100	16 083 286	100

In 2025, overnight stays in the country amounted to 2 793 855 469 leva, with 60.96% of the revenue from foreign tourists and 39.04% from Bulgarian citizens, respectively. The Southeast and Northeast regions are again leading (63.09% of the revenue from overnight stays) (Table 3).

After the pandemic, the lower level of realized overnight stays, including overnight stays from foreigners, still persists. This decline is most pronounced in the Northeast planning region. However, the Northwest, Southwest and South-Central regions report some growth in total revenues, but the decline in revenue from foreigners is significant in all regions. This increases the importance of domestic tourism.

Table 3. Revenue from overnight stays (total and from foreigners) in accommodation facilities in the country in 2025 in BGN (based on NSI data and own calculations)

Planning regions	Total revenue from overnight stays	Share of revenue from overnight stays in %	Total revenue from overnight stays of foreigners	Share of revenue from overnight stays of foreigners in %
Northwestern	52 931 578	1,89	5 771 403	0,34
North Central	56 991 113	2,04	15 066 435	0,88

Northeastern	710 071 304	25,42	563 374 734	33,08
Southeastern	1 052 401 624	37,67	731 026 466	42,92
South Central	331 370 175	11,86	63 616 911	3,74
Southwestern	590 089 675	21,12	324 206 109	19,04
Total for the country	2 793 855 469	100	1 703 062 058	100

The main part of the tourist superstructure is concentrated on the territory of the South-Eastern, North-Eastern and South-Western regions. These are the territories with developed sea holiday and winter ski tourism. Smaller concentrations are observed in several of the larger regional centers, with the presence of anthropogenic tourist resources of global and national significance. The leader in this regard is Sofia-city. Other such centers are Plovdiv, Varna, Burgas, Veliko Tarnovo, Ruse. One of the main contemporary problems of Bulgarian tourism is the overdevelopment of large territories of the Black Sea coast, which leads to overloading and pollution of the environment, leading to a disruption of the ecological balance. In the remaining parts of the country, tourist facilities are modestly represented. For example, the almost complete lack of lifts and tows in the longest mountain in Bulgaria - Stara Planina. The insufficient tourist infrastructure in a number of territories in the interior of the country leads to a lag in their tourist development.

In summary, a consistent upward trend has been observed in recent decades across all research indicators that constitute the established baseline for the tourism sector. The only significant deviation from this trend occurred between 2019 and 2021, a period directly affected by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourism sector is among the most sensitive areas of the economy to external shocks (such as natural disasters, armed conflicts, political instability, health crises, and other factors) that directly impact tourism supply and demand.

The results of the long-term analysis indicate a relatively stable maintenance of the positions held by the regions under study. The Southeast, Northeast, and Southwestern regions remain the leaders across the examined indicators, while the Northwest and North Central regions continue to record the lowest values. The analysis also reveals that only the Northeast region registered a decline in the number of accommodation establishments, with the value of this indicator in 2025 being lower than that recorded in 2017 [9, 18, 19].

The observed regional disparities can be attributed to the uneven development of tourism infrastructure, varying resource potential, and insufficient investment in less developed areas. Improving the situation requires encouraging investment in tourism facilities, developing transport and technical infrastructure, and implementing targeted policies to promote the tourism potential of lagging regions.

4.3. Uneven time load

Due to the peculiarities of the geographical location and climate in Bulgaria, there are summer and winter active tourist seasons. Therefore, the available infrastructure is not fully used for the needs of tourism throughout the year. Seasonal fluctuations in its use are observed, especially in the territory of the Black Sea municipalities. The uneven time distribution of tourist flows also leads to unevenness in the revenues of the tourism industry, which makes it difficult to invest in specialized infrastructure. At the same time, a large part of the costs for maintenance and operation of tourist sites and facilities are year-round. The hotel business is most affected in this regard, where the costs for long-term tangible assets and their maintenance are the highest. This is especially noticeable in facilities such as campsites, for example, which have a short operating period. During the active tourist season, full occupancy achieved within a few months leads to overloading, rapid depreciation and difficult servicing of the material base. During the low season, most of the facilities do not operate at all, not only due to the lack of tourists, but also due to the lack of technical suitability, for example for heating. The depreciation of the material base during the low season is associated with the almost complete lack of maintenance. In a positive aspect, the possibility of carrying out repairs and renovations of the base during the low season without causing a loss of tourists can be considered.

Similarly, seasonality is reflected in the use of transport for tourist needs. A particularly big problem is the increased traffic in, around and to the resorts during the high tourist season, which is the reason for the increased number of road accidents [20].

4.4. Other specifics

Other problems include the aging and low quality of part of the tourist infrastructure in the interior of the country; the underdeveloped network of tourist companies related to the logistics of the tourist sector in most municipalities. Due to the lack of sufficient funds, a large part of the material base of the cultural institutes is in poor condition.

4.5. Innovations in tourism infrastructure

In connection with the development of the tourism industry in recent decades, the hotel and restaurant superstructure has been gradually renovated and modernized. A relatively new trend is the construction of water parks. There are already over 20 of them and, like the accommodation facilities, they are unevenly distributed across the country. They are concentrated mainly on the Black Sea coast and in southern Bulgaria. The number of innovations in sports infrastructure is significant. Thanks to the built golf courses, Bulgaria is becoming a golf destination. Golf courses are concentrated between Kavarna and Balchik (Northeastern Bulgaria) and in Southwestern Bulgaria near the capital [21]. The growth of large ski resorts, and above all Bansko, is associated

with the need for new ski lifts and ski tows with increased throughput, which has become a publicly discussed issue in connection with the entry into the Pirin National Park and threats to the environment. Significant progress has been made in terms of building a wide network of eco-trails for the needs of ecotourism. They were built mainly through EU co-financing [22]. New tourist attractions are gradually being created, such as Miniature Parks near Veliko Tarnovo and Strelcha, Historical Park near the village of Neofit Rilski, Historical Park near Pravets, Retro Museum with a Wax Museum in Varna, Castle "In Love with the Wind" near the village of Ravadinovo, Horlog Castle near the village of Trigrad, Pliocene Park near the village of Dorkovo, the Cyrillic Courtyard near the village of Pliska, eco-village "Azareya" near the village of Gorno Trape (Trojan municipality), eco-village "Omaya" near the village of Gaitaninovo (Gotse Delchev municipality), etc. The first funicular in Bulgaria is already operating near Tsari Mali Grad. However, it was designed and built with a small capacity (8 people), which is why it cannot accommodate the tourist flow during the active season. Its length is also minimal - the distance is covered in 3 minutes in one direction. Rope parks are also gaining popularity (near Varshets, Bachinovo near Blagoevgrad, etc.). In 2024-2025, investments focus on cultural and historical heritage and ecotourism. Over 4.7 million leva have been invested in Western Bulgaria. They are aimed at modernizing museums, interactive exhibitions and improved infrastructure around natural landmarks, aimed at developing regional tourism. The funds are invested in various projects in the municipalities of Montana, Varshets, Pravets, Breznik, Zemen, Belogradchik, Botevgrad, Chiprovtsi, which aim to preserve and promote the local natural and cultural heritage [22]. A number of sites have been restored and the infrastructure has been renovated, which aim to develop the entire region. The variety of newly built tourist attractions makes a positive impression, but Bulgaria lags behind in terms of building large-scale amusement parks, for example, as well as innovative facilities that require large investments. Dimitrov [23] notes that technological lag is also observed in the field of cultural tourism in our country. It is striking that innovations in Bulgaria have long existed around the world. Therefore, Bulgaria is trying to catch up with more developed tourist destinations, but is not innovative in itself. The innovations mentioned are mainly private sector initiatives and/or co-financed with foreign investments. The abdication of the public sector from the tourism industry has an adverse effect on its development. An active attitude of the public sector would contribute to the growth of investments and innovations, as well as to a more even territorial and temporal distribution of tourist facilities and activities.

The described innovations are effective because they improve tourism infrastructure, diversify the tourism product, and enhance Bulgaria's appeal as a tourist destination. However, their effectiveness could be significantly greater with a more active state policy, a more balanced distribution of investments, greater implementation of homegrown innovations, and the development of large-scale, high-tech tourism projects designed to boost the country's international competitiveness.

5. Prospects and recommendations for development

The balanced construction and functioning of the tourism infrastructure and superstructure is an important and mandatory condition for the sustainable development of the tourism industry. In this regard, for the better development of the tourism industry in Bulgaria, we recommend:

- The general infrastructure should match or outpace the construction of the tourism infrastructure. This can be achieved through precise territorial planning at the national, regional and local levels and relevant investments.

The guidelines for improving the general infrastructure should be aimed at increasing the share of motorways in the country, rehabilitation and major repairs of the republican roads, completion and improvement of the regional and municipal road network [17]. It is necessary to improve transport accessibility to attractive sites and settlements on the territory of the country, especially in the interior, which will contribute to increasing the number of visits. It is necessary to increase access to and use of information and communication technology networks and services in smaller settlements. It is important to renew the depreciated water transmission and water supply network and build treatment facilities, especially in large resorts.

- Improving the quality and expanding the capacity of existing tourist facilities
- Precise spatial planning of tourist facilities

Regarding accommodation facilities, it is necessary to stop building on coastal areas and pay attention to the interior of the country, focusing on the construction of modern and functional accommodation for the development of alternative forms of tourism.

- It is important to build new large-scale infrastructure facilities, as well as to maintain existing ones in excellent condition. It is also important to improve their quality.

Some guidelines in this regard are:

- Reconstruction and renovation of parks, green spaces and recreation areas;
- Renovation of the building stock of cultural institutes;
- Creation of cultural and information centers in areas with potential for the development of cultural and educational tourism;
- Construction of sports and tourism, recreation and rehabilitation centers in areas with potential for the development of various forms of tourism;
- Implementation of eco-infrastructure projects;
- Creation of a comprehensive network of routes for hiking and cycling tourism by connecting existing ones and marking new ones [17].

Only through the construction of diverse and relatively evenly distributed new and innovative tourist facilities and attractions can one expect to improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of Bulgaria as a tourist destination, as well as to increase revenues and efficiency in the tourism industry.

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B) Review and final approval of the work: Associate Professor V. Vasileva, PhD.

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