

PROBLEMS OF THE MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING OF FAMILY BUSINESS IN TOURISM¹

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ABSTRACT

A significant number of enterprises in tourism are family businesses. They have their own specifics arising from the ownership and peculiarities of management and control. Business development in these enterprises is subordinated to and is dependent on the successful combination of two systems with different character, values, interests and goals – the social system, formed on the basis of the family, and the economic system, aimed to gain a profit. Three key elements are united by the family business realization’ - family, business and property. As a result, in enterprises of this type occur several problems related to their management and marketing policies.

In this regard, the objective of this article is to identify specific problems of management and marketing policy of family businesses of the tourism sector in Bulgaria through analysis of the empirical data and to bring out guidelines for their solution.

For the conduction of the study are used the following methods: survey of family enterprises in tourism, analysis and synthexsis, and also statistical methods for analysis and evaluation.

Keywords: management, marketing, family business, tourism, issues,
decision making guidelines

INTRODUCTION

The family business occupies a significant share in the production and marketing of goods and services in countries with developed market economy. According to some sources family businesses globally constitute at least 70% of all enterprises (Krosby, 2004). Within the European Union,

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according to the European Family Business Barometer in 2015 they were 73% of enterprises on average. According to the same source, in Bulgaria family businesses constitute 70% of the country's economy.

(European Family Business Barometer, Fourth Edition 2015, <http://www.europeanfamilybusinesses.eu/family-businesses/facts-figures>).

The role of the family business for the development of the economy and society is indisputable. It "contributes significantly to the gross domestic product, creates jobs and employment, provides market flexibility, accelerates local and regional development, develops entrepreneurship and new business culture, providing development of civil society and is the basis of the middle class" (Madgerova, Kyurova, 2012). Its importance and the high proportion of family businesses give the ground to define family businesses as "vital force" in the economy (FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESSES, <http://www.referenceforbusiness.com/small/eq-inc/Family-Owned-Businesses.html>). Along with that, family businesses bring long-term stability, have a specific duty to the local communities, and have the responsibility of owners and carriers of values (<http://www.europeanfamilybusinesses.eu/about-us>). In the fullest extent these characteristics also apply to family businesses in tourism.

Statistical data on family business in Bulgaria in general and in tourism in particular are scarce. The reason for this is that only one study on this issue was conducted in the country after the transition to a market economy and the development of private initiative. The lack of specific larger-scale national and regional research leads to a misunderstanding of the problems of the business, particularly the ones related to management and marketing, which are the basis of its development.

In terms of the tourism sector, official statistics reports only businesses in the hotel and restaurant industry without categorizing them according to the characteristic "family / non family" enterprises. These enterprises in Bulgaria are the 26 312 with 100% private ownership in the sector. Of these, 26 010 are the in the category of small and medium enterprises (www.nsi.bg).

The development of this paper is inspired by the great role and importance of family businesses in the tourism sector and the lack of in-depth studies of its condition and problems related with its functioning and arising from its specifics.

In this regard, the aim of the paper is to identify specific problems of management and marketing policy of family businesses of the tourism sector in Bulgaria based on the results of the analysis of empirical data, and to bring out guidelines for their solution.

To achieve this purpose a review of literature on the problems of family business in tourism was made and a survey of owners of 84 enterprises from

the business was conducted to establish its status and key issues in management and marketing. An important task of this study is to propose possible solutions to these problems.

To conduct the study the following methods were used: survey of family enterprises in tourism, analysis and synthesis, and statistical methods for analysis and evaluation.

Information from literary sources was processed and systematized, the materials and data from analytical reports, statistical data from the National Statistical Institute of Bulgaria, and results of a survey were also used.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issues of family business have attracted the attention of a number of researchers who examined it from different aspects - in terms of its specific features, its life cycle, the state and role in social and economic life and especially to solve the problems of employment and income population, as well as in connection with its organization and effective management. A review of the literature shows that a number of authors have made significant contributions to the development of family business theory.

The basis of the understanding of the specifics of family business, its essence and problems is the three-cycle family business model of R. Tagiuri and J. Davis (1982), which reveals its specificity by combining three key elements - family, business and ownership. In this model two important systems intertwine that interact and influence each other, namely the social system (family) and economic (business and property) (Madgerova, Kyurova, 2012).

The three-cycle family business model is defined in the literature as a "starting point for all experts examining different aspects of family business as well as trying to define it" (Šmardová, Elexa, 2013). Considering the possibilities of problems in reconciling family, business and property according to the original Three Circle Model, and the fact that 21st century businesses enter into new relationships with customers, HM McCabe (2012) offers a new model - "Advanced Paradigm", which he called the 21st Century Client Relation Model. To the original three-circular pattern, he added three elements - Divorce, Real estate and Partnerships.

The problems of specificity, management, organization and managerial decisions for the survival of the family company in the presence of a complex relationship between social and economic systems (family and business) are also discussed by other authors such as R. Beckhard and W. Dyer (1983), WC Handler (1989), M. Gallo and J. Sveen (1991), K. Todorov (2011), ES Kirenkina (2010). In this sense J. Lievens (2004) reveals the complex and significantly more complex nature of the management of

family firms compared with non-family companies, which he said was due to their specifics and highlights the important role of professionalism in management, comparing it with the corner stone for the competitiveness of the enterprise.

A significant proportion of issues concern the success and survival of the family business (P. Alcorn, 1982), the development of an organizational structure (B. Barry, 1975), as well as changes in the life cycle in small family businesses (R. Peiser and L. Wooten, 1983).

The planning activities of family businesses as the most important element management also play an important part in the scientific literature. R. S. Carlock and J.L. Ward (2001) address the issues of strategic planning and J. Lievens (2004) states that the family firm "cannot exist and prosper without planning and without always awaken spirit and ambition for the survival of the company" and "the bedrock on which a competitive family business builds consists of three main pillars - long-term planning of company activity, functional family group and professional management.

The management and development of the family company are subject to the attention of J.L. Ward (2003), who presents the advantages of family business based on the application of unconventional strategies, F. Neubauer and A. Lank (1998) revealing management capabilities geared towards sustainability, D. Yordanova (2014), which also considered family property and business closely and with a view to mutual influences and reveals opportunities for business growth. An important question is posed concerning the implementation of governance, leading to an increase in the potential of family and business (Aronoff and Ward, 1993).

One of the main issues related to successful and sustainable functioning of family businesses over time is succession, transfer and inheritance of the business. This problem in the scientific literature is also paid special attention by authors such as D. Ambrose (1983), A. Crosby (2004), D. Kenyon-Rouvinez and Gabs (2005), K. Todorov (2005), D. Yordanova (2014) and others.

Continuity is defined by D.K. Rouvinez and Gabs (2005) as a "sensitive period for the company and for the family," "very emotional" and causing "a lot of uncertainty because it involves profound changes." According to K. Todorov (2005) inheritance should be considered in terms of the relationship with the entrepreneurial continuity of the family business. In general, the decision to sell the business affects the company itself, its economic purpose, management and workforce. In particular, for a family business that is very complex decision containing numerous economic variables arising from highly diversified aspects (not just economic) (Todorov, 2005). According to him, the problems arising from the process of inheritance have significant implications for all countries - especially the negative impact on growth and

employment, it is therefore necessary to carry out planning for succession and transfer of business.

The specifics of the family business in tourism and hospitality is reflected in the works of D. Getz, J. Carlsen, A. Morrison, T. Petersen, T. Andersson, J. A. Knight, P. A. Nilsson, J. McGibbon, Gh. Ahmad, M. Peters, D. Buhalis, W. Zhao, L.A. Wilson, L. Šmardová, A. M. Zapalska and others. Key questions in a number of publications are those of the operation, vision, challenges, opportunities and the growth of family businesses in the sphere of tourism and hospitality. For example, D. Getz, J. Carlsen and A. Morrison (2004) put on consideration the nature and specifics of family business in tourism and hospitality, entrepreneurship related to it, maintaining and developing the role of strategic planning and strategic marketing in the process, the problem of balancing family and business through the life cycle and other important issues connected with its establishment, successful operation, management and marketing. Considering the peculiarities of family businesses in tourism through the prism of three-cycle model and based on extensive research, they represent the relationship between family ownership and business. In this sense, they argue that the role of the family consists of the following: „First, autonomy and lifestyle motives are a family-first vision, making the business a means towards an end. For a subset, the business offers the specific type of family life the owners (typically couples working together) are seeking. Either way, the dominance of these types of family business in tourism and hospitality, at least in highly developed economies, ensures that the sector will remain largely one of small and micro businesses. Second, the family vision as related to children and possible succession is revealed to be of secondary importance and frequently is not an issue at all. As will be demonstrated, most family businesses in this industry do not involve children at all, and very few get inherited.“ (D. Getz, J. Carlsen and A. Morrison, 2004, p.12). According to them „the tourism and hospitality industry embodies a number of unique or especially important considerations relative to the family business (D. Getz, J. Carlsen and A. Morrison, 2004, p. 9).

A number of collective works of D. Getz with other authors address key issues related to the management of the family business in terms of family, property and business (D. Getz and J. Carlsen, 2000), an analysis of growth opportunities and profit of family businesses owners (D. Getz and T. Petersen, 2005), discuss the specifics of family businesses in tourism, paying attention to issues such as the operations of small and family business, links with entrepreneurship, roles and responsibilities of family members (D. Getz, J. Carlsen, 2005), place the problems of the life cycle of the business, its launch, development and sales (Andersson, T., J. Carlsen and D. Getz, 2002). The authors also discuss key issues such as management for

sustainable rural development and tourism, and the support for sustainable practices in rural family businesses (Carlsen, J., D. Getz and J.A.Knight, 2001), as well as the strategies of family businesses overcoming seasonality in tourism demand, which gives profound implications for both the family and the vitality and business development (Getz, D., P.A. Nilsson, 2004). W. Zhao and D. Getz (2008) examine the characteristics and goals (relating to start-up, business operation, and family) of rural family business owners in developing countries.

The scientific literature discusses the issue of opportunities for development of small business in tourism and hospitality through participation in networks, which provides an opportunity to enhance the potential of the companies and the response of the competitive environment through the use of common resources within the network (Ahmad , Gh., 2005). M. Peters and D. Buhalis (2004) examined the specific business processes, occurring in small family businesses, which generate particular training and educational needs. The authors review a number of management areas, such as: planning, strategy development and behaviour in these enterprises. Another important question concerns the characteristics of the owners of a small family business in tourism and hospitality based on a family model for business development, designed around three axes - family, business and ownership (Wilson, L.A., 2007).

In one of their publications A. M. Zapalska and D. Brozik (2007) emphasize the importance of tourism family business for regional development. Based on a study they conducted, the authors stated that „the biggest start-up problems are with finance, credit, and a lack of business training. Once the family business is in operation, the lack of financial planning experience is its greatest difficulty“, as well as „those arising from lack of management experience and limited business skills, the failure to control or exploit community relationships, lack of sufficient financial resources, and limited marketing skills.”

L. Šmardová and L. Elexa (2013) give attention to the main burdens of doing business perceived by family-owned hospitality enterprises, and reveal the important role of external business and administrative environment and especially the related administrative burden, the taxation system, labor-related laws and social securities.

Based on the above literature review some key highlights connected with the understanding of the nature and specifics of family business in general and in tourism in particular can be outlined.

It should be noted that when it comes to family businesses it is necessary to keep in mind that family-owned enterprises "are affected by a wider range of issues and interests than usually occurs in other forms of business" (M.

Duka et al., 2013). They have their own specifics arising from ownership and peculiarities of management and control.

Business development in these enterprises is subject to and is dependent on the successful combination of the two systems with different character, values, interests and goals - social, formed on the basis of family and economic (business and property) aimed at obtaining profit. As a result, in enterprises of this type several problems related to their management and marketing policies arise.

Making management and marketing decisions is closely related to the nature of this business, with its specificity and the relationships between its major systems and components. So one of the conditions for success in business involves "the need to achieve a certain balance between them" (Madgerova, R. and V. Kyurova, 2012). This balance is imperative because "every system has its own priorities, interests and goals, and each member within the different segments will actively seek to protect their interests in terms of the segment in which it operates" (M. Duka et al, 2013).

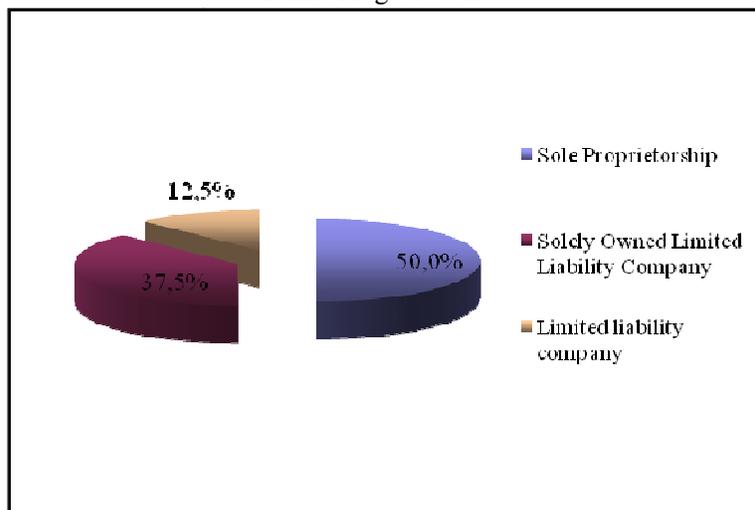
The integration of business interests with those of the family is of great importance. It has an important role "in shaping the goals of the family-owned enterprise" (Madgerova, R. and V. Kyurova, 2014). Giving equal priority to both systems (social and economic) and stable relations in the family are an important condition for the effective management of the family company and its success (Madgerova, R. and V. Kyurova, 2014).

The identified main highlights are the basis of the survey conducted by the authors in the first quarter of 2016 among owners of family businesses in the tourism sector, aiming to establish management and marketing problems of their enterprises.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The profile of the surveyed enterprises shows that 98% of them are from the field of hospitality, and the rest are tour operators and tour agents. According to the form of registration it is found that the largest numbers are sole proprietors (50%) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Distribution of family-owned enterprises according to their form of registration



Source: own research

It would be interesting to look at the distribution of enterprises according to the number of persons employed. The results of the study show that small enterprises dominate (62.5 %), followed by micro enterprises (37.5%). There are no medium or large enterprises.

The more important managerial problems that were identified in the course of the study include the link between family and business and the balance between family, business and management, as well as the factors influencing effective management and the success of the family-owned business.

In this context, the analysis of results reveals that the priority in the operation of business activities is how to combine family and business (87.5%). Only 12.5% of responding family entrepreneurs prioritize their business and none of them believes that only the family is important. At the same time all respondents claim that there needs to be continuity between generations in the realization of business. In this context, one of the tasks of the study is to identify if the owners have a plan for succession of the business. Observations reveal that only 37.5% of them have a plan for succession.

The survey results show that for over half of respondents (62.5%) the characteristics that are crucial to the development of family business are a combination of ownership, continuity and control. Not small, however, is the share of those who believe that only the management is essential for

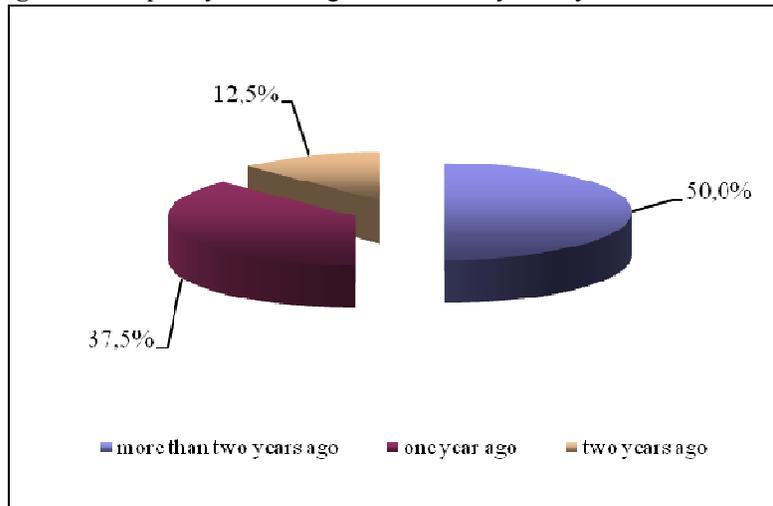
effective development of this business (37.5%). At the same time we should bear in mind that according to 62.5%, family relationships affect the efficient management of the business. There are a relatively high proportion of respondents (62.5%) who claim that the existence of conflicts in the family grave consequences for the state of the family business. The opinion of the majority of respondents (87.5%) is that it is necessary to clearly define the obligations of each family member in the management, ownership and operation of the enterprise.

In this connection, the survey data show that the most important factors for the success of these enterprises are: combining the experience of the older generation with the energy of the younger generation for a better business thinking in the long term (75%); high degree of confidence/trust (50%); participation of all family members in employment (37.5%); understanding between the two generations (37.5%); operational thinking of two generations in the introduction and use of innovative technologies (37.5%).

One of the prerequisites for the successful operation of the business of an enterprise is its ability to finance. In this respect, the survey results revealed that the most significant share of businesses used their own funds to finance their activity (62.5%). Next rank those who use bank loans (50%). Only 12.5 percent of enterprises use funds under EU programs and projects. In addition, although 75% of respondents say they are informed about the possibilities for applying for European programs, few of them have received funds from European Union to develop the business. This shows that the majority of owners of family businesses do not realize the opportunities they provide them.

In view of the crucial importance of the quality of human resources for the effective functioning of the family business, one of the highlights of the study is to establish the status and actions they undertake for the training and development of human resources in the surveyed enterprises. Substantial proportion of respondents (75%) evaluates their staff as well prepared professionally. At the same time, the share of respondents who consider the qualification of the staff is excellent is only 25%. A positive point is that there are no low and middle grades. One of the conditions for the effective functioning of enterprises is the frequency of the staff training. The research found that 50% of enterprises committed staff training more than two years, in 12.5% of the enterprises staff training was conducted two years ago and the other 37.5 percent - a year ago (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Frequency of trainings carried out by family businesses



Source: own research

The survey results show that the main directions of conducted staff training being are:

- training related to safety at work (50.0%);
- induction training of new employees (50.0%);
- work with machinery, facilities, technology (without office equipment) - 25.0%;
- work with computers and other office equipment (12.5%);
- improving the language skills (25.0%);
- training related to sales, marketing and advertising (12.5%).

The management skills of family business owners are a major factor for the success of their business. In this connection, respondents give their self assessment from which it was found that they all possess management skills. Only half of them stated that their professional qualification matches the activity performed in enterprise. This explains the fact that 75% of respondents believe that there is an objective need for further training. The main directions for the acquisition of additional knowledge, skills and competencies that they determine are: foreign language, marketing, management and tourism. While in terms of the level of qualification and experience of the owner / owners of the company it was found that the most significant share of responses for the period was “very good” (62.5%).

The research identified some marketing problems too. For example, undertaking market and competitors research is important for the effective management and sound development of an enterprise. Analysis of the survey

shows that a significant proportion of owners (75%) are exploring the market. However, only 12.5% carry this out regularly and 25% - once a year. The proportion of those who do market research twice a year is relatively higher (37.5%). A positive point is that only 12.5% said they did not research the market.

Another important question is the attitude towards competitors. According to survey results comparatively low proportion of respondents (12.5%) believe it is not necessary to do an analysis of competitors in the sector. This is due to the fact that all respondents claim to study and have information about the main competitors in the market. It is important to note that 62.5% of owners know their competitors of their businesses, do competitive analysis in order to build a strategic plan and 37.5 percent analyzed competition in terms of sales management.

One of the most important indicators to analyze and assess the market position of companies is the size of their market share. 75% of respondents estimated the market share of their businesses as small (less than 5%) and 25% define it as average (between 5% and 20%). There are no companies with large market share, which we believe is due to the fact that the surveyed enterprises are micro and small enterprises.

A summary group of problems connecting management and marketing activities are those of strategic planning for the development of enterprises. The research found that a the proportion of companies that have developed such a strategy and plan is higher (87.5%). It should be noted that development strategies which they apply include:

- product differentiation (12.5 %);
- low prices (12.5 %);
- staff care (12.5 %);
- high quality (75 %);
- minimum expenses (25 %);
- customer care (37.5 %);
- total quality management (25 %);
- specialized products (25 %);
- innovations (50%);
- expanding the size of the enterprise (37.5%);
- national market (37.5%).

Using the survey the assessment of business owners for the value of existing marketing strategies in enterprises was identified. The analysis shows that there are no low or excellent ratings. The responses reveal that 50% of respondents give a good rating and the remaining 50% - very good assessment of their strategies.

In terms of product policy the study shows that all businesses plan update of the assortment of products / services offered, as well as creating new ones.

While in terms of assessing the level of innovation of enterprise we found a higher the relative proportions of respondents who give medium and good rating.

An important issue for family businesses is what action to take for disclosure of the usefulness of the offered product and convince the consumer in its usefulness. It was found that a significant proportion of companies (87.5 percent) take actions to promote their product. An additional analysis was made to establish the type of promotional tools. The survey results reveal that the most frequently used one is the Internet, including web sites of enterprises (87.5%). The advertising materials respondents used most are brochures (50%). Only 12.5 percent used television as a primary means of advertising.

During the research, the following issues were also object of attention: the level of competitiveness, customer demand, financial results. A significant proportion of respondents (62.5%) gave a very good assessment of the level of competitiveness of the enterprise products. Only a small proportion of respondents give excellent rating - 12.5%.

In terms of assessing the level of consumer demand for the products of the enterprise, it was found that the largest proportion of respondents give a very good assessment - 37.5%. Excellent ratings are missing, and there is a small share of low ratings (12.5%). The remaining 50% are good ratings.

Based on examining the indicators for profit, efficiency, profitability and liquidity, the study provides an opportunity to analyze and evaluate the financial and economic performance. The estimates that respondents give for financial results are mostly good (37.5%), 25% of them indicated a very good rating and 25% - excellent.

The degree of efficiency of enterprises is estimated as follows: 12.5% of respondents give a medium rating, 37.5% - good and 50% - very good. There are no low and excellent ratings for the period under study.

50% of respondents give a good assessment and 50% - very good rating for the level of profitability of enterprises.

The assessment of the degree of liquidity of the company is also of interest. It is noteworthy that the highest proportion of respondents gave an average rating (50%), followed by good (25%). The proportion of those giving a very good and low estimate is small (12.5% for each group). An excellent rating is missing.

Based on the analysis of the following problems in the management and marketing of family business in tourism and opportunities to solve them can be outlined:

1. Insufficient understanding of the relationship between social and economic systems in the family business. Underestimating this link

inevitably affects the effectiveness of the management and marketing solutions.

2. Policies to create new products to meet the differentiated needs of customers and to improve the position of national and foreign markets are insufficient. In this connection it is necessary to improve the innovative activity in accordance with the market needs identified as a result of market research.

3. A small proportion of companies use European funding despite the large percentage of the ones who are informed about this opportunity. For this purpose it is necessary to increase their knowledge and skills to develop projects under European programs.

4. In relation to maintaining a high quality of human resources employed in tourism, a crucial problem for the vast majority of companies is the low share of the performed training of staff. Significant attention should be paid to improving the language skills and the one related with sales, marketing and advertising. An important problem is that a small proportion of introductory training of new employees. Additional training is also important for business owners.

5. Some of the companies have no established strategies and plans for their development, which affects their financial and economic results. They do not benefit from various complex factors contributing to business success. The main strategy used is aimed at achieving high quality, while other strategies occupy much smaller shares in their strategic plans. Given that mainly SMEs operate in tourism, primarily strategies of product differentiation and focusing should be applied that will allow them to apply unique products that provide better value to customers compared to competitors and to form targeted segment in order to obtain a competitive advantage in it. In connection with the the constant and dynamic changes in market needs and addressing the strong influence of seasonality in tourism, the strategy of diversification is suitable. To increase the success of the business refinement of the company's goals and priorities, as well as enhanced knowledge of market, customers and competitors is necessary.

6. Insufficient attention is paid to some important aspects of marketing activity. The survey results show that a significant majority of businesses do not make regular market research. Large proportion of business owners do not carry out competitive analysis, especially in terms of sales management. The spectrum of promotional tools used is not rich enough. The level of marketing metrics such as competitiveness and consumer demand is low. In this sense, we consider it necessary to apply marketing policies and strategies appropriate for the business.

Solving these problems is one of the most important keys to implementing a successful business of family businesses in tourism.

CONCLUSION

From this study it was found that there are serious problems regarding the management and marketing activities of the surveyed family businesses. These problems can be solved only with the active participation of the business itself and an understanding of the need for proper management and marketing approaches.

The guidelines for solving the problems identify opportunities for future behavior of entrepreneurs - owners of enterprises in tourism. Key to the prosperity of this business is the successful implementation of three-cycle model. An important condition for ensuring the effective management and development of marketing activities is the combination of professional business management with stable family relationships, the presence of synchronization between family ownership and management of the company. In this sense, knowledge and consideration of the specifics of the business is of key importance for making the right management and marketing solutions.

Priority solving of the identified problems through specific programs and strategies will contribute to the success and development not only of family businesses, but also of the tourism sector.

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