

**TRAKIA UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**



VIOLETKA LYUBENOVA ZHELEVA

**ASSESSMENTS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF
ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TOURISM
IN THE REGION OF STARA ZAGORA**

ABSTRACT

**of a dissertation for awarding an educational and scientific degree "PhD"
in a scientific specialty
"Economics and Management (Agriculture)"**

SCIENTIFIC SUPERVISORS:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Blaga Ivanova Stoykova

Prof. Dr. Ivan Georgiev Ivanov

Stara Zagora

2020

STRUCTURE AND VOLUME OF DEVELOPMENT

The developed dissertation has a volume of 180 pages of main text and 71 pages of appendix. The material is illustrated by 41 figures and 14 tables. The structure of the development consists of an introduction, an exposition in three chapters, general conclusions from the dissertation research, recommendations of a practical-applied nature and a list of used literature. The number of used literature and information sources is 187, of which 101 in Bulgarian and 86 in foreign languages. 4 appendices are presented to the dissertation.

The dissertation was discussed and directed for defense by the Department of Regional Development at the Thracian University, Stara Zagora, with protocol № 148 / 15.10.2020.

The public defense of the dissertation will take place on 19.02.2021. from 11:00 am in the Conference Hall of the Faculty of Economics, Thracian University, Stara Zagora, at an open meeting of the scientific jury, determined by Order № 3253 / 07.12.2020. of the Rector of the Thracian University, Stara Zagora.

The materials for the defense of the dissertation are available in the "Scientific" department of the Faculty of Economics, Thracian University and online at www.uni-sz.bg

CONTENTS

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION	4
1. Relevance of the problem	4
2. Object and subject of the research	6
3. Aim and tasks of the research	6
4. Research thesis	7
5. Organization of the research	7
II. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION	8
1. Introduction	8
2. First chapter. Theoretical foundations of alternative tourism	9
3. Chapter Two. Research methodology. Socio-economic characteristics of Stara Zagora district and of the selected municipalities and settlements	10
4. Chapter three. Analysis and assessment of the condition and opportunities for development of alternative forms of tourism on the territory of Stara Zagora district	16
III. MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DISSERTATION WORK	21
IV. PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION	22

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Relevance of the problem

In recent years, there has been an upward trend in the development of the tourism sector in the world economy. It occupies an important place in the economies of well-developed countries, generating significant economic benefits, and also plays an important role in the social system, both globally and nationally. In 2016, the tourism sector formed 12.8% of the GDP of the Bulgarian economy, which provides employment to 362,900 people. Resisting the damage caused by the economic crisis in previous years, the sector has not only managed to maintain its leading position, but also to expand and direct its potential in other areas. The changes that have taken place in Bulgarian tourism in recent years are due to a number of consequences that provide a clear direction for the development of alternative forms of tourism. Apart from the positive trends that mark the development of Bulgarian tourism, there are also negative ones. One of the reasons for this is the negative impact that mass tourism has on local communities.

It turns out that one of the current problems related to modern tourism is the perceived need of the tourist to diversify their vacation through different experiences. The replacement of each other with priority, namely the consumption of goods and services with the consumption of experiences and culture, is shown and observed in a trend of strong growth of tourist activity in different destinations, where alternative forms of tourism are becoming increasingly important, associated with activity and thirst for adventure and knowledge. Modern tourists are attracted by sites and economic activities with specific features and characteristics. For the identification of the different forms of alternative tourism, the determining factor is the motive as a starting point in the decision-making process for its practice. Natural resources, cultural and historical sites or individual goods can attract interest and develop and promote

the specific village to the position of a popular destination. An important part of the tourist product are food and drinks, festivals and folklore events. The specifics of the local cuisine and alcoholic products are just as popular among tourists as the natural and cultural-historical sites. Of particular interest is the wine, which is inextricably linked with human history from antiquity to the present day. It has penetrated deep into the life of the Bulgarians, and today is an important part of the consumer basket of the population in Bulgaria. The modern way of life and the construction of gourmet culture has prompted a large number of people to seek more in-depth information and opportunities to "enrich" their palate by trying new and unfamiliar wines. To a large extent, this is the main motive for the sustainable development of the so-called "Wine tourism".

Tourism, as a means of developing the region, is closely linked to the development of the local economy. Stara Zagora District has many natural and anthropogenic tourist resources that can arouse interest among tourists and become a leading motive for their travel. The area has an important geographical position for the country. There is a good infrastructure network and a good accommodation base. Among the natural resources the first place is occupied by the presence of mineral springs in the village of Starozagorski Bani (Stara Zagora municipality), the village of Yagoda (Maglizh municipality), the town of Pavel Banya (Pavel Banya municipality), which are a prerequisite for balneal and wellness tourism. Among the anthropogenic resources in the most important place is the presence of a rich cultural and historical heritage dating back to antiquity, having a high cognitive value. Deeply preserved traditions and customs are evidence of the rich intangible cultural heritage.

The current situation suggests increasing interest in alternative forms of tourism. More and more attention is paid to such mass activities, but rather to the individual demand among tourists.

Degree of elaboration of the problem

The analysis of the reviewed scientific literature shows that the basis of the theoretical and methodological framework related to the overall assessment of tourist resources and the possibilities for their proper exploitation of the territory for the development of tourism is in the process of development. Scientific publications on the researched issues are not sufficiently developed and can be enriched with new contributions.

2. Object and subject of the research

The object of the study are settlements, events and tourist attractions, together with tourists, as end users of tourist goods and services; persons providing tourist services; experts, representatives of the local administration, who are directly related to the development of tourism; organizers of popular and attractive local events that attract tourist interest.

The subject of the study are the current state and trends in the development of different types of alternative tourism: rural tourism, tourism related to traditional industries, cultural tourism, festival tourism, ethnographic tourism, wine tourism, sports and hobby tourism.

3. Aim and tasks of the research

The purpose of this research is to analyze and assess the tourist resource potential of some municipalities in Stara Zagora, as well as the development of region-specific forms of alternative tourism, to analyze the development of these forms of tourism, to assess the results and assessment of opportunities.

In order to achieve the set goal of the research, the following **research tasks** have been set:

1. To make theoretical research and analysis of classical and modern scientific sources from the fields of economics, tourism and sociology to substantiate basic theoretical statements related to the development of the concept, concept and classification of alternative tourism and its subtypes.

2. Development of a methodological approach in research and assessment of the state and opportunities for development of alternative forms of tourism in connection with the specifics of Stara Zagora.

3. To analyze and evaluate the condition and development of alternative forms of tourism in Stara Zagora district.

4. To make an analysis and evaluation of the results of the field research.

5. To identify the problems related to the development of alternative forms of tourism; to analyze and evaluate the impact of these forms of tourism on local development.

6. To suggest possible solutions to the identified problems.

4. Research thesis

In Stara Zagora district there is untapped potential in the field of alternative forms of tourism.

In the course of developing the thesis and setting basic framework for the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected through empirical studies are set four main hypotheses eight sub-hypothesis, incorporating the multiplicity of circumstances in order to reach election of the correct option for development of each of the studied alternative forms of tourism.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used in the dissertation development. Quantitative indicators include statistical-economic and statistical-mathematical indicators, which are related to both the preliminary and the current and subsequent evaluation. The qualitative methods that are applicable to the present study are focused on the current assessment, looking for the assessment of the respondents who participated in the survey.

5. Organization of the research

The study is limited in scope on the territory of Stara Zagora district. The opening of appropriate events and destinations is at the administrative level, as 5 municipalities (Gurkovo municipality; Kazanlak municipality; Maglzh

municipality; Stara Zagora municipality; Chirpan municipality) on the territory of the district are studied, in accordance with the municipal development plans of each municipality, their cultural calendars and the District Strategy for Development of Stara Zagora District. The study period is 3 years - from 03.2017 to 02.2020. The choice to analyze the specific types of alternative tourism is based on preliminary monitoring of the state of tourism and the availability of natural and anthropogenic resources in the district, referring to existing classifications for this type of tourism.

This dissertation should be considered as the first attempt to assess opportunities for development of alternative forms of tourism in Stara Zagora. The research so far is sporadic and closely limited in scope, forms of tourism studied and research methods. By introducing into scientific use new empirical material and applying complex methods, this topical and practically important topic will become available to the general public and will enable other researchers to supplement and further develop it in other aspects.

I express my gratitude to the participants in the surveys, who responsibly and correctly participated in the collection of empirical material, as well as to the organizers of the researched events, who supported the current research.

II. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

The structure of the dissertation is subordinated to the purpose and tasks of the research. It consists of an introduction, an exposition in three chapters, a conclusion, literature with a volume of 180 standard text pages, main text. 187 literature and information sources were used. The text includes 41 figures and 14 tables. There are 4 appendices to the dissertation, with a volume of 71 pages, containing 240 figures and 15 tables.

1. Introduction

The introduction substantiates the relevance of the researched topic, as well as the need for its analysis, evaluation and improvement. The research thesis is

formulated and the goal and the main tasks of the research, its subject and object are presented. The applied methods and approaches used in the work process are presented, as well as the sources of information.

2. First chapter. Theoretical foundations of alternative tourism

The development of this chapter is a result of the implementation of the first research task. It analyzes the definitions of alternative tourism, its types and their classification, proposed by foreign and Bulgarian authors. It consists of four sections, distributed as follows:

The **first section** summarizes the main definitions of alternative forms of tourism. It emphasizes the generally accepted meaning of the concept, which unites the needs, interests, the way of flow and expectations of the various actors involved in the process of offering and consuming alternative forms of tourism.

The **second section** presents the features, role and importance of alternative tourism, which occupies an important place in the process of dealing with the negative effect on the main destinations suitable for mass tourism.

The **third section** pays attention to the different views of the authors in the field, which led to different definitions of alternative tourism and its forms.

The **fourth section** discusses several alternative forms of tourism used in the development of this study, taking into account the specifics of the destination, the quantity and quality of natural and anthropogenic resources in the area. These are:

- Cultural tourism, including this group:

° Festivals of certain types of arts - music, dance, song, ballet, theater, opera, cinema - **Rock Fest**, Sredno Gradishte and **Festival of Opera and Ballet**, Stara Zagora;

° Folklore festivals - dedicated to authentic folklore, including the various folklore festivals - **National Thracian Folklore Festival "Virgin Mary's Step"**,

Stara Zagora Bani and the **Fifth Meeting of Folklore Ensembles from Abroad and Bulgaria under the motto "Vereya and Friends"**, Stara Zagora;

◦ Festivals-bazaars, fairs and fairs, at the same time festivals of folk crafts - "**Feast of the Horse**" Todorovden, Stara Zagora and **XXI Festival of Masquerade Games**, Stara Zagora;

◦ Festivals of traditional productions - **National Lavender Festival** in the village of Sredno Gradishte and **Rose Festival**, Kazanlak.

- Extreme tourism (sports and hobby tourism) - "**Stara Zagora Trophy " 2018 - Traditions**, Stara Zagora and **National Moto Fair MC Free Wind Riders BG**, Stara Zagora Bani.

- Wine tourism - **Augustiada - festival of wine and cultural heritage**, Stara Zagora and the **Wormwood Festival** in the village of Zmeyovo.

- Rural tourism - the **village of Seltse** (Maglizh municipality) and the **village of Lyava Reka** (Gurkovo municipality).

3. Chapter Two. Research methodology. Socio-economic characteristics of Stara Zagora district and of the selected municipalities and settlements

This chapter describes the methodology of the study, as well as the socio-economic characteristics of the studied areas. The chapter consists of three sections.

The **first section of this chapter** presents the methodological framework of this dissertation, which refers to some of the widely popular in the theory of recreation and recreation theoretical and methodological formulations.¹

¹ Murphey, P. (1985), *Tourism. A community Approach*. New Your-London: Methuen, quoted by Taylor, G. (1995), *The community approach: does it really work?* *Tourism Management Great Britain*, Vol. 16, No. 7, 487-489; Murphey, P. (1986), *Tourism as an agent for landscape conservation and assessment. The science of the total environment*, Netherlands, 55, 387-395; Popova, N. (2011), *Spatial characteristics and features of the resource potential for development of cultural and historical tourism in Bulgaria*, ed. Avangard, Sofia

As in the scientific literature there is still no developed universal and complex criterion for measuring the assessment of opportunities, this requires the development of its own author's methodology in order to multifaceted assessment of opportunities for tourism development in Stara Zagora. Therefore, different methods and assessments are used in the present dissertation. A set of subjective assessments of tourism participants, combined with relative, qualitative and quantitative assessments at expert level related to the development of alternative types of tourism allows a more comprehensive and detailed picture by analyzing the strengths and weaknesses and predicting the direction of future development and unleashing the potential.

The **following specific methods** are **used to** achieve the set goals and perform the research tasks: the method of the included observation; the field research method; the method of the survey; graphical method for qualitative evaluation of the obtained results; methods for descriptive statistics; interfering statistical methods.

The **evaluation methods used** are both **quantitative** and **qualitative methods**. Quantitative include various statistical-economic and statistical-mathematical indicators, which are related to both the preliminary and the current and subsequent evaluation and survey. The qualitative methods that are applicable to the present study are focused on the current assessment, looking for the assessment of the respondents who participated in the survey.

The quantitative characteristics of the qualitative changes are sought through the survey. The evaluations examine the management and exploitation of various natural and anthropogenic resources, providing opportunities for alternative forms of tourism.

The evaluation process went through several periods:

- Understanding the available estimates (ex ante);

- Current assessment (ongoing);
- Subsequent evaluation (ex post).

Specifics and structure of the questionnaire

The questionnaires are divided into three parts and consist of 24 questions and are consistent with the characteristics and uniqueness of each of the studied events and settlements. Respondents gave more than one answer to some of the closed questions and therefore the overall percentage of data processing exceeds 100%. The questions in the surveys are formulated in this way in order to obtain a clear and objective assessment of the opinion and attitudes of the respondents regarding the state and trends in the development of alternative forms of tourism in the region.

Selection and processing of primary data

To collect the necessary primary data in the dissertation, the questionnaire method is applied, which provides information about the individual components in the present study. For this purpose, a questionnaire was compiled, addressed to the guests and participants in the respective events and destinations. The places where the field research was conducted are tourist destinations and famous festival events relatively evenly distributed throughout the study area of Stara Zagora. The selection of the persons who filled in the questionnaires is at random among all the visitors and participants in the above-mentioned events and destinations, as a result of which **1360** successful polls were realized. The large number of realized questionnaires, gives grounds to assert that the results obtained are larger and credibility.

Statistical data processing

For the purposes of the dissertation the software package SPSS (Statistical package for social sciences) was chosen. The main indicators of the current survey are the following independent variables: gender, age, level of education and monthly income. The main empirical characteristics used in this study are: arithmetic mean values; dispersion; significance level coefficient. These

empirical characteristics participate as key elements in testing the prerequisites for the application of subsequent tests of evidentiary statistics, as well as in accepting or rejecting the hypotheses that are applied in the third part of the dissertation.

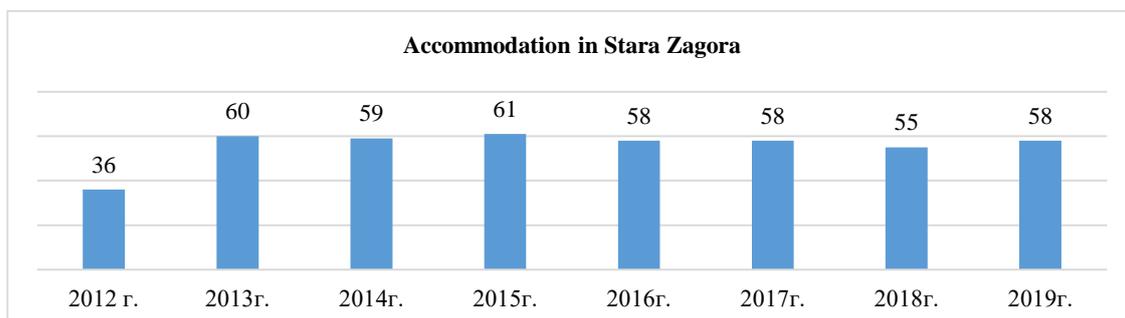
In order to establish what is the relationship between two or more variables, and they are detected, they are illustrated by krostables, t-test for independent samples of the student's and test Levin (Levene), Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

In the **second section per minute** are presented and analyzed the necessary geographical and economic data for Stara Zagora, including an administrative - territorial structure; natural resources; economic development; transport access; anthropogenic tourist resources and potential.

Regarding the assessment of the tourist potential of Stara Zagora district, it is indisputable that the region has unique opportunities and resources for development of almost all types of alternative tourism, such as eco, cultural, festival, spa and wellness, wine, rural, sports and hobby tourism, etc., but we do not dwell on all, because some of them are not well developed and / or are not enshrined in the various strategic documents, but in future studies will be considered.

During the study of the condition and the use of the tourist bed base on the territory of the district the following data presented through figures have been established. Figure 1 shows the number of accommodation for the period 2012-2019. It is clear that since 2013. until the end of 2019 the number of accommodation places is approximately equal.

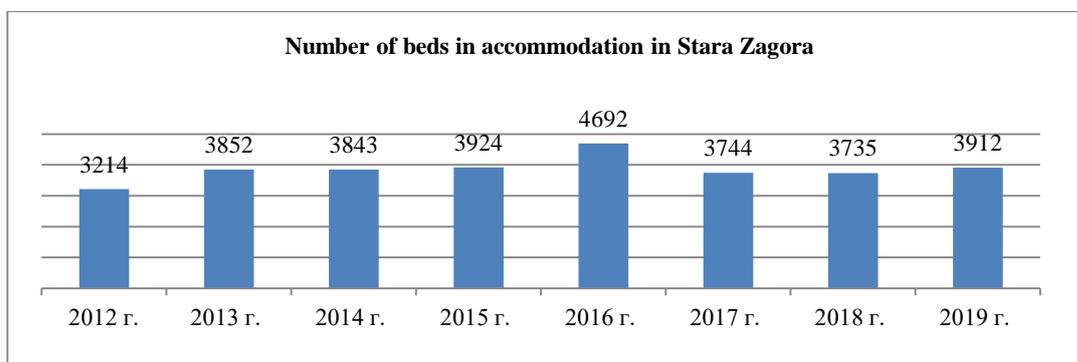
Figure 1: Accommodation in Stara Zagora district for the period 2012-2019



Source: NSI²

Figure 2 presents information regarding the number of beds in accommodation in Stara Zagora district for the period 2012-2019. It is noted that since 2012. until 2016 it is growing, as in 2016. is the highest - 4692. In the following years it began to decline - in 2017. reaches 3744, in 2018. - 3735, and in 2019. is 3912. In the last year there has been a gradual increase in the number of beds in accommodation.

Figure 2: Number of beds in accommodation in Stara Zagora district for the period 2012-2019



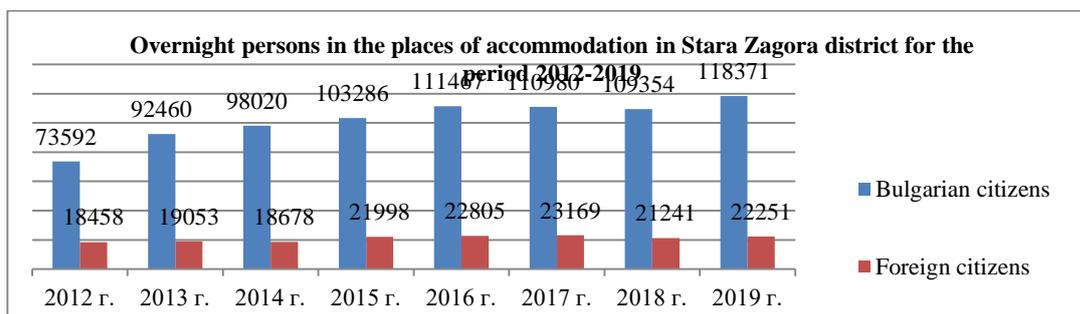
Source: NSI³

Information about the number of overnight stays in the places of accommodation in Stara Zagora district for the period 2012-2019. is presented in Figure 3. From the presented on it there is a growing trend in the number of overnight stays in the study area. From 73,592 Bulgarian citizens in 2012 their number has increased to 118,371 in 2019. Foreign citizens in 2012 were 18458, and in 2019. reach 22251.

²Official site of the NSI, <https://www.nsi.bg> , cited on 18.05.2020

³Ibidem

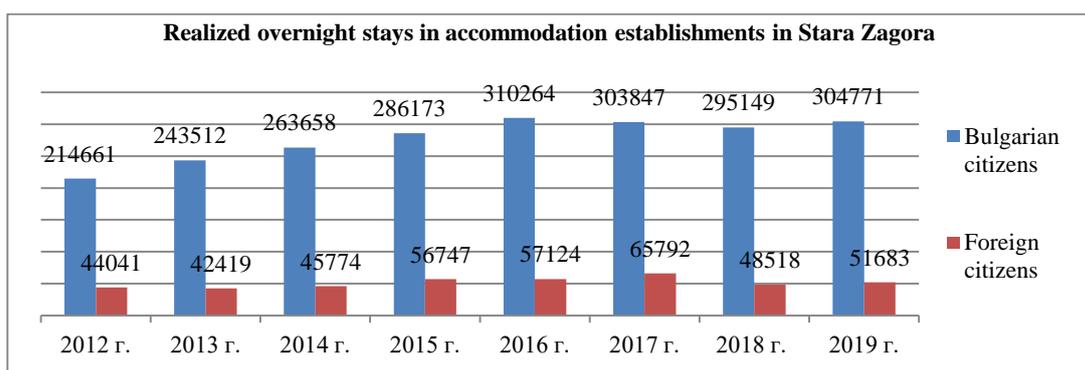
Figure 3: Overnight persons in the places of accommodation in Stara Zagora district for the period 2012-2019



Source: NSI⁴

The realized overnight stays in the places of accommodation on the territory of the district for the studied period are presented in Figure 4, which shows us a growing trend, corresponding to the presented data from Figure 3. The realized overnight stays are the indicator related to the real demand within the reporting period. In this case in 2016. There was a "peak" in the demand from Bulgarian citizens and 310,264 overnight stays were realized and refers to the volume of domestic tourism in the country. In 2017 The "peak" was from the demand for foreign citizens - 65,792 realized overnight stays. This is an indicator that takes into account the importance of international tourism for Bulgaria.

Figure 4: Realized overnight stays in accommodation establishments in Stara Zagora district for the period 2012-2019



Source: NSI⁵

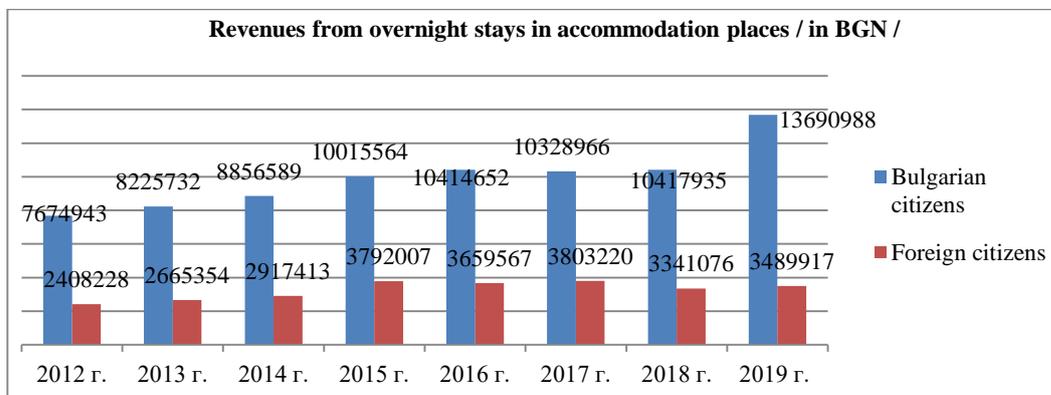
From Figure 5 it is clear that the highest revenues from overnight stays in accommodation in Stara Zagora are in 2019. by Bulgarian citizens, amounting to BGN

⁴ Ibidem

⁵ Ibidem

13 690 988. In 2017. are the highest incomes from foreign citizens in the amount of BGN 3 803 220.

Figure 5: Revenues from overnight stays in accommodation places / in BGN / in Stara Zagora district for the period 2012-2019



Source: NSI⁶

The **third section of this chapter** presents the characteristics of the municipalities in which the field surveys were conducted and the reason for their selection.

4. Chapter three. Analysis and assessment of the condition and opportunities for development of alternative forms of tourism on the territory of Stara Zagora district

This chapter presents an analysis and assessment of the state and opportunities for development of various forms of alternative tourism in the Stara Zagora region. For this purpose, an ongoing assessment was made, realized by examining the opinion of the participants in the purchase and sale of the alternative tourist product in its various forms. Here we look for the point of view and evaluation of tourists as end users with their subjective expectations and attitudes. The comparison between the individual groups-participants in the tourist events or in the purchase and sale of specific tourist goods and services provides a certain objectification of the assessment. It is difficult to find the intersection of the points of view of the different participants, but their comparison and comparison would allow to identify strengths and weaknesses of the offered tourist product.

⁶ Ibidem

The **first section of the third chapter** presents the parameters of the study. The data were obtained from primary sources through a survey of the following events and settlements presented in Chapter II.

In the **second section of the chapter** an analysis of the results of the questionnaires is made. The demographic profile, social and social character of the respondents is presented, followed by the behavioral characteristics of participants and visitors, paying attention to their tendency to allocate funds for practicing alternative forms of tourism, as well as their leading motives. The next part of the analysis gives an idea of their impressions regarding the specific event (destination) they visited, the level of continuity and integration of the studied forms of alternative tourism among the local community.

The **third section of the third chapter** presents an analysis through evidentiary statistics.

The study was performed with respect to the following independent variables: gender; age; monthly income; level of education. Four compound hypotheses were investigated. To prove each of them, it is necessary to check the eight sub-hypotheses with the relevant statistical tests.

The results are presented in Chapter III of the dissertation.

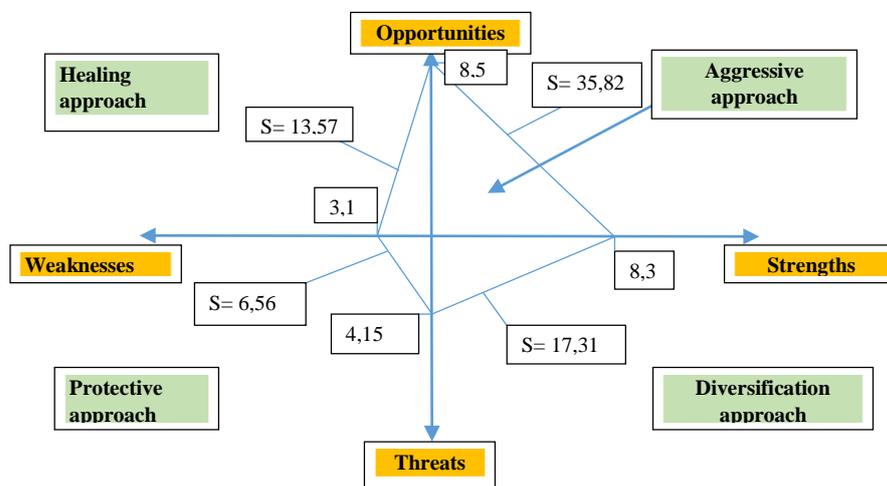
In the **fourth section of this chapter** a SWOT analysis is presented, presenting the state of the considered alternative forms of tourism for Stara Zagora district. The SWOT analysis will serve to determine future policies in the field of regional tourism development in Stara Zagora.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of various anthropogenic resources for development of the considered forms of alternative tourism; • Well-developed road infrastructure and good accommodation base in the municipal centers; • Slightly pronounced seasonal character in cultural, wine, rural, sports and hobby tourism; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of adequate marketing strategy and weak advertising activity; with a wide range of additional tourist services; • Insufficiently skilled labor; • Not a good base for accommodation and road infrastructure outside the municipal centers • Uneven distribution of the realized tourist destinations on the territory of the district;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive and consequences for the local community . 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient market research at local and regional level.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to utilize the untapped resource potential of local tourism; • Undertaking measures for diversification of the offered tourist products and constantly providing new opportunities; • Opportunity to improve advertising activities to promote local tourism; • Opportunity for training of persons starting businesses in the field of tourism at all stages of the procedure; • Opportunity for greater participation of the local population in various tourist activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative ecological consequences - violation of the integrity and pollution of the environment as a result of the practice of cultural, sports and hobby tourism in the open; • Threat of the forthcoming economic crisis in the country and reduction of the purchasing power of the population; • Low interest due to poor advertising; • Threat of low-skilled workers due to migration of young people abroad; • Lack of financial resources for investment in various projects to improve the condition of old and create new attractions.

The **fifth section of this chapter** defines a possible approach for the development of alternative forms of tourism in Stara Zagora district by the method of expert assessment, made on the basis of the SWOT matrix presented above. The following results are presented, presented in Figure 6. This, respectively, requires the development and implementation of the so-called **aggressive approach**. The following author's recommendations are defined for the implementation of this approach.

Figure 6: Positioning and selection of an appropriate approach



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conducted research work, including a thorough analysis and assessment of the regional tourism potential, the following main **conclusions** can be made:

- Stara Zagora District has favorable geographical positions with dynamic development of the economy in the region. In combination with the availability of various natural and anthropogenic resources, it has the opportunity to become a well-developed center offering alternative forms of tourism.
- In recent years there has been increasing interest from tourists to destinations offering alternative forms of tourism and for the area the most sought after types are cultural, festival, wine, rural, sports and hobby tourism.
- The alternative forms of tourism are mostly visited only by Bulgarian tourists. There is a trend in which foreign visitors are interested in some festivals and sporting events.

Based on the data obtained from the research and the SWOT analysis, as some omissions have been identified, it may be proposed to update the current management processes, regulations and administrative provisions in connection with the development of tourism in Stara Zagora for the period 2014-2020. through a recommendation to introduce a number of measures in the relevant areas:

- 1) To increase the tourist culture of tourists by receiving timely and adequate information about the available tourist potential of the district.
- 2) It is necessary to develop an appropriate and at the same time working advertising and marketing strategy, in order to improve and apply the right methods to reach a larger number of people in the respective target groups to gain greater popularity both in the country and beyond.
- 3) It is necessary to pay attention to the diversification of the offered types of alternative tourism.
- 4) It is recommended to develop steps to reduce the pronounced seasonality of some types of alternative tourism.
- 5) P approval of transport accessibility and modernization of the bed base outside municipal cities.

6) It is recommended to consider the possibility of cooperation between specialized schools, universities and businesses to create appropriate specialties and realize the trained staff.

7) It is recommended to participate in various European projects and higher application of project funding in order to obtain funds needed for the development of cultural, wine, rural, sports and hobby tourism in the area.

III. MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DISSERTATION WORK

1. A comprehensive assessment of the opportunities for development of alternative forms of tourism in the district of Stara Zagora has been introduced in scientific circulation, for which no such study has been done so far.

2. Presented for scientific use is new empirical material and application of complex methods for assessing the opportunities for development of alternative forms of tourism.

3. Based on an in-depth analysis of literary sources, scientific literature in the field of alternative tourism has been systematized, which clarifies the nature and features of its alternative forms.

4. A methodology for assessing the opportunities for development of alternative tourism has been developed, which has been used to assess the tourist resource potential on the territory of Stara Zagora district.

5. An author's survey has been developed, which is the basis for assessing the opportunities for development of alternative forms of tourism in the study area.

6. Specific practical and applied measures are proposed, suitable for setting the aggressive approach for the development of regional tourism in Stara Zagora district.

IV. PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

1. Zheleva, V., State, trends and perspectives for the development of extreme tourism in Bulgaria (presenting the case of the off-road “Bulgaria Trophy Challenge 2017”), Trakia Journal of Science, Vol. 15, 2017, pp 446-451
2. Zheleva, V., A study on the development of festival tourism in Kazanlak Municipality: the case of the Rose festival 2019, Trakia Journal of Science, Vol. 17, 2019, pp 86-93
3. Zheleva, V., Development of festival tourism in Stara Zagora (on the example of the national Thracian folklore festival "Virgin Mary's Step"), Monograph on project II / 2017 "Identification of relationships and processes for developing a model for sustainable regional tourism", 2019, pp 119-139
4. Zheleva, V., Stoykova, B., Condition and development trends of wine tourism in Bulgaria (the example of festivals of wine and folklore heritage), Trakia Journal of Science, под печат