

GOOD PRACTICES IN THE NIGHT TOURISM – CASE STUDIES FROM BULGARIA

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Abstract

The tourism at night is a term that is usually associated with all the negative aspects of our modernity – alcohol, drugs, prostitution, gambling, violence, etc. In many cases Bulgaria makes no exceptions. Some of our best-known resorts have become world famous in spreading these phenomena and instead of competing with beautiful beaches and nature, we are popular as a destination which offers cheap alcohol and other entertainment. The night-time economy could generate significant revenue and tourism offers legal opportunities for this to happen which may differ greatly from these negative phenomena. In this article we aim to explore events as an opportunity to overcome the negative aspects of evening tourism as an essential part of the evening economy. We define them as an essential element in overcoming the negative image of Bulgaria as a tourist destination and a marketing tool for its promotion. The legislation in our country largely allows or at least does not prohibit the night entertainment, which is a prerequisite for organizing a number of night events that, through appropriate advertising and wider promotion, can change the image of Bulgaria as a tourist destination. Subject of research will be a number of positive practices which, on the one hand, consider the opportunities offered by the night life and on the other hand promote education, culture, history and the nature of our country. In order to achieve the goal set out in the article, we have applied the system approach, observation, abstraction, expert analysis, and some general science principles such as objectivity, dialectic, concretization, unity between theory and practice, system analysis, induction, deduction and others.

Keywords: *tourism, events, night economy, night tourism*

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, tourism has grown considerably and is continuously expanding its scope to global reach. Data from recent years show an unprecedented increase in travel, revenue, tourism and jobs. Competition, or in other words the race for ideas, the development of new technologies, the tendencies in the perception of the surrounding world and the surrounding space, as well as the aspirations of people to self-cultivation and the search for the beautiful and aesthetic in all their manifestations are just some of the challenges for the modern entrepreneurs in the field of tourism. We are witnessing tourist demand of a new type that, in its scale, tendencies and essence, is the result of the increasing demandingness of customers and the entry of new competitors with innovative models of work. As an activity, however, it is accompanied by a number of negative phenomena that have a negative impact on destinations. That is why the tourist entrepreneurs are looking for effective ways to overcome them and develop profitable strategies for improving the image in the hosts. In this paper we will focus on the presentation of some good practices from Bulgaria in the organization of evening events. Our goal is to prove that events are an effective means of overcoming the negative consequences of tourism. The promotion of the positive aspects in the management and organization of the Bulgarian tourism through the organization of spectacular evening events is an opportunity to popularize our country and to attract an additional number of tourists outside the traditional contingent and the major tourist seasons that our country is familiar with.

2. Layout of the problem

Tourism as a tertiary sector of the economy is accompanied by a number of activities that have a direct and indirect impact on its development and trends. Nowadays, it has been recognized as the **world's largest service area**. The tourism industry generates 10.4% of global GDP, 6% of world exports and 30% of exports of services in 2018. Despite the political and military conflicts as well as the terrorist attacks, international cross-border trips grew by 5.5% compared with 2017. The number of nights reported growth by 3%, with average spending rising by 4% per night. The urban trips, which mainly relate to evening tourism, also reported and increase of 8%. The direct economic impacts of industry, including accommodation, transport, entertainment and attractions, has amount approximately \$ 8811 billion in 2018. International outbound travel trips increased from 528 million in 2005 to 1.4 billion in 2018, according to a World Travel Monitor survey and IPK International results (IPK International, 2019).

This is the highest result of this industry for the past seven years, according to the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2019). The biggest increase in visits of 8% was recorded by European countries and Africa. A total of about 671 million tourist trips

were made in the countries of Europe in 2017, while Africa was visited by 62 million tourists, a record for this region. The number of tourists is steadily increasing in almost all other parts of the world:

- in the Asia-Pacific region by 6% - up to 324 million visitors;
- In the Middle East (+ 5%) - 58 million and 207 million tourists;
- in North and South America (+ 3%). (UNWTO, 2019).

The growth of tourist traffic in 2018 is linked to the **global economic recovery** as well as the revival of tourist markets in countries like Brazil and Russia after a period of long decline. Indeed, the tourist industry recovered in extremely short time after the 2008 crisis, the only year in which travel was reported was 2009. The upward trend of tourism development has been seen since the 1950s since the official tourism statistics.

The development of tourism in our country is also interesting. According to Gatovski (2013, p. 377), Bulgaria's favorable geographic position is a key factor in the development of tourism and determines its importance for the country's economy (Gatovski, 2003). The statistics on the **state of tourism in Bulgaria** in 2016 show that just over 3.8 million were Bulgarian citizens who have made travel trips. 83.4% traveled only in the country, 12.9% only abroad, and 3.7% - both in the country and abroad. 8.2 million were foreign tourists who visited Bulgaria in 2016. Compared to 2015, the total number of tourists over 15 years grew by 11.5%. **The majority of the tourist trips in the country and abroad were for rest.** Concerning expenditure, the biggest share in the country is for food - 40,3% and for abroad - for transport - 32,7%. In 2016, the average cost of traveling for personal purposes was 176 leva in the country, and abroad - 502 leva. At the same time the cost of one person for professional travel is on average 160 leva in the country and over 1000 leva abroad (NSI, 2017).

In 2017 there were **3331 places for accommodation** in Bulgaria with over 10 beds - hotels, motels, campsites, chalets and more. The number of rooms in them is just over 140 thousand, and on the beds - 328 thousand. Compared to 2016, the total number of accommodation places increased by 4% and beds in them increased by 1.8%. The total number of overnight stays in all accommodation places in 2016 is 25.2 million, or 17.7% more than the previous year. The trend for more nights in the high-end hotels is confirmed. In 2016 hotels with 4-5 stars accounted for 66.2% of the total number of nights spent by foreign citizens and 31.5% for Bulgarians. In the 3-star places, 25.1% of the overnight stays of foreigners and 29.1% of Bulgarians were realized. For last year, **only accommodation revenues reached 1.22 billion leva**, or 18.9% more than in 2015 (Marinova, 2017). 2016 has made a peculiar peak, as summer tourism continues to lead due to the peculiarities of our country, but winter tourism is booming, especially in the last two years.

These data eloquently show the exceptional development of tourism in the world and in Bulgaria. Indicative among the reported trends is the dominant role of holiday sea and winter tourism, which remain the most popular and most sought types of tourism.

Although the supply of the tourist product has diversified over the years, in our opinion tourism demand will in the future be dominated by these types of tourism.

This expansion in tourism is unfortunately also accompanied by some negative phenomena, with which our tourist product has become known worldwide. Bulgaria is popular with the offer of cheap mass tourism. That's why our country is visited by many young tourists who come here to consume cheap alcohol and enjoy active night-time tourism, which is also accompanied by a number of negative phenomena. Sunny Beach has not once been part of the world's negative news with events such as - a drunken Swedish tourist kicked out a maid, a drunken tourist fell off the fourth floor in a hotel, showdowns, arrests and more. For our country were broadcasts of films that showed the dark side of the night tourism offered on our Black Sea coast.

Research on the subject of evening tourism is extremely small and covers some aspects of the problem. In Bulgarian specialized literature, questions about evening tourism have not been studied. There are separate publications that point to the negative effects of globalization without specifying specific events. This article is an attempt to direct the analyzes to the opportunities to draw positive examples in the management of evening attractions that will not only improve the image of Bulgaria, contribute to its popularization as a positive experience in their organization, will improve the performance of tourism, will enhance the cultural identification of the country and others. In order to achieve the goal set out in the article, we have applied the system approach, observation, abstraction, expert analysis, and some general science principles such as objectivity, dialectic, concretization, unity between theory and practice, system analysis, induction, deduction and others.

3. Literature Review

The researchers state, that the current model of nightlife tourism is a model based on alcohol and illegal substances as facilitating elements which help the users to quickly get into a party mood, to endure many hours dancing or going from one club to another, to lose their inhibitions, and so on. Alcohol, then— often accompanied by other substances – is an inherent part of youngsters' concept of night life fun. The way young people consume alcohol often follows the pattern of *binge drinking* (defined as the consumption of 5 or more units of alcohol drunk successively in a single session), or simply “drink until you're drunk”, which largely amounts to the same thing (Calafat et al., (2011), p. 13).

Another of the main problems deriving from substance abuse in the nightlife context is that of interpersonal violence. Numerous studies have shown the relationship between alcohol abuse and violence, even in terms relative to the amount of alcohol consumed. Wounds to the head or other parts of the body from broken glass (mainly

bottles) as a result of fighting are commonplace in nightlife recreational contexts (Calafat all., (2011), p. 14).

The situation in tourist destinations in which night life is a major attraction often leads to an intensification of the problems that already occur in the recreational life of the tourists' cities of origin. The young people drink more, they are geared up for new experiences and meeting new people, and so on. This particular mood and attitude interacts with the local conditions (Calafat all., (2011), p. 14). There is also a similar situation in Bulgarian Black Sea resorts, which makes us look for ways to overcome the night-time economy. In our opinion, our resorts can organize a number of night events that instead of focusing on the negative effects of nightlife, will promote the education, culture, history and nature of our country. In a number of ways, we already have a number of positive practices in this direction. Before we analyze these good practices, we will clarify the essence of the events and determine their role in overcoming these negative trends.

At the heart of the etymology of "event tourism" is the term "event", which has a **wide meaningful range**. According to the contemporary vocabulary, "an event is a significant fact of public life; something that happened. " The acclaimed representative of Event Management theory Joe Goldblatt agrees that **the term "event"** means **everything that is out of the ordinary everyday life**. This broad definition is narrowed down in the theoretical positions of other researchers, which place emphasis on event orientation and the specific interests of visitors. They identify the concept of "event" with "what intrigues the audience, by attractiveness and focusing on specific tastes, desires and needs." (Goldblatt, (2007).

Events are special celebrations that are planned and organized on site by various public institutions or private organizations. Typically, they contain a number of activities. Events can be a form of tourism, and precisely in this aspect they are an object of interest for our research. In this case, the content of the event is tied to the **specific resources of the place** where it is held. In this way, it attracts potential visitors and does not harm the environment, as tourism programs are planned depending on natural or other tourist resources and values.

There are many definitions of event tourism, and we assume that it is best one to say the following: "These are short-term localized tourist attractions that are organized and conducted once or periodically to retrieve specific benefits from the host community. Their effect is most often related to gaining popularity or raising the positive image as well as to political, economic and cultural prosperity by attracting participants and visitors to the area or the tourist site "(Neshkov, 2002).

Extensive analysis of literature gives us reason to summarize that the main areas of research and publications about tourism events are in the field of their economic impact, followed by marketing of various types of events, sponsorship, event management and trends. Summarized, we can say that different studies define events from two different

points of view: depending on the characteristics of the event itself and in terms of the possibilities for tourists to enjoy the holiday, social and cultural experience.

4. The role of events in overcoming the negative effects of night-time tourism

The organization of tourism events has a **positive impact on the location and region** because it generates economic profit based on revenues from the sale of products and services from various activities related to them. This also increases the tourist flow, which improves the quality of tourist services and infrastructure.

Destinations develop, facilitate and promote events to achieve several **goals**:

- to attract tourists, especially in out-of-season periods,
- To serve as a catalyst for city renewal and to improve the infrastructure and capacity of the destination,
- promote the positive image of the destination
- Make the destination a better place to live, work and invest. (Getz, D. (2007), p. 404.)

Event organization aims to make full use of the destination's opportunities to encourage the development of the tourist product. The evolution of Event Management has recently led to the emergence of an industry that promotes rapid globalization on the market.

Ensuring a complete analysis of tourist destinations requires the study of various interrelated factors such as natural and cultural resources, infrastructure, services, promotional materials. The existing literature demonstrates that the attractions of the area are formed by the combination of different sources such as **physical** (architecture, parks, monuments and transport), **geographic** (location and morphology), **cultural** (sporting events, festivals, theaters and concerts) and **heritage** (castles, churches, historic areas) (Kolb, B. (2006). The combination of all these elements draw the tourist experience and should be considered in formulating a strategy for positioning the destination.

A crucial question is to understand and define the structural elements of the destination from temporary elements such as events. Getz offers a landline typology based on three parameters: environmental resources, sustainable man-made resources, but not those specifically designed to serve tourists and events.

More and more events are seen as an **integral part of tourism development** and marketing planning. Although the majority of events have occurred for non-tourist purposes, such as religious holidays, sports competitions, traditional festivals, or cultural celebrations, it is clear that they tend to be used by the tourism industry or to create them as a tourist attraction.

Existing researches on tourism events proves that the popularity of the destination and its image can be greatly increased by organizing even a single event (Monga, M. (2006).) They also have a significant impact on destination marketing and its strategies

Sometimes an event may be the only competitive advantage in an area, region or even a country (Getz, D., Smith, S. (1994).) Therefore, the study and knowledge of events and the assessment of their occurrence the impact on the development of the tourist destination is of the utmost importance for enhancing its competitiveness in the turbulent tourism market and can also become a significant factor in overcoming the negative effects of the night economy In the future, events that meet the needs of tourists and supply using effective media will become a constant goal of all organizations trying to maximize the profits from tourism in destinations (Getz, D. (2008).

The success of the tourist event, at the same time, depends to a large extent on the integration of various agents to achieve good results. The event may have different effects on the economic, social and environmental spheres of the place where it takes place. A number of researchers highlight the positive role of events in the region in which they are taking place, which we have discussed above. We could summarize that events have both economic and social benefits for tourism, if they are well planned and organized to provide a constantly unique and enjoyable experience for people who choose to visit it. That is why we will offer some successful practices from the organization of night events in Bulgaria.

5. Good practices from Bulgaria in organizing night events

The review of evening events held in Bulgaria gives us reason to focus on some of the successful examples in this regard. The sample of the investigated events is not representative and represents only a small part of the opportunities provided by the night to improve the negative practices of evening tourism. Focusing our efforts in this direction in the future may turn our country into an example of overcoming them.

The most recent event, which was successful for another consecutive year, is "The European Night of Museums in Sofia". Traditionally in recent years only in Sofia more than 50 museums and galleries are included in the event and welcome thousands of visitors with free entrance. The European Night of Museums was organized for the first time in 2005 in France and for only a few years it has spread successfully across Europe. In its format, the European Night of Museums is a widely open program, to the widest possible range of people who have the opportunity not only to touch the exhibits and works exhibited by museums and galleries but also to their messages. The event is organized by the French Institute in Bulgaria, Sofia Municipality and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria (Art Sofia, (2019)).

The festival "Night of Museums and Galleries" - Varna 2018 is also interesting. Over 50 events within 2 days and over 60 locations cover the third edition of the festival. Many new places and spaces are included with an attractive program and activities. On the first day of the festival more than 10 exhibitions were opened in different galleries and spaces. Also not missed is the music program, which this year includes special guests

- Tapi Project group from India. There are also concerts in the Ethnographic Museum, the New History Museum of Varna, the Archaeological Museum, the Social Tea House and the HATORI. Further screenings of films, avant-garde spectacle, art installations, curious collections, summer cinema in the courtyard of the French Cultural Institute accompanied by a thematic party took place. "Night of Museums and Galleries" is organized with the support of the Culture Fund of Varna Municipality (Visit Varna, (2019)).

In May, from 18 o'clock to 22 o'clock, European translation literature is read in twelve Bulgarian cities - Bourgas, Varna, Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo, Dobrich, Pazardzhik, Pernik, Plovdiv, Rousse, Sofia, Stara Zagora and Shumen. The main organizers of the event are the embassies and cultural institutes of European countries (EUNIC Bulgaria and others), the Representation of the European Commission in Bulgaria, the Children's Book Foundation and the Next Page Foundation. Night of Literature is an international event that aims to popularize contemporary European authors. In each of the participating cities there are readers which include famous actors - actors, radio and TV presenters, musicians, celebrities and others. This year for the first time Night of Literature is also turning to Bulgarian literature in translation. In the new series, which is realized with the assistance of a House for Literature and Translation, contemporary Bulgarian authors will sound in translation in different European languages (Art Sofia, 2019).

"The Ensemble of the Ensembles" in Sofia enjoys an exceptional interest from the Bulgarian public. The three biggest Bulgarian folk ensembles - emblems in our music and dance art - ensemble Philip Kutev, Trakia and Pirin performed a spectacular show. The event is unique, bringing together more than 150 people in the rhythm of true Bulgarian folk music. The participants change different costumes from all the folklore regions of Bulgaria and go on stage in several consecutive games. The stunning show of some of the best dancers, singers and instrumentalists in Bulgaria will conquer the villagers with the beauty, dynamics and color of folkloric folklore (Ticketportal, 2019).

In March 2018 in the Arena Armeec hall was held the seventh Night of the Stars. The event was attended by representatives from 11 countries. The show presented: 5 Guinness Records; 6 prize from Monte Carlo; 20 extreme stunts; Comrade Broadway; live torpedo; man spider; a deadly crossbow and many other surprises (Arena Armeec, 2019).

One of the most popular evening shows is the "Sound and Light" show, held in Veliko Tarnovo. The idea of the show is from the late 1960s. At the beginning of the archaeological excavations and the restoration of the Tsarevets fortress, the possibility of restoring the bell tower of the Patriarchal Church and putting a bell to ring at certain times was discussed. 630 km of cable network over an area of over 100 acres, 2,400 color floodlights, 140 lightning bolts and 6 real beating bells weighing from 600kg to 6t are included in a computer-controlled system to showcase this a unique attraction. Over BGN 10 million are invested in the construction of the audiovisual performance (Tourist Information Center of Veliko Tarnovo, 2019).

Without claiming exhaustiveness, we will present another interesting event from Bulgaria. It's about **Julia Morning** (July Morning - Julian Morning). This is a tradition of hippie movement to meet the sunrise on July 1st. The symbolic welcome of the sunrise is conceived as a welcome to a new beginning and an expectation of a better future by the participants. In a broader sense, this is just the beginning of the summer. The name of the feast is associated with the famous song July Morning of the British rock band Juraj Heap from 1971. Every June 30th, July 1, many people gather along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast to meet sunrise together. The Gulag is unique to Bulgaria due to the nature of its occurrence, not observed in other countries in Europe and the world. Appearing as a hippie festival in Varna in 1980, later the celebration moved to the village of Varvara, Tsarevo Municipality. It is currently celebrated regularly with the participation of John Lawton on the eastern coast - the rocks near the village of Kamen Briag, where the sun first shines Bulgaria. It is alleged to have emerged as a protest against Communist power expressed in the meaning and impulse of the song of the same name by Juraj Heap. After the fall of the Communist regime in the country, the wedding continues to exist, but the lack of the origin of the protest changes with time the basic idea of the first hippie movement in Bulgaria. Some argue that the idea has already lost its original meaning, and that younger people are not necessarily familiar with the conditions in which this celebration arose, or even who is the author of the song. However, the excitement of the first morning rays as a symbol of the emerging life is still a major reason for people to celebrate it (Municipality of Kavarna, 2019).

6. Conclusion

As a result of our analysis, we can summarize that events can become an essential resource of destinations that attract visitors according to their preferences and the uniqueness and quality of the planned and conducted events. This implies the need to assess the contribution of events not only in terms of direct financial revenues but also in terms of their contribution to creating a positive image of the destination aimed at creating strong and lasting links with visitors. Evening experiences are just a small part of the whole palette that can be offered to visitors, especially in the cities. Their good organization brings many advantages to the host destination, which has an impact not only in economic terms. With regard to the evening economy, we believe that events would make a significant contribution to overcoming the negative effects of night-time tourism. In Bulgaria, there are already significant positive examples of how evening tourist events are beneficial and well received by tourists. The expansion of the opportunities for access to our country, mainly through low-cost flights, can also be effectively utilized by absorbing positive experience in the organization of night attractions and events. Though modest, our experience is in the right direction and can promote Bulgaria in a more successful and reliable way than reports from criminal news.

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