

Options for Overcoming Seasonality in Bulgarian Tourism

Elenita Velikova

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elenita Velikova, Department "Economics of tourism"
University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria

Svetla Tzvetkova

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Svetla Tzvetkova, Department "Economics of transport and Energy"
University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria

Abstract

For the longest time tourism has been an economic and social phenomenon in the everyday life of hundreds of millions of people. Not only does it encompass their free movement, it is also an essential form of utilizing spare time and a primary means of creating connections between them – for political, economic and cultural contacts. Additionally, tourism is one of the main factors that improve people's quality of life. For these reasons, over the past few decades its size has increased significantly and its scope of influence continues to expand. Data from recent years has indicated an unprecedented growth in the number of travels, profits, tourism objects and jobs. The economic significance and development of tourism predetermines the **topicality** of the investigated problem. In view of the establishment of the primary parameters of this development, the **object of study** is the tourist industry worldwide and in Bulgaria, and the **subject of analysis** will be the options for overcoming seasonality. Determining the significance of tourism for Bulgarian economy gives us **reasons to presume** that the discovery of effective mechanisms for minimizing seasonality will further expand the role of the tourist industry.

Keywords: *tourism, economic development, seasonality, alternative tourism, decisions, event tourism.* **JEL Codes:** E32, P00, R11, L83

1. Introduction

In specialized literature, tourism is often categorized as a leisure activity that tourists perform in a place that is different compared to their residence. In the modern world, however, this definition is no longer valid, hence why it should be given a new meaning. First of all, tourism is not necessarily different from everyday activities. Every day, we walk, try to feel good, engage in various programs, exercise, have fun – things that are typical for a holiday. Also during our tourist experience we may have started an activity that needs to be continued when we go home (for example sports, fitness, diet, health programs, etc.)

Consequently, tourism activities may increase the number of duties typical of everyday reality instead of reducing it. Secondly, these obligations define tourism not as a passive activity but as a unifying experience. For modern tourists, the "tourist experience" is partially or solely motivated by their health and well-being or by the perception of their health or well-being. As a result, tourism can involve hard work and it is not necessarily limited to time and place – the impact of the provided services remains and travels with tourists even to their residence. In reality, the long-term recovery and benefits of tourism occur at a stage when the tourist has already returned home. This development defines tourism as an activity that takes place not only during the holidays but is increasingly intertwined with everyday life. Searching for opportunities to increase the duration of tourist activities outside the main seasons will increase the efficiency of the operation of tourist sites and hence the overall positive effects of the industry.

It is also important to note that tourism stimulates the development of other related sectors in the economy, in particular trade, transport, communications, agriculture, household goods, etc. Along with its high economic potential, it also plays an important social role, having a significant impact on the population's employment. This gives us reasons to claim that increasing efficiency in the tourism industry will have additional multiplier effects in other economic activities with which tourism interacts directly or indirectly. Analyzing the dynamic of the main economic indicators for tourism development, it

can be concluded that in the past 25 years it has developed at a rapid rate. Even in conditions of unfavorable conjuncture and periods of economic crisis in the world economy, tourism has retained its positive growth tendencies.

The transformation of tourism into a **dominant sector in Bulgarian economy** is hindered by the seasonality factor. Finding effective approaches and mechanisms to overcome it will increase the expansion of the industry, improve the supply and demand structure, increase employment and pay levels, which will contribute to the sustainable development of tourism towards improving its quality and competitiveness. Based on the analysis of the state of tourism, **the purpose of this article** is to offer effective solutions and guidelines for its effective economic development, leading to overcoming or at least minimizing seasonality. In order to achieve this goal, the state and development of the tourism industry as a whole and in Bulgaria is studied, seasonality is analyzed as a factor that hinders tourism development and sets the directions for overcoming it. On this basis, the future directions for the development of Bulgarian tourism are defined.

2. State and Development of the Tourism Industry

Tourism as an industry 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 **9% of global GDP**, 6% of world exports and 30% of exports of services. In spite of political and military conflicts, as well as terrorist attacks, international travel has shown a 7% growth compared to trips in 2016 and has reached the pre-estimated volume of 1,322 billion tourists (UNWTO, 2018).

The number of overnight stays has grown by 3%, with average spending rising by 4% per night. The direct economic consequences of the industry, including accommodation, transport, entertainment and attractions, amount to roughly \$ 2360 billion in 2015. The number of international outbound travel trips has increased from 528 million in 2005 to 1,322 billion in 2017, according to data from a World Travel Monitor study and IPK International results (IPK International, 2016/2017).

The evidence shows the **significant expansion** that provides the industry with new challenges and new opportunities for expansion. The development of modern, global tourism, the introduction of new technology that provides opportunities for virtual travel and the emergence of new and unique in essence destinations influence the general culture of the individual, contribute to the formation of aesthetic attitude, sense, taste for the beautiful and the expedient; at the same time, it is one of the new strands in the competitive struggle for attracting as many visitors as possible. Yordanov (2013) points out that the trends in the development of tourism on an international scale are related to the new needs and the new attitude of tourists towards the motives and the preferences for the model of organizing and conducting tourist trips (Yordanov, (2013), pp. 189-190). Planning and building modern tourist destinations requires **an emphasis on innovation** to a very large extent and the monitoring of current and significant trends in the industry. As a result of the analyses carried out in the present scientific research, we will ultimately outline the main trends that will determine the tourism industry's scale of development in the future.

The data for 2017 is extremely encouraging and exceeds the 4% growth forecast per year identified by the World Tourism Organization. European countries and Africa have marked the largest growth in the number of visits – 8%. 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 increasing all the time in almost all other parts of the world:

- in the Asia-Pacific region by 6% - up to 324 million tourists;
- in the Middle East (+ 5%) – 58 million and 207 million tourists;
- in North and South America (+ 3%) (UNWTO, 2018).

The growth of tourist traffic in 2017 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. What's more, 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 observed since the 1950s when official tourism statistics were officially put into practice.

In order to further illustrate **the economic importance of tourism**, we will provide some extra details of its development. The number of citizens traveling outside their countries for a period of 67 years is as follows: 25 million in 1950; 278 million in 1980; 674 million in 2000, and **1,322 million in 2017**. The World Tourism Organization's projections envisage an increase in international travel by about 3.3 % per year by 2030, with the number of tourists reaching 1.8 billion. **Revenues from**

international tourism worldwide have also risen many times: \$ 2 billion in 1950; \$ 104 billion in 1980; \$ 495 billion in 2000 and **\$ 1260 billion in 2015**.

WTO surveys also show that **the purpose** of about half of the trips is **recreation and entertainment**. **Relaxing or other recreational trips** amount to about 53% or 632 million. Only 14% of all international tourists indicate business and professional duties as the purpose of their trips. Another 27% travel for other reasons, such as visiting friends or family, religious motives, medical treatment, and more. The purpose of visit of the other 6% is not specified. **Tourism holds third place in the export of goods and services** after fuels and chemical products, surpassing food and automobile products (Institute for Development and Sustainability of Tourism, 2018). And this is just the data for international travel, disregarding the domestic travel data reported by the national statistical institutes of each country.

The development of tourism in our country is also interesting. According to Gatovski (2013), 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, p. 377). The statistics on the **state of tourism in Bulgaria in 2017** show that Bulgarian citizens have made a total of **6,227,623 trips** abroad for all types of purposes. **The growth** compared to 2016 is **15.5%**. 8.883 million foreign tourists have visited Bulgaria in 2017. Compared to 2016, the total number of tourists over 15 years has increased by 11.5%. **The purpose of the majority of tourist trips in the country and abroad is rest**. Regarding expenses, the biggest share in the country is for food – 40,3% and for foreign countries – the ones for transport – 32,7%. In 2016, the average cost of traveling for personal purposes was 176 leva in the country, and 502 leva abroad. At the same time, the average cost of one person for professional travel is 160 leva in the country and over 1000 leva abroad (NSI, 2017).

Over the past year **3331 places of accommodation** with over 10 beds have been working in Bulgaria – hotels, motels, campsites, chalets and others. The number of rooms in them is a little over 140 000, and the beds – 328 000. Compared to 2016, the total number of the places of accommodation has increased by 4% and the number of beds – by 1.8%. The total number of overnight stays in all places of accommodation in 2016 is 25.2 million, or 17.7% more than the previous year. The trend for more overnight stays in high-end hotels is confirmed. In 2016 hotels with 4-5 stars have accounted for 66.2% of the total number of overnights stays by foreign citizens and 31.5% for Bulgarians. 3-star places have reported a 25.1% of overnight stays for foreigners and 29.1% for Bulgarians. For the previous year, only **accommodation revenues have reached 1.22 billion leva**, or 18.9% more compared to 2015 (Marinova, 2017). 2016 has reached a peculiar peak, with summer tourism still in the lead due to the peculiarities of our country; however, winter tourism has also been booming, especially in the last couple of years (see Table 1, 2 and 3). The data in the tables clearly shows the increasing development in tourism during the summer months (over three times more than the worst months – January and February). Another point of interests is the fact that during the first quarter of 2018, an increase in overnights stays has also been reported, compared to the same period for the previous year.

Table 1: Indicators for tourism development in Bulgaria by months for 2017.

	I, 2017	II, 2017	III, 2017	IV, 2017	V, 2017	VI, 2017
Accommodation places - number	1797	1832	1884	1965	2240	2771
Beds - number	109472	109760	111805	148650	228223	294925
Overnight beds - number	3275103	2984206	3319324	3793643	6221189	8596360
Realized overnights	802008	907497	782648	907959	1310088	3889525
Overnight people	334639	381171	382036	435536	503540	926888
Overnight income - leva	41602823	45842442	39829780	44243661	61500829	188034651

Source: *Systematization of the author by dates from NSI.*

Table 2: Indicators of tourist development in Bulgaria by months for 2017

	VII, 2017	VIII, 2017	IX, 2017	X, 2017	XI, 2017	XII, 2017
Accommodation places - number	3114	3145	2729	1959	1787	1946
Beds- number	320846	313039	285492	154450	106315	116586
Overnight beds - number	9569051	9547718	8280116	4315241	3106346	3459206
Realized overnights	6009519	5946368	3089259	864659	711284	833282
Overnight people	1219459	1256599	797630	422165	371626	430357
Overnight income - leva	316977719	323729497	152576883	44804976	37465642	44288098

Source: *Systematization of the author by dates from NSI.*

Table 3: Indicators for tourism development in Bulgaria by months for 2018

	I, 2018	II, 2018	III, 2018
Accommodation places - number	1894	1883	1942
Beds - number	113473	110690	114904
Overnight beds - number	3420127	3016690	3452659
Realized overnights	910011	939410	832903
Overnight people	372966	389090	400398
Overnight income - leva	50009574	50224683	44955261

Source: *Systematization of the author by dates from NSI.*

This data eloquently shows the exceptional development of tourism worldwide and in Bulgaria. Holiday sea tourism plays a dominant role among the reported trends the dominant role of holiday is sea tourism, which continues to be among the most popular and most sought after types of tourism. In recent years there has also been a significant increase in demand for ski vacations during the winter season. This outlines the development of another tourist season in our country, albeit with a smaller scale than the summer season. **Although the supply of tourist products has diversified over the years, in our opinion, tourism demand will continue to be dominated by these trends.**

3. Analyzing Seasonality as a Factor Hindering Tourism

Tourism is not a panacea or a solution to all the problems of economic development in underdeveloped or developing countries, with our country falling into the latter category. The cited data indisputably shows the exceptional **economic importance of tourism**. The figures also indicate that the largest and most preferred types of tourism continue to be the sea recreational and winter ski tourism for recreation or vacation. Over half of all trips worldwide are subject to this purpose. Bulgaria is no exception to world trends (see Figure 1). However, these types of tourism are largely hampered by the seasonality factor. The question arises: What would be the economic impact of tourism in the world if we could reduce seasonality or increase the possibilities for extending the tourist season, regardless of the weather conditions?

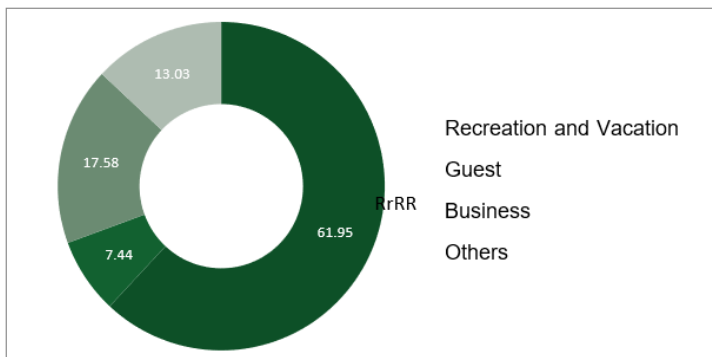


Fig. 1. Structure of foreigners' tourist visits in Bulgaria by purpose in 2017

Source: NSI

Seasonality is a defining trait and a major problem for tourism industry. The necessity for its study is determined by: the complex influence of the natural and climatic conditions on the pricing process of tourist services, the characteristics of the tourist flow (volume, structure, direction) and the profit of tourist companies; the major economic consequences on all levels (national, regional, company); opportunities for developing strategies to limit negative effects and extend the season. Seasonal fluctuations hold important economic significance and are the result of a variety of factors. Their influence determines the length of the tourist season (Kazandzhieva, 2016).

According to **Eurostat data**, one in four European trips takes place in July or August. For 2015, tourist demand for EU tourists is concentrated in the third quarter, mostly in August (12.7%) and July (11.1%). The number of trips in August is 2.4 times larger than the number of trips in the worst month of January. The seasonal model is even clearer when examining the length of trips – the number of overnight stays in August is 3.8% higher than the number of overnight stays in the worst month – November (Eurostat Statistics Explained: Seasonality in tourism demand, 2017).

The situation analysis of the **Bulgarian tourist product**, made by the Ministry of Tourism in the Annual Program for National Tourist Advertisement, points out that one of its weakest aspects is its highly pronounced seasonality and dependence on sea and winter tourism, as well as the supply of a uniform and seasonally dependent product (Annual National Tourism advertisement, 2018). Surveys conducted among foreigners about their motives for visiting to Bulgaria also indicate that Bulgaria is popular as a cheap tourist destination for summer sea and winter ski tourism (Operational Program "Regional Development" 2007-2013).

Although our country has the potential to develop year-round tourism such as cultural and spa tourism, we are still competitive precisely with the two aforementioned types of seasonal tourism. For this reason, **we believe that it is economically appropriate to explore the possibilities of extending the tourist season in the traditional, well-known and enjoyable types of tourism**. Exploring and studying the **approaches to extending the tourist season** will increase the competitiveness of Bulgarian tourism, increase the efficiency of Bulgarian tourist companies and improve employment and wages in the field of tourism. These are effects that will support **state policy in the field of tourism and the successful development of the business**.

A frequent criticism of tourism is that it provides only a **low level of income, and a seasonal one at that**. It is well known that the majority of jobs in tourism are of low qualification. The employees are mostly women and young people. The job is inconsistent and inconvenient in terms of work schedule. The rate of pay of the majority of employees is low. It is necessary to improve working conditions and ensure the development of human resources (Ivanova et al. (2013), p. 150).

The development of effective mechanisms that will lead to the extension of tourist stays will have a beneficial effect on the level of pay in tourism. This will considerably reduce turnover and improve the opportunities for attracting and retaining well-qualified and efficient human resources in our country, which will greatly improve the quality and competitiveness of Bulgarian tourism.

The seasonal fluctuation of tourism demand has a negative impact on national economy. The fact that the material base and the staff are employed for only a few months per year is the reason for the high share of the conditional and permanent costs in the cost of the tourist product. This reduces the possibility for a flexible pricing policy, impedes the activity of tourism enterprises and reduces their competitiveness. Seasonality leads to a concentration of road vehicles to leisure areas during the high season. Travel comfort and quality of service are reduced (Rakadzhyska, (2007), p. 101).

Tourism development, in contrast to the development of service activities, influences the growth of travel needs. Moreover, the development of international and domestic tourism has become one of the chief factors that influence the growth of the population's transport mobility and the volume of passenger freights in the last decade (Tsvetkova, 2009). These growing needs provide the basis for looking for opportunities to increase tourism supply, which is also the name of recreational tourism. Finding effective solutions to extend the tourist season would contribute to increasing the efficiency of tourism and meeting consumer preferences more fully.

According to Ivanova (2013), the negative **consequences of seasonal inequality** in demand require a thorough study of this phenomenon and the adoption of appropriate organizational, economic and social measures. For this purpose, tourist organizations employ seasonally differentiated prices (increased prices during the active season, moderate prices in-between seasons and discounts during the "dead season"), stimulating the development of the types of tourism that are impervious to seasonal fluctuations (business, congress, etc.) (Ivanova, 2013, p. 151).

Reducing prices in the wings of the season or raising them during the active season is a well-established practice that has proven its effectiveness. As we pointed out earlier, our country has the capability to offer a number of year-round tourism types. However, our country is still perceived as a destination for cheap sea tourism and holds second place for ski tourism. Therefore, the possible decisions to extend the summer or winter tourist season are subject to research interest.

4. Potential for Extending the Tourist Season

In relation to the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, a meeting of European and Balkan tourism ministers was held in our country. It was announced that **tourism has a leading role in the economic growth and regional integration between the countries**. To achieve sustainable tourism development, a **shared economy and implementation of EU regulatory policies in the sector is needed**. Besides, the statistical data is also evidenced by the significance that tourism holds for the Bulgarian economy. According to the World Tourism and Travel Council in 2016, in this sector and all related economic activities **Bulgaria's gross domestic product is worth over BGN 11.6 billion, which is approximately 13% of the country's indicator**. For this period, the number of **employees** in the sector and all related branches was **363,000 people**, which is approximately **12% of all employees** in Bulgaria.

All this proves the leading role of tourism in our economy. As mentioned earlier, the most developed and most visited types of tourism in Bulgaria are **the summer sea and winter ski tourism**, which, however, are limited by the seasonality factor. Moreover, according to consumer surveys, expert assessments and on the basis of our own studies, we can say that these are also the most competitive types of tourism in Bulgaria. For this reason, the **purpose** of the present scientific paper is **to determine the possibilities for improving the economic development of tourism in our country, based on an analysis of the current situation and expert assessment of the future development or identification of desired development directions to be taken into account in the national tourism policy**.

In our opinion, the Bulgarian tourist product will be improved significantly through **the development of effective mechanisms for extending the tourist season for the most competitive and perspective for development types of tourism in Bulgaria – summer sea and winter skiing**. Other authors point out that mass development models of those types of tourism can be resisted through cultural tourism and diversification of the product (Yordanov, 2012, p. 56).

Alternative forms of tourism are of interest for overcoming seasonality. These "new" forms of tourism made their appearance in developing countries between the 1970s and early 1980s, in order to tackle the hard mass tourism. These forms of tourism served a more sensitive approach giving priority to natural and cultural resources at the front line of planning and development of the destination. They appeared in different names and various models to improve situation and to preserve the original rural appeal of the tourist destination (Triarchi, E., Karamanis, K. (2017). The same authors indicate ecotourism, cultural and creative tourism as forms of alternative tourism. Most authors support the standpoint that alternative tourism unites those types of tourism that differ from the mass ones, which, for their part, are marine recreational tourism and winter ski tourism.

According to the Statute of Bulgarian Association of Alternative Tourism (BAAT) alternative tourism involves travel that is personal and authentic and encourages interaction with the local environment, people and communities. Alternative tourism includes package tours and individual tourist services in the following areas:

Nature-based tourism - tourism in natural environments, ecotourism, outdoors and adventure including biking, horseback riding, skiing, snow shoeing, rafting, diving, caving and hiking;

Culture tourism - rural, cultural heritage, ethnic, religious, wine, cuisine, music and crafts (BAAT's Statute, 2018).

The classification of alternatives forms of tourism made by Ö. Özer, M. Avci and N. Karakuş is indisputably the most exhaustive one. It can be studied thanks to Table 4.

Among the types of alternative tourism indicated in the table, astronomical tourism and cruise tourism are not as widely covered in Bulgaria. The rest are represented well and have significant chances for further development. Among them, the ones with the highest potential and opportunities are ecological, rural, cultural tourism as a whole and health tourism. Bulgaria has a total of 942 protected territories, 35 of which are well-kept reserves and 55 preserves, 3 national and 11 natural parks, 346 natural monuments and 492 protected areas, covering a total of 578 484 hectares (The Law for Protected Territories). They are an essential prerequisite for the development of ecological and rural tourism, the latter of which is also developing well in the multiple country houses scattered across the country's mountainous and hilly territories.

Table 4. Alternative Tourism Types

<p>1. Recreational Alternative Tourism Astronomy tourism Steam train tourism Marine aquariums and tourism Bird watching tourism Speleological tourism Landscape tourism Eco tourism Auto-caravan tourism Rural tourism Tableland tourism Camping and tourism National Parks Botanical tourism Photo safari tourism</p>	<p>2. Sportive Alternative Tourism Horse riding and tourism Cycling sport and tourism Mountain climbing sports and tourism Golf tourism Skiing and winter sports tourism Underwater sports and tourism Water sports and tourism Trekking Hang gliding and tourism Hunting tourism</p>	<p>3. Cultural Tourism Silk road Ancient cities and historical places Shooting areas</p> <hr/> <p>4. Health Tourism 5. Yacht Tourism 6. Faith Tourism 7. Congress Tourism 8. Cruise Tourism 9. Youth Tourism</p>
--	---	--

Source: Özer, Ö., M. Avci, N. Karakuş (2016).

Bulgaria has the third largest cultural heritage in Europe (behind Greece and Italy). Over 40 000 historical, ethnographic and cultural objects have been identified in the country. Over the past 4000 years seven civilizations have undergone an intense development within today's Bulgarian lands – prehistoric, Ancient Greek, Roman, Ancient Thracian, Byzantine, Bulgarian and Islamic. The advantages of health tourism in Bulgaria involve primarily the natural potential's high competitiveness. There are over 600 mineral water sources in the country, grouped in about 240 beds. Their total debit is about 270 million liters per day. Over 75% of them are warm and hot, with a temperature of 37-101°C. Almost all types of mineral waters found around the world can also be found in Bulgaria.

Thanks to its natural and historical variety, Bulgaria has significant potential for developing **both mass and alternative types of tourism**. The serious, still untapped, potential of natural and cultural resources is a prerequisite for the development of practically the majority of the so-called "alternative forms" of tourist activities which could have a significant impact in terms of changing the currently existing image of Bulgaria as a "destination for mass tourism", as well as help destroy the clear seasonality in consumption outside of the active summer and winter seasons.

There are also other positive effects that could counter the negative economic consequences of seasonality. One possibility is to create prerequisites in our country for the development of year-round types of tourism – cultural, spa, wellness, business and others. While there are sufficient resources in Bulgaria for the development of these species, there is still a long way to go. The starting point in popularizing this type of supply is the development of an effective advertising campaign to demonstrate the country's capability for offering these types of tourism in an attractive and appealing way. Combining recreational with year-round types of tourism would become one of the most profitable strategies for developing our

economy. However, such an advertising policy would require significant resources which, unfortunately, are inseparable from the budget. Therefore, other, more feasible options and solutions that would require fewer resources should be sought.

Literature overviews, personal observations and analyses and personal interviews with business representatives give us reason to conclude that **event tourism can be an effective form for extending the tourist season in Bulgaria**. The organization and conduct of **attractive events** can have effects in a number of directions: extending tourist stays, engaging the available base outside of peak seasons, enhancing the appeal and image of the area where it takes place, as well as a number of other effects.

The organization of tourism events has a positive impact on a given location or region, generating an **economic profit** based on revenues from the sale of products and services from various activities related to the event and increasing tourist turnover, which improves service quality and infrastructure. Since event tourism is **a key area for the image and economy of destinations**, its value has two viewpoints. On one hand, event tourism supports the progress of scientific knowledge in an area with great opportunities for research and development. On the other hand, it could prove important for managers, as it gives them a better understanding of the importance of being a host of unique events in shaping the image of the destination and the development of a sustainable tourism economy (Velikova E., St. Dimitrova, 2017, p. 8-17).

Events are increasingly seen as an **integral part of tourism development and marketing planning**. Although the majority of events have occurred with non-tourist purposes such as religious festivals, sports competitions, traditional festivals and cultural celebrations, there is a clear tendency for them to be used by the tourism industry or for the industry itself to create them as a kind of tourist attraction.

The prospects for turning Bulgarian tourist regions into **destinations throughout all seasons** are good. The development of more unpopular specialized tourism types, including event tourism, is limited, mainly due to a lack of information. It would be appropriate to seek options for organizing various events to build an image of our mountain and sea areas as destinations for "non-mass" tourism.

A survey conducted by Toneva has found that the measurement of the impact of event tourism in Bulgaria is applicable in the following more important directions:

- knowledge of market conditions and their use;
- adopting measures for improving event tourism in the future;
- implementing innovations;
- clarifying the strengths and weaknesses and their appropriate interpretation;
- connecting the received information to external systems, etc. (Toneva P.I. 2017)

According to the business, the seasons affect the visits of the tourists both in the sea and mountain resorts. A major problem for hotel-keepers is the strong influence of seasonality in the summer. Despite the fact that a significant number of them study the needs of tourists and the season during which they want to rest, as well as the preferences for various entertainment programs, there is a **lack of essential information from local authorities and communication between event organizers, tour operators and hotel-keepers**. Gatovski (2013) also points out that the current transport infrastructure does not have the necessary parameters and qualities to create the best conditions for transport services for tourism (Gatovski, 2013, p. 596). This further hinders accessibility to destinations in organizing large and significant events in the wings of the season.

In order for the bases of hotel-keepers to be more fully used, it is necessary to design **plans and programs for organizing all kinds of events, mainly during seasons with the least amount of visitors**. Most managers use tourist attractions and organize events in more than one season, but not all year round. The year-long employment of our tourist enterprises can be guaranteed through a more thorough analysis of the tourist market, available investments and good organizational structure.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, an event can help overcome seasonality in tourism, as well as distribute evenly the cash flow in the region and increase full-time opportunities. The lack of year-round employment is one of the reasons why people are reluctant to start working in tourism in Bulgaria. Moreover, the high turnover of staff forces entrepreneurs in the tourism sector to pay

low wages, thus closing the circle. Therefore, creating conditions for year-round employment will improve not only the wages in tourism, it will also minimize the outflow of staff, which will, in turn, increase the quality of the tourist product.

This is only a small part of the positive effects of tourism. It has the ability to achieve a significant multiplier effect on the other economic sectors with which it is closely interconnected – transport, agriculture, commerce, light and construction industries. Improving tourism development through overcoming seasonality by developing year-round types of tourism or organizing attractive events to lengthen tourists' stay could revive Bulgarian economy wholesale and contribute to its stable development. For this purpose, integrated tourist policies for encouraging tourism development through the aforementioned mechanisms should be implemented.

In our opinion, the **trends that will dominate the tourism market over the next few years** are expected to be in the following directions:

- further differentiation of the supply of the tourist product, aiming at a wider range of clients with diverse needs and opportunities;
- the process of concentrating capital, creating large international companies and corporations;
- Maintaining the integration process in the field of tourism both horizontally and vertically.

It is only in recent years that efforts have been made for diversifying the national product through the development of analyzed alternative forms of tourism combining the interest of smaller, but more solvent market segments with the stable consumption of tourist (natural and anthropogenic) resources. At this stage, however, alternative forms of tourism have more of a supplementary position in regards to its place in the national tourist product, meaning that the significant potential of a large portion of Bulgaria's territory remains untapped or scarcely used and businesses and local municipalities there cannot make use of the advantages of tourism.

Besides taking into account the dominant trends, it is important to reduce the impact of seasonality and increase the number of visits by tourists outside the peak season by developing exemplary models to integrate into the concepts of development of the resorts or even areas. Carrying out a quality event requires the coordination of many stakeholders.

In recent years a good example of integrating mass ski tourism with alternative forms of tourism and organizing a number of events in Bulgaria is **the town of Bansko**, which, aside from holding a number of world sports competitions during the winter season, provides excellent options for hiking, rural and ecotourism during transitional seasons, and hosts multiple music festivals and folklore events in the summer.

Combining traditional mass tourism with natural, climate, historical and socio-cultural conditions allows for the creation of a **complex, resource-based product that best suits the needs of tourists and is crucial for overcoming seasonality**.

References

- [1] Bulgarian Association of Alternative Tourism (BAAT). BAAT's Statute. (2018). Available from: <http://www.baatbg.org/definitions/17/27/> [accessed July 01 2018].
- [2] Eurostat Statistics Explained: Seasonality in tourism demand, Available from: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Seasonality_in_tourism_demand [accessed Mar 01 2018].
- [3] Gatovski, I., (2013). Improving the Quality of Transport Services for Tourism through the Development of Road Infrastructure. *Jubilee International Scientific and Practical Conference "Business - Positive Force in Society"*. Sofia: NBU, 588-598.
- [4] Gatovski, I., (2013). Condition and Development of Road Transport in the Context of European Integration. *Collection of papers from International Scientific Conference "RESPONSIBLE TOURISM 2020", Tom I*. Varna: Ed. "Science and Economics", University of Economic, 374-383.
- [5] Kazandzhieva, V. (2016). Factors for Assessing the Seasonality of Tourism, University of Economics - Varna. Available from: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309202351>
_FAKTORI_ZA_OCENKA_NA_SEZNOSTTA_NA_TURIZMA_doc_d-r_Velina_Kazandzie-va_ikonomiceski_universitet_-_Varna [accessed Mar 01 2018].
- [6] Marinova, Evg. (2017) Tourism in Bulgaria with Sustainable Growth Over the Last Eight Years. Available from: <http://www.investor.bg/ikonomika-i-politika/332/a/turizmyt-v-bylgaria-s-ustochiv-ryst-prez-poslednite-osem-godini-236617> [accessed Mar 01 2018].
- [7] Ministry of Tourism, Annual National Tourism advertisement, 2018, Available from: http://www.tourism.government.bg/sites/tourism.government.bg/files/documents/2017-10/godishna_programa_2018.pdf [accessed Mar 01 2018].

- [8] NSI. (2017). Tourist Trips and Tourism Expenses of the Population. Available from: <http://www.nsi.bg/> [accessed Mar 01 2018].
- [9] Institute for Development and Sustainability of Tourism, 2018. Available from: <http://www.irut-bulgaria.com/%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%87%D0%B0%-D0%BB%D0%BE/> [accessed Mar 01 2018].
- [10] IPK International, *ITB WORLD TRAVEL TRENDS REPORT 2016/2017*. Available from: http://www.itb-berlin.de/media/itb/itb_dl_all/itb_presse_all/World_Travel_Trends_Report_2016_2017.pdf [accessed Mar 01 2018].
- [11] Ivanova, P., V. Minkov, L. Ilieva. (2013). *Introduction to tourism*. Svishtov: Tsenov Academic Publishing House.
- [12] Operational Program "Regional Development" 2007-2013, Surveys of Foreign Visitors in Bulgaria, Available from: http://www.mi.government.bg/files/useruploads/files/turizm_-_statistika_i_analizi/prouchvania_proekti/prouchvane_chujdenci_lqto_2010.pdf [accessed Mar 01 2018].
- [13] Rakadijska, St., Neshkov, M. et al. (2007). *Introduction to tourism*. Varna: University Publishing House "University of Economics - Varna".
- [14] Özer, Ö., M. Avci, N. Karakuş (2016). A Study For the Evaluation of Alternative Tourism Opportunities in Fethiye Destination. *Journal of Tourism and Gastronomy Studies* 4/1 (2016) 21-26. Available from: http://www.jotags.org/2016/vol4_issue1_article3.pdf [accessed July 01 2018].
- [15] Toneva P. I. (2017). Studying the impacts of event tourism on the host communities in Bulgaria [Online] // *Economic Processes Management: International Scientific E-Journal*. 2017. No 1. Available from: http://epm.fem.sumdu.edu.ua/download/2017_1/epm2017_1_5.pdf [accessed Mar 01 2018].
- [16] Triarchi, Ei., Karamanis, K. (2017). The evolution of alternative forms of Tourism: a theoretical background. *Business & Entrepreneurship Journal*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2017, 39-59. Scienpress Ltd, Available from: http://www.scienpress.com/Upload/BEJ/Vol%206_1_4.pdf [accessed July 01 2018].
- [17] Tsvetkova, S. (2016). *Specific Features in the Management of the Transport Company's Staff*. Sofia: University of National and World Economy.
- [18] Tsvetkova, S. (2009). *Management of Transport Service Marketing*. Sofia: "Stopanstvo".
- [19] UNWTO, World Tourism Barometer. Available from: <http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2018-01-15/2017-international-tourism-results-highest-seven-years> [accessed Mar 01 2018].
- [20] Velikova, E. (2016). The Influence of the Events in Tourism. *Journal of Science and Research*, Volume 1, 9/2016, p. 83-91.
- [21] Velikova, E., St. Dimitrova. (2017). Events as a Peculiar "Partner" in Tourism. XIII International Scientific Conference „The Modern Science, Business and Education”. *Yearbook of Varna University of Management, Volume X*. Publisher: VUM, Bulgaria, 8-17.
- [22] Velikova, E., St. Dimitrova. (2006). *Event Management in Tourism*. Sofia: „Avangard Prima”.
- [23] Yordanov, D. (2012). Role of Transport for the Development of Tourism in Bulgaria. *"Economics and Management", VIII, 4/2012*. 51-57. Available from: <http://fe.swu.bg/en/wp-content/uploads/07-4-2012.pdf> [accessed Mar 01 2018].
- [24] Yordanov, D. (2013). Transport Entrepreneurship as a Factor for the Development of Sustainable Tourism. *Collection of papers from International Scientific Conference "RESPONSIBLE TOURISM 2020", Tom I*. Varna: Ed. "Science and Economics", University of Economic, 189-197.