

EVENT TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN BULGARIA: KEY FACTORS AND MAIN GOALS

The focus of research interest is on examination the specific features of event tourism and the opportunities it offers for the development of destinations. Global trends in tourist demand and the state of tourism supply are indicative of the relevance of developing event tourism. Special events, especially those that are hallmark events, and tourism that is based on them, are recognised as an opportunity to achieve a range of goals. They can also have an impact on the image, attract tourists and emotionally influence them, which makes them a particularly suitable instrument of the development of destinations.

This study aims to identify the main goals of the development of event tourism, as well as to outline the key factors in their achievement. An expert survey was conducted on the basis of a structured model, including process and result objectives. The results of the study permit identification of key determinants of successful event tourism policy: efficient use of identified event tourism resources; strategic measures at a national level to support and promote event tourism, including building a portfolio of distinctive events for the destination; the implementation of marketing strategies for the distribution and advertising of event tourism, professional organisation; building knowledge on event tourism demand and tourist satisfaction. Today's event tourism management exists via utilising the potential of digital technologies in the design and distribution of the event tourism product.

JEL: L83; L84; M11

1. Introduction

The substantial characteristics of event tourism reflect the lifestyles of modern society, oriented towards demanding a unique experience. In the conditions of increasing competition in the tourism market and the prominent orientation of tourists towards the consumption of unique experiences, it is appropriate for destination Bulgaria to emphasise the emotional value that its distinctive events have to attract tourists.

As a result of changing public values, as well as new dimensions in the use of leisure time, the popularity and the significance of such events are constantly increasing. This, together

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with the presence of events in the country, which are tourist attractions, determines the relevance of the article's thesis and the author's interest in it.

In present days, when the world is affected by the pandemic of COVID-19 and measures related to social exclusion and restriction of tourist trips and public events, the event tourism has been affected and transformed. Its specific characteristics to meet concrete tourist interests and needs, to offer creative and unique experiences, to bring people with similar interests together in one place pose challenges to their management. The need for physical and social isolation to deal with the pandemic has a significant impact on event tourism.

Event tourism as a scientific area is the result of the intersection of two scientific fields – tourism and event management. Although, there are studies dedicated to each of these areas individually, as well as to the cross-over field – event tourism – no similar study of the possibilities for the strategic management of event tourism in Bulgaria has been made.

In addition to the relevance of the survey, we can point out that leisure and recreation organisations are seen as carriers of social transformation. At the same time, they operate in a dynamic, complex and globalised environment. Tourism preferences for the entertainment industry shape certain trends that providers need to take into account. They are mainly related to: the thematisation of routes (destinations); virtualisation; enhancing the role of innovation; integration between travel and other activities.

All this is largely in line with the characteristics and specifics of event tourism, which explains its widespread entry into tourism practice, the scientific interest in the topic, and the need for this research. This study is the first of its kind dedicated to the identification of the factors and significant goals of event tourism for the development of destination Bulgaria. An expert study was conducted on the basis of a model for the assessment of factors and objectives of Bulgarian event tourism. *The research purpose* is to identify the main factors and essential goals in the context of strategic destination management.

The research framework requires the application of a documentary and expert approach to systematise and explain the meaning of the exploitation of distinctive events for tourism purposes. Structurally, this study consists of the following sections: (i) introduction, (ii) literature review, (iii) research methodology, (iv) analysis and results and (v) conclusions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical foundations of the categories of special events and event tourism

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and in the high-tech and digital era, the need for social events is increasingly emerging in order to capture local and global details in life.

The term "special events" has found a place in the vocabulary to refer to specific rituals, presentations, performances or celebrations that are deliberately planned and created to commemorate an occasion or to achieve social, cultural or corporate goals (Allen J., 2011, p. 11). *To this we can add that events are often organised to attract tourists. When organised by public authorities, they are set not only economically but also to achieve public goals and benefits.*

Special events can be on the occasion of national holidays and celebrations, important civic occasions, unique cultural performances, major sporting events, corporate functions, and trade promotions. This wide range of special event occasions makes this industry so popular. At the same time, it is this latitude that makes it difficult to define special events in a single definition. Getz, one of the most reputable authors in this field, suggests that special events be defined in their particular context (Getz, 1997). However, he offers two broad definitions, one from the organisers' point of view and the other from the visitors' perspective (local or tourist):

- A special event is a one-off or periodic event outside the usual program and activities of the sponsor or organiser.
- For visitors, a special event is an opportunity to experience something beyond the normal range of possibilities or beyond daily experience (experiences).

The author considers that among the attributes that create the special atmosphere are a festival spirit, uniqueness, quality, authenticity, traditions, hospitality, themes and symbolism.

The events are current and a type of tourist attraction with increasing attractiveness. In the specialised literature, it is accepted that the attractions in the destination are formed by a combination of offered resources such as physical, geographical, and cultural. The combination of these elements constitutes the tourist experience and the strategy for positioning the destination. According to Swarbrook, "Tourist attractions are essential resources for the travel industry regarding interest and motive to visit the site (Swarbrooke, 1995, p. 23). The author classifies tourist attractions as four types:

- Natural environment;
- Not specifically designed to attract visitors;
- Designed specifically to attract visitors;
- Events.

In contrast to permanent tourist attractions, which are characterised by time concentration, the events are a flexible capital of definite duration and theme, easily subject to development, improvement and innovation. The distinctive events of a particular destination are related and specific to that particular destination, complement the destination product and, in this sense, are also characterised by spatial affiliation.

Special events are described as fixed-term happenings that allow for social interaction beyond everyday life (Jado, 1998, p. 3). In defining special events, Getz focuses on the uniqueness and differentiation of one place from another. More specifically, special events are defined as, "a short period of time filled with attractive and engaging activities concentrated in a limited geographical area to mark a present or historical fact" (Janiskee, 1980, p. 97). Goldblatt (Goldblatt, 2002, p. 34) summarises that these are, "exceptional festivities held at a specific place, at a particular time and time in order to meet specific needs".

The various definitions of special events can serve to systematise their characteristics. In particular, they are the following:

- Periodic – once a year or less;
- Time limited;
- Organised;
- Topical, while the program may include different activities independent of one another;
- Events occur within a certain perimeter;
- Attractiveness and unique experiences, multisensitivity, orientation to dialogue and interactivity;
- They are non-depreciable and easily adaptable to changes in demand;
- Have no permanent structure.

Getz excludes fairs and exhibitions that are associated with permanent facilities, such as exhibit areas, from the scope of special events. Also, the travelling circuses and stage performances, and conferences held more than once a year, are out of this scope. It is clear that not every event is a special event.

Essential elements of events such as tourist attractions are the spectacle, the ritual, the games, and the inclusion of visitors in the overall festive atmosphere. This atmosphere is one of the reasons for the tourist attraction type.

Events are often described by their visible, tangible components that the promoters create, but part of the mechanism of event tourism is created by visitors. There is a synergistic process involving the tangible and intangible elements that create the atmosphere.

Regarding the characteristics of special events, Jado and Shaw (Jado, 1998, p. 3) outline the following: the ability to attract tourists; the ability to support local development; a limited duration; they are rarely held; they raise citizens' awareness and image of the destination; offer social experience. In general, the review of definitions in specialised literature reveals two main approaches in the study of special events: first, in terms of the characteristics of the event itself, and second, in terms of the possibility of entertainment and recreation, the social and cultural experience of visitors. With regard to the latter, events can become a channel to meet the needs of culture, sports, local food and traditions, and participation in games and entertainment.

Event organisation is not always done primarily for tourism. Destination managers organise and offer events as part of the destination's entertainment mix. In order to be a sellable product and to provoke tourism, the event should be attractive to a specific target segment, with high quality and an accurate price (Hudson, 2003).

We can refer to event-based tourism as event tourism. In the tourist context and as part of the tourism system, events are a key element in both the generating territory (as an important motivator for tourism) and the visited site (as part of the tourism supply). Event management at a national level requires the inclusion of all planned events in a common approach to development and marketing. As with most types of tourism, event tourism is viewed in terms of supply and demand, whereby we have "special" interests for tourists who receive special

experiences (Getz & Page, 2016, pp. 593-631). A significant circumstance characterising the specificity of event tourism is the time constraint of the event – a tourist attraction, as opposed to the permanently existing resources in the destination in the other specialised forms of tourism (Venske, 2019), (Viol, et al., 2018) .

A review of the specialised literature allows us to systematise the following main distinguishing features of event tourism, which are largely related and derived from the characteristics of the event itself:

First. Special events are a tourist attraction for this type of tourism.

Second. It takes place over a period of time when the special event takes place.

Third. The special event is a motive to one degree or another for undertaking the tourist trip.

Fourth. This type of tourism offers unique, non-unified, authentic experiences.

Fifth. Utilises an existing infrastructure and is flexible and innovative.

Sixth. The attraction for this type of tourism (event) is not depreciated.

Seventh. In most cases, it involves the active participation of the tourist, where we have common, mutual creativity and co-creation of value.

It is clear that the systematisation of the specificity of event tourism is deterministic and is a consequence of the specificity of the special events that are its tourist attraction. At the same time, the variety of events makes the different types of event tourism quite different from one another. However, event tourism is one of the channels through which visitors satisfy their desires for entertainment, touching local culture, food, sports, etc. (Tang, et al., 2020)

It becomes clear that the opportunities offered by event tourism at the managerial level, as well as the increased demand as a result of offering specific experiences and atmosphere, are also engaging more and more authors in an analysis of their functions and dimensions. This is also the reason for different definitions in the scientific literature, analyses of event significance, their potential for application in different fields, as well as classification criteria.

For the purposes of this development, we adhere to the basic productions for grouping and typing events.

The review of the specialised literature shows that the events are categorised by different authors using different methods, the main criteria being purpose, scale and circumstances (Table 1).

Goldblatt uses objective criterion and groups events according to this into four main types: celebration, education, marketing and meetings. Festive events refer to personal events, the life of organisations and institutions, and the celebration of historical events. The importance of formal education is increasing and related events can be social or professional. Events are used to stimulate interest or increase sales of enterprise products. Meetings allow people to celebrate certain occasions.

Table 1

Type of events

Gets	Goldblatt	Shone and Parry
Culture Art Fun Sports Education Recreation Politics Personal Celebrations	Private events Exposures Fairs and festivals Hallmark events Hospitality Meetings and Conferences Trade Social life	Leisure (sports, recreation) Personal (weddings, birthdays, anniversaries) Cultural (ceremonial, sacred, art, cultural heritage) Organisational (commercial, political, charitable)
Bowdin et al.	Hall.	Freyer
Cultural Sports Business *** Mega-events Hallmark events Major events Local and municipal events	Religious and sacred celebrations Carnivals and cultural events Commercial (business) events Sports competitions Political meetings	Cultural events Sport events Economic events Socio-political events Natural events

Source: Author's research work.

Hall offers the following five main sectors: religious and sacred celebrations; carnivals and cultural events; trade (business) events; sports competitions and political meetings. Similarly, Frayer organises events by including natural events. However, political and natural events are beyond the scope of the concept of special events and are not the subject of research in this paper.

Bowdin distinguishes events by type – cultural, sporting and business, and by scale. In terms of size and scale of impact, the general categories are mega-events, hallmark events, big events and local (municipal) events, although the definitions are not precise and the differences may not be as noticeable. The scale of impact is measured by participation, media profile, infrastructure, costs and benefits.

Depending on the role of the event in a complex tourism product, two main types of events are distinguished: (i) self-sufficient or 'fundamental' events and (ii) additional or 'complementary' events. The former are a major component and act as a tourist attraction of the tourism product, having the primary purpose of attracting tourists and visitors, while the latter are a complementary element, a tourist attraction in the tourism product and their main purpose is the positive image of the destination as "a place where interesting things happen."

Demand for event tourism is on the rise, and tourists' expectations are rising, with the requirement for the complexity of experience increasing. At the same time, one important characteristic of event tourism is its flexibility, which, together with its other characteristics and importance, make it an appropriate management tool for achieving tourism goals. The

topic is under development and there have been current studies, that provide an agenda for future event tourism research (Getz & Page, 2016) (Wilson, et al., 2017) (Laing, 2018).

2.2. Significance and possible impacts of special events and event tourism

From the point of view of event tourism management, knowledge of its importance and potential for impact are essential. The importance and the role of event tourism are closely and significantly related to the noteworthiness of the event itself. Getz examines the economic and non-economic role of events and event tourism derived from these in his research (Getz & Page, 2016). With regard to tourism, he points out that events can attract tourists (and other interested parties such as sponsors, the media, etc.) who would not otherwise visit the place; the costs that tourists make generate economic benefits for the place, business and the local community; event tourism can be a leverage mechanism to reduce seasonality in demand, tackle geographical inequality, and support other forms of urban and economic development; a portfolio can be designed to maximise positive impact by attracting multiple target segments.

Freyer (Freyer, 1998) divides the effects of the events into visit-oriented and visit-oriented events and locally-relevant events (Table 2).

Table 2

Tourist goals and effects of events	
<i>Externally oriented</i>	<i>Internally oriented</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractiveness for visitors • Increasing the number of visitors • Increasing popularity • Creating an image • Seasonal effects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractiveness for the locals • Promoting culture • Preserving the culture • Internal marketing • Economic effects

Source: Freyer, W. (1998).

The external effects, in general, are related to increasing the tourist attractiveness of the destination for tourists, attracting new target groups and thus increasing the number of tourists. The degree of popularity and good image contribute to the fuller utilisation of the existing infrastructure and superstructure, and increase employment. The timely positioning of events outside the active season contributes to a more even load and balances the distribution of visits.

Some of the key benefits and characteristics of event tourism are related to the following: it has higher returns and, as a rule, higher quality than recreational tourism; with less seasonality; uses the existing infrastructure for recreational tourism; it is resistant to economic downturns; stimulates future investments in the destination; creates jobs for event-related services and more.

In the context of changing tourist behaviour, event tourism is becoming a resource for enhancing the image and promoting the further development of tourism in the visited country. (Devine, 2017, p. 320). Following the most widely used significance of events, it creates a

positive image of the destination and to support the brand or repositioning. Well-organised events contribute to destination marketing, making the place more attractive (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018), (Kelly & Fairlay, 2018), (Chibir & Shirko, 2015).

The events enliven places, resorts, parks, urban areas, making them more attractive to visit. Event tourism acts as a catalyst for other forms of desired development (urban regeneration, capacity building, volunteering, sophisticated marketing) and thus generates long-term or permanent effects. Following the most widely used significance of events is to create a positive image of the destination and to support the brand or repositioning. Well-organised events contribute to destination marketing, making the place more attractive. The vital role of community in event tourism is often overlooked and events may be imposed on them as event are harnessed for tourism growth agendas (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018).

From a destination point of view, event tourism, in addition to marketing, brings economic and social benefits, and their ability to extend the life cycle of the destination is equally important (Getz, 1988, p. 25). Getz systematise plan and process goals and outputs of events. Some authors also add the effect of competency acquisition (knowledge, innovation is generated), and network effects (cooperation and links between partners). The growing importance of event tourism destination management is recognised and hallmark events are core components of destinations managed events (Todd, et al., 2017).

With the growing role of technology, destinations receive media coverage from the events. The events direct the tourists to the specific destination in which the event will take place and, depending on the level of satisfaction, they associate the destination with the event. It is sometimes a catalyst for the creation and renewal of infrastructure and superstructure, and of urban development in general.

In a summarised way, we can present the direct benefits of event tourism for the tourist destination as follows:

- Revenues for the economy, including outside the active tourist season on site;
- Increasing support for local businesses – hotel accommodation, food, restaurants, transportation, other business offerings.
- It may encourage tourists to stay longer in the destination.
- It has the potential to be a tool to reach both a narrow and a broad target market.
- Enhances the destination image and supports the advertising, positioning and branding of the destination.
- Is part of the communication strategy, awareness and brand building.

The main long-term and indirect effects for the destination can be attributed to: improving infrastructure; attractive investments from large companies; improved quality of life for locals; unique experiences for tourists; building a destination brand; adding value to place identity; presenting the distinctive character of the place.

Networked event quality is one of the reasons many cities around the world are increasingly interested in using events to achieve the desired cultural, social and economic outcomes

(Larsen & Berenhold, 2019). The reasons why more and more cultural and other events take place mainly gravitate toward the following:

- Events are more flexible than some types of fixed physical infrastructure;
- The events help differentiate the physical environment threatened by serial reproduction;
- Events are more likely to offer spectacle and atmosphere;
- The events satisfy the need for a shared presence and a sense of "being there" and gathering people with similar interests;
- They may not require many resources but have an impact in the short term.

On the other hand, there are certain negative impacts on event tourism destinations: some events divide rather than bring one community together; mega-events have high economic returns, but encourage individual ethnocentrism and competition between peoples rather than a worldview and a spirit of cooperation. There are also problems caused by noise, collision, increased risks, exceeding the carrying capacity of the destination. At the same time, however, some cultural events take place because of the differences between hosts and guests. They emphasise these differences and may cause this inequality to affect the host-guest relationship (Yu, et al., 2020) (Walters, et al., 2016).

It is crucial for the organisers of the event to be informed and involved. It is important to engage the local community, because if they are dissatisfied, these experiences reflect on the experiences and entertainment of the event's visitors. (Kim, et al., 2015). There are also examples of protests against certain events that undoubtedly have a negative impact. Event organisers evaluate this and develop strategies for engaging the local community in event planning, maintaining good community relationships, and monitoring the perception and attitude of the event. Social media like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube allow you to reach the audience and get feedback from the local community (Laing, 2018).

Developing 'event' can make cities, tourists and residents more attractive. At the same time, they can strengthen the stakeholder network and organisation, which is very important for maintaining the creative potential of the site. They function as 'structural openings' in the social fabric of the city (Getz & Page, 2016, p. 598). Events attract attention and focus this attention on creating new opportunities.

The key to developing event tourism is to start with your own creative power and resources. In this sense, each place has different potential and challenges that require good knowledge and management.

3. Research methodology

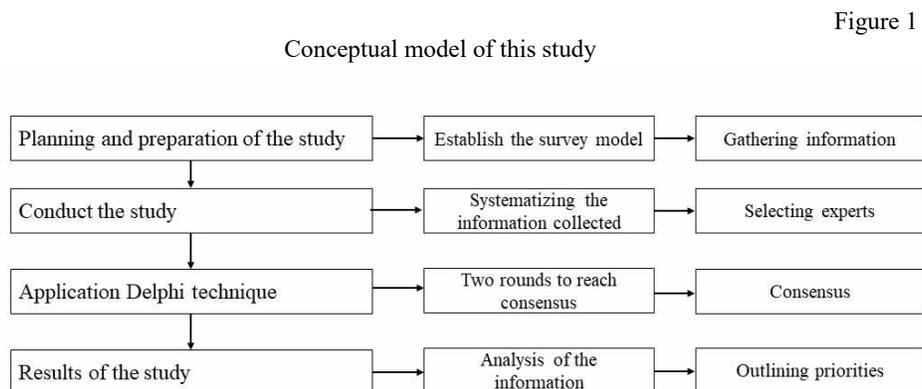
The public register of tourist attractions created by the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria, section "Festivals and Events" (Bulgaria, 2019), serves as an information base for the events in Bulgaria that have the potential to attract tourists. As of December 2019, 1868 festivals and events have been registered there and is available at

<http://rta.tourism.government.bg/TFRegister.aspx>. The National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development of the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2030 states that 99% of the events and festivals are of international importance. Information about the numerous events is used by specialised portals: <https://opoznai.bg/> in the events section and at <https://fest-bg.com/>.

The documentary analysis also includes a study of the offers from tour operators and what is included in their organised tourist trips in the total cost, and events in Bulgaria with tourist potential. Within this stage, events that have both internal and external effects are examined. The results of the research conducted among experts are used as a basis for clarifying the possibilities for the strategic management of event tourism in Bulgaria.

The starting point in modelling the key factors, and the process and result goals of event tourism development is their identification. The results of published theoretical studies and available public information were used as a basis for this.

The study algorithm is presented in Figure 1.



Source: Author's systematisation.

The main stages of empirical research include the following algorithm of action:

Stage 1 – Planning and preparing the survey – refining the survey, gathering information;

Stage 2 – Conducting the study – systematising the information collected, selecting experts to participate in the study.

Stage 3 – Examination of expert opinion (Delphi method) on the factors and the goals of the development of event tourism in Bulgaria.

Stage 4 – Results of the study – analysis of the information received, outlining priorities, guidelines for development and reserves for improvement.

To perform the analysis, a set of techniques were applied, that are applicable to the relevant object of the study and in relation to the intended purpose.

The methods used in the study are well-established techniques such as: collecting, organising and analysing existing information – using official sources of information – sites by official public and private organisations, approved tourist portals, organisers and promoters of an event tourist product; observation; resource audit; website audit; social media audit; situational analysis; Delphi method, formal and informal meetings with experts; expert survey questionnaire.

The sequence of application of the methods is logically related to each other and complementary. The choice of methods is based on their applicability as well as their established strengths contributing to the objectives of the study. The methodology is based on secondary data supplemented with primary data. Expert judgment was chosen as the most appropriate method to collect primary information. The empirical study was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved the development of a model for the evaluation of the key factors and goals for the development of event tourism in the country. The second stage was related to conducting expert research and data analysis.

The purpose of the application of the Delphi technique in the study is to reach a consensus on the main factors and goals of event tourism. There are 16 participants in the research, forming four panels, each representing a relatively homogeneous group. A first, academic panel, consisting of key experts to study the problems of event tourism (6 experts). A second, political panel of experts to shape the tourism policies (3 experts). A third, institutional panel of department managers to manage tourism at a destination level (4 experts). And a fourth, panel of experts in the field of event management (3 experts). The toolkit consists of two polls, respectively for the first and second round. The task of the first round is informing and testing the completeness of the formulated key factors and goals. For this purpose, the experts are presented with a version of a list of key factors and goals of event tourism, which they can supplement or reduce. Based on the answers from the first round, a systematisation is made, as feedback to the participants, which combines the opinion of all participants from the Delphi group. The task of the second round is reaching a consensus among the participants on the degree of importance of the respective goal and a key factor, which the experts assess on a five-point scale: minimum score, 1 - does not matter, and maximum score, 5 - very important. Due to the high degree of overlap of opinions after the first two rounds, a third round was not needed.

In conducting the Delphi study, the three principal advantages of the method as a consensus technique were observed, which ensured the reliability of this qualitative study. Anonymity was guaranteed the surveys being conducted individually. Repeatability was observed as the survey was conducted in two rounds and feedback was provided along with handing over of the second questionnaire and the consensus summaries that each Delphi expert received. The responsibility shown by the participating experts could also be included as a key factor in ensuring the reliability of the study.

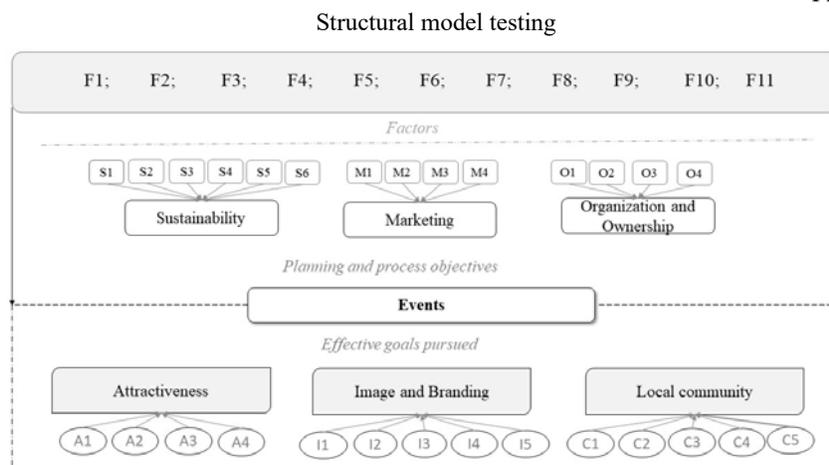
The survey involved generating information on the use of event tourism opportunities in a portfolio approach to tourism development in Bulgaria. To this end, we applied an adapted system model. The model was validated through feedback from an expert opinion survey. The choice of a survey as a method of conducting a survey among experts gives comparability of the results by individual groups and the possibility of direct comparisons.

Thus, the priority areas for special events management are identified so that the most important and relevant goals for tourism development in the country are achieved.

The model presented also has the character of an event management and destination management tool to more precisely outline the directions for enhancing event effectiveness and making informed, expert-based decisions.

The model logic and structure is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2



Source: Adapted by the author on Ferdinang, N.P (2017); Getz, D. (2012).

The key factors in creating an event that can provoke tourism are (Ferdinand, 2017):

- F1 – Context: Develop a program that is appropriate at that moment. Each place is in a different phase of historical, cultural, social and economic development and this should be taken into account.
- F2 – Involvement of the local community: the engagement and the ownership of the local population need to be managed in an appropriate and effective manner.
- F3 – Partnership: developing partnerships between different stakeholders. This includes cultural institutions, local independent organisations and groups, business and tourism sectors and social organisations.
- F4 – Long-term planning: preliminary and subsequent planning.
- F5 – Clear goals: a clear definition of intentions and goals.
- F6 – Strong Content: The program must be unique and visible, balanced with different types of projects.

- F7 – Political independence and artistic autonomy: the program of the event should not be influenced by political interests and the operating structure should have artistic programmatic autonomy.
- F8 – Good communication and marketing: a clearly defined communication strategy.
- F9 – Sufficient capital: The approved budget should be available as early as possible in the preparation phase.
- F10 – Strong leadership and leadership team: An independent director with international vision and leadership skills.
- F11 – Political will: the project needs political support to provide the desired influence.

These factors are important for any event. Effectively unlocking its potential requires paying attention to three issues: involving local people, co-creating events with different partners and willingness to take risks.

Goals and the planning process are seen as success factors that organisers and supporters need to consider when planning and hosting an event. Their relative importance may vary. The goals and the process are sometimes highly interconnected or overlapping. The model captures the key features of distinctive events, not so much the nuances and the full explanation of each aspect, which makes it not only applicable to the purposes of this study.

The attractiveness is measured by the number of people who are attracted to the event, the geographical distribution of the issue market, or the attractiveness of the competition. The term "attractive force" is also used, which is related to the distance, travelled by people to engage in the attraction. This is related to the marketing concept of "unique sales offer" and, in relation to distinctive events, it is related to the topic of authenticity.

Distinctive events can help to create a positive image for the destination and provide co-branding. To do this, professionals recommend active and coordinated brand management; periodic image testing of all stakeholders – local residents, visitors, industry and elected officials managing the site; professional media management. Periodic events (such as the distinctive events under study), as compared to one-off events, have, of course, more opportunities for media coverage and, accordingly, more opportunities to enhance the image. Distinctive events play an additional role in on-site marketing to help attract residents and investors, leading to branding effects. Co-branding refers to the efforts of two or more partners to associate their individual brand with a common purpose.

A significant goal of these events is to provide multifaceted benefits to local people economically, and is mainly associated with those for the local tourism industry and to reduce the negative effects of seasonality in demand. The goal is also to make the event a tradition, such as participation and funding, and to become a kind of institution among the local community. That is why it is of utmost importance that the local population attends the event. Unlike distinctive events, mega events are large and with strong external and internal effects, but are usually one-offs and owned by external owners and stakeholders, with many set standards, making them less complex in terms of the destination and the local community.

Effective goals pursued with distinctive events

Attractiveness

A1 – Developing an attractive unique theme and program that attracts residents and targeted segments of tourists with special interests: identifying a key market or segment; marketing research at the planning and refinement stage of the event;

A2 – Producing a high-quality event, focusing on customer value and satisfaction: quality can be measured by bench-marking with other successful events; the topic and program are specified by experts; continuous monitoring of customer satisfaction with a purpose and positive future recommendations.

A3 – Developing appropriate event venues: involving the community in identifying suitable venues, identifying the need for new infrastructure and improvements; considering aesthetic and functional sites, design and capacity.

A4 – Developing high standards and accessibility in terms of services and supplies: offering basic services that meet visitor needs.

Image and branding

I1 – Generation and establishment of positive media coverage of the event and destination: integration of event and destination marketing; visual planning and messages in the concept of the event and integration in all aspects of design and production.

I2 – Developing and establishing a strong media partnership: getting media input when planning and evaluating; maximising the number and type of media sponsorship.

I3 – Developing and constantly monitoring the value of the brand: accepting the event as a brand with it's own value, co-branding with the destination; building brand value with the target segment jointly between the event and related experiences in the destination.

I4 – Maintaining a positive event image among all stakeholders: monitoring media coverage; audience impact studies.

I5 – Specifically promoting a strong reputation through media communication, quality, uniqueness and positive word-of-mouth recommendations: media management should include dealing with image issues; managing word-of-mouth attention regarding the product, co-creating experiences and rewards.

Local community

L1 – Creating specific benefits for the local community: creating better employment; improving infrastructure; new entertainment options; the revitalisation and better use of existing facilities; raising a sense of pride; new forms of social interaction and integration; new improvements and design (lighting, public art).

L2 – Creating attractive volunteering opportunities and other forms of participation: measuring the number of volunteers, participants; improving local development capacity; improving organisational and decision-making capacity; network cooperation; demonstrating innovation and vision.

L3 – Avoiding and, where necessary, alleviating negative impacts on the community: avoiding traffic and parking problems, noise and other threats; avoiding crowds, keeping the peace; avoiding negative environmental impacts – waste, recycling, and control of sensitive areas.

L4 – Maintaining political satisfaction and support for the event: ensuring regulatory approvals: lobbying to obtain funding and key votes; internationalising political support.

L5 – Implement full cost and benefit reporting, management and planning: consider monitoring and control transparent to residents and other stakeholders.

Analysing and considering distinctive events as a system requires clarification as to how elements of that system interact with the environment in order to achieve results.

Planning and process goals for special events

Sustainability

S1 – To be an environmentally friendly event in all activities and impacts: compliance with sustainable development standards

S2 – To be socially responsible for the event in all activities and influences: to conclude a contract with the local population – transparency and accountability.

S3 – Ensuring adequate resources are permanently available for the development and growth of the event: generation of additional contingencies and investment capital, periodic financial crises should be foreseen including how to deal with them, adopt business planning and budgeting, monitoring performance and generating additional revenue.

S4 – Risk Assessment – Initial and Annual: observing and forecasting factors and trends influencing demand, including competitive events and attractions; conducting a financially sensitive analysis; conducting risk prediction for the public, users, participants, the environment, staff and volunteers.

S5 – Impact control, through a three-pronged approach: environmental, social, cultural and economic measures.

S6 – Organization and networking to adapt to changing conditions and periodic updates: strategic planning; strategically oriented staff; rules for adapting the structure.

Marketing

M1 – Effective management of the marketing mix to achieve the goals. The external elements are: product, place, program and people; the facilitating elements are: price, packaging,

partnership and promotion/communication. The product is a unique quality experience for residents and tourists. It is advisable to offer a tourist package. A long-term strategic partnership is a key process objective. Keeping the event fresh is a constant challenge.

M2 – Implementation of a quality control system and continuous improvement. Covering the quality of management, staff, program, services, communications. Adoption of management standards (ISO20121).

M3 – Building and establishing loyal audience relationships, positive recommendations, committed staff, volunteers and sponsors. Implementation of strategies for involving the local population. Permanent connection with the tourism industry.

M4 – Apply strong consumer orientation, especially in niche market segments. Utilisation of training and research organisations. Striving for continuous improvement.

Organisation and ownership

C1 – Ensuring adequate capital investment and other necessary resources: ensuring optimal balance between responsibilities of commercial (for profit), voluntary and public organisations; possible costs; conducting necessary risk agreement.

C2 – Maximising industrial and municipal investment (promoting a sense of ownership) and providing ongoing support from all key stakeholders: internationalisation of key stakeholders; continuous lobbying; ensuring full accountability to stakeholders.

C3 – Ensuring a high level of professionalism in all aspects of event planning and management: professional selection and a staff development system; implementation of a voluntary training system and "career" path.

C4 – Promoting and evaluating innovation in all aspects of event planning and management: innovation must follow the professionalism of the staff, volunteers and stakeholders; use of external experts and bench-marking; management promotion system; bench-marking with successful events reveal weaknesses and opportunities.

A clear interpretation of sustainability as a three-pronged approach to economic, environmental and social goals is essential for distinctive events to be a permanent institution. This includes demonstrating green ideas and corporate social responsibility, accountability and transparency in public spending, and demonstrating benefits to the local community.

The management of the entire marketing mix begins with a permanent and close relationship with the tourism sector. This sector requires the constant consideration of its product and should package it and market it with the event. Market and consumer orientation are required to be competitive regarding an event, especially when the target market is niche. Most events reflect the identity of the venue and must have a strong brand and one or more unique sales offers. There is a risk of tension between the event brand and site image if they are different and incompatible. Domestic destination marketing reflects on events and all stakeholders become ambassadors for the event.

In terms of organisation and ownership, most often, distinctive events are organised by the non-governmental sector with a certain level of support and control from public authorities. Organising them in the private sector is more problematic due to the fact that the community wants to feel that it is the owner of traditions and image, and that politicians and other stakeholders are involved in the support.

4. Analysis and results

As regards the importance of the factors for the development of event tourism, the average expert evaluation is given in Table 3. The need for partnership between all stakeholders is highest rated (average 4.82), followed by equal assessments of: involvement of the local community, strong program content and clear goals (rating 4.64 with a maximum of 5) and the destination for developing an event that has traditions associated with it (rating 4.63).

Table 3

Factors in the development of event tourism

Factor	Rank	Mean
Partnership between all stakeholders	1	4.82
Involvement of the local community	2	4.64
Strong program content	2	4.64
Clear goals	2	4.64
The destination must develop an event that has traditions associated with it	3	4.63
Leadership	4	4.60
Political independence and artistic autonomy	5	4.54
Adequate capital	5	4.54
Long-term planning	6	4.45
Communication Policy	6	4.45
The destination needs to develop an event that is right for it at that particular moment	7	4.09
Political will to realise the event	8	3.73

Source: Authors' calculations.

Knowledge of how experts prioritise the different guidelines to be applied in event tourism management is essential (Table 4). First of all, there is a need for a strategic approach to event tourism in the country (rating 4.73 with a maximum of 5). Next in importance are: harnessing the capabilities of digital technologies and security and safety strategies (rating 4.45).

The popularity of events held in the country and the positive image with which they are associated should be part of the tourism policies pursued and that are incorporated. The tourism potential of the events should be strategically placed as a priority when conducting that event. In order to maximise this potential, it is important that tourism influences are properly planned. The destination in which they take place must adopt a strategic approach to event tourism and its principles before putting it into practice. This strategic approach should be focused on building the desired image and branding of destination Bulgaria (Table 5).

Table 4

Directions for the development of event tourism in the country

Directions	Rank	Mean
Strategic approach to event tourism in the country	1	4.73
Harnessing the capabilities of digital technology	2	4.45
Security and safety strategies	2	4.45
Public financing of the events	3	4.36
Development of the event industry in the country	4	4.18

Source: Authors' calculations.

Table 5

Assessment of the importance of the main goals for the development of event tourism in Bulgaria

Goal	Rank	Mean
Image and branding of destination Bulgaria	1	4.82
Benefits for the local community	2	4.73
Attractiveness – increasing the number of tourists	3	4.45

Source: Authors' calculations.

This fact is confirmed by the assessment of the main positive impacts of event tourism in the context of destination management and marketing. The experts mostly appreciated the use of this potential for building image and branding (rating 4.82), followed by benefits for the local community (rating 4.73). To a lesser extent, priority is given to using event tourism to increase the number of tourists (estimate 4.45).

The attractiveness of the events is a measure of their ability to attract the number of visitors, their geographical distribution on the market, and the presence of advantages over competitors. When looking for a measure of attractiveness, reputation is paramount, so it must be maintained and promoted in the long term. Persistence and traditional local support are essential prerequisites, especially as some of these events use permanent facilities and the community is the setting and scene for the event.

The importance of building a reputation for providing a satisfying experience, and therefore, joint branding between a distinctive event and a destination, was appreciated. An event may not be successful if the visitors are not satisfied, which means that a customer-centric approach is vital. Placing the user in the centre provides guidance for planned and operational actions. The knowledge about real and potential users is a determining factor for success. Facilitating social interactions is one of the best ways to reach a wide audience, as social motivators often draw people to events. This is especially relevant when niche markets are targeted and the event is relevant to a particular social circle (Table 6).

In order to achieve attractiveness, the highest rank is obtained by the need to develop appropriate event venues (rating 4.63), followed by the production of a high-quality event, and focusing on consumer value and satisfaction (rating 4.54).

Table 6
Assessment of the importance of major activities for achieving attractiveness for the events

Activities to achieve attractiveness	Rank	Mean
Developing appropriate venues for events	1	4.63
Producing a high-quality event, focusing on customer value and satisfaction	2	4.54
Developing an attractive unique theme and program that attracts residents and a targeted segment of special interest tourists	3	4.45
Developing high standards and accessibility in terms of services and supplies	3	4.45

Source: Authors' calculations.

Table 7
Objective activities – benefits for the local community

Activities to the purpose benefit the local community	Rank	Mean
Avoiding and where necessary mitigating negative impacts on the community	1	4.82
Creating specific benefits for the local community	2	4.45
Implementing complete cost and benefit reporting, management and planning	3	4.09
Creating attractive opportunities for volunteering and other forms of participation	4	4.00
Maintaining political satisfaction and support for the event; ensuring regulatory approval	5	3.55

Source: Authors' calculations.

In order for the local community to benefit from the development of event tourism, experts consider the most significant activity to be avoidance and, where necessary, mitigating the negative impacts on the community for which they have rated 4.82 (Table 7). It is noted that maintaining political satisfaction, supporting the event and securing regulatory approvals are activities of the lowest importance regarding benefiting the local community (3.55 at maximum 5).

Table 8
Objective activities – image and branding

Activities for the purpose of image and branding	Rank	Mean
Maintaining a positive event image among all stakeholders	1	4.82
Developing and establishing a strong media partnership	2	4.73
Generating and establishing positive media coverage of the event and destination	2	4.73
Specifically promoting a strong reputation through media communication, quality, uniqueness and positive word-of-mouth recommendations	3	4.45
Developing and constantly monitoring brand value	4	4.09

Source: Authors' calculations.

One of the most commonly pursued goals is to help create a positive image for the destination/community and to become recognisable synonymously with it (Table 8). Therefore, active and coordinated brand management is required at the event, community and destination level. The image of the event should be reviewed periodically by all stakeholders, including residents, visitors, elected officials and industry representatives. The role of the media is crucial; it requires the development of strong media partners.

It is widely accepted that major events strongly influence the image of the host community or country, leading to a positive perception of the place as a potential travel destination. With global media attention focused on the host city, even in a relatively short period of time, huge publicity will be gained.

According to expert estimations, image and branding activities are the most important in the scope of the goal: maintaining a positive event image among all stakeholders (average score 4.82); developing and establishing a strong media partnership (average score 4.73).

By their very nature, planning and process goals are a complex system composed of many elements. Those that are significant for event tourism in Bulgaria are included in the model and researched for the purposes of development.

Sustainability is essential to the realisation of events. For them to exist periodically, they must be economically viable. Due to their affiliation with sponsorships, society, partners, media, it is advantageous to associate events with an environmental focus and corporate social responsibility. Transparency and accountability of the use of public funds are linked to the demonstration and a clear demonstration of benefits for the local community (Table 9).

Table 9

Assessment of the importance of the main activities for sustainability

Activities to achieve sustainability	Rank	Mean
To be an environmental event in all activities and influences	1	4.45
Impact control through a three-pronged approach – economic, social and environmental	1	4.45
Make the event socially responsible in all activities and influences	2	4.36
Ensuring adequate resources are permanently available for the development and growth of the event; Generation of additional revenue for unforeseen expenses and capital for investing	3	4.18
Risk assessment – initial and annual	4	4.09
Organisation and a network to adapt to changing conditions and periodic updates	5	3.90

Source: Authors' calculations.

Among the sustainability activities, experts place the event being environmental in all activities and impacts first (average rating 4.45) and the control of impacts through a three-pronged approach – economic, social and environmental (average 4.45). The least significant, with an average score of 3.9, is creating an organisation and a network to adapt to changing conditions and periodic updates.

Managing the marketing mix implies close links with the tourism sector, which over time will require changes to the product itself - pricing, services and the overall distribution of the event. Market and consumer orientation is required to keep the event competitive in attracting and satisfying tourists, especially when niche markets are targeted. Quality and value for the consumer are a must.

The event should reflect the values and identity of the community and have a strong brand. Staff, volunteers, suppliers, sponsors and other stakeholders are ambassadors of the event

and its organisation. Keeping in touch with the community can be essential in maintaining support (Table 10).

Table 10
Assessment of the importance of the core activities to achieve the goal of event marketing

Event marketing activities	Rank	Mean
Apply strong consumer orientation, especially in niche market segments.	1	4.7
Effective management of the marketing mix to achieve the goals. The external elements are: product, place, program and people; the facilitating elements are: price, packaging, partnership and promotion/communication.	2	4.6
Building and establishing loyal audience relationships, positive recommendations, engaged staff, volunteers and sponsors.	3	4.4
Implementation of a quality control system and continuous improvement.	4	4.3

Source: Authors' calculations.

In support of event marketing, experts consider the strong implementation of a strong consumer orientation as important (average 4.7), followed by effective management of the marketing mix to achieve goals and build loyal audience relationships, positive recommendations, engaged staff, volunteers and sponsors.

Most events are part of the non-profit sector and use public funds, public ownership and are subject to control. This is due to the fact that the community needs to feel they have ownership of their traditions and image, and for politicians to support it.

Event management requires a high level of professionalism. Events require adequate planning, resources and funding (Table 11).

Table 11
Assessment of the importance of the main activities in terms of organisation and ownership of the event

Activities – organisation and ownership of the event	Rank	Mean
Ensuring adequate capital investment and other necessary resources	1	4.8
Maximising business and municipal investment (promoting a sense of ownership) and providing ongoing support from all key stakeholders	2	4.6
Ensuring a high level of professionalism in all aspects of event planning and management	3	4.5
Promoting and evaluating innovation in all aspects of event planning and management	4	4.2

Source: Authors' calculations.

The results of the study show that providing adequate capital investment and other necessary resources (average score 4.8) together with maximising business and municipal investment (promoting a sense of ownership) and providing permanent support from all key stakeholders (average rating 4.7) are measurements of paramount importance for the organisation of events.

5. Conclusions

The results of the empirical study identified four key determinants of a successful event tourism policy:

- Identification, provision and efficient use of event tourism resources.
- Strategic measures at national level to support and promote event tourism, including building a portfolio of distinctive events for the destination.
- Implementation of marketing strategies for the distribution and advertising of event tourism, and professional organisation.
- Building knowledge regarding event tourism demand and tourist satisfaction.

The main statement in this paper is the argumentation of the framework set out in the introduction regarding the object under study. From the literature review, it was concluded that special events also play an important role as part of the development of the destination in host communities. Property, type, theme or size are not definitive characteristics.

The strategic management of event tourism involves the determination of the main goals and their realisation in terms of the resources available. In this sense, the research results which are presented can serve as a framework for managing the overall process of planning and implementing event tourism. It summarises the main factors and goals of the events and proposes certain aspects of their design and planning.

The model is useful for assessing and auditing existing events as well as for building an event portfolio. The study aims to help management more accurately outline directions for improving the performance of events so as to increase destination effects and make informed decisions.

Based on what has been said here, we can point out certain trajectories for better use of the opportunities of event tourism.

First. Event tourism is first and foremost a by-product of an event and in the long run it will only have a future if a reputation for quality is developed. The event and tourism industries need to be supported to invest in expertise, competencies and professionalism.

Second. Within the marketing of destination in Bulgaria, it is appropriate to develop a balanced portfolio of events – different types, scale and timing. As a strategic approach, apart from the diversification of the tourism product, it is a tool for a more even distribution and streamlining of tourist flows across time and geographical space.

Third. Establishing funding programs to support special events with full transparency of spending. Funding should be linked to the creation of a portfolio of events that are temporally and spatially selected for the distribution of tourist flows and the extension of the tourist season.

Fourth. Utilising the potential of digital technologies in the design and distribution of the event tourism product.

Cohesion, changes in the economy and, in general, changes to public life as a result of the invasion of technology, again raise a number of questions and challenges that need to be answered and addressed.

Digitization also affects topics with a significant social and cultural dimension and, in general, on the even more global issue of sustainable development. The pursuit of sustainable development is based on the search and acquisition of methods, tools and working solutions with a trinity of economic, environmental and socio-cultural goals, which we hope to offer with this study.

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