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State and Development of Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria

AUTHOR'S ABSTRACT

of a dissertation

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The dissertation has been reviewed and proposed for defense in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff at “D. A. Tsenov” Academy of Economics – Svishtov, by the Department of Economics and Management of Tourism at the Faculty of Production and Commercial Business.

The author is a part-time doctoral student at the Department of Economics and Management of Tourism at “D. A. Tsenov” Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

The dissertation consists of a total of 225 pages, structured as follows: Introduction (3 pages), main text comprising three chapters (206 pages), conclusion (3 pages) and References (5 pages). A Declaration of Originality and Authenticity is included (1 page). The dissertation is accompanied by 1 appendix (7 pages). The information is visualized through 31 figures and 16 tables. The reference list contains 108 sources, including 37 in Cyrillic and 71 in Latin script.

The defense of the dissertation will take place on 2025, at a.m./p.m., in the meeting hall of the Rectorate at “D. A. Tsenov” Academy of Economics, Svishtov. The materials related to the defense are available for review by interested parties at the

Department of Doctoral Studies and Academic Development at “D. A. Tsenov” Academy of Economics – Svishtov – <https://www.uni-svishtov.bg/bg>

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I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Relevance and significance of the research

The relevance of the topic is directly linked to the global trend of seeking experiences that go beyond the standard consumption of tourism services. The modern tourist is in search of meaningful, emotional, and culturally enriching experiences that connect them to the identity and traditions of the visited destination. Gastronomy, as an authentic cultural expression, has the power to influence the perception of the destination, creating unique and memorable impressions. This transforms gastronomic practices into a central element of the new tourism culture.

In this context, academic interest in culinary tourism is growing both internationally and nationally. Among the leading international scholars working on this topic are Bessiere, J., Hall, C. M., & Sharples, L., McKercher, B., Mason, R., & O'Mahony, B., who examine the connections between cuisine, cultural identity, and the tourist experience. In the Bulgarian academic literature, culinary tourism has also gained increasing importance thanks to the research of Prof. Dr. T. Dabeva, Prof. Dr. M. Bozhinova, Prof. Dr. St. Marinov, Assoc. Prof. G. Rafailova, and others, who contribute to the development of a theoretical foundation and models for its advancement in the country.

Bulgaria possesses a rich culinary heritage, characterized by regional diversity, traditional recipes, and sustainable agricultural practices. However, this resource potential remains largely untapped and poorly integrated into tourism policies and marketing. The lack of a national strategy for the development of culinary tourism, limited digitalization, and insufficient cooperation among local producers, tour operators, and public institutions hinder the country's transformation into a recognizable and attractive gastronomic destination.

Based on these premises, the present study aims to explore in depth the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of culinary tourism in Bulgaria, as well as the factors that influence its development. It proposes an analytical framework for identifying the barriers and opportunities facing the sector and contributes to laying the groundwork for the strategic positioning of the country as a sustainable and competitive culinary destination.

2. Object and Subject of the Research

The object of the research in this dissertation is *culinary tourism in Bulgaria*, examined in the context of its role in the economic and social development of the tourism sector. **The subject** of the research is *the environmental factors and those influencing satisfaction with the practice of culinary tourism in Bulgaria*.

3. Aim and Objectives of the Dissertation

The aim of this dissertation is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the state of culinary tourism in Bulgaria, with a focus on identifying the main factors influencing its development and formulating effective strategic guidelines for its sustainable advancement.

To achieve this aim, the following research objectives have been defined:

First. *To conduct a theoretical review of the nature and development of culinary tourism, highlighting its key characteristics and specific features.*

Second. *To analyze the demand and consumer preferences in the field of culinary tourism, with an emphasis on motivational factors and tourist behavior.*

Third. *To identify innovative approaches in the offering of culinary services and products that could enhance Bulgaria's competitiveness in this sector.*

Fourth. *To develop a model for studying the current state and future prospects of culinary tourism.*

Fifth. *To propose concrete guidelines and strategic solutions for the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria, with a focus on sustainability and its integration into national tourism policy.*

4. Research Thesis of the Dissertation

This dissertation defends the following research thesis: ***Improving the environment for the development of culinary tourism, alongside taking into account the factors that shape the satisfaction of the culinary tourist, is a significant prerequisite for unlocking the potential of culinary tourism and establishing it as an attractive element within the spectrum of specialized forms of tourism offered in Bulgaria.***

5. Research Methodology

The research is based on a methodological framework that combines quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. A literature review, surveys, comparative analysis, and expert interviews have been applied. The collected data has been processed using statistical

methods, allowing for a detailed analysis of the current state and prospects for the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria.

This dissertation relies on a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods aimed at a comprehensive and systematic examination of the factors that determine the development and competitiveness of culinary tourism in Bulgaria. The methodological framework is aligned with both the specifics of the research object and the need to validate the proposed research thesis, which is related to improving the environment in response to tourists' expectations for the establishment of this specialized tourism segment.

Throughout the research process, numerous literature sources have been reviewed, including academic publications, international reports, documents, and best practices related to culinary tourism and tourism in general, both in national and international contexts. This review serves to build the theoretical foundation of the study, define key concepts, and outline strategic development guidelines.

As part of the empirical section of the dissertation, the author conducted a survey among representatives of public authorities, businesses in Bulgaria, and educational institutions. The data obtained was processed using statistical methods, which enabled the identification of significant correlations and trends.

A comparative analysis was also conducted between different tourism regions in Bulgaria, focusing on regional characteristics of culinary offerings, the level of infrastructure development, and the degree of integration of culinary tourism within the overall tourism product.

The combined application of these methods ensures the necessary analytical depth and reliability of the results, while also enabling the formulation of practical guidelines for the sustainable development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria. The obtained empirical data and theoretical conclusions provide a foundation for proposing effective strategies for transforming the country into a recognizable culinary destination with high added value.

6. Limitations of the Research

The dissertation is characterized by scientific and applied novelty and value. The study of the environment and the elements shaping tourist satisfaction in the context of culinary tourism in Bulgaria contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge in this field. The developed author's model makes it possible to identify key areas in need of improvement in order to best valorize existing resources and to develop innovative ones.

As a result of the research, specific recommendations have been proposed and guidelines have been systematized with the aim of fostering the development of this type of tourism in the country.

The primary limitations within the scope of this dissertation are related to its coverage:

Geographical and temporal limitations. The dissertation focuses on culinary tourism in Bulgaria and its current stage of development within the country.

Limitations related to the subject of the study. Due to the broad scope of the researched topic, the dissertation emphasizes the potential of the environment to create conditions conducive to the development of culinary tourism, in line with tourist expectations and current market trends.

The author's objective is that this dissertation contributes to the more effective development and consolidation of culinary tourism in Bulgaria by laying the groundwork for future research and strategic initiatives in this field.

7. Validation of the Scientific Research

The dissertation has been reviewed and submitted for defense by the Department of Economics and Management of Tourism at “D. A. Tsenov” Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

Two scientific articles and four conference papers—one of which is co-authored—have been published in specialized academic publications.

Parts of the dissertation have been presented at a total of six specialized scientific forums, including two doctoral research sessions and four international scientific conferences.

II STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation follows the established structural framework and includes: an introduction, three main chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices. In addition, a declaration of originality of the research is attached. The structure of the dissertation is presented as follows:

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III SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of the dissertation presents and substantiates the main research directions related to the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria as a specific and increasingly important form of specialized tourism. The relevance of the topic is justified in the context of global trends toward seeking authentic experiences and preserving cultural identity, as well as its significance for diversifying the country's tourism offerings. The object and subject of the research are clarified, focusing on the factors influencing the environment for development and the satisfaction of tourists engaged in culinary tourism.

The central research thesis is formulated: that improving the environment and aligning with consumer attitudes is a key prerequisite for establishing Bulgaria as a competitive culinary destination. The aim of the research is outlined, along with the specific research objectives and the limitations concerning the geographical and thematic scope of the study. The applied methodology is presented, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

CHAPTER ONE. Review of the Theoretical Determinants of Culinary Tourism

1.1. Culinary Tourism as a Specialized Type of Tourism

1.1.1. Historical Development of Culinary Tourism

This section of the dissertation focuses on the formation of Bulgarian ethnicity and culture as a long and multilayered process shaped by the influence of three main ethnic groups—Thracians, Slavs, and Proto-Bulgarians. Despite the limited historical data, preserved through ancient written sources and archaeological findings, it is possible to trace key elements of their lifestyle and dietary habits.

The Thracians were skilled farmers and vintners; they were familiar with oil-bearing crops and beekeeping, and they prepared foods such as leavened bread, pork and lamb, fish, and legumes. They were especially renowned for their wine production, which is reflected

today in contemporary wine tourism. The Slavs were primarily engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. Their diet consisted mainly of grain porridges, vegetables, and fruits, with a preference for fish and, more rarely, meat.

The Proto-Bulgarians sustained themselves mainly through livestock breeding and primarily consumed meat, which they preserved by roasting and drying. After settling in the Balkans, under the influence of the Slavs, they began to develop agriculture and gradually enriched their culinary culture.

The interaction among these three ethnic groups led to the formation of a unique traditional cuisine that remains alive to this day.

In her classification of the stages in the development of culinary arts, Y. Hristova (Hristova Y., 2012) outlines five distinct phases in this process.

First stage: Primitive culinary art – This stage covers the period up to the first millennium BCE.

Second stage: Pre-classical culinary art – This stage includes the time of Homer, Pericles, and the flourishing of Greek culture, continuing until the end of the Roman Empire.

Third stage: Barbarian culinary art – This stage spans from the Great Migration of peoples to the Middle Ages.

Fourth stage: Classical culinary art – This stage encompasses the period from the mid-17th century to the early 20th century.

Fifth stage: Scientific and cultural culinary art – This stage has been developing from the second half of the 20th century to the present day.

Based on the presented periodization, and following the analysis and review of numerous literary sources and various accounts, the following revised and expanded author's periodization of the development of culinary art can be outlined. Figure 1 illustrates culinary art and its stages.

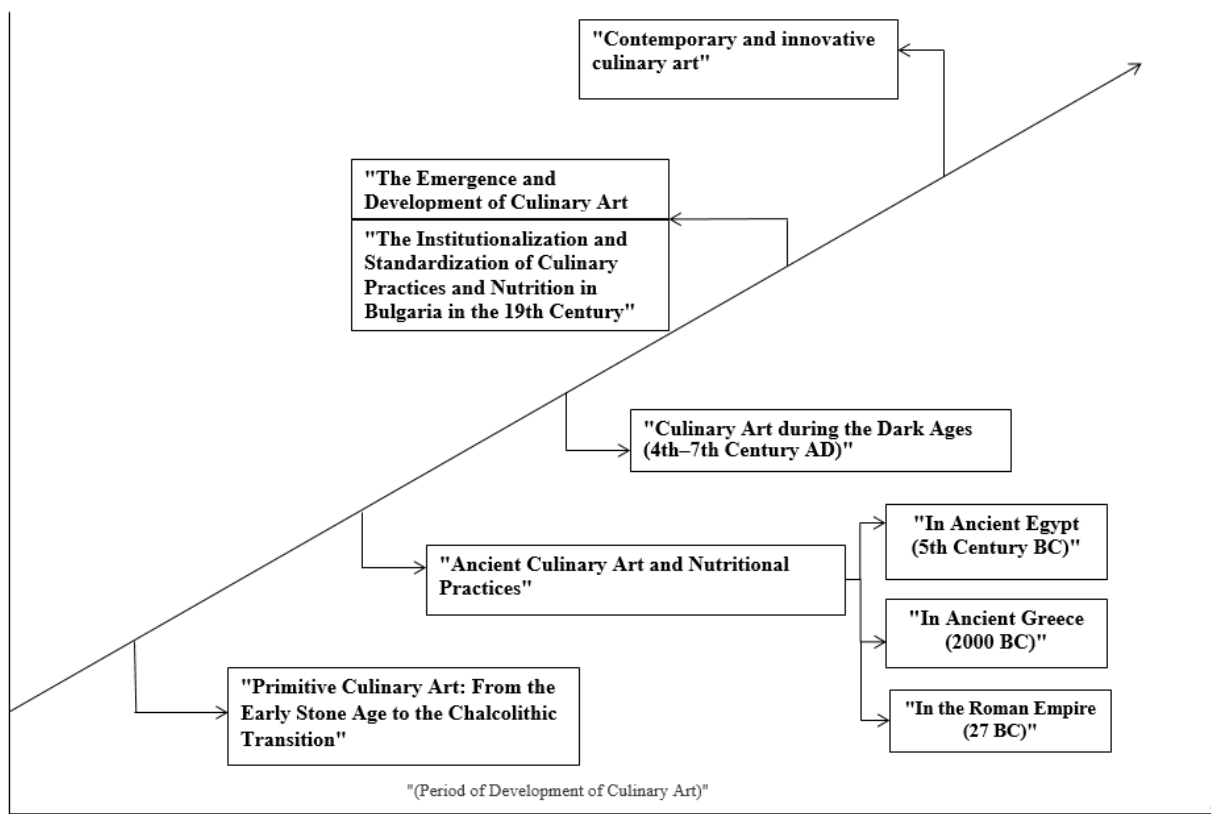


Figure 1. Periods of Culinary Art

The history of culinary art has passed through several key stages of development. The earliest primitive attempts at cooking date back to the Stone Age, when people began using fire to prepare meat by heating stones and burying food in embers. Gradually, culinary practices became more refined within the civilizations of Ancient Greece, Egypt, and Rome, where eating was associated not only with survival but also with cultural and social norms.

The Greeks and Romans developed culinary habits that included a variety of grains, olives, fish, and wine, while the Egyptians combined bread and beer with vegetables, poultry, and spices.

During the so-called "Dark Ages," which coincided with the Great Migration period, culinary culture declined, and quantity was often prioritized over quality.

With the revival of European societies came an "awakening" of culinary art—chefs began striving for food that was not only nourishing, but also aesthetically pleasing, flavorful, and healthy. In the 19th century, Paris established itself as the culinary capital, and the science of nutrition and hygiene began to develop actively.

Gradually, distinct national cuisines emerged, each with clearly defined characteristics—French, English, Russian, Greek. Culinary traditions became cultural markers of national identity, transmitted and enriched through generations.

These processes laid the foundation for modern cuisine and have directly influenced the development of culinary tourism, turning food into an experience with social, historical, and economic dimensions.

1.1.2. Nature and Etymology of the Concept of "Culinary Tourism"

This section focuses on the concept of “culinary tourism,” tracing its meaning and origins. It is considered a specific form of specialized tourism, in which the main motivation for travel is the pursuit of culinary experiences through tasting local food and beverages that reflect the cultural identity of the destination.

In the literature, the terms “gastronomic tourism,” “gourmet tourism,” and “food tourism” are often used interchangeably, despite some contextual distinctions—for example, “gourmet tourism” emphasizes refined dishes and high culinary culture.

The term “culinary tourism” was introduced by Lucy Long in 1998 and has gradually become established as an independent form of cultural tourism. In English-language literature, "culinary tourism" is often viewed as a subcategory of "food tourism," whereas in Bulgarian academic discourse, the term encompasses all tourism practices centered around food.

Culinary tourism is strongly linked to cultural identity and intangible heritage, while also being associated with agritourism due to its dependence on local agriculture and food production. It has also evolved as a complementary practice to other types of tourism, offering experiences in which gastronomy is combined with visits to landmarks and participation in local traditions.

More and more frequently, tourists seek opportunities to taste traditional or innovative foods in authentic settings, making culinary tourism an important tool for regional development and cultural promotion.

The types of tourism directly related to culinary tourism are shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. The Relationship of Culinary Tourism with Other Types of Tourism

Culinary tourism is considered a sustainable form of tourism that effectively utilizes the natural, geographical, social, and economic resources of a destination (Bozhinova et al., 2018). According to the World Food Travel Association, it represents “the act of traveling for a taste of place,” whereby tourists seek authentic and memorable gastronomic experiences. This form of tourism encompasses a wide range of culinary activities—from tastings and restaurant visits to street food and local markets—each contributing to the overall emotional impact of the journey.

Hall and Sharples (2003) emphasize that gastronomy often plays a central role in travel decision-making, particularly through events such as festivals, cooking demonstrations, culinary classes, and farmers’ markets. Culinary tourism combines the sensory pleasure of food with cultural engagement. According to the Culinary Tourism Alliance, it encapsulates the pursuit of unforgettable experiences connected to the flavors of the place being visited.

Similarly, Ivanova (Ivanova P., 2016) notes that culinary tourism involves travel aimed at exploring, discovering, sampling local specialties and products, and gaining culinary experiences.

Leading authors Hall and Mitchell point out that not every restaurant visit while traveling qualifies as culinary tourism—the desire to taste a specific food, dish, or cuisine must be the main motivation for the visit in order to be classified as such. Their definition draws a distinction between “tourists who consume food as part of the travel experience and those whose activity, behavior, and even choice of destination are influenced by an interest in food” (Hall, Sharples, & Mitchell, 2003).

In relation to the varying role of food in tourism, Hall and Mitchell propose a scale for categorizing tourists based on the degree to which food serves as a motivation for travel (see Figure 3).

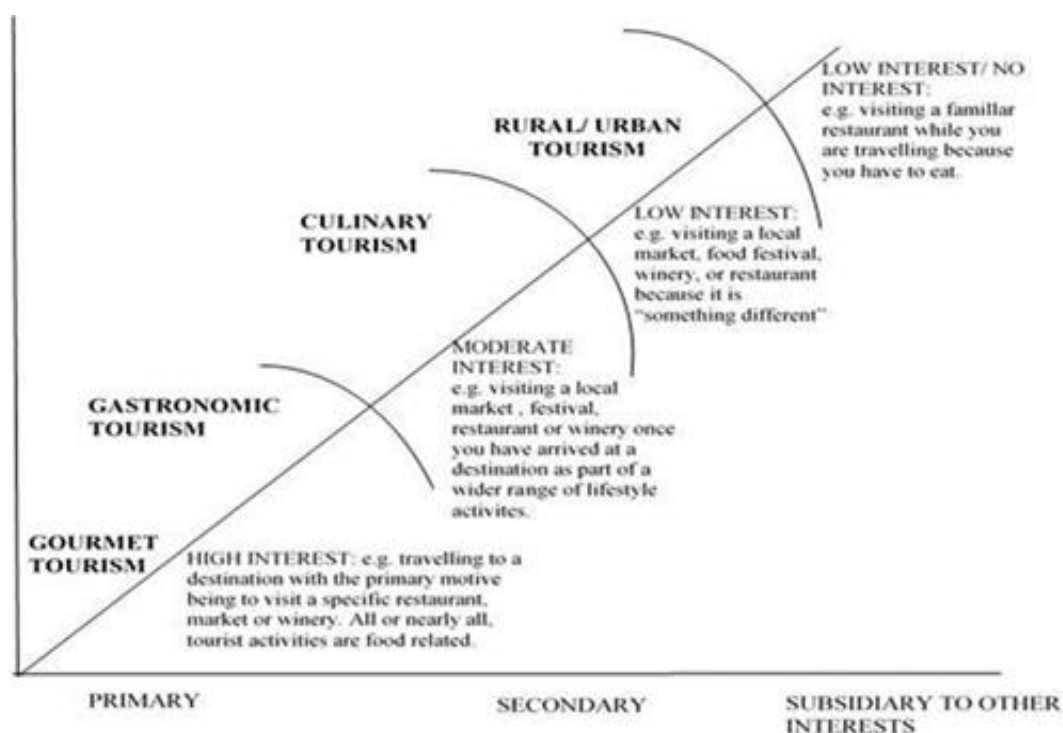


Figure 3. Culinary Tourism as a Special Interest Tourism Activity
(Hall, Sharples, & Mitchell, *Food Tourism Around the World*, 2003)

Culinary tourism provides significant benefits to the local economy of a given region. In the creation and offering of a tourism product, local products, regional lifestyle, cultural heritage, natural environment, and emerging trends in specific culinary recipes are utilized.

Based on the discussion above, the following key characteristics of culinary tourism can be identified:

First. Food is one of the main motivations for undertaking such a journey.

Second. The consumption of well-prepared food in the specific territorial area where it is renowned creates a sense of an unforgettable travel experience.

Third. Tourists traveling to certain regions become acquainted with the local way of life, culture, and customs through the tasting of traditional foods and beverages.

By analyzing various definitions and perspectives, the following author's definition of culinary tourism can be formulated:

Culinary tourism is a specialized and distinct form of tourism that reflects the connection between travel undertaken to explore and experience diverse destinations and the specific food prepared using traditional/authentic or innovative recipes and local products. Its aim is not only to satisfy sensory needs but also to offer a new kind of emotional experience.

1.1.3. Traditional Concept of the Nature and Scope of the Culinary Tourism Product

At this point in the dissertation, attention is directed toward the culinary tourism product, which is part of the specialized tourism market. Its realization depends directly on consumer behavior and the demand for food-related services. Tourism products combine both tangible and intangible components, with services playing a leading role. Among the main characteristics of tourism services are intangibility, perishability, inseparability, and variability, which make them highly sensitive to consumer preferences. The approach to examining tourism services is based on their role within the structure of the tourism product. According to this framework, Ivanova (Ivanova, Minkov, & Ilieva, Introduction to Tourism, 2013) classifies services as either permanent (universal) or variable.

➤ *Permanent services* – These are essential for the organization and execution of the tourist trip, as they are present in and form the basis of every tourism product. Such services include: accommodation, food, transportation, and others.

➤ *Variable services* – These determine the ability of the tourism product to meet specific tourist needs. They define the type and consumer value of the product.

According to this classification, in all types of tourism, food is part of the permanent components; however, what is specific to culinary tourism is that food also belongs to the variable components—it determines both the type and the consumer value of the culinary tourism product.

At the same time, culinary tourism also includes additional elements such as tastings, culinary festivals, and demonstrations, which enrich the overall experience and enhance the destination's competitiveness.

Food-related attractions—regional recipes, traditions, and events—are regarded as key motivational factors in choosing a destination. These may include both local natural and cultural assets, as well as engaging events such as holidays, fairs, and gastronomic festivals.

Culinary tourism also makes use of anthropogenic resources, including both cultural and historical sites (e.g., traditional markets and cooking schools) and artificially created events.

The National Concept for Tourism Zoning defines nine tourism regions in Bulgaria, each with its own potential for the development of culinary tourism. Municipalities, as the primary territorial unit, serve as the basis for the strategic planning of specific products, among which regional foods and events stand out.

In this way, the culinary tourism product is built as a complex system of interacting components—services, resources, and attractions—which reflect the cultural richness of the region and respond to the needs of the modern tourist.

This section of the dissertation examines the diverse culinary events and festivals held across the various tourism regions of Bulgaria, as well as their significance for the development of culinary tourism. The analysis covers all nine regions defined in the Concept for Tourism Zoning and aims to highlight the relationship between local culinary resources, tourism practices, and regional development. The collected data shows that regardless of their primary tourism specialization, each region possesses potential for developing culinary tourism through events that emphasize local products, recipes, and traditions.

Examples of specific holidays and festivals include: the Festival of Lard and Mulled Rakia in Apriltsi, the Yogurt Festival in Razgrad, Mood for Food in Plovdiv, the Watermelon Festival in Sevlievo, the Truffle Festival in Ugarchin, the Pumpkin Festival in Sevlievo, as well as themed events such as Apple Fest in Dobrich and the Honey Festivals along the Southern Black Sea coast. Forms of participation include tastings, competitions, demonstrations, exhibitions, and folklore and culinary programs, which transform these events into authentic tourist experiences.

The analysis also covers aspects such as the participation of the local community, the engagement of children and young people through educational initiatives, and the involvement of professional chefs who promote regional cuisine by offering contemporary interpretations of traditional recipes. This section of the dissertation also includes a review of the economic and promotional effects of such events, including the stimulation of local production, seasonal expansion of tourist flows, and the development of complementary services. Emphasis is placed on the potential for thematic destination branding through foods with protected designation of origin, such as Gornooryahovski sudzhuk, Elenski but, Strandzha honeydew honey, and others. It is noted that culinary events not only contribute to the tourism appeal of regions but also serve as a tool for sustainable development and integrated management of tourism resources.

1.2. Characteristics of Culinary Tourism Demand

This section of the dissertation examines the decision-making process related to the consumption of a culinary tourism product as a complex and multifactorial phenomenon. It analyzes the role of the tourist's personal profile—including value orientations, lifestyle, prior experience, and demographic characteristics—and its influence on the stages of search, evaluation, and selection of culinary experiences. A typology of the culinary tourist is presented, based on the concepts of neophilia (the inclination toward new tastes and cultural practices), allocentrism (the pursuit of authenticity and difference), and the level of involvement in the experience. This typology helps to better understand the motivations and behavior of different consumer segments—from traditional consumers to experimenters seeking unique and interactive forms of dining. The section also includes a review of contemporary research in the fields of food and culinary tourism and proposes an analytical framework for profiling tourists according to their preferences and expectations. It is emphasized that understanding the different tourist profiles is essential for the creation of innovative and personalized culinary products that meet the growing demands for quality, authenticity, and experience.

1.3. Innovative Approaches in Culinary Tourism

This section focuses on the importance of food as an integral part of the tourist experience—for both individual travelers and organized groups. It also emphasizes the distinction between food as an accompanying element of travel and food as a primary factor motivating the choice of a tourist destination. Special attention is given to specific

characteristics of culinary tourism, such as interest in the origin, taste, history, and preparation methods of food. It is noted that contemporary techniques such as molecular gastronomy, sous-vide, and carving are being introduced into Bulgarian culinary practice. These innovations give a modern twist to traditional dishes and increase tourist interest in culinary destinations.

1.3.1. Innovative Methods of Food Preparation

This section of the dissertation clarifies innovative approaches to the preparation and presentation of culinary products that enrich traditional cuisine and enhance the value of culinary tourism. Special emphasis is placed on molecular gastronomy, sous-vide cooking, and carving—methods perceived as modern and attractive practices in the restaurant industry.

Molecular gastronomy combines science and art by using laboratory equipment to create unconventional shapes and textures that stimulate the senses.

The sous-vide technique achieves tenderness and preserves flavor qualities through slow vacuum cooking at low temperatures, making it suitable for healthy, therapeutic, and sports tourism.

Carving—the art of decorating by carving fruits and vegetables—creates a visual impact and is used both in restaurants and culinary festivals.

What unites all these approaches is their role in creating a unique customer experience and attracting tourists through visual aesthetics, innovation, and culinary creativity.

1.3.2. Innovative Methods of Presenting Culinary Dishes

This paragraph examines innovative methods for presenting and showcasing culinary creations, which are used both in high-end restaurants and in tourist establishments to enrich the visitor experience and increase the added value of culinary tourism. These modern approaches not only enhance the visual and taste appeal of food but also create an emotional connection between the tourist and the destination through unique sensory experiences.

Among the main innovative methods discussed in this section is flambéing—a technique in which a dish or dessert is ignited with an alcoholic beverage in front of the customer, creating a spectacular visual effect. In addition to its attractive presentation, this method holds culinary significance, as it adds a distinctive flavor and aroma to the dish. Its

execution requires skill, precision, and professionalism on the part of the so-called “flambé master,” which further enhances the prestige of the establishment. Flambéing is gaining increasing popularity in Bulgaria and is now part of the service offering in high-end restaurants catering to discerning tourists.

Another modern method is show cooking or cooking in front of the customer, which involves preparing food in open kitchens or at demonstration stations. This approach draws strong interest from tourists, as it combines culinary transparency, order customization, and the opportunity to observe the entire process. It is particularly suitable for themed restaurants and cultural-culinary festivals, where authenticity and the visual appeal of food are of key importance.

Also discussed is Smoking & Wood Fire Cooking, which imparts a characteristic aroma to foods and is deeply rooted in traditional techniques from various cultures, including the Balkan region. This method plays an important role in preserving local culinary heritage and is especially popular for preparing meats, sausages, and fish.

Another notable practice is cryogenic cooking with liquid nitrogen, which is used to create innovative textures and visual effects through instant freezing. With the help of liquid nitrogen, dishes achieve both a remarkable aesthetic presentation and originality that impresses tourists seeking new and exciting experiences.

Finally, the section emphasizes sustainable approaches such as the eco-gourmet concept and Zero-Waste Cooking.

These methods aim for the complete utilization of food resources, minimization of waste, and promotion of responsible consumption. They reflect global trends toward environmentally conscious cooking and are of growing importance in the development of sustainable culinary tourism.

By combining attractiveness, technology, and sustainability, innovative methods of food presentation and preparation enrich the tourist experience and enhance the competitiveness of destinations that implement them. Bulgaria, as a country with rich culinary traditions, has the potential to successfully integrate these approaches into its tourism product.

Summary and Conclusions of Chapter One

1. Food and beverages have always accompanied the development of humanity and have left a mark on the culture of societies. Culinary art, viewed in connection with historical development, demonstrates that it has evolved over the centuries. At every stage—from primitive times, through antiquity and the dark ages, to the period of awakening and finally modern and innovative culinary art—food and beverage preparation and consumption have been not only a means of satisfying a biological need but also a foundation and factor for identifying local customs and traditions and for expressing cultural belonging.

2. Culinary tourism, by its nature, is defined as a specialized and specific type of tourism that reflects the relationship between travel undertaken to explore and learn about different destinations and the food and beverages offered—not only to satisfy sensory needs but also to provide a new type of emotional experience. Food in itself stimulates human perception, emotions, pleasure, the mind, body, and soul.

3. The behavior of the culinary tourist, driven by the desire to find and consume food-related services, defines the concept of the “culinary product.” The main factors influencing culinary consumer demand include tourism resources and attractions, the image of the destination, and the established traditions of the locality. The individual components complement each other and create a unified harmony and completeness of the culinary tourism product, demonstrating the complexity and dynamics of its structure. By introducing the concept of tourism zoning into the analysis, clarification is provided for all the different components that define the specifics of the culinary tourism product.

4. Food and the way it is prepared and presented are the main attraction of culinary tourism. Innovative technologies, influenced by the diverse requirements and desires of tourists, offer a unique and memorable experience for each traveler. The focus of service providers in culinary tourism is precisely on innovations in the presentation of cuisine as a specific way of offering traditional food—not only as sensory pleasure but also as an emotion and a means of satisfying the special culinary interests and needs of the tourist.

CHAPTER TWO. Research Approach for Determining the State of Culinary Tourism

2.1. Algorithm and Model for Studying Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria

This section of the dissertation examines the research approach for determining the current state and development potential of culinary tourism in Bulgaria. The main objective is to propose an effective methodology and analytical model for evaluating culinary tourism by applying scientifically grounded criteria, indicators, and methods. At the core of this approach lies the use of modeling as a tool for structuring, summarizing, and analyzing significant relationships within the sector. An original algorithm is presented—a methodological model (Figure 4)—which outlines the stages of the research and forms the foundation for further empirical work.

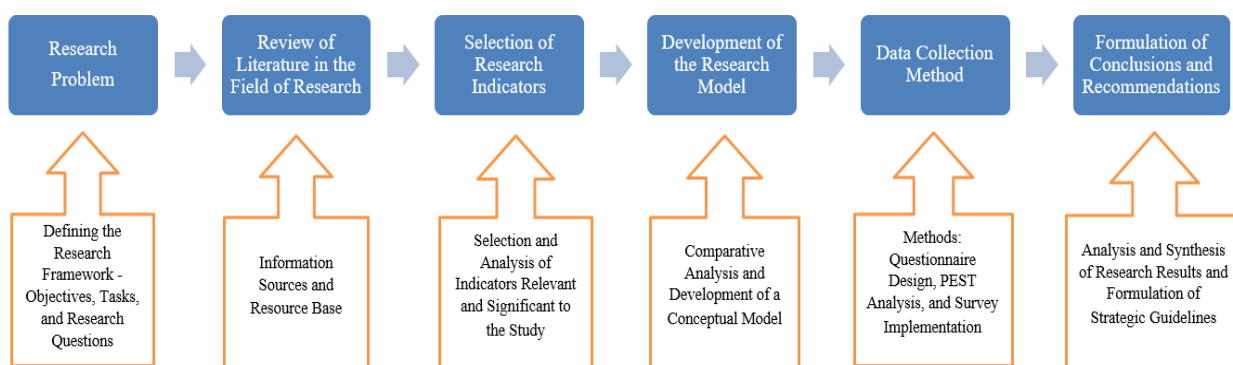


Figure 4. Algorithm – Methodological Model for Research.

Modeling is viewed as a process of creating an abstract yet representative depiction of the phenomena under study, which facilitates decision-making, analysis of interrelationships, and forecasting of future outcomes. It is used to systematize various factors—human resources, technologies, territorial and cultural characteristics—and their impact on the development of an effective culinary product.

In this scientific study, dedicated to the development of culinary tourism, the assessment of factors determining satisfaction is regarded as an essential element for its improvement. These factors are analyzed in parallel with the influence of the external environment at both macro and micro levels.

Based on this, a research model addressing the scientific problem has been developed (Figure 5), which illustrates the relationships and interactions between the internal characteristics of the system and the external factors influencing the development of culinary tourism.

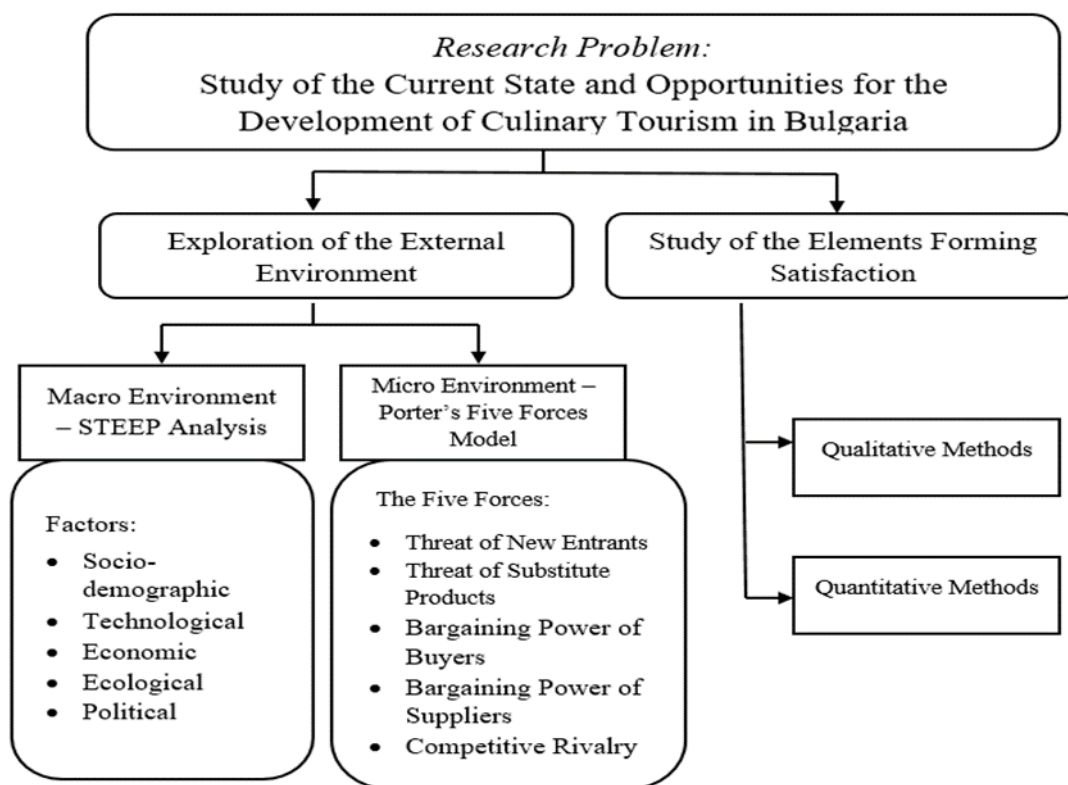


Figure 5. Research Model Aligned with the Objective of the Dissertation

Source: Compiled by the author

The main questions addressed in this section of the dissertation include: identifying the relevant factors influencing the satisfaction of culinary tourists; establishing criteria and indicators for evaluating culinary tourism; and applying analytical and sociological methods for data collection and interpretation. The analysis employs both static and dynamic methods, encompassing short-term and long-term observations that allow for the assessment of trends. Graphical methods are also used for data visualization.

Emphasis is placed on survey research, which gathers empirical data from the two main sides of the market—consumers and providers of culinary tourism services. These surveys make it possible to identify key expectations, levels of satisfaction, and motivations.

The application of a model-analytical approach and a variety of research methods enables a comprehensive assessment of the state and development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria. This includes clarifying the factors that drive it, identifying the problems that hinder it, and formulating recommendations for its sustainable development. A key focus is the need to take into account both external (economic, social, cultural) and internal (organizational and human resource) influences on the sector.

2.2. Macroenvironmental Factors Influencing the Development of Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria

This section of the dissertation is dedicated to analyzing the macroenvironment as a key contextual factor in the formation and development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria. The main external conditions and influences are outlined—factors that cannot be directly controlled by tourism establishments but that significantly determine the possibilities for sustainable growth and effective planning in the sector. Emphasis is placed on the need for a strategic understanding of the external environment as a multi-layered system in which social, technological, economic, environmental, and political factors intertwine and shape the framework within which culinary tourism operates.

The analysis applies the STEEP approach—a variation of the classic PEST analysis—which systematizes the influencing factors into five main categories: socio-demographic, technological, economic, environmental, and political.

Socio-demographic factors are viewed as key to understanding societal attitudes and values toward culinary experiences. These include cultural preferences, population structure, and the social organization of life, all of which form specific requirements for the food, services, and experiences offered. Demographic changes—such as an aging population or increased mobility—lead to new demands and segments among tourists, while the growing awareness of environmental concerns reshapes expectations toward sustainable culinary offerings.

The technological environment also has a significant impact on this type of tourism. Developments in information and communication technologies, new methods of food production and distribution, and modern transportation systems greatly facilitate access to tourism products and enable precise marketing, planning, and personalization of culinary experiences. The integration of new software solutions in the restaurant and tourism sectors leads to improved efficiency and enhanced customer experiences.

Economic factors—including inflation, household income, unemployment rates, and economic growth—directly affect consumer purchasing power and willingness to travel. Fiscal and monetary policies, as well as global market dynamics, set the parameters within which tourism services, including culinary tourism, can evolve.

The environmental impact—both natural and built—is also given special attention. The increasing consumer interest in "green" products and sustainable practices leads to adaptations in tourist behavior and the emergence of eco-culinary concepts. Culinary tourism is expected to meet the growing expectations for environmental responsibility and to adapt to new requirements for environmental protection.

Political and legal factors play an important role in regulating the tourism sector. Legislative frameworks, economic policies, public services, and international trade relations create the environment in which the tourism product is shaped. The regulatory environment—especially regarding health, safety, consumer protection, and ecology—can both facilitate and hinder the development of culinary tourism.

This section aims to present an integrated conceptual framework for understanding the influence of macro factors on culinary tourism. The analysis highlights the need for proactive strategic thinking that accounts for external environmental influences and supports the sustainable development of the sector. The research shows that successfully positioning Bulgaria as a culinary destination requires flexibility, adaptability to changing trends, and the application of innovative approaches in tourism offerings.

2.3. Microenvironmental Factors Influencing the Development of Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria

This section of the dissertation examines the significance and impact of the microenvironment on the development of culinary tourism through the application of Porter's Five Forces model. The main elements of the microenvironment, which have a direct impact on culinary tourism enterprises as well as on the overall industry in which they operate, are analyzed in detail. It is clarified that the microenvironment includes factors such as industry competition, consumer behavior, supplier positions, threats from new entrants, and substitute products or services—factors that operate daily and drive dynamic changes with the potential to strengthen or weaken a company's competitive

position. Porter's model serves as the theoretical foundation for the analysis, with each of the five forces applied specifically to the context of culinary tourism.

The first force analyzed is the threat of new entrants. Attention is given to entry barriers such as high capital costs, customer loyalty to established brands, access to distribution channels, and loyalty programs that deter new competitors.

The second force is the threat of substitutes—products or services that can satisfy the same needs as culinary offerings. The analysis considers the cost of switching to substitutes and brand loyalty when consumers evaluate such alternatives.

The third force—the bargaining power of buyers—relates to the number of customers, their purchasing volume, and the availability of alternatives that allow them to influence the price and quality of offered services.

The fourth force—the power of suppliers—is evaluated based on their number and size, the uniqueness of the provided resources, and the possibility of replacing those resources. The more limited and valuable a resource is, the stronger the supplier's position.

The fifth and final force is the intensity of rivalry among existing competitors. In culinary tourism, this rivalry is particularly strong in regions with many equally matched participants, low brand loyalty, and a lack of clear product differentiation.

The study shows that understanding and strategically utilizing these five forces is crucial for the successful positioning of tourism enterprises within the sector. The microenvironment, analyzed through this model, provides a realistic and dynamic picture of the competitive landscape in which culinary tourism in Bulgaria operates. This allows managers and stakeholders to build more sustainable and effective business strategies tailored to market specifics.

2.4. Factors Determining Tourist Satisfaction in Culinary Tourism

This part of the dissertation is dedicated to systematizing the factors that form the framework for analyzing and evaluating the development of culinary tourism, with an emphasis on the importance of tourist satisfaction and the influence of both external and internal environments. Various theoretical models for measuring customer satisfaction are examined, with a justified focus on the European Customer Satisfaction Index, adapted to the specific context of culinary tourism in Bulgaria.

The analysis is based on the understanding that an integrated examination of micro- and macroenvironmental factors is essential for developing sustainable strategies. Within

the microenvironment, Porter's model is applied to assess competitive forces, while at the macro level, the STEEP analysis is used to systematize external factors—political, economic, socio-demographic, technological, and environmental. Additional attention is given to loyalty as a long-term goal for any business in the field of culinary tourism, viewed through the lens of customer expectations and their exceeding through proper organization and service delivery.

2.5. Selection of Criteria and Indicators in Accordance with the Developed Model for Measuring the Factors Influencing the Development of Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria

This section of the dissertation examines how macro- and microenvironmental factors influence the development and future prospects of culinary tourism in the country. The focus is on objectively assessing these factors through a system of criteria and indicators selected to provide a comprehensive and reliable overview of the current state and strategic opportunities in the sector. For the purposes of the study, specific measurement tools are presented, grouped into a table of criteria at both macro and micro levels.

The macroenvironment is analyzed using the STEEP model, which includes social-demographic, technological, economic, environmental, and political factors. Each component is examined through specific sub-criteria and quantitative indicators such as: dynamics of tourist visits by gender, age, and nationality; level of innovation; average annual inflation; tourism's contribution to GDP; the presence of green practices and eco-certification; regulatory framework and state support for the sector. The analysis shows that although the external environment lies beyond the control of individual actors in the tourism sector, it is crucial for market sustainability and the strategic development of culinary tourism. For example, technology not only transforms production processes but also consumer experiences, with the integration of "smart" solutions becoming a catalyst for innovation and competitive advantage.

The second major direction in this section is the analysis of the microenvironment using the adapted Porter's Five Forces model. This part explores competitive dynamics in the industry, including the threat of new entrants and substitute products, the bargaining power of consumers and suppliers, and the intensity of rivalry among existing competitors. Emphasis is placed on barriers to entry such as capital costs and customer loyalty, as well

as the risk of market share loss due to the emergence of alternative offerings. A strong bargaining position among buyers and suppliers can negatively affect profitability, requiring flexible managerial decisions. Indicators related to the number of customers, degree of loyalty, uniqueness of service, and competitive differentiation are key to analyzing market dynamics.

Additional attention is given to the development of criteria for measuring satisfaction in culinary tourism, introducing indicators such as brand image, perceived quality, trust, perception, perceived value, and loyalty. These not only allow for an evaluation of the current state but also form the basis for strategic planning aimed at improving the customer experience and strengthening competitive advantages.

In this way, the dissertation provides a comprehensive and analytical approach to evaluating external and internal factors for the development of culinary tourism, combining quantitative and qualitative tools within a sustainable research framework.

Summary and Conclusions of Chapter Two

1. Internal and external environmental factors have a significant impact on the condition and development of culinary tourism and should be the subject of in-depth analysis when formulating strategic management decisions.

2. Customer satisfaction is a key indicator of the effectiveness of culinary tourism and should be measured through clearly defined quantitative and qualitative indicators.

3. The use of innovative and flexible management approaches is essential in a dynamic market environment and is a crucial element for increasing the competitiveness and attractiveness of tourism products.

In summary, Chapter Two of the dissertation outlines the main theoretical and methodological guidelines on which the analysis of culinary tourism development in Bulgaria is based. The studies and models presented in the chapter highlight the importance of internal and external factors that influence this specialized tourism sector. Special emphasis is placed on the evaluation of consumer satisfaction as a key element for quality and sustainable development. Major models of customer behavior and satisfaction measurement are examined, and based on the theoretical foundations, a conceptual model adapted to the specific characteristics of Bulgarian culinary tourism is proposed.

CHAPTER THREE. Current State and Development Prospects of Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria

3.1. Analysis and Evaluation of the Results from the Empirical Study

The empirical phase of the research is fundamental to the dissertation, as it provides a realistic view of the attitudes, expectations, and perceptions of key stakeholders—representatives of the tourism business, public administration, educational institutions, and active consumers of culinary tourism services.

The survey was conducted between April 15 and May 10, 2025, using an online form developed through the Google Forms platform. The questionnaire is structured into four thematic sections: (1) General information about the respondents; (2) Macroevironmental factors influencing the development of culinary tourism; (3) Characteristics of the microeconomic environment and its role in the tourism business; (4) Factors shaping tourist satisfaction with the offered products and services. A total of 233 respondents participated in the study, divided into two main groups: 152 representatives from the private tourism sector (65.2%), including owners and managers of food establishments, local producers, and tour operators; and 81 representatives from public administration and educational institutions (34.8%).

This distribution provides a balanced analytical foundation, covering both the practical and strategic aspects of sector development.

The analysis of the collected data includes both quantitative dimensions through single- and multiple-choice questions and Likert scale items, and qualitative evaluations derived from open-ended questions. This approach allows for a comprehensive picture of the interaction between supply and demand in culinary tourism products, the existing challenges, institutional gaps, and development potential.

Special attention is paid to the profile of the participants—their institutional affiliation, area of activity, motivation, and level of engagement with the topic.

The ratio between the two groups—business and public/educational sectors—is approximately 3:2, providing a balanced perspective from both practitioners directly involved in tourism offerings and regulatory and educational structures that shape the strategic framework and prepare human resources for the sector.

This dual perspective allows the analysis to cover both real market processes and institutional mechanisms necessary for the sustainable development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria.

The data analysis shows that the largest proportion of respondents come from the Danubian tourism region, accounting for 21% of all participants. This is followed by the Sofia tourism region with 17%, highlighting the significant participation of the capital and its surroundings.

The Stara Planina and Rila-Pirin tourism regions each account for 15%, indicating balanced participation from these areas. The Burgas Black Sea tourism region represents 14%, while the Varna Black Sea region and the Rhodopes account for 7% and 8%, respectively. The smallest share of respondents comes from the Rose Valley tourism region, comprising only 3% of all participants.

These results emphasize the diversity of Bulgaria's tourism regions and their relevance to culinary tourism. The high participation from the Danubian and Sofia regions may be attributed to well-developed infrastructure and the abundance of cultural and culinary experiences. Balanced representation from the Stara Planina and Rila-Pirin regions indicates interest in mountain and adventure tourism combined with traditional culinary experiences. The low participation from the Rose Valley region may be explained by its smaller territorial scope and specific focus on rose production and related events (Figure 6).

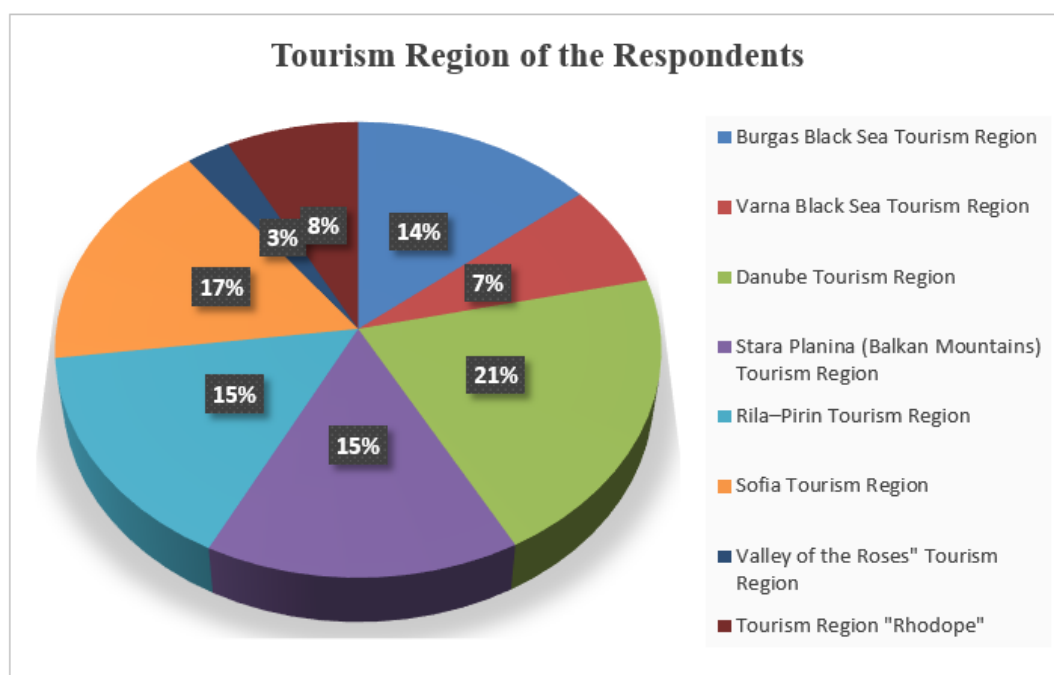


Figure 6. Analysis and Evaluation of the Results

Source: Compiled by the author based on data from the survey

This part of the dissertation presents the key perspectives of the two main groups of participants in the survey—public administration and educational institutions on the one hand, and representatives of the tourism business on the other.

The public sector emphasizes the strategic importance of culinary tourism for sustainable regional development and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Respondents highlight the need for a more active state policy that promotes marketing, education, and support for local producers, while also noting challenges such as weak coordination and the limited visibility of Bulgarian cuisine.

For their part, tourism businesses adopt a pragmatic approach, focusing on the need for investment in human resources, improved service quality, promotion of traditional foods, and reduction of administrative burdens.

Both groups share the view that culinary tourism holds significant potential, which can be realized through targeted, coordinated, and sustainable efforts between the state and the private sector.

3.2. Global Market Trends and Guidelines for Culinary Tourism Destination Management

This section aims to provide an in-depth strategic and market review of leading global trends, innovations, and successful models in the development of culinary tourism, with a focus on their applicability and adaptation to the specific conditions and potential of the Bulgarian tourism environment. A review of the global market, valued at over USD 11 billion in 2023, is presented, with a projected average annual growth rate of 19.9% by 2030. The analysis highlights the role of gastronomy as a means of creating unique experiences, exploring cultures, and fostering sustainable regional development. Key activities include culinary festivals, cooking classes, and food routes, with Europe holding a leading share of the global market due to its cultural heritage and diverse cuisine.

Special attention is given to the importance of strategic planning in positioning a destination as a competitive gastronomic location. Four key planning phases are outlined—from initial diagnostics to operational implementation and communication with target

audiences. Emphasis is placed on developing a culinary value map and integrating cultural, social, and sustainable elements into the tourism product. The need for the creation of an integrated market monitoring system is underscored, incorporating innovative sources of information.

Strategic priorities include the development of distinctive and themed culinary products, active involvement of local communities, and the formulation of a strong culinary brand for the destination. For successful implementation, a collaborative model is recommended—between institutions, businesses, academia, and civil society—guided by values such as cultural identity, quality, sustainability, and innovation.

This part of the dissertation emphasizes the importance of culinary tourism as a sustainable tool for the development of tourist destinations, bringing together cultural, social, and economic dimensions. The strategic development of this tourism segment should be based on a thorough analysis of the internal and external environment, as well as a clear vision, mission, and goals aligned with the global guidelines of the UNWTO.

The survey results show that tourists value the authenticity of culinary experiences, the quality of service, and local traditions the most. At the same time, challenges such as lack of promotion, workforce shortages, and weak coordination between institutions and businesses have been identified. A differentiation strategy is proposed, highlighting the unique characteristics of destinations—such as traditional recipes, sustainable practices, and local identity. The development of a "culinary value map" and its inclusion in the national marketing strategy is identified as key to increasing Bulgaria's recognition as a culinary destination.

3.3. Strategic Model and Recommendations for the Development of Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria

In this final part of the dissertation, the strategic importance of culinary tourism for the development of tourist destinations in today's competitive environment is analyzed. The discussion explores how tourism companies and destinations are adapting their offerings through culinary experiences to achieve better market positioning and sustainable competitive advantage. Food and beverages are no longer viewed merely as part of basic tourism services, but as a social and cultural phenomenon capable of building identity and creating a strong emotional connection between the tourist and the destination.

The growing diversity of culinary tourism forms is increasingly evident and includes events and festivals, markets, tastings, production site tours, agritourism experiences, themed holidays, and cooking classes. Many destinations are developing culinary routes that connect various food-related sites and events in response to the rising demand and interest in local cuisine and traditions. As a result, investments in this area are increasing, and there are growing efforts to leverage local culinary culture as a tool for regional development and tourism differentiation.

Based on the theoretical foundation of strategic planning and Leiper's tourism model (Leiper, 1990), a conceptual tool/framework is proposed to be used for the strategic planning of culinary tourism projects. It is argued that culinary tourism should be considered and approached from three perspectives: Consumer (tourists and visitors), Destination (host spatial area), and Marketing (communications), as illustrated in the following Figure 7.

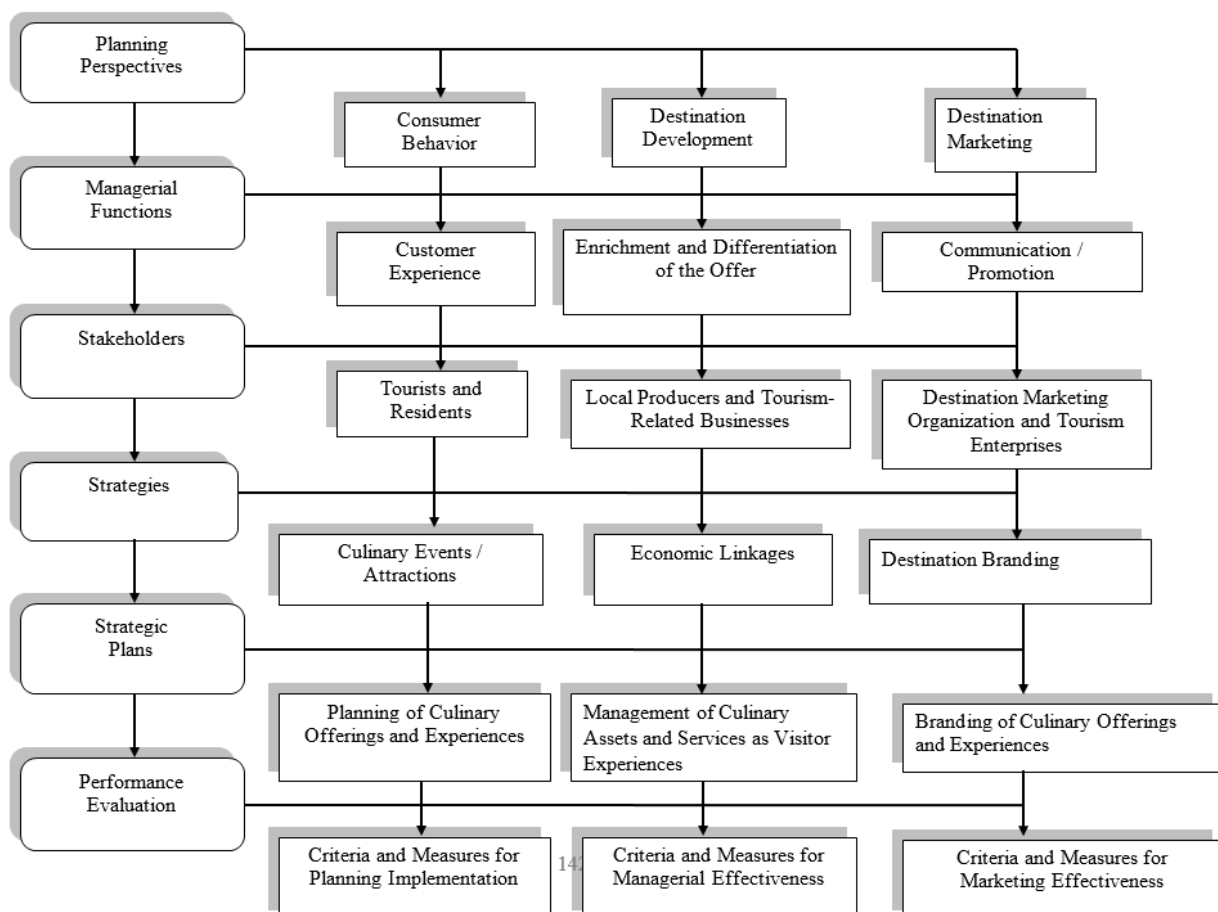


Figure 7. Strategic Planning Tool

The prospects for the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria in the context of post-COVID-19 recovery are also examined. The global health crisis had a significant impact on the tourism sector but also created new opportunities to rethink and modernize culinary tourism. A key focus of adaptive strategies is the digitalization of tourism experiences, which enables destinations and businesses to respond to changing consumer attitudes.

Among the emerging digital solutions are virtual restaurant experiences, digital culinary routes, and online tastings, as well as mobile apps featuring local recipes and dining establishments. The concept of “Local-Virtual” is shaping up as a leading trend, seeking a balance between place-based authenticity and digital accessibility. At the same time, tourists are increasingly turning to smaller rural areas, seeking peace, safety, and authentic culinary experiences.

The pandemic has also amplified the social dimension of cuisine—food is seen not just as a necessity, but as a form of social connection and cultural experience. In this context, a rise in short domestic trips is expected, which will support local businesses and contribute to the promotion of regional cuisines.

Thus, Bulgaria holds real potential to establish itself as a sustainable and culturally enriching culinary tourism destination.

Summary and Conclusions of Chapter Three

In summary, Chapter Three of the dissertation presents development strategies for culinary tourism and analyzes the results of the empirical study. Based on these, the author formulates several key conclusions along with corresponding recommendations, which are of strategic importance for the sustainable and effective development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria.

1. Conclusion: A major issue identified in the study is the lack of a clearly defined national policy and coordinated state support for the development of culinary tourism. There is a fragmented institutional environment with no synergy among the various stakeholders.

Recommendation: It is necessary to develop a national strategy for culinary tourism, integrated into the overall tourism policy. Concrete measures for institutional

support should be introduced through targeted programs, financial incentives, business relief, and inclusion of the sector in regional development planning.

2. Conclusion: The analyses reveal a serious deficit in the marketing positioning of Bulgaria as a culinary destination, both in the domestic and international tourism markets. Recognition of traditional Bulgarian cuisine remains limited.

Recommendation: It is imperative to create a national brand related to culinary tourism, emphasizing the authenticity, quality, and regional diversity of Bulgarian cuisine. This brand should be supported by digital and offline marketing tools—participation in international trade fairs, events, influencer campaigns, digital platforms, and interactive guides.

3. Conclusion: Infrastructure deficiencies, especially in rural and less accessible areas, hinder the development of comprehensive culinary routes and limit the organization of themed events and festivals.

Recommendation: Infrastructure investments should be made to improve accessibility to culinary-relevant destinations—roads, signage, parking, tasting centers, demonstration kitchens, and culinary markets. Municipalities should be encouraged to prioritize culinary tourism in their development plans.

Conclusion

The concluding part of the dissertation presents a synthesis of the three main chapters, united by the common goal—a comprehensive exploration of culinary tourism as an economic, cultural, and social phenomenon.

Chapter One traces the historical and theoretical evolution of the concept, emphasizing the growing importance of food as a cultural carrier and tourism experience. Consumer attitudes, tourist profiles, and motivational factors influencing tourist behavior are analyzed. Key aspects such as festivals, traditional dishes, and innovations contributing to the development of the culinary tourism product are outlined.

Chapter Two focuses on the research methodology, in which an original conceptual model for sector evaluation is developed. By combining the STEEP analysis with customer satisfaction models, key external and internal factors influencing the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria are identified. Contemporary management practices are examined, and indicators for assessing competitiveness and sustainability are proposed.

Chapter Three presents the results of the empirical study conducted via a survey, analyzing the perceptions of business representatives, the public sector, and tourists. Based on this, proposals are made for sustainable development through innovation, digitalization, and interdisciplinary strategies. The study concludes with specific guidelines and scientifically grounded recommendations aimed at enhancing Bulgaria's competitiveness as a culinary destination.

IV SUMMARY OF THE MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. The existing knowledge on culinary tourism has been further developed based on an in-depth critical analysis of the current theoretical concepts found in specialized academic literature. An original author's definition of the category "culinary tourism" has been formulated, following an analysis of the distinctions between culinary tourism and other closely related concepts used in the literature.

2. A periodization of the development of culinary tourism worldwide has been presented, highlighting its potential for development across the nine tourism regions of Bulgaria, in accordance with the concept of tourism zoning. Within the framework of the traditional concept, modern innovative approaches have been introduced, the integration of which enhances the value of the culinary tourism product.

3. An original author's research model has been developed, based on a comprehensive and critical analysis of methodological tools. The proposed model offers a new analytical framework for assessing the state and development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria.

4. An empirical study has been conducted to test and validate the author's model, confirming its practical applicability. As a result, current characteristics have been identified, serving as a basis for conclusions and recommendations related to the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria.

5. A strategic model for the development of culinary tourism in Bulgaria has been constructed, and concrete guidelines and recommendations have been formulated, taking into account both national specifics and international best practices in this field.

V LIST OF PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

Scientific Articles

Simeonov, S. (2019). Specific Characteristics of the Culinary Tourist. *Annual Almanac of Doctoral Research, Svishtov*, Vol. XII, Book 15, pp. 383–397. ISSN: 1313-6542.

Simeonov, S. (2020). The Influence of Micro- and Macroenvironmental Factors on Culinary Tourism. *Annual Almanac of Doctoral Research, Svishtov*, Vol. XIII, Book 16, pp. 381–398. ISSN: 1313-6542.

Scientific Conference Papers

Ivanova, P., **Simeonov, S.** (2019). Characteristics of the Culinary Tourist. Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference "Tourism in the New Millennium – Status and Prospects", Academic Publishing House "Tsenov", Svishtov, pp. 36–45. ISBN: 978-954-23-1764-7.

Simeonov, S. (2018). Models for Evaluating Customer Satisfaction in Culinary Tourism. Proceedings of the Scientific Conference "Tourism, Education, Business", College of Tourism at "Prof. A. Zlatarov" University, Burgas, pp. 166–174. ISBN: 978-619-7125-74-0.

Simeonov, S. (2018). Opportunities for Developing Bulgaria as a Destination through Culinary Tourism. Proceedings of the International Student and Doctoral Scientific Conference "Tourism and Innovations", Academic Publishing House "St. Cyril and St. Methodius", Veliko Tarnovo, pp. 184–193. ISBN: 978-619-208-167-6.

Simeonov, S. (2018). Innovative Approaches in Culinary Tourism. International Scientific Conference on the Occasion of the 55th Anniversary of the College of Tourism – Varna, "Tourism and Innovations", "Science and Economics" Publishing House, University of Economics – Varna, pp. 370–379. ISBN: 978-954-21-0973-0.

VI STATEMENT ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE MINIMUM NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO THE PROCEDURE FOR ACQUIRING THE EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC DEGREE "DOCTOR"

Indicator	Points
Group A Indicators	
<i>Indicator 1. Dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree "Doctor"</i>	
"The State and Development of Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria"	50
<i>The dissertation has been reviewed and the procedure for its defense has been initiated.</i>	
Group G Indicators	
<i>Total from indicators 4 to 10</i>	
<i>7. Articles and conference papers published in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals or in edited collective volumes</i>	
Simeonov, S. (2019). Specific Characteristics of the Culinary Tourist. Annual Almanac of Doctoral Research, Svishtov, Vol. XII, Book 15, pp. 383–397. ISSN: 1313-6542.	10
Simeonov, S. (2020). The Influence of Micro- and Macroenvironmental Factors on Culinary Tourism. Annual Almanac of Doctoral Research, Svishtov, Vol. XIII, Book 16, pp. 381–398. ISSN: 1313-6542.	10
Ivanova, P., Simeonov, S. (2019). Characteristics of the Culinary Tourist. Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference "Tourism in the New Millennium – Status and Prospects", Academic Publishing House "Tsenov", Svishtov, pp. 36–45. ISBN: 978-954-23-1764-7.	5
Simeonov, S. (2018). Models for Evaluating Customer Satisfaction in Culinary Tourism. Proceedings of the Scientific Conference "Tourism, Education, Business", College of Tourism at "Prof. A. Zlatarov" University, Burgas, pp. 166–174. ISBN: 978-619-7125-74-0.	10
Simeonov, S. (2018). Opportunities for Developing Bulgaria as a Culinary Tourism Destination. Proceedings of the International Student and Doctoral Scientific Conference "Tourism and Innovations", Academic Publishing House "St. Cyril and St. Methodius", Veliko Tarnovo, pp. 184–193. ISBN: 978-619-208-167-6.	10
Simeonov, S. (2018). Innovative Approaches in Culinary Tourism. International Scientific Conference on the 55th Anniversary of the College of Tourism – Varna, "Tourism and Innovations", "Science and Economics" Publishing House, University of Economics – Varna, pp. 370–379. ISBN: 978-954-21-0973-0.	10
<i>Total Score – Sum of Indicators from 4 to 10</i>	55
<i>Required Number of Points – Sum of Indicators from 4 to 10</i>	30

VII LIST OF PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES AND FORUMS

Conferences, Seminars, Round Tables:

- International Scientific and Practical Conference "Tourism in the New Millennium – Status and Prospects", Svishtov, 2019.
- Scientific Conference "Tourism, Education, Business", College of Tourism at “Prof. A. Zlatarov” University, Burgas, 2018.
- International Student and Doctoral Scientific Conference "Tourism and Innovations", Academic Publishing House “St. Cyril and St. Methodius”, Veliko Tarnovo, 2018.
- International Scientific Conference on the Occasion of the 55th Anniversary of the College of Tourism – Varna, "Tourism and Innovations", University of Economics – Varna, 2018.
- Participation in the Student and Doctoral Scientific Forum "Tourism in the New Millennium – Status and Prospects", April 5–6, 2019, in Oreshak village, Troyan Municipality.
- Participation in the European Vocational Skills Week – official national opening in Luxembourg, online culinary demonstration, 09.11.2020.
- Participation in the Thirteenth Black Sea Tourism Forum: “The Tourism Industry – Positivity During the COVID Crisis”, 28.11.2020 – online attendance.

Докторантски научни сесии:

1. Doctoral Scientific Session 2018, D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.
2. Doctoral Scientific Session 2019, D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.
3. Doctoral Scientific Session 2020, D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

Научноизследователски проект:

Project No. 9-2018 "Modern Dimensions of the Management of the Tourist Destination Bulgaria", Research Institute, D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics.

VIII DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY AND AUTHENTICITY

D E C L A R A T I O N of Originality

by Simeon Ventsislavov Simeonov,
doctoral student in part-time study mode
in the PhD program "Economics and Management (Tourism)"
at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov

I hereby declare that the submitted dissertation titled “The State and Development of Culinary Tourism in Bulgaria”, submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the scientific specialty “Economics and Management (Tourism)”, is an original work of authorship. It contains results obtained through my own scientific research. The results obtained, described, and/or published by other scholars are properly cited in the text and included in the bibliography.

This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of a scientific degree at any other higher education institution or research institute.

.....2025 г.

Town of Svishtov

Declarant:

/Simeon Simeonov/