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# **DIVERSIFICATION OF THE TOURISM PRODUCT BY ORGANIZING EVENTS**

## **AUTHOR'S ABSTRACT**

*of*

*a dissertation for obtaining the educational  
and scientific degree "Doctor"*

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SVISHTOV

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The dissertation has been discussed and proposed for defense by the Department of Tourism Economics and Management within the Faculty of Industry and Commerce at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov. The author of the dissertation is a doctoral student enrolled in part-time studies at the Department of Tourism Economics and Management, within the field of higher education 3. “Social, Economic, and Legal Sciences”, professional field 3.8. “Economics,” doctoral program “Economics and Management (Tourism)”. The dissertation consists of a List of Figures, a List of Tables, an Introduction, three Chapters, a Conclusion, a List of References, a Declaration of Originality and Authenticity, and Appendices. The work comprises 204 pages in total, including an introduction (5 pages), main text (163 pages), a conclusion (7 pages), references (11 pages), and appendices (17 pages). The dissertation contains 11 tables, 13 figures, and 4 appendices. The list of references includes a total of 123 sources in both Cyrillic and Latin scripts (52 in Cyrillic and 71 in Latin).

The defense of the dissertation will take place on August 29, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. in the Rectorate Conference Hall of D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov. All materials related to the defense are available to all interested parties on the website of D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics and at the Department of Doctoral Studies and Academic Staff Development at D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov.

## **I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION**

### **1. Relevance of the Topic**

The present research is motivated by the need for sustainable and strategically grounded development of tourist destinations in the context of intensified competition, dynamic market changes, and the pursuit of territorial cohesion. Tourism, as one of the leading sectors of both national and regional economies, performs important socio-economic functions and is closely interconnected with various other sectors such as transport, culture, agriculture, and services. In this context, the organization of events as a tool for diversifying the tourism product is emerging as a strategic approach to enhancing competitiveness, reducing seasonality, and engaging local communities.

The topic is particularly relevant for small and medium-sized destinations, where the potential of cultural, natural, and intangible heritage remains underutilized. The absence of a comprehensive model for event-based diversification and the limited application of modern management tools hinder sustainable tourism development. In international academic literature, the focus is predominantly on large urbanized destinations and well-established tourism markets, while practical, applicable solutions for smaller areas with limited resources remain underrepresented.

In response to this gap, the present dissertation aims to propose an analytically grounded and empirically validated model for diversifying the tourism product through events-one that is adaptable and applicable within the context of Bulgarian municipalities. In doing so, the research combines academic originality with practical value, addressing specific managerial challenges and contributing to the strategic development of local tourism.

## 2. Object and Subject of the Research

The **object** of the research in this dissertation encompasses enterprises engaged in organizing events aimed at diversifying the tourism product within the territory of Svishtov Municipality.

The **subject** of the research concerns the opportunities for diversifying the tourism product by organizing events.

## 3. Research Thesis

**The research thesis** presented in the dissertation is that the organization of events constitutes an effective tool for the diversification of the tourism product, which simultaneously contributes to the economic development, social engagement, and cultural sustainability of destinations

## 4. Aim and Objectives of the Research

**The aim** of this dissertation is to analyze the impact of organized events on the development of a tourist destination. In this context, the destination is viewed as an integrated system with both managerial and functional dimensions, within which tourist flows are concentrated, high value-added products are created, and a sustainable identity is built.

In accordance with the stated aim, the following **research objectives** have been formulated:

- To conduct a theoretical analysis of the nature and scope of the tourism product, the specifics of event tourism, and the interaction between tourism management and event organization, as well as to explore the opportunities for diversification through events that generate high added value for the destination;
- To develop and validate a model for diversifying the tourism product through events, including the formulation of indicators to measure their impact on the development of the destination;

- To analyze and assess the tourism resources with potential for event activities, identifying those that generate significant tourist flows;
- To evaluate the effectiveness of organized events for the development of the tourist destination and to formulate specific measures and recommendations for applying event tourism as a tool for diversifying the tourism product at the municipal level.

## **5. Research Methodology**

A wide range of research approaches and methods have been employed in the development of this dissertation, including induction, deduction, comparative analysis and synthesis, content analysis, statistical data processing methods, the Likert scale for measuring attitudes, survey and interview methods, empirical observation, the historical method, as well as techniques of scientific cognition and logical generalization.

The methodological framework of the study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that integrates concepts and tools from tourism, marketing, economics, local governance, and regional development. The theoretical section analyzes the essence of the tourism product with a focus on its diversification through event organization, addressing the conceptual foundations of destination management, the role of events in brand building, and approaches to effectiveness evaluation.

The empirical research applies a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods-content analysis of scientific and strategic documents, comparative assessment of events through predefined indicators (number of visitors, length of stay, satisfaction, media visibility, etc.), surveys, and expert evaluations using standardized matrices to validate the results.

A central component is the developed and tested analytical model for assessing the diversification of the tourism product through the implementation of events and evaluating the effectiveness of event-based diversification via a system of key performance indicators (KPIs).

## **6. Scope of the Research**

This study combines theoretical, methodological, and empirical analyses of the opportunities for diversifying the tourism product through events, employing an interdisciplinary approach based on principles from tourism, marketing, destination management, and cultural policy. With a thematic focus on the role of event tourism in extending the tourist season and enriching the tourist experience, a situational analysis of tourism development in Svishtov Municipality-a medium-scale destination with an active cultural calendar-was conducted. The research includes a survey, expert evaluations, and a KPI analysis of key events for the period 2022–2024, based on which an original model for strategic diversification was tested. This provides a basis for conclusions regarding the impact of events on tourist flows, consumption, and the socio-economic development of the destination.

## **7. Validation of the Dissertation**

The dissertation has been reviewed and approved for defense at a meeting of the Department of Tourism Economics and Management at the D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov. Some of the research findings have been presented at academic conferences and published in specialized scholarly journals.

# **II. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

## **1. General Description**

The dissertation comprises 204 pages, including 163 pages of main text, 11 tables, 13 figures, and 4 appendices. Structurally, the work consists of an introduction, three thematic chapters, a conclusion, a list of sources in Cyrillic and Latin scripts, appendices, and a declaration of originality and authenticity.

## **2. Table of Contents of the Dissertation**

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### III. SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION

#### **Introduction**

The introductory part of the dissertation covers seven pages and includes an argumentation regarding the relevance and significance of the topic. It presents the object, the subject, the research thesis, as well as the aim and objectives of the study. The scientific methods used are described, and the scope and limitations of the research are defined.

The **First Chapter** of the dissertation outlines the main conceptual and theoretical aspects related to the researched problem. The essence of tourism product diversification is examined, establishing the conceptual framework that forms the basis for the subsequent methodological and empirical developments. A thorough analysis of key terms is conducted, based on which original definitions are formulated, systematizing existing theoretical views and adapting them to the objectives of the present study.

The **first section** focuses on the conceptual clarification of core categories relevant to the academic discourse to ensure clarity and consistency in the terminology used. The spatial, functional, and managerial dimensions of tourism activity are elucidated, creating a theoretical basis for formulating an expanded definition of the tourism product. Within this study, the tourism product is understood as an integrated system of natural and anthropogenic resources, tourism services, infrastructure, events, experiences, and social engagement, which creates value for the tourist through emotional impact, cultural authenticity, and satisfaction. This system unites both tangible elements – such as sites, routes, and services - and intangible ones - including impressions, perceptions, cultural exchange, and local community attitudes. Such an understanding positions the tourism product as a



flexible, experience-oriented system that can be strategically adapted through high value-added events.

The presented concepts and interpretations confirm the understanding that tourism activity develops within territorially defined spaces endowed with resources, supporting infrastructure, and institutional capacity. This underscores the necessity of a systemic analysis of the tourism product in the context of its diversification, especially when realized through events aimed at enriching the experience and promoting sustainable destination development.

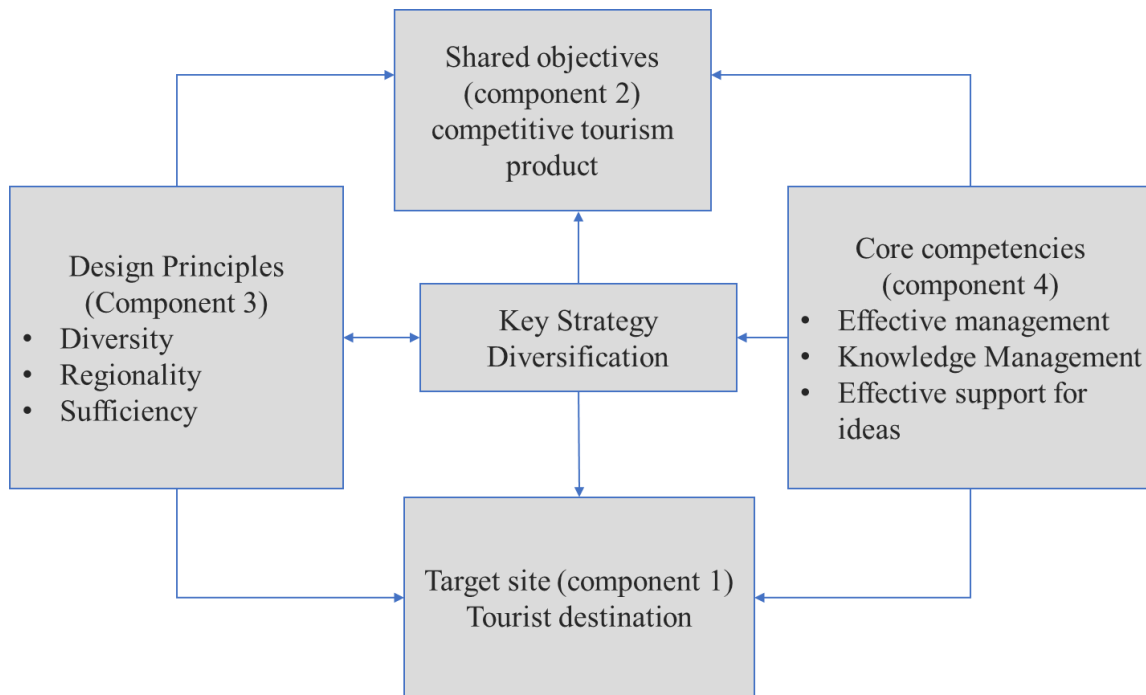
The **second section** analyzes tourism product diversification as a key strategic direction for destination development amid intensified competition, seasonal fluctuations, and changing consumer preferences. Depending on resource potential, market orientation, and managerial capacity, various strategic approaches can be applied that consider both local specificities and the dynamics of tourism demand.

The choice of a tourism product development strategy depends on multiple factors: the stage of the destination's life cycle, characteristics of its resource base, the degree of recognition of its tourism image, intensity of tourist flows, and availability of institutional and entrepreneurial capacity. Based on these factors, various strategic alternatives are applied in practice – specialization strategy, branding strategy, integrated strategy, digitalization and innovation strategy, as well as product diversification within the destination.

Among these, diversification stands out as a leading strategic direction, encouraging the development of a multilayered, adaptive, and sustainable tourism product tailored to the diversity of tourist preferences, seasonal characteristics, and market fragmentation. It provides opportunities for introducing new forms of experience, expanding target markets, and increasing the destination's added value.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of the strategic approach to diversification, visualizing the interrelationships among four main components – resource base, market orientation, managerial mechanisms, and tourist experience.

These components form the logical foundation for sustainable, coordinated, and efficient development of the tourism product within the destination and function as an analytical tool for strategic planning and management of the tourism offer.



***Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Diversification in Tourism***

Adapted from: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit  
(Partale, K., Partale, A., 2022)

The conceptual framework of the strategic approach to tourism product diversification includes four interconnected components that outline the foundation for sustainable destination management. The first component defines the tourism destination as a targeted entity with clearly delineated geographical and functional boundaries, facilitating resource coordination, identity building, and effective governance. The second component emphasizes the need for shared goals and interests among all stakeholders – tourists, local authorities, businesses, and communities – through the formulation of a common vision, wherein tourism is also regarded as a means to improve quality of life. The third component focuses on the

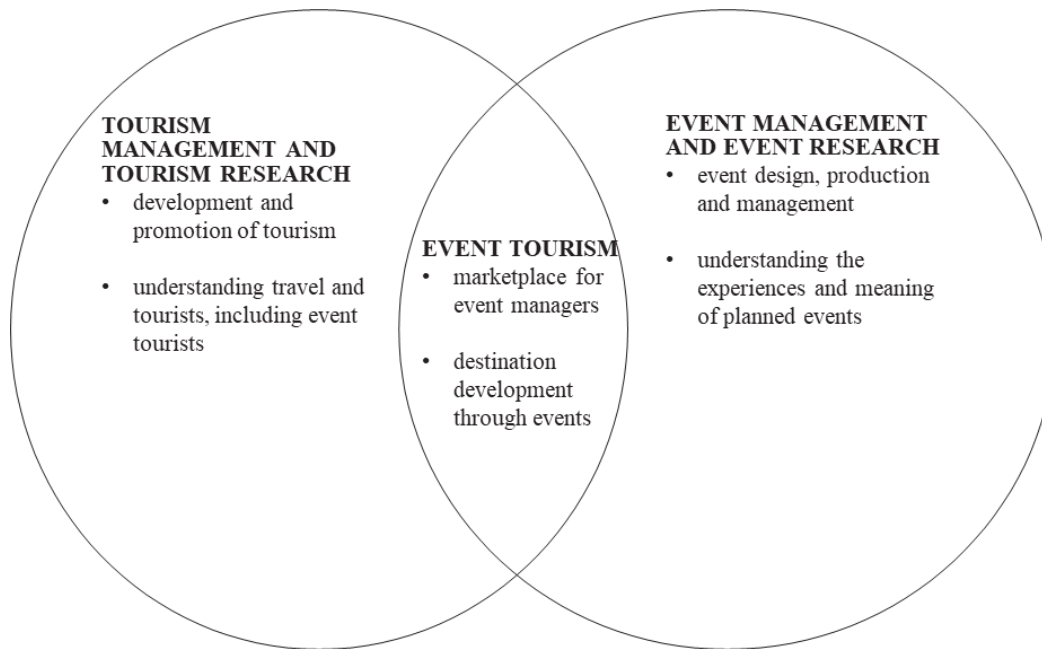
project principles necessary for effective diversification: multifunctionality of products, utilization of regional resources, and sustainable, responsible management. The fourth component relates to the key competencies that the destination must develop, including managerial and innovation capacity, as well as effective knowledge management.

Taken as a whole, the conceptual framework affirms the understanding that diversification is not an isolated marketing tactic but an integrated management strategy supporting economic growth, social welfare, and sustainable development of tourism destinations.

**The third section** of the first chapter discusses tourism product diversification through event organization, which is established as a strategic tool to increase destination appeal and promote sustainable tourism development. Organized events – whether cultural, musical, sporting, or gastronomic – attract new visitors and stimulate tourist flows, especially during off-peak periods. The ability of events to generate tourist motivation and flows has led to the formation and establishment of the concept of “event tourism.”

Figure 2 illustrates the intersection and network of interrelationships arising between tourism and event planning, comprising the two fields of tourism management and event management. The central part highlights event tourism as the result of interaction and synergy between these two areas.

Event tourism emerges in response to the growing importance of events for the tourist experience and gradually takes shape as a specialized form of tourism, including cultural, sporting, festive, and business events. According to Getz (2008), it represents a synergy between tourism and event management, where experience, logistics, and thematic content are combined into a unified service. In this context, events are established as a powerful tool for creating attractions, reducing seasonality, and enhancing the destination’s image.



***Figure 2. The Role of Event Tourism in the Interrelationship Between Tourism and Events***

Adapted from: Donald Getz (Getz, Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research, 2008)

The strategic potential of events to generate tourist flows and function as a tool for sustainable destination development forms the basis of the present study.

In summary of the information presented in **Chapter One**, the following **conclusions** have been drawn:

**First**, tourism activity is spatially bound to territorial units where natural and anthropogenic resources, the tourism industry, infrastructure, and local administration interact. This forms a functional and managerial whole – the destination – which serves as the primary platform for the creation and delivery of the tourism product. The relationship between resource potential and the possibilities for strategic positioning of the destination through an integrated tourism approach has been clarified.

**Second**, the tourism product should be viewed as a holistic experience, encompassing not only a collection of goods and services but also emotional,

cultural, and social elements that reflect the destination's authenticity and its impact on tourists. This enriched understanding builds upon classical definitions, emphasizing the role of experiences, local identity, and cultural dialogue in the formation of the tourism product.

**Third,** diversification is established as a key management strategy for enhancing the sustainability and competitiveness of tourism destinations. It enables adaptation to dynamic market conditions, expansion of tourism offerings, and the introduction of innovations through new forms of tourism and thematic experiences. Its role as a complex mechanism for balanced development, attraction of new tourist segments, and efficient resource utilization has been elucidated.

**Fourth,** organized events have been identified as a crucial instrument for diversifying the tourism product, achieving not only the overcoming of seasonality but also the sustainable development of the destination. They create added value through cultural representation, economic activation of local communities, and the building of a recognizable tourism brand. The theoretical rationale reveals the capacity of event tourism to transform tourism supply by creating authentic and value-oriented experiences.

**Chapter Two** is dedicated to the development of a model for evaluating events in the context of the tourism product, with an emphasis on their role as a tool for the strategic diversification of destinations. The development of a Model for Diversifying the Tourism Product by Organizing Events reinforces the understanding that events effectively contribute to harnessing tourism potential, reducing seasonality, and enhancing resilience to market fluctuations.

**The first section** of the chapter provides an assessment of the destination's resource base and its suitability for organizing events within the tourism offer. Based on existing scientific typologies, an adapted classification of tourism resources has been developed, encompassing natural, cultural, and social elements applicable to the formation of a diversified tourism product.

The study applies an ideographic approach that enables an in-depth and differentiated description of the resources, emphasizing their unique characteristics and competitive advantages. By combining qualitative and quantitative assessments oriented towards natural and social indicators, both natural and anthropogenic components of the resource base are covered.

This approach involves the identification, classification, and expert evaluation of resources within a specific destination to determine their potential for inclusion in a sustainable, event-based tourism product. The possibility of constructing an interpretative typology supported by measurable scales renders this approach an effective tool for strategic territorial planning in tourism.

Considering the central role of resources in the creation and realization of the tourism product, the study has developed a five-level evaluation scale that provides a systematic, expert-based method for determining the tourism potential of each resource. The scale accounts for varying levels of development-from low to exceptional value-taking into consideration accessibility, infrastructural provision, degree of recognition, and opportunities for inclusion in event initiatives.

The application of this scale ensures objectivity and comparability, while simultaneously creating a foundation for informed strategic decision-making in the design of events within the tourism product. The assessment of resources through this instrument constitutes the first stage of the model, through which opportunities for creating attractive, sustainable, and brand-relevant events are identified.

In **the second section** of Chapter Two, event organization is examined as a form of tourism product diversification. Events are not viewed merely as isolated activities, but rather as a strategic tool with multidimensional impact on the development of tourist destinations. They influence a broad spectrum of factors-social, cultural, economic, environmental, and political-by creating opportunities for sustainable growth, the development of a diversified tourism product portfolio, and increased competitiveness.

Organized events contribute to meeting social needs, stimulating investments, revitalizing traditions, strengthening identity, and building a recognizable public image of the destination (Gursoy, Kim & Uysal, 2004; Andersson & Getz, 2009). From an economic perspective, events can activate the local business environment, increase employment in hospitality and related sectors, and generate repeated tourist interest, thus extending average stay duration and encouraging return visits.

The positive effects of events are most often manifested in the long term-through improved destination image, increased tourist arrivals, and the formation of a loyal visitor base. At the same time, there are potential negative impacts-such as social tension, environmental pressure, excessive commodification, or insufficient social responsibility-especially when strategic planning is lacking.

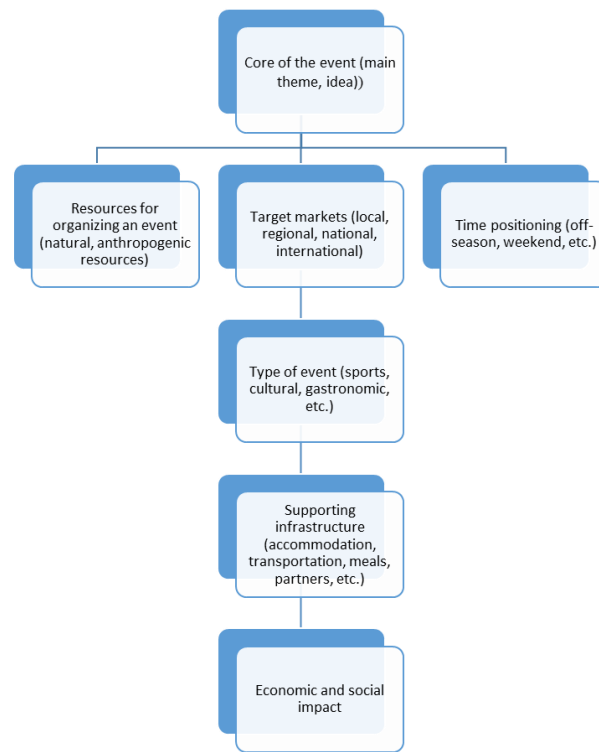
For this reason, the evaluation of events should include multidimensional indicators-economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and political impacts.

In **the third section** of Chapter Two, the developed Model for Diversifying the Tourism Product by Organizing Events is presented. This model represents an original conceptual framework proposed by the author, integrating key elements from contemporary management, marketing, and resource-based analytical approaches. It is based on the understanding that effective diversification of the tourism product requires a strategic, integrated, and multi-component approach aimed at building an event portfolio tailored to diverse interests, target markets, and seasonal dynamics.

The proposed model consists of seven interconnected stages that cover the entire event lifecycle-from concept development to impact assessment (Figure 3):

Stage 1: Event Core. This stage involves defining the concept or theme of the event. It should be original, authentic, and closely linked to the destination's identity, reflecting its cultural, natural, or historical features. A well-formulated event core enhances tourists' emotional engagement and fosters long-term loyalty.

Stage 2: Microenvironment. This involves an analysis of the resource base—natural, cultural, and historical—in order to ensure alignment between the event and the local context. The event does not merely use resources as a backdrop but interprets and builds upon them, reinforcing authenticity and a sense of local identity.



***Figure 3. Model for Diversifying the Tourism Product by Organizing Events***

*Source: Author's interpretation*

Stage 3: Target Markets and Tourist Segments. Specific audiences targeted by the event are identified, including by geography, interests, age, or travel style. Precise targeting supports effective marketing and enhances the event's competitiveness.

Stage 4: Temporal Positioning. The optimal time period for hosting the event is selected, taking into account seasonality, the calendar of other events, and



infrastructure capacity. Well-planned temporal positioning contributes to the extension of the tourist season and the optimal use of available resources.

Stage 5: Event Typology. The type of event-cultural, sports, music, gastronomic, etc.-is determined based on the destination's profile and the interests of target groups. Choosing an appropriate format facilitates logistical planning, marketing positioning, and the achievement of strategic objectives.

Stage 6: Assessment of Supporting Infrastructure. An evaluation is conducted of the availability and condition of key infrastructural and logistical components-accommodation, transport, food services, safety, accessibility-as well as institutional support. A well-developed infrastructure is a prerequisite for the smooth execution of the event and a positive visitor experience.

Stage 7: Evaluation through KPI Analysis. A quantitative and qualitative assessment of the event's impact is carried out using a system of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). These encompass economic, tourism-related, social, cultural, and marketing effects, and support result tracking, informed decision-making, and accountability to stakeholders.

Each stage in the model represents an essential and complementary component of the system for planning, implementing, and evaluating events used as a tool for diversifying the tourism product. Collectively, they form a logical framework through which a destination can develop a sustainable, recognizable, and economically effective event-based tourism product.

However, the application of the model is not an end in itself-achieving tangible results requires a systematic and well-reasoned evaluation at each stage, aligned with strategic goals, local specificities, and the needs of target audiences. The evaluation process serves three main functions:

- It facilitates comparability between different events and destinations;

- It supports improvements and adaptations by identifying weaknesses;
- It ensures accountability regarding effectiveness and contribution to sustainable development.

To this end, the study introduces a five-point evaluation scale ranging from 1 (very low level of compliance) to 5 (excellent level, characterized by high innovation, integration, and impact). This scale provides an objective diagnostic tool and enables tracking of developments over time, serving as a foundation for the informational and strategic management of event tourism.

To validate the author's thesis-that organizing events diversifies a destination's tourism product and leads to positive outcomes for the local economy and community-a **KPI (Key Performance Indicators) analysis** is proposed. In the context of evaluating the effects of organized events, KPIs serve to measure the effectiveness, impact, and success of a given event for the destination. These indicators represent both quantitative and qualitative metrics aimed at assessing the achieved results in relation to the predefined objectives. They do not measure the processes themselves, but rather the impact of those processes, thus providing a reliable tool for strategic decision-making.

The system includes indicators that reflect the economic contribution, tourism activity, social engagement, cultural authenticity, and marketing recognition of the destination. In this way, it allows for tracking the extent to which events contribute to extending the season, increasing length of stay, improving visitor satisfaction, and strengthening the destination's brand.

In summary of the findings presented in **Chapter Two**, the following **conclusions** have been drawn:

**First**, the assessment of tourism resources is a key starting point in the planning of a diversified tourism product. Within the scope of the study, an adapted model for the typologization and evaluation of resources has been developed, based

on an ideographic approach. This model provides an analytical foundation for identifying elements of the natural and anthropogenic environment with the potential to be integrated into event-based initiatives, demonstrating a high degree of alignment with the local context.

**Second**, the developed Model for Diversification of the Tourism Product by Organizing Events presents a systematic, multi-stage, and adaptive approach. The model integrates both conceptual and practical components-ranging from defining the thematic core of the event, through profiling target markets and analyzing supporting infrastructure, to evaluating impact through KPIs. Each stage is interlinked and contributes to the sustainability and strategic positioning of the destination.

**Third**, events are established as an effective tool for the economic and social activation of tourism destinations. They help extend the tourist season, stimulate local entrepreneurship, foster social engagement, and strengthen cultural identity. This is particularly important for regions with limited or highly seasonal tourist flows.

**Fourth**, evaluating the effectiveness of event impact requires the use of a system of key performance indicators (KPIs) that allow for objective monitoring and analysis. The study outlines four groups of indicators – economic, tourism-related, socio-cultural, and marketing. KPI analysis provides a reliable foundation for validating the contribution of events to the diversification of the tourism product and the sustainable development of the destination.

**Chapter Three** focuses on the empirical application of the developed model for diversifying the tourism product by organizing events, with a specific focus on Svishtov Municipality. The aim of the analysis is to assess the state of resource availability and the extent to which the tourism potential is being utilized, through a situational analysis, application of the event-based diversification model, and measurement of the effectiveness of this approach. Emphasis is placed on the development of long-term policies for sustainable tourism growth by integrating a

portfolio approach into destination management and identifying new opportunities for expanding tourism activity.

In the **first section**, a comprehensive situational analysis of the tourism destination of Svishtov is presented, carried out through an integrated approach that includes geographic, ecological, cultural-historical, infrastructural, and event-related parameters. The analysis outlines the current tourism profile of the region and highlights its strengths, weaknesses, and potential opportunities for differentiation and specialization of the tourism product. The evaluation of available resources and the municipality's event calendar is aimed at assessing Svishtov's capacity to position itself as a competitive tourism destination with a strong cultural and event-oriented identity.

According to the National Register of Tourism Events and Festivals maintained by the Ministry of Tourism (<http://rta.tourism.government.bg/TFRegister.aspx>), 21 events of various scales and levels of significance are registered in Svishtov Municipality. Among them are internationally recognized events such as the International Contest for Short Humorous Story "Aleko", the International Biennale for Children's Drawings, the Folklore Festival "Folklore Spring" ("*Folkloren Izvor*") held in the village of Tsarevets, and the Historical Reenactment Festival "Eagle on the Danube" ("*Orel na Dunav*"). The national cultural calendar includes the "Little Stars for Lora" ("*Zvezditsi za Lora*") Festival, the "Yanko Mustakov" Choral Celebrations, and the National Poetry Contest "Svishtov Vineyards" ("*Svishtovski Loznitsi*"). In addition, a number of regional and local events contribute to the preservation and strengthening of local cultural identity-such as the "Charisma of the Horo" ("*Harizmata na horoto*") Festival and the Catholic Gathering in the village of Oresh.

The results of the situational analysis show that Svishtov has a significant and diverse tourism resource base-a combination of natural assets, rich cultural and historical heritage, vibrant cultural life, and an active event calendar. This foundation, combined with adequate infrastructure and geographic accessibility,

offers a real opportunity for the development of a sustainable, competitive, and diversified tourism product that meets modern tourism demand and ensures the long-term development of the destination.

As analyzed in **the second section**, Svishtov's tourism resources have been systematized into two main categories-natural and anthropogenic, to achieve greater analytical clarity when assessing their potential for event-related use. Natural resources include geographic and biological elements that create conditions for open-air events, nature trails, and environmentally focused activities. Anthropogenic resources encompass cultural-historical and socio-economic assets that not only possess high symbolic value but also provide organizational and human support for the realization of events with varying thematic orientations.

A total of 30 resources have been identified, distributed among 11 natural and 19 anthropogenic sites. This typology reveals significant opportunities for integrating local resource potential into a diversified tourism product, laying the groundwork for the sustainable development of event tourism and the enrichment of the visitor experience in the destination.

**Table 1.**

**Classification of Key Tourism Resources in Svishtov Municipality**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Number of resources</b>	<b>Share (%)</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
Exceptional resource of strategic importance	2	6.7%	4.75
Well-developed resource	13	43.3%	~4.04
Moderate potential	14	46.7%	~3.26
Low potential and limited functionality	1	3.3%	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>-</b>

In the category of *exceptional resources of strategic importance*, which includes assets with an average score of 4.75, fall two of the highest-rated tourism

resources: the architectural heritage from the Bulgarian National Revival period and the Baroque façades, as well as the overall tourism infrastructure and hotel base. These assets demonstrate a high degree of uniqueness, well-developed infrastructure, and strong potential to serve as venues for events of national and international significance.

The next level-*well-developed resources*-includes **13 assets** with an average score of approximately 4.04. These are characterized by a balanced combination of attractiveness, recognizability, and logistical suitability. This group encompasses museums, cultural centers, community centers (chitalishta), cultural institutions, festivals, and natural sites that are either already functioning as tourism assets or exhibit a high degree of adaptability for future use.

The largest number of resources-14 in total-are classified under the category of *moderate potential*, with an average score of around 3.26. These are sites with partially developed functional and communication characteristics. They are known within the region but have not yet been fully integrated into the local tourism system.

In the lowest classification group, there is only one resource, evaluated as having *low potential and limited functionality*, with an average score of 2.5. This is the municipal cultural calendar, which currently shows a low level of integration into the public sphere, limited promotion, and a lack of clearly structured communication with external audiences.

In summary, 50% of the evaluated resources fall into the categories of well-developed or strategically significant, forming a solid foundation for building destination identity through event-based formats. At the same time, a considerable share of the remaining resources can be further developed through interdisciplinary partnerships, including collaborations with cultural institutions, educational centers, NGOs, and local businesses. In this regard, Svishtov Municipality has the potential to organize a wide range of events - from cultural heritage festivals, Roman-themed days, and historical reenactments, to agro-ecological weekends, educational camps, as well as forums and international meetings involving the Danube and Balkan

regions. Such a program could position Svishtov as a sustainable cultural tourism destination with high added value on both national and international levels.

**Table 2.**  
**Resource-Event Matrix in Svishtov Municipality**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Event Type</b>	<b>Target Group</b>	<b>Expected Effect</b>
Historical and archaeological sites (Nove, Kaleto, churches, museums)	Historical reenactments, musical evenings, museum-based festivals	Cultural tourists, families, students	Image enhancement, season extension, activation of cultural tourism
Cultural heritage and folklore (festivals, traditions, crafts)	Folklore festivals, ethnographic markets, workshops	Tradition enthusiasts, senior tourists, cultural groups	Preservation and promotion of intangible heritage
Danube River and surrounding natural areas	Regattas, weekend eco-festivals, fishing events, camping weekends	Active young people, eco-tourists, sports clubs	Diversification of the tourism product, active off-season tourism
Higher education institution and educational tradition	Student festivals, scientific conferences, debates, exhibitions	Students, academic communities, young people	Enhancement of the city's academic image, extension of stay
Local wine production and gastronomy	Wine and cheese festival, tasting weekends, culinary demonstrations	Gourmet tourists, wine enthusiasts, culinary bloggers	Promotion of local production and culinary tourism

The analysis of the table clearly reveals the profiling of the tourism resources in Svishtov Municipality in relation to the types of suitable events, target audiences, and the expected effects of their implementation. Structuring events around existing resource clusters creates an opportunity to apply the event-based diversification model to the tourism product.

In **the third section**, the Model for Diversifying the Tourism Product by Organizing Events was tested in the context of Svishtov Municipality. Given the municipality's rich but uneven cultural calendar, the selection of events for in-depth

analysis was not mechanical. Out of more than 30 events listed in the annual cultural calendar, six events were selected that meet several key criteria: actual tourist attendance, thematic and format diversity, seasonal distribution, and potential impact on the destination's brand. These events—"Folklore Spring", "Svishtov Vineyards", "Eagle on the Danube", "Little Stars for Lora", "Café-Theatres" and "Charisma of the Horo"—form the basis for applying the model and allow for comparisons across different types of events: folklore, historical, musical, theatrical, and civic.

Each event was analyzed through the lens of the model by identifying its thematic core (central idea and uniqueness), the micro-environment (territorial and cultural context), target markets (tourist segments), temporal positioning (season, frequency), type of event (according to international classification), and the supporting infrastructure (logistics, accommodation, accessibility, institutional backing).

This holistic approach made it possible to trace not only how the events function, but also what exactly they diversify—whether it be the season, the audience, the type of experiences, or the tourist motivations (see Table 3).

**Table 3.**

**Model for Diversifying the Tourism Product by Organizing Events for  
Key Events in Svishtov Municipality**

<b>Event Name</b>	<b>Core Description</b>	<b>Micro-environment</b>	<b>Target Markets</b>	<b>Type of Event</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Infrastructure</b>
<b>Folklore Spring (Folkloren Izvor)</b>	National folklore festival focusing on traditional music and dances	Tsarevets Village – traditional architecture and cultural environment	National and international tourists, ethno- and culturally oriented audiences	Cultural and festival	August – off-peak tourist season	Partnership ensured by municipality, cultural institutions, and volunteer teams
<b>Svishtov Vineyards (Svishtovs ki Loznitsi)</b>	City celebrations with cultural, entertainment, and music programs	City of Svishtov – open spaces and historic city center	Local, regional, and national tourists	Cultural-urban event	September – extension of the active	Good urban planning and access to accommodation and dining



					tourist season	
<b>Eagle on the Danube (Orel na Dunav)</b>	Historical reenactment and ancient heritage (Roman legions, camps, and demonstrations)	Ancient city of Nove near Svishtov	Niche tourists, history and archaeology enthusiasts	Historical-cultural event	June – pre-peak season	Limited but compensated by strong theme and partnerships with historical clubs
<b>Little Stars for Lora (Zvezditsi na Lora)</b>	National contest for young pop performers	Community centers and cultural institutions in Svishtov	Young talents, their families, teachers, music experts	Competition-youth event	April – off tourist season	Support from cultural institutions and community centers, basic hotel network available
<b>Café-Theatres (Kafe-teatri)</b>	Non-traditional theatrical performances in cafes and alternative venues	Small stages and establishments in the city center	Local residents, students, theatre audiences	Stage-educational event	March – off tourist season	Low infrastructure dependence – held in existing establishments and community centers
<b>Charisma of the Horo (Harizmat na Horoto)</b>	Festival of Bulgarian folk dances with participation of schools and ensembles	Central part of Svishtov – open stage	Folklore-oriented youth and tourists, dance groups	Folklore-educational event	June – beginning of summer season	Public support, stage, and access to services in the city center

In the KPI analysis, which represents the final stage of the Model, an evaluation is conducted to assess the extent to which the predefined objectives have been achieved (see Table 4).

**Table 4.**

**Evaluation of Events Based on the Achievement of Set Objectives**

Event Name	Increase in Tourist Flow	Visitor Engagement	Economic Impact on Local Business	Destination Brand Building	Average Score per Indicator
<b>Folklore Spring (Folkloren Izvor)</b>	5 (over 5,000 visitors)	5 (high cultural authenticity, local participation)	4 (moderate income and overnight stays)	5 (recognizable folklore festival)	4.75

<b>Svishtov Vineyards (Svishtovski Loznitsi)</b>	5 (over 5,000 visitors)	5 (festival with active community participation)	5 (high income from overnight stays)	5 (official celebration with image value)	5
<b>Eagle on the Danube (Orel na Dunav)</b>	4 (2,000–3,000 visitors)	4 (participation of historical clubs and audience)	4 (good contribution despite limited infrastructure)	4 (branding through historical identity)	4
<b>Little Stars for Lora (Zvezditsi na Lora)</b>	4 (2,000–3,000 participants)	4 (engagement through contest participation)	3 (low, with limited duration of stay)	3 (youth cultural orientation)	3.5
<b>Café-Theatres (Kafe-teatri)</b>	3 (around 2,000 participants)	4 (involvement of local audience and artists)	5 (high return on investment with low costs)	3 (local theatre brand)	3.75
<b>Charisma of the Horo (Harizmata na Horoto)</b>	4 (3,000–4,000 participants)	4 (involvement of dance groups)	3 (limited effect, short stay)	4 (folklore identity for youth audience)	3.75

The analysis shows that the events organized in Svishtov Municipality demonstrate a high level of **achievement of the predefined objectives**, with particularly strong impact in the following areas: **(1) increase in tourist arrivals, (2) enhanced visitor engagement, (3) stimulation of the local economy, and (4) development of a recognizable destination brand.**

Examining the data from Table 5 in the context of the diversification of Svishtov Municipality's tourism product through event organization enables a deeper analytical interpretation of the cultural initiatives and their role in the sustainable development and strategic positioning of the destination at both national and regional levels.

**Table 5.**  
**Evaluation Scale of the Model Diversifying the Tourism Product by Organizing Events in Svishtov Municipality**

<b>Event Name</b>	<b>Core</b>	<b>Micro-environment</b>	<b>Target Markets</b>	<b>Type of Event</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>KPI Achieved Goals</b>	<b>Average Score</b>
Folklore Spring	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.75	<b>4.82</b>
Svishtov Vineyards	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	<b>4.43</b>

Eagle on the Danube	5	4	4	5	4	3	4	<b>4.14</b>
Little Stars for Lora	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.5	<b>3.93</b>
Café-Theatres	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.75	<b>3.11</b>
Charisma of the Horo	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.75	<b>3.96</b>

The results of the analysis indicate that the highest effectiveness among the events in Svishtov Municipality is demonstrated by the national festival "Folkloren Izvor," which received an average score of 4.82. Its distinctive features include a clearly defined thematic core, strong connection with the local cultural environment, well-targeted audiences, and a high level of local community participation. Held outside the peak tourist season, the festival significantly contributes to the extension of the tourist cycle, increased attendance, and the building of a sustainable brand based on intangible cultural heritage.

The next most significant event is "Svishtovski Lozhnitsi," with an average score of 4.43. Although it has a more general thematic profile, it is distinguished by its deep connection with local tradition, broad public recognition, and active municipal support. This event plays an important role in strengthening the internal tourist flow and reinforcing the cultural identity of the destination.

The data analysis shows that events in Svishtov Municipality make a substantial contribution to increasing tourist flow, especially during the summer and autumn seasons. Local community participation and visitor satisfaction indicate a high level of engagement. Although there is no direct increase in municipal budget revenues, the events have a positive impact on local businesses. Moreover, they significantly contribute to the formation and consolidation of Svishtov's destination brand identity. Effects on the municipality's budget revenues are limited, and public awareness beyond the participants remains insufficient.

In **the fourth section**, the evaluation of the effectiveness of event organization as a tool for tourism product diversification in Svishtov Municipality is presented. This evaluation is based on the application of key performance

indicators (KPIs), which cover four main groups – economic, tourist, socio-cultural, and marketing indicators.

For each event, an individual effectiveness assessment was conducted, using data from the last year of its occurrence. For five of the leading events held in the municipality in 2024 ("Folklore Spring", "Svishtov Vineyards", "Little Stars for Lora", "Charisma of the Horo" and "Café-Theatres"), current empirical and survey data were used. For the festival "Eagle on the Danube", which was removed from the municipal cultural calendar after 2023, the assessment was based on data from its last year held in Svishtov.

An important clarification in interpreting the economic results is the possibility of distortion in assessing the economic efficiency and return on investment (ROI) of the events. This is because in most cases, Svishtov Municipality covers the organizational costs without generating direct revenues from participants. The primary economic effect is concentrated on the local businesses – hotels, restaurants, and retail establishments – with reported revenues based on officially declared accommodation data. For the municipality itself, an indicator of indirect economic contribution remains the revenues from tourist fees, which, although modest in absolute terms, create conditions for sustainable development.

• ***Economic indicators***: The average score in this group ranges from 2.8 ("Eagle on the Danube") to 3.8 ("Café-Theatres"). Although all events report a high number of visitors (score 5), accommodation revenues and ROI are among the lowest scores (score 1) for most events. This is due to the municipality financing the events but not generating direct income from participants, and the officially declared revenues from tourist fees being low.



**Figure 4. KPI Evaluation of Events in Svishtov Municipality**

•**Tourism indicators:** This group shows moderate to low effectiveness.

The highest average scores are achieved by "Svishtov Vineyards" (3.5) and "Folklore Spring" (3.25), while the other events fall within the range of 2.5–3.0. The indicator "number of overnight stays" shows the weakest performance, indicating that most events do not encourage extended stays typical of sustainable tourist interest.

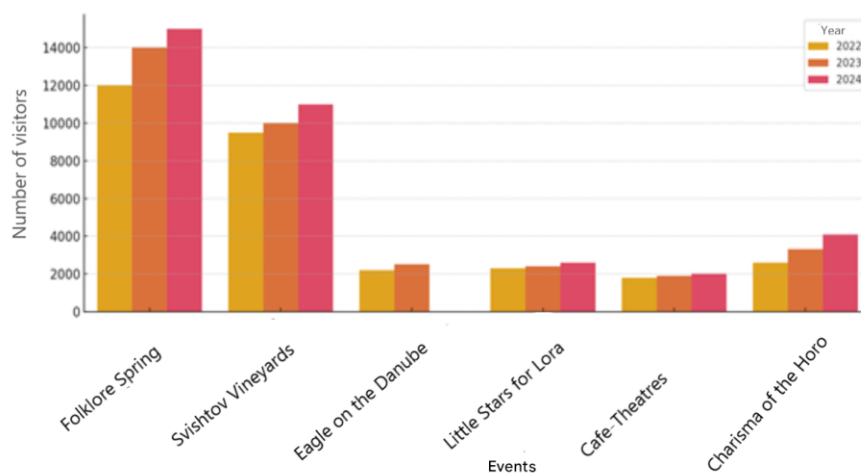
•**Social and cultural indicators:** This group exhibits the highest values, with "Folklore Spring" and "Svishtov Vineyards" achieving an average score of 4.5, and "Eagle on the Danube" scoring 4.0. Strong engagement of the local community, a high degree of cultural authenticity, and participation of craftsmen and artists reinforce the identity of these events, positioning them as tools for cultural preservation. Lower scores for "Little Stars for Lora" and "Café-Theatres" reflect their more limited socio-cultural impact.

•**Marketing indicators:** Results in this group vary significantly – from 4.33 for "Folklore Spring" to 2.00 for "Café-Theatres". High activity on social media and

good engagement of partners and sponsors enhance the impact of the folklore and urban festivals. For the other events, limited media visibility and low sponsor interest hinder the establishment of a sustainable event brand.

The results align with the evaluations based on the Diversification Model, with "Folklore Spring" and "Svishtov Vineyards" once again standing out as leading events with sustainable tourism development potential. They combine high cultural value, strong marketing positioning, and economic benefits for the local community. Although "Eagle on the Danube" has a strong core and niche focus, it suffers from limited infrastructure and withdrawal of municipal support. Events such as "Little Stars for Lora" and "Café-Theatres" mainly serve local and educational functions, without significant economic or tourism effects.

To determine the cumulative effect and sustainable contribution of event tourism to tourist demand, economic impact, and the consolidation of Svishtov's image as an attractive tourist destination, an analysis of tourist activity in Svishtov Municipality for the period 2020–2024 was conducted, based on survey and empirical data.

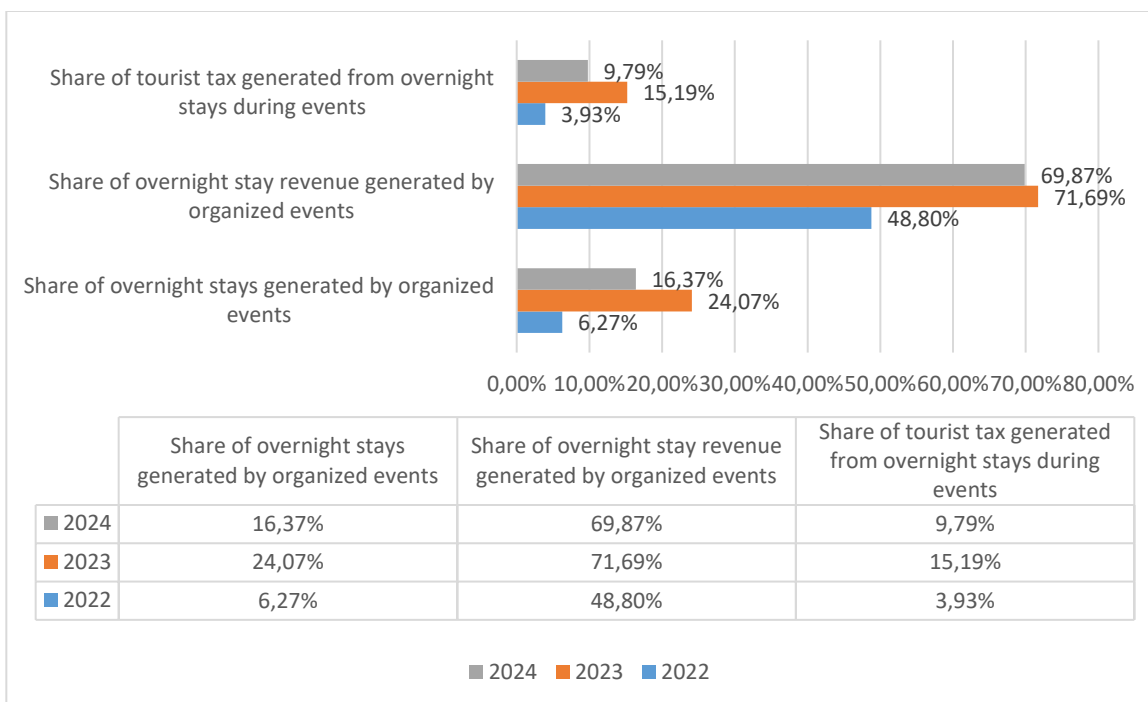


***Figure 5. Comparison of Visitor Numbers by Events for the Period 2022 – 2024***

The data clearly highlight two leading events in terms of the “number of visitors” indicator - “Folklore Spring” and “Svishtov Vineyards”, which form the core of the event calendar in Svishtov Municipality and play a key role in stimulating tourist activity. “Folklore Spring” attracts thousands of participants and spectators from both domestic and international audiences, establishing itself as an event of international significance that unites traditional music, dance, and customs. The broad geographical reach of visitors and the high level of engagement from the local community make it an event with a multiplying effect on the local economy and the destination’s image.

On the other hand, “Svishtov Vineyards” carries the charge of a deeply rooted urban tradition, combining elements of culture, folklore, and winemaking. The event has a sustained presence in local identity and draws a wide audience from the region and other parts of the country. Its high attendance is attributed to good logistical support, its central position in the cultural calendar, and active institutional backing. Both events function as effective tools for extending the tourist season, activating local business, and increasing the recognition of Svishtov as an event destination.

Data from Figure 6 show a clear upward trend in the economic significance of the organized events over the period analyzed. The strongest contribution is recorded under the indicator “share of revenues from overnight stays,” where events accounted for 48.80% of total revenues in 2022, 71.69% in 2023, and 69.87% in 2024.



***Figure 6. Share of Organized Events in the Main Economic Indicators for Tourism Reporting in Svishtov Municipality for the Period 2022-2024***

The contribution to the indicator "share of overnight stays from organized events" is manifested on a moderate scale but with a distinct growth trend. It increases from 6.27% in 2022 to 24.07% in 2023, followed by a stabilization at 16.37% in 2024. The relative share of tourist tax revenues generated during events follows a similar pattern. It records its lowest value in 2022 (3.93%), when the reporting system was not yet fully synchronized with the tourism activation. Subsequently, a significant increase is observed – reaching 15.19% in 2023, followed by a slight decrease to 9.79% in 2024.

The analysis of marketing indicators, derived from survey research and aggregated data on visits to tourist sites in the Municipality of Svishtov, clearly confirms the significant impact of organized events on the destination's popularity and image. All major events in the municipality - including "Folklore Spring", "Svishtov Vineyards", "Eagle on the Danube", "Little Stars for Lora", "Café-



Theatres” and “Charisma of the Horo” – are linked to clearly defined objectives aimed at building brand identity, promoting the destination, and increasing attendance at cultural sites.

Data analysis shows that organized events not only generate tourist flow but also create a significant economic contribution. The share of revenues from overnight stays during events, as well as the increased income from tourist tax, testify to the growing effectiveness of this type of tourism. To more fully leverage this potential, better integration of local businesses and encouragement of longer stays are necessary in order to increase the added value for the destination.

**The fifth section** outlines measures and recommendations for diversifying the tourism product through event organization at the municipal level. Despite its considerable cultural-historical resources and active event and cultural calendar, the tourism sector in the Municipality of Svishtov remains underutilized due to existing structural and managerial challenges. The main problems focus on the absence of a comprehensive marketing strategy and weak digitalization, which hinder effective positioning of the destination and its presentation to external audiences. The municipality’s recognition as a tourist destination is limited, while digital and communication tools are poorly developed, outdated, or completely lacking. This complicates orientation for the modern tourist, who relies on mobile applications, booking platforms, and visual identification elements.

In addition to technological deficits, the issue of insufficient partnership with sectoral organizations and tour operators is clearly evident, complicating the inclusion of Svishtov in national tourist routes and cultural packages. Despite its diversity and richness, the destination’s resources are poorly socialized – many do not offer engaging tourist experiences and are perceived as passive cultural sites. Furthermore, the lack of involvement from local businesses limits opportunities for sustainable tourism development.

Svishtov continues to be perceived primarily as an academic center rather than an established tourist destination. This reinforces the seasonality of visits and

reduces the chances of building a recognizable tourism brand. Nevertheless, Svishtov has strategic advantages that can be activated through targeted and complementary measures.

The first step is the creation of an integrated cultural-tourism strategy aligned with the Municipality's Integrated Development Plan, including specific goals, indicators, and priorities. The second direction involves developing a digital platform and visual identity for events, alongside modern marketing practices. Parallel to this, infrastructure modernization and ensuring logistical support for holding events outdoors and in non-standard environments should be undertaken. Public-private partnerships can stimulate the local economy, while participation in cross-border initiatives can expand the destination's market reach.

Event tourism in Svishtov can become a key tool for diversification and sustainable growth if managed through a strategic model with measurable indicators (KPIs), linked to the real activity of the local community, businesses, and cultural institutions. Introducing a system for evaluation and monitoring allows tracking of impact, optimization of resources, and sustainable development of the destination.

In summary of the findings presented in **Chapter Three**, the following **conclusions** have been drawn:

**First**, the situational analysis of tourism resources in the Municipality of Svishtov revealed a high concentration of cultural-historical assets and active event practices, which form a stable foundation for developing a diversified tourism product. The application of an ideographic approach and a standardized evaluation scale allowed differentiation of sites by significance, accessibility, popularity, and suitability for event initiatives.

**Second**, the piloting of the Tourism Product Diversification Model through events demonstrated its practical applicability as a strategic management tool for the destination. The model integrates conceptual and analytical elements, successfully linking the resource potential of the destination with the impact assessment of events through KPI indicators.

**Third,** the comparative analysis of key municipal events highlighted events such as “Folklore Spring” and “Svishtov Vineyards” as best practices, distinguished by a high degree of compliance with criteria for sustainability, cultural identity, and economic return. These are established as leading events with high strategic value for the destination’s development.

**Fourth,** the model confirms the role of event tourism as an effective means of overcoming seasonality, activating new target groups, and extending the length of stay. Positive effects on cultural services consumption and increased local engagement have been noted, especially outside peak months.

**Fifth,** alongside the potential, the analysis revealed significant limitations - weak digitalization, insufficient coordination among stakeholders, and lack of strategic marketing. The proposed measures outline directions for improvement that can contribute to establishing Svishtov as a sustainable and recognizable cultural-tourism destination in the regional and cross-border context.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the research conducted in Chapters One, Two, and Three confirm the achievement of the main aim and objectives of the dissertation, as well as validate the formulated research thesis.

The obtained results demonstrate the applicability of the analytical approach and confirm its adaptability to the conditions of medium-scale destinations with a specific tourism profile and cultural density.

The dissertation outlines concrete opportunities for transforming the tourism offering under conditions where experience, culture, and local engagement are the leading factors for the competitiveness of destinations.

#### **IV. OVERVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC AND APPLIED CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE DISSERTATION**

1. Enrichment of the theoretical framework of the tourism product and event tourism through conceptual systematization and critical analysis of leading scientific concepts, refinement of key terms, and formulation of an original definition focused on opportunities for diversification through events within the context of integrated tourism management.

2. Development of a theoretical-methodological framework for the strategic management of events in a destination, resulting in a model for diversifying the tourism product by organizing events. The model is supplemented by a “resources – events” matrix, a portfolio approach, and a system of key performance indicators (KPIs).

3. Based on empirical testing of the proposed model in a real destination environment - the Municipality of Svishtov - a situational analysis and classification using typological and ideographic approaches were conducted to assess tourism resources and events with potential to generate tourism demand, as well as their impact on destination development.

4. Development and application of an efficiency measurement system through KPI analysis as a tool to evaluate the impact of organized events on the diversification of the tourism product within the destination.

5. Formulation of practical guidelines for sustainable destination development through event diversification, improved event management, and effective destination positioning, applicable to the Municipality of Svishtov and other destinations with a similar profile.

## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE TOPIC OF THE DISSERTATION

### Monograph Chapter Indexed in Scopus:

1. Ilieva, L.M., Procenko, Y.V., Todorova, L.K., Spasova, S.P., Chumikova, S.Y. (2022). Innovative Solutions Through Digitalization of the Tourism Business as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. In: Bogoviz, A.V., Popkova, E.G. (eds) *Digital Technologies and Institutions for Sustainable Development*. Advances in Science, Technology & Innovation. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-04289-8\\_79](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-04289-8_79)

### Articles:

1. Ilieva, L., Bozhinova, M., Todorova, L., Marinov, M., Ismailov, T., & Spasova, S. (2024). Festivals: an Opportunity for Sustainable Development of Tourism Regions. *Revista De Gestão Social E Ambiental*, 18(11), e09356. <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n11-069>
2. Spasova, S. Diversification of the Tourism Product Through Organized Events, *Annual Almanac "Scientific Research of Doctoral Candidates"* 2024, Issue XVII - 2024, Book 20 - Studies and Articles (forthcoming)

### Conference Papers:

1. Spasova, S. Challenges of Event Organization under COVID-19 Conditions, Proceedings of the Conference *Sustainable Development and Socio-Economic Cohesion in the 21st Century – Trends and Challenges*, Vol. 2, Academic Publishing House "Tsenov," 2021, pp. 796-804, ISBN 978-954-23-2069-2
2. Spasova, S., Ilieva, L. Research on the Potential for Development of Innovative Forms of Tourism in Bulgaria, Proceedings of the Round Table with International Participation *Trade – Scientific Knowledge and Business Reality*, Academic Publishing House "Tsenov," 2021, pp. 265-271, ISBN 978-954-23-2005-0

3. Spasova, S., Ilieva, L. Organizing Events through Established Formal and Informal Networks, Proceedings of the National Round Table *Formal and Informal Innovation Networks*, held on May 27, 2024, at D.A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov, Academic Publishing House "Tsenov", 2024, pp. 131-139, ISBN 978-954-23-2493-5
4. Krastanova, V., Spasova, S. Impact of Festivals on the Hotel Business in Rural Areas, Proceedings of the Round Table Discussion *Theory and Practice for Sustainable Management and Development of Rural Areas in Bulgaria*, held on May 30, 2024, at D.A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov, Academic Publishing House "Tsenov," 2024, pp. 355-361, ISBN 978-954-23-2491-1

**DECLARATION  
OF ORIGINALITY AND AUTHENTICITY**

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In connection with the procedure for awarding the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" under the doctoral program "Economics and Management (Tourism)", I hereby declare that:

1. The results and contributions presented in the dissertation titled “Diversification of the Tourism Product by Organizing Events” are original and have not been derived from research and publications in which I have not participated;

2. The information provided by me in the form of copies of documents and publications, personally prepared reports, and other materials corresponds to objective truth;

3. Scientific results obtained, described, and/or published by other authors are duly and thoroughly cited in the reference list.

This dissertation has not been submitted for obtaining a scientific degree at any other university or research institution.

June, 2025

Svishtov

Declarant: \_\_\_\_\_

/PhD student Siana Spasova/