

# **Study of cultural events in the cross-border region between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia – importance-performance analysis**



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## INTRO

This study is part of the project „Our common past – road to the joint future“, reference number CB006.2.12.028, funded by contract №RD-02-29-155 / 12.07.2019 under the Cross-border Cooperation Program IPA INTERREG 2014-2020 between the Republic Bulgaria and the Republic of Northern Macedonia. The project focuses on the development and promotion of cross-border cooperation in the field of culture, festivals and creative opportunities for exchanges between public institutions and other stakeholders in the tourism sector, by organizing project events, transfer of knowledge and experience, organizing thematic student visits, development of various IT applications and development of 3D video.

The study examines the development of local tourism and distribution processes in relation to cultural resources, identifying key factors for interventions in regional and local policies that could maximize the attractiveness of destinations. The expectations of the tourists and their perception of the existing festivals are considered, as well as the importance of the cultural aspects in a tourist event. Visitors' satisfaction, their likelihood of re-visiting and word-of-mouth advertising are assessed.

Purpose of study:

To assess the current levels of satisfaction of festival visitors, to determine which elements are important for satisfaction and to analyze what is most important for festival visitors in order to recommend activities and measures to help increase the overall satisfaction of guests of the festivals.

Methodology:

Survey (through questionnaires) among 200 visitors to festivals and cultural events in the CBC region - at least three cultural events / festivals. Visitors should provide information about their visit, as well as classify by importance and presentation various aspects of festivals and cultural events.

On this basis, an analysis is made of the relation between tourism, culture and the attractiveness of destinations. It includes consideration of practices from international experience in destinations where cultural resources are at the center of the overall attractiveness of the destination.

Based on the analysis - formulation of recommendations for changes in a positive direction regarding the organization and promotion of traditional festivals and cultural

events, which will lead to a larger number of visitors and higher satisfaction of these visitors. The recommendations are intended to be provided to the organizers of festivals and cultural events.

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## STUDY DESIGN

The study includes three cultural events in the cross-border region between Bulgaria and North Macedonia which differ in type and have been selected exactly on the basis of their specific focus:

- Festival of contemporary culture
- Festival of traditional culture
- Culinary festival

They have been selected with view of their location as well – in different sites within the cross-border region: Gotse Delchev, Blagoevgrad, Kyustendil. They also differ in duration – 1 day, 3 days, 5 days. The idea is to extract as much information as possible on various types of criteria: geographical, timely, genre-based.

A questionnaire has been prepared for the visitors of the three cultural events to answer the purpose of the study:

- Motivation to visit the specific cultural event
- Aspects of the event which visitors find important
- Extent of satisfaction from the event

At our discretion, we have included a question about potential recommendations that the visitors might have in order to improve the cultural event.

The questionnaire has the following structure:

**Question 1: What were your expectations when visiting the current event (why did you come)?**

- a. I was interested in the themes
- b. I was interested in the programme
- c. I like to visit cultural events every time I can
- d. I wanted to have a good time
- e. There was nothing else I could do at this time

f. Other (please specify):

.....  
.....

**Question 2: How well do you know this one or other cultural events in the same region?**

a. I have visited ..... events (please specify if possible)

.....  
.....

b. I haven't taken part myself but I have information (please specify where from)

.....  
.....

c. I don't know them

**Question 3 (If selecting points a. or b. under Question 2): What is your past experience?**

a. Excellent

b. Good but there is room for improvement

c. There's definitely need of improvement

d. Not good at all

Please specify your answer:

.....  
.....

**Question 4: How important are the cultural aspects of such events to you?**

a. Extremely

b. Mostly yes

c. Mostly no

d. Not at all

**Question 5 (If selecting points c. or d. under Question 4): Please elaborate why / what other aspects are important to you?**

.....  
.....

**Question 6 (If selecting points a. or b. under Question 4): Please specify which cultural aspects are important to you?**

.....  
.....

**Question 7: How would you describe your level of satisfaction from the current event?**

- a. Exceptional
- b. Mostly high
- c. Mostly low
- d. Missing

**Question 8 (If selecting points c. or d. under Question 7): What caused the lack of satisfaction?**

- a. Unattractive programme
- b. Bad organization and logistics
- c. Other

Please specify:

.....  
.....

**Question 9 (If selecting points a. or b. under Question 7): What caused the high satisfaction?**

- a. Attractive programme
- b. Good organization and logistics
- c. Other

Please specify:

.....

.....

**Question 10: Which aspects of the event did you like most and why?**

.....

.....

**Question 11: Which aspects of the event did you like least and why?**

.....

.....

**Question 12: Would you recommend this event to others?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**Question 13: What would you recommend for the better promotion of the event?**

.....

.....

**Statistical information:**

You are:

- Male                                      Female
- Under 20              Between 20 and 40              Between 40 and 60              Over 60



- Local                                      Non local
- Traveling solo                      With a partner                      With family                      With friends

A total of 210 questionnaires have been printed out with the purpose to be disseminated at the three selected events, 70 at each, so that the required number of 200 respondents is covered.

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## STUDY ACCOMPLISHMENT

The programs of the three cultural events covered in this study are given in an annex to this document, together with photos of the events.

The International Festival of Street Arts "Fair Fest" was held in Blagoevgrad between 18 and 22 May 2021. The event covered various locations in the city - both in the center and in the suburbs - probably to provide access to culture for more residents. The "international" element was reduced to the participation of guest performers from Italy and Russia. The program was concentrated in evening shows, except for two of the days (Friday and Saturday), when daily performances for children were included. The performances included Theater of Fire and Shadows, demonstrations of circus arts and the like.

According to the plan for conducting the survey, some part of the 70 questionnaires provided for Blagoevgrad had to be disseminated and filled in in each of the evenings of the festival. On the first evening, it was found that the visitors refused to fill in the questionnaire, despite the explanations for the purposes of the survey and the value of their opinion. The explanation can be summarized as "I have come for something else, and it will take me a long time to complete." Of the questionnaires distributed, 6 were returned with no answers to some of the questions, so these numbers were reported as invalid.

This necessitated a rethinking of the study strategy. It was decided to try to gather the necessary information by asking the addressee to participate, by reading the questions to him / her and writing down the answers on their behalf. The new approach was tested during the children's sessions on the fourth and fifth day of the festival and proved successful. Less than 10% of those invited to participate in the survey refused for various reasons, among which there was again the fear that it would take too much time, which visitors had planned for other purposes.

Of the remaining 64 questionnaires for Blagoevgrad, 30 were completed during the children's events of the festival, and the other 34 - in the final evening, which, as expected, enjoyed the highest attendance, being organized in the central square, as well as on a day off. All these questionnaires, as well as the questionnaires for the other two events included in the survey, were completed in the manner described above, with assistance being paid to the respondents.

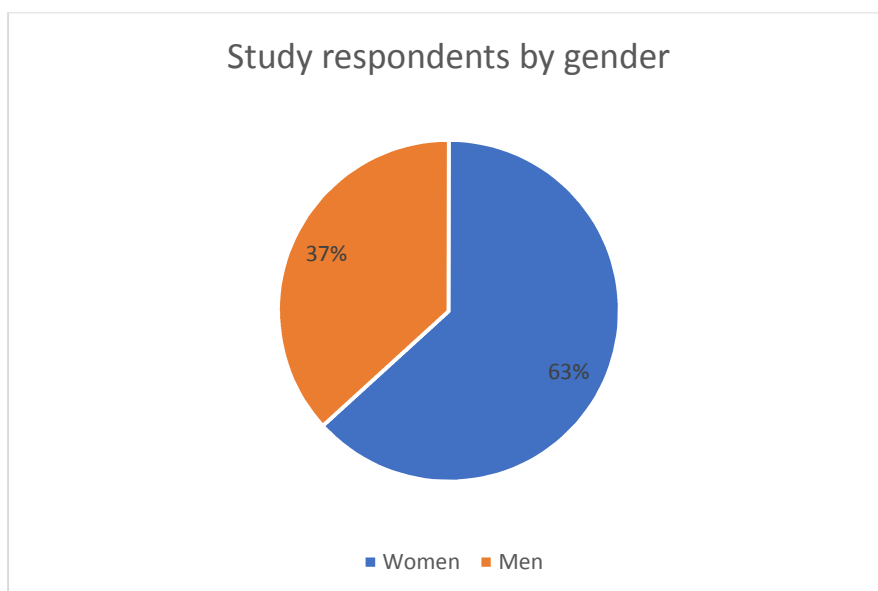
The second event - the Dance Festival in the town of Gotse Delchev, took place on May 29th and 30th (Saturday-Sunday), focusing on Saturday night and Sunday morning. The emphasis was on the presentation and study of traditional folk dances. Approximately half of the questionnaires were collected on Saturday night, when there were many more visitors, but their attention was focused on the performances on stage; the other half were gathered on the second day, before and after the folk-dance lesson in the city park of Gotse Delchev.

The third cultural event included in the study was selected in view of its different focus, namely cuisine and food. This was the Cherry Festival, which took place in the town of Kyustendil between June 25th and 27th. Its program included a culinary exhibition (on stands) in front of the Kyustendil Municipality building in the city center, as well as various culinary demonstrations and competitions, plus a concert part. Questionnaires with information needed within the survey were collected among visitors to the stands and culinary demonstrations.

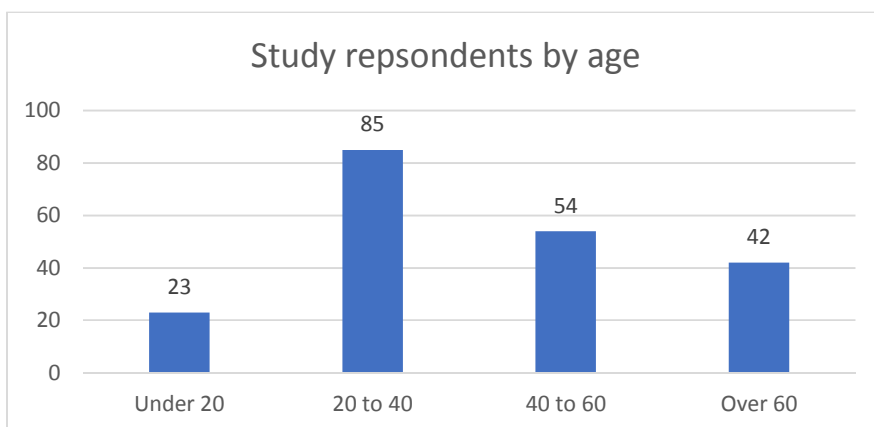
## STUDY RESULTS

### Statistical information

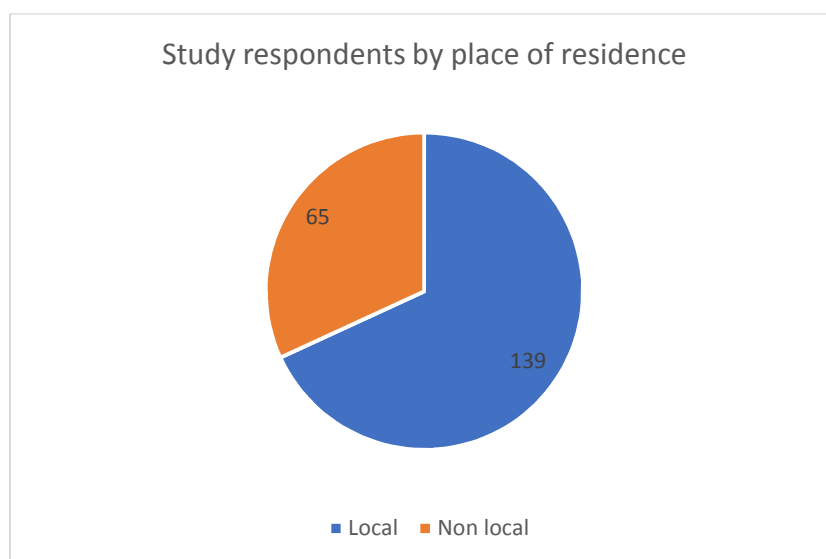
People taking part in the study were mostly women. As no specific issues were included in the design in this regard, we can only speculate on the reasons for this. In some specific cases, such as the daily show for children during the festival in Blagoevgrad, the larger audience was mothers with children, which explains the predominance of female respondents. In other cases, there is no clarity. In Blagoevgrad the ratio of women / men is 73% / 27%. In Gotse Delchev it is 61% / 39%, and in Kyustendil - 56% / 44%. Or for the whole study, this makes 63% women to 37% men.



Analyzing the age of the participants in the study, some differences between the three cultural events should be noted. Although the group between the ages of 20 and 40 predominates in all three places, in Blagoevgrad the difference between it and the other groups is much larger. At the Festival of Street Arts, the group over the age of 60 is the least represented, with a result even lower than the group of under-20s, which is relatively small everywhere. In Gotse Delchev, the group over 60 is twice smaller than that of people between 20 and 40, while in Kyustendil the two groups are almost equal. The age segment between 40 and 60 years in the three manifestations varies in the range of 20-30%. The average results for the three events are shown in the graph below.

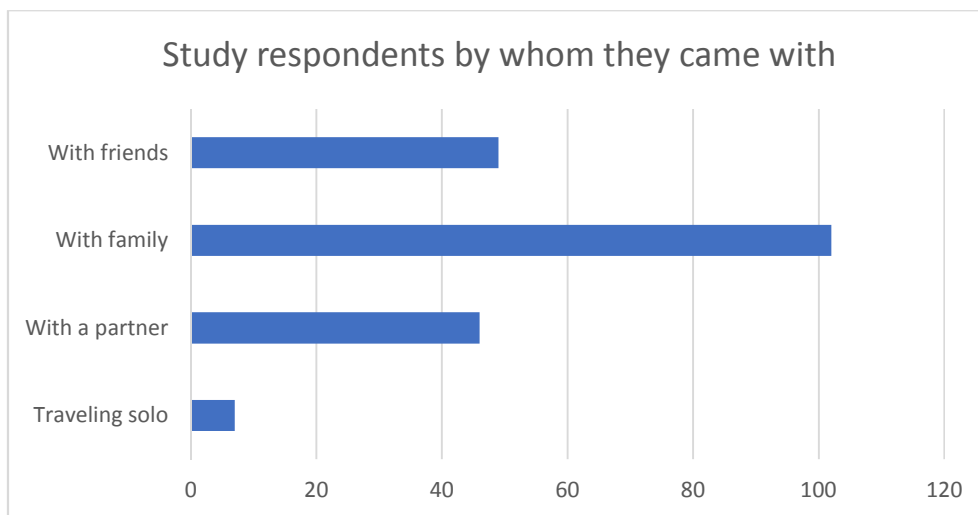


Differences between the three studied cultural events are also observed in terms of the starting point or place of residence of the visitors. While the predominance of local audiences is logical in the current period, still tied to the effects of the global KOVID crisis, as in all three events, on Cherry Festival, visitors coming from places outside the region are almost on par with locals. International visitors were not counted at all events, except for some of the performers in Blagoevgrad and Gotse Delchev.



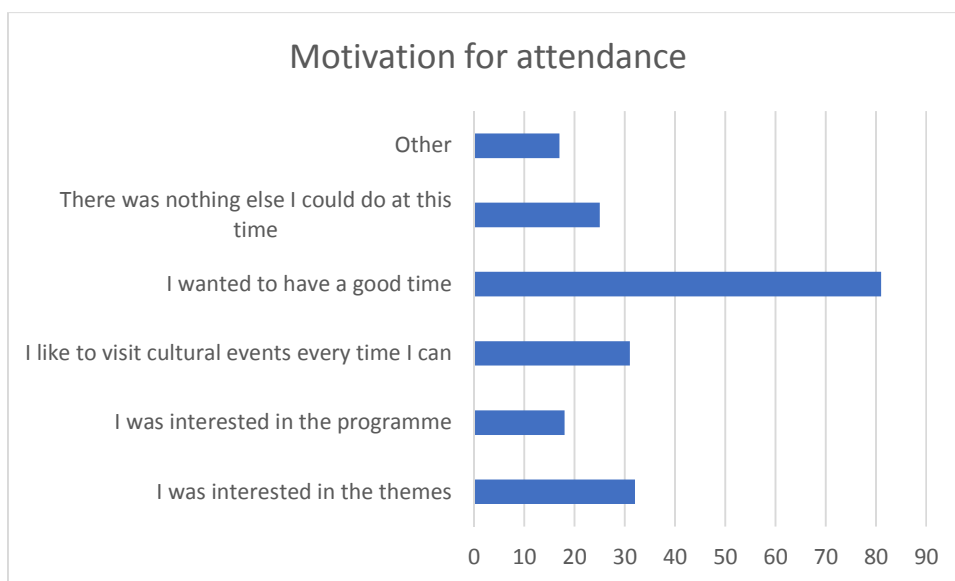
The last statistical element that was studied was with whom the visitors came to the respective cultural event. The features observed in the three locations are obviously related to the type of the specific event and where the visitors are from. The main difference is that local people attend cultural events with their whole family (with children) or friends, while those arriving from outside the region travel equally as couples (families without children). What is common is the extremely low percentage

of visitors who came to the cultural event on their own. The graph below shows the summary data for the three locations.



**Question 1: What were your expectations when visiting the current event (why did you come)?**

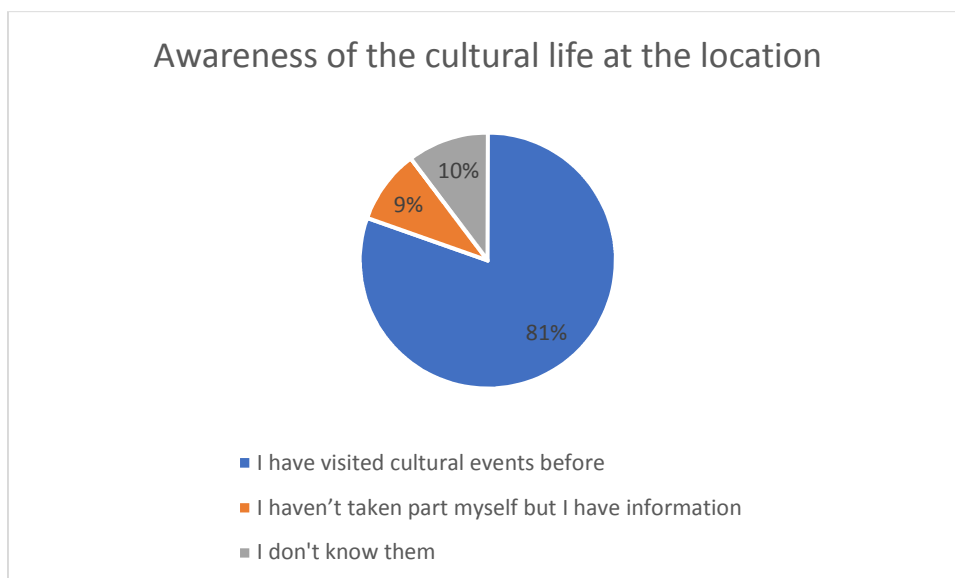
The answers to this question clearly show the motivation of the visitors to the three cultural events. The strongest motivation is related to the desire of people to have a good time, which they obviously associate with cultural events, although there are some fluctuations depending on the specific topic. The specific program of events played the least role in deciding the visit, commensurate with the answer "I had nothing else to do at the time".



Of interest are also the answers defined as "other". Some are completely non-specific, although they should be taken into account when conducting analyzes and planning cultural events. These are formulations such as "it's good for something to happen in the city" and "I stopped out of curiosity." The hunger of people for communication and entertainment should not be ignored after the restrictions imposed by the global KOVID crisis. A small percentage are the so-called "fans" or returning visitors who "have always come to the Cherry Festival."

### **Question 2: How well do you know this one or other cultural events in the same region?**

In all three locations covered by the survey, the percentage of respondents who do not know the cultural life of the area, respectively other cultural events held there, is extremely low. The reason is that in all three places there are rich and long-standing cultural and festival traditions. In Blagoevgrad, the percentage of people who gave the answer "I don't know them" is practically reduced to 0. The appearance of this answer in Gotse Delchev is probably due to the visitors accompanying the dance groups from other cities who joined the celebration, and in Kyustendil - to the people, who came to the Cherry Festival for the first time; it should be borne in mind that Sofia is a huge market. The locals in all three places are used to having a cultural life in their city.



When asking the group that answered "I did not participate personally, but I have information" - where did the information come from, the answers were generally reduced to two options: from friends / acquaintances and from the publicity made by the municipality at the local level. In Blagoevgrad, visitors who have been guests at

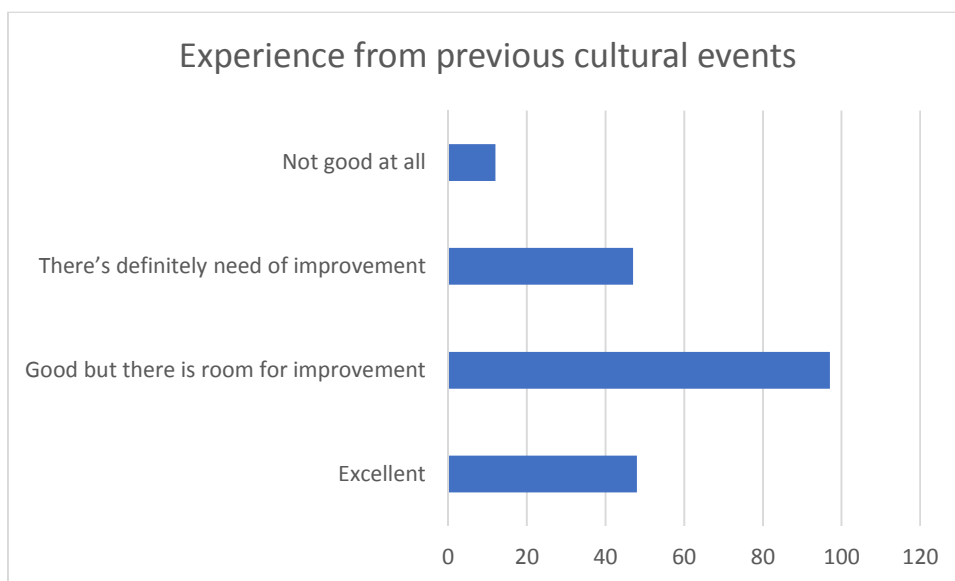
cultural events before associate their experience mostly with the Francofolies festival, with most of them visiting more than two editions (54%), followed by visitors to all editions (26 %) and of those who visited only one edition (12%). A small percentage of the respondents do not specify the cultural events in Blagoevgrad that they have visited, but give them in general as "various concerts on the square"; 2% indicate the theatrical holidays in the city.

In Gotse Delchev, the experience from other cultural events is associated mainly with folklore traditions, which are very strong in the city and region. In Kyustendil, the connection is in the first place with the previous editions of the Cherry Festival (> 60%), followed by the Kyustendil Spring Festival and the Fertility Festival.

**Question 3 (If selecting points a. or b. under Question 2): What is your past experience?**

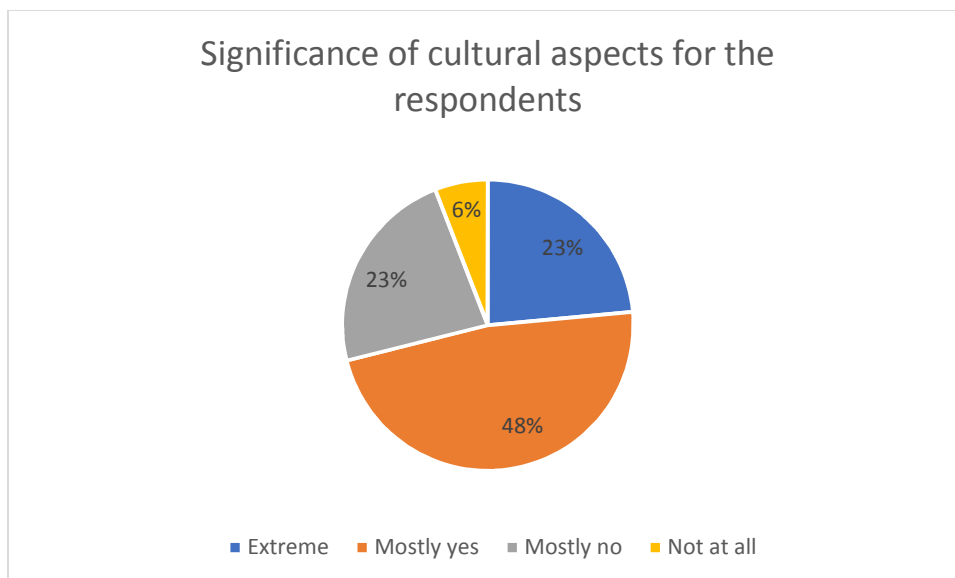
The answers to this question in our opinion are extremely indicative of the common psychology of the Bulgarian visitor and at the same time extremely interesting for the future planning of cultural events. When asked directly whether something is liked / approved or not, Bulgarians are usually divided between the desire to be polite with "yes, I liked it very much" and to be critical with "there is room for improvement". This is confirmed by the practically equal number of answers given by our respondents in these two directions, 23-24%. Our proposed answer "good experience, but there is room for improvement" is the most preferred by respondents (nearly 50%), as it satisfies both psychological needs. The fact that when asked why they gave exactly this answer, 75% of respondents do not actually give an explanation, demonstrates the strength of this common psychology. Among the remaining 25% of answers to the question "please clarify your opinion", the opinions in the positive direction vary around "to make more similar events", and the opinions in the negative direction are mainly related to the low publicity of the events. We will not comment on the several answers received in Blagoevgrad that the Francofolies festival should return to the city.





**Question 4: How important are the cultural aspects of such events to you?**

The tendency to give evasive answers with a rather positive bias is also observed in this question. Of the possible answers - "extremely", "mostly yes", "mostly no" and "not at all", both poles receive the least attention, definitely with a predominance of positive attitudes. The difference between the first two answers is the largest in Blagoevgrad and the smallest in Kyustendil, which can theoretically be explained by the higher percentage of visitors from outside the city.

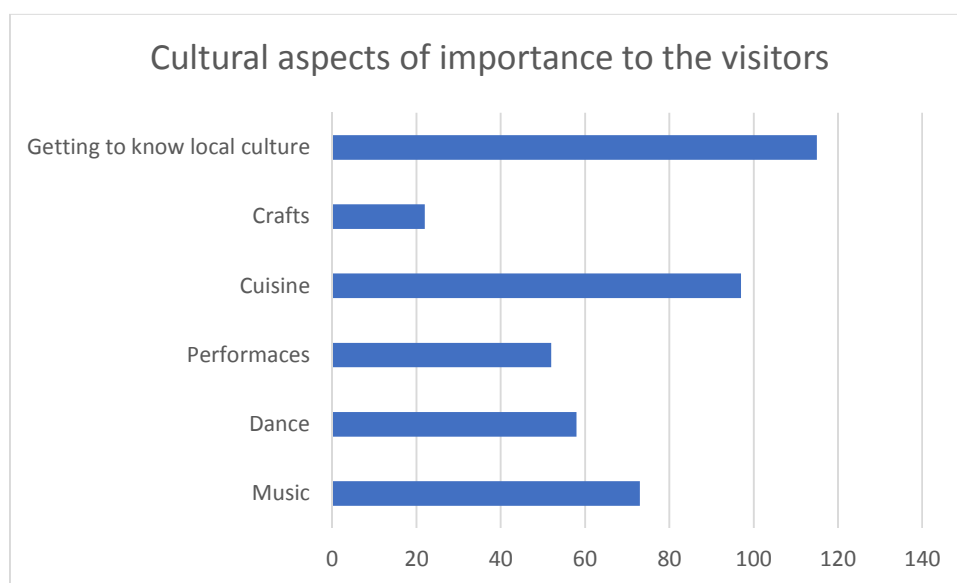


**Question 5 (If selecting points c. or d. under Question 4): Please elaborate why / what other aspects are important to you?**

The answer to this question is completely open, which gives respondents the freedom to choose the aspects that are important to them. With 59 answers to the above question with selection of options c. or d., we have attempted to summarize various wordings by meaning as follows: 60% of the answers are inclined towards “having a good time” which corresponds to the answers of Question 1 above. The other three generalized answers are given in more or less equal proportions: 1. We are looking for something different and special; 2. We insist on finding the local and the authentic; 3. Communication with the natural environment. All these answers actually make great sense, because they are not the antithesis of the cultural event, but allow for its diversification, combining cultural aspects with others important to the audience and ultimately attracting more visitors.

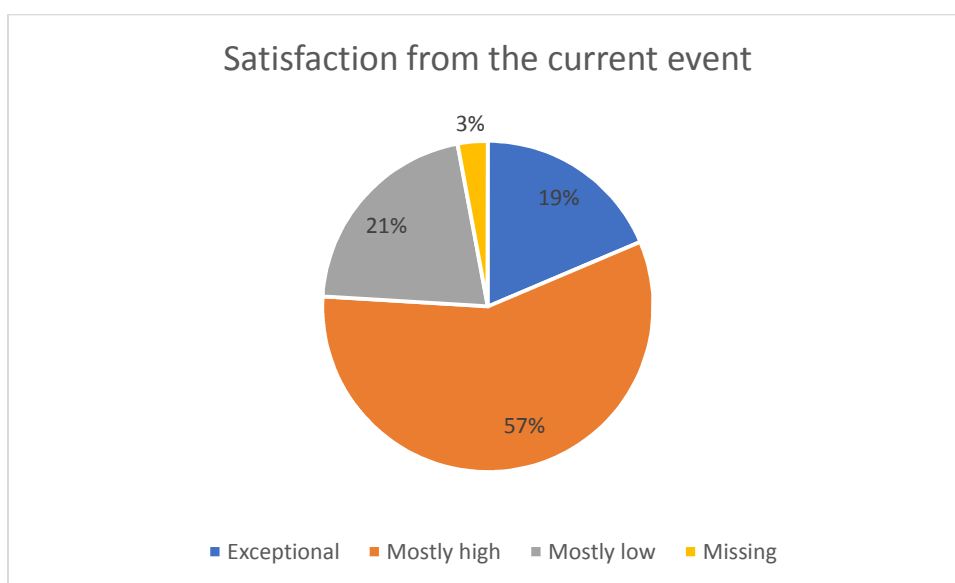
**Question 6 (If selecting points a. or b. under Question 4): Please specify which cultural aspects are important to you?**

As with the above question, we have tried to summarize the answers given by the respondents based on their meaning. For example, "jazz festival", "rock festival", "folk songs and instruments", etc. are united in "music". The presence of a pro-active element / element of communication with features of the local culture are united in "acquaintance with the local culture". Over 80% of the respondents gave more than one answer to the question. Indicative is the fact that 68% of the visitors to the surveyed events are local, and yet more than half of them believe that communication with the local culture is a very important aspect of a cultural event.



### Question 7: How would you describe your level of satisfaction from the current event?

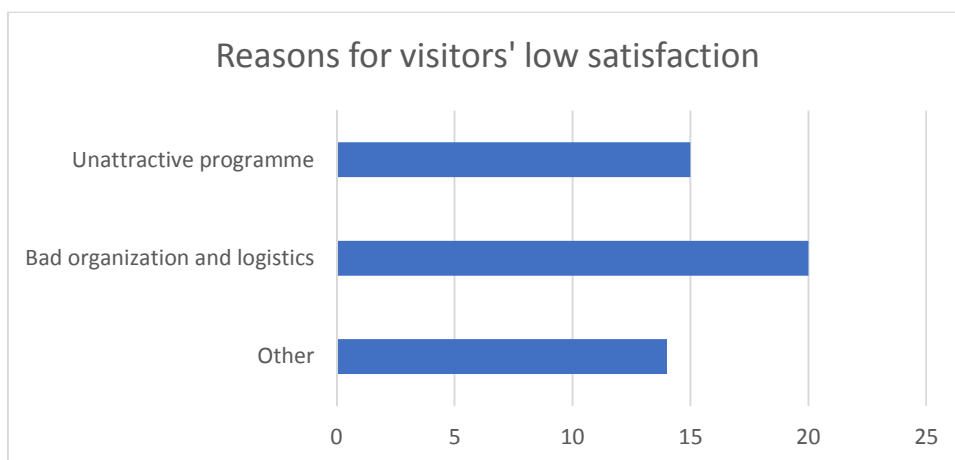
The answers to this question did not differ significantly from the answers to Question 3 about the respondents' experiences from cultural events in general. The same trends are observed and similar conclusions can be drawn. The Bulgarian public tends to give rather positive assessments, but without losing its criticism.



### Question 8 (If selecting points c. or d. under Question 7): What caused the lack of satisfaction?

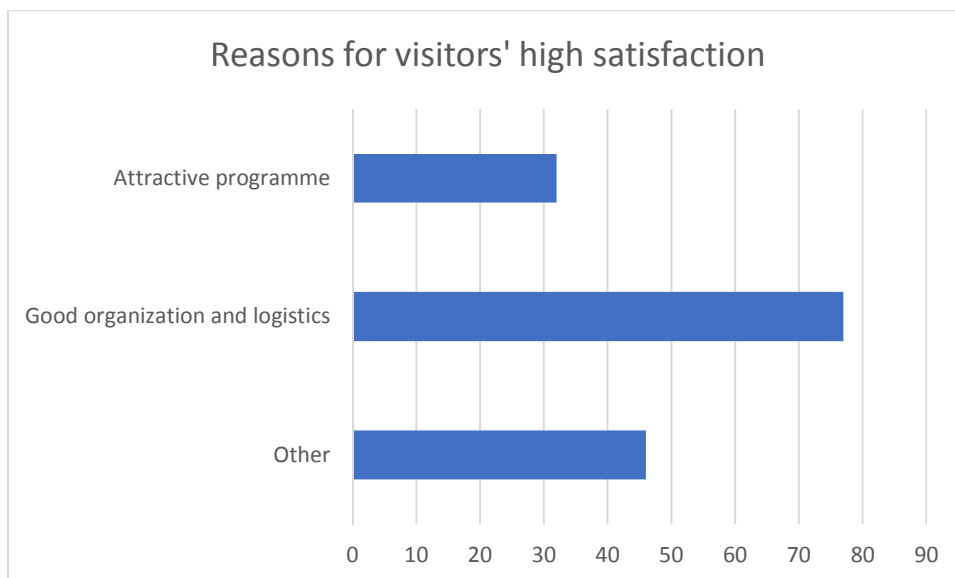
Only 24% or a total of 49 out of 204 respondents chose points c. or d. in their answer to Question 7. The internal distribution between them in the answer to Question 8, or the reasons for their low satisfaction are comparable between the three locations included in the survey. The distribution between the answers proposed in the questionnaire related to poor program quality, poor organization or 'other' is also relatively even. Interestingly, when asked to clarify their answer, most respondents do not elaborate, even those who have indicated the answer "other" and have the opportunity to indicate what this "other" is.

The other interesting fact is that the answers given in connection with the choice "other" often represent a variation or specification of the first two proposed answers - poor organization or unattractive program - for example "the sound was not good" or "no one told us how much the program starts on the square, it was announced at 8 pm, but now the time is passing and they are not starting".



**Question 9 (If selecting points a. or b. under Question 7): What caused the high satisfaction?**

In the systematization of the answers received from the respondents, similar tendencies are noticed as in the answers to Question 8 above. It is obvious that, again, the good organization was more important for the visitors than the program of the event, but this time the explanations to the answer "other" show more variety.



We could summarize the following as answers that are given more often:

- Good selection of performers (in Blagoevgrad and Gotse Delchev)
- Very beautiful fair – the stands of the exhibitors (in Kyustendil)
- Entertainment for the public (Kyustendil)

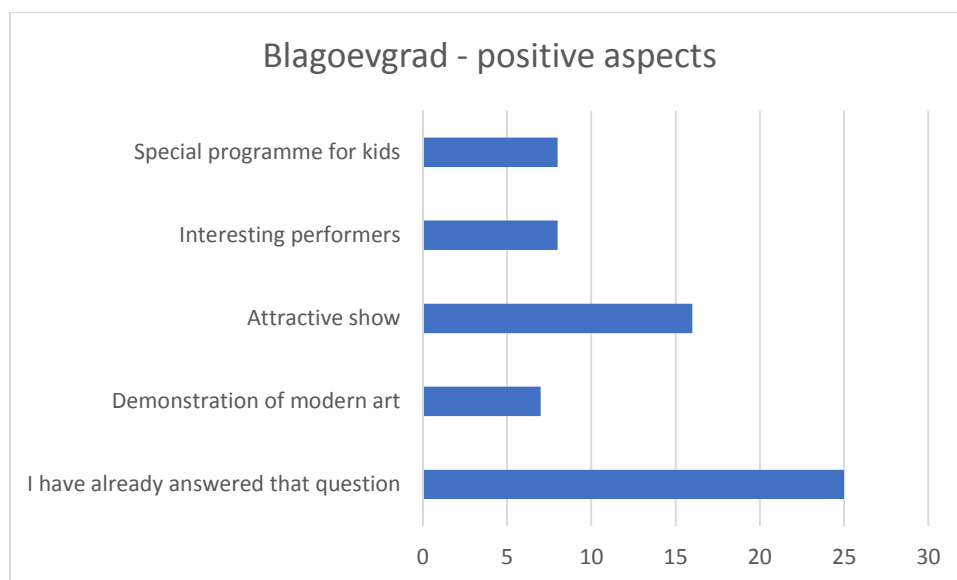
- It is good to see something different and modern (Blgoevgrad)
- It is important to keep traditions (Gotse Delchev)

### Question 10: Which aspects of the event did you like most and why?

This question and the next one did not bring much new information to the survey, because surprisingly many respondents answered in the sense of "I have already answered this question", including in plain text. Here we present the summary.

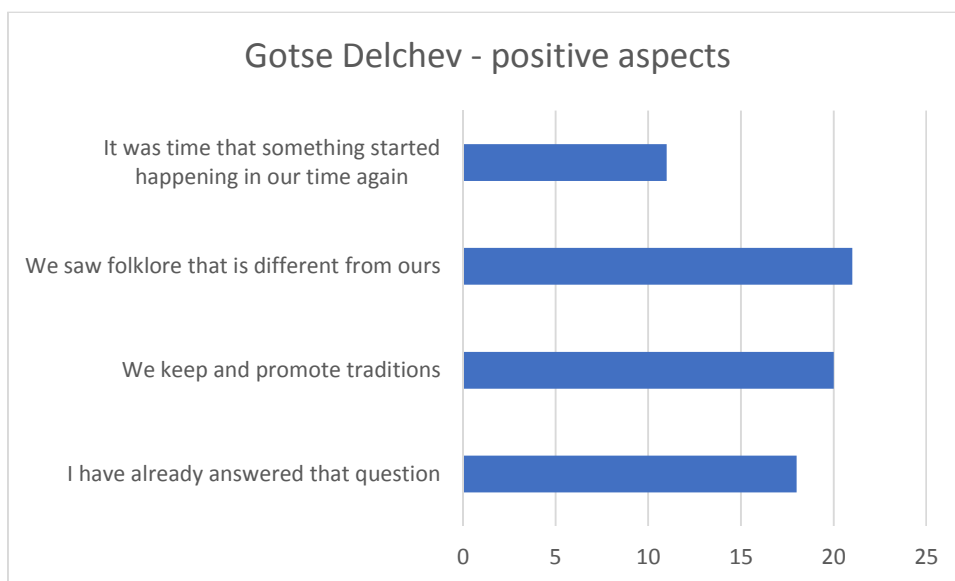
In Blagoevgrad, the collected answers can be summarized in several groups of elements, accepted by the audience as positive:

- Attractive show
- Interesting performers
- Demonstration of modern (contemporary) art
- Special programme for kids



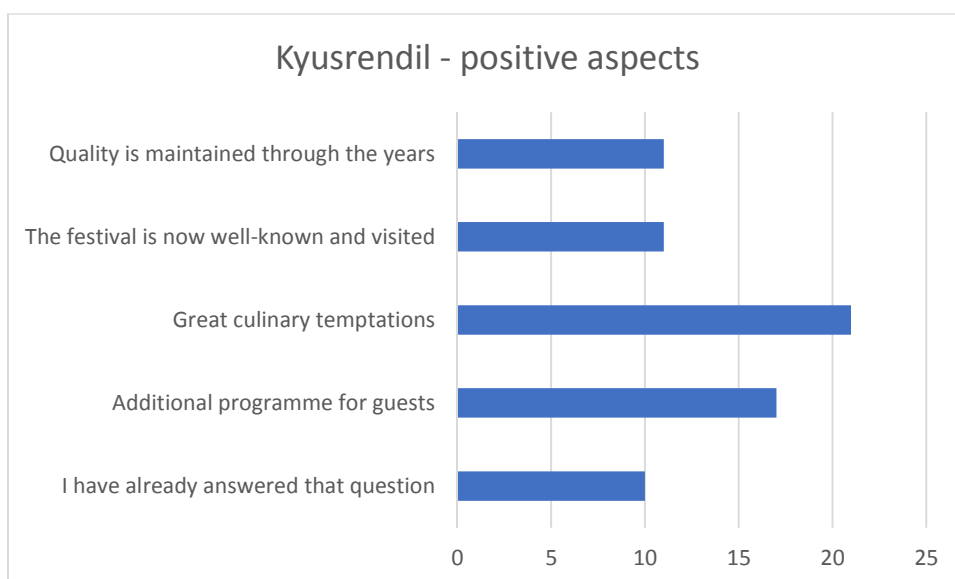
In Gotse Delchev, the respondents stressed on the following aspects, also in summary:

- Protection promotion of local traditions and folklore
- Getting to know different folklore, from other regions
- Restart of the cultural life in the town



The results from Kyustendil can be summarized in the following way:

- The Cherry Festival is already living its own life as an event which is now a tradition
- The festival offers quality of organization and handling which has been maintained through the years
- The culinary aspect of the festival is extremely important, as well as the beauty that comes to our town during these days
- It is a good tradition to organize additional events for the guests of the festival

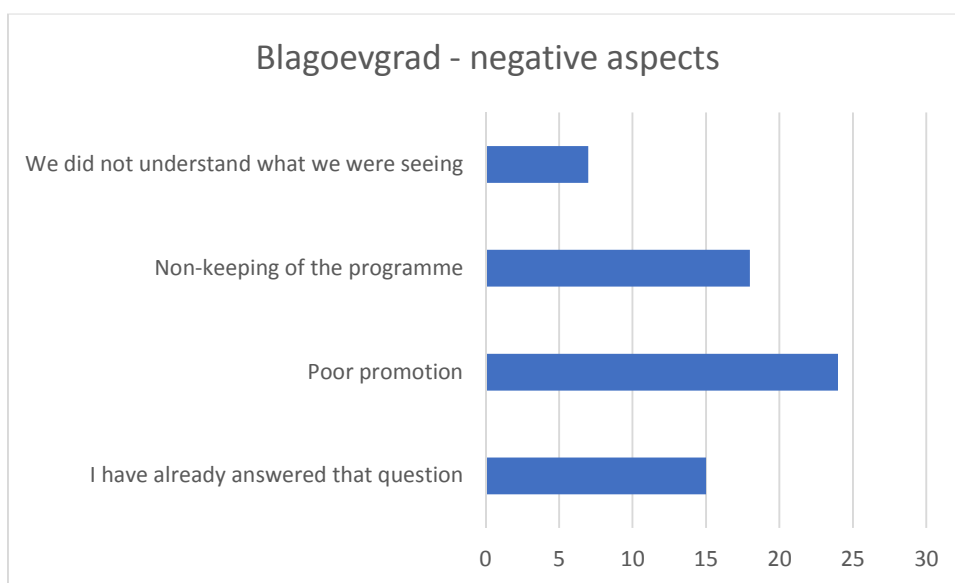


The specifics of the answers from the three locations included in the study is due to the different types of the events, as well as the fact that non-local visitors are not present everywhere.

### Question 11: Which aspects of the event did you like least and why?

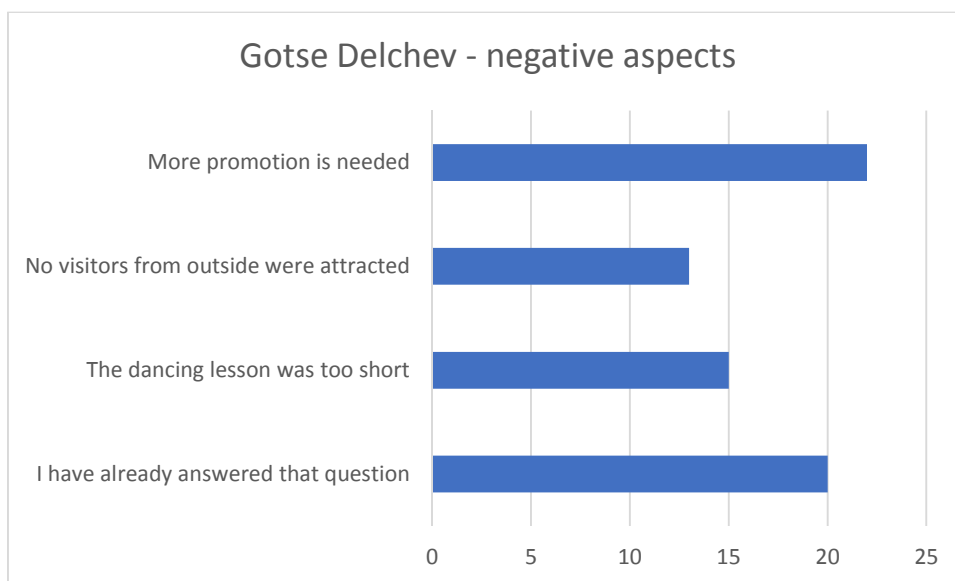
Here, same applies as for the previous question. We present the summaries by location. In Blagoevgrad, visitors gave the following elements as being important to them:

- Poor promotion of the event
- Non-keeping of the programme
- Ack of understanding in many visitors about some aspects of modern arts

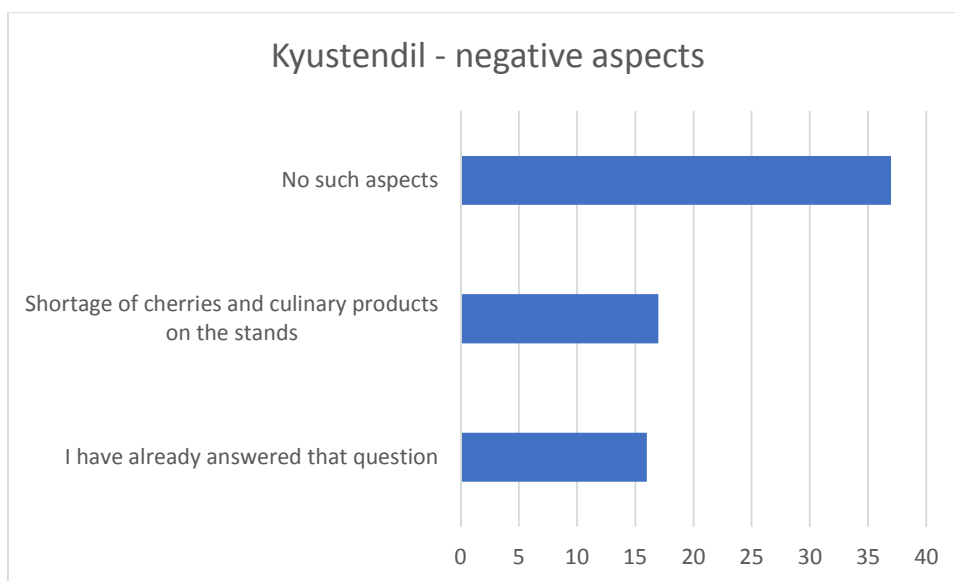


In Gotse Delchev, answers can be summarized in the following way:

- There are things to be done regarding the promotion around the town
- The event has not been promoted outside Gotse Delchev in order to attract visitors from outside
- The dancing lesson (the programme for the second day of the event) was too short



The parallel with the summary of answers from Kyustendil is quite interesting:



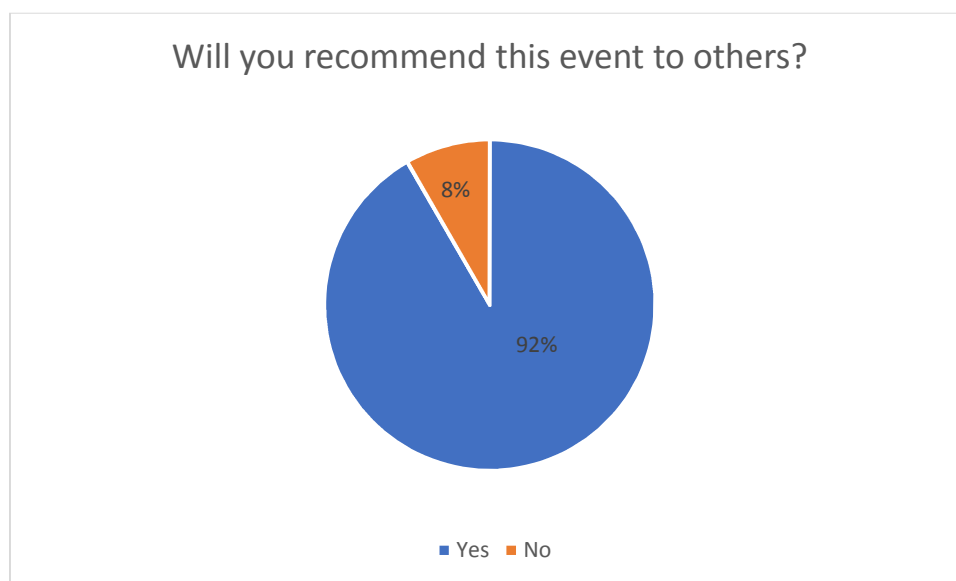
It is interesting that less non-likeable aspects of cultural events are stated where there are more outside visitors and the programme is more varied.

**Question 12: Would you recommend this event to others?**

The high percentage of positive answers received to this question shows that the overall level of satisfaction with the events is rather high, despite the remarks and negative aspects in the answers to other questions in the survey. It is clear that these negative aspects noted by visitors are not considered significant to such an extent as to



prevent successful word-of-mouth marketing, which is extremely valuable in such cases. Of course, it is possible that this high percentage of "yes" answers is due to the already mentioned specific psychology of the Bulgarian, but against the background of the entire survey and all the answers collected, we believe that the first explanation is more likely.



### **Question 13: What would you recommend for the better promotion of the event?**

The answers obtained here are too diverse to be presented graphically. Nearly 36% of respondents do not answer this question or give the answer "I have no recommendations". A small part (10%) transfer the responsibility for the promotion to the organizers - in this case the municipalities, which in practice is equivalent to that of the previous group.

The following answers can be deduced from the other answers, some of which are summarizing:

- The promotion should be broader and more aggressive
- The promotion must start early enough
- Attract more partners to promote the event, including the media
- Work with tour operators and travel agents
- Promote the event in neighboring larger cities and especially in the capital

- Advertise on national media - television, radio
- Aim to attract visitors outside the city and the region, including international ones
- Advertise on the Internet
- Attract students and young people to take part in the promotion
- Attract celebrities for "patrons" of the holidays, they will also serve as advertising agents
- Promote not only the specific event, but also the place itself - for example, Kyustendil itself as a tourist center
- Work with specialists in the field of marketing and advertising.

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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

The main thing to keep in mind when analyzing the results of the survey is that it, by assignment, pre-forms the type of information that can be extracted by the respondents. We mean that we study people who have already chosen to attend a cultural event. The logic of the study lies in understanding why and how these people came, what they like and what they do not, and possibly in the future to multiply the motives for choice, and to reduce and even avoid negative reactions. This type of research cannot show the motives of people who did not come to the cultural event and, accordingly, no definite conclusions can be drawn about how to attract them.

- Cultural events in Bulgaria, in particular in the cross-border region with the Republic of North Macedonia, are mainly of local and regional importance, less of national importance. Currently, there are virtually no international visitors, which can be partly explained by the global crisis caused by KOVID-19. The only international participation is among the performers themselves in the cultural events. Attendance by national tourists outside the region depends directly on the attractiveness of the cultural event (a Cherry Festival is unique, while a folklore festival is not) and the proximity to major domestic markets, such as Sofia.
- - In general, cultural events enjoy the attention of the general public. Not surprisingly, the most active age segment is between 20 and 40 years, although the distribution depends very much on the type of cultural event. It is natural for a contemporary art festival to attract more young audiences, while a culinary festival to attract different age groups with equal force. It should also be borne in mind that cultural events are almost never associated with individual visits. Most often the whole family is involved, followed by couples or groups of friends.
- Predominant are the visitors with non-specialized interest, i.e. the main motivation for attending the event is not the consumption of culture, but the general desire to have a good time and do something different from the routine. For another part of the visitors, the theme of the events is important for the decision to visit, and to a much greater extent than the program of the event. However, this does not mean that the program of cultural events is irrelevant and should be ignored. It may not have a great weight when deciding to visit,

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but already on the spot, it is extremely important for the satisfaction of the visitor.

- The cultural aspects of a festival event are important for 71% of the surveyed visitors, with the first place being held by “introduction to the local culture”, followed by the cuisine. Something very important demonstrated by the present study is that the non-cultural aspects identified as important by the remaining 29% of visitors can actually be easily incorporated into the concepts of current events and provide opportunities for maximum visitor satisfaction - if, of course, organization, logistics and marketing will also be at the required level.
- The level of satisfaction with cultural events is generally high (positive answers are close to 75%), but not specified. Most visitors believe that there is still work to be done, but do not explain in which direction they see opportunities or needs for development. Reasons for the lower satisfaction are also expressed in a more general style, such as "poor organization", but respondents rarely want to explain exactly what they find "poor" in that organization. This statement is supported by the extremely high percentage of respondents who would recommend the cultural event to other people.
- The degree of satisfaction of visitors is directly related to the type of cultural event and the specific elements covered in its concept and organization.

### **Recommendations to the organizers of cultural events**

The recommendations are addressed specifically to the organizers of cultural events in the cross-border region between the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia, where the present study is based, but it can be assumed that most of them are universal not only for other nearby border areas but also for our whole countries.

#### *Recommendations to the organization of cultural events*

- - It is necessary to start planning early enough to be able to attract enough partners, to clear the program and, above all, to have time for a larger promotion.
- Attract the widest possible range of partners in the organization. An organizing committee may even be set up in which the various stakeholders are represented - the municipality, local NGOs such as community centers and others, departments of state institutions (education inspectorates, forestries, etc.), cultural institutions such as museums, theaters, etc., educational institutions,

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private business - tourism and tourism-related. Media partners as well as tour operators can also be involved in the organizing committee.

- Set goals for the event - promoting local heritage and culture or attracting more tourists to the destination; realization of certain levels of income and their distribution in a certain way among the local community; placing the settlement on the "map" of popular places in Bulgaria and / or Northern Macedonia. Determine the target groups which the event will address - the "general public" is never good enough as a target group.
- Build a balanced program that is, if possible, consistent with the requirements and expectations of the identified target groups. The balance should be sought in all directions - in the distribution by days (if the event will be multi-day), within the day, as well as territorially. It should be checked that the selected dates do not coincide with other more popular events held near the main target market. It is always a good idea to "see" the program from the point of view of the potential visitor.
- The program should provide modules for attracting visitors. The modern tourist travels to collect experiences and memories, and in that case attending a folklore concert, where s/he only listens and watches performances on stage, is not enough. It is mandatory to include gastronomy, this is always a successful formula.
- Appoint responsible persons or coordinators for each of the modules in the program, deadlines and budgets. From the very beginning, a financial plan should be drawn up with potential sources of funds, and it should be strictly followed.

#### *Recommendations to the handling of cultural events*

- The pre-announced program should be followed as accurately as possible. Do not wait for the mayor to open the program if he or she is late, and the start is announced for 11 am. If changes are necessary due to force majeure, they should be announced as widely as possible.
- Provide up-to-date information during the event. At the very least, print a banner or large posters with the program to display in prominent places. It is even better to have an "Information" stand, to which each of the participants can direct the visitor in case of questions or need of assistance. Modern

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technologies can also be used if, for example, a mobile application with information or an online information service is prepared.

- Each of the participants must be aware of the pre-determined main goal of the event and to follow it. Everyone should remember that he / she is an ambassador of his / her community and destination to the visitors. This concerns his / her behavior towards visitors, the quality of welcoming and offering the cultural tourist service and even the appearance. To this end, the organizing committee must have made every effort to prepare for the event.
- All points of the program should be handled in a way which is as convenient as possible for visitors. The easier it is for the tourist to use the tourist service, the more likely we are to achieve a high degree of satisfaction of his / her expectations and needs. This is how we raise future ambassadors and advertising agents for our travel offers.

#### *Recommendations to the marketing of cultural events*

- Marketing must be planned and carried out with the help of specialists. With so much competition in the tourism markets, as well as in the global information society, the task of making a destination (or event) visible to consumers is becoming more and more difficult.
- Marketing measures should also start as early as possible, as soon as the dates, name and target groups of the event are fixed. A very important first task is to bring a brand to the event, destination or both together.
- Marketing measures must be selected according to the relevant target groups, but do not forget that most of the marketing communication is already carried out electronically. The forms and tools of e-marketing are mandatory for every organizer of tourist events.

## **ANNEXES**

### **ANNEX 1**

#### **PROGRAMMES OF THE CULTURAL EVENTS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY**

##### **International Festival of Street Arts „Fair Fest“, Blagoevgrad:**

###### **18.05.2021**

**19.30** At the Courthouse: Theater of fire and shadows „FIRETER” street parade

**20.30** Makedonia Square: Evening show „Ohlyumotiv“

###### **19.05.2021**

**20.00** Yard of 4<sup>th</sup> School of Dimcho Debelyanov: MAGO FOFFICINO, Italy

**21.00** Strumsko Quarter, Ivan Vazov School: Theater of fire and shadows „FIRETER”: evening show “The Bals”

###### **20.05.2021**

**20.00** Strumsko Quarter, Ivan Vazov School: MAGO FOFFICINO, Italy

**21.00 ч.** Strumsko Quarter, Ivan Vazov School: Theater of fire and shadows „FIRETER”: evening show “The Flower”

###### **21.05.2021**

**10.00-12.00** Bachinovo Park: Workshop for the children of Blagoevgrad willing to gain skills such as juggling with various items, walking on stilts and other forms of circus art

**20.00** Elenovo Quarter, Pirin Sports Complex Parking: MAGO FOFFICINO, Italy

**21.00** Elenovo Quarter, Pirin Sports Complex Parking: Theater of fire and shadows „FIRETER”: evening show “The Giant Dolls”

###### **22.05.2021**

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- 10.00-12.00.** Bachinovo Park: Workshop for the children of Blagoevgrad willing to gain skills such as juggling with various items, walking on stilts and other forms of circus art
- 20.00** Georgi Izmirliiev Square: „Angelion“ – air acrobatics by Konstantin Konstantinovski, Russia
- 21.00** Georgi Izmirliiev Square: Theater of fire and shadows „FIRETER“: evening show “The Legend of Day and Night”, Balis & Irene, with the special participation of dancers from the Arabesc Ballet Group

### **Dance Festival, Gotse Delchev**

#### **29.05.2021**

- 17.00-18.00** Participants parade from the square of Gotse Delchev to Makedonia Square
- 18.00-20.00** Concerts with the participation of:
- Dance formation „Palavi Nozhinki“ – Gotse Delchev
  - Dance club „Pirin Gold“ – Gotse Delchev
  - Dance club „Bulgarian smile“ – Blagoevgrad
  - Dance school „Shopite“ – Novi Iskar
  - Dance club „Filigrani“ – Dobrinishte
  - Dance formation „Aigidik“ – Dobarsko
  - Dance club „Aspri“ – Dobarsko
  - Dance club „Mehomia“ – Razlog
  - Dance formation „Razlozhanche“ – Razlog
  - Dance formation „Ripni Tropni“ – Malo Selo
  - Female dance group at Prosveta Community Center – Kochan village
  - Nevrokop Folk Song and Dance Ensemble – Gotse Delchev



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Folklore Ensemble of Lyupcho Santov – Orizari Village, N. Macedonia

Mitko Aleksov Ensemble – Kochani, N Macedonia

### **30.05.2021**

**10.30-11.30** Open lesson in Bulgarian folk dancing with Assoc. Prof. Georgi Gargov  
(town park of Gotse Delchev)

### **Cherry Festival, Kyustendil, Velbujd Square**

#### **25.06.2021**

**20.00** Opening concert

#### **26.06.2021**

**10.00-16.00** Fair of cherries and cherry products

**11.00** Official opening

**12.00-16.00** Presentation of perspective types of cherries for the country and the  
region by the Agricultural Institute of Kyustendil

Competition for the biggest cherry, attractive cherry split, original cherry  
application and beautiful cherry stand

**16.00** Announcing competition results

**21.00** Concert

#### **27.06.2021**

**10.30** Culinary contest „Kitchen of Cherries“ and culinary demonstrations

**12.00** Cherry games

**14.00** Announcing results from the culinary contest and official closing of the  
festival

### **During all festival days**

Bazaar of cherries and exhibition of local craftspeople

**ANNEX 2**

**PHOTOS FROM THE CULTURAL EVENTS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY**

***Blagoevgrad***





*Gotse Delchev*





**Kyustendil**



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### **ANNEX 3**

## **PRACTICES RELATED TO CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE DESTINATIONS**

### ***Sun of Todorka Festival, Ohoden Village, Vratsa Region***

The festival has been organized for six consecutive years now by the Regional History Museum in Vratsa. Its focus is a prehistoric archaeological site near the village of Ohoden, which is being studied by museum experts. It is usually two days long.

Strengths to be considered:

- The venue of the festival is extremely well marked. The route through the village to the site is clear; there are signs on the spot where you can park, and the entrance to the festival stage is easily recognizable and hospitable.
- The program includes a balance between elements in which the visitor is only a spectator and elements in which s/he takes an active part. This is often a major problem of Bulgarian cultural events, especially those related to the traditions in which community centers or various interest clubs participate. Their members have been preparing for a long time to perform on stage, and sometimes miss the moment when a balance must be sought. The modern tourist travels to experience, not to observe.
- The program addressing visitors only as spectators is also different and attractive, with elements of contemporary interpretation and art.
- Visitors have the opportunity to choose between different types of activities to include: The way of bread (harvesting with ancient tools, grinding wheat, kneading bread and baking in an open oven); school of archeology; manual modeling with clay, archery lessons, etc.
- At all times the care for the client is evident - from the information provision, to the provision of tents / sheds over the tables for bread preparation, on the site for the archeological school, etc.









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### *Chestnut Festival, Belasitsa*

It is organized by the Directorate of Belasitsa Nature Park in partnership with Petrich Municipality, community centers in the villages around the park and non-governmental organizations working in the field of tourism and nature protection, such as Pirin Tourist Forum and Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation. The aim is to strengthen the link between the protected area and the local population, while stimulating tourism. The symbol of the festival is the edible chestnut, for which the nature park has been designated, but which has been present in the local tradition for centuries. So the focus is on the place of chestnuts in the traditional culture of the area.

Strengths to be considered:

- Involving more partners with different areas of expertise, different skills and experience helps a lot for the organization of an event.
- This also helps to provide funding in various forms and from different sources.
- The media is an extremely important partner that must be involved from the very beginning in the planning of the cultural event. In the best case, they can be co-organizers and start promoting the event during the preparation.
- The combination of culture, history and nature as tourist resources in organizing an event is a very successful formula. For example, by offering a short tourist route in a nearby mountain or forest. In this way, the interests and expectations of different customer groups can be met and wider audiences can be attracted. Especially considering that the audience is often families with children - so something can be offered to everyone.
- The culinary element is important in every event and contributes to its attractiveness. Especially when it offers something local, something different from the usual grills with kebabs and meatballs.





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### ***The Eternal City and cultural tourism***

Being the capital of one of the largest empires in history, Rome today is one of the absolute destinations for cultural tourism. Before the Covid Crisis, visitors to Rome reached 9 million a year. The most popular foci of tourist interest include: the Vatican with St. Peter's Cathedral and the Vatican Museums; The Palatine with the Colosseum and the Roman Forum; renaissance squares with cathedrals and fountains such as Di Trevi, Navona, Venice and others.

Strengths to be considered:

- The attractiveness of the destination is 100% related to its cultural and historical resources. The combination of them is unique on a global scale and determines the overall life of the destination.
- The management of cultural resources is fully linked to the management of visitor flows. The destination lives and feeds on tourism and all resources are mobilized for this.
- Everywhere the offer is related to guiding (tour guide) services, which is a way to add value to the tourist visit, while concentrating more income in the local community.
- The guiding services themselves are diverse both in type and in the way they are offered. Increasingly popular are the so-called "free tours" based on donations from visitors - in case they are satisfied with the tour. This practice is somewhat risky for the service suppliers, but the fact is that most visitors enjoy the opportunity not to be subject to payment in advance and necessarily, while at the same time showing generosity at their discretion. The offer increasingly covers electronic channels - websites and social networks.
- Despite the uniqueness of the cultural sites and resources themselves, IT technologies are introduced in the design of the tourist service in order to improve the visitor experience. This includes simple systems such as audio guides offering information in different languages, as well as 3D glasses and augmented virtual reality - a technology that is increasingly evolving and improving and its importance to the visitor experience should not be overlooked.





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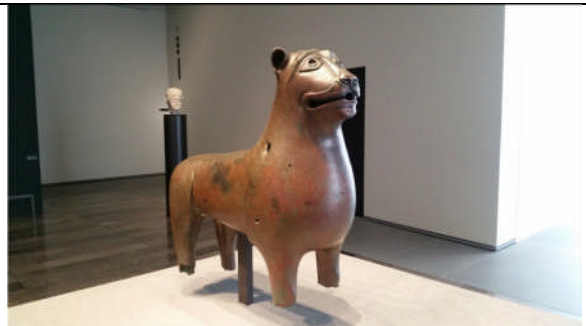
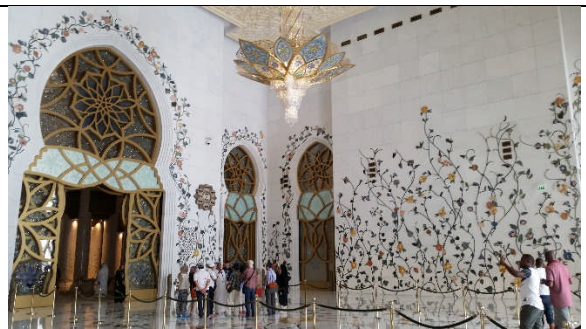
### ***Abu Dhabi and cultural tourism***

Abu Dhabi is one of the seven United Arab Emirates that today attracts a huge number of tourists - about 11.5 million a year before the Covid crisis. Most of the visits are related to cultural experiences, which says a lot about the destination, given that what is preserved in the local traditional culture is primarily intangible due to the centuries-old nomadic lifestyle of the local population until the mid-20th century. There are two main centers of visitor interest, both related to cultural tourism - the White Mosque of Abu Dhabi (the 8th largest religious site in the world) and the Louvre of Abu Dhabi.

Strengths to be considered:

- The lack of material cultural resources is not an obstacle to the development of cultural tourism. In the case of the UAE, development is linked to investing large amounts of capital, but we have examples of other destinations where such large investments are made, but not in cultural resources. It is usually invested in hotel and road infrastructure, or various types of amusement parks.
- Taking into account the visitor's interest and customer care when planning a cultural and tourist experience is extremely important - how the visitor will arrive, where s/he can park, how his/her visit to be comfortable in a hot climate, what vision to create, how to make everything aesthetic, etc.
- Especially the visit to the White Mosque is a very good example internationally for creating a product of religious tourism. The latter is always a delicate operation, given that the objects of religious tourism are primarily religious sites and tourist at second place; and that tourism must be planned and implemented in a way that does not interfere with, disrupt or jeopardize their primary function. The visit is organized in a way that does not make the visitor feel uncomfortable, despite the presence of certain restrictions and requirements at the site.





## ANNEX 4

### LIST OF INFORMATION SOURCES RELATED TO THE PRESENT STUDY

1. Haralampiev, K., Marchev, A. Empirical methods for collecting (and analyzing) data. Institute for Development of the Public Environment, Sofia, 2017
2. Effective preparation for the creation of a questionnaire, in:  
<https://survey.bg/info/%D0%BF%D1%8A%D1%80%D0%B2%D0%B8-%D1%81%D1%82%D1%8A%D0%BF%D0%BA%D0%B8/parvi-stapki-efektivna-podgotovka-za-sazdavaneto-na-anketa-34>
3. Information sources about the Sun of Todorka Festival:
  - [http://modernavratza.com/shesti-festival-za-drevni-kulturi-slanceto-na-todorka-m-valoga--s-ohoden-obshtina-vraca-11--14-septemvri-2121\\_30138.html](http://modernavratza.com/shesti-festival-za-drevni-kulturi-slanceto-na-todorka-m-valoga--s-ohoden-obshtina-vraca-11--14-septemvri-2121_30138.html)
  - <https://festivali.eu/%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%B2%D1%8F%D1%82-%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%85%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%B5%D1%81-%D0%B2-%D1%81-%D0%BE%D1%85%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BD/>
  - <https://www.vratza.bg/bg/1599549766.html>
4. Information sources about the Chestnut Festival:
  - <https://belasitsa.net/> - official site of Belasitsa Nature Park;
  - <https://www.visitpetrich.com/petrich/%D1%84%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BB-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%81-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE/>
5. Visitor information on popular destinations: <https://manyathetourist.com>
6. Visitor websites on cultural destinations:

- <https://romesite.com/>
- <https://visitabudhabi.ae/en>

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