



A STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF FESTIVAL TOURISM IN KAZANLAK MUNICIPALITY: THE CASE OF THE ROSE FESTIVAL 2019

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to observe the development of festival tourism in Kazanlak Municipality, and to assess the attitudes of participants and visitors of the traditional Rose Celebrations, which take place in early June. We have mainly focused on the satisfaction of participants from the events and the accompanying activities. The scientific **methods** applied here are statistical, historical, comparative descriptive, and regional analysis. The most important among them is, the survey, which has been discussed in more detail in the discussion. **The results** confirm the research hypothesis that the natural and anthropogenic resources available in Bulgaria are a prerequisite for the development of alternative forms of tourism. The main **conclusions** imply that the value of this kind of tourism is rather positive and is based on the possibility of combining active recreation with preservation of Bulgarian national traditions. The attractiveness of the region and its tourist potential and opportunities for development and improvement have been analysed thoroughly.

Keywords: tourism, festival, cultural tourism, festival tourism, traditions, Rose Festival, Kazanlak

INTRODUCTION

The present study focuses exclusively on festival tourism as a form of alternative tourism on the territory of Kazanlak Municipality. For this purpose, we have conducted a survey with participants and observers of Rose Festival 2019.

Festivals are events with a long history, but only in the last thirty years they have become a research topic in academic circles. Festivals attract a significant tourist flow and generate revenue for the local economy. Festival tourism is a relatively new phenomenon, which is developing at a rapid pace. According to a number of studies, it is clear that some of the most interesting tourist destinations are those that offer opportunities for combining exposure to cultural and historical heritage, natural sights and local folklore, including traditional celebrations and

festivals, for educational and recreational purposes.

In most studies, festivals are seen as a major regional assets. These analyses have focused on development possibilities, leading trends and problems associated with this alternative form of tourism (Getz (1), Gotham (2), Cudny (3), Cudny and Rouba (4) Markov and Borut (5)).

Other authors view them as a tourist product. In 2007, Mika defined festival tourism as one in which "the main motive is participation in cultural events such as films, theatre, music, street festivals or other events related to entertainment, entertainment and sports" (6). This is one of the reasons why it is considered as an independent form of alternative tourism.

In Bulgarian scientific literature "festival tourism" is defined as a subspecies of cultural tourism. Attempts have been made to agree on it a common definition, but researchers have not been unanimous in their views.

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One of the most prominent researchers in Bulgaria in the field of cultural and festival tourism is Sonya Alexieva. She notes that "festival tourism is characterized by dynamics and large appeal to the masses, with richly diverse genres, and different forms of traditional and modern cultural celebrations. These festivals involve different kinds of arts, authentic events and more." The author lists a number of such events, stating that these are festivals of "different art genres". To this group of events, she also refers "the adaptations of famous folk festivals, holidays and specific folk symbols" (7).

The driving force behind the existence and development of such festivals is the continuing interest in new cultural events, as well as the desire to satisfy the cognitive needs of consumers for this type of attraction. According to Hristova, they "develop their potential to attract participants and visitors (patrons, experts, locals and tourists) for the promotion of leading art trends and the cultural variety of high artistic quality and diversity of forms of entertainment." (8)

There is a large number of festivals and celebrations on the territory of Kazanlak Municipality that contribute to the development of festival tourism, some of them of local significance and others with national status. According to the municipal development plan of the municipality, these are **Chudomir Fest, National Theater Festival "The Comedy Hit of the Season", Celebrations in the Valley of the Thracian Kings, Musical Fest "Academician Petko Staynov", Rose Celebrations, and International Folklore Festival.** (9)

Rose Celebrations - The **Rose Celebrations** in Kazanlak is the first traditional festival in Bulgaria and has a history of over 115 years. It is one of the most remarkable fests in the country, dedicated to the beauty and fragrance of the precious Rosa Damascena. It was first celebrated in 1903 and has been held annually on the first Sunday of June. The celebrations are concurrent with **International Folklore Festival, during which all twin towns send representatives to Kazanlak Municipality.** In 2012 the Rose Celebrations were restructured as a multigenre festival. Now it brings together over 3000 participants from Kazanlak Municipality and Bulgaria, as well as from the twin towns of Kazanlak. (10)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the successful study of the attitudes of the participants, we prepared a survey containing 27 questions, of which 26 closed and 1 open. The respondents selected more than one option or the closed questions, the closed questions, and therefore the overall percentage of data processing exceeded 100%. The interviewed person comprised 185 in the age group of 18+. They were tourists visiting the Rose Festival 2019, part of the annual Rose Celebrations in Kazanlak Municipality, which took place on 02.06.2019. Interview method: Directly standardized interview on the day of the event.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The analysis of the opportunities for the development of festival tourism in the municipality of Kazanlak is based on the data obtained from the survey results.

185 respondents were interviewed, of which 60.54% or 112 were foreign tourists and 39.46% or 73 Bulgarian citizens. This shows that the festival is popular outside the country and provokes interest among many foreigners. The number of women participating in the study is higher than men, respectively by - 57.84% and 42.16%.

Based on the obtained results, no definitive assessment of the age of the festival visitors can be given as the results are approximately the same. However, it can be noted that the highest percentage is attributed to visitors at the age of 51 (34.05%). Respondents within the age range of 18-30 years amount to 25.41%, those between the ages of 31 and 40 years old. - 18.38% and those between 41-50 years. - 22.16%. These results are not disturbing because the majority of visitors are between 18 and 50 years old, which is evident from the results of the study. 154 persons or 78.97% defines themselves as employed, 19 (9.74%) indicated that they were still studying and 22 (11.28%) were retired. The analysis of the survey shows that 77.84% of the respondents have higher education and also declare a monthly income of over BGN 1000. (56.22%) which is probably due to the high education of employees. They are followed by those with income between 500 and 1000 leva. - 25.95%, and those in the income group of between 300 and 500 BGN. (16.22%).

It is clear from this analysis that the main respondents are visitors and tourists - 72.04%,

who have come especially for the Rose Festival and its accompanying celebrations and events. 18.85% said they were residents of Kazanlak, and 4.84% were business representatives. There were also 8 people or 4.30% who selected "Others" and noted that they were attending at a scientific conference in the district town of Stara Zagora.

The majority of the respondents (82.16%) expressed their positive attitude towards the festival tourism in Bulgaria and said that there were suitable conditions for its future

development (**Figure 1**). A leading opinion among them was that this form of tourism was an appropriate way for recreation and walking (63.78%), while some found it an appropriate way to preserve traditions and customs (32.43%). 14.59% of the visitors took advantage of the opportunity to create new social contacts and 2.16% visited the festival as a social event coinciding with a scientific conference held in the district town of Stara Zagora (**Figure 2**).

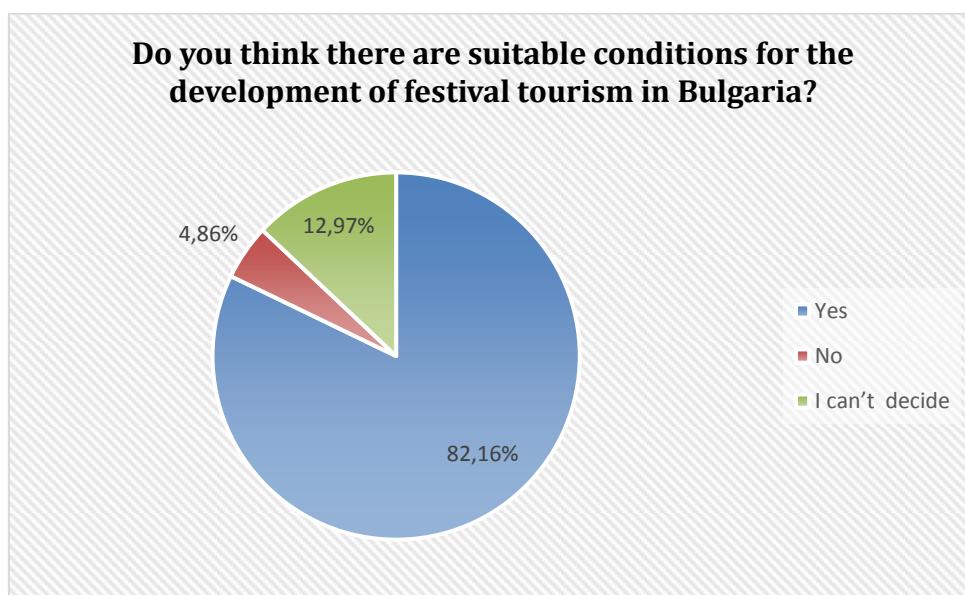


Figure 1. Conditions for the development of festival tourism

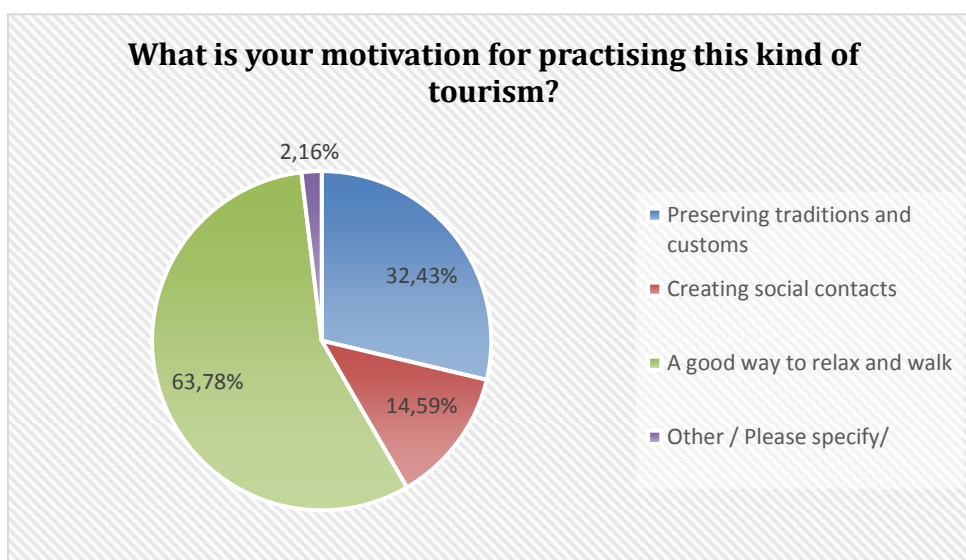


Figure 2. Reasons for practising

Respondents indicated spring (57.30%) and summer (57.84%) as preferred seasons for practising festival tourism. In the other two

seasons tourists were also active, but not so significantly, in the autumn - 17.30% attended festivals and in winter only 5.95% (**Figure 3**).

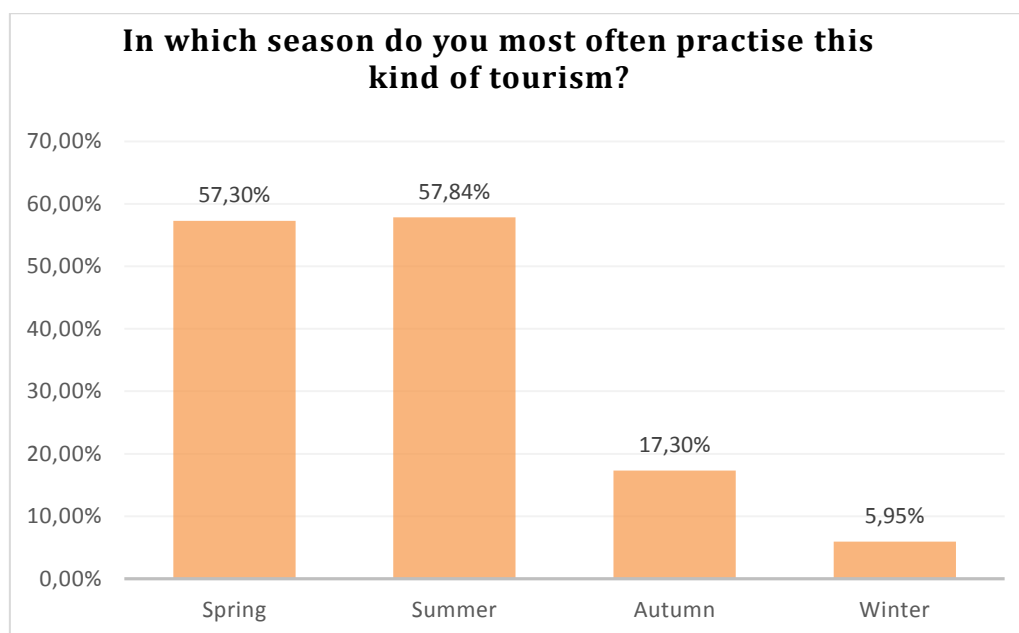


Figure 3. Preferred season

Figure 4 shows the results that show that 40,00% of the respondents engage into festival tourism once a year, with a similar percentage being the result of those practising 2-3 times a

year (38,92%). A small proportion of respondents (14,59%) indicated that they attended festivals more than 5 times a year.

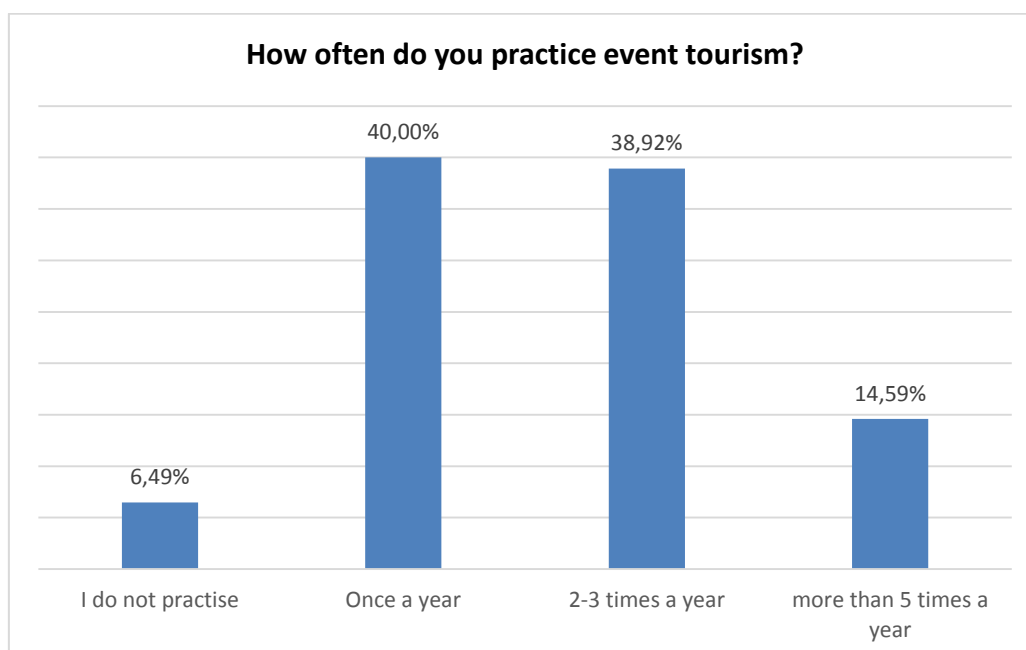


Figure 4. Frequency of practice

The results obtained in **Figure 5** show that most of the visitors (69,73%) have learned about the Rose Festival from friends or by word of mouth. Those who read about it on the Internet and social networks were only 24,32%. This shows that the publicity campaign has not been well organized. This is also evident from the data in **Figure 6**. Only

29,73% characterized that the promotion of the particular event as excellent, 40,00% gave a good score, 20,54% said it was satisfactory and 4,86% said "not very good". In order to get better results, more work should be done to improve and find new ways of promoting the festival to visitors.

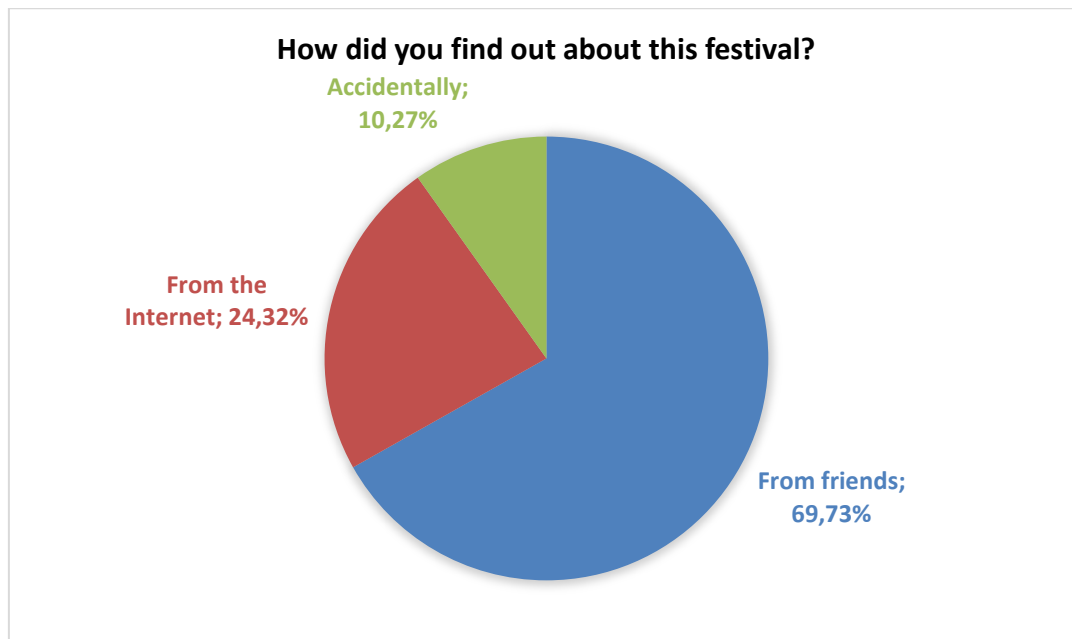


Figure 5. Source of information

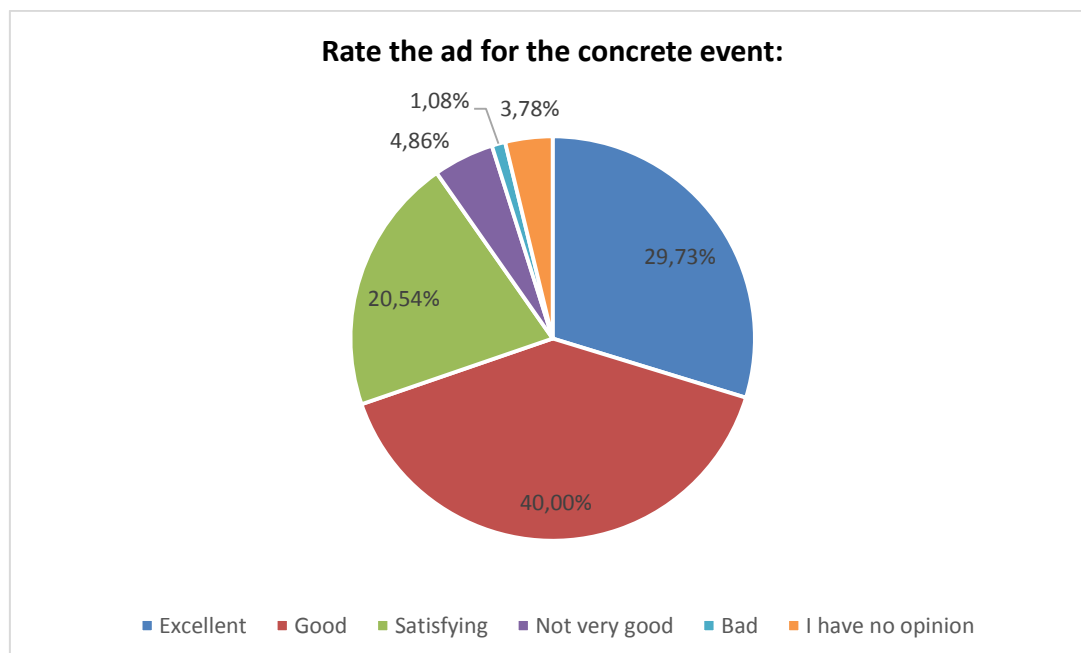


Figure 6. Evaluation of the ad

According to 62.7% of the visitors (**Figure 7**), the development of festival tourism would not cause problems for the local population. However, on the contrary 96.22% (**Figure 8**) claim that local people would benefit from the increase of tourists and visits in the region because they have a positive economic impact.

Data presented in **Figure 9** show that 43.39% of visitors attending the Rose Festival 2019 preferred to stay in a hotel. Not so high is the percentage of those who opted for at a guest house: they were 15.87%. Part of the participants said they had stayed over with friends and relatives (15.34%) or were just

taking a day trip to Kazanlak and returning to their homes the same evening (25.40%). These data are also consistent with the data shown in **Figure 10**, where it is clear that most of the respondents are willing to allocate from their budget funds up to BGN 100 - 37.30% and 28.65% up to 50 leva. Therefore, it can be concluded that these people have used hotels and guest houses as accommodation during their stay. The percentage of those who did not use any accommodation is roughly the same as those who declared that they had not allocated any means for accommodation - 25.40% and 24.32% respectively.

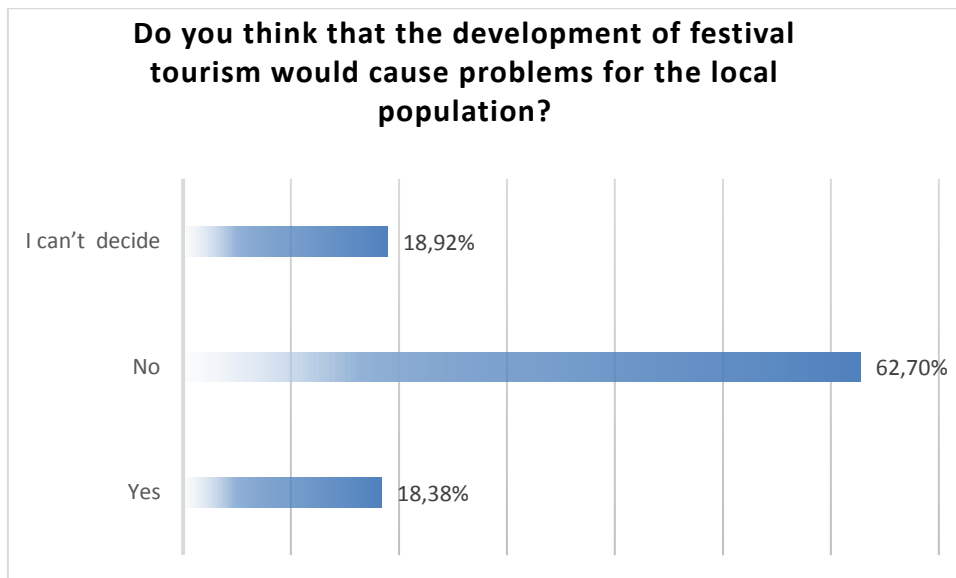


Figure 7. Local population and festival tourism

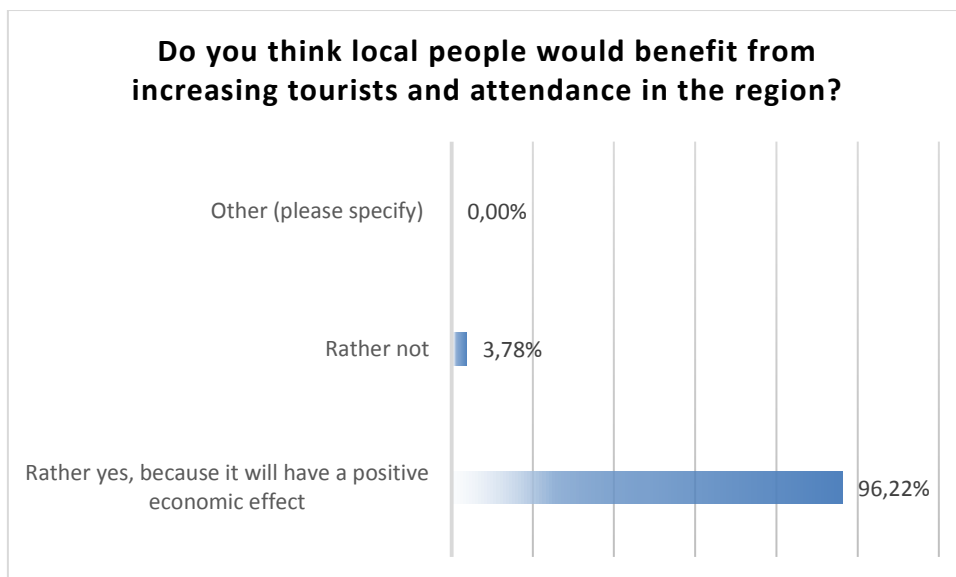


Figure 8. Benefit to the local population

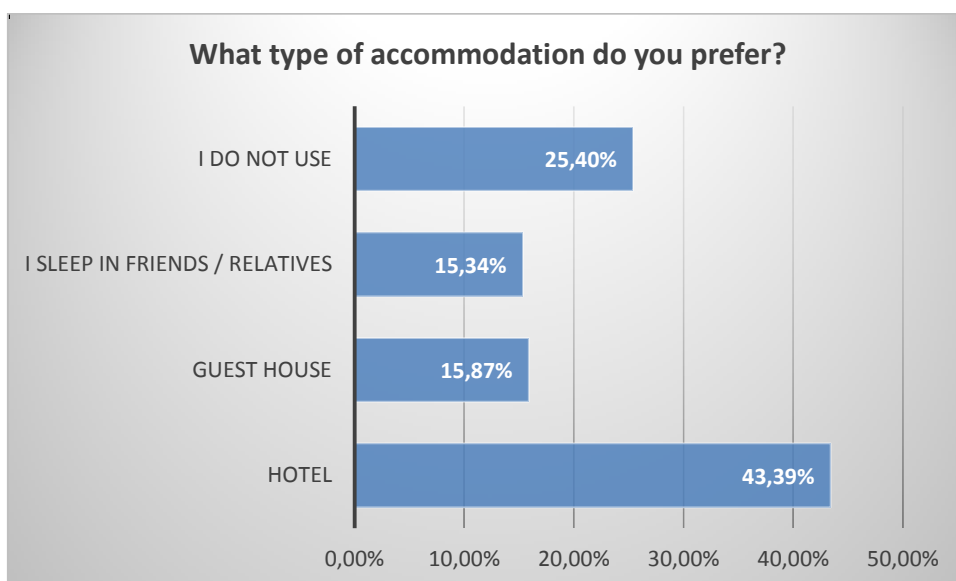


Figure 9. Accommodation type

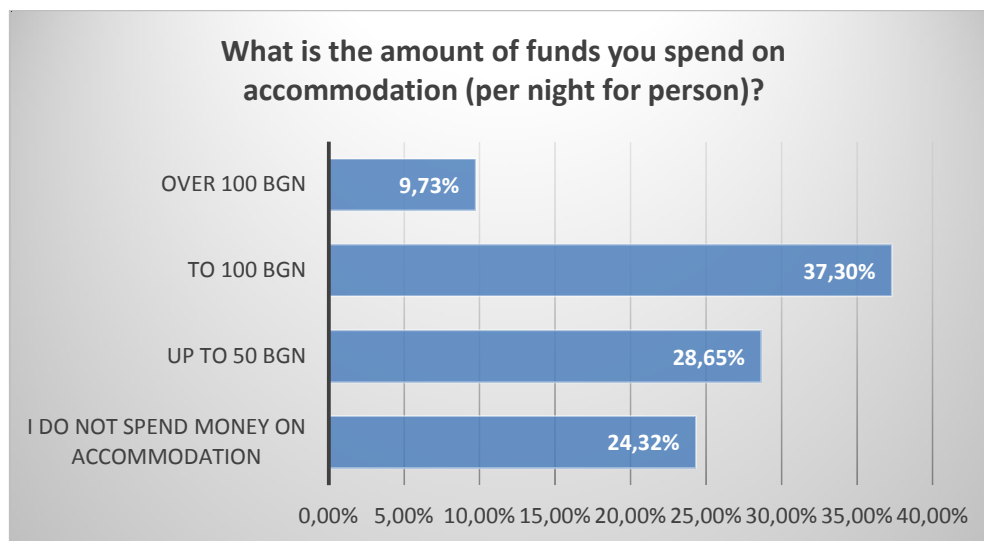


Figure 10. Accommodation facilities

CONCLUSION

- The Rose Festival has a positive economic impact on Kazanlak Municipality as it generates a solid flow of tourists. The majority of respondents are foreign tourists staying in hotels and guest houses in the city.
- At present, the festival is gaining popularity both in Bulgaria and abroad. Every year the number of international visitors increases and through their personal observations and experience they promote the event, the city and Bulgaria in their countries.
- It is necessary to include interesting events from the cultural calendar of the municipality in different tour operator packages, which can be offered on the Bulgarian and international tourist market.
- Digital marketing in the advertising of this type of tourism should be stepped up. After analyzing the obtained empirical data, we can conclude that the Rose Festival and the accompanying festivals are a prerequisite for the development of festival tourism in Kazanlak Municipality. They generate an economic benefit for the local population by creating jobs at the time of its running. It would be beneficial for the municipality to create constant employment and economic revenues in the local economy by doing more to attract existing and new partners – in order to stimulate the alternative forms of tourism, such as festivals and all related businesses.

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