

Prospects for the development of the restaurant industry in hotel-restaurant complexes

Petya Raeva¹, Snezhana Ivanova^{1,*}

¹ Department of Catering and Nutrition, University of Food Technologies, Plovdiv 4002, Bulgaria

Abstract. After Covid 19, hazards appeared for the development of the hotel and restaurant business. Some of the skilled personnel left this business and headed for more sustainable industries or abroad. Therefore, the aim of the work is to study the main factors affecting the survival and prospects for the development of the restaurant business in the hotel-restaurant complexes in Bulgaria. The main motivations of consumers for the future development of modern restaurants in the country aimed at increasing customer satisfaction have been studied. The research was conducted through qualitative and quantitative marketing research and SWOT analysis of available high-end hotels and dining and entertainment establishments in Bulgaria. Mathematical and statistical models were used to process the data of the respondents for each of the questions. The results are presented graphically. A comparative characterization of six hotel-restaurant chains in Bulgaria was made in terms of categorization, comfort, amenities and quality of service, and way of eating in the restaurants. The positive sides and their shortcomings and prospects for development in the current economic situation are reflected, and the consequences of the Covid 19 crisis are also taken into account.

1 Introduction

A restaurant makes a profit from culinary and service operations, its business is selling food and beverages to individuals and groups of guests. Restaurants may have different number of seats, may be stand-alone or located in hotel complexes, resorts or shopping malls. They may or may not offer alcoholic beverages as an accompaniment to meals, and may have expanded or limited menus. They may offer high quality food and very good service, or provide fast service at low prices. Restaurants serve local diners, tourists, tour groups and those with quick service use alternative service methods.

Service technology in the restaurant industry is an element of the overall tourism product. No two service systems are exactly the same in any tourist organization and each establishment develops its own, which is seen as a combination of material environment, staff and service process. Synchrony between these elements is mandatory, with each site emphasizing those of them that are more profitable and thus influencing the system's performance [12]. In order to be successful, service technology must take into account changes in the environment, mainly demand and technology factor. The object of restaurant service is the restaurant, and the subject is the restaurant operator.

Today, the success of a restaurateur [8] depends on many factors, but first of all on the presence of good management, modern cuisine, the presence of the restaurant concept, bar, impeccable service, interesting interior and reasonable prices.

One of the most important elements of the restaurant business is the location of the restaurant. The specific characteristic of restaurants in hotel-restaurant complexes is that the choice of location allows defining the type of restaurant and its operation as "A la carte" or "All inclusive". An all-inclusive restaurant is usually located in a large area depending on the capacity of the hotel, or the hotel or tourist complex. The halls can also be located on two floors. Having an elite restaurant, the complex is placed in a small square to ensure the return of its investment. It is necessary to have the availability of parking next to it [2]. Site selection is preceded by a demographic analysis of the area in which the restaurant is located. A survey is carried out on the age, occupation, and average income of people who regularly visit nearby and who are future potential consumers of the hotel and restaurant. Traffic flows should be carefully studied [9, 13].

As the future for the development of the modern restaurant industry in hotel and restaurant complexes is to increase customer satisfaction by introducing innovation and new technologies. Some restaurateurs remain strict conservatives when it comes to the "new". A number of factors such as - demographic trends of declining population, heavy outmigration, reluctance of skilled personnel to work in the sector and many others emerge as a problem regarding service in restaurants [3]. The purpose of the research is to study the main factors and reasons affecting the survival and prospective development of the hotel and restaurant industry in Bulgaria after a post-Covid 19 situation.

* Corresponding author: author@e-mail.org

2 Materials and methods

The main theoretical knowledge and methods for the study of the importance of high-category hotels and adjacent establishments in Bulgaria have been used to carry out this research. A survey methodology was used, and a quantitative marketing research was conducted on the restaurant development of large hotel complexes and their adjoining restaurants. Mathematical and statistical processing of the data was carried out using Excel systems.

It is these processes that become the basis of the so-called "trends" in the tourism industry as a whole and in the restaurant industry as a sub-sector [4]. The advent of smartphones has given rise to a boom in online ordering (and delivery) with hundreds of apps, some of them customized and restaurant-specific. The vegan trend is also gaining momentum [4], influencing not only the ingredients used but also the way food is prepared and served. Two other trends are also shaping restaurant service perspectives - the desire of customers to eat in a more informal setting, and the desire of customers to eat with products directly from the producer. When staying at the hotel, guests have the opportunity to visit different restaurants in the complex with modern and contemporary menus.

Improving the regulatory framework in tourism is among the main challenges facing the Ministry of Tourism (MT) as the institution responsible for developing and implementing tourism policy. There is a need to build consensus among the interested countries regarding tourism laws and related sub-regulatory framework so as to ensure the provision of quality tourism service with limited environmental impact and maximum benefits to local communities [14].

3 Results and discussion

The level of financial stability of the Bulgarian economy has a strong impact on the development of tourism and the tourism industry. Financial stability has a direct impact on the well-being of the population, income levels and the propensity to consume tourism products and services. However, sovereign debt and credit growth exceed GDP levels in many countries, posing a major risk to the development of their economies and the tourism sector in particular.

3.1 Economic factors

In Bulgaria, the financial stability curve follows that of the world and Europe. The stability of the national currency facilitates the development of fruitful financial relations with other EU countries. For tourism, 2020 has become a year in which an entire industry was brought to its knees globally and in which the so-called chain of success was finally broken. Among the events that have had an impact, apart from COVID-19 and the subsequent global economic and social crisis, let us recall the bankruptcy of Thomas Cook at the end of 2019, the merger and acquisition of major hotel chains (Mariott,

Accor), the global incoming model of the sharing economy (AirBnb), the role of online OTAs (Booking.com and Expedia), the unstable political situation in recent years in certain regions of the world, and migration processes. The precursors and catalysts for change are many, and tourism has always been a highly sensitive and responsive industry that thrives where there is calm, predictability and prosperity. Tourism is also among the national priorities for the Bulgarian economy and in 2019 it will account for 12% of GDP and 10% of total EU GDP. We are expecting a slow recovery of selling prices from the fluctuation and risk aversion of tourism service providers, significant shrinkage in the profit margin of companies in the industry, driven by customer demand for optimal value for money, increased costs and volatile cash flows, which reflects on the hotel and restaurant industry [15].

3.2 Hazards for the development of the hotel and restaurant industry

- Long-term loss of position as a tourist destination due to unclear vision for the development of the sector, insufficient visibility, positioning as a mass destination, undeveloped and undiscovered potential of tourism with high added value.
- Insufficient economic support from the state.
- Deepening inter-company and intra-company indebtedness, insufficient liquidity for restart.
- Movement of some of the workers in the sector to more stable industries and people leaving the country after the pandemic was more contained.
- Acceptance of social discourse as the norm. In the service sector, full digitalization of processes is not possible.
- Functioning of the economy with fewer people and how the income of the surplus people will be protected.
- Compromises in service offerings subordinated to cost saving.
- Focus only on survival, not on business development through digitalization and optimization of operational processes.

3.3 Environmental factors

Climate change is also having a strong impact on the preferences of tourists to many tourist destinations traditionally attractive to millions of tourists, and is becoming one of the biggest challenges that the tourism industry, respectively the hotel and restaurant industry, has ever faced. However, Bulgaria is among the most vulnerable EU Member States to climate change due to the significant changes in hydrometeorological parameters. In the longer term, the country is expected to face serious consequences due to the high sensitivity of its economic sectors to climate change and their currently limited adaptive capacity. Climate change could lead to more widespread heat waves as well as more frequent floods and droughts. The development of the hospitality industry is directly dependent on environmental factors and the quality of natural assets. In view of this, in

addition to climate change, the constant pressure on the environment from both the tourism industry and other economic sectors is also a threat. Overdevelopment, the generation of sewage and municipal solid waste, and the irresponsible use of natural resources (topography, climate, water, biodiversity and landscape) affect the components of the environment and lead to serious environmental problems that either threaten the tourist site (product) itself or reach larger scales and affect the image of the entire destination.

The hotel and restaurant industry in Bulgaria is characterized by strong seasonality and dependence on weather conditions and the general state of the environment. Extreme events and natural disasters, which are a clear signal of climate change, are increasingly frequent. Bulgaria as a tourist destination, but also any hotel and restaurant enterprise or complex, must take steps to adapt its hospitality offer to the changes taking place. Possible options for action include reducing the supply of seaside holidays in the hottest summer months at the expense of increased supply of mountain tourism, expanding the supply in the high season and off-season, encouraging the development of alternative forms of tourism with lower negative environmental impact.

3.4 Socio-cultural factors

Demographic, social and cultural changes are leading to changes in tourists' motivations and preferences. Today's tourists are increasingly taking leisure trips closer to home, reducing their length of stay but travelling more frequently, seeking higher quality and buying 'last minute'. They are more disloyal to the destination and the tourism product, rapidly changing their preferences and requirements, looking for more specialised products and demanding detailed and reliable information about them [11]. Before making a final purchase decision, they compare features and prices from several tourism offers and seek opportunities for social and cultural interactions with representatives of the host community [1]. A new type of consumer is also emerging - the so-called "online tourists" - impatient, inquisitive, communicative, with a pronounced personality, and are active consumers of information on the Internet [3,5]. These changes in consumer behaviour are having an impact on tourism offers: the amounts of them are growing, and they are increasingly specialised and more tailored to individual customer preferences. This calls for a flexible and adaptive combination of different product components - offering dynamic packages [5].

Tourism management authorities in Bulgaria should support the hotel and restaurant industry in the process of adaptation to changes in tourist behaviour by providing regular information and advisory support.

3.5 Technological factors

In order to meet modern requirements, the hotel and restaurant industry must be technologically modernized, attractively and comprehensively presented on the Internet and offered in a digital environment through a

range of electronic services. Steps are needed to modernise transport at national, regional and municipal levels. Technological factors have a significant impact on the development of restaurants in hotels and large hotel complexes and especially on the distribution system of restaurant services and products in hotel complexes [7]. Technological innovations - booking hotel services through the Internet, and mobile devices and digital channels for the realization of hotel services through the corresponding catering in the restaurants built in them - have a particularly strong impact. The dynamics of competition on international tourism markets and the priority nature of tourism for the Bulgarian economy require compliance with the evolution of the information society and the mass application of digital distribution opportunities. However, this also requires the development of relevant digital skills both among those employed in the sector, the hotel and restaurant industry and among students at all educational levels [7].

3.6 Analysis of tourist flows in Bulgaria and from abroad

The tourism sector needs to be urgently included in the Recovery and Sustainability Plan for Bulgaria. As a strategic sector for the Bulgarian economy, tourism should be supported with separate measures by the state. After the massive vaccination against Covid 19, the sector should gradually recover and increase its contribution to economic growth and employment. The restoration and accelerated development of transport corridors, smarter management of tourism flows and a variety of tourism packages tailored to expected changes in consumer behaviour are vital.

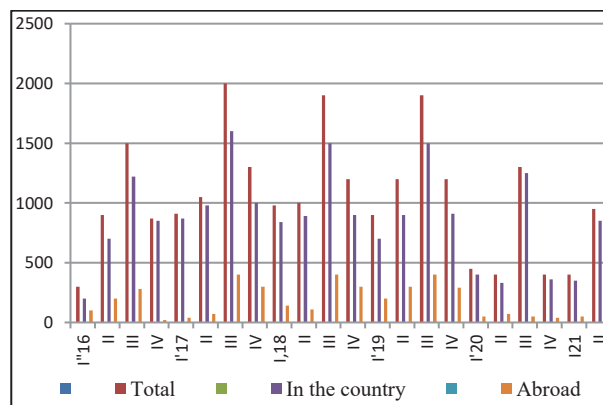


Fig. 1. Travelers aged 15 and over by quarter

In the second quarter of 2021, during the ongoing epidemic situation in the country, 931.7 thousand Bulgarian citizens made tourist trips. The vast majority of them, 93.0%, travelled domestically only, 6.1% travelled abroad only and 0.9% travelled both domestically and abroad (Figure 1).

In the second quarter of 2021, Bulgarians aged 25-44 years travelled the most - 429.1 thousand, or 46.1% of all travellers. In all age groups, the relative share of domestic travel is prevalent, with the highest share for persons aged 25-44 years - 94.7% of travellers in this age group. The

proportion of 45–64-year-olds who travelled abroad was 7.6% of those in this age group and was the highest compared to the other groups (Figure 2). The majority of tourist trips of persons aged 15 and over both at home (61.0%) and abroad (52.1%) were with purpose of "rest and excursion" (Fig.2).

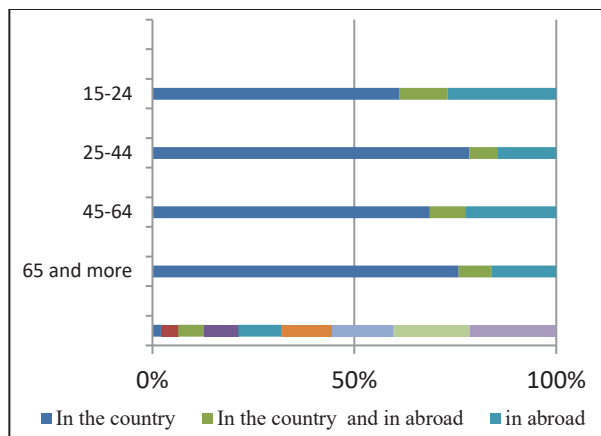


Fig. 2. Travellers aged 15 and over by age group in the second quarter of 2021

After March 2020, given the stringent measures put in place at home and abroad to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the economic fallout from the global crisis, many tourists stopped taking trips outside their home country. This was a prerequisite for an even stronger focus on domestic tourism as the Ministry of Tourism's top priority in 2023. A strong emphasis was placed on the Bulgarian tourism product; the advantages of our resorts, the opportunities for health, spa and wellness tourism, the authenticity of our culture, traditions and customs, the charm of our small towns, the good quality of food and wine, having modern cities and more.

3.7 Study of the importance of high-category hotels and their available dining and entertainment facilities in hotel chains in Bulgaria

Most of the available four- and five-star hotels in Bulgaria are part of hotel chains. Hotel chains are important for the development of the hospitality industry. They help to introduce high service standards to the tourism market. Hotel chains contribute to the spread and significant increase in the level of organization of production and service to tourists, and create a certain image of the hotel service, where, although in another country, the tourist is almost like at home, in a familiar and comfortable environment. Bulgarian hotel chains are positioned in the higher categories, similar to foreign chains with representatives in the country. Their location stands out strongly - on the seaside (49%), in mountain resorts (28%) and urban areas, (20%) mainly in Sofia. There are almost no representatives of local chains in the interior of the country. However, it can be seen that the individual member hotels of Bulgarian hotel chains are heterogeneous, do not belong to the same category and in

most cases do not provide similar products. There is even more of the opposite trend - when an owner owns a prosperous seaside holiday hotel, the next step is to turn to mountain or rural tourism, or vice versa. This is explained by the owners' desire to capture a larger market share as well as to provide their loyal customers with year-round opportunities to use their services [8].

The quality of the tourist product offered is the harmony the human has with the natural environment referring to its sustainable development. Maintaining sustainability in tourism requires managing the impacts of the natural and socio-economic environment, establishing metrics to measure them and maintaining the tourism product and market. There is no sustainability without quality [8].

3.7.1 Victoria Group Hotels & Resorts

Founded in 1996, Victoria Group Tourism Holding is today the largest hotel operator in Bulgaria.

Their portfolio consists of hotels categorized by 4 and 5 stars in the top destinations of Bulgaria, which include:

- “Marinella” Hotel Sofia - 5 stars;
- “Maritsa” Hotel Plovdiv - 4 stars;
- “Pamporovo” in the Pamporovo complex - 4 stars.

In the resort complex “Elenite”, hotels include:

- “Royal Castle Design & Spa” - 5 stars;
- “Royal Park” Hotel - 4 stars;
- “Andalucia Beach” Hotel - 3 stars;
- “Atrium Beach” Hotel – stars;
- “Royal Bay” Hotel - 4 stars;
- “Negresco” Hotel - 3 stars;
- “Royal Casa” Villas - 4 stars;
- Holiday Villas Elenite - 4 stars;
- In the resort complex Sunny Beach on the first line are located the hotels “Victoria Palace” - 5 stars and “Chaika Beach Resort” - 4 stars;
- In the antique town of Sozopol is located the holiday complex “Hacienda Beach” - 4 stars.

The hotels are highly recognizable for their holiday, city, event and conference tourism. Their bases offer more than 13,000 beds in Sofia, Plovdiv, Pamporovo, Sunny Beach and the resort village Elenite. We target all market segments and offer the best product for both guests and employees.

For 20 years they have built key partnerships with the world's largest tour operators. Business Travel Consortiums including Carlson Wagonlit Travel, Amex, BCD Travel, and others, as well as all Holiday Tour Operators such as Thomas Cook, TUI, Balkan Holidays, Coral, Pegas, Anex, Solvex and more.

They are not limited to achieving good financial results. They are one of the few companies in Bulgaria that provide real opportunities for career paths. Their professional development center enables over 3,000 Bulgarians to stay in Bulgaria and develop here.

In 2017, they are the first hotel group that allows free movement by electric car in Bulgaria. Electric car charging stations have been installed in all hotels. Their goal is sustainable business development with responsibility and care for the environment.

3.7.2 BT Collection

BTDS (BT Development Services AD) is one of the largest asset management companies in Bulgaria, specializing in hotels, resorts and real estate, as well as in the exercise of tour operator and engineering activities.

The company is a direct successor of "Balkantourist" - the only and the largest state-owned tourism development company of the recent past.

Their mission is to provide first-class asset management combined with the highest level of guest service, and thereby promote Bulgaria as a tourist destination.

BTDS is a management company of four- and five-star hotels and complexes in some of the most popular resorts in the country - Borovets Resort, Golden Sands Resort, Saints Constantine and Helena Resort and the village of Arbanasi, near the old capital of Bulgaria - Veliko Tarnovo. The hotels in the BT Collection group offer first-class service and all the conditions necessary for a relaxing holiday for the modern active person. The BTDS hotels also have everything you need to organize all kinds of business events: conferences, congresses, seminars and team building at a world-class level. Conference centers and halls combine functionality and modern design to offer maximum comfort to business guests.

BTDS successfully combines the traditions it has inherited with contemporary trends in design and art. With its projects, the company manages to preserve the authentic spirit of some of the most iconic tourist sites in the country, as well as to improve and modernize them through modern creative solutions. The company Ttrust Engineering Ltd, the engineering company in the BTDS family, has also played a role in this. The company specializes in the construction and maintenance of tourist sites, lift facilities, installations, construction and furnishing of real estate, providing project management and investment control.

Hotels include:

- "Rila" Borovets Hotel - 4 stars;
- "International Hotel Casino & Tower Suites", Golden Sands - 4 stars.
- Complex Grand Hotel "Varna" - 5 stars;
- "Arbanasi Palace" Arbanasi, Veliko Tarnovo - 5 stars.

3.7.3 Grifid Hotels

Founded in 2001, there are now 7 hotels in the hotel chain, which together have over 1,680 rooms and 3,400 beds located in Golden Sands. The hotel chain holds more than 100 prestigious awards.

As a *quality* hotel and restaurant product, their biggest mission is to ensure that every guest is truly happy, relaxed and satisfied with their holiday. When we talk about quality, we mean everything from the taste of the food and beverages, to the impeccable hygiene and design of the bars and eateries, to the pleasure of the service in the hotel and when dining in the hotel's restaurants.

For *innovation*, they believe that every vacation leaves its mark. That's why they work hard to create unique places that are in line with the latest trends in the modern hospitality industry for service, design and equipment.

For *dedication*, the people who entrust their vacation to them and the people who work selflessly every day to give unforgettable moments that make the brand truly exceptional!

For *attention to detail*, they care about the details that are of utmost importance and strive to always exceed expectations. In this way, they ensure guests have a top quality holiday. The staff happily go out of their way to provide the customer with everything they need.

At Grifid Hotels, they realize how important the environment and its preservation is for the business to exist and grow. As tourism service providers, they are extremely keen to have a policy that spares and conserves resources and strive to manage their business in a way that reduces the detrimental impact of operational activities on the environment, using best practice and modern methods in their operations.

Hotels include:

- "Arabella" Hotel - 4 stars;
- "Bolero and Aquapark" Hotel - 4 stars;
- "Vistamar" Hotel - 4 stars;
- "Metropol" Hotel - 4 stars;
- "Foresta" Hotel - 3 stars;
- "Encanto Beach" Hotel - 4 stars;
- "Sentido Marea" Hotel - 4 stars.

3.7.4 Festa Hotels

"Festa Hotels" is a hotel chain, part of "Festa Holding", established in 2003, with a proven record of high-quality service and personal approach to each guest over the years. Thanks to their attractive locations, the hotels of the chain offer various options for summer seaside relaxation, winter ski holidays, business travel and a wide range of restorative spa and balneotherapy treatments.

For fans of seaside holidays, Festa's collection includes three hotels in two of the most popular destinations on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast - Nessebar and Pomorie. Our guests can also enjoy mountain skiing holidays in our hotels in the "Borovets" Resort, as well as city business trips in hotels such as "Festa Sofia", located in a quiet location in the capital.

Hotels include:

- Festa Sofia - 4 stars, Sofia;
- Festa Panorama - 4 stars Nessebar;
- Festa Via Pontica - 4 stars, Pomorie;
- Festa Pomorie Resort - 4 stars, Pomorie;
- Festa Winter Palace - 5 stars, Borovets;
- Festa Chamkoria - 4 stars, Borovets;
- Dunav Plaza - 4 stars, Ruse.

3.7.5 Sharlopov Hotels

"Sharlopov Hotels" (now Sharlopov Group) is the first private hotel chain in Bulgaria, established in 1999. For 21 years now, it has been offering clients and partners not only high-quality travel services at competitive prices, but also the unique opportunity to feel in their "Home away from Home!" The brand "Sharlopov Group" carries the idea of tourism related to health, spa, nature, history,

ethnography, and family values. By taking care of our health, and by resting, we also fulfill an important task to help establish Bulgaria as a year-round tourist destination with exceptional natural features, climate, mineral waters, cultural and historical heritage, and national identity.

“The Sharlopov Group” is also the first Bulgarian hotel chain to expand its presence in Europe with the opening in 2010 of the Palmenwald Schwarzwaldhof, a four-star spa and wellness hotel in Freudenstadt, Baden-Württemberg, Germany.

The brand “Sharlopov Group” unites the corporate values of the company in a common idea. This is the idea of dynamic development, innovative thinking and inspiring proposals. The high standard and quality of the products and services offered, the professionalism in service and the continuous drive for innovation are highly appreciated by our customers.

The Company is a member of the following social organizations:

- Bulgarian Union of Balneology and Spa Tourism (member of the European Spas Association ESPA);
- Bulgarian Tourist Union;
- Bulgarian Hotel and Restaurant Association (BHRA);
- Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria (CEIB/ KRIB);
- German-Bulgarian Chamber of Industry and Commerce;
- Associations of hoteliers and restaurateurs in Sandanski, Devin and Veliko Tarnovo.

Hotels include:

- “Pirin” Park Hotel Sandanski - 5 stars;
- Grand Hotel “Yantra” Veliko Tarnovo - 4 stars;
- Grand Hotel “Murgavets” Pamporovo - 4 stars;
- Spa Hotel “Devin” Devin - 4 stars;
- Complex “Sozopolis” Sozopol - 3 stars.

3.7.6 FPI Hotels & Resorts

Founded in 2006, FairPlay Properties Management EOOD (FPPM) is the registered company behind the FPI Hotels & Resorts brand. The company is part of the portfolio of FairPlay International JSC (FPI), one of the most respected investment companies in Bulgaria, with a history of more than 25 years.

FPI Hotels & Resorts operates several hotels in Sofia, including Arena di Serdica Residence Hotel and Crystal Palace Boutique Hotel, as well as three holiday properties - Santa Marina Holiday Village, Sozopol and Viva Mare Beach Hotel near the Black Sea town of Sozopol and SPA Resort St. Ivan Rilski in the ski resort of Bansko. In addition to its core business, the company is also active in property management, offering services including property management, rental, and maintenance of properties in resorts.

The high-quality service standards of FPI Hotels & Resorts and the individual approach to each guest are the main factors that distinguish the chain among other hotels in Bulgaria. Proven for their individual style and contemporary comfort, the hotels of the chain offer boutique services and special attention to each guest.

Hotels include:

- “Arena di Serdica” Hotel, Sofia - 5 stars;
- “Crystal Palace” Hotel, Sofia - 4 stars;
- “Santa Marina” Holiday Village - 3 stars;
- “Viva Mare Beach” Hotel, Sozopol - 4 stars;
- Spa resort "St. Ivan Rilski", Bansko - 4 stars.

In general, Bulgarian hotel chains are yet to develop. A big advantage for them is the current unsaturated market for hotel chains in the country and the large number of potential hotels that could be joined together. At this stage, however, apart from the launch of a separate brand, Bulgarian chains are hardly working to differentiate their product based on their own specifics or technology, and rely entirely on growth through ownership. The hotel chains are building 4- and 5-star hotels with very good conditions at reasonable prices.

3.8. Marketing research and SWOT analysis of the available high category hotels and their available dining and entertainment facilities in Bulgaria

The attitudes of people when visiting the high-end hotels and their available dining and leisure facilities were investigated through a survey. The results are presented in the following graphs.

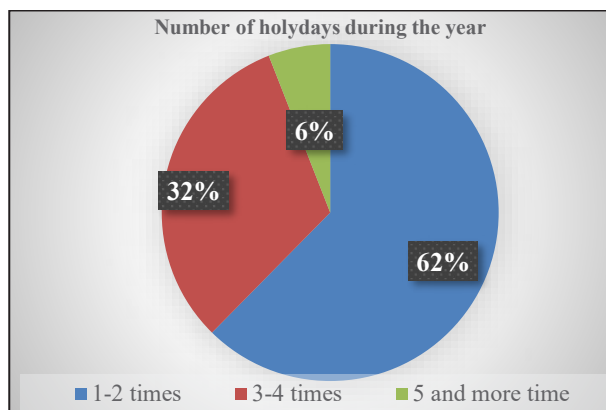


Fig. 3. Treatment of respondents for frequency of annual leave taken

Comment: 62% of respondents take 1 to 2 holidays a year, in line with the annual leave. 32% of the respondents having more leisure time and more financial capability for leisure and holidays go up to 3 to 4 times a year in different seasons of the year and only 6% of the respondents take more than 5 holidays a year who are not engaged in productive work but more intellectual and have an adventurous spirit and great financial capability (Fig.3).

Comment: 40% of the respondents visit high-category hotels whenever they go on holiday or on a business trip, the most likely reason for this is high financial capability. 43% of them do it, at most once or twice, these are probably the people who comply with their annual vacation and vacation once or twice a year.

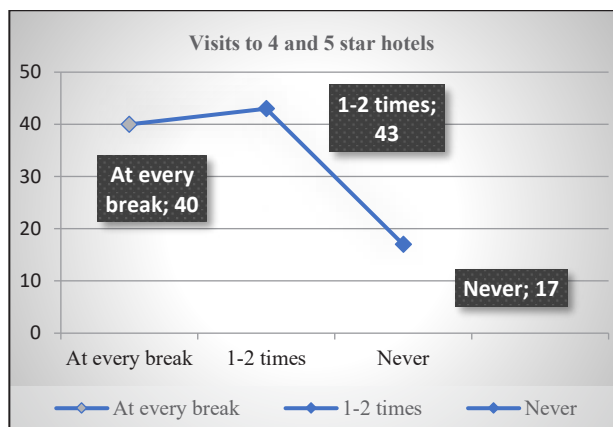


Fig. 4. Statistical and graphic processing of data on the frequency of visits to high-class hotels and hotel complexes

17% are people who never visit such places, the most likely reason for this is that the prices of these places are high (Fig.4).

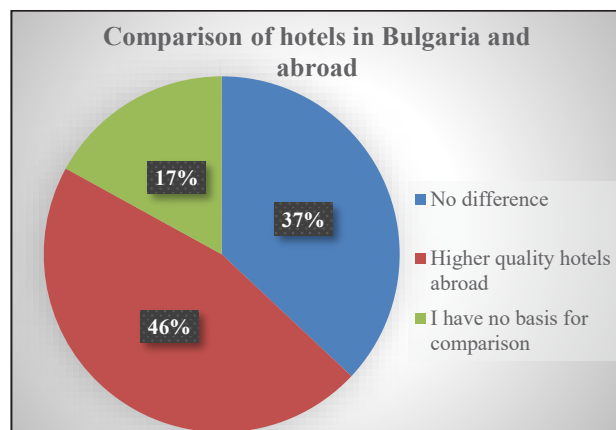


Fig. 5. Graphic presentation of the results of the conducted survey regarding the respondents for a comparison of low-category hotels in Bulgaria with high-category hotels abroad

Comment: A large percentage (46%) of the respondents are of the opinion that hotels abroad are much better, this most likely comes from the service and customer care, but also from the price difference and extras received. 37% find no difference, which means that Bulgarian hotels can provide a competitive experience. 17% have no benchmark due to the fact that they have not left the country (Fig. 5).

Comment: The reason price would be most important (26%) is most likely because people base their visit on their financial capability. The next most important part is the food (22%), as the experience is considered complete if good, and if the food is bad, the stay is ruined. After that comes location (18%), how accessible the hotel is by car, and proximity to tourist sites. Next, service (16%) also plays an important role, more so on a subsequent visit to the hotel. Finally, amenities (13%) and additional entertainment (5%), as an overall addition to the visit (Fig 6).

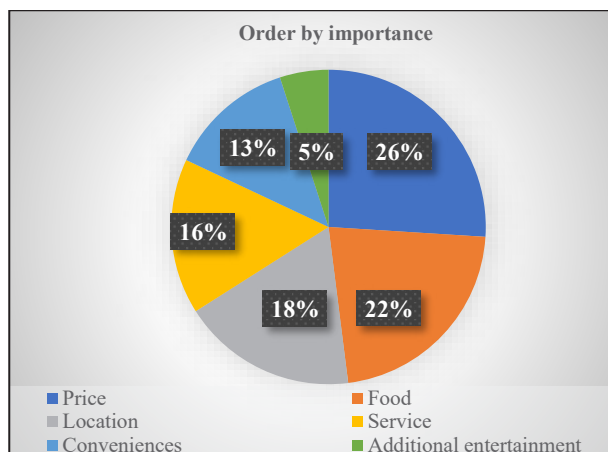


Fig. 6. Graphic representation of the results of the conducted survey regarding the respondents on the order of importance of things when booking a hotel

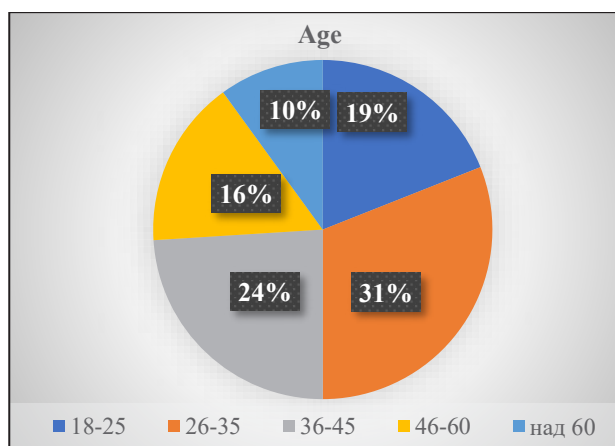


Fig. 7. Graphic presentation of the results for the ratio of respondents by age indicator

Comment: The highest percentage of respondents were aged between 26-35 years old (31%), they are the most active in travel and have relatively good financial opportunities, followed by 36-45-year-olds with 24%, they are already fulfilled in their work and have high financial opportunities in most cases. 18–25-year-olds can hardly visit 4- and 5-star hotels because these are students in most cases who are self-supporting and paying for education, yet their percentage is only 5% less than 36–45-year-olds indicating that they do take importance in travelling. 46–60-year-olds (16%) and over 60-year-olds (10%) don't travel as much anymore and spend more time on children and grandchildren (Fig.7).

Table 1. SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Most hotels have a central location in towns ✓ Personalized service, stylish and elegantly furnished rooms ✓ Famous hotel chains ✓ Own swimming pools and spas ✓ Large conference rooms with natural lighting ✓ Program for regular customers ✓ Maintain a high standard of service ✓ Staff training programmes ✓ Internet with good coverage ✓ Many cultural monuments and landmarks in Bulgaria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Weak market image of Bulgaria compared to competing destinations ✓ Lack of alternative financial sources ✓ High staff turnover in the hospitality industry ✓ Seasonality of most hotels - winter or summer
Opportunities	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Decreasing prices of basic raw materials and supplies ✓ Economic upturn in the country and the region ✓ Increasing the number of users ✓ Increasing incomes and living standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increasing competition between new luxury hotels ✓ The global economic situation and the threat of terrorism ✓ Do not have well trained staff at all levels ✓ Oversupply of rooms in the low season

4 Conclusions

After conducting marketing and survey research and analysing the results on the guests' preferences and requirements regarding high-category hotels and hotel complexes, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Most respondents are familiar with the hotel chains in Bulgaria, they go on holiday 1 or 2 times a year, to 4- and 5-star hotels, which are preferred. However, it is clearly expressed that foreign hotels are superior to Bulgarian ones. The two most important factors when choosing a place are the price and the food provided in the hotel. The attitude of the staff is almost excellent and hygiene standards and additional safety measures are in place.

In Bulgaria, there are prospects for the restaurant industry to develop in a positive direction in the hotel-restaurant complexes by increasing the quality of the product, offering a good price, improving the material and technical base and hygienic conditions, and also stabilizing the pay of the staff in accordance with the new economic conditions.

References

1. Alonzo Roy, *The upstart guide to owning and managing a restaurant* (Kaplan Publishing, New York, 2007)
2. R. Butler, *The business of tourism* (Longman, London, 1996)

3. I. Emilova, *Introduction to tourism* (NBU, Sofia, 2016).
4. J. Ninemeir, D. Hayers, *Restaurant operations management & principles and practices* (Prentice Hall, Hoboken, 2005)
5. M. Garvey, H. Dismore, A. Dismore, *Running a restaurant for dummies* (Wiley Publishing, Inc., Hoboken, 2004)
6. Z. Grigorova, E. Arabska, *Environmental protection and development of ecotourism in modern tourism policy* (University of Economics, Varna, 2015) [In Bulgarian]
7. S. Ivanova, M. Georgieva, *E-marketing in the restaurant industry* (House of Science and Technology, Plovdiv, 2017) [in Bulgarian]
8. S. Marinov, *Technological innovations and tourism in Bulgaria* (Publishing House "Slavena", Varna, 2004) [in Bulgarian]
9. M. Neshkova, *Introduction to tourism* (University of Economics, Varna, 2001)
9. G.T. Somov, S. D. Ivanova, *Restaurant management, organization, technology* (Academic Publishing House of UHT, Plovdiv, 2011) [In Bulgarian]
10. G. Somov, I. Shopova, *Hospitality - management, organization, technology* (Academic Publishing House of VUARR, Plovdiv, 2013) [In Bulgarian]
11. M. Veleva, *Yearbook Univ. Econ. – Varna*. **82**, 328 (2010)
12. M. Vodenska, *Basics of tourism* (Matcom, Sofia, 2010) [in Bulgarian]
13. R. Krier, *Rev. Gen. l'Hotell. Gastron. Touris.* **5**, 4 (2012)
14. https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism_bg
15. <https://forbesbulgaria.com>
16. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/GPI-2021-A3-map-poster-1.pdf>