

**UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS - VARNA**  
**FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT**  
**MARKETING DEPARTMENT**

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**Yana Georgieva Balashova-Stefanova**

**MARKETING DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES OF THE  
TERRITORY**

**A B S T R A C T / R E S U M E**

of a dissertation for awarding the educational and scientific degree  
"doctor" in direction 3.8. Economics, scientific specialty "Marketing"

**Research Supervisor:**

Assoc. Prof. Evgenia Tonkova, PhD

Varna

2024

The dissertation has a total volume of 360 pages and is structured in an introduction (6 pages), three chapters (211 pages), a conclusion (4 pages), a list of the literature used (15 pages) and appendices (116 pages. ). The dissertation contains 12 tables, 39 figures and 23 appendices. The bibliography includes 267 sources (19 of which are on the Internet) - in Bulgarian, English, French and Russian.

The defense of the dissertation will take place on .... at ..... in hall .... of the University of Economics - Varna at a meeting of a scientific jury appointed by Order No. .... of the Rector of the University of Economics - Varna.

Defense materials are available at the University of Economics - Varna and on the university's website [www.ue-varna.bg](http://www.ue-varna.bg).

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**Scientific jury:**

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Varna

2024

The dissertation was discussed by the "Marketing" department at the University of Economics - Varna. The author is a PhD student at the Department of Marketing at the University of Economics - Varna. Research and development were carried out at the same university.

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

## **1. Relevance and significance of the research**

Every territory, regardless of its territorial level - region, municipality, city, district, district or specific place, is unique in its essence. This uniqueness is formed by the different characteristics that the territory possesses, such as natural resources; historical landmarks; cultural landmarks; places of special interest to certain groups of users; products specially produced on the territory or hand-made goods on it; certain traditional rituals, specific foods, etc. These specific features can be seen as comparative advantages.

According to the "theory of comparative advantages", the comparative advantages of each country are contained in the production of this product, which they can produce at a lower relative opportunity cost, and the source of comparative advantages is the so-called factor collateral – resources, such as natural resources, physical capital, labor. The theory of comparative advantages finds a number of applications and can be adapted to territories, by identifying their comparative advantages and their appropriate development to achieve competitive advantages, develop the territory and increase its attractiveness for different groups of interested parties.

Territories today face a number of challenges. On the one hand, they are placed in the conditions of strong competition for resources at the local, national and global level. Territories try to attract not only visitors, tourists and funding (such as investment and local and national budgets), but also compete to be an attractive place to live, visit and set up and develop a business. Territories therefore compete by the way they use the resources at their disposal for the benefit of the individuals concerned. In terms of residents, territories generally compete for the levels of quality of life provided, security, medical services, educational services, employment opportunities, labor pay rates, purchasing power of remuneration, entrepreneurial opportunities, cultural and social events, etc. In attracting tourists (Mulec and Wise, 2013), territories compete for development and maintenance in good condition of local cultural and historical attractions, improving the quality of natural resources used by tourists, offering comprehensive solutions for tourists, etc. Competition in relation to attracting visitors is expressed in helping to prepare and offer special events, various festivals, conferences, round tables, etc.

On the other hand, globalization poses new challenges to the territories. It is supported by the development of technology, especially information, which leads to a rapid exchange of

information about any event in the world in real time; the development of transport, which reduces the value of exchange of materials and goods between countries; the facilitated movement of persons and capital to the countries where there are the most favorable conditions for them, etc.

The impact of globalization on territories is not one-way. Although globalization increases the competitive pressure on territories on the one hand, it actually creates conditions and prerequisites for their development on the other. Globalization leads to an increase in the accessibility of territories and their greater "visibility" and prominence in the world market and makes them more recognizable to all their contact audiences. And the main groups of users of the territory are the persons living on it; the business operating on it and investing there; tourist flows visiting the territory; local administration, etc.

Territories also face new opportunities and challenges related to rapid advances in telecommunications, transportation, information processing, and information technology. All these changes, on the one hand, allow more flexible forms of territory management organization and faster and easier processing of information, but on the other hand, they require speed of adaptation, constant learning and flexibility of the local administration.

With regard to these fundamental problems, it is becoming increasingly relevant to ask how the processes and activities of local and regional development should be organized so that municipalities and regions can maintain the positions they have already achieved (Döring, Knappitsch, Aigner, 2010 ), and continue to develop.

Issues related to the problems of the territories and their development nowadays are recognized and considered at the EU level as well. The EU Regional Development Program 2021-2027 envisages that it will be aimed at "Bringing Europe closer to citizens by promoting sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives", according to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament.

The EU's Territorial Agenda 2030 has 6 main priorities: balanced territorial development, functional areas with fewer inequalities, integration and cooperation across administrative-territorial and national borders, a healthy environment, circular economy and sustainable digital and physical connectivity. It will be implemented through targeted actions to support multi-level governance, implementation of policies based on specific local needs, coordinated implementation and impact of sectoral policies, cooperation between territories and territorial cohesion.

For the implementation of these policies and the development of the territory, its comparative advantages can be used. According to the Interim Evaluation of the Development

Strategy of the Varna Region, the formulated priorities must be based on the key comparative advantages of the Varna Region, as well as reflect the most urgent and critical moments for its development. The comparative advantages of territories are found in various specific characteristics of the territory, such as specific climate, available natural resources, cultural and historical attractions, certain local culture, customs and traditions, traditional foods and drinks, etc. When determining the comparative advantages of the territory, the attitude of the various stakeholders towards them is considered, since not all comparative advantages are important for all interested parties.

The use of the comparative advantages of the territory to support its development is carried out by applying marketing principles and strategies related to territorial development within the framework of territory marketing. Although the topic of territory marketing as a response to the challenges that territories face today has been considered in marketing theory and practice for more than 30 years, research on the use of comparative advantages in this direction is insufficient. Studies on the subject show that there is a need for a more detailed and systematic study of the ways to identify the comparative advantages of the territories and the possibilities for their development.

The topicality of the topic of the dissertation is determined by the need for the territories to develop successfully in the conditions of a strong competitive environment and the possibility for this development to use the available resources of the territory, considered as its comparative advantages. Examining the complex topic of the essence of the comparative advantages of the territory and the process of their identification and development covers a wide range of specific information that should be analyzed through various perspectives. This leads to the identification of the unique characteristics of the territory for different groups of users and the development of ways to use them for the development of the territory. The urgency of the problem is also determined by the fact that the comparative advantages of the territory are defined in the strategic documents of the municipality of Varna as important for it from the point of view of regional development and possible changes in the geostrategic situation of the district, without, however, carrying out research on the identification and their use for the benefit of the various interested groups of entities.

## **2. Object and subject of the study**

The object of research in the dissertation are the comparative advantages of the municipality of Varna from the positions of different groups of users - residents, visitors and local businesses.

**The subject of research** in the dissertation are the opportunities for marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory in the interest of the interested groups of subjects.

### **3. Main research thesis**

**The main research thesis** is that the identification of the comparative advantages of the territory and their assessment from the point of view of different groups of users can be used as a basis for their marketing development, which will lead to their full use, development of the territory and increase of its competitiveness.

### **4. Purpose and tasks of the dissertation**

**The aim** of the dissertation is, based on the studied literary sources, to construct a process for marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territories, through which to identify the comparative advantages of the territory, to evaluate their condition from the point of view of the users of the territory, to determine the possibilities for their use and reach a specific marketing toolkit to support the development of the territory.

In order to achieve the goal, the following more important **tasks** can be highlighted: 1) a review of literary sources regarding the theories of marketing the territory and the theories of comparative advantages, in particular of the territory and deriving specifics in the development of the comparative advantages of the territory; 2) construction of a methodology for developing the comparative advantages of the territory; 3) development of marketing directions to support decision-makers in the process of developing the comparative advantages of the territories.

### **5. Research methods**

Аналитичните подходи, методи и техники, които са използвани в настоящата дисертация, са: индукция, дедукция, анализ на съдържание, анализ на динамични редове, сравнителен анализ, дескриптивна статистика, анализ на средни величини. Софтуерните продукти, използвани в рамките на разработката за обработка на емпирични данни са SPSS, Microsoft Excel.

### **6. Limitations of the study**

Within the framework of the dissertation, the following restrictive conditions are set:

1) the municipality of Varna was chosen for the study and development of the comparative advantages of the territory, but the methodology could be adapted to any other territory;

2) the scope of research in the dissertation work does not include the influence of various types of interested persons on the comparative advantages of the territory, but their assessment



of the state of the comparative advantages of the territory and the way of their use is taken into account;

3) although comparative advantages by different kinds are covered in the thesis, the causal relationships between them are not explored.

## **7. Sources of Information**

The information necessary for the realization of the aims and objectives of the research is provided through:

- Cabinet study of various publications by Bulgarian and foreign authors from various scientific fields.
- Cabinet study of official strategic documents of the municipality of Varna.
- Primary data is provided through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods included in the study design – interviews, a pilot study and surveys.

## **8. Approbation**

The dissertation was discussed at meetings of the Marketing Department. Parts of it have been presented and discussed at international scientific conferences and published as articles and reports in specialized scientific publications.

## **II. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION**

The dissertation is structured in an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and appendices with a total volume of 360 pages, of which 6 pages of introduction, 211 pages of exposition, 4 pages of conclusion, 15 pages of references and 116 pages of appendices.

The structure of the exhibition is as follows:

Introduction

Chapter I. Theoretical aspects of the marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory.

1. Theoretical overview of territory marketing
2. Theories of comparative advantage and their application to territory.
3. Prerequisites for marketing development of the territories.
4. Main positions and role of marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory.
5. Forms of marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory.

Chapter II. Methodology of marketing development of comparative advantages of the

territory

1. Process of marketing development of comparative advantages of the territory
2. Research project on the comparative advantages of the territory
3. Conceptual model of the study of the comparative advantages of the territory
4. Argumentation for the choice of the municipality of Varna as a territorial unit for conducting the research
5. Main characteristics of the municipality of Varna, which can be defined as prerequisites for comparative advantages

Chapter III. Applied aspects of marketing development of comparative advantages of the territory.

1. Approbation of the research hypotheses.
2. Comparative advantages in primary research results.
  - 2.1. Results of the survey among residents of Varna municipality.
  - 2.2. Results of the survey among visitors to the municipality of Varna
  - 2.3. Results of the survey among the local businesses of the municipality of Varna
3. Comparison of the importance of comparative advantages by user groups.
4. Starting point for developing comparative advantages of the territory.
5. Marketing directions for developing the comparative advantages of the territory.

Conclusion

References:

Appendices

### **III. MAIN CONTENTS OF THE DISSERTATION**

#### **Introduction**

The introduction briefly presents the topicality of the problem and its significance, the main practical-applied problems related to the identification and use of the comparative advantages of the territory in its marketing development, the subject and object of the research, the research thesis, the main goals and tasks of the dissertation work, as well as perceived limitations.

#### **Chapter one**

The first chapter consists of five paragraphs, in which the conceptual foundations of territory marketing, the theories of comparative advantages and their application to territories,

the prerequisites for marketing development of territories, the role of marketing development of comparative advantages of the territory and forms of marketing development are discussed. of the comparative advantages of the territories.

**Paragraph 1** of the first chapter provides a historical overview of the terms "territory" and "territory marketing", summarizing the different main emphases of territory marketing that stand out in defining it, according to different authors. Information on understandings of territory marketing is summarized in a table.

Within the framework of the dissertation, it is assumed that **the territory is a separate place, characterized by certain resources and specific features (natural, historical, cultural, etc.)**. They should be used in such a way as to satisfy the needs of internal users, thereby supporting their retention in the territory, attracting external users to the territory and providing an opportunity for the territory to develop. These resources or specific features may be natural resources; historical landmarks; cultural landmarks; places of special interest to certain groups of persons; products specially produced on the territory or hand-made goods on it; certain traditional rituals, specific foods, etc.

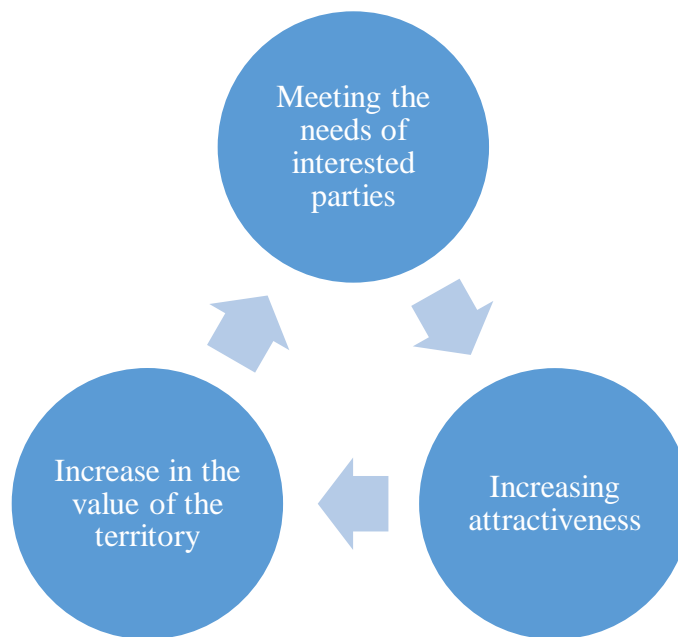
It is noted that the essence of territory marketing develops and changes over time, the focus of territory marketing also changes - from meeting the needs of target users, through building a brand and promoting products in the territory to developing joint policies with residents on the territory. But regardless of whether it is defined as a management tool, a set of activities, or a system of relations between different stakeholders, the development of the territory itself stands out as the main emphasis when considering the different perspectives on the marketing of the territory.

Within the paragraph, **the marketing of territories is defined as an approach to support the development of the territories through the use and development of the resources available in the territory and the creation of appropriate territorial products for the different groups of users of the territory - local residents, visitors, tourists, businesses and investors, with aim of increasing the attractiveness of the territory and improving the quality of life there.**

Territory marketing aims to manage the relationship with stakeholders in a way that creates value for the people who live or work in it and the businesses that operate in it, and to attract those who do not live, work or do business there . In this way, the territory can be financially independent from its neighboring territories or the territories to which it belongs administratively. Thus, it strives to ensure long-term sustainability in its development, and that the bodies of state government and local self-government can attract the various interested

parties for support and active participation in the future development of the territory.

In conclusion, based on the content analysis of 72 scientific publications made in the paragraph, a development process of the territory has been deduced. It includes an analysis of the needs of stakeholders (customers or markets); satisfying these needs by developing, maintaining and strengthening mutually beneficial exchange relations with interested parties (internal and external to the territory). This leads to an increase in the attractiveness of the territory and, therefore, to an increase in its value. The development of the process is presented in fig. 1:



**Fig. 1** *Development process of the territory*

**Paragraph 2** of the first chapter provides a historical overview of the "theories of comparative advantage". The various types of advantages that exist and their use for the development of a particular subject are analyzed. The approaches for turning the respective advantages into advantages over competitors and their application to the territories are summarized.

The source of comparative advantages in classical macroeconomic theory is the so-called factor collateral (resources are taken as factors, such as natural resources, physical capital, labor force). Initially, Swedish economists E. Heckscher and B. Ohlin connected Ricardo's theory of comparative advantages with factor security. Their theory, developed in the first half of the 20th century, is based on two premises<sup>1</sup>: 1) the production of each good requires a different combination of factors (e.g. there are so-called labor-intensive goods, where the relative share

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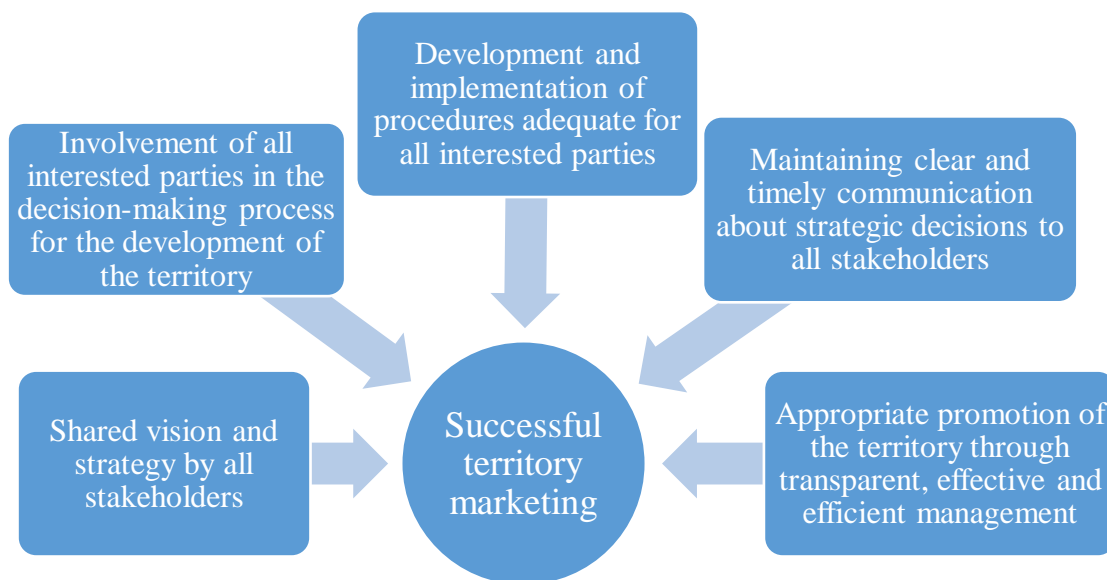
<sup>1</sup> Kovachev, Z. (1996) General economic theory. Varna: STENO

of labor costs is largest, and capital-intensive goods where the relative share of capital expenditure is the largest); 2) each country has different resources in terms of quantity and quality.

Therefore, each country would have to specialize and export products for the production of which factors are required that are abundant in it.

The following is a classification of the factors or comparative advantages possessed by a particular people. Porter (1990) offers the following classification<sup>2</sup>: 1) human resources - information is taken into account, such as: the amount, qualification and skills, cost of labor, etc.; 2) physical resources – abundance, quality, availability, price of land, water, minerals, available timber, climatic conditions, location, etc.; 3) knowledge – scientific, technical knowledge and knowledge of the market; 4) capital resources – amount and price of available capital that could finance the industry; 5) infrastructure - type, quality, value for the user, types of transport systems, communications, postal services, healthcare, etc. To this indicator, Porter also includes the infrastructure related to cultural activities and housing, i.e. impacting the quality of life and attractiveness of the country as a place to live and work.

This paragraph systematizes the types of competition: direct and indirect, the resource approach in developing territory marketing and the key factors that make territory marketing successful, as presented in fig. 2.



**Fig. 2 Territory Marketing Success Factors**

In **paragraph 3** of the first chapter, the prerequisites for marketing development of the territories are presented. The conditions in which the territories function today and the difficulties they face are summarized.

<sup>2</sup> Porter, M. E. (1990) Competitive Advantage of Nations. New York: Free Press.

Within the framework of the analysis, it is stated that the significant problems affecting the various entities at the local, regional, national and global level can be (adapted from Tonkova et al.<sup>3</sup>): 1) globalization of business and lifestyle; 2) increased access to information, increased presence in social media and importance of digital life for different stakeholders; 3) change in the demand and supply of goods and services in a quantitative and structural aspect, based on the increased access to information and influence of social media; 4) facilitated and enhanced migration of the population around the world; 5) increased production capacities, without taking into account the distribution capacities; 6) imbalance in the use of the territories' resources; 7) loss of the positions of traditionally strong local production structures; 8) politicization of business; 9) endangering nature from unreasonable human activity, etc.

It is concluded that the prerequisites for the marketing development of the territories are determined by the need for the territory to offer a solution to certain problems faced by its users at a given moment, while at the same time providing suitable conditions for the development of the interested parties in the long term.

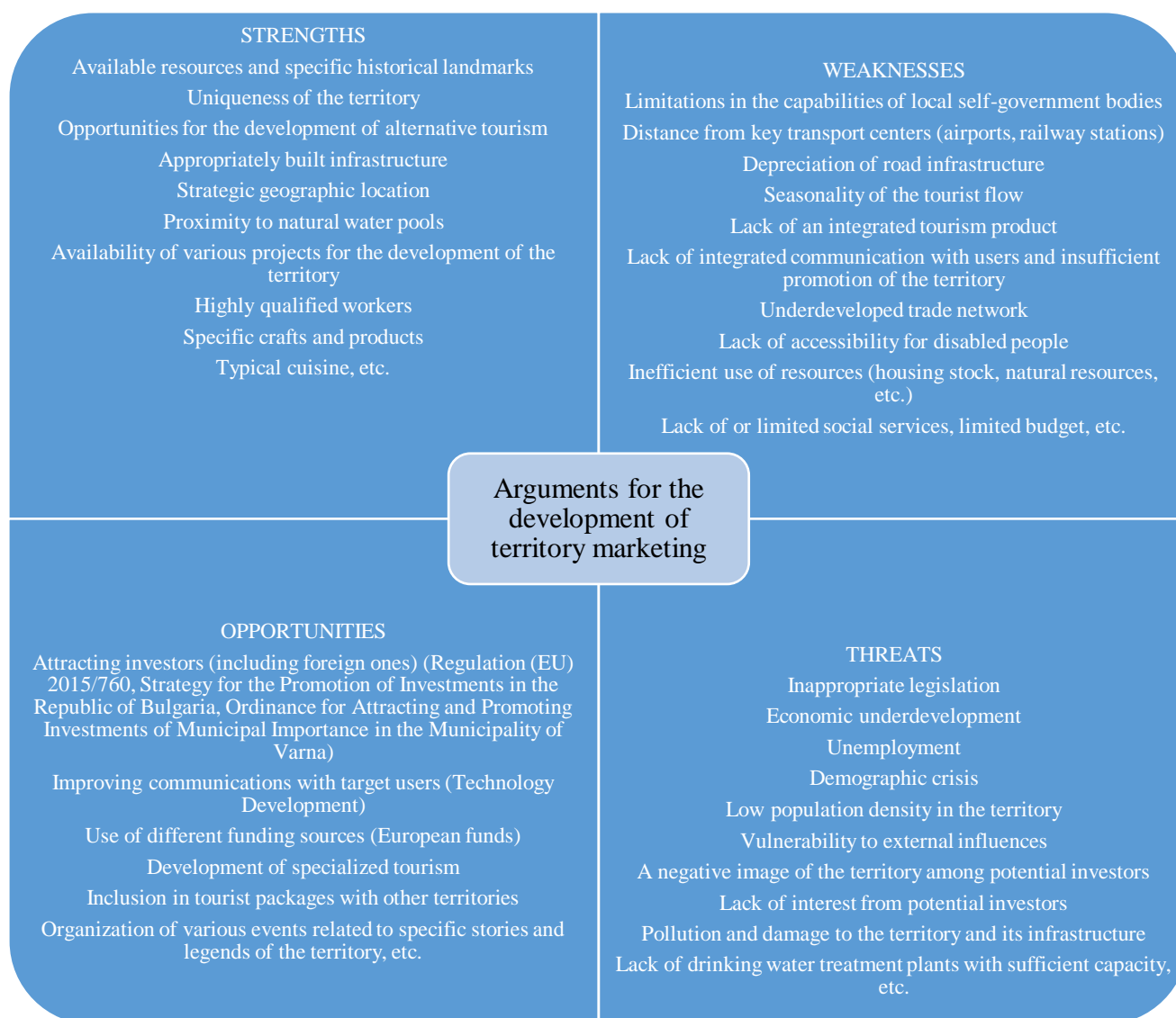
These problems can be of different nature like economic, demographic, social, environmental etc. The specific problems of the respective territory are brought out by analyzing its situation at a given moment.

The problems may be some of the following: economic backwardness; inefficient use of the resources available to the territory; limited budget; depopulation; poor infrastructure quality; inappropriate legislation; limitations in the capabilities of local self-government bodies, etc., as well as any combination of some of the above.

At the end of the paragraph, the different arguments for the development of territory marketing are graphically presented in fig. 3 "SWOT arguments for the development of territory marketing".

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<sup>3</sup> Tonkova, E., Hristova, S., Petrov, D. (2015) Development of local potential for socio-economic development of regions. Varna: STENO



***Fig. 3 SWOT arguments for developing territory marketing***

**Paragraph 4** examines the main assumptions and the role of marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory and the approaches to the analysis of its environment. Taking into account the points of view of various authors such as Kotler, Bagautdinova, Chamard, Sguenfle, Anastasova, etc., it is determined that the role of the marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory is related to it being the basis for the development of marketing of the territory, so as: 1) leads to the promotion of the territory's resources and stimulation of the loyalty of its stakeholders; 2) it is related to the creation and development of the value of the territory, through the promotion of products, services and activities of its stakeholders; 3) supports the making of strategic decisions for the development of the territory; 4) leads to effective and efficient marketing of the territory and therefore stimulates its development; 5) identifies the specific characteristics for differentiating the territory from other similar territories.

Attention is paid to the need to start the development of the comparative advantages of the territory with an analysis of the external and internal environment of the territory. The methods for analyzing the environment and the ways to adapt them to the territory are summarized.

The possible approaches for the development of the territory and the types of interested persons are summarized. The types of users of the territory are identified.

At the end of the paragraph, it is concluded that the marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory plays a key role in attracting attention and support from the different groups of interested parties, supports the development of the territory and promotes a sustainable and innovative society. The following important aspects are emphasized: identification of the comparative advantages of the territory; creating a marketing strategy based on the identified comparative advantages; communication with target audiences; identity and brand creation; possibility of managing the attractiveness of the territory by building the positive reputation; providing support for projects and initiatives as a consequence of using an appropriate marketing approach; monitoring and adaptation through feedback from interaction with target audiences.

In **paragraph 5** of the first chapter, different forms of marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory are considered, paying attention that the focus of marketing programs may be different according to the specifics of the territories and cover one or more of the following elements: product, brand, image, management, etc.

It presents views of the territory as a product in the marketing of territories.

The various specific forms of marketing development that have been found in recent years, presented in the scientific publications of various authors such as Tonkova, Gayet, Chamard, Braun, Stanimirov, Amidou, Rochette, Garcia, Hollensen, Alaoui, Zbucnea, Fedrici, Mitrofanova and etc.: 1) Holistic or integrated marketing - which covers all aspects of the marketing of territories - strategy, functioning, positioning, brand, etc.; 2) Shared marketing, which is based on the idea of synergy between the various stakeholders and joint use of the resources of the territory.; 3) Resident-oriented marketing, which should satisfy the needs mainly of the residents of the territory; 4) Marketing through communities, which is focused on satisfying the specific needs and preferences of small communities whose members have shared interests.; 5) Marketing with the motto: excellence - development of competences with the aim of differentiation, leading to an increase in the attractiveness of the territory.; 6) Creative marketing - aims to create a favorable environment for innovation and participation, while developing the competences and effectiveness of the territorial community in order to



improve the capacity to create new and adapted ideas.; 7) Digital marketing which refers to internet based marketing tools and methods allowing easy access to target groups. 8) Marketing based on personalization of the offer, by adapting to the profile of each user.; 9) Viral marketing, which aims to spread certain information from person to person in the form of entertaining messages or informative messages.; 10) Marketing based on the customer experience - target audiences are attracted by using the emotion that the use of the product creates in them.; 11) Identity marketing - emphasizes the authenticity of the territory and therefore leads to the creation of a sustainable relationship with the interested parties.; 12) Marketing based on large events - organizing large events that have the potential to attract a large number of interested persons to the territory for a certain time. 13) Marketing based on unique territorial products – products produced in a traditional way are used, reflecting the characteristics of the places where they were created and are rare, their production method is very specific, etc., i.e. carry symbolism for the territory. 14) Territorial marketing based on cultural heritage, so culture becomes an important part of the territorial marketing strategy and can lead to attractive and effective branding of the territory.

The marketing mix is described in historical terms and it is noted that for the purposes of the dissertation work, the classic marketing mix with 4Rs will be considered, but tailored to the specifics of the marketing of territories. A marketing mix adapted from Pankruhin is presented, which includes the following elements<sup>4</sup>:

□ Both public goods and services such as airplanes, railways, roads, water treatment plants, landscaping, etc. are considered as a product. (public services also include tourism, education, medicine, housing stock, cultural events; products and services from regional programs for the domestic and foreign markets), as well as geographical location, population, quality of life, level of business activity, level of development of business services, etc. The product also includes specific products created in the territory, characteristic crafts, tourist services offered in the territory of various types - accommodation, additional services such as bicycle rental, boat trips, visits to typical local historical or natural attractions, opportunities for practicing different types of sports – for example rock climbing, canoeing, eco-trails, etc., i.e. users are offered a complex product, including both the public products and services provided in the territory, as well as the entire range of products and services offered by its residents and the businesses operating on it.

□ The price can be considered from two points of view - for domestic consumers it

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<sup>4</sup> Pankruhin, A. (2006). Marketing territory, Moscow, PETER

includes the cost of living in the territory (income received, pensions, social assistance compared to the necessary costs of living in the territory), for tourists the price is the value of additional personal expenses, for businesses these are transport costs, time, effort, amount of taxes, tax preferences, fines and penalties. The evaluation of the work of the institutions and the bureaucracy in them is also important. The better and faster the institutions work, the more valuable it is for the stakeholders. Thus, the complex value of what a consumer should pay to obtain a given product offered in the territory is included here.

□ Distribution includes the distribution channels, the logistics of goods and services, as well as the public transport system, the ways of delivering a product to end customers (for example, the possibilities of ordering and booking a hotel online), i.e. the complex distribution of goods and services.

□ The promotional policy includes, on the one hand, the regional system for access to public information, the region's system for access to telecommunications services and statistical databases, stimulation of the sale of goods and services, advertising. On the other hand - the approaches of communicating the products to the target users.

A review of the scientific literature on the subject shows that numerous studies are available on the essence of territory marketing, approaches to the use of its various forms to support the development of territories, and various theories on the comparative advantages of the territory, but no specific methodology has been developed to identify the comparative advantages of the territories, an assessment of their importance and status from the point of view of the different groups of users of the territory and the use of this information to build a marketing toolkit for developing the comparative advantages of the territory, adapted to its specifics.

## Chapter two

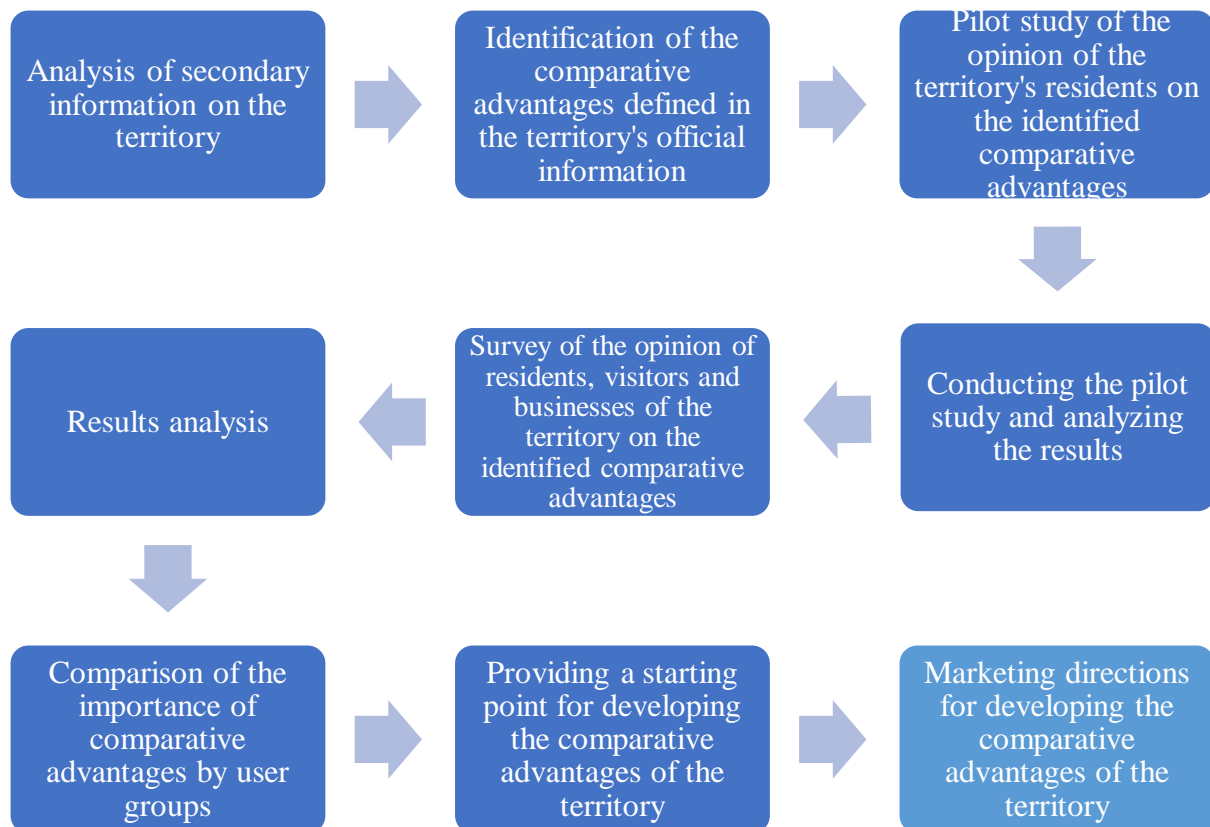
The second chapter consists of five paragraphs, in which a process of marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory is constructed, a project is developed for the study of the comparative advantages of the territory, a conceptual model of their study is drawn up, an argument is presented for the choice of the municipality of Varna as territorial unit for conducting the research and defining the main characteristics of the municipality of Varna, which can be defined as prerequisites for comparative advantages.

**Paragraph 1** of the second chapter presents the concept of attractiveness of the territory and methods for its evaluation.

The following is a detailed description of the different steps of marketing development

and a presentation of territory marketing development processes identified in the scientific literature.

Based on the research of the scientific literature and the presented models of marketing development of the territory, a process for developing the comparative advantages of the territory is proposed, presented in Figure 4. The main steps of the process are briefly described in the paragraph.



**Fig. 4. Process of developing the comparative advantages of the territory.**

It is concluded that the presented process of developing the comparative advantages of territories covers the key steps that are used to identify and analyze the advantages of a given territory. In this way, the process acquires great importance for the strategic planning and development of the territory and/or the community.

In **paragraph 2** of the second chapter, literature sources are examined in detail in order to identify possible comparative advantages, their sources and how they can influence the development of the territory. It is emphasized that the easiest and most comprehensive approach for this is to compile a list of the advantages of the territory, to determine their importance for the stakeholders and the territory as a whole, to determine the stage of development and the ways of their use - whether they are used efficiently and effectively, to determine the potential of the resources and whether they are fully utilized, etc.

Once all of the territory's resources have been identified, prioritized and evaluated, the territory's management organizations can use marketing techniques to promote them to target audiences and build the overall image of the territory.

A detailed classification of the comparative advantages of the territories, derived on the basis of the review of the scientific literature on the subject, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

**Types of comparative advantage based on a literature review**

Type of comparative advantage	Possible manifestations
Natural resources (Mulec and Wise, 2013)	Geographical position and size of the territory Geological resources Climate Water resources (rivers, lakes, sea) Landscape Specific flora and fauna Balneological resources
Infrastructure (Tonkova, 2015)	Transport – public transport, good condition of highways and local roads, availability of rail and air transport Public services such as health care, safety, education infrastructure, sports and entertainment infrastructure Utilities available - gasification, electricity supply, water supply, waste management
Quality of life of local residents (Nuvolati, 2003; Shafranskaya and Potapov, 2012)	Amount of wages at local employers A fair balance between pay and workload Purchasing power of local wages The residents' ease of access to the local infrastructure - playgrounds, libraries, etc. Safety and security of life in local communities Public transport and transport infrastructure Safe and reliable educational services - kindergartens, schools, universities, etc. High quality of opportunities for social life - events, festivals. Reliable medical services Opportunities for local residents to participate in local government decision-making
Socio-economic resources (Birnleitner, 2014)	Structure of the economy (available productions) Socio-demographic structure - characteristics of the population, migration, professional training, specialized training Political and administrative structure - local government, way of making decisions about it
Opportunities to start and develop a business (Tonkova, 2014)	Local business taxes and fees Bureaucracy and conditions for starting and running a business Ease of access to local government and financing by entrepreneurs Openness of local government to cooperation with business Availability of qualified labor
Cultural and historical resources (Zbucea, 2014)	Historical landmarks Traditions, local crafts and productions (Pustynick, 2011) Placement of sights Monuments and places of interest Events Entertainment Organized excursions and tours Specific cuisine Festivals.
Sports facilities (Zimmer and Grassmann, 1996)	Water sports and swimming Aviation Horseback riding Pedestrian and bicycle lanes and paths

	Winter sports Golf Other sports facilities
Accommodation available for tourists and visitors (Zimmer and Grassmann, 1996)	Total capacity of the territory Distribution of accommodation on the territory Distribution of accommodation by type and size Quality and prices of overnight stays Availability of camping sites and caravan parks Opportunities for agricultural tourism or village holidays Availability of conference centers Exhibition halls Possibilities for holding conferences and availability of technical means Variety of restaurants offering different types of dishes/cuisine Food quality and price Distribution of restaurants on the territory

*Source: Author's previous studies of the scientific literature<sup>5</sup>.*

Attention is drawn to the fact that the comparative advantages of the territories are based on the specific features of the determined territory (historical, natural, etc.) and its historical and economic development, however, these comparative advantages are not static, they develop and their importance and relevance change over time. It is therefore important to monitor the environment and adapt the approach to identify comparative advantages to change. Attention should be paid to opportunities to invest in innovation, education and human capital development, as well as in creating favorable conditions for business development and attracting investors.

In order to identify the comparative advantages of a certain territory and assess their importance for the various stakeholder groups of the territory, the use of the following sequence of research stages is proposed: 1) Identification and analysis of available research in the field of territorial development of the territories in order to operationalize the concepts and bringing out comprehensive lists of possible manifestations of comparative advantages of the territories; 2) Study of official documents presented by the organization managing the development of the territory in order to identify the comparative advantages of the respective territory; 3) Conducting in-depth interviews with specialists in the field of territorial development in order to discover differences in the possibilities and potential of the identified comparative advantages; 4) Preparing a survey and conducting a pilot study of the opinion of the local residents on the comparative advantages of the territory determined in this way; 5) Preparing a survey and conducting a real survey of the opinion of the local residents about the comparative advantages of the territory determined in this way; 6) Preparing a survey and conducting a study of the opinion of visitors about the comparative advantages of the territory thus determined; 7)

<sup>5</sup> Balashova-Kostadinova, Y. (2018) Comparative Advantages of Territories—the Residents' View. // Journal of Emerging Trends in Marketing and Management, 1(1), pp. 55-68.

Conducting interviews to study the opinion of the local business about the comparative advantages of the territory determined in this way; 8) Analyzing the information and determining the most important benefits that are mentioned by the most stakeholders; 9) Defining the priorities when developing the marketing of the territory.

It is concluded that the stages identified in this way ensure systematicity in the process of identifying the comparative advantages of the territory and comprehensiveness of the determined comparative advantages, specific to the given territory and adapted to its needs. In this way, the existing and potential advantages of an area can be understood and documented. It is important to note that the identification process becomes a valuable tool for formulating development strategies and improving the competitiveness of the territory, as it respects the principles of systematicity, comprehensiveness, specificity and interaction, and research activities should be renewed and adapted to accommodate changing conditions and emerging opportunities.

The paragraph contains information on the research methods used for each stage of the process of identifying the comparative advantages of the territory: 1) Analysis of secondary information from a literature review; 2) Analysis of secondary information from official documents; 3) Collection of primary information by conducting interviews with specialists in the field of territorial development from the region; 4) Collection of primary information by preparing a survey for conducting a pilot study; 5) Collecting primary information by preparing a survey, conducting a survey among local residents; 6) Collecting primary information by preparing a survey and questioning visitors to the territory; 7) Collecting primary information by conducting interviews with local business representatives; 8) Analysis of collected information.

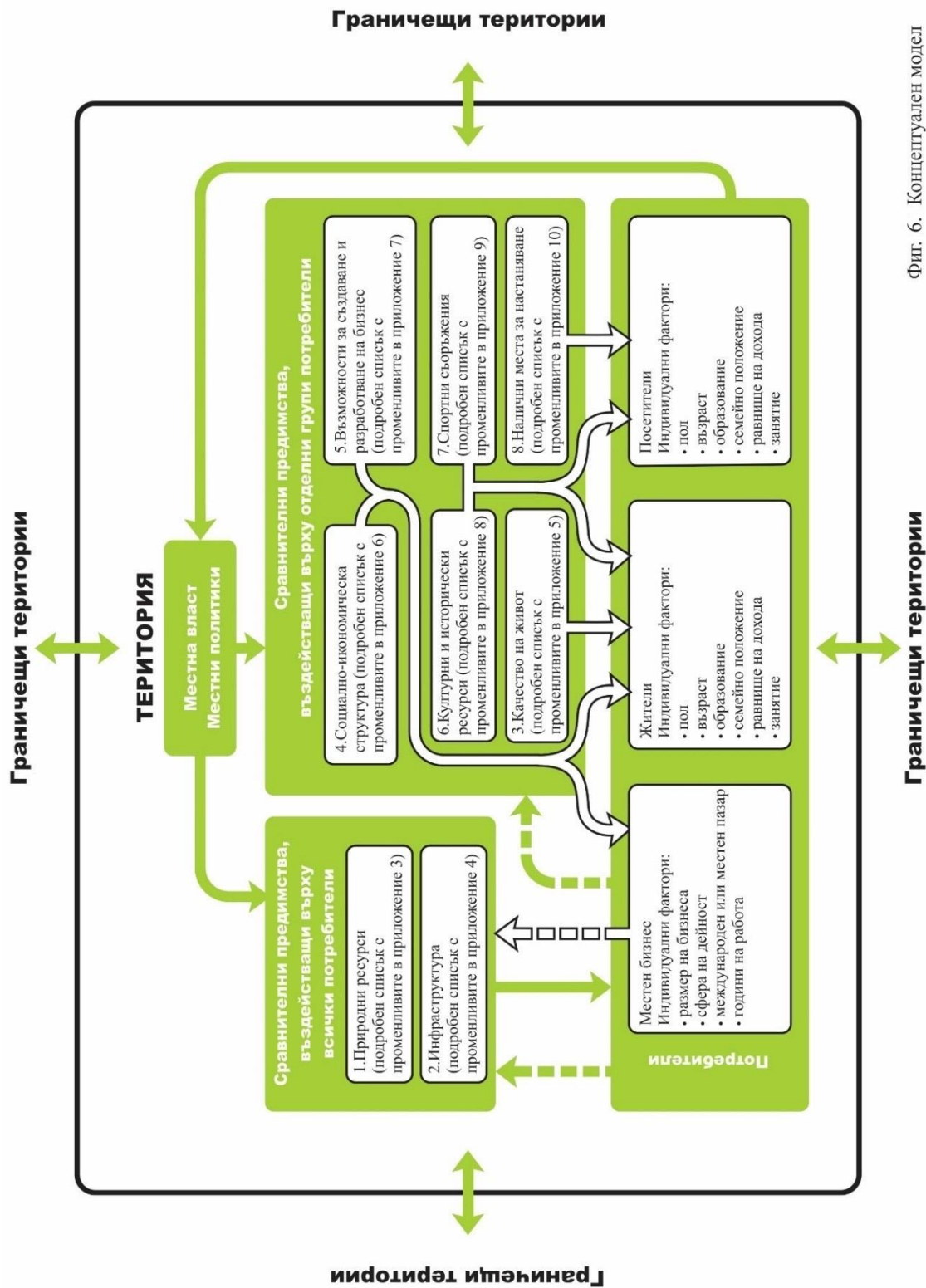
The sources for collecting information for the purposes of identifying the comparative advantages of the territory are systematized: 1) Cabinet study of literary sources, databases and publications on the subject; 2) Cabinet study of official documents; 3) Interviews with specialists and experts; 4) Survey among residents of Varna municipality (pilot survey); 5) Survey among residents of Varna municipality; 6) Survey among the visitors of Varna municipality; 7) Interviews with business representatives; 8) Collected primary and secondary information from the previous seven stages.

In conclusion, attention is paid to the fact that when developing the comparative advantages of the territory, it is very important to approach holistically and to examine the interests of all interested parties, since the users of the territory are both those who live there, as well as local business organizations and visitors.

In **paragraph 3** of the second chapter, the conceptual model of the study of the comparative advantages of the territory is presented. The conceptual model outlines the framework of the dissertation research and follows a specific research structure. It is emphasized that the study was carried out in two phases: 1) in Phase I of the study, all possible comparative advantages of the territory are identified through a study of the theoretical foundation and analysis of secondary information about the territory of the municipality of Varna. Phase I also includes conducting a pilot survey of the local residents' opinion (through a survey) about the importance of the identified comparative advantages of the territory of the Varna municipality, their condition and way of use. 2) in Phase II of the research, primary information is gathered about the opinion of residents, visitors and local businesses in the territory of the municipality of Varna about the importance of the identified comparative advantages for the territory of the municipality, assessment of their condition and the ways of their use. Surveys and interviews are used to collect the primary information.

It is summarized that the following elements are the basis of the conceptual model: 1) identified comparative advantages of the territory of the municipality of Varna, divided into two groups: first group - affecting all interested parties - natural resources and infrastructure; second group - influencing different groups of interested persons - socio-economic structure; local conditions for starting and doing business; cultural and historical resources; sports infrastructure; quality of life and available accommodation; 2) the different groups of users are presented with the respective studied individual characteristics for each of them; 3) the possibilities for interaction or influence of the different groups of interested persons with the local government are presented, as well as for the influence of these interested persons on the comparative advantages of the territory.

The conceptual model of the study of the comparative advantages of the territory is presented in fig. 6.



Фиг. 6. Концептуален модел

Attention is drawn to the fact that when considering the conceptual model of the study, the following limitations should be taken into account during its development: 1) It is considered that there are possible relationships and influences between the territory under consideration and the neighboring territories bordering it. These relationships and influences



were not taken into account when developing the comparative advantages and were not explored within the framework of the dissertation. 2) It is assumed that there may be influences from different groups of users on the comparative advantages of the territory, but this influence does not fall within the scope of the designed research. 3) It takes into account the fact that comparative advantages can be interrelated and influence each other. These influences are also beyond the scope of the dissertation. 4) The elements of the territory's external and internal environment may influence its comparative advantages, but it should be borne in mind that these influences do not fall within the scope of the dissertation work. 5) Only one territorial unit is studied in the developed conceptual model.

Emphasis is placed on the following points when developing the conceptual research model:

- The comparative advantages of the territories in themselves are only a prerequisite for developing and obtaining an advantage over other territories of a similar type. Comparative advantages are valuable only when they are valuable to the stakeholders. Therefore, when examining comparative advantages, it is paramount to examine them in terms of their value to stakeholders.

- In Bulgaria, the management of territories is entrusted to local government bodies (municipal government), therefore information on the development of territories and previous studies are described in strategic and other documents created, distributed and shared by local government bodies and should be accessible from them.

- The elements of the external and internal environment should be analyzed and the results of these analyzes should be taken into account when studying the comparative advantages of the territory, since these elements set the main limiting conditions within which the research and development of the corresponding comparative advantages is carried out.

- The identified comparative advantages and their assessment by the various stakeholders are systematized, taking into account the review of theoretical models and the empirical results of the pilot study.

- The formulated research problem is the starting point for starting the empirical study. It is derived on the basis of the theoretical propositions discussed in the first chapter of the dissertation presentation and can generally be reduced to identifying the comparative advantages of the territory of the municipality of Varna and assessing their condition from the point of view of the different groups of users of the territory with purpose of using this information for the marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory.

- It is specific to the dissertation research that the search for an answer to the posed

scientific research question occurs from three perspectives at the same time - from the point of view of the inhabitants of the territory, from the point of view of visitors to the territory and from the point of view of the local business developing its activity on the territory. This makes it possible to compare the positions and gain a more comprehensive view of the possibilities to identify the most important comparative advantages of the territory.

□ The presented point of view for the study of the comparative advantages of the territory can be used as a starting point for the fulfillment of the tasks of the dissertation work.

It is concluded that the conceptual model of the study of the comparative advantages of the territory discussed above (Fig. 6) is based on the theoretical and methodological statements and researches in the field of comparative advantages to date, combining and adapting some of their elements according to the characteristics of a municipality Varna.

The following is a presentation of the staging of the implementation of Phase II of the research, collecting primary information about the opinion of the three considered groups of users of the territory - residents, visitors and local businesses in the territory of the municipality of Varna about the importance of the identified comparative advantages for the territory of the municipality and the assessment of the state them

When constructing the surveys, the results of the research and analysis of secondary information carried out so far, the interviews with experts and the results of the conducted pilot study were taken into account.

In order to provide the necessary information, 3 questionnaires have been developed, each of which covers the comparative advantages for each of the studied user groups: residents of the territory, visitors and local businesses.

The object of research for each of the polls is, respectively, the opinion of each of the groups of interested persons about the comparative advantages of the territory; determining the benefits that are important to them; determining the state of comparative advantage, according to them. The structure of each of the compiled surveys is presented.

In **paragraph 4** of the second chapter, information is presented on the comparative advantages of the municipality of Varna compared to other municipalities on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria. Only comparative advantages that are quantified are considered.

Table 2

**Comparative advantages of the municipality of Varna compared to other municipalities  
on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria**

	Comparative advantage	Value as of 31.12.2023	Trend in the last 5 years	Place compared to other municipalities
1	Population	319900	decrease	3 <sup>rd</sup> out of 265
2	Coefficient of natural increase	-1573	no clear trend	5 <sup>th</sup> out of 265
3	Migration (mechanical movement)	2430	decrease	3 <sup>rd</sup> out of 265
4	Population below working age	68462	decrease	3 <sup>rd</sup> out of 265
5	Population of working age	259803	decrease	3 <sup>rd</sup> out of 265
6	Population over working age	102582	increase	3 <sup>rd</sup> out of 265
7	Size of the territory	238,49 km <sup>2</sup>	no change	200 <sup>th</sup> out of 265
8	Population density	1340 p./km <sup>2</sup>	decrease	2 <sup>nd</sup> out of 265
9	Average annual salary of employees (BGN)	19448	increase	17 <sup>th</sup> out of 265
10	Poverty line in BGN	7211	no clear trend	2 <sup>nd</sup> out of 265
11	Number of schools	104	no clear trend	4 <sup>th</sup> out of 265
12	Number of higher education institutions	6	no change	3 <sup>rd</sup> out of 265
13	Number of students	22226	no clear trend	3 <sup>rd</sup> out of 265
14	Number of community centers	29	no change	17 <sup>th</sup> out of 265
15	Number of museums	14	no change	3 <sup>rd</sup> out of 265
16	Crimes resulting in a conviction	886 from 1236	no clear trend	3 <sup>rd</sup> out of 265

Source: data from NSI<sup>6</sup>

It is clear from the above table that the municipality of Varna ranks up to 5th place in 13 out of a total of 16 comparative advantages. Up to 20th place in 2 of the comparative advantages and is ranked 200 out of 265 in territory size alone. A positive impression is made by the comparative advantage "Poverty Line", the value of which is 2 out of 265, which means that incomes on the territory of the municipality are relatively high.

The following is a description of the municipality of Varna with information on the main parameters related to the state of the municipality. The presented information is extracted from official documents published on the website of the Municipality of Varna.

The following documents were reviewed and analyzed: Plan for Integrated Development of the Municipality of Varna 2021-2027, Final report-report of the Integrated Plan for Urban Reconstruction and Development of the City of Varna 2014-2020, study "Varna - City of Knowledge", conducted by the Institute for Market Economy, and other publications on the website of the Municipality of Varna. For up-to-date data from the statistics of some parameters of the characteristics of the municipality of Varna, information published on the NSI website

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nsi.bg/bg/>. Accessed: 28.01.2024

was used.

It is summarized that after the analysis of the presented characteristics, the choice of the municipality of Varna to conduct the research and the development of its comparative advantages is based on the following arguments:

1) Economic and infrastructural potential: Varna is one of the largest economic and industrial centers in Bulgaria. The city is attractive for investment and provides diverse economic opportunities. An important argument for the choice of the municipality of Varna is the fact that it is a regional center and, as the administrative and economic center of the North-Eastern region, Varna has the opportunity to manage decision-making and the implementation of programs for the development of the entire region.

2) Demographic potential: the municipality of Varna is the third most populous in the country after Sofia and Plovdiv.

3) Infrastructural potential – transport infrastructure: a well-developed and diverse transport infrastructure is available, although the state of transport-related infrastructure is not excellent.

4) Infrastructural potential – health services. The municipality of Varna is defined as a health center for the entire North-East region of the country, it is important to study how the interested parties evaluate the health services provided on the territory of the municipality.

5) Tourist potential: the municipality of Varna is known for its rich tourist potential. The presence of beaches with built and developed seaside resorts, cultural and historical attractions and many organized events attract thousands of tourists to the region.

In paragraph 5 of the second chapter, the main characteristics of the municipality of Varna are discussed, which can be defined as prerequisites for comparative advantages.

It is noted that the first step in identifying the advantages of the municipality of Varna is the study of secondary documents, which contain official data about it. After their survey, a list was drawn up, which was provided to experts from the local offices of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, as well as regional development experts from a consulting firm, in order to evaluate and compare their opinion and the data from the official documents for the comparative advantages of the municipality of Varna.

Based on the studies of official documents and interviews with experts in the territorial development of the municipality of Varna, the main comparative advantages of the municipality of Varna have been identified. The classification of comparative advantages, compiled on the basis of the literature review on the topic, was used (Table 1).

In the conclusion of the second chapter, a summary is made that the municipality of Varna

has diverse resources, numerous factors and characteristics that make it an attractive region for Bulgaria. They can be seen as comparative advantages of the territory.

Although they are recognized as advantages in official strategic documents provided by the municipality and by territorial development experts, the general opinion is that comparative advantages are not used to their full potential.

The fact that the comparative advantages of the territory are not fully used determines the need for their marketing development, as well as the topicality of the problem on the territory of the municipality of Varna.

### **Chapter three**

The third chapter of the dissertation is divided into five paragraphs, in which the applied aspects of the marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory are considered, first presenting the approbation of the research hypotheses, then the results of the conducted studies, then making a marketing interpretation of the obtained results, guidelines are drawn for developing the comparative advantages of the territories and a marketing toolkit is designed for developing the comparative advantages of the territory, adapted to the specifics of the municipality of Varna.

The surveys were conducted in the months of June-September 2023.

Data in the studies were collected through online surveys of respondents. The results of the responses collected (749 residents; 431 visitors and 22 local business representatives) are described.

The survey questions are described in Appendices 12, 13 and 14 to the dissertation and profiles of respondents are available in Appendices 16, 18 and 20.

In **paragraph 1** of the third chapter, a test of the research hypotheses is presented. It is noted that the Chronbach's Alpha criterion is applied to assess the reliability of the research instrument of the dissertation study.

The scales of the constructs from the surveys used were tested, and the results show that the scales used to evaluate the constructs in question have a high degree of reliability (Chronbach's Alpha between 0.877 and 0.884).

The profiles of the respondents who answered the questions of the three surveys are presented. For each of the studies among the users of the municipality of Varna, research hypotheses were formulated to check for the presence of a relationship between key variables. A level of significance was determined:  $\alpha = 0.05$ . A  $\chi^2$  (Pearson Chi-Square Value) test was

chosen, which is considered appropriate in the presence of a nominal scale.

A check was made against each bivariate distribution for compliance with the conditions for applying the test. An empirical  $\chi^2$  value was calculated to test each of the research hypotheses. The obtained empirical value is compared with the critical value at the corresponding degrees of freedom and  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This is how it is determined which hypothesis is accepted and which is rejected.

It was concluded that from the presented information on the studied relationships between the variables of the socio-demographic profile of the residents and important issues related to the evaluation of the municipality of Varna, the most common indicator that has an influence is the degree of education, which also corresponds to the information from the strategic documents of the municipality of Varna for a high level of education in the municipality.

The assessment of the residents of the municipality of Varna on whether the comparative advantages of the municipality are used effectively and for the benefit of the society is related, in addition to the level of education, to the age and occupation of the respondents. This shows that in order to assess these variables it is necessary for the respondents to have experience and observations.

From the information presented about visitors to the territory, it is clear that there are no connections between their socio-demographic indicators and the choice of Varna municipality as a place to visit, i.e. the variables presented are independent. We can summarize that the opinion on whether the comparative advantages of the municipality are effectively used is only tied to the age indicator of the respondents. In the opinion of the respondents, whether the comparative advantages of the territory are used for the benefit of society is linked to the degree of completed education and their occupation.

In summary, we can conclude that when checking for the presence of a relationship between the variables determining the profile of the business and the most important advantage of the municipality of Varna, which is why they develop their activities in the territory; as well as the opinion of the respondents whether the comparative advantages of the territory are used for the benefit of society and whether they are used effectively, it is clear that there is no relationship between most of the studied variables.

In **paragraph 2** of the third chapter, the comparative advantages in the primary research results are presented in detail. The summary of the results shows that the local government and territorial development experts identify a wide range of comparative advantages for the municipality of Varna compared to other similar territories, but only certain advantages are important for the inhabitants of the territory, its visitors and the businesses developing activities

there. There are a large number of comparative advantages that different respondents indicate as important to them, these comparative advantages are also recognized by experts, but are currently identified by stakeholders as being in 'Poor' or 'Very Poor' status. It is concluded that it is good to pay attention to the comparative advantages that are assessed in the 'Poor' condition by the stakeholders because they may influence their choice to stay living and work in the territory, to continue to visit the territory or to develop their business on it.

The following conclusions and generalizations are made from the studies described above:

➤ In relation to "Natural resources", the comparative advantages "Geographical position", "Available water resources" and "Climate" are rated very highly by all stakeholders and the opportunities to offer them as a product in the territory should be more widely used by the local authority, as they were considered very important to improve the attractiveness of the territory among visitors and tourists, to attract labor and investment.

➤ Regarding "Socio-Economic Resources", local residents rated "Accessibility to educational services", "Opportunities for professional development", "Opportunities for specialized training", "Quality of academic education" and "Quality of vocational education". Residents rate these advantages as being in "Very good" or "Good" condition for the municipality of Varna. While for local business, the most important comparative advantages related to "Socio-economic resources" of Varna municipality are "Structure of the economy", "Available productions on the territory of the municipality", "Opportunities for professional development". They are rated Very Good or Good by a large proportion of local business representatives.

➤ Previous studies confirm the great potential of the local population, suggested by the huge number of micro-enterprises created on the territory of the municipality, and the high level of education of the population. This should be carefully explored by local authorities and supported by building close relationships between universities, local businesses and investors. These advantages bring enormous potential for the development of the territory as a whole.

➤ The results of the survey of the opinion of local residents show that the presence of an airport and a port are very important comparative advantages for them. As their condition is assessed as good or very good. These comparative advantages are among the most important for both visitors to the territory and local businesses. This also coincides with the opinion of the experts, as well as with the proposed development plan of the municipality of Varna. Consideration should be given to and exploration of opportunities to utilize local residents' suggestions for further development of maritime transport and related recreational services.

- Special attention should be paid to local roads, as their condition negatively affects the opinion of residents about the municipality, as well as the perceptions of visitors about the territory and makes it difficult for business organizations in the area to operate.
- The importance of local historical landmarks, organized events and annual festivals, emphasized by the experts, was also confirmed by the results of the conducted survey among local residents and visitors to the territory. Local authorities can support the implementation of similar initiatives in different areas of the municipality, as they are currently concentrated in the city center.
- Experts suggest that different types of sports are important and a priority for local government. The importance of sports infrastructure for local residents and visitors is also confirmed by the results of the survey. This comparative advantage requires the attention of the local government, as it is important to maintain the built infrastructure in good condition, and also to develop and promote these resources to other interested stakeholders. For example, climbing walls could open up a new niche of visitors or tourists for the area.
- The results of the surveys confirm the opinion of the experts that the conditions for creating and carrying out business on the territory of the municipality are unsatisfactory. Local authorities should pay attention to this fact, as the potential of the territory's resources is enormous, given the skilled workforce and the large number of micro-enterprises.
- In general, the quality of life is rated as satisfactory by local residents, which also confirms the experts' opinion on this. The local authority should pay attention to the quality of services that are indicated as important by local residents, and also to the willingness of local residents to take part in the decision-making process of the territory.

A summary was made that the results of the conducted survey among local residents, visitors and local businesses in the municipality of Varna and the conducted interviews with experts in territorial development bring out the comparative advantages of the territory of the municipality of Varna and outline the opportunities for growth and development. These results show that the territory is rich in resources and has the necessary potential to improve the quality of life of local residents, attract visitors and investment.

**Paragraph 3** of the third chapter comments on the interpretation of the results of the study of the comparative advantages of the territory.

It is noted that when tracking the responses for the most important group of comparative advantages for individual user groups, it is noted that for residents these are "Natural Resources", "Quality of Life" and "Socio-Economic Resources". For visitors, "Natural Resources" and "Cultural and Historical Resources" are most important. For local businesses,

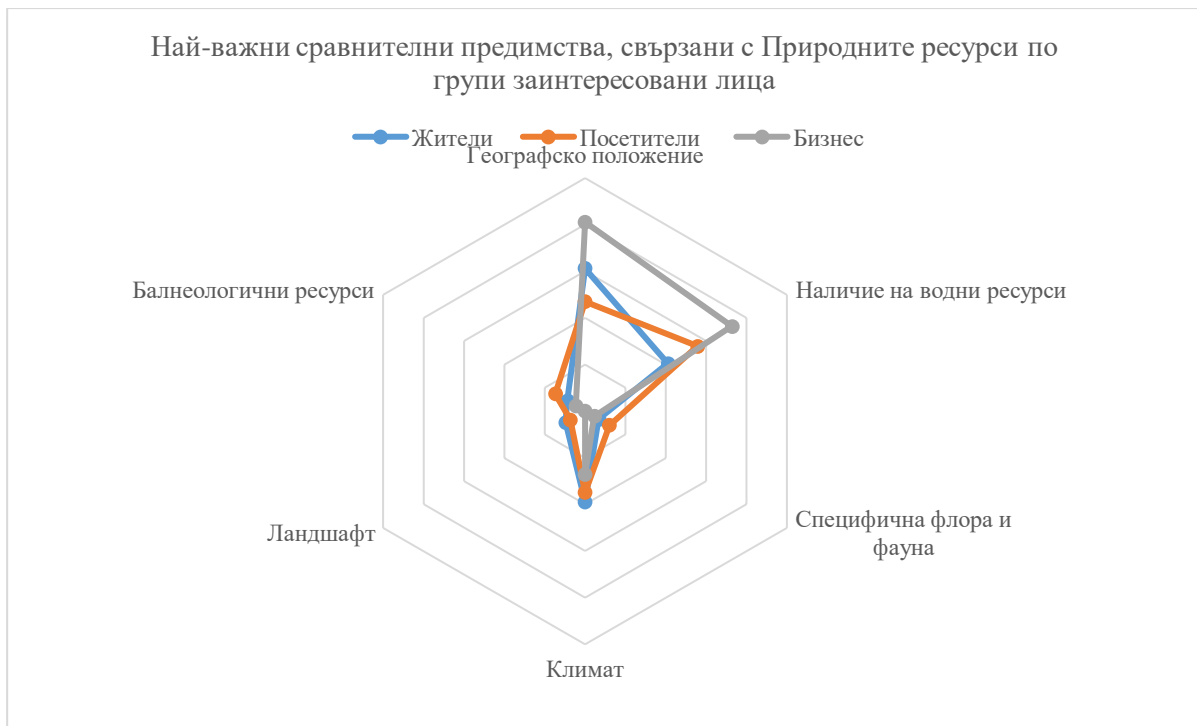


the most important are: "Socio-economic resources" and "Opportunities to create and develop a business". (Fig. 7).



**Fig. 7 Assessment of the importance of comparative advantages by user groups.**

A comparison of the answers was made according to the individual comparative advantages of the above-mentioned groups. First, the comparative advantages associated with "Natural Resources" are discussed. It is noted that the three comparative advantages related to natural resources that are most important for all considered user groups are: "Geographical location", "Availability of water resources" and "Climate" (Fig. 8).



**Fig. 8 Assessment of the importance of comparative advantages related to "Natural Resources" by user groups.**

It is noted that with regard to comparative advantages related to "Infrastructure", the most

important comparative advantages related to infrastructure mentioned in the first places - "Availability of an airport", "Availability of a port", "Entertainment facilities (theatre, cinema, exhibition halls, etc.)", "Availability of railway transport" and "Educational infrastructure", are important for all considered groups of interested persons - residents, local businesses and visitors to the territory. (fig. 9).



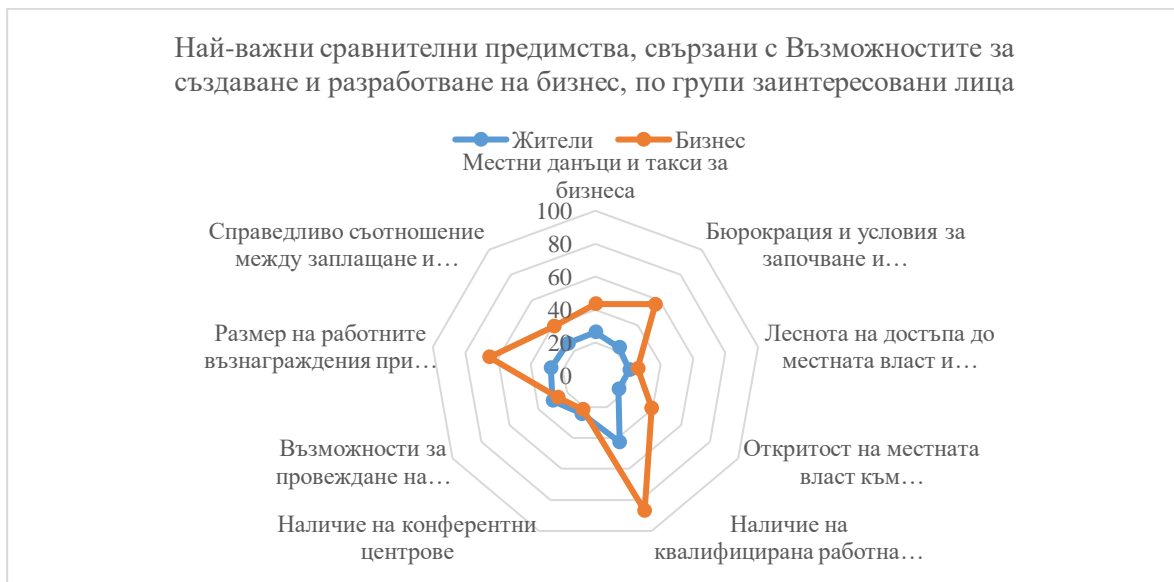
**Fig. 9 Assessment of comparative advantages related to "Infrastructure" by user groups.**

Next, the group of comparative advantages related to "Socio-Economic" resources is considered. The first mentioned comparative advantages related to "Socio-economic resources", which are important for all considered groups of interested parties - residents and local businesses, are "Opportunities for professional development", "Opportunities for specialized training", "Access to educational services", "Structure of the economy of the municipality" and "Available productions on the territory of the municipality". (fig. 10).



**Fig. 10 Assessment of the importance of comparative advantages related to "Socio-economic resources" by user groups.**

The next group of advantages that is considered is "Opportunities to create and develop a business in the municipality of Varna". It is noted that the most important comparative advantages are: "Availability of skilled labor", "Wage rate at local employers" and "Local taxes and fees for business" (fig. 11).



**Fig. 11 Assessment of the importance of comparative advantages related to "Opportunities to create and develop a business" by user groups.**

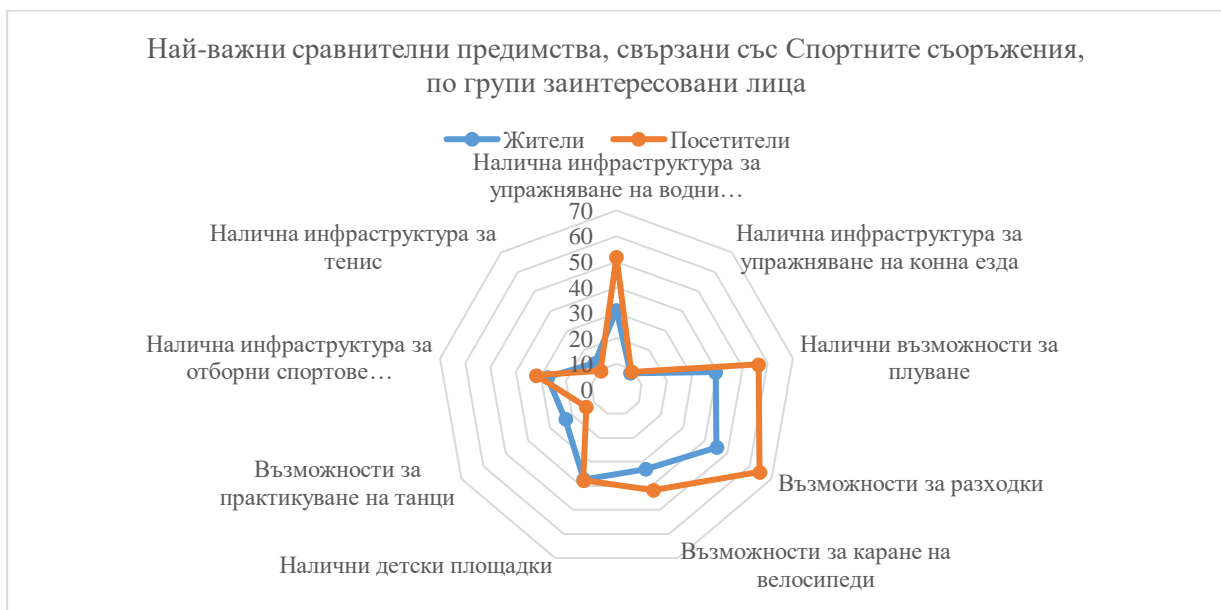
Within the comparative advantages related to "Cultural and Historical Resources", as the most important, "Historic Landmarks" was determined for both residents and visitors of the

territory. For both stakeholder groups, the "Entertainment (Cultural)" and "Organized Festivals" benefits follow. It is noteworthy that the comparative advantages related to "Cultural and historical resources" are ranked equally in order of importance by residents and visitors (Fig. 12).



**Fig. 12 Assessment of the importance of comparative advantages related to "Cultural and historical resources" by user groups.**

The comparative advantage group related to "Sports facilities" is examined. It was observed that there were three comparative advantages that were identified as most important - 'Walking opportunities', 'Swimming opportunities available' and 'Cycling opportunities' - for both groups of stakeholders. (fig. 13).



**Fig. 13 Assessment of the importance of comparative advantages related to "Sports facilities" by user groups.**

As far as the comparative advantages related to "Quality of life" are concerned, it is noted that these are of utmost importance to the inhabitants of the territory. The most important comparative advantage according to the residents of the municipality is "Accessibility to

entertainment infrastructure", followed by "High quality of opportunities for social life and entertainment". Only in third place are "Quality and safe educational services", followed by "Quality medical services offered on the territory of the municipality" and "Educational level of the population". Detailed information with the results of the study is presented in fig. 14.



**Fig. 14 Assessment of the importance of comparative advantages related to "Quality of life".**

The comparative advantage group related to "Accommodations Available" is examined last. The most important comparative advantage according to visitors of the municipality is "Variety of restaurants offering different types of meals/cuisine", followed by "Quality and prices of overnight stays", "Atmosphere", "Quality and price of food" and "Total capacity of the territory ". Detailed results of the study are presented in Fig. 15.



**Fig. 15 Assessment of the importance of comparative advantages related to "Accommodation Available".**

In conclusion, it is summarized that the comparative advantages of the territory, which are determined to be important for the widest possible group of interested parties, are brought out. In this way, the territory can focus on those advantages that are most attractive and can bring the greatest benefit to the area.

**Paragraph 4** of the third chapter provides guidelines for developing the comparative advantages of the territory. The most important results for the studied groups of users will determine the assignment of the respective comparative advantage as: strength, weakness, opportunity or threat for the respective subjects. The comparative advantages thus distributed in the corresponding quadrants of the SWOT matrix will serve to derive the guidelines for developing the comparative advantages of the territory.

The main indicators of the SWOT analysis are summarized in the following four tables. The tables are sized with rating values ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important for the territory. The total value of the weights is 1.

Table 3

**Comparative advantages assigned to the "strengths" quadrant from the perspective of the user groups studied**

№	Strengths	Weight	Rating	Weighted value
1	Geographical location	0.09	5	0.45
2	Availability of water resources	0.07	4	0.28
3	Climate	0.05	3	0.15

4	Availability of an airport	0.09	5	0.45
5	Port availability	0.07	4	0.28
6	Historical landmarks	0.09	5	0.45
7	Entertainment (cultural)	0.07	4	0.28
8	Organized festivals	0.05	3	0.15
9	Organized events	0.02	2	0.04
10	Swimming facilities available	0.07	4	0.28
11	Opportunities for walks	0.09	5	0.45
12	Accessibility to entertainment infrastructure	0.09	5	0.45
13	High quality of opportunities for social life and entertainment	0.07	4	0.28
14	Variety of restaurants offering different types of dishes/cuisine	0.08	5	0.4
	Total	1		4,39

Source: primary data analyzes and author's calculations.

Note: the rating values show the assessment of the studied groups of users for the status of the respective comparative advantage. The weight value reflects the importance of the respective comparative advantage for the studied user groups.

The thus obtained sum of the weighted values for the comparative advantages that fall into the "strengths" quadrant for the subjects will be used to size the results of the SWOT analysis on a coordinate system.

Table 4

**Comparative advantages assigned to the "weaknesses" quadrant from the perspective of the user groups studied**

№	Weaknesses	Weight	Rating	Weighted value
1	Lack of interest on the part of the local government to cooperate with the business	0.1	5	0.5
2	Lack of incentives to create new enterprises	0.09	4	0.36
3	Deteriorating demographics	0.1	5	0.5
4	Absence or insufficient development of high-tech and innovative industries with high added value	0.07	5	0.35
5	Poor infrastructure in populated areas /streets, sidewalks, water supply network, etc./	0.09	5	0.45
6	Underdeveloped non-governmental sector and civil initiatives	0.05	4	0.2
7	Absence or poor condition of logistics business infrastructure	0.07	4	0.28
8	Obsolete and depreciated production base of the enterprises	0.03	3	0.09
9	Administrative structure (local government)	0.03	3	0.09

10	Transparency of public procurement	0.03	3	0.09
11	Cleanliness	0.07	3	0.21
12	Ineffective integration of disadvantaged groups, including minority and isolated groups	0.07	4	0.28
13	A fair balance between pay and workload	0.09	4	0.36
14	Opportunities for the residents of the municipality to get involved in the decision-making process of the local authorities	0.11	5	0.55
	Total	1		4.31

Source: primary data analyzes and author's calculations.

Note: the rating values show the assessment of the studied groups of users for the status of the respective comparative advantage. The weight value reflects the importance of the respective comparative advantage for the studied user groups.

The sum of the weighted values for the comparative advantages that fall into the 'weaknesses' quadrant for the subjects will be used to size the results of the SWOT analysis on a coordinate system.

Table 5

**Comparative advantages assigned to the "opportunities" quadrant from the perspective of the user groups studied**

№	Opportunities	Weight	Rating	Weighted value
1	Availability of rail transport	0.07	2	0.14
2	Entertainment options (theatre, cinema, exhibition halls, etc.)	0.09	3	0.27
3	Educational infrastructure	0.05	1	0.05
4	Access to educational services	0.13	5	0.65
5	Opportunities for professional development	0.09	3	0.27
6	Opportunities for specialized training	0.11	2	0.22
7	Availability of qualified labor	0.14	5	0.7
8	Cycling opportunities	0.07	2	0.14
9	Quality and secure educational services	0.05	3	0.15
10	Quality and prices of overnight stays	0.11	4	0.44
11	Atmosphere	0.09	3	0.27
	Total	1		3.3

Source: primary data analyzes and author's calculations.

Note: the rating values show the assessment of the studied groups of users for the status of the respective comparative advantage. The weight value reflects the importance of the respective comparative advantage for the studied user groups.

The resulting sum of the weighted values for the comparative advantages that fall into the 'opportunities' quadrant for the subjects will be used to size the value across the different values of the coordinate system.



Table 6

**Comparative advantages assigned to the "threats" quadrant from the perspective of the user groups studied.**

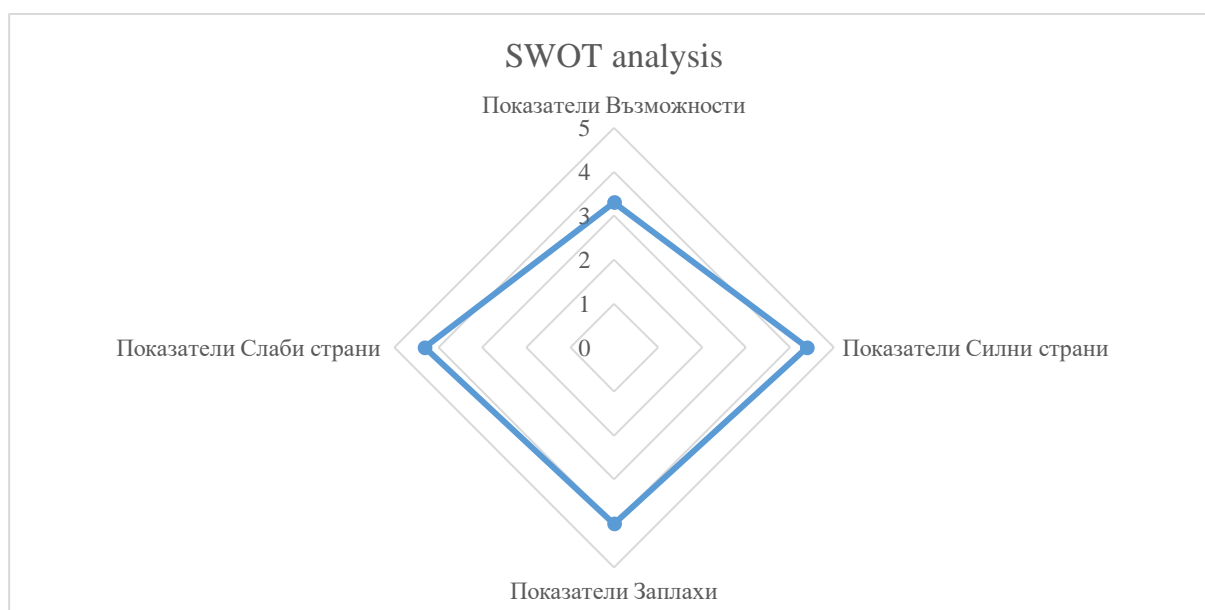
№	Threats	Weight	Rating	Weighted value
1	Local business taxes and fees	0.15	5	0.75
2	Amount of wages at local employers	0.1	2	0.2
3	Red tape and regulatory burden	0.15	5	0.75
4	Lack of predictability	0.11	4	0.44
5	Corruption	0.09	3	0.27
6	Ineffective partnership of local government with business	0.15	5	0.75
7	Migration of young and educated persons	0.15	5	0.75
8	Purchasing power of local remuneration	0.05	1	0.05
9	Waste treatment methods	0.05	1	0.05
	Total	1		4.01

Source: primary data analyzes and author's calculations.

Note: the rating values show the assessment of the studied groups of users for the status of the respective comparative advantage. The weight value reflects the importance of the respective comparative advantage for the studied user groups.

The sum total of the weighted values of the comparative advantages that fall into the 'threats' quadrant for the studied user groups will be used to scale the value across the different values of the coordinate system.

Based on the calculated sums of the weighted values for the comparative advantages falling into the quadrants "strengths", "weaknesses", "opportunities" and "threats", a graph was made with the results of the SWOT analysis, presented in fig. 16.



**Fig. 15 Graphic presentation of the results of the SWOT analysis of the territory of the municipality of Varna**

Next, the faces of the resulting triangles are calculated to determine the one with the largest area. The following tabulated results are obtained.

Table 7

<b>Summative assessment of the SWOT analysis</b>			
Indicator	Value	Strategy	Value
Strengths	4,39	SO	7,24
Weaknesses	4.31	ST	8.80
Opportunities	3.3	WO	7.11
Threats	4.01	WT	8.64

Source: primary data analyzes and author's calculations.

It was concluded that according to the summarizing assessment from the SWOT analysis, the strategy that should be chosen for the development of the municipality of Varna is the so-called ST (Strengths Threats) - Strengths Threats, i.e. focusing on using the municipality's strengths to limit the impact of potential threats on the municipality's development.

It is summarized that the territory of Varna municipality has potential for development. The strengths of the territory, such as natural resources, infrastructure and cultural and historical resources, should be developed and approaches should be sought to improve the assessment of their condition by the interested parties. The territory of the municipality has unique features and great potential, which, if used correctly, can lead to an improvement of the economic condition of the territory, to an increase in the number of visitors to the area, and therefore to a limitation of the influence of threats to the development of the territory and elimination on its weak sides.

The analyzes show that a large part of the weaknesses and threats to the territory are mainly due to local policies and the lack of good practices of local government work with the businesses developing activities in the territory, as well as the residents of the territory. This is entirely under the control of the local authority and coordinated action by the local authority should be planned to resolve the identified problems related to the relationship of the local authority with residents and businesses operating in its territory.

The last paragraph of the third chapter comments on the marketing directions for developing the comparative advantages of the territory. In **paragraph 5** of the third chapter, taking into account the studies carried out for the municipality of Varna and the analyzed results

of the studies conducted among different groups of users of the territory, the following marketing directions adapted to the territory of the municipality of Varna can be proposed for developing the comparative advantages of the territory. The directions are presented according to the basic elements of the marketing mix:

Direction: Product/Services/Ideas.

Regarding the residents of the territory, the following conclusions and proposals for the direction can be made:

The analysis of the results shows that of the comparative advantages related to natural resources, the most important for all considered groups of stakeholders are the geographical location, the available water resources and the climate, with attention being paid to the fact that the available water resources have an unused potential for development. In this regard, the development of complex products using the currently available resources is proposed - "Water" summer camp for children/teenagers. The camp coordinates the use of the already built infrastructure and available resources such as Wake Park Varna, Varna Party Boats, opportunities to ride a water bike, etc.

In infrastructure-related comparative advantages, "Entertainment facilities (theatre, cinema, exhibition halls, etc.)" is among the most important advantages for all stakeholder groups considered, noting the seasonality of cultural events held in the city. In this regard, we propose the development of the so-called "cultural card" which, following the model of the popular Multisport cards, offers the use of various cultural events - exhibitions, theater productions, cinema screenings, etc., on the basis of a monthly subscription. In this way, seasonality in the use of these services will be balanced and an opportunity will be created to coordinate their offer, achieving a better organization of the activities of the organizations related to culture in the area.

In terms of comparative advantages related to socio-economic resources, "Professional Development Opportunities" is among the most important advantages for all stakeholder groups considered. In this regard, it could be recommended to develop a complex product linked to the activity of the existing Career Guidance Center - Varna. The product is aimed at secondary school students and will offer career guidance followed by a 3-week internship during the summer vacation at a company in the industry that is recommended to the participant.

In relation to comparative advantages related to cultural and historical resources, the most important comparative advantage for all stakeholder groups considered is "Historical landmarks". It is proposed to develop programs coordinated by the local government to familiarize the children and students of the municipality with the historical landmarks through

the use of various incentives for the interested parties such as games with prizes. This will help to overcome seasonality in visiting the historical sites and the incentives can be used to generate ideas for a more attractive presentation of the historical sites and/or to raise awareness of these sites on social networks through the use of social media channels networks of different groups of users.

In the comparative advantages related to sports facilities, the most important comparative advantage for the two stakeholder groups considered is "Walking opportunities". In this regard, it is proposed to develop mobile applications with walking routes in the municipality, classified by accessibility with different types of transport (car, public transport), difficulty of the route (beginners, advanced, etc.), duration of the route, opportunities for additional services (picnic spots, attractions, special views, etc.) or create a website with this information.

In relation to the comparative advantages related to the quality of life, the most important comparative advantage according to the residents of the municipality is "Accessibility to recreational infrastructure". The entertainment infrastructure of the municipality is concentrated in the central parts of the city of Varna. In this regard, it is proposed to build and develop entertainment infrastructure in the neighborhoods of the city of Varna and smaller settlements in the municipality.

Taking into account the studies carried out by the municipality of Varna and the analyzed results of the studies conducted among the users of the territory, the following conclusions and proposals can be made for the direction in relation to the visitors of the territory.

The analysis of the results shows that of the comparative advantages related to natural resources, the most important for all the groups of interested parties considered are the geographical location, the available water resources and the climate, with attention being paid to the fact that the available water resources have an unused potential for development. In this regard, it is proposed to develop complex products covering a combination of offers on the territory, following the example of the water camp for residents. In the case of visitors, however, a general card is offered for a series of services offered in the territory such as visits to various attractions along the sea. The positive side of the card for visitors is that they will have the opportunity to use a discount on the use of services, since the use of many attractions will be purchased at once.

In relation to the comparative advantages related to cultural and historical resources, the most important comparative advantage for all considered groups of stakeholders is "Historical attractions", the festivals held are also of great interest to visitors. Therefore, it is proposed to create a complex product - holding several daily festivals related to certain historical events of

the city and the municipality. Due to the expected high interest in such festivals (following the example of the "Medieval Festival" held at the beginning of September), it is proposed that these festivals be organized annually.

In the comparative advantages related to sports facilities, the most important comparative advantage for the two stakeholder groups considered is "Walking opportunities". In this regard, the proposed development of mobile applications with walking routes in the municipality can also be used by visitors to the territory.

In the comparative advantages related to available accommodation, the most important comparative advantage according to visitors of the municipality is "Variety of restaurants offering different types of meals/cuisine". In this regard, it is proposed to organize a culinary festival, presenting the various restaurants and giving the opportunity to try the various cuisines offered on the territory of the municipality. Thus, visitors will be able to get to know the different restaurants they can visit during their stay, and restaurateurs will have the opportunity to advertise themselves in a new way among potential consumers.

Based on the conducted surveys of the municipality of Varna and the analyzed results of the conducted surveys among the users of the territory, the following conclusions and proposals can be made for the direction regarding the local business in the territory:

In the comparative advantages related to the opportunities to create and develop a business in the municipality of Varna, the most important for all considered groups of interested parties is "Availability of qualified labor". In this case, the most important thing is the coordination of the needs of the business in the territory with the possibilities of the vocational high schools and higher education institutions in the territory of the municipality. Therefore, it is proposed to develop an online platform for collecting information from businesses about the necessary workers and employees to carry out their activities at the moment in scientific directions and centralized coordination of this information with vocational high schools and higher education institutions on the territory of the municipality.

Direction: Prices/costs/value

In connection with the results of the analyzes of the collected information from the inhabitants of the territory, an analysis and revision of local taxes and fees is recommended. They stand out as a threat from the point of view of the subjects of the territory and should be analyzed and updated in detail.

In connection with the results of the analyzes of the collected information from the survey conducted among the local businesses of the territory, the comparative advantage "Local taxes and fees" is evaluated in a bad state by the respondents. An analysis and review of local taxes

and fees is recommended. They stand out as a threat from the point of view of the subjects of the territory and should be analyzed and updated in detail.

From Ch. of the Municipality of Varna, the following local taxes are collected from the local residents and businesses, defined in the Ordinance of the Varna Municipal Council on determining the amount of local taxes on the territory of the Municipality of Varna<sup>7</sup>: Tax on real estate; Inheritance tax; Donation tax; Tax on acquisition of property for consideration; Vehicle tax; Patent tax; Tourist tax; Tax on taxi carriage of passengers; Other local taxes determined by law.

In the Ordinance of the Varna Municipal Council on the determination and administration of local fees and service prices on the territory of the municipality of Varna<sup>8</sup>, the following fees are defined for local residents and businesses developing activities on the territory of the municipality: for household waste; for use in markets, fairs, sidewalks, squares and street lanes; for the use of specialized institutions for the provision of social services, camps, dormitories and other municipal social services; for technical services; for administrative services; for buying burial sites; for owning a dog; other local fees determined by law.

In Appendix 2 of the Ordinance of the Varna Municipal Council on the determination and administration of local fees and service prices on the territory of the Varna Municipality, the prices of the services provided by the Varna Municipality are determined. This includes services such as: prices for visits to museums, prices for administrative services provided by the municipality, price for the right to set up booths, pavilions, etc. sites on municipal property, prices for public catering establishments (breakfast bars, pastry shops, snack bars, restaurants, bars, discotheques, etc.) and much more<sup>9</sup>.

The studies show that within the district, local taxes are the highest in the municipality of Varna<sup>10</sup>. According to the results published in Regional Profiles<sup>11</sup>, municipal expenses in the municipality are almost completely covered by local revenues. Although this brings positives for the municipality, because in this way it can purposefully and rationally use these revenues, it is necessary to update the local taxes and fees, because if they are too high, it acts as a depressing and demotivating effect on the subjects of the territory and can be an obstacle to its development.

It should be borne in mind that the increase in spending on social activities, infrastructure,

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<sup>7</sup> <https://varna.obshtini.bg/doc/345772>. Accessed: 28.01.2024

<sup>8</sup> <https://varna.obshtini.bg/doc/372899>. Accessed: 28.01.2024

<sup>9</sup> <https://varna.obshtini.bg/doc/372899>. Accessed: 28.01.2024

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.regionalprofiles.bg/var/docs/2023/03-Varna-2023-BG.pdf>. Accessed: 28.01.2024

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.regionalprofiles.bg/bg/regions/varna/>. Accessed: 28.01.2024

etc. can be implemented both at the expense of the municipality's budget and by attracting additional funds. Additional funds can be attracted by applying for funding under various EU projects and programs, but in this regard, the presence of announced procedures for the recruitment of project proposals, as well as administrative and organizational capacity, is required. Activities of this type can also be financed by attracting extra-budgetary funds for the development of the municipality, such as resources from the financial market, bank loans, municipal bonds, pooled financing and revolving funds (Petrov, 2015).

Regarding the results of the survey of the opinion of residents and local businesses on the comparative advantages of Varna Municipality and the evaluation in "Poor" condition of "Political structure (way of decision-making in the municipality)" and "Administrative structure (local self-government)" follows to bear in mind that it is advisable for the municipality of Varna to implement greater internal and civil control over the spent funds.

In connection with the results of the analyzes of the collected information from the survey conducted among the visitors of the territory, the comparative advantages "Quality and prices of overnight stays" and "Quality and price of food" are evaluated in good condition by the respondents. No changes are proposed.

For the studied groups of users – local residents, businesses and visitors, it should be borne in mind that, depending on the type of users, it is possible to charge additional values for the use of some services. Such as using Blue Zone car parks. This increases the price of other services used by them (for example, administrative services in the municipality of Varna, cafes, shops, etc.).

#### Direction: Distribution of products, services and ideas/channels/intermediaries

Delivery of the various products to consumers depends on the nature of the respective products. Online channels can be used to reach the relevant consumers. It is recommended to expand the range of online services provided by the municipality of Varna (via PIN access). Currently, only local taxes and fees can be paid<sup>12</sup>.

In relation to public transport, its integration should be continued and opportunities to reach important places for users should be developed. This can be done by updating bus routes. Because the current routes are from more than 30 years ago, and the centers of attraction for the users of the territory have changed.

In relation to visitors to the territory, information on how to reach the hotels in the resorts from the various airports, train stations and bus stations in the territory of the country should be

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.varna.bg/bg/217>. Accessed: 28.01.2024

specified. This can be organized through the development of a mobile phone application specialized in offering integrated transport for this target group of users.

In relation to the local business, the direction includes the delivery of the various products and services created by the local business to consumers and the supply of materials to the business. Although the business considers the various transport services offered in the territory as a comparative advantage of the municipality, the representatives of the business consider the state of local roads and highways as a threat to their development. Local authorities should pay attention to this.

In this direction, reverse distribution channels such as waste collection should be considered. According to the studies, the comparative advantage "Waste Treatment Methods" is defined as a threat from the users' point of view. Therefore, it is good for the municipality to pay attention to this and organize itself in a better way. A prerequisite for a better organization are the relatively high taxes and fees in the municipality, which should be used purposefully, including for waste processing.

In the direction of distribution, the intermediaries that the municipality of Varna uses in providing its services should also be considered. With them, a reasoned selection should be made and the commissions given to them should be monitored to be within the scope of covering the value of the functions they perform and ensure a reasonable profit. Here it should be kept in mind that it is beneficial to develop direct channels for the distribution of the products and services provided by the municipality. I.e. the municipality has an interest in creating conditions to directly sell its products and services to different groups of users.

#### Direction: Communications and Incentives/Channels/Integration

It is necessary to update the communications of the municipality with the different groups of users in connection with the development of new technologies. Conditions should be created for the provision of relevant and fast information to different groups of subjects using modern communication channels and platforms to achieve greater efficiency and accessibility.

Taking into account the development of technologies and new communication channels, it is recommended for local residents to collect information from adolescents through existing communication channels (for example, the "Preventions" club of the Varna municipality communicates with students from most schools in the city and can use the opportunity to collect feedback on the communication channels used by the representatives of this age group). According to the author, there is a huge untapped potential in the social networks of city residents to spread information and increase awareness of what is happening in the city (for example, the use of hashtags in social networks).



Given the development of technologies and the development of new communication channels, it is proposed to create specialized profiles of the municipality in social networks popular among visitors, through which to share constant information about the events happening in the city and to give feedback when information is needed . (a kind of online version of the Tourist Information Centre). It is very important to offer 24/7 service, which is possible through the use of AI in developing relevant profiles. The popularity of such profiles is recommended to be in the form of a game with prizes. This is one of the fastest ways to access profile "followers".

The local business reports that the opportunities for communication with the local government are insufficient. Local business representatives are not satisfied with their relationship with the local government. 95.65% of respondents claim that "Local authorities do not make efforts for effective partnerships with businesses". This is a serious problem and it is recommended to pay attention to it, since in this way problems from Ch. i.e. funding from local businesses, general campaigns, etc. According to the representatives of the local business, the most suitable mechanisms for interaction between the business and the local government are: "Opportunity to participate in the meetings of the committees of the municipal council", "Official websites of the municipal administration and municipal council with the possibility of feedback" and "Formation of joint working and/or thematic groups'.

Specialization in communication channels is recommended according to the specifics of different users and ways of using different channels. It is good to make internal specialization according to different groups of users. Care must be taken to ensure that there is internal integration on the various channels or elements of the channels, as at the moment this is not observed and each channel is used either for a certain time or partially for sharing information. The integrated communication system should be considered and built as part of integrated marketing of the territory.

If necessary, different incentives can be used for different user groups. For example, when involvement in volunteering is necessary for the implementation of project activities, etc.

A serious problem in the communication of the municipality with the different groups of users at the moment is the sending of letters containing personal data, on paper without them being recommended. This is a serious threat to users' personal data and must be addressed as a problem by the municipality.

## **Conclusion**

In the conclusion, the fulfillment of the set goals and objectives of the dissertation work is reported. It is indicated that the topic can be continued and further developed in future research. It is shared that the proposed sequence of actions to identify the comparative advantages of the territory and determine their importance to different stakeholder groups is applicable to any territory with minimal adjustments and shows how the interests of different stakeholders can be coordinated, leading to increased of the competitiveness of the entire territory, increasing its quality of life and increasing its attractiveness for external users - visitors and tourists, and investors.

#### **IV. DISSERTATION CONTRIBUTIONS REFERENCE**

The contributions of the dissertation research can be summarized as follows:

1. Systematization, critical analysis and summary of the theoretical aspects of the categories "territory marketing" and "comparative advantage" and the possibilities of applying the "theory of comparative advantages" to the territories;
2. Design of a methodology for marketing development of the comparative advantages of the territory and construction of a conceptual model of their study
3. Specific marketing directions are proposed for the application of the methodology, which can support the identification of the comparative advantages of the territory of the municipality of Varna and their development in order to use the potential of the territory for its development with a focus on the preferences of residents, local businesses and visitors to the territory.

#### **V. DISSERTATION PUBLICATIONS**

##### **Scientific articles:**

1. Balashova-Kostadinova, Y. (2016) Identifying Competitive Advantages for Territories, Bucharest: Bucharest Univ. of Economic Studies Publ. House, pp. 111 - 118, ISSN 2537-5865; ISBN 978-606-34-01108-4.
2. Balashova-Kostadinova, Y. (2017) Comparative Advantages Related to a Municipality - the Experts View, Bucharest: Bucharest Univ. of Economic Studies Publ. House, pp. 41 - 52, ISSN/ISSN-L 2344-5130.
3. Balashova-Kostadinova, Y. (2018) Comparative Advantages of Territories - the Residents' View, Bucharest: Bucharest Univ. of Economic Studies Publ. House, pp. 55-68, ISBN 978-606-34-01108-4; ISSN/ISSN-L 2537-5865.

##### **Scientific reports:**

1. Balashova-Kostadinova, Y. (2019). Innovative Approaches for Disseminating Territory Information. The Journal of Management and Sustainable Development, 75 (2), pp. 53-59

#### **VI. DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I declare that this dissertation is a completely author's product and during its development no foreign publications and developments were used in violation of their copyrights.