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## Modeling Perceived Quality, Customer Satisfaction and Probability of Guest Returning to the Destination

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### ABSTRACT

In the hotel industry, it is a well-known fact that, despite of quality and variety of services provided, there is a low probability that the guests will return. This research is focused on identifying the basic factors of the hotel offer, which could determine the influence on the correlation between the guests' satisfaction and the probability of their return. The objective of the article is to explore the relationship between the guests' satisfaction with the quality hotel services in total (including the tourist offer of the place) and the probability of his return to the same destination. The questionnaire method was applied in the survey, and the data were analysed based on factor analysis. Thereafter, the model for forecasting the probability of the guests returning to the destination was established, by using the example of Montenegrin tourism. The model represents a defined framework for the guest's decision-making process. It identifies two main characteristics of guest experiences: satisfaction and rated quality (of the destination's overall hotel service and tourist offer). The same model evaluates the impact of the above factors on the probability of the guests' returning to the same destination. The starting hypothesis was the existence of a high degree of correlation between the guests' satisfaction (with the destination's hotel services and tourist offer) and the probability of returning to the selected Montenegrin destinations. The research confirmed the above-mentioned hypothesis. The results have revealed that there are significant differences in perceived quality, i.e. satisfaction between the target groups of Eastern and Western European tourists.

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### INTRODUCTION

In modern business conditions, marketing philosophy has experienced a shift from mass to individual marketing, from the effort to create a "superior product" towards a very satisfied and loyal customer. The growing tourist demand and increasingly demanding consumers of the tourist product are the biggest stimulus for further development of the tourist offer in all of its forms, consequently, also the growing competition in this branch. The current international market situation is significantly different from the previous years due to the negative effects of the economic crisis, terrorism and other unfavourable trends in the environment. In the new market conditions, the key issue is to op-

timize the quality of the service, in order to maximize profit and, at the same time, consumer satisfaction. The needs of tourists must be synchronized both territorially and temporally in tourism, in order to ensure the unity of the perfect service process. According to economic theory and practical experience, the importance of the perceived value of products and services grows during periods of economic recession. (Korda et al., 2009).

**The motive of the research.** An important practical experience in the touristic management has motivated the authors of this study to, by using the previously utilized researching methods, complete the study of the perceived quality and the customer satisfaction in the function of predicting the probability of return (Popović, 2018). Therefore, the goal and the task of the conducted research is focused on encouraging management in the hotel and tourism industry to continually question the offered quality of service by using interactive communication with consumers. Taking into consideration the fact that the basic goals of each tourism company are the satisfaction of tourists and the financial result, Vetitnev et al. (2013) points out that tourist satisfaction is an important indicator of the tourist destination performance and its financial results.

**Review of literature and previous research.** Bearing in mind the aim of this paper the literature review shall provide a cumulative review of the research in the field of tourist satisfaction with the destination offer; a rather detailed review of research in the area of hotel guests' satisfaction and a review of the most significant researches in Montenegro regarding this and related topics. Starting from the analysis of early papers (Pizam et al., 1978; Mayer et.al., 1998; Kozak and Rimmington, 2000; Hsu, 2003; Chi and Qu, 2008; Alegre and Garau, 2010) to newer ones (Munir, 2013; Ragavan, 2014; Ramseook-Munhurrin et al., 2015; Suhartanto and Triyuni, 2016; Chand et al., 2016; Agrawal, 2017, Albayrk, 2017; Tanford, 2017, Han, 2017; Androniceanu, 2017; Androniceanu and Popescu, 2017; Pjerotic, 2017), we can summarize several important conclusions:

- The tourist satisfaction depends on a number of factors directly related to the primary and secondary elements of the destination. These factors include: natural beauty, cultural and historical heritage, climate and weather conditions, beaches, accommodation, food and beverage, staff kindness, destination accessibility, transport, destination safety, offer of specific interests (wellness and spa, shopping, animation, sports and recreational offer, religious tourism, entertainment facilities, tourist guides).
- Tourist satisfaction depends on the marketing policy of a destination, its reputation, price, manner of distribution and promotion.
- Tourist satisfaction depends as well on their demographic features, such as sex, age, travel motives, occupations, income, origin.
- The most frequently tested and verified model is the following: tourist satisfaction depends on the quality of tourist offer, and tourist loyalty depends on their satisfaction with the destination.

Dannaher and Mattsson (1994) examine the impact of individual components of hotel service process on guest satisfaction. They point out 5 essential variables that can significantly affect the overall guest satisfaction, such as: check-in, check out, accommodation sector, breakfast and restaurant offer. M. A. Spinelli and G. C. Canavos (2000) particularly deal with the influence of human factor on the hotel guests' satisfaction. They conclude that the satisfaction among the employees depends on the hotel guests' satisfaction, i.e., the more satisfied the employees are, the more satisfied the hotel guests shall be with the complete hotel service. The hotel guests' satisfaction depends on the service provider (staff), room quality, the basic contents of the hotel, the content for business segment, values, safety, accompanying content (Choi and Chu, 2001). J. Kandampully and D. Suhartanto (2003) came to similar conclusions as well, adding price as a significant factor for hotel guests' satisfaction. J. Barsky in his papers (2003) treats guest satisfaction with the hotel service from the emotional point of view, and concludes that emotions vary from market segment to segment, but it significantly influences guest loyalty and overall satisfaction.

A research conducted in 5-star hotels in Antalia (Emir and Kozak 2011) shows that the service of reception, employees, maintenance sector and restaurant service largely influence the degree of hotel guests' satisfaction and their intention to come back again. A. Mattila and J. O'Neill (2013) in their empirical researches concluded that mostly price, directly followed by the room cleanliness, main-tenance, and staff politeness influence the overall hotel guests' satisfaction. On the other hand, the authors proved no connection between hotel occupancy rate and the degree of guest satisfaction. C. M. Chen et al (2015) obtain rather interesting findings that hotel guests are satisfied if service prices are lower and vice versa.

According to K. Worsfold et al. (2016) the guest satisfaction with the services and physical attributes of the hotel affect the possibility of guests' return. This research has proven that the possibility of guests' return to the hotel is influenced by the level of satisfaction with the physical features of the hotel, rather than satisfaction with the hotel service. Furthermore, it is proven that the guest satisfaction with hotel services is influenced by their perception of the value of the hotel, while guests' perception of the value of the hotel does not affect their intention to return.

M. A. Fouad et al (2016) particularly examine the effect of housekeeping on the degree of customer satisfaction. The results of their research show that the degree of customer satisfaction with a complete hotel service is caused to a large extent by the quality of the housekeeping sector. A survey conducted in boutique hotels in Paris (Zaman, Botti and Thanh, 2016) shows that the level of customer satisfaction decreases if management increases efforts to improve hotel efficiency and vice versa. Based on an online survey conducted among 644 tourists from the United States, it was found that the level of their satisfaction depends on factors of consumption, value and accommodation (Tussyadiah, 2016).

E. Martin-Fuentes (2016) proves that guests' satisfaction depends on the hotel category, regardless of the standard set varying from country to country for the same hotel category. Additionally, the author proves that the price is in correlation with the hotel category and the level of satisfaction. A survey conducted among budget hotels in China shows that the overall hotel guests' satisfaction depends on tangible and sensory experience, staff, location and visual perception (Ren and Lianping et al, 2016).

The hotel guests' satisfaction additionally depends on the hotel type, whether it is a full or limited-service hotel, suite hotel that includes restaurant services, or hotel with no food and beverage serving (Xu and Li, 2016). Furthermore, the scents in the hotels can significantly influence guests' emotions, as well as their degree of satisfaction, as highlighted by the authors G. B. Denizci et al. (2017). Hotel location, its availability to the main tourist attractions, the distance from the airport, railway and bus stations, the distance from universities, business centers including the distance from green areas, parks, shops etc., can make a significant impact on the level of customer satisfaction, while the airport shuttle and free of charge parking can alleviate the accessibility shortcomings or the hotel location. Recent researches are particularly concerned with the level of satisfaction of the disabled persons with hotel services, and they come to the conclusion that satisfaction depends on the hotel availability. The greater the number of accessible areas for the disabled people, the greater their satisfaction (Tutuncu, 2017).

When it comes to research in Montenegro on the topic of customer satisfaction with hotel services in Montenegro, and generally on the topic of customer satisfaction with the destination offer in Montenegro, we have to emphasize that they are very few. The tourist satisfaction in Montenegro is most studied from the aspect of sustainable tourism, where the tourist satisfaction is treated as one of the indicators of tourist destination sustainability. M. Bigovic (2013) examines the relation: the tourist satisfaction, the quality of service, the benefits for tourists that arise when consuming a tourist product, and are related to its attributes and the intention of tourists to visit the destination again. In other words, it examines the impact of three variables (tourist satisfaction, quality of service and benefits) on the return of tourists. He checks three models and concludes that the most relevant is the model that includes all possible correlations among variables.

## 1. THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION

Taking into consideration the influence of Tourism Industry on the overall economy of Montenegro, special analyses was conducted on the perceived quality of the hotel services in the area of Budva Riviera, as the most attractive touristic destination. For the purpose of obtaining data on satisfaction and customer loyalty, a number of surveys were conducted in-house and by the tour operators in the previous work. For the purposes of this research, below is processed the questionnaire conducted in medium and large hotels (a total of five - 4\* and 5\* hotels), in order to analyse the quality perception of the high-level guests.

### 1.1 Methodology

The questionnaire, as the main instrument of the conducted research, included the four sets of issues that are related to the basic functions of the hotel: Welcoming, Accommodation, Food and Beverage services and other services. Besides the basic set of questions, there was also a question regarding measuring quality in relation to the money invested and the likelihood of returning to the hotel. A numerical scale for the assessment of attitudes applied, so that the guests gave grades on a scale from 1 to 5 (5 - excellent, 4 - very good, 3 - good, 2 - satisfactory and 1 - unsatisfactory). During the survey, a total of 600 questionnaires were distributed and guests selected randomly were surveyed; out of which 499 were completed, while 80 questionnaires were returned, and 21 questionnaires were rejected as irrelevant. The study had duration of 50 days in total, ending on October the 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

### 1.2 Data analyses

Data processing and analysis was performed in SPSS 22 methods of descriptive statistics, factor analysis and correlation. Demographic analysis included the following categories: gender, age of the respondents, region, number of visits and booking method (agency or individual). Distribution of respondents by sex, country of origin (region), age, realized number of visits and method of booking. The overall guests structure looked as follows:

- According to *the sales channel*, 20,32% of respondents declared as individual customers, while 79,68% said they are agency guests.
- *Gender structure* - surveyed a total of 52,31% of female and 47,79% of male respondents.
- *Age structure percentage* - surveyed by age in total 10,24% under the age of 25 years, 17,87% between 26 and 35, 18,27% between 36 and 45, 20,28% from 46-55 years and around 33,33% over 56 years.
- *Structure by country of origin* - according to the indicators of national structures, the largest percentage of visitors were from Eastern Europe 42,37 %, 34,74% visitors were from Western Europe, 7,03% Western Balkans 6, 02% Central Europe, 5,82 % Scandinavia, 3,21% South Europe and 0,80% USA. (author's original work)

The  $\chi^2$  (Chi-square) test shows that the age distribution of the respondents varies between the  $\chi^2$  poles (4, n = 498) = 12,764, p < 0.05; until a statistically significant difference in the number of visits has been identified ( $\chi^2$  square test shows that there is no difference in the distribution between the regions  $\chi^2$  (6, n = 498) = 6.123, p = 0.410. Chi-square test shows that the decision to return to the hotel does not differ between the  $\chi^2$  poles (4, n = 497) = 0.924, p = 0.921; while it differs among respondents who previously stayed at the hotel and those who did not  $\chi^2$  (8, n = 497) = 20.477, p < 0.001. In the further analysis, descriptive indicators of the level of satisfaction are determined, and fluctuations and dependencies among responses were identified (Popovic, 2018).

**Table 1.** Analysing the level of satisfaction with the overall hotel service and the quality of service in relation to the money invested

Overall hotel service ratings	Quality of service in relation to the money invested				Total
	Excellent	Very good	Good	Sufficient	
Excellent	199 (81,89%)	59 (29,80%)	10 (19,23%)	0 (0,00%)	268 (54,14%)
Very good	41 (16,87%)	115 (58,08%)	24 (46,15%)	0 (0,00%)	180 (36,36%)
Good	3 (1,23%)	24 (12,12%)	18 (34,62%)	2 (100,00%)	47 (9,49%)
Total	243 (49,09%)	198 (40,00%)	52 (10,51%)	2 (0,40%)	495 (100,00%)

Source: author's original work

The Spearman's test shows a medium strong correlation between the level of satisfaction with the overall hotel service and the service quality score in relation to the invested money  $r = 0.555$ ;  $n = 495$ ;  $p < 0.001$ , whereas high ratings of the overall hotel service are followed by high estimate of the ratio of the money invested and the services received.

**Figure 1.** Overall hotel service ratings



Source: author's original work

*Analysis of other services (excursion programs and animation) tourist offer of the city - The Spearman's test shows a medium strong correlation between:*

- Ratings of satisfaction with the entertainment/ animation program and ratings of the catering facility with the environment:  $r = 0,589$ ;  $n = 498$ ;  $p < 0.001$
- Evaluation of the quality of excursion programs and ratings of the catering facility with the environment:  $r = 0,563$ ;  $n = 498$ ;  $p < 0.001$
- Evaluation of the quality of excursion programs, animations and ratings of the total tourist offer of the destination  $r = 0.574$ ;  $n = 498$ ;  $p < 0.001$

Analysing the further data, a certain number of guests, despite the exceptionally high level of satisfaction with the offer at the hotel, demonstrate low probability of returning, in order to analyse further, the variable “probability for the second arrival” has been transformed as follows:

- Category 1- Return to the hotel is slightly possible while the level of satisfaction is high
- Category 2- Return to the hotel is slightly possible while the level of satisfaction is average
- Category 3- Return to the hotel is probable
- Category 4- Return to the hotel is highly probable

## 2. FACTOR ANALYSES

In order to analyse the attitudes and level of customer satisfaction based on defined issues and grouping into significant factors, factor analysis was initiated. The justification of initiating factor analysis has been proven. KMO value was high and scored 0.882, indicating sufficient items for each extracted factor. Bartlett’s Test was significant ( $\chi^2=5875.905$ ,  $df=351$ ,  $Sig.=0.000$ ) meaning that there are strong correlations between the items in each factor. Hence, it was justified to conduct exploratory factor analysis. The results are reported in the following Table 2.

**Table 2.** Factorial weights matrix with correlation coefficients of variables and factors with two factor solution rotation

<i>FACTOR / ITEMS</i>	<i>Factor loading</i>	<i>Eigen value</i>	<i>% of Variance</i>	<i>Cronbach alpha</i>
Factor 1- perceived quality: basic hotel functions		7.553	27.974	0.848
Factor 2- perceived quality: additional hotel services		3.257	12.063	0.869
Factor 3- perceived quality: extra services		1.721	6.373	0.472
Factor 4- the number of previous visits		1.406	5.209	-
Number of visits	0.536			
<i>Factor 5- Basic demographic data</i>		1.220	4.518	-0.177
Gender	-0.365			
Age	0.466			
<i>Factor 6- Origin of guests</i>		1.050	3.888	-
Native country	0.702			
Total			60.025	0,813

Source: Adjusted Popovic, 2018.

*Factor 1* - perceived quality: basic hotel functions obtained: location, hotel foyer, efficiency of reception and hospitality of reception staff, accommodation, room tidiness, F&B offer, overall cleanliness of the hotel, overall quality of service and “value for money” of stay.

*Factor 2* - perceived quality: additional hotel services obtained: entertainment program, the level of development of the building/facility and its surrounding, excursion program, additional facilities, complete tourist experience of the town, environmental standards of the surrounding.

*Factor 3* - perceived quality: extra services obtained: room service, service at the Wellness & SPA centre

*Factor 4* - the number of previous visits: number of visits

*Factor 5* - Basic demographic data: gender, age

*Factor 6* - Origin of guests: native country

The value of the Cronbach alpha coefficient (as a threshold value taken at 0.60) for the entire scale of the perception is 0.813, indicating its reliability. It can be observed that Factors 1 and 2 have a good internal coefficient of consistency. The *average value* is defined, which is at the same time the average grade for the items within the factor, and is further categorized on the scale 1-5.

Within the factor, the *average value* is determined. It represents the average rating for the above-described arguments and it is further categorized on scale from 1 to 5. The summary of the descriptive parameters are shown in the following table. In addition, the probability of returning to the hotel is transformed into a binary variable: YES (if the respondent replied that it is highly probable and probable to come back), or NO in all other cases. The distribution of the obtained binary variable is also shown in Table 3. When the logistic regression model runs across regions, the result is shown in the following table 4.

**Table 3.** Transformations of the probability of returning (guests) into binary variable

Factor	Average value; standard deviation	DISTRIBUTION ON SCALE 1-				
		Insufficient	Sufficient	Good	Very good	Excellent
<i>Factor 1- Perceived quality of the basic hotel functions (N=484)</i>	4,54; 0,446	0 (0,00%)	0 (0,00%)	13 (2,69%)	180 (37,19%)	291 (60,12%)
<i>Factor 2- perceived additional hotel facilities and environment (N=374)</i>	4,11; 0,641	0 (0,00%)	0 (0,00%)	62 (16,58%)	183 (48,93%)	129 (34,49%)
	Average Value - standard deviation	DISTRIBUTION ON THE SCALE YES - NO				
		YES		NO		
<i>Return to the hotel (YES/NO)</i>	4,21; 0,845	397 (79,88%)		100 (20,12%)		

Source: (Popovic, 2018)

**Table 4.** Results of logistic regression: by region

REGION	Variable		B	Stand. error	Wald	Likelihood ratio	95% Confidence interval for likelihood ratio	p
WESTERN EUROPE	Factor 1	Good	-	-	5.229	-	-	0.073
		Very good	1.667	0.919	3.293	5.296	1,075-32,054	<b>0.050</b>
		Excellent	2.430	1.063	5.226	11.357	1,414-91,200	<b>0.022</b>
	Factor 2	Good	-	-	2.577	-	-	0.276
		Very good	0.845	0.550	2.362	2.328	0,793-6,839	0.124
		Excellent	1.067	1.004	1.128	2.906	0,406-20,801	0.288
	Constant		-1.099	0.816	1.810	0.333	-	0,178
EASTERN EUROPE	Factor 1	Good	-	-	0.012	-	-	0.994
		Very good	21.041	40192.504	.000	.000	0,000	1.000
		Excellent	20.986	40192.504	.000	.000	0,000	1.000
	Factor 2	Good	-	-	10.565	-	-	<b>0.005</b>
		Very good	1.378	0.673	4.196	3.967	1,061-14,829	<b>0.041</b>
		Excellent	2.719	0.839	10.510	15.163	2,930-78,459	<b>0.001</b>
Constant		21.203	40192.504	.000	-	-	1.000	

Source: author's original work

Due to the small number of respondents, the data obtained for the Central European market are not statistically significant for further analysis and they were not included in the model. When we are analyzing the Eastern Europe, we need to take into consideration the Factor 2 data: *Perceived additional hotel facilities and environment*. It is significantly different from the data provided in the Western European market analysis; therefore, the important data for this market is the Factor 1: *Perceived quality of the basic hotel functions*. As demonstrated by the analysis, the east and west markets require two completely different strategies.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the research confirmed the information obtained by many authors who dealt with this ever-present and insufficiently researched topic: satisfaction in the function of consumer loyalty concept.

As noted in the earliest papers on this subject ((Pizam et al, 1978, Lounsbury, Hoopes, 1985, Ross, Iso-Ahol, 1991 and others), the satisfaction of tourists depends on a number of factors directly related with primary and secondary elements of destination. The tourists' satisfaction depends likewise on the marketing policy of a destination, depends on its image, price, distribution manner, promotion, as well as its demographic characteristics, gender, age, motives for travelling, interests, income or origin. Finally, the tourists' satisfaction depends on the quality of the tourist offer, while their loyalty to the destination depends on their satisfaction. As already highlighted in this work, the most recent research confirms a positive correlation between the quality of hotel services, customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The research on the example of Montenegro's vacation tourism according to the defined target groups, confirmed certain attitudes from previous research results and by creating the models in accordance to the different target groups, gave their contribution to both science and marketers. It helped the destination and hotel management decide the direction to take in order to define successful business strategies.

### CONCLUSION

The conducted marketing research on customer satisfaction provide the insight into consumer attitudes. According to results, research defined measures taken by the hotel management from various companies in Montenegro, in order to improve customer relationships.

The research emphasize the significance and causality of the application of the marketing surveys results of consumer satisfaction in marketing decision-making process in the hotel industry in Montenegro.

The established model for predicting the probability of return, provides significant inputs to the management in tourism for creating a different marketing strategies as well as destination management systems. In accordance with the presented results, it is necessary to define a two different strategies such as: The defined issues were:

- marketing strategy with a set of measures to improve the tourist product development of the overall hotel offer for the target group of Western European countries
- marketing strategy with a set of measures to improve and develop new content and enrich the tourist offer of the city for the target group of Eastern European countries

The current research also has its limitations regarding the representativeness of the sample, particularly with regard to the insufficient number of respondents for the target group of the Central European market, which is of great importance for Montenegrin tourism. This fact gives a stimulus to analyse this topic also in the future. Finally, it is recommended that in future research, con-



sideration be given to online research, which in the last decade became more and more applicable with the tendency to become the only form of questionnaire. There are several reasons for this, among which it should be particularly emphasized that today's guests in the age of information technology, especially young and mature, are more likely to use the on-line questionnaire filling, and on the other hand, this method of testing is easier to handle by using specialized software

It is expected that this research will initiate further research in this very actual and under-researched area, which "paves a new path" for contribution to science and to further interest in marketing research and tourism in general. This will also be a new motive for future research on the satisfaction and preferences of these "new and old" target groups.

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