Defining Target Market Based on Tourists' Perception: The Example of Tourist Destination Dubrovnik

Irena Pandža Bajs

Abstract—The purpose of this paper is to research how destination management can determine the groups of tourists to target, those whose needs can best be met with the resources and capabilities available at a given destination. To achieve this goal, author conducted the research in Dubrovnik about tourists perception of destination's offer, tourist perceived value, satisfaction and future behavioral intentions among the tourist divided by gender, age, income, frequency of travel, first and repeated visit and trip organization. According to the results of an empirical study, destination management of Dubrovnik should focus its marketing activities on tourists older than 55 years with higher personal incomes since Dubrovnik can best meet the needs and wishes of that target market.

Index Terms—Target group, tourist destination, perceived value, Dubrovnik.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourist destinations combine a set of products and services, offered individually or together and at a particular location, and place this product for offer in the global marketplace. Features such as a destination's attractions, accessibility, tourist services, ancillary services, and activities are combined to be offered or marketed as a tourist destination or a tourism product [1]. The importance of a destination's features and benefits can be expected to vary among individual tourists, although members of the same target groups can be expected to have similar behaviors and possess similar value scales, so that their perceptions of value will generally be similar. Associated with that, researchers concluded that perceived value is useful for segmentation, differentiation and positioning tourism product [2]. A survey of tourists divided by gender, age, residence and frequency of travel has shown that there are significant differences in how tourists perceive value which vary according to these same characteristics [2]. It is important to take such findings into account when segmenting the market and selecting markets to which marketing may be targeted. It is therefore also necessary to develop and implement marketing programs for tourist destinations which are shaped by the interests held by those targeted groups of tourists, whose wishes and needs can be best fulfilled by providing an excellent value to those who travel to that destination. In accordance with that, in this paper were analyzed differences in perception between different groups of tourists in Dubrovnik and selected the

market which destination marketing may be targeted.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Perceived value represents a trade-off between the travel time and money invested on the one hand and the experience gained through a visit to the destination on the other [3]. Tourists select a destination to visit based on their preferences and desired values [4], taking into account the factors of the expected benefits and expected costs. During the visit, tourists create the perception of the specific destination's value in their own mind [5], which results in either satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their visit. If the value as perceived during and after the visit is not less than the expected value prior to visiting and if the benefits received are higher than the actual costs incurred, then the overall result is satisfaction [6], which in turn can lead the tourist to revisit the destination or to convey their satisfaction with their positive experiences to others [7]. The perceptions of value formed in the minds of consumers are affected by their experiences with other, competing products [8]-in this context, other tourist destinations [9]. Since competition between destinations is high, a destination must offer those facilities and services which their targeted segment of the tourist population prefers and expects in order to strengthen and enhance its market position [10].

With its specific features, services and the benefits that provides, tourist destination is attracting the specific groups of tourists to choose and visit exactly that destination. The basis for attracting tourists to the tourist destination is tourists' desired and expected value; and they come back to the destination based on perceived value that tourists perceive during their stay. To make perceived value higher, marketing program of the tourist destination should be as close as possible to the desired and expected value of tourists [11]. The prerequisite for creating a successful marketing mix is to define strategic target market according to the tourist product should be designed.

Tourists perceive positive value when the benefits received while traveling are greater than the costs invested in travel [12]. Tourists estimate whether the benefits gained are worth the money, time and effort invested, which further impacts their satisfaction and intentions to return [13]. The particular benefits the tourist will seek out and how the travel costs will be estimated will depend on what features and benefits are important to the tourist. The importances of tourist features differ from tourist to tourist but members of same target group have similar behavior and similar measures of value.

Features such as the natural environment, culture,

historical heritage, climate and other primary features (such as beach cleanliness, availability of attractions and amenities, etc.) may be primary determinants in defining the value of a destination for tourists. The quality of tourism services, the behavior of service providers, their efficiency and kindness can all have a decisive influence, as well [3], [14]. In addition, the price of services and the cost of travel can exert heavy influence. In the process of evaluating the perceived value of a destination, emotional benefits can be very important [15], as they affect both the likelihood of visiting and satisfaction with the visit through factors such as enjoyment, relaxation, the chance to experience something new, etc. In accordance with that, one study [16] emphasized that emotional elements "promote differentiation, value, satisfaction, trust and loyalty by satisfying human needs". That study concluded that emotional aspect of value has a stronger influence on visitors' satisfaction and behavioral intentions than functional aspect of value. It can be therefore concluded that the tourist's evaluation of overall value is based on a comparison of functional and emotional benefits with the total costs as perceived before, during, and after having visited the destination.

III. METHODOLOGY OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Most studies that have investigated the perceived value of tourist destinations have focused on questioning tourists about different tourist destinations [2], [7], [17]-[19]. This research on the contrary examines various socio-demographic tourists groups that have visited a one destination. In order to plan and organize marketing activities related to a particular tourist destination, it is important to explore the existing perception of the destination and based on the results of such research, select target tourists groups and improve destination's offerings accordingly.

In this research were analyzed dimensions of expected and experienced value, satisfaction and future intentions. The value dimensions were measured using reliable scales previously applied in previous researches [2], [7], [19], [20] as well as having been assessed through the results of qualitative data obtained previously by the author through in-depth interviews with six experts in the field of tourism and 25 tourists who have visited or intended to visit Dubrovnik as a tourism destination in the near future. Dimensions which are analyzed in this research are: quality of tourist services such as accommodation, food and beverages, shopping, entertainment, than destination appearance, emotional response, reputation, monetary and non-monetary costs.

Variables perceived value, satisfaction and future intentions were measured through scales previously applied in other researches [3], [7], [13], [14], [17], [21]-[23].

Most of the perceived value researches used a 5-point or 7-point Likert scale, to measure investigated variables. As a result, in our research, for value dimensions, satisfaction and intention items, tourists were asked to rate their perceptions on a 7-point Likert scale.

The subject of this study is the city of Dubrovnik. Due to its unique features, rich historical heritage and global reputation, Dubrovnik is an important tourist destination in

Croatia. Dubrovnik is often mentioned as one of the most popular and interesting destinations not only in Croatia, but in the wider Mediterranean and in Europe, more generally (in TripAdvisor - Best European Destination in 2011). Dubrovnik is therefore often included on public lists of the world's top destinations to visit (such as online lists on CNN Travel, Trip Advisor, Open Travel, Directline Holidays, Bestourism, The Guardian, etc.). Dubrovnik is also often perceived as an 'expensive' destination while, on the other hand, some aspects of the city's offerings are not developed according to that perception, which opens up increased possibilities to develop better marketing strategies to position Dubrovnik as a tourist destination. Accordingly the research was conducted in the Dubrovnik. The total number of collected questionnaires was 357 but, due to incomplete responses, 72 questionnaires were excluded from subsequent analyses.

Analysis of the sample shows that the majority of the respondents in the research — about 80% — were from Europe (Fig. 1). In total, those tourists included in the final sample were drawn from 38 separate countries, with most coming, in tiers, from Great Britain and Croatia, followed by Germany, the U.S., Ireland, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and France.
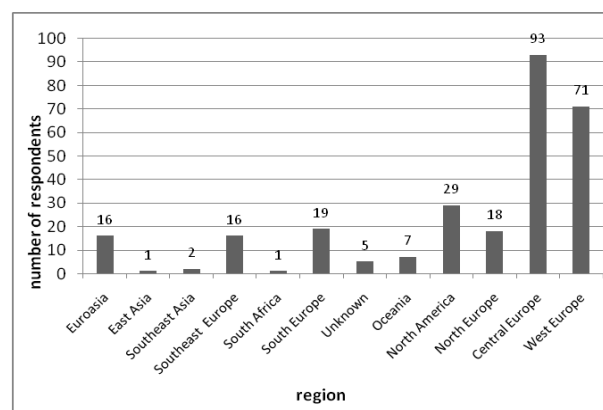

Fig. 1. Region from which respondents come.

To determine whether there are significant differences between different groups of tourists, author used the analysis of variance ANOVA. The significance level was $\alpha = 0.05$, which means that the possibility of making a wrong conclusion is 5%.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

Based on the results of quantitative research conducted in Dubrovnik, it is possible to identify and isolate the tourists' groups whose wishes and needs best match with the current offer of Dubrovnik, the available resources and opportunities for improvement that offer. Differences between the gender, age and income groups, frequency of travel, number of visits to Dubrovnik and organizational type of travel were analyzed (Table I).

A. Differences between Genders

Analysis of statistically significant differences between the gender shows that women have slightly higher expectations than men (expected quality of food and beverages – item eqfb,

expected quality of tourism services – item eqts, expected emotional response – item eer, expected tourist attractions – item eta) and their entertainment experience (item ee) was higher. Also, monetary costs (item mc) were more important for women (Table II). The analysis of difference between the expected value, experienced value, satisfaction and future intentions shows no significant difference between the genders.

TABLE I: THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE

Characteristic	Percentages
Sex	
Female	52%
Male	48%
Age	
18–24	7.4%
25–34	36.5%
35–44	17.2%
45–54	18.2%
55–64	14.3%
65+	6.4%
Travel frequency	
Less than once a year	2.1%
Once a year	21.4%
2–3 times a year	47.3%
4 or more times a year	29.2%
Personal Monthly Income	
500 EUR or below	6.3%
500–1000 EUR	14.4%
1000–2000 EUR	24.2%
2000–3000 EUR	18.6%
3000–4000 EUR	15.2%
4000–5000 EUR	4.2%
More than 5000 EUR	6.7%
No answer	10.4%
Accommodation	
Hotel	55.8%
Private accommodation	35.8%
Own apartment/house	1.1%
With friend/family	2.5%
Hostel	4.9%
Number of visits	
First visit	66.9%
Repeated visit	33.1%
Travel arrangement	
Private arrangement	66.1%
With tourism agency	15.9%
Business travel	18.0%

TABLE II: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENDERS

Item	Number of visits	Mean	Std. Deviat.	Std.Error
item eqfb	female	5,14	0,97	0,08
	male	4,84	0,94	0,08
item eqts	female	4,94	1,06	0,09
	male	4,63	1,05	0,09
item eer	female	5,52	0,96	0,09
	male	5,22	1,09	0,10
item eta	female	5,31	1,09	0,09
	male	4,98	1,22	0,11
item ee	female	5,50	1,21	0,10
	male	5,20	1,22	0,11
item mc	female	5,80	1,10	0,09
	male	5,51	1,18	0,11

B. Differences between Age Groups

Analysis of different age groups shows a significant difference between the youngest and oldest age groups in the segment of the expected quality of accommodation (item era), expected emotional response (item eer) and the expected security (item esec) at the destination. In these aspects the age

group of 55 years and over had significantly higher expectations than younger than 34 (Table III).

TABLE III: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AGE GROUPS - 1

Item	(I) age	(J) age	Mean difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Item eqa	55+	18-34	0,61	0,19	0,01
Item eer	55+	45-54	0,61	0,20	0,02
Item ese	55+	18-34	0,60	0,19	0,01

In the aspect of perceived quality of accommodation (item pqa) there is a significant difference in perception between the youngest and oldest age group, thus the older tourists perceived a much higher quality of accommodation then the young tourists. Also, tourists above 55 years perceived a higher level of security (item sec) in the destination compared with the tourists under the age of 34. On the other side, tourists under 34 perceived poorer offers of tourist attraction in Dubrovnik than older age groups, and the experience of the tourist attractions (item eta) and the availability of attractive tour in town (item aat) are also on the lower level (Table IV).

TABLE IV: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AGE GROUPS - 2

Item	(I) age	(J) age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Item pqa	55+	18-34	0,62	0,17	0,00
Item sec	55+	18-34	0,53	0,16	0,01
		35-44	0,74	0,23	0,01
Item eta	35-44	18-34	0,64	0,21	0,02
Item aat	35-44	18-34	0,57	0,17	0,01

Analysis of the differences between the age groups shows that in comparison to young subjects, the oldest age group perceive significantly higher expected value of Dubrovnik (item ev), higher level of satisfaction (item sat) and better comparative value (item uv) – value of Dubrovnik compared with values of other visited destinations (Table V).

TABLE V: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AGE GROUPS - 3

Item	(I) age	(J) age	Mean diff. (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Item ev	55+	18-34	0,47	0,16	0,02
Item sat	55+	18-34	0,56	0,17	0,01
Item uv	55+	18-34	0,68	0,25	0,04

TABLE VI: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AGE GROUPS - 4

Item	(I) age	(J) age	Mean diff. (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Item iqa	18-34	35-44	-0,62	0,21	0,02
		45-54	-0,65	0,18	0,00
		55+	-0,74	0,18	0,00
Item iqfun	55+	18-34	-0,72	0,25	0,03
Item itp	55+	18-34	0,58	0,19	0,02
Item irep	55+	18-34	0,77	0,20	0,00

The analysis also shows that for the older tourists much more important are the quality of accommodation (item iqa), the kindness of tourism personnel (item itp) and the good reputation of the destination (item irep), while the variety and quality of entertainment (item iqfun) are less important for them than for respondents younger than 34 (Table VI). The quality of accommodation is of minor importance for the youngest age group (average mark 5.23), and with increasing

age group increases significantly importance of quality accommodation (average mark 6.00).

The oldest observed age group (55+) has the highest level of perceived value and satisfaction with Dubrovnik's offerings in comparison to the younger age groups.

C. Differences between Income Groups

Respondents of lower income groups have significantly higher expectations about the appearance (item eapp) and security of Dubrovnik (item esec), while the perceived quality of accommodation (item pqa) and the comparative value (item cv) to other destinations increases significantly with increasing income level (Table VII).

TABLE VII: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INCOME GROUPS – 1

Item	(I) Eur	(J) Eur	I-J	Std. Error	Sig.
Item eapp	up to 1000	2000-3000	0,57	0,2	0,03
Item esec	up to 1000	3000+	0,60	0,21	0,03
Item pqa	3000+	up to 1000	0,57	0,19	0,02
		1000-2000	0,57	0,19	0,02
Item cv	3000+	1000-2000	0,72	0,24	0,02
		2000-3000	0,68	0,23	0,03

It is important to point out that tourists with higher incomes give more importance to the quality of accommodation (item iqa), and less importance to the quality of entertainment (iqfun) compared to tourists with income of up to € 1000 (Table VIII).

TABLE VIII: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INCOME GROUPS – 2

Item	(I) Eur	(J) Eur	I-J	Std. Error	Sig.
Item iqa	3000+	up to 1000	0,86	0,22	0,00
		1000-2000	0,60	0,20	0,02
Item iqfun	3000+	up to 1000	-0,97	0,27	0,00

In accordance with the foregoing conclusions, analysis of different income groups also shows that the level of perceived value, satisfaction and future behavioral intentions rise with income rising.

D. Difference in Frequency of Travels

Analysis of frequency of travel during the year, showed significant differences between tourists who travel rarely in comparison with tourists who travel at least 4 times per year. The expected level of service quality in Dubrovnik was greater at tourists who travel frequently, unlike those who travel once a year or less. The most significant difference was in the aspect of expected quality of food and drinks. It is interesting to note that in some other aspects, such as expectations of emotional experience of destinations subjects who travel frequently had lower expectations.

Analysis of travel costs shows that tourists who travel rarely expected a higher monetary cost and higher costs of time and effort and they also perceived higher. In the context of tourists' perceived value of Dubrovnik and destination's offer, the results show that the perception of tourists who travel rarely are better than those who travel at least 4 times a year. Thus it is possible to extract significant differences in perception of the quality of accommodation (item pqa), the number and variety of see sights, appearance and abundance

of beaches, the weather and beauty of the natural environment (item env). Analysis of frequency of travel shows that the respondents who travel rarely are significantly more satisfied (item sat) with trip to Dubrovnik in comparison with tourists who travel frequently throughout the year (Table IX). Such a result is expected since the tourists who travel more and more experienced and more demanding from the tourists who rarely travel.

Tourists' perceived value and future behavioral intentions are the lowest in tourists who travel the most. So, it can be concluded that tourists who travel less have a more positive experience of Dubrovnik, as well as higher level of overall perceived value and satisfaction, even though they, on the other hand, perceive a higher level of invested costs.

TABLE IX: DIFFERENCE IN FREQUENCY OF TRAVELS

Item	(I) freq.	(J) freq.	I-J	Std. Error	Sig.
Item pqa	once a year	more than 4 times	0,56	0,18	0,02
Item env	once a year	more than 4 times	0,48	0,15	0,02
Item sat	less than once	more than 4 times	1,01	0,26	0,04

E. Difference between First and Repeated Visit

There are interesting results in terms of first and repeat visits to Dubrovnik. Tourists who revisit destination expected higher costs, but on the other side they perceive lower costs of arrival at the destination and lower costs of accommodation in comparison to tourists who visited Dubrovnik for the first time. Analysis of tourists' expected value (item ev) show that tourists who revisit Dubrovnik have higher expectations in the aspects of costs, quality of accommodation, emotional experience, tourist attractions, beauty of the natural surroundings and the uniqueness of the city, attractiveness of destination, safety and hospitality. Also, tourists who revisit Dubrovnik perceive a higher reputation and have better intentions of re-arrival (item fi) in comparison with tourists who visit the city for the first time (Table X).

TABLE X: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FIRST AND REPEATED VISIT

Item	Number of visits	Mean	Std. deviat.	Std.Error mean
item ev	first visit	5,25	1,05	0,08
	repeated visit	5,54	1,03	0,11
item fi	first visit	5,48	1,49	0,11
	repeated visit	6,07	1,31	0,14

F. Trip Organization

Trip organization considers whether tourists used the services of a travel agency, organized a trip by themselves using the internet or used a business trip arrangement. Analysis of different modes of organization and also the different reasons of arrival shows that worse experience of Dubrovnik had tourists who come through a business trip arrangement. Tourists who used the services of the tourist agencies have significantly better experience of Dubrovnik: better perception of city appearance, attractions, quality of entertainment, emotional experience, and experience the beauty of the natural environment. Accordingly, the perceived value (item pv), satisfaction (item sat) and intention of future behavior (item ifb) are at the highest level

at tourists who come through travel agencies, followed by tourists who organized their own journey and the lowest for the tourists who come for business reasons (usually conference, symposium or etc.).

TABLE XI: DIFFERENCES IN TRIP ORGANIZATION

Item	I	J	I-J	Std. Error	Sig.
Item pv	agency	private	0,15	0,18	0,96
		business	0,80	0,24	0,01
	private	agency	-0,15	0,18	0,96
		business	0,65	0,20	0,01
Item sat	agency	private	0,27	0,15	0,34
		business	0,78	0,20	0,00
	private	agency	-0,27	0,15	0,34
		business	0,50	0,17	0,03
Item ifb	agency	private	0,26	0,13	0,28
		business	0,92	0,25	0,00
	private	agency	-0,66	0,24	0,05
		business	-0,93	0,25	0,00

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

If as a starting point to define the primary target group we take the level of perceived value, satisfaction and intention of the future behavior, then the destination management of Dubrovnik is suggested to create and improve Dubrovnik offer according to the wishes and needs of people over 55 years, with higher personal income - more than 3,000 euros net a month. A more detailed analysis of tourists shows that this tourists' group give the higher importance to the quality of accommodation, quality of food and beverages, quality of tourism services (in the context of efficiency and kindness of tourism personnel), historical heritage and landmark destinations, security and reputation of the destination, and the effort and time expended to arrive at the destination in comparison with younger tourists with lower incomes. On the other side monetary cost of travel and the quality of entertainment were not so important. That is opposite to the younger age group with lower income, which these criteria considered as extremely important in the selection and evaluation of travel.

Overall analysis shows that Dubrovnik destination poses accommodation of high quality and a large number of exclusive hotels, has a good reputation in the world, and is perceived as a safe destination with a rich historical heritage and beautiful appearance of the city and the natural environment. On the other hand, there is the lack of entertainment facilities which are specifically related to the nightlife offer and sports facilities, and lack of availability and diversity of traditional food.

Based on this study can be differentiated the tourist group of 55+ with higher incomes as a group to which Dubrovnik management organizations (DMOs) should focus their marketing efforts. Taking into account the characteristics of the Dubrovnik's offer on the one side and the desires and needs of different tourists' groups on the other side, can be concluded that the offer of Dubrovnik is most convenient for the selected group of tourists. Also, if destination management wants to attract some other tourists' segments, it is necessary to improve those aspects of the offer that are important to them in process of destination value assessment.

According to organization of travel can be distinguished group of tourists who use the services of a travel agency to organize a trip, since their experience, satisfaction and behavioral intentions significantly are much better than at the other forms of travel arrangements. Thus, the marketing activities of Dubrovnik - design and arrangement of tourist promotion activities - could be intensified for this channel of distribution. From the point of frequency of a travel a highest level of perceived value and customer satisfaction shows tourists who travel less than those who travel four or more times per year. So, this aspect of consumer behavior has to be taken in to consideration while selecting the target market and creating marketing activities.

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Irena Pandža Bajs is a senior research and teaching asisstant in the Marketing Department at Faculty of Business and Economics University of Zagreb, Croatia. She obtain the PhD degree in the field of marketing at the Faculty of Business and Economics in 2012. year. She conducts research on perceived value, satisfaction, customer loyalty and destination marketing.

Dr. Pandža Bajs published numerous scientific and professional papers as author and coauthor and actively participates at the national and international conferences. Among the others she published the chapter in the book "Branding" and paper in Journal of Travel Research. She is a member of CIRCLE (CentreInternational, Research in Consumers, Location and their Environments), CROMAR (Croatian Marketing Association) and CRODMA (Croatian Direct Marketing Association).