

STUDY OF SATISFACTION AMONG DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TOURISTS IN TUZLA

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DOI: 10.15170/TVT.2023.08.02.08

Abstract

Tourism is becoming an increasingly important branch of the economy for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although strategic documents in Bosnia and Herzegovina emphasize the importance of applying a systematic approach to the development of tourism, tourism offers are not sufficiently developed yet. The problem is particularly pronounced in areas where industrial centers were developed due to the proximity of the mines, such as the city of Tuzla. Therefore, in this paper, we analyze the results of the primary survey of satisfaction in 150 tourists, which took place in the summer of 2019 while they were visiting Tuzla. The tourists were most satisfied with the local cuisine, gastronomy, and catering establishments, and the least of all, with the preservation and unpolluted environment. In this paper, through the application of the Mann-Whitney-U test, we checked whether there were statistically significant differences in satisfaction elements of the tourist offer of the city of Tuzla among domestic and foreign tourists. It was established that there is a statistically significant difference in satisfaction with accommodation between the two groups of respondents, where the respondents from other countries are significantly more satisfied than those from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the other 16 aspects, relating to tourist offers, it was not established that there was a statistically significant difference in satisfaction between the observed two groups of respondents. Based on the analysis of the obtained research results, we provided recommendations for improving the tourist offer in order to increase the satisfaction level of tourists in Tuzla.

Keywords: domestic and foreign tourists, tourist satisfaction, tourist offer, Tuzla

Received: 25 April 2023

Accepted: 26 June 2023

Published: 30 June 2023

1. Introduction

Considering its rich deposits of salt and coal, Tuzla has been the center of the chemical industry and energy industry since the time of the former Yugoslavia. In recent decades, the mechanical, metallurgical, metal processing, electrical, construction, footwear, clothing and food industries have been developed. According to the social product in the pre-war period, Tuzla was among the best positioned cities in BiH, while according to the employment rate, it was the most developed regional center. The pre-war Tuzla economy was characterized by large economic systems, which were produced for the whole region. The war in these areas led to the loss of markets, halting production and obsolescence of technologies, accompanied by a state of general unemployment. The way out of this situation may be seen in the restructuring of the economy (STRATEGIC GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF TOURISM IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TUZLA, 2007:20). Following the trends in the environment, Bosnia and Herzegovina recognized the potential of tourism for the sustainable development of the economy, and created strategic documents that should encourage its planned development. Accordingly, the city of Tuzla recognized the importance of tourism for development. The Development Strategy of the city of Tuzla, until 2026, emphasizes that the chance for the development of tourism in the municipality of Tuzla rests on the natural and cultural-historical heritage, which implies the transformation of existing comparative advantages, such as people, knowledge, natural resources and cultural-historical heritage, into competitive advantages through service-creative products, especially through tourist-healthcare complexes. The valorization of the natural heritage of Tuzla was achieved by the construction of the Pannonica Lakes complex in Tuzla, which properly reaffirmed the importance of this resource for the current and future development of Tuzla. The Pannonica lakes are a unique example of salt lakes in Europe (DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY OF THE CITY OF TUZLA, UNTIL 2026, TUZLA, APRIL 2012:25-27). If we consider the fact that the economic development of Tuzla was based on salt ores and coal, then it becomes clear that tourism is a new branch of activity for the city. Therefore, the following research questions were asked in the paper:

- How satisfied are the tourists with the tourist offer in Tuzla?
- Which aspects of the tourist offer in Tuzla make them the most and the least satisfied?
- Is there a difference in the satisfaction level with the tourist offer in Tuzla among domestic and foreign tourists?

2. Overview of previous research

Tourist satisfaction is a subjective feeling, and it depends on several variables, such as: previous expectations, previous experiences, socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the respondents, and also the quality of tourist services, an image of the destination, and such. The consequences of tourist satisfaction are reflected in behavioral intentions, which are of key importance for sustainable tourism destination development (LUVSANDAVAAJAV – RAFFAY 2022). Therefore, tourist satisfaction is a frequent subject of research in academic papers. Nevertheless, the researchers considered different aspects of this issue, depending on their research goals.

It has been empirically confirmed that all the dimensions of local food consumption experience had significant contributors to the tourists' memorable experience at the destination (PIRAMANAYAGAM et al. 2020:326), as well as that, satisfaction levels in the low season generally show the highest levels of satisfaction for most of the elements considered (PERLES-RIBES et al. 2021, 497). The satisfaction of tourists-consumers of low-budget airlines with their visiting destination was analyzed, and it was established that the level of satisfaction with a destination through the monitored period is high, as is the willingness to recommend, but the

desire to return to the destination in the next year continually drops in the observed period (VIDIĆ et al, 2019:62).

Interrelations among (1) satisfaction, (2) quality and (3) benefits (as exogenously specified variables), while they are influencing tourist intentions, were researched. The structural relationships assumed that quality, as a formative construct, and satisfaction and benefits, as reflective constructs, directly influence tourist intentions, as an endogenous construct (BIGOVIC 2014:240-250).

It has been empirically confirmed that there is a direct, significant and strong connection between the tourist destination's reputation with the tourist satisfaction (MUŠANOVIĆ 2020:96), as well as, the relationship between (a) quality and image, (b) image and satisfaction, (c) quality and satisfaction, and (d) the mediating role of image on the quality–satisfaction relationship of international tourists (TRAVAR et al. 2022:15).

Through the research on rural tourism, a low level of satisfaction with the tourist offer was established, and, through the application of the IPA method, recommendations to create tourist characteristics were provided (WANG et al. 2022:10). (ŠTUMPF et al.) have established that we may divide satisfaction components into three groups, controllable, semi-controllable, and uncontrollable. This means that the evaluation may be based on three groups of indicators as well: (1) intangible satisfiers (atmosphere, willingness to help), (2) tangible primary satisfiers (cultural and natural sights, cultural attractions), and (3) tangible secondary satisfiers (catering, accommodation, traffic, and such). In addition to the above-mentioned, the researchers find that uncontrollable components may affect tourist satisfaction more than controllable ones (ŠTUMPF et al. 2022:357-358).

The effects on tourist satisfaction were also observed from the psychological aspect, which confirmed a positive significant effect of attachment to a place on tourist satisfaction. This psychological linkage satisfies and motivates them to revisit these places in the future (ABOU-SHOUK et al. 2018:178). SAAYMAN et al. find that the emphasis needs to go beyond just tourist satisfaction and take account of the more profound benefit of the visit experience for tourists' subjective well-being, as it further contributes to repeat visitation (loyalty) and positive word-of-mouth (SAAYMAN et al. 2018:395). It was also established that the effect of tourist engagement on satisfaction was found to be much higher than the effect of tourist engagement on loyalty. Furthermore, a positive indirect effect of tourist engagement on loyalty was found (RASOOLIMANESH et al. 2019:569–570).

The results of the satisfaction survey in relation to socio-demographic data showed that younger tourists had higher expectations than older tourists, and that the female gender had a higher average rating for perception than the male gender, which, however, did not significantly affect the average rating of expectations and perception of the quality of wellness services (MARKOVIĆ et al. 2020, 199). The effect of age on satisfaction has additionally been confirmed by BAŠANA et al. (2021, 107), when they established that there are significant differences in the correlation of overall satisfaction with destination attributes between different age groups.

Studies conducted on domestic tourist satisfaction have confirmed strong divergences from the theory (GRIGALIUNAITE, PILELIENE 2019:288-289), and they have shown that domestic tourism is a distinct niche market with its own unique characteristics. Thus, destination managers are advised to design typical tourism development policies and strategies to enhance its development and boost its contribution to the economy of the country at large (BAYIH, SINGH 2020:14).

ARDANI et al. presented an overview of previous research on tourist satisfaction and the effects of that satisfaction on tourist intentions. They have established that service quality is a key factor to tourist satisfaction, and the relationship between tourist satisfaction and loyalty does not seem to be linear as there are tourists who prefer to visit new destinations despite being satisfied with a holiday destination. Based on their research, the consequences of satisfaction may be repeat visits, tourist loyalty, verbal propaganda, and WOM (ARDANI et al. 2019:87-88).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, only a small number of researchers ventured into researching tourist satisfaction. One of the rare primary studies was conducted on a sample of 171 visitors to Zenica-Doboj Canton in the period from April to August 2013. The obtained results showed a low level of familiarization with the Zenica-Doboj Canton as a tourist destination. Visitors were mostly satisfied with the natural attractions and the beauties of the landscapes, and the least with the quality of accommodation (SMAJLOVIĆ, BEGOVIĆ 2015:281-288).

However, if we start from the fact that marketing strategies in tourism are based on segmentation, then it is surprising that there is a small number of studies comparing the level of satisfaction of domestic and foreign tourists. This is one of the few papers that analyzes the difference in the satisfaction of domestic and foreign tourists in the city of Tuzla.

3. Research methodology

The data was collected through primary research using a survey method as a form of data collection. The questionnaire was structured in the form of closed-end questions with offered answers using the Likert rating scale from 1 – strongly dissatisfied to 5 – strongly satisfied. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire related to questions of a general demographic nature, such as gender, age, level of education, and place of origin. The second part of the questionnaire contained questions related to tourists' satisfaction with the city of Tuzla. When selecting sample units from the basic set, which in our case are tourists in the city of Tuzla, a convenience sample of 150 respondents was used, who were in the city of Tuzla during the survey period in the summer of 2019. An effort was made to approach different profiles of tourists in order to make the sample as representative as possible. The examination was conducted orally.

4. Analysis of obtained results

Based on the analysis of respondents' gender of those who participated in the survey, it was established that more men participated in the survey, 57% of them compared to 43% of women. The largest number of respondents, 30% of them, were aged 21-30, followed by 23% aged 41-50, 19% of respondents aged 51-60, while the smallest number of respondents were over 60 years old 5%, and 6% under the age of 20. The cities from which the respondents came are different. The largest number of respondents were from the cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina 72%, followed by cities from Croatia 9%, Germany 6%, Austria 5% and other countries 8%. The largest number of respondents, 68% of them, had completed high school, while 20% had university degrees, 6% had college degrees, 5% had postgraduate degrees, and 1% had doctorates.

Respondents decide to go to a destination mainly on the basis of a previous visit to the destination 39%, or recommendations of friends and colleagues 35%. The Internet is the first-ranked source of information for 34%, while the least important sources are travel agencies for 4%, and newspapers and magazines for 3% of respondents. Of the total number of respondents, 93% had already been to the city of Tuzla, while only 7% of those surveyed had never been to the city. 21% of respondents visit Tuzla for gathering with friends, 18% for vacation, and 19% of them state that shopping is the reason for their visit. Visiting relatives ranks fourth on the

list, which was cited by 11% of respondents as the reason for the visit. Approximately the same number of respondents visit the city of Tuzla for business 10%, and 11% of respondents visit events in Tuzla.

The research aimed to determine satisfaction with the tourist offer of the city of Tuzla, such as accommodation facilities, catering facilities, cultural and historical attractions, the city's heritage, natural attractions, and such. The collected responses were divided into two groups in order to obtain information about the satisfaction of tourists coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from abroad.

Table 1 presents the arithmetic means of satisfaction with the tourist offer in Tuzla for both groups of respondents.

Table 1: Domestic and foreign tourists' satisfaction level with the tourist offer in Tuzla

	Country			
	BiH		Other countries	
	M	SD	M	SD
Accommodation facilities and quality of accommodation	3.3	0.8	3.6	0.9
Cultural and historical attractions and heritage	3.5	0.9	3.6	0.9
Quality of service is in accordance with the price	3.5	1.0	3.7	1.0
Local cuisine, gastronomy and catering facilities	3.8	0.8	3.9	0.8
Hospitality and kindness of the local population	3.6	1.0	3.7	1.0
Helpfulness and kindness of employees in tourism	3.4	0.9	3.4	1.0
Cultural, entertainment, sports content and nightlife	3.5	1.0	3.5	1.1
Indigenous-traditional products and souvenirs	2.9	1.0	3.2	1.1
Local infrastructure and transport	2.8	1.0	2.9	1.1
Availability of useful tourist information	2.8	1.0	2.9	1.1
Landscapes/natural attractions and their beauty	3.2	1.0	3.4	1.0
Conservation and pollution of the environment	2.3	1.0	2.5	1.2
Tourist signalization in the destination	2.9	1.0	2.8	1.0
Knowledge of foreign languages of those employed in tourism	2.8	1.0	3.0	1.0
Transportation and traffic accessibility	3.0	1.0	3.1	1.0
Local traffic and parking lots	2.7	1.1	2.7	1.1
Useful information about the destination	2.9	1.1	3.2	1.2
Overall satisfaction	3.1		3.2	

Source: own editing

Tourists are most satisfied with the local cuisine, gastronomy and catering facilities, as well as with the hospitality and kindness of the local population. They are the least satisfied with the preservation and non-pollution of the environment, as well as with local traffic and parking lots. The results show that in fourteen out of a total of seventeen evaluated variables of the tourist offer in Tuzla, the level of satisfaction of tourists from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from abroad

differs. At the same time, tourists from abroad were more satisfied with the tourist offer than domestic tourists. Therefore, we attempted to establish whether there are statistically significant differences in satisfaction with certain elements of the tourist offer in the city of Tuzla between respondents who live in BiH and respondents who live outside of BiH. However, prior to the main analysis, we checked the normality of the distribution. Based on the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, it was established that all measured variables deviate from the normal distribution to a statistically significant extent of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied, as a non-parametric test that examined the existence of statistically significant differences between the level of satisfaction of domestic and foreign tourists (Table 2 and Table 3).

Table 2: Statistical significance of the difference in the level of satisfaction of domestic and foreign tourists with the tourist offer in Tuzla

	Accommodation facilities and quality of accommodation	Cultural and historical attractions and heritage	Quality of service is in accordance with the price	Local cuisine, gastronomy and catering facilities	Hospitality and kindness of the local population	Helpfulness and kindness of employees in tourism	Cultural, entertainment, sports content and nightlife	Indigenous-traditional products and souvenirs
Mann-Whitney U	2252.000	2581.000	2339.000	2628.000	2678.000	2731.000	2771.000	2372.500
Wilcoxon W	5027.000	5356.000	5114.000	5403.000	5453.000	5657.000	5546.000	5147.500
Z	-2.261	-.922	-1.863	-.734	-.527	-.320	-.163	-1.719
P	.024	.356	.062	.463	.598	.749	.870	.086

Source: own editing

Table 3: Statistical significance of the difference in the level of satisfaction of domestic and foreign tourists with the tourist offer in Tuzla

	Local infrastructure and transportation	Availability of useful tourist information	Landscapes/natural attractions and their beauty	Conservation and pollution of the environment	Tourist signalization in the destination	Knowledge of foreign languages of those employed in tourism	Transportation and traffic accessibility	Local traffic and parking lots	Useful information about the destination
Mann-Whitney U	2584.000	2792.000	2523.000	2625.000	2663.500	2575.000	2684.500	2753.500	2542.500
Wilcoxon W	5359.000	5567.000	5298.000	5400.000	5589.500	5350.000	5459.500	5679.500	5317.500
Z	-.898	-.079	-1.143	-.737	-.588	-.935	-.502	-.229	-1.048
P	.369	.937	.253	.461	.556	.350	.616	.819	.295

Source: own editing

According to the presented results, we may see that there is a statistically significant $p < 0.05$ difference between the two groups of respondents in terms of satisfaction with accommodation facilities and the quality of accommodation, where respondents who come from other countries are more satisfied than respondents who come from Bosnia and Herzegovina. For the other 16

tested variables, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test showed that there is no statistically significant difference $p < 0.05$ in the level of satisfaction between the two groups of respondents.

We also surveyed how impressed tourists are by the city, and the average satisfaction score is $M=3.5$ ($SD=0.7$). On the question about visiting the city again, the result $M=4.0$ ($SD= 1.1$) was obtained, which indicates that tourists are very likely to visit the city of Tuzla again. Table 4 presents the results of the impression of the city and the decision to visit the city of Tuzla again.

Table 4: Tourists' impressions of the city and willingness to visit the city again

	M	SD	Min	Max
How would you express your general impression of the city of Tuzla as a tourist destination?	3.5	0.7	1	5
How would you evaluate the attitude of the local population towards tourists during your visit to the city of Tuzla?	3.6	0.9	1	5
Are you willing to visit the city of Tuzla again in the future?	4.0	1.1	1	5

Source: own editing

It is very positive that 76% of the respondents answered that they would recommend Tuzla as a destination, and 24% did not recommend Tuzla as a tourist destination.

5. Concluding considerations and recommendations

The research results brought weaknesses to light, and also the potential of the tourist offer in the city of Tuzla. Out of a total of 17 tested characteristics of the tourist offer, the satisfaction of domestic tourists is low (average rating less than 3) with 47% of the characteristics, while foreign tourists are insufficiently satisfied with 29.4% of the characteristics. Although the average ratings of satisfaction of foreign tourists are higher than the satisfaction of domestic tourists in 82.3% of the tested features of the tourist offer, a statistically significant difference in the level of satisfaction was found only for accommodation facilities and quality of accommodation, while it was not confirmed for the other 16 features. The potential for developing the competitive advantage of Tuzla's tourist offer is reflected in the local cuisine, gastronomy, and hospitality facilities, a good relationship between the quality of service and the price, as well as the hospitality and kindness of the local population. The overall average rating of satisfaction with the tourist offer of domestic tourists and foreign tourists is lower than the general impression of the city of Tuzla as a destination, which shows the need for significant improvement of the tourist offer. The research results deviate from previous theoretical findings and confirm the intention of tourists to return to Tuzla and to recommend Tuzla as a destination, despite the low level of satisfaction of domestic and foreign tourists.

Based on the analysis of obtained research results, we may provide the following recommendations to destination policymakers in Tuzla, for the improvement of satisfaction in domestic and foreign tourists, while defining a tourism strategy:

- It is necessary to improve marketing communication for domestic and foreign tourists to be better informed of the tourist offer in the city of Tuzla, where using social media must be the focus of such communication.
- Promote the quality of local cuisine, gastronomy, and catering facilities as well as the hospitality and kindness of the local population.
- Invest in local infrastructure in order to improve tourist signalization and local traffic, as well as build an adequate number of parking lots. It is necessary to invest in environmental protection and decrease pollution.

- Stimulate entrepreneurs to offer richer cultural content and entertainment, nightlife as well as indigenous-traditional products and souvenirs during the season.

The research conducted on the satisfaction of domestic and foreign tourists with the tourist offer had several limitations. The basic limitation is the sample size and the distribution of domestic and foreign tourists in the sample that influenced the choice of statistical methods of data analysis. Furthermore, the survey questionnaire was in the Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language, so the foreign respondents were mostly the diaspora from Bosnia and Herzegovina and residents of neighboring countries. Considering the limitations of the conducted research, the recommendations for future research are as follows:

- Conduct research on a larger sample, which will have a normal distribution of domestic and foreign tourists. The survey questionnaire should be made in English in order to examine foreign tourists from other speaking areas.
- Include other stakeholders in the research, such as tourism planners and policymakers in Tuzla, entrepreneurs who offer tourism products i.e. hoteliers, restaurants, handicrafts units, travel agents, etc.
- Conduct a survey of the satisfaction and importance of the elements of the tourist offer for domestic and foreign tourists, and with the application of the IPA method (Importance-Performance Analysis), make a proposal for improving the tourist offer in Tuzla.

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