

Leisure Time, Travel Habits and Possibilities to Travel: Case of Serbia

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Abstract. Leisure time is supposed to be the time of happiness, pleasure and the time when people fulfill their needs. Traveling is an especially significant aspect of leisure time. The aim of this research is to identify the basic ways Serbian residents spend leisure time, focusing on their travel habits, as well as to identify the possible development direction of Serbian tourism. The results have been acquired through an online questionnaire on a sample of 257 respondents.

Keywords: Leisure Time, Travel, Residents, Tourism Product, Serbia.

1. Introduction

Leisure time appeared as a phenomenon with the development of the industrial society and with the division of time to work hours and the time which is work-free, when the individual can satisfy their need of self-actualization. Leisure time activities are supposed to provide joy, pleasure and relaxation to the individual.

There are numerous ways to spend leisure time. Since the founding of the Republic of Serbia, there were no research in this area on a national level which deals with all of the age structures of the population. There have been research on how certain categories of people such as children, young people (Grandić & Letić, 2009; Petrović & Zotović, 2010; Stepanović et al., 2009), adults (Kačavenda-Radić, 2008) and old people (Milosavljević, 2011) spend their leisure time.

The aim of the research is to determine the extent to which traveling is significant as an aspect of spending leisure time of Serbian residents and their traveling habits, as well as define the possible direction of development of Serbian tourism.

2. Travel Habits

The basic socioeconomic assumptions of the development of tourism are leisure time and free funds. Travel decisions are conceptualized as a mental structure that comprises a hierarchically arranged set of action plans (Russell & Ward, 1982; Garling et al., 1986; Bell et al., 1996; Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2000). Pearce, Morrison and Rutledge (1998) defined tourist motivation "as the global integrating network of biological and cultural forces which gives value and direction to travel choices, behavior and experience". Many studies explain the affect of some factors on the decision of tourists to visit a certain destination (Um & Crompton 1990; Crompton & Ankomah, 1993; Nadeau et al., 2008; Wong & Yeh, 2009). The basic division of travel motivations is to push and pull factors (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Uysal & Jurowski 1994; Fodness, 1994; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Beerli et al., 2007). Personal characteristics, environment, the degree of culture and personal motivation mostly shape the tourist behavior. A modern tourist, led by the principle "value for the money invested" chooses certain tourist destinations, taking the additional possibilities of entertainment, being informed and learning new things into consideration. Financial constraints, lack of leisure time, physical constraints, family issues, lack of interest and psychological boundaries are not stimulating to traveling (Đeri, 2009).

3. Methodology

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"The Research on How Serbian Residents Spend Leisure Time" has been conducted through an online questionnaire¹, from November 24th, 2011 to January 13th, 2012. The number of respondents was 257. The questionnaire consists of three parts, the first part deals with socio-demographic variables; the second part includes questions about leisure time, while the third part connects leisure time and traveling. The questionnaire consists of 49 items, of which 48 are closed-ended questions. The results of travel habits and ways of spending leisure time are shown in this paper. The data has been processed with the use of the SPSS program 17.00. The results analysis is in descriptive statistics and the Chi-Square test.

There were 68.52% female respondents and 31.5% male respondents. Most of the respondents (61.5%) are between 21 and 30 years of age and between 31 and 40 years (18.3%). Most of the respondents are employed (50.2%), while students make the other large group (38.9%). According to their education, 31.5% have a bachelor degree, 24.5% have graduated from high-school and 20.2% have graduated from college. Most of the respondents are single (56.4%) and 31.1% are married. According to the monthly salary, most of the respondents earn less than € 200 (40.1%).

4. Results

When asked how much they travel in a year, most of the respondents answered they do so once or twice a year (45.9%), 29.9% of the respondents travel six times a year, 18.3% travel more than six times a year and 5.8% never travel. Those who never travel in most cases stated lack of money as a constraint (70%) as well as lack of leisure time (25%), while other state that they do not travel because of health reasons, they are not motivated or they do not like to travel.

The research attempted to determine how much money Serbian residents spend on traveling. Almost half of the respondents (42.8%) stated they spend less than € 500 a year, while 29.6% spend between € 500 and € 1000, and 27.6% spend more than € 1000.

When asked where they mostly travel, the answer was quite uniformed, although most of the respondents (55.6%) travel across the country and 44.4% travel abroad.

Figure 1 shows to which extent the respondents travel to the following destinations: the seaside, the mountains, the urban environment, the spa, the cruise and the holy places. The Figure shows that 67.3% of the respondents go to the seaside once a year or once in a few years (25.3%), while a small number of the respondents do so more than once a year. Almost half of the respondents (45.9%) go to the mountains once in a few years and a small number do so once a year (28.4%). While 70.4% of the respondents visit cities once or twice a year, 15.9% do so once a year. Most of the respondents go to the country twice a year or more (32.7%), once a year (23.7%) or once in a few years (23.7%). 43.6% of the respondents go to the spa once in a few years. Only 15.2% travel get on a cruise and only a small number of respondents do so often. Most of the respondents visit holy places once in a few years (27.2%), once a year (17.5%) or more than once a year (21.1%). Apart from the frequency, the respondents were able to choose the destination they did not visit and they wish to. Most of the respondents (77.82%) stated they have never got on a cruise and they wish they have, 22.78% wish to visit holy places, spas (21.8%) and the country, the mountains, the urban environment and the seaside. When asked where they would not like to travel, most of the respondents stated they have no interest in visiting spas (13.6%) and holy places (12.1%) The urban environment, the mountains, the cruise and the seaside follow.

¹ Available at: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/viewform?formkey=dGY4UVg0UDhsN3dRSEIRUzR1S01TaXc6MA#gid=0>

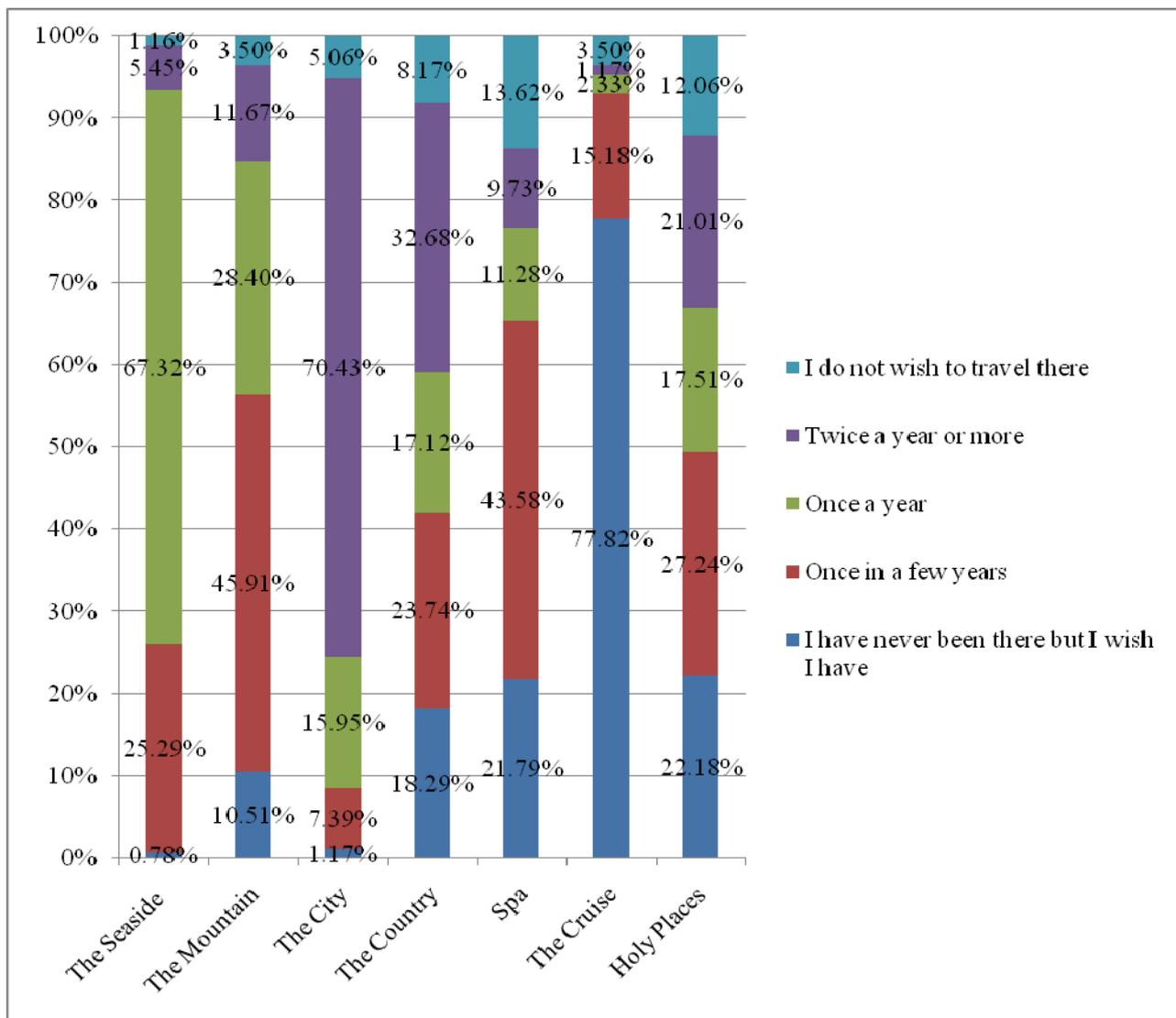


Fig. 1: Types of destinations most frequently visited by Serbian residents

Table 1 shows travel motivation of Serbian residents. Mean rank and standard deviation are also shown on the Table 2. Experiencing something new, visiting sights, escaping the daily routine, familiarizing with the local people and the culture are the strongest motives, while health reasons and satisfying the need for recreation are less significant. The respondents are neutral to enjoying gastronomic specialties.

Table 1: Travel Motivation

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I travel to familiarize with the local people and the culture	257	3.98	1.073
I travel to experience something new	257	4.49	.834
I travel to enjoy gastronomic specialties	257	3.45	1.158
I travel to visit sights	257	4.13	.970
I travel to escape the daily routine	257	4.05	1.198
I travel to satisfy the need for recreation	257	3.19	1.276
I travel for health	257	2.80	1.322
I travel to meet people from across the world	257	3.91	1.097
Valid N (listwise)	257		

According to the results of the Chi-Square Test, a significant difference has been determined on a 0.05 level - men and women value health as a motive to travel differently $\chi^2(4, n=257)=16.940, p=0.002$. More

than 54.3% of male respondents consider health as not a decisive motive to travel, while 29.6% are neutral and only 16.1% state it as decisive. Compared to men, almost 39.8% women consider health as a significant motive to travel.

Table 2: Chi-Square Tests

	Pearson Chi-Square	df	N of Valid Cases	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Gender	16,940	4	257	.002

When asked how they would like to improve their leisure time, 94% of the respondents stated they would like to travel more.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The research results have shown that lack of funds is the factor of constraint for Serbian residents to travel. In that sense, the organizers should strive to expand the offer and promote domestic tourism, by creating quality tourist offers which would be a lot more affordable to Serbian residents.

Domestic tourist offers are less attractive and are directed to destinations such as spas, the mountains and the administrative centers, which are the main tourist products of the Republic of Serbia (National Strategy for Tourism in Serbia, 2005). The Republic of Serbia is a country rich with natural as well as anthropogenic resources, and the development of the domestic tourism would improve spending leisure time of Serbian residents to a great extent as well satisfying their need for traveling. By developing and promoting the new tourist product such as rural and eco tourism, which is directed towards return to the past and enjoying the nature. Those could become an interesting and relaxing way of spending leisure time. Marketing trends are moving in favor of the rural tourism, which is confirmed by the estimations of the World Tourism Organization. The number of the consumers of the rural tourism on a year level in Serbia has a growth of 30%, as well as the construction of the accommodation capacities (Gagić et al., 2012). The development of the tourist product such as festivals, concerts and other manifestations could satisfy the cultural needs of the population. The development of the nautical tourism, with the focus on the Danube which flows through Serbia and has many panoramic views and monuments could provide cruising to Serbian residents for a relatively low price.

The promotion of the tourist products and destinations would ensure positive effects on many levels: Serbian residents would travel more and spend their leisure time in a good way, the new tourist product would be developed and the demand would grow, new and revitalized tourist destinations would activate and the growth of the tourist economy would increase.

The organizers of traveling in Serbia are being focused on the tourist offer which includes North Italy, Austria, and Czech Republic which are affordable considering their proximity to Serbia. The research has shown that the most frequent travel motivation for a Serbian resident is to experience something new, visit sights and escape the daily routine and this could be a trigger for the development of the domestic tourism. The need for traveling could easily be satisfied if Serbian residents would be offered good, interesting and affordable tourist offers directed towards domestic destinations.

Serbia needs a strategic approach to the development of the domestic tourism, since the development of specific tourist offer could contribute to the development of the country, decreasing the trade deficit, increasing employment, improve the image of the country and encourage foreign investments. In this way the rich cultural heritage of Serbia would be put to function and would present itself to the domestic but also to the world tourist demand.

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