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Quality management of the tourist destination in the context of visitors' satisfaction

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Abstract

The specificity of a tourist destination brings the necessity to apply integrated quality management that also includes evaluating the satisfaction of visitors to a destination with the key quality factors. The article deals with the determination of the most important factors which have the highest impact on the total satisfaction of visitors and the relations between the evaluation of particular factors, the overall visitors' satisfaction and their expectations. The data was obtained by means of a primary research enacted in the Czech Republic in the tourist destination of Brno and its surroundings. The method of regression analysis was used. As a result, the factors most influencing the overall visitors' satisfaction were identified; at the same time it was confirmed that the overall satisfaction of visitors is higher than the evaluation of individual quality factors which are influenced by expectations.

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1. Introduction

Several research works in the field of tourism have recently focused on the study of overall satisfaction in particular tourist destinations (Kim, 2012). The research of satisfaction on the basis of quality and its individual

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factors is important for destination managers as it helps them improve the core product and the promotion of the region within the target groups (Yoon and Uysal, 2005).

In the frame of the satisfaction research various definition concepts are used. Foremost, it is important to emphasize the difference between the terms of quality and satisfaction (Oh, 2001). Although the relationship between quality and satisfaction is undoubted, Tse and Wilton (1988) emphasize that the overall satisfaction and the specific aspects of the service quality must be assessed independently, as different concepts. A general consensus prevails that the satisfaction is a subjective evaluation following the purchase or use (de Rojas, C. and Camarero, C., 2008).

Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2006) in their publication state that although in practice the terms of satisfaction and quality are mutually interchangeable, experts claim that satisfaction is generally perceived as a broad concept while the quality of services concentrates especially on the dimensions of services. According to Zeithaml, Bitner, Gremler (2006) customer satisfaction is an outcome of product quality. However, mutual relations between satisfaction and perceived quality induce more controversies. Admittedly, Petrick (2004), who verified models of relations between perceived quality, customer value, satisfaction, and market behavior of customers, does not assume such a possibility that satisfaction has influence on quality, in all analyzed variants assuming the opposite relation. However, Lee et al. (2004) on the basis of broad studies of the literature notice that research cannot agree on which of the two terms has a wider scope and which of them is the prerequisite of the other. Getz et al. (2001) notice that defining relations between quality and satisfaction properly depends mainly on the way quality is defined.

Some authors perceive satisfaction as a multidimensional variable, integrating practical functional aspects as well as different dimensions of consumer value (Williams–Soutar, 2009). Several authors understand satisfaction as an emotional state, others as a result of cognitive processes, or a combination of both. Other authors work with satisfaction as with a one-dimensional value, representing overall mental state of a person who has passed a tourist activity (Baker and Crompton, 2000); this is frequently used approach in the tourist destination research.

Another commonly used approach to measure satisfaction stems from the service marketing concepts and is based on the creation of the customer value and the concept of a perceived value (Petrick and Backman, 2002). When measuring satisfaction with specific service providers or products, some authors frequently use an approach based on the difference between expectations and actual performance evaluation – particularly known is the Servqual model (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

In our research, we will understand the satisfaction as a manifestation of emotions in the form of subjective assessment of the destination and its particular components. The satisfaction is influenced firstly by the individual expectations of the visitors and secondly by the destination and its characteristics itself.

As regards destination management, it is noticeable that in each research work regarding destinations authors usually developed specific measures that correspond to the given destination. The rationale of this rather heterogeneous approach is to bring adequate outcomes and relevant implications for management of each given destination. For example, Fang et al. (2008) found that in the case of a natural valley, offering sporting facilities for families, a key aspect of customer satisfaction was friendly atmosphere, service and accommodation. Other aspects, such as the food quality, location, or outdoor activities were less important.

In the case of a larger city, Thompson and Schofield (2007) found that the visitors' satisfaction with the public transport depends more on the ease-to-use aspect than on its speed or security. Interestingly, according to the research, the quality of public transport affects the visitors' overall satisfaction with the destination only marginally. Based on a comparison of four destinations in Portugal, do Valle et al. (2011) showed that positive attitude and acceptance by local residents impact overall satisfaction of tourists significantly. The research was enacted by questioning the local residents on their receptiveness and attitude towards tourists on one hand and by measuring the satisfaction level of visitors on the other hand.

2. Methodology and research questions

The main purpose of the research is to analyze the relationship between overall satisfaction and subjective and objective evaluation of individual quality factors. The results of the primary research will also be evaluated in the context of secondary data.

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