

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TOURISTS' SATISFACTION AT THE DESTINATIONS

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Abstract

Contemporary forms of business in tourism impose new trends conditioned by an ever-increasing number of tourists travelling in the world today. It is an undeniable fact that tourists are increasingly demanding and that it is not a simple task to satisfy all their needs and expectations. Tourist satisfaction is an important strategic weapon on which success of a tourist destination is dependent. Customer satisfaction often results in prolonged stay in a tourist place, which is certainly dependent on a fair relationship between the service user and provider, but also on the way in which that service has been delivered. Meeting the expected level of satisfaction should be a common attitude, as the emotional reaction of the visitor is based on the difference between the expected and the delivered service. A basic indicator of customer satisfaction in tourism are revisits of a tourist destination. Guests visit many destinations several times during their lifetimes, which clearly indicates that satisfaction with time spent at a certain place leads to the intention of revisiting. On the other hand, an increasingly large share of family business in tourism, especially the accommodation sector, can be directly related to the tendency of achieving tourist satisfaction through an experience based on a direct contact with service providers. Successful hosts have already realized that their guests must not be perceived merely as numbers, but need to strive towards creating a personal relationship that would generate satisfaction. The practice of renting out accommodation in private homes and households has been present in Montenegro for decades. Moreover, that form of accommodation is numerically superior to all other kinds. The goal of this paper is to explore the satisfaction of customers with services offered on tourist destinations and to establish in what way it affects the successfulness of family business based on private accommodation facilities. Research described in this paper was conducted in the coastal town of Sutomore (Bar municipality) in the Republic of Montenegro, which has been recording a significant growth of tourist visits in the recent years. The paper demonstrates the results of survey research created according to the *qualitest* model, conducted on a sample of 160 tourists accommodated in private accommodation premises. The results obtained will serve to propose measures for improvement the tourism offer.

Keywords: customer satisfaction, tourist destination, tourism offer, Qualitest

INTRODUCTION

Tourism, as a growing industry, is characterized by constant changes of trends that must be followed so as not to be left behind the competition. The growth of demand in tourism leads to greater involvement and professionalization in this field, which has grown (due to many factors, primarily globalization and development of new technologies) into one of the largest service industries in the world, with an ever-

expanding market. According to the UNWTO data (2014), the number of tourists in 2013 has reached 1.087 billion, which is 5% higher compared to the previous year. According to the same source, every eleventh employee in the world works in the field of tourism, which is represented with 6% in the overall world export, which is the fact that speaks enough about the state of development of this field.

Surveying tourists on satisfaction and experience offered by the service offered at a destination has become a common occurrence. More than 20 years ago, Peterson and Wilson (1992) have found more than 15.000 scientific and professional articles on the topic of customer satisfaction, which is just a testimony to the importance of this topic in modern business. One of the most important goals of marketing managers in the field of tourism is to find the most applicable model for improvement of satisfaction of tourists and their loyalty to the destination. Of course, all these activities should be based on principles of sustainable development, which means that it is necessary to harmonise the expected number of visitors with planned investments in tourist infrastructure and development of service industry at the destination (Peršić, 2005). This certainly requires a modernization of destination management that must be ready for all challenges placed before it by the contemporary tourism market.

The goal of this paper is to indicate, through an overview of available literature, the importance of research of tourist satisfaction, primarily in smaller destinations in developing countries. The results obtained will serve to propose measures for improvement the tourism offer.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemporary forms of business in tourism impose new trends conditioned by an ever-increasing number of tourists travelling in the world today. It is an undeniable fact that tourists are increasingly demanding and that it is not a simple task to satisfy all their needs and expectations. Contemporary tourists meet daily with a great number of offers that could satisfy their need for travelling. When faced with such a difficult task, they make decisions mainly on the basis of their own perception of value of different travels (Đorđević & Tomka, 2011). It is a common opinion that tourist destinations of the new age do not need to have spectacular attractions, such as Paris, Rome or London in order to be competitive in attracting tourists. For a successful start, it suffices that they have quality infrastructure and readiness to become active and develop, in tourist terms. Benefits of tourism for every destination are manifold, ranging from employment of local population to amount of revenue generated through this activity. However, tourist destinations focusing on needs and expectations of tourists will see that precisely the satisfaction of tourists is the goal to be strived towards.

Tourist satisfaction is an important strategic weapon on which success of a tourist destination is dependent. Živković and Ilić (2008) claim that it primarily depends on benefits realized during delivery of a service, as well as that it is very important to take into account the expectation based on previous experiences, social influences, but also the credibility of information delivered through various means of marketing. Yuksel and Yuksel (2002) are of the opinion that customer satisfaction research can bring

numerous benefits to the destination and serve to successfully gain and maintain customer loyalty, thus achieving long-term competitiveness. Kotler et al. (2006) emphasize that tourist satisfaction depends on degree of realised success in delivering the products and services in relation to tourist expectations. Furthermore, they claim that if a product or service do not fulfil customer expectations, (s)he will remain unsatisfied, while if they meet expectations, the tourist can be considered satisfied. Only in the case that expectations are surpassed will the tourist be delighted (Kotler, et al., 2006). Customer satisfaction often results in prolonged stay in a tourist place, which is certainly dependent on a fair relationship between the service user and provider, but also on the way in which that service has been delivered. Meeting the expected level of satisfaction should be a common attitude, as the emotional reaction of the visitor is based on the difference between the expected and the delivered service (Zineldin, 1998). In order to achieve a desired level of visitor satisfaction, all stakeholders at a tourist destination must jointly design guidelines for a continuous improvement of business and accept them as a general model of behaviour. Destinations that use models for researching customer satisfaction must clearly define the link between the satisfaction and goals (Kostić, 2010). Because of all of this, it is not surprising that the scope of research in the field of customer satisfaction has been constantly increasing, entailing the development of various models for measuring the successfulness of this factor. These models use diverse approaches in service industries and some of the most extensively used ones, according to Vijayadurai (2008) are transaction report, mystery shopping, complaints, user suggestions, etc.

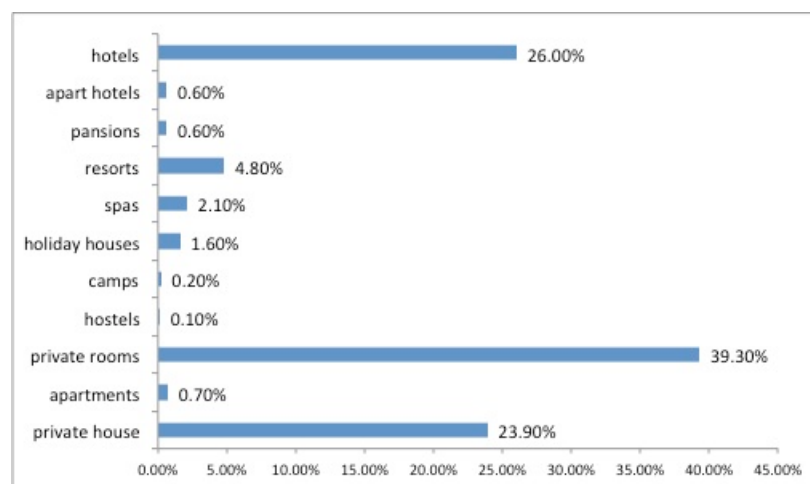
The value that can be realised in tourism is conditioned by customer satisfaction, i.e. the positive response to the question of whether the customer will be loyal in the future or not. A satisfied customer will transfer his/her positive experiences to persons (s)he is in contact with, which can result in increased demand for certain services in the future (Komppula, 2006). Hence, benefits from a satisfied customer are certainly manifold. Numerous authors (Alegre & Garau, 2009; Cooper & Hall, 2008; Del Bosque & San Martin, 2008; Deng et al., 2013; Hosany & Prayag, 2013) claim that customer satisfaction is in a direct relation with functional performances of a certain service and that it is mostly affected by understanding and perceived quality. Satisfaction itself is a basis for retaining the existing and attracting new customers (Kotler et al., 2005). This concept is very pronounced in tourism and managers need to adapt to the increasingly complex requirements of the customers and thus realise their business goals. A very important role here is played by a well-formed marketing strategy that will result in recurring purchases and customer loyalty. A basic indicator of customer satisfaction in tourism are revisits of a tourist destination. Guests visit many destinations several times during their lifetimes, which clearly indicates that satisfaction with time spent at a certain place leads to the intention of revisiting. Mountinho (2005) emphasizes that even when a tourist does not intend to revisit a destination, his/her satisfaction is equally important. This is explained by the tourists' desire to experience other destinations, too, in the same manner, in the following years. In order for a revisit to take place, Kotler et al (2006) emphasize that it is necessary to surpass the expectations of tourists and make the customer a loyal one. On the other hand, there are more reasons for which a satisfied tourist needs no become a loyal one. Some of them are related to wish to visit as many different destinations as possible, but equally significant are service prices, which are often the key factor in choice making. In order

for the tourist to become loyal, he must primarily be satisfied. However, if we wish to compare these two notions, satisfaction versus loyalty, we can very easily reach the conclusion that loyal tourists are more valuable for a destination, in the long run, compared to those “merely” satisfied. Because of this, it is very important to recognise the “old”, loyal guests and prepare a richer content for them than the competition would, treating them as new guests. Tourist loyalty should not be thought of only in the context of a frequent choice of the same destination or accommodation, but also in the context pertaining to a great potential of personal marketing (so called *word of mouth*), typical of those who recount their positive experiences to friends, relatives and colleagues. It is not realistic to expect an average guest today to keep returning always and forever. Offering basic services to visitors is not enough to achieve their complete satisfaction. A comprehensive visitor experience must reflect a synergy of all individual experiences in the chain of value at a destination. In that respect, the quality of visitors' experience is an indicator or an end result of all efforts invested in internal development of the destination. Monitoring the quality level of destination experience, with surveying of visitors' satisfaction is an example of activity that supports those activities. One of the key duties of a manager when it comes to revisits is collecting data on revisits, which can be done in different ways, the most common of which is the technique of survey (Jegdić & Marković, 2011). Experts dealing with this kind of research in the EU emphasize that it would be the best to use the percentage of revisits to a place during the period of five years as an indicator. Optimal values of this indicator are those above 50% of revisits, while all values below 30% can be considered a warning that there is a problem that requires an urgent reaction and introduction of measures for improvement of the quality of offer (Jegdić & Marković, 2011). Marketing experts must also take care of the estimate level of tourist expectations. If they are too low, they can be easily satisfied, while, if they are too high, tourists can be very easily disappointed, which is certainly a circumstance that indicates faults in the domain of application of marketing strategy.

An increasingly large share of family business in tourism, especially the accommodation sector, can be directly related to the tendency of achieving tourist satisfaction through an experience based on a direct contact with service providers. Successful hosts have already realized that their guests must not be perceived merely as numbers, but need to strive towards creating a personal relationship that would generate satisfaction. Numerous historical facts indicate that there is a long tradition of hosting guests in private homes. Today, when tourism is a world trend, this practice is continued, naturally in significantly changed circumstances and no longer out of altruistic motives, but with the goal of creating economic benefits to the host. Thus, we are witnessing the fact of family business being one of the most significant generators of wealth and employment in the world's economy (Penezić, 2008). This topic was covered by many authors, who tried to define it, although it proved to be a very demanding work, precisely due to the complexity of these two notions (family and business). Đurić (2012) defines family business as “*family firm or company whose majority of shares is owned by the family that controls it, including the founders which intend to transfer the company onto their offspring*”. Penezić (2008) asks whether family enterprises are different from the non-family ones. He also claims that this kind of enterprise is characterized by long-term planning and that successful family companies will, in such a way, offer special benefits to the employees who are

members of the family, as well as to those who are not (Penezić, 2008). Many families have recognised the chance precisely in investing into family homes that would be specialized in accommodating tourists. They have quickly realized that quality equipment of the premises does not suffice and that the complete satisfaction of the modern, demanding tourist requires far greater investments. What separates facilities such as these from the others is the fact that guests share the space with the family and that this very relation and the “domestic atmosphere” is a significant element of attractiveness of this kind of accommodation (Petrić & Mimica, 2011). The practice of renting out accommodation in private homes and households has been present in Montenegro for decades. Moreover, that form of accommodation is numerically superior to all other kinds (Figure 1). The common thing about all kinds of accommodation in this category is small dimensions. Furthermore, in the situation of decreasing investments in tourism and hospitality in developing countries, opening of this kind of capacities seems a very suitable development option, which greatly mitigates bad social position of the local population.

Figure 1: **Structure of overnight stays in Montenegro according to the kind of accommodation, 2013.**



Source: Statistical office of Montenegro

2. METHODOLOGY

The research topic of this paper is the survey of attitudes of tourists who visited the tourist destination of Sutomore on certain values of tourist offer of this place and the degree of their satisfaction with the service. The aim was to establish to what extent satisfaction affects the successfulness of family-ran accommodation businesses. This research was conducted by means of the QUALITEST method, which serves to rate tourist satisfaction with the service offered at the destination and resulting from the study developed by the Danish Ramboll Group, specializing in global consulting and formed at the request of European Committee (European Communities, 2003). For the needs of this research, the authors have singled out certain questions in the mentioned

model, which supposedly represent the factors that affect the successfulness of family business and whose results unequivocally indicate the degree of satisfaction with a certain service that is graded. For the needs of this research, the basic model has been modified within limits recommended by the very author of the model. These changes consist of adding questions pertaining to general information on the respondent, but also the questions of respondent's travelling habits and frequency of travelling.

In order to assess the psychometric characteristics of the survey, two statistical procedures were carried out: (1) Scale Reliability Analysis (calculation of Cronbach's Alpha) and (2) Factor Analysis with Direct oblimin rotation. The statistical inference was conducted at a significance level of 0.05 (Sig. < .05). The Cronbach Alpha coefficients were computed for the reliability of the factors thus identified the value above 0,8, which was higher than its recommended theoretical value. In all items, high reliability of the scale was confirmed as all claims were homogeneous and focus on the related features. Extracting of one factor was possible, indicating the high validity of the instrument used.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) was higher than recommended value of 0.6 thus demonstrated a strong sampling adequacy. In terms of suitability of Factor analysis for this dataset, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance, which pointed towards factorability of correlation matrix. Taken together, these tests provide a minimum standard which should be passed before a Factor analysis should be conducted (Table 1).

Table 1: **Reliability Analysis**

Items	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Availability of information about a destination on internet	,846
Quality of transportation services	,834
Quality of accommodation facilities	,846
Offer and quality of food and drink	,832
Offer and quality of activities	,848
Quality of information about activities on a destination	,826
Sense of security regarding criminal (including medical services)	,847
Kindness of locals	,840
Cleanliness on a destination	,834
Cleanliness of the sea	,837
Quality of air on a destination	,835
Value for money	,846
Cronbach's Alpha	,851
Adequacy =	,843
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity =	661,974
Sig. =	,000
	KMO Measure of Sampling

Source: Author's elaboration

Tourists are increasingly opting for services that they feel sure guarantee good quality and equivalent to the price paid. At the same time, tourist destinations and tourist service providers increasingly often face growth of guests' demands and expectations, but also face a growth of competition, both nationally and abroad. QUALITEST is based on a healthy business practice, with an accent on what tourist destinations need to do right away to provide quality tourist services. Using QUALITEST can help tourist destinations and providers to establish the quality level of their business. The model has been designed in such a way as to evaluate the quality of offer of tourist destination and its ancillary services. It can be applied onto any kind of urban, rural and coastal town in Europe and the related tourist, transport and all other services. Its explanation should be based on the experience of a life cycle of an average individual and its perception of holidays. The final, complete experience and memories that a tourist will take away from a destination are a complex blend of all that (s)he faced during the stay in that place and the encounters with the local population. All that a tourist destination can offer always directly reflects on a certain tourist experience, where a tourist/guest is an active participant in the interaction of tourist offer and consumption.

2.1. Results

The research was conducted in the period from July 15th to August 19th 2014 on the territory of the municipality of Bar in the town of Sutomore. As a place with a long-standing tradition of tourism, Sutomore is renowned as a summer resort for its long sandy beach and suitable climate. Sutomore is only seven kilometres away from the city of Bar, which is an important administrative, cultural and traffic centre of the Republic of Montenegro.

Data source for the conducted research were the guests accommodated in private homes, i.e. their answers to questions asked. The character of the sample is representative, as it satisfies the basic prerequisite, which is to represent the part of the population that possesses important characteristics researched and can thus be a source of valid data. The processing of obtained data was done in Portable IBM SPSS Statistics v22 Software. A chi-square (χ^2) test was applied as a nonparametric procedure, which enables the comparison of any statistic series, regardless of the methodological nature of the original measurement results (Perić, 2006). In addition to this, analysis of variance was used – ANOVA (ANalysis Of VAriance), as a statistical method for analysing differences between arithmetic means of two or more statistical series affected by the same factor. A sample of 160 respondents who filled in the questionnaire independently was composed of 73 men and 87 women. The respondents belong to all age groups, dominated by that of 19 to 25 years of age (with a share of over 45%). The respondents spent between 5 and 8 days at the destination and for 60% of them, this was not the first time to spend their summer holidays there. The quality of services at the destination was very favourably rated, firstly the quality of accommodation, then the kindness of the local people, as well as the value-for-money aspect (Table 2).

Table 2: Results of descriptive statistical analysis

	Level of satisfaction	Number of respondents	Percent
Quality of accommodation	Excellent	59	36.9
	Good	62	38.8
	Satisfactory	36	22.5
	Bad	3	1.9
	Total	160	100.0
Kindness of local population	Excellent	12	7.5
	Good	40	25.0
	Satisfactory	50	31.3
	Bad	37	23.1
	Very bad	13	8.1
	Inapplicable	8	5.0
	Total	160	100.0
Value for money	Excellent	40	25.0
	Good	59	36.9
	Satisfactory	51	31.9
	Bad	4	2.5
	Inapplicable	6	3.8
	Total	160	100.0

Source: Author's elaboration

Pearson's χ^2 showed a significant statistical relation between the respondents' age and their intention to revisit Sutomore as a holiday destination, but also the intention to recommend it to their friends and relatives.

Table 3: Results of reliability analysis

Respondent's age	Do you plan to revisit Sutomore?		Total	Would you recommend Sutomore as a holiday destination?		Total
	yes	no		yes	no	
19 - 25	65	9	74	64	64	74
26 - 35	42	4	46	41	41	46
36 - 45	15	6	21	12	12	21
46 - 55	8	0	8	6	6	8
56 - 65	5	0	5	4	4	5
over 66	2	4	6	2	2	6
Total	137	23	160	129	129	160

Source: Author's elaboration

Persons in age groups of 19-25, 26-35 and 36-45 years of age are far readier to repeat the visit $\chi^2 (5.160)=20.450 (p=0.001)$ (Table 3). In addition to this, this respondent group is more likely to recommend Sutomore as a destination to their friends than the respondents older than 45, $\chi^2 (5.160)=19.924, (p=0.001)$.

Taking into accounts these results, we can conclude that Sutomore is a destination that primarily attracts the younger tourist population, primarily in the period of summer season (July and August).

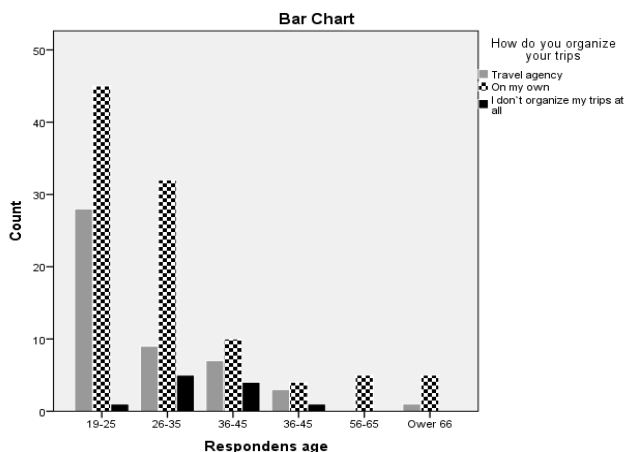
Table 4: **Correlation between the respondent's gender and ways of organizing their tourist travel**

		How do you organise your travels?			Total
		Through a tourist agency	independently	I don't organize, but travel without organisation	
Gender	Men	24	40	9	73
	Women	24	61	2	87
Total		48	101	11	160

Source: Author's elaboration

When it comes to a usual way of organizing travels of, Pearson's χ^2 test has shown a significant statistical relation between the gender and age of respondents and the way in which they most often organize their travels. Research results show that women are more prone to organising than men $\chi^2 (2.160)=7.654, (p=0.022)$ (Table 4) and that there is a tendency for the younger respondent population (19-35 years), in a significant percent of over 48% (Figure 2), to (most often) avoid the mediation of tourist agencies.

Figure 2: **Differences between the respondent age and ways of organising tourist travels**



Source: Author's elaboration

Table 5: **Results of bivariate statistical analysis (ANOVA, t-test, correlation analysis)**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.432	2	2.216	3.453	.034
Within Groups	100.762	157	.642		
Total	105.194	159			

Post Hoc test				
(I) How often do you travel for tourism purposes?	(J) How often do you travel for tourism purposes?	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
once or twice	three or four times	.30804*	.13855	.028
	five times or more	.40144*	.18631	.033
three or four times	Once or twice	-.30804*	.13855	.028
	five times or more	.09341	.18399	.612
five times or more	once or twice	-.40144*	.18631	.033
	three or four times	-.09341	.18399	.612

Source: Author's elaboration

During the analysis of Table 4 a single factor (ANOVA One Way) variance analysis was used, in order to reveal the possible differences in ratings of satisfaction of tourists with the quality of accommodation according to the frequency of travel per year. Obtained results ($F=3.453$; $p=0.34$) indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in ratings of tourists' satisfaction with accommodation depending on travelling frequency. A further analysis (Post Hoc test) (Table 5) established that those who travel less often, i.e. once or twice a year, show a higher level of satisfaction with the accommodation service in Sutomore in comparison to the guests who travel more often.

3. DISCUSSION

A lived experience in tourism is considered an increasingly important factor, which speaks in favour of the fact that the very value of travelling is reflected in a unique experience lived by the tourist and is realised as a dominant form of emotion-based value (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung, 2007). Tourist hospitality is affected by the hospitality of all stakeholders at a destination and their most important task is to recognise that role as soon as possible. Hospitality essentially entails relations and processes between guests and hosts (Skipper, 2009). Skilful treatment of guests, friendly attitude, cordiality and kindness, flexibility and care for the guests' privacy are only some of the segments of successful hospitality. Hospitality should be an attitude of tourism workers with direct contacts with tourists (Brunt & Courtney, 1999).

After analysing results obtained through the research conducted, it can be concluded that the destination of Sutomore is recognized primarily for its content, as a destination focused on the development of youth tourism, with a tendency to satisfy the needs of the younger population. Theory, with its data based on the practice, recognizes youth tourism as a mass movement without greater economic effects on a destination, seeing as younger tourists are not big spenders. On the basis of this analysis, it does not come as a surprise that younger respondents would gladly recommend this destination to their friends, unlike those from older respondent groups. Moreover, service providers at this destination should focus on direct contacts with potential tourist, especially through internet, as that particular target group organizes its travels electronically. A primary important message indicated by the results obtained is the fact that respondents who travel less often are more satisfied with the quality of accommodation capacities than those who have a greater tourist experience. This information entails a more concrete explanation, starting from the very fact that the quality of service offered, observed through the elements of functionality of service and experience lived (Milošević, 2012), can be measured only on the basis of subjective expectations and customer experience. One cannot help but wonder if that is a difficult task. Đorđević and Tomka (2011) find, analysing numerous benefits and consequences of tourism, that tourism can hardly be understood as a linear process and even less so as a circular one. Tourist movement must be understood as a spiral process, where each successive travel begins on an enriched, higher level. This higher level is, in this case, based on a final point of the previous cycle, enriched with new experiences that are enhanced in comparison with the previous beginning and so on, along the spiral, into infinity. This kind of approach is applicable on all aspects of tourism. As a logical sequence of events, it can be expected that all future attention will be directed towards studying needs, motives and expectations of tourists. Thus, satisfying the expectations of tourists/guests becomes an increasingly difficult work, as service delivered should be in accordance with their subtle expectations acquired on the basis of the previously lived experience.

4. CONCLUSION

The demanding nature of modern tourists is reflected in their expectation to be offered an increasing number of activities during their stay, in order for the degree of their satisfaction to be higher. Not attributing enough significance to their satisfaction leads to visitor's negative tourist experience being created. It is obvious that, with each passing season, guests look for greater value for money, additional services, more cultural and entertainment content. In order to meet the growing demands, it will be necessary to develop additional offer on destinations, as natural beauties and possibilities for family vacation will not suffice in the future. A satisfied guest is a key marketing weapon for Montenegrin tourism and it is necessary to do everything for the guests with lower purchase power to be as satisfied as possible. This is especially important considering the fact that primary information channels in tourism are recommendation of friends and internet. Individual approach in which a guest is not just a number, but a person with a name and personality, as well as the warmth and hospitality of the host, are basic advantages of a private accommodation based on family business. They make it a unique form of tourist offer, especially in developing

countries, in which traditional lifestyle is still cherished.

Results obtained on the basis of the conducted research can contribute and affect the advancement and raising of image of Sutomore as a tourist destination. One of the tasks for improving tourism on this destination is advancement of processes of approach to tourism, tourist welcome, communication with visitors of all those who contact with tourists and provide (even indirectly) comfort, pleasantness of stay, and experience. Taking into account the fact that an integral tourist offer of a destination is the value that is aimed for, it does not come as a surprise that tourist satisfaction with all partial destination products strongly affects the development and improvement of family business, which is recognised as an extraordinary power of modern tourism.

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