SATISFIERS AND DISSATISFIERS IN CONGRESS TOURISM – THE CASE OF DUBROVNIK

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate satisfiers and dissatisfiers in congress tourism using the case of Dubrovnik. The authors apply an impact-asymmetry analysis (IAA) to categorize nine destination attributes according to their potentials to generate tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as well as their range of impact on the tourist's overall satisfaction. The results of this study provide insightful information for destination marketers who wish to increase tourist satisfaction in the segment of congress tourism.

Keywords: Congress tourism, tourist satisfaction, impact asymmetry analysis, Dubrovnik

1. INTRODUCTION

Congress tourism presents a form of special-interest tourism. From a perspective of motivation and content, it belongs to the category of educative and communicative forms of tourism,[1] which are not tied directly to the main tourist season. According to the definition adopted at the 10th AIEST Congress held in 1970 in The Netherlands, congress tourism is "a group of activities and relationships that stem from the travel and stay of individuals coming together to exchange mainly scientific and professional knowledge, and where the meeting place is not a place of work or residence". The term stems from the word congress (Latin - congredi), which means meeting, assembly, rally, conference, convention and usually has an international character.[2] Today, this term implies the organization of a group of people that come together at a predetermined time and place to discuss certain topics. The development of this form of tourism was affected by various kinds of business meetings, such as congresses, corporate business meetings, public conferences, government conferences, conventions, travel incentives, team building programs, etc. Even though delegates are motivated to travel in order to attend meetings where certain common issues are to be addressed, delegates also generally spend part of their time as tourists. Some meetings, such as political ones, have an entirely work character, whereas some combine work and pleasure.

Business meetings are being held worldwide today. Europe has by far the greatest share of the international meetings market, and in 2003, 64% of the headquarters of international organizations that organized meetings were based in this continent. According to the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA), in 2003, Europe achieved its greatest market share, by number of meetings, at over 60%.[3] Medium sized conferences, from 250 to 1,000 participants, have declined in popularity, while there has been an increase in the number of conferences with less than 250 participants and those with over 2,500 participants. The income from congress tourism is not negligible. The average income from fees per meeting by delegates worldwide reached US$ 367,258 while the total expenditure per meeting US$ 1,224,194 in 2003.[4] According to the International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (IACVB) *2004 Convention Expenditure and Impact Study*, the average convention attendee spent US$ 945 in the host city with an average stay of 3.5 nights. Lodging, food and beverage account for 77% of visitor spending. In addition to the delegates, the host city also benefits from the organizers spending an average of US$ 96 per delegate for the event, and exhibitors who spend an average of US$ 350 each for the event.[5]

Many destinations invest in the improvement of existing congress capacities and in the building of new ones, so as to increase the market share in this segment, which is growing at greater market rates than the number of international arrivals. The criteria considered desirable for a successful destination are as follows:[6]

1. An attractive destination
2. A variety of meeting facilities
3. A range of good accommodation
4. Good access by air, road and rail, etc.
5. Civic commitment to hosting delegates
6. A coordinated approach to destination marketing and visitor servicing

The leading world destination according to the number of delegates is the United States, followed by Germany, Spain, France and Italy. In terms of participation, the world's top five meeting cities in 2003 were located in Europe (Berlin, Paris, Vienna, Lisbon, Barcelona), and only the presence of Singapore and Toronto prevented a pan-European top ten. Stockholm. Helsinki and Prague have been the fastest growing destinations in recent years, while Copenhagen currently holds the strongest worldwide position in terms of the number of meetings scheduled between now and 2015.[7] Even though most meetings are held in large cities, many tourist destinations are interested in the development of this specific form of tourism, as it allows the tourist season to be extended, as meetings are usually held in spring or fall.

Croatia cannot compete with the leading European meeting destinations. It only has 75 completely equipped meeting halls available.[8] Out of 5,191 business meetings held in Croatia in 2007, only 485 of the meetings were with bed-nights. Foreign delegates accounted for only 12% at business meetings. The total income from all the business meetings held from January to November 2007 was 219,405,238 Kuna from accommodation and catering services (restaurants, bars, cafés), renting of conference halls, exhibition areas and technical equipment. More than ¾ of the income was realized from meetings with bed-nights.[9] Congresses account for the most (52%), attended by 53% of all conference delegates in Croatia, with 69% bed-nights and 68% of the overall income (Table 1).

Table 1: Business meetings in Croatia according to type between January-November 2007

	Total number of meetings	**Duration of meetings in days**	**Total number of delegates**	**Total bed-nights**	**Total revenue in Kuna incl. VAT**
Corporative/ business meetings	1 598	2 525	76 178	52 430	33 781 739
Congresses (forums, lectures, seminars, symposiums)	2 681	5 757	200 403	209 289	149 662 718
Public conferences	135	208	15 448	5 267	6 768 779
Government conferences	10	18	1 083	1 018	1 430 299
Public conferences	150	248	20 600	2 385	3 328 928
Conventions	18	37	3 972	1 406	960 449
Incentives	82	191	6 011	10 480	8 982 767
Team building	113	221	6 805	7 003	4 033 655
Other	404	623	49 711	13 589	10 455 904
Total	5 191	9 828	380 211	302 767	219 405 238

Source: First release by the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Croatia, http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/publication/2007/4-4-10_11h2007.htm, 20th June, 2008.

Alongside Zagreb, other meeting cities that stand out as coastal tourist destinations are Opatija, Dubrovnik, Pula, Rovinj, Cavtat, Poreč, Brijuni and so on. Dubrovnik is one of the biggest Croatian meeting centers. In Dubrovnik, congress tourism developed alongside regular tourism right from the very start. The first international conference was held in Dubrovnik in 1887 when Hotel "Imperial" opened.[10] Today, many hotels are equipped with meeting halls, as well as some facilities in and around the historical old town.

2. SATISFIERS AND DISSATISFIERS - ASYMMETRIC EFFECTS IN THE FORMATION OF OVERALL SATISFACTION

A growing number of studies on the determinants of customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction reveal that some service attributes have a varying impact on overall customer satisfaction, depending on the current level of their performance. In the literature, such attributes have been variously referred to as:

- *satisfiers* and *dissatisfiers*;[11]
- *attractive-* and *'must-be' quality elements/requirements*;[12] and/or
- *excitement-* and *basic factors/attributes*.[13]

Attributes that can be classified as 'satisfiers' (attractive quality elements, excitement factors) have a greater impact in creating satisfaction in cases of high-level performance than they have in creating dissatisfaction in cases of low-level performance. In other words, these attributes have a larger potential to create satisfaction than dissatisfaction. Conversely, attributes that can be classified as 'dissatisfiers' ('must-be' quality elements, basic factors) have a greater impact in creating dissatisfaction in cases of low-level performance than they have in creating satisfaction in cases of high-level performance. In other words, these attributes have a larger potential to create dissatisfaction than satisfaction.

The existence of such asymmetric effects has important implications for service managers. It has been suggested, as a rule of thumb, that dissatisfiers (must-be quality elements, basic factors) should be fulfilled first, as 'they establish a market entry threshold'.[14] Therefore, it seems obvious that satisfiers and dissatisfiers require particular attention in service improvement strategies, and information about their existence represents a valuable resource for managers in setting priorities of service attribute improvement.

3. CASE STUDY

3.1. Aim and analytical framework

The aim of this study was to investigate satisfaction-generating potentials (SGPs) and dissatisfaction-generating potentials (DGPs) in congress tourism using the case of Dubrovnik. In order to quantify SGPs and DGPs, in the first step a *penalty-reward contrast analysis* (PRCA) was conducted based on the methodology by Brandt.[15] The second step involved an *impact-asymmetry analysis* (IAA) to provide a detailed insight into the (a) asymmetry of attribute-impact on the tourist's overall satisfaction with the journey and (b) the range of attribute-impact on the tourist's overall satisfaction with the journey.

3.2. Methodology and sample

For the purpose of this study, a survey was conducted among tourists who were attending a congress/conference in one of three main congress facilities in Dubrovnik. Data was collected in face-to-face interviews by means of a standardized questionnaire over a period of one week in spring 2008. Respondents were asked to rate the performance of nine destination-attributes and their overall satisfaction with the journey (OS) on a scale from 1 ('very low') to 5 ('very high'). The selection of destination attributes, which are most relevant in congress tourism, was based on a literature review. In total, 109 fully completed and usable questionnaires provided the data for this study.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1. Penalty-reward contrast analysis

In the first step a PRCA was conducted to generate data input for the IAA. For each destination attribute, two sets of dummy variables were created. The first set was created by recoding the lowest performance ratings as '1' (P = 1 and 2), whereas all other ratings were recoded as '0' (P = 3, 4, and 5). This set was used to measure the impact of low performance on OS. The second set, which was used to measure the impact of high performance on OS (reward indices), was created by recoding highest performance ratings as '1' (P = 5), whereas all other ratings were recoded as '0' (P = 1, 2, 3, and 4). A multiple regression analysis was then conducted using the two sets of dummy variables as independent variables and OS as the dependent variable. For each attribute, two regression coefficients were obtained. The first coefficient represented an incremental decrease in OS in cases of extremely low attribute-performance (penalty index), whereas the second coefficient represented an incremental increase in OS in cases of extremely high attribute-performance (reward index). PRCA results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: PRCA results

Attribute	**reward indices**	**penalty indices**
1. congress-related activities and organizational issues	0,034^{ns}	-0,196*
2. accommodation	0,160*	-0,146*
3. non-congress activities and events	0,137**	-0,043^{ns}
4. attractions/sights	0,459***	*0,007**
5. restaurants	0,004 ^{ns}	-0,014^{ns}
6. bars	0,139**	-0,003^{ns}
7. shopping	0,148**	-0,008^{ns}
8. transportation/accessibility of destination	0,005*	-0,043*
9. atmosphere in the destination	0,165**	-0,05^{ns}
Notes: ***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.1; ^{ns} = not significant; adjusted R^2=0,811 penalty and reward indices are standardized regression coefficients		

The PRCA results were used in two ways. First, absolute values of penalty-indices and reward indices for each attribute were totaled to provide indicators of an attribute's *range of impact on OS* (RIOS). Secondly, the results were used to calculate an index that quantified the extent to which an attribute had a SGP compared with its DGP. This index was termed impact-asymmetry index (IAI). The following equations were used:

(1) $SGP_i = r_i / RIOS_i$
(2) $DGP_i = |p_i| / RIOS_i$

(3) $IAI_i = SGP_i - DGP_i$

in which:

r_i = reward index for attribute i;
p_i = penalty index for attribute i;
$RIOS_i = r_i + |p_i|$ = range of impact on overall customer satisfaction; and
$SGP_i + DGP_i = 1$.

IAI values range from –1 to +1 and can be interpreted as follows:

- A value of +1 indicates that an attribute is a 'perfect satisfier'- i.e., the attribute has only SGP.
- A value of –1 indicates that an attribute is a 'perfect dissatisfier'- i.e., the attribute has only DGP.
- A value of 0 indicates that the attribute is a perfect 'hybrid'- i.e., the attribute has equal SGP and DGP.

Attribute-SGPs and DGPs, with corresponding RIOS scores and IAIs are shown in Table 3.

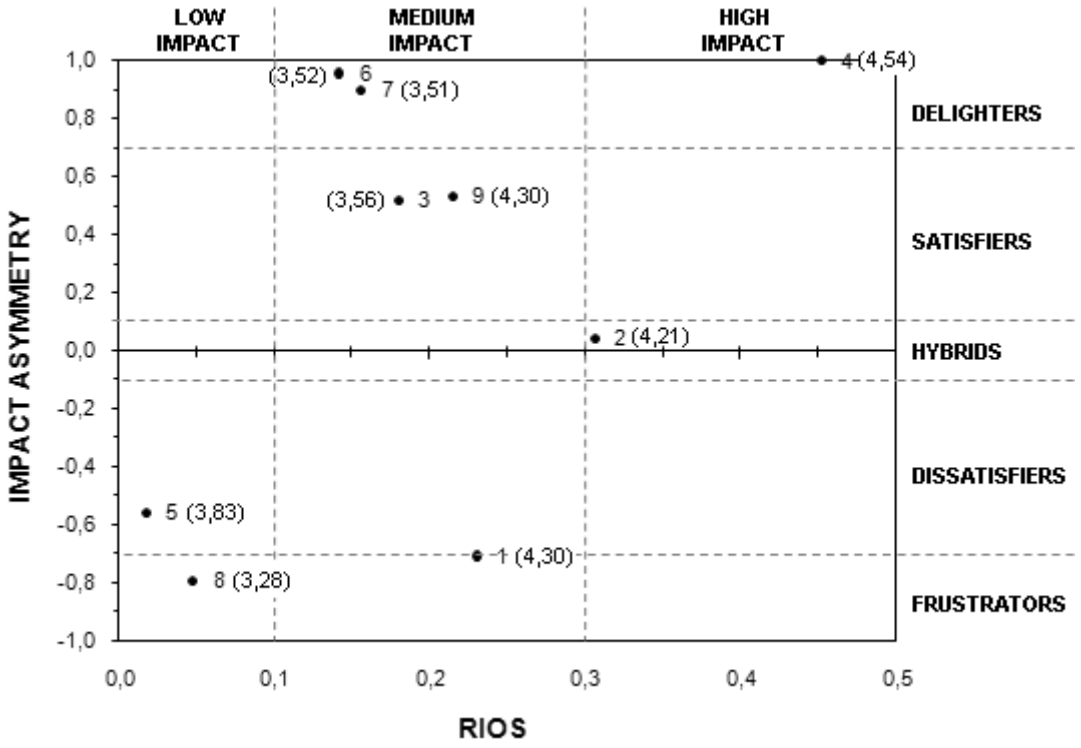
Table 3: Impact on satisfaction indices

Attribute	**SGP**	**DGP**	**RIOS**	**IAI**
1. congress-related activities and organizational issues	0,148	-0,852	0,230	-0,704
2. accommodation	0,523	-0,477	0,306	0,046
3. non-congress activities and events	0,761	-0,239	0,180	0,522
4. attractions/sights	*1,015*	*0,015*	*0,452*	*1,000*
5. restaurants	0,222	-0,778	0,018	-0,556
6. bars	0,979	-0,021	0,142	0,958
7. shopping	0,949	-0,051	0,156	0,897
8. transportation/accessibility of destination	0,104	-0,896	0,048	-0,792
9. atmosphere in the destination	0,767	-0,233	0,215	0,535

4.2. Impact-asymmetry analysis

To provide a detailed insight into the asymmetry and the range of attribute-impact on OS, in the second step an IAA was conducted. As shown in Figure 1, a two-dimensional grid was constructed, with RIOS scores depicted along the horizontal axis and IAIs along the vertical axis. Additionally, an *iso-impact* line was drawn at IAI = 0. Attribute-performance scores are shown in brackets.

Figure 1: Impact-asymmetry analysis (IAA)



The IAA grid can be interpreted as follows. Attributes in the lower part of the grid (IAI < 0) have a greater potential to create dissatisfaction than satisfaction; these attributes can be referred to as 'dissatisfiers'. Conversely, attributes in the upper part of the grid (IAI > 0) have a greater potential to create satisfaction than dissatisfaction; these attributes can be referred to as 'satisfiers'. Attributes located exactly on the iso-impact line (IAI = 0) have an equal potential to create satisfaction and dissatisfaction; these can be referred to as perfect 'hybrids'.

The attributes were further subdivided into five categories according to the degree of asymmetry of their impact on OS: (i) 'delighters' (IAI > 0.7); (ii) 'satisfiers' ($0.7 \geq$ IAI > 0.1); (iii) 'hybrids' ($0.1 \geq$ IAI ≥ -0.1); (iv) 'dissatisfiers' ($-0.1 >$ IAI ≥ -0.7); and (v) 'frustrators' (IAI < –0.7). In addition, to facilitate a distinction between more or less relevant attributes in the creation of OS, the attributes were also subdivided into three categories according to their RIOS: (i) 'high-impact attributes' (RIOS > 0.3); (ii) 'medium-impact' attributes ($0.1 \leq$ RIOS ≤ 0.3); and (iii) 'low-impact attributes' (RIOS < 0.1).

Figure 1 reveals the following:

- Three attributes are categorized as 'delighters'—attribute 6 (variety of bars) and attribute 7 (shopping possibilities) are medium-impact delighters, and attribute 4 (attractions/sights) is a high-impact delighter. Since the performance-levels of attribute 6 (P_6=3.52) and attribute 7 (P_7=3.51) are relatively low, this is indicating that these attributes still have unused satisfaction-generating potential.
- Two attributes are categorized as 'medium-impact satisfiers', i.e. attribute 3 (non-congress activities and events) and attribute 9 (atmosphere in the destination).
- One attribute is categorized as 'high-impact hybrid', i.e. attribute 2 (accommodation).
- One attribute is categorized as 'low-impact dissatisfier', i.e. attribute 5 (variety of restaurants).
- Two attributes are categorized as 'frustrators'—attribute 8 (transportation/accessibility of destination) is a 'low-impact frustrator', and attribute 1 (congress-related activities

and organizational issues) is a 'medium-impact frustrator'. Since the performance-level of attribute 8 is the lowest among all analyzed attributes (P_8=3.28), while it is a frustrator, this is indicating that it is an active source of dissatisfaction. However, it should be noted that the attribute's overall impact on OS is very little ($RIOS_8$=0.048), meaning that attribute 8 has not the potential to significantly impair the general impression of the journey. Nevertheless, low performance on *transportation/accessibility of the destination* should be regarded as a potential barrier which is keeping higher numbers of congresses, as well as congress tourists from coming to the destination.

5. SUMMARY AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study has investigated the existence of satisfiers and dissatisfiers in a congress tourism setting using the case of Dubrovnik. An impact-asymmetry analysis (IAA) enabled nine destination attributes to be categorized according to their satisfaction-generating potential (SGP) and dissatisfaction-generating potential (DGP), as well as their range of impact on overall satisfaction (RIOS). The analysis revealed one 'high-impact delighter' (attractions/sights), two 'medium-impact delighters' (variety of bars; shopping possibilities), two 'medium-impact satisfiers' (non-congress activities and events; atmosphere in the destination), one 'high-impact hybrid' (accommodation), one 'low-impact dissatisfier' (variety of restaurants), one 'low-impact frustrator' (transportation/accessibility of destination) and one 'medium-impact frustrator' (congress-related activities and organizational issues).

The results from this study provide useful information for destination managers who wish to raise tourist satisfaction in the segment of congress tourism. However, it is not possible to generalize the individual findings of this case study to other destinations, or to other tourism segments.

The major limitation of this study is the small sample size (n=109). Closely connected to this is the statistical insignificance of several impact-scores in the penalty-reward contrast analysis, representing another major limitation.

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