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## **IMPACT OF ECONOMIC CRISIS ON MOTIVATIONS FOR SELECTING A TOURIST DESTINATION**

*ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER*

There are a number of motivations for travelling, and these motivations are linked to needs that tourists want to fulfil. As tourists differ from one another, so do the factors that motivate tourists to travel, such as personality, life styles, past experiences and self-perception. In most cases, multiple factors exist that encourage tourists to travel. In this time of economic crisis, it is assumed that certain changes have occurred in the behaviour of tourists when selecting a destination. A survey concerning tourist behaviour in times of crisis was conducted in July, August and September 2009 to establish the effect of economic crisis on tourist behaviour in selecting a tourist destination. The survey involved a sample of tourists visiting selected seaside tourist resorts of the Istria County. The paper aims to establish a link between economic crisis and the motivations for selecting the Istria County as a holiday destination.

Keywords: tourist behaviour, motivations, tourist destination, economic crisis

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are many reasons why people travel and one of those reasons is tourism. The exact motivators that push people on travelling as tourists vary depending on different features of individuals as well as on destination offerings. One of the common theories used to examine tourist motivations is the theory of push and pull motivations where push factors refer to internal forces that motivate or create a desire to satisfy a need to travel, while pull factors are recognized as destination attributes that respond to and reinforce inherent push motivation factors like beaches, recreation, natural and cultural attractions etc<sup>1</sup>. Attractions have been viewed by many as central to the tourism

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<sup>1</sup> Sangikul, A.: A factor-cluster analysis of tourists motivations: A case of U.S. senior travellers, *Tourism*, Vol. 56, 2008, No. 1, p. 26

process because they are often the reason for visiting a particular destination, providing activities and experiences and a means of collecting the sins of consumption<sup>2</sup>.

Within the last decade, the tourism industry is experiencing changes under the premises of sustainable development, moving from mass-standardised and rigidly packed tourism to alternative forms of tourism that are more environmentally friendly. Tourism destinations are developing new marketing strategies that can identify and exploit new opportunities that are attractive, economically rewarding and sustainable<sup>3</sup>. This is all due to changes in tourist needs and desires. It is important for a destination to stress a set of desirable differences, which will serve as a basis for forming positioning strategy. In order to accomplish that it is necessary to determine how current tourists perceive tourism destination and which factors influence their choice.

One's travel motives can be separated into primary (which refer to one's roots of origin) and secondary motivations (that refer to values such as money or attributes of destination) operating within the parameters of social and economic determinant<sup>4</sup>. Age, income, gender, personality, education, cost, distance, nationality and risk are just one of many factors that affect one's choice of destination<sup>5</sup>. Many studies determined relationship between socio-demographic features of tourists and motivational factors. According to research by Sangikul<sup>6</sup> on senior U.S. travellers to Thailand, four group of pull factors were identified: 1) travel arrangements and facilities, 2) cultural and historical attractions, 3) shopping and leisure activities and 4) safety and cleanliness. Another research by Ibrahim and Gill<sup>7</sup> also detected four important factors: 1) places of interest and culture, 2) resort atmosphere, 3) outdoors activities and 4) scenery, adventure and beach. Chen and Gursoy<sup>8</sup> found that three choice attributes were significantly related to tourist's loyalty to destination: 1) different cultural experience, 2) safety, 3) convenient transportation.

Tourism and travelling industry is a very delicate; so many external conditions can have bad influence on the industry. An example of negative external conditions can be drawn from UK's leisure and tourism industry in 2000 when, due to certain not favourable situations, the number of visitors reduced causing many significant effects on profits<sup>9</sup>. One of these external conditions emerges from economic matters e.g. economic crisis. Economic crisis effect consumers in two quite distinctive ways:

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<sup>2</sup> Richards, G.: Tourism attraction system – Exploring Cultural Behavior, *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 29, 2002, No. 4, p. 1048

<sup>3</sup> Ibrahim, E. E., Gill, J.: A positioning strategy for a tourism destination, based on analysis of consumers' perceptions and satisfactions, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 23, 2005, No. 2, p. 173.

<sup>4</sup> Chang, J. C.: Travel motivation of package tour travellers, *Tourism*, Vol. 55, 2007, No. 2, p. 159.

<sup>5</sup> Hsu, Tzu-Kuang, Tsai, Yi-Fan, Wu, Herg-Huey, The preference analysis for tourist choice of destination: A case study of Taiwan, *Tourism Management*, Vol. 30, 2009, p. 290.

<sup>6</sup> Sangikul.: A factor-cluster analysis of tourists motivations: A case of U.S. senior travellers, *Tourism*, Vol. 56, 2008, No. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibrahim, E. E., Gill, J.: A positioning strategy for a tourism destination, based on analysis of consumers' perceptions and satisfactions, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 23, 2005, No. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Chen, J. S., Gursoy, D.: An investigation of tourists' destination loyalty and preferences, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 13, 2001, No. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, C., Ferguson, M.: Recovering from the crisis – Strategic alternatives for leisure and tourism providers based within a rural economy, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, Vol. 18, 2005, No. 4.

psychologically and economically<sup>10</sup>, so consumers feel less secure in their employment, they have to work more in order to maintain their lifestyle, adapt their shopping behaviour and habits etc. and it is quite logical to conclude that tourism is affected by these changes as well as other human activities. The main purpose of this paper is to determine a relationship between economic crisis and the motivations for selecting the Istria County as a holiday destination in 2009.

## **1. METHODOLOGY**

In order to strengthen comparative concurrent possibilities of Istria County as a tourist destination a survey was pursued on a sample of tourists with intention to determine tourists' behaviour during crisis.

### **1.1. Respondents**

A total of 1,130<sup>11</sup> questionnaires were collected from tourists visiting Istria County in July, August and September 2009 and staying in five researched sites<sup>12</sup>: Pula and Medulin 14%, Poreč and Vrsar 59%, Rovinj 27%.

### **1.2. Instruments**

For the purpose of gathering data on tourists' behaviour during crisis, the questionnaire was constructed. It consisted out of 22 questions which were divided into four sections. The first section of questions was related to demography (country of origin, age, gender, income, size of settlement, family members) and media usage. The second section of questions involved questions relating to tourists' perception of services offered and used during their vacation. The third section of questions was related to the tourists' major priorities in life and the last section of questions focused on determining extend of current crises on tourists' behaviour.

### **1.3. Procedure**

The sampling was carried out into two phases. In the first phase tourism towns were selected according to two criteria: 1) variety of hospitality facilities located in each site and 2) the number of arrivals<sup>13</sup> in the previous year. Each site had to reach, during July, August and September 2008, at least 6% of total arrivals in Istria County during the same period. The sites were then grouped according to the gravitating

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<sup>10</sup> Köksal, M. H., Özgül E.: The relationship between marketing strategies and performance in an economic crisis, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, vol. 25, 2007. No. 4, p. 327.

<sup>11</sup> Total population of tourists visiting research sites from July to September 2009 was 919.611 with confidence level 95% and response distribution 50% margin of error is 2.91%. Data on tourist arrivals was obtained on web site of Istria Tourists Board, <http://www.istra.hr/hr/pr/statistika> (23.11.2009.),

<sup>12</sup> According to data Tourist arrivals and nights by tourist offices 2008, Istria Tourists Board, <http://www.istra.hr/hr/pr/statistika> (10.6.2008.) from July to September 884.839 tourists arrived in the researched sites, which was 52,8% of total arrivals in Istria County for that period.

<sup>13</sup> Tourist arrivals and nights by tourist offices 2008, Istria Tourists Board, <http://www.istra.hr/hr/pr/statistika> (10.6.2008.)

centers, so clusters were formed. Three of them with more than 15% of share in total arrivals: 1) Medulin and Pula, 2) Rovinj and 3) Poreč and Vrsar were chosen for conducting research. All categories of accommodation facilities were included.

In the second phase facilities were selected using random numbers. Total number of facilities was obtained for three formed clusters<sup>14</sup> Pula and Medulin 23, Rovinj 14 and Poreč and Vrsar 21. It was decided that 30% of 58 total facilities are to be include into research, so the research was carried out in 17 accommodation facilities. Questionnaire was available in following languages: English, German, Italian, Russian, Slovenian and Croatian. Survey was conducted from July to September. Facilities were visited on dates previously agreed upon with the hotels' managements. Guests were given questionnaires and were asked to fill them up with a supervision of researchers. Before filling the questionnaires guests were told that they were anonymous. Convenient sample was used.

Data were processed through standard statistical procedure: univariate analysis and bivariate analysis. By univariate analysis general description of the sample was presented, while in bivariate analysis the  $\chi^2$  test (95% accuracy) was applied in analysing relationship between economic crises, socio-demographic features of tourists and tourist motives for selecting a tourism destination.

## **2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Data were processed through standard statistical procedure: univariate analysis and bivariate analysis. By univariate analysis general description of the sample was presented, while in bivariate analysis the  $\chi^2$  test (95% accuracy) was applied in analysing relationship of economic crisis and socio-demographic features of tourists on tourist motives for selecting a tourism destination.

### **2.1. Profile of responders**

The sample profile of tourists' socio-demographic data is presented in table 1. The proportion of female responders (53%) was higher than that of male (47%). Majority of the responders were in the age group 55 and more years, while nearly 25% were younger than 35, and almost every second responder was in the age group between 35 and 54. The mean age of the responders was 45,39 years, and the standard deviation was about 14 years. The majority of responders had only secondary education, but over 50% had education at least at college level. The majority of them had personal net monthly income between 1,000 and 2,000 €, while only 11% earned more than 4,000 € per month. The responders had different background and occupation, such as 17,36% were or managers or civil servants, 15,40% were workers, while only 0,97% were unemployed. Most of the responders were from Germany, 18%

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<sup>14</sup> Number of facilities was obtained from the web pages of Croatian National Tourist Board <http://www.croatia.hr/English/Lokacije/Smjestaj.aspx>

were from Austria, about 12% from Italy and UK, and 17,61% from other countries with a share of less than 5% in total sample. Regarding the number of visits to Istria County, most responders (46,58%) were first-time visitors, 22,39% second-time visitors, however, more than 30% had travelled to Istria County more than three times.

Table 1. **Socio-demographic indicators of tourists**

<b>Socio-demographic variables</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>	<b>Socio-demographic variables</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Gender		Occupation	
Female	52,83	Private entrepreneur	13,81
Male	47,17	Manager	17,26
Age (mean 45.39, S.D. 14. 03)		Civil servant	17,26
16-24	8,32	Worker	15,40
25-34	15,75	Student/pupil	3,89
35-44	24,25	Retired	12,74
45-54	22,83	Unemployed	0,97
55+	28,85	Other	18,67
Education		Land of arrival	
Basic education	7,79	Austria	18,41
Secondary education	36,37	Germany	27,79
College	25,04	Italy	12,92
University	22,04	Russia	10,62
Masters	5,40	UK	12,65
Ph.D.	3,36	Other	17,61
Personal net monthly income		Number of visits to Istria County	
0 – 500 €	5,58	One time	46,58
500 – 1,000 €	8,49	Two times	22,39
1,000 – 2,000 €	22,12	Three – five times	14,03
2,000 – 3,000 €	19,20	Six or more	17,00
3,000 – 4,000 €	8,49		
4,000 – 5,000 €	4,60		
5,000 – 6,000 €	2,12		
Over 6,000 €	4,69		
Private	24,69		

Source: Institute of Agriculture and Tourism, Department of Tourism, Questionnaire - Tourists behaviour and economic crisis, 2009, processed by author

## 2.2. Motives for choosing tourism destination and economics crisis

Tourist motivations analysed in this paper are, according to theory of push and pull motivations<sup>15</sup>, elements of pull factors. They were divided into ten categories: 1) Sun and the sea, 2) Entertainment, 3) Natural beauties, 4) Gastronomy, 5) Sports and recreation, 6) Cultural heritage and events, 7) Vicinity of the destination, 8) Health reasons, 9) Business obligations and 10) Transport infrastructure and are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Motives for choosing tourism destination

Rang	Motive	Percentage (%)
1	Sun and the sea	88,76
2	Natural beauties	44,86
3	Vicinity of the destination	23,98
4	Cultural heritage and events	23,53
5	Gastronomy	18,84
6	Sports and recreation	16,99
7	Transport infrastructure	14,24
8	Entertainment	9,20
9	Health reasons	5,30
10	Business obligations	1,06

Source: Institute of Agriculture and Tourism, Department of Tourism, Questionnaire - Tourists behaviour and economic crisis, 2009, processed by author

Concept the Sun and the sea was dominant motive for selecting Istria County as a tourism destination in 2009, natural beauties are the second dominant motive, while business obligations are the least dominant motive. According to Tomas research<sup>16</sup> passive vacation i.e. concept the sun and the sea was a dominant motive in choosing Croatia in 2007 so practically no difference occurred in-between.

Influence of economic crisis in choosing tourism destination and motives for choosing Istria County as this year's tourism destination was determined using  $\chi^2$  test (Table 3).

Among ten different pull motives, statistically significant relation was only determined between influence of economic crisis and four motives: natural beauties, vicinity of the destination, health reasons and business obligations. The relationship, although statistically significant, shows a very weak relation between the variables, which implies that present economic crisis, had little influence on motives for choosing Istria County as a tourism destination.

<sup>15</sup> Sangikul.: A factor-cluster analysis of tourists motivations: A case of U.S. senior travellers, Tourism, Vol. 56, 2008, No. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Ćorak, S. et. al, Tomas Summer, Institute for Tourism, 2008.

Table 3. Correlation of economic crisis influence and motives for choosing tourism destination

Variable	X <sup>2</sup>	df	CC	Sig.
Natural beauties	10,709	4	0,098	0,030
Vicinity of the destination	10,602	4	0,097	0,031
Health reasons	9,688	4	0,093	0,046
Business obligations	11,006	4	0,099	0,026

Source: Institute of Agriculture and Tourism, Department of Tourism, Questionnaire - Tourists behaviour and economic crisis, 2009, processed by author

When examining data on influence of economic crisis in choosing tourism destination, most of the tourists (74%) stated that it had no effect on their choice, while only 12% stated that it had a least same influence. From those responders who said that economic crisis did influence their choice of tourism destination, more than half stated how one of the motives for choosing Istria County were natural beauties, while about 40% selected vicinity of the destination. Those tourists that come to Istria due to health reasons did not consider economic crisis an important factor (84%), while for responders visiting Istria County due to business obligations economic crisis had no impact.

### 2.3. Motives for choosing tourism destination and socio-demographic profile

According to Tomas summer research<sup>17</sup> in 2007 every fifth tourist visiting Croatia was a first-time visitor, while the most frequent were three and more time visitors. When considering Istria County, this summer, about 47% of the responders visited Istria County for the first time this summer, about 22% was in Istria County for the second time, while 31% visited Istria County three and more times.

Number of visits to Istria County was correlated with economic crisis and motives for choosing tourism destination in order to determine relationship between the variables. Between number of visits and impact of economic crisis on choosing Istria County as tourism destination statistically significant correlation was not determined ( $\chi^2 = 18,132$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = 0,112$ ) indicating that the first time visitors did not choose Istria County because of economic crisis, but correlation was detected in the case of number of visits and motives for choosing tourism destination (presented in table 4).

When considering number of visits and motives for choosing tourism destination and comparing the results to influence of economic crisis and motive it can be concluded that number of visits played more important role in selection process than influence of economic crisis. Natural beauties, gastronomy, cultural heritage and events proved to be highly significant variables, while entertainment, vicinity of the destination, business obligation and transport infrastructure were only significant variables, but the strength of the relationship for all variables was weak.

<sup>17</sup> Čorak, S. et. al, Tomas Summer, Institute for Tourism, 2008.

Table 4. Correlation of number of visits with motives for choosing tourism destination

Variable	X <sup>2</sup>	df	CC	Sig.
Entertainment	11,909	3	0,103	0,008
Natural beauties	36,081	3	0,177	0,000
Gastronomy	19,506	3	0,131	0,000
Sports and recreation	13,707	3	0,110	0,003
Cultural heritage and events	34,458	3	0,173	0,000
Vicinity of the destination	11,874	3	0,103	0,008
Business obligations	9,491	3	0,092	0,023
Transport infrastructure	11,328	3	0,100	0,010

Source: Institute of Agriculture and Tourism, Department of Tourism, Questionnaire - Tourists behaviour and economic crisis, 2009, processed by author

For first-time visitors entertainment (92%), gastronomy (85%), sports and recreation (87%), vicinity of the destination (78%), business obligations (99%), cultural heritage and events (70%) and transport infrastructure (88%) were not motives for choosing Istria County, while natural beauties (54%) was a dominant motive. Natural beauties as a motive decreased with an increase in number of visits, while sports and recreation, gastronomy, vicinity of the destination and transport infrastructure increased what implies that those tourists who frequently visit Istria County are returning due to the mentioned pull factors. There is also a possibility that first-time visitors are not well informed about other pull factors.

Travel market is quite a diverse one with respect to different socio-demographic characteristics; lifestyles, interests, attitude and consumption patterns<sup>18</sup>, so socio-demographic variables were correlated to motives for choosing tourism destination (table 5). This was done in order to better emphasize the motivational factors that pull people to choose a specific tourism destination.

Country of arrival was the variable related to the most of examined motives, showed the strongest relationships compared to other socio-demographic feature as well as very high correlation with most of the variables: sun and the sea, natural beauties, sports and recreation, cultural heritage and events, vicinity of the destination and transport infrastructure. Education is highly significant variable in selecting cultural heritage and events as a motive to visit tourism destination, profession and age are highly correlated to natural beauties, while for entertainment only age is highly significant.

In general, the sun and the sea motive was the most important motive in choosing Istria County for responder from every country and every kind of profession, which implies that the concept of sustainability in tourism development is not met and that the trend of mass-tourism is still present.

<sup>18</sup> Sangikul.: A factor-cluster analysis of tourists motivations: A case of U.S. senior travellers, Tourism, Vol. 56, 2008, No. 1.



Table 5. Correlation of socio-demographic features with motives for choosing tourism destination

Variable	X <sup>2</sup>	df	CC	Sig.
Gender				
Natural beauties	4,491	1	0,065	0,034
Gastronomy	4,488	1	0,065	0,034
Cultural heritage and events	6,831	1	0,080	0,009
Education				
Gastronomy	13,519	5	0,114	0,019
Cultural heritage and events	40,852	5	0,195	0,000
Vicinity of the destination	19,955	5	0,138	0,001
Business obligations	12,347	5	0,109	0,030
Profession				
Sun and the sea	14,417	7	0,116	0,044
Entertainment	14,457	7	0,116	0,044
Natural beauties	26,400	7	0,156	0,000
Gastronomy	23,895	7	0,149	0,001
Business obligations	16,264	7	0,123	0,023
Income				
Gastronomy	19,424	7	0,149	0,007
Cultural heritage and events	17,160	7	0,141	0,016
Age				
Entertainment	20,386	4	0,147	0,000
Natural beauties	26,604	4	0,167	0,000
Sports and recreation	14,913	4	0,126	0,005
Cultural heritage and events	11,306	4	0,110	0,023
Country of arrival				
Sun and the sea	27,238	5	0,155	0,000
Natural beauties	115,670	5	0,308	0,000
Sports and recreation	61,854	5	0,230	0,000
Cultural heritage and events	89,544	5	0,274	0,000
Vicinity of the destination	58,191	5	0,224	0,000
Health reasons	13,545	5	0,110	0,019
Business obligations	16,466	5	0,121	0,006
Transport infrastructure	30,786	5	0,165	0,000

Source: Institute of Agriculture and Tourism, Department of Tourism, Questionnaire - Tourists behaviour and economic crisis, 2009, processed by author

Possibility of different kinds of entertainment was not very interesting to responders, especially those over 54 (94%), while responder up to 24 years of age (22%) showed a bit more interest. This is due to inadequate offer of different elements of entertainment.

Natural beauties were ranged second in the case of all nations except Austrians. Every second retired responder and tourist over 54 said that natural beauties

were the motive for visiting Istria County. Men (57%) were less interested in getting to know natural beauties in Istria County than women.

Although, in general, gastronomy was not very important motive in choosing Istria County, men (21%) were more motivated by gastronomy offer than women (15%), and the same applied to responders with PhD (25%) and personal net monthly income of over 6.000 € (34%). This motive was more frequent in the case of repeat visits.

Although outdoor activities proved to be very important pull factor by Ibrahim and Gill<sup>19</sup>, in this case sports and recreation was chosen as an important motive in selection of tourism destination only by German tourists (29%) and responders younger than 25 years of age (25%).

Cultural heritage and events was very important motive for UK citizens (46%) and those responders with finished university degree (33%). Managers (26%), responders in retirement (25%) and those older than 54 (31%) were more interested in getting to know cultural heritage and participate in cultural events. Cultural heritage and event, although proven as an important motivator by Ibrahim and Gill<sup>20</sup>, Chen and Gursoy<sup>21</sup> and Sangpikul,<sup>22</sup> but was not a very important motive in this case since it was chosen by only 23% of total responders.

Vicinity of the destination was important for Italians (40%) and responders who obtained college degree (31%), but was not very important motivator in choosing tourism destination which contrasts Chen and Gursoy<sup>23</sup> research. Health reasons, transport infrastructure and business obligation were generally not a motive for selecting Istria County.

## **CONCLUSION**

Perception of a tourism destination and push motivators play an important role in choosing a particular tourism destination. It does not matter what pull factors a particular tourism destination offers, but what pull factors are tourists familiar with. Istria County as a tourism destination is perceived as a destination offering the sun and the sea, i.e. a destination for passive vacation. Other pull factors that are considered interesting to tourists, especially first-time visitors are natural beauties. Although other motives are gaining their importance in choosing Istria County as destination for spending summer vacation, the concept the sun and the sea reminds dominate. These other motives like: cultural heritage and events, sports and recreation are more important to the responders that have already visited Istria County in the past. Economic crisis proved to be not a very important factor in choosing Istria County this

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<sup>19</sup> Ibrahim, E. E., Gill, J.: A positioning strategy for a tourism destination, based on analysis of consumers' perceptions and satisfactions, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 23, 2005, No. 2

<sup>20</sup> Ibrahim, E. E., Gill, J.: A positioning strategy for a tourism destination, based on analysis of consumers' perceptions and satisfactions, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 23, 2005, No. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Chen, J. S., Gursoy, D.: An investigation of tourists' destination loyalty and preferences, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 13, 2001, No. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Sangikul.: A factor-cluster analysis of tourists motivations: A case of U.S. senior travellers, *Tourism*, Vol. 56, 2008, No. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Chen, J. S., Gursoy, D.: An investigation of tourists' destination loyalty and preferences, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 13, 2001, No. 2.

summer, while other features like socio-demographic characteristics were more significantly.

It is important for tourism destinations to adjust to new trends in the environment like sustainability, but to accomplish that, every destination has to find and point out a set of desirable difference in comparison to other tourism destinations. Tourism destinations are trying to move from mass tourism by offering alternative forms of tourism more friendly to environment. The trend of massive tourism is still present in Istria County and motives for choosing it are reduced to sun and the sea concept. Other motives are gaining on importance, but are still in infancy.

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