TOURISM PRODUCT/ SERVICE ATTRIBUTE INFLUENCE ON OVERALL TOURIST SATISFACTION LEVEL IN RIGA

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Abstract. Tourist satisfaction is significant for successful destination marketing as it affects the choice of destination,

consumption of tourism products and services as well as the decision to return to the destination and intentions to

recommend the destination to other potential tourists. The mutual positive influence of customer satisfaction and loyalty

is indisputably proven by empirical research studies carried out in different economic fields and industries, including

tourism.

The aim of the research was to study the satisfaction level of foreign tourists as consumers with various tourism

product attributes in Riga and its influence on overall satisfaction and further consumer behaviour of tourists.

The method used in this research is the Penalty/Reward factor analysis method, which was developed by Brandt and

afterwards used by many researchers to investigate the influence of different service attributes on the overall satisfaction

level.

The research is based on data of a tourist survey carried out in Riga in the summer of 2018. The data acquired in the

survey allowed for conducting the Penalty/Reward analysis which represents an important instrument for establishing the

trip elements or factors the absence or poor performance of which (low quality) causes customer dissatisfaction (decrease

in the overall level of satisfaction) and the factors which cause increased customer satisfaction (rise in the overall level).

Main results and findings are intended for a destination marketing organisation of Riga. The recommendations made by

the authors will facilitate the improvement of the opportunities offered by Riga's tourism industry in accordance with the

foreign tourist requirements, thus raising the satisfaction level of foreign tourists.

Key words: tourist satisfaction, product/service attributes, penalty factors, reward factors

JEL code: M31, L83

Introduction

Tourist satisfaction is a significant factor for successful destination marketing as it affects the choice of destination,

consumption of tourism products and services as well as the decision to return to the visited destination. An efficient

tourism destination service improvement strategy can be achieved only on a base of an appropriate selection of service

attributes to be improved. The identification of the determinants of overall customer satisfaction is a key issue for

researchers and practitioners. This is an essential prerequisite for the management of service quality, since it is very

important for service providers to know which service elements add value and increase satisfaction, which of them only

meet minimum requirements and reduce frustration and which do both. Only then can service providers make better

decisions on how resources should be allocated to different service attributes to improve quality and satisfaction.

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The aim of the research was to study the satisfaction level of foreign tourists as consumers with various tourism product attributes in Riga and its influence on overall satisfaction and further consumer behaviour of tourists.

Theoretical discussion of the paper outlines importance of tourist satisfaction in destination marketing as well as tourist satisfaction research models applied in destination marketing.

The main research method applied in this paper is the Penalty/ Reward factor analysis method for which the initial concept was developed by Brandt (1987, 1988) and afterwards used by many researchers (Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002; Matzler, Pechlaner & Siller, 2001; Fuchs & Weiermair, 2004) and which, over time, was expanded with impact-asymmetry analysis (Mikulić & Prebežac 2008, 2011; Albayrak, Caber, 2013; Albayrak, 2018; Velikova, Slevitch, Mathe-Soulek, 2017 etc.) to investigate the influence of different service attributes on the overall satisfaction level.

Research on the satisfaction level of foreign tourists with various tourism product attributes has been conducted in Riga several times. The previous survey on tourist satisfaction with the tourism industry in Riga was conducted in the year 2014 and the afterwards one was organised in season of 2018.

The contribution of findings on the discipline of destination marketing are addressed for a destination marketing organisation that is responsible for tourism development in Riga – Live Riga. The recommendations made by the authors will facilitate the improvement of the Riga's tourism product in accordance with the foreign tourist requirements, thus raising the satisfaction level of foreign tourists.

Importance of tourist satisfaction in destination marketing

Historically, satisfaction with tourism products offered by destinations has been a part of studies by different scholars dating back to the late 19th century due to the economic and social importance and fast development of tourism industry (Loi, et.al., 2017). More specifically, in the last few decades, the issue of tourist satisfaction has been outlined in research papers of social psychology, marketing and customer behaviour (Cole, Scott 2004).

As a theoretical concept, satisfaction with travel destinations can be defined as the aggregate feelings that a tourist derives as a result of visiting a tourist attraction (Cole, Scott, 2004) or, more explicitly, as a manifestation of emotions in the form of a subjective assessment of the destination and its particular components (Vajčnerová, Žiaran, Ryglová & Andráško (2014). As a result of different research dimensions, a lot of definitions of the concept of satisfaction have been put forward based on evaluations made during purchase (Oliver & Swan, 1989), post-purchase (Fornell, 1992, Westbrook & Reilly, 1983, Churchill & Suprenant, 1982), during consumption (Oliver, 1992, 1997, Cadotte, Woodruff & Jenkins, 1987, Westbrook, 1987, Swan, Trawick & Carroll, 1982) or post-consumption (Tse & Wilton 1988, Swan, Trawick & Caroll, 1982) that express positive, neutral or negative attitude towards a particular product or service. Although there are a lot of particularities in perspective to the satisfaction concept, common agreement is that customer satisfaction shows the correspondence between the subjectively perceived and practically experienced satisfaction in correspondence with customer needs and desires.

Significant research has also been carried out to determine the influence of the level of customer satisfaction on future customer behaviour. Many scholars outline that the tourist satisfaction after the visit of destination is an important determinant of post-holiday behaviours, returned visits, loyalty and further recommendations (Arasli, Baradarani, 2014).

Customer satisfaction influence on loyalty comprises repeated purchases, additional purchases of the same supplier and recommendation of the product to other potential customers ("word of mouth" advertising). The mutual positive influence of customer satisfaction and loyalty is proven by empirical research studies which have been carried out in different economic fields and industries (Oliver, 1989, Woodruff, Cadotte & Jenkins, 1983 etc.) The specifics of customer

satisfaction influence on loyalty in the tourism industry can be seen in the research of Ottmar L. Braun (1993), Metin Kozak and Mike (2000). Tourists tend to return to places where the received services, or gathered impressions have given them a sense of satisfaction. Tourists repeatedly choose other products offered by the same tour operator if their previous tour was successful. Tourists, upon returning from a tour, often share their impressions with their relatives, friends and acquaintances – positive travel experience and satisfaction with services expressed very often serve as motivation to visit destinations about which one has heard positive travel reviews. Thereby, a satisfied tourism customer also becomes a loyal, free advertisement tool for travel destinations, as well as tourism service providers. Behavioural outcome gained from destination satisfaction can be in the form of multidimensional repeated destination visits (Arasli, Baradarani, 2014), recommendations made by tourists to other people, and general positive word of mouth communication.

Even though there are studies related to tourist satisfaction with destinations, scholars still indicate a huge gap in research between destination tourism product attributes and tourists' perceptions of experienced quality (Chen & Chen, 2010; Moon, Han, 2018).

Tourist satisfaction research models applied in destination marketing

Efficient tourism destination service improvement strategy can be achieved only on a base of an appropriate selection of service attributes to be improved. Research on the particular tourism product/service attributes and their influence on overall satisfaction can be carried out using Correlations, Performance/satisfaction relationship Kano model and Penalty/Reward factor analysis.

Kano model (1984) gained increasing popularity in studies of service quality and customer satisfaction especially in the tourism research area over the past three decades (Mikulic, Prebezac, 2016). Kano (1984) developed a twodimensional quality model to overcome disadvantages of other one-dimensional quality models for which the only measured indicator is customer satisfaction, showing a possibility that improvements in service quality may not always lead to higher customer satisfaction, thus showing a non-linear pattern in the relationship between a dimension's service quality and customer satisfaction (Go, Kim, 2018). Kano explained this non-linear pattern in the relationship between quality attributes in performance and overall customer satisfaction by categorising quality indicating attributes in five categories - basic, performance, excitement, indifference, and reverse (Pyo, 2012). The last two categories are not relevant to overall satisfaction analyses, therefore, in studying tourist satisfaction using the Kano model, frequent use is made of the three-factor module of consumer satisfaction, stating that consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction develops from the interaction of various factors - minimal product requirement provision, excitement factors as well as desirable service factors. The first group contains the basic factors forming the minimal product/service requirement provision the lack of which causes dissatisfaction, however meeting of which does not create a higher level of satisfaction. These minimal product/service requirements can be described as basic features which are essential for all customers (Basfirinci, Mitra, 2015). A negative assessment of these factors has a bigger influence on the overall level of satisfaction than a positive assessment. The second factor group - the so-called excitement factors - can increase the customer satisfaction level if they belong to the product attributes, however, they do not decrease the satisfaction if they do not belong to the product attributes. These excitement factors, when fulfilled, can lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction, and not cause dissatisfaction when not fulfilled as expected by customers, who could be unaware of such tourism product features (Basfirinci, Mitra, 2015). The excitement factors surprise the customer and create joy.

The third factor group – the product/ service performance or desirable service factors create satisfaction if they are performed at a high quality and create dissatisfaction if performed at a low quality. Product/ service performance factors



are designed to meet consumers' needs, and the service provider must offer them in a competitive way (Alegre, Garau, 2011). The mutual relation between the performance quality and satisfaction is linear and symmetrical.

From a tourism destination perspective, as influence factor examples that are affecting the tourist's perception about the destination, the following tourism services could be outlined - lodging, restaurants, shopping, tourist attractions, transportation facilities, local cuisine and environment (Pyo, 2012; Arasli, Baradarani, 2014). It is noticeable that scholars usually develop various specific measures that correspond to the given destination indicating rather heterogeneous approach (Vajčnerová, Žiaran, Ryglová, Andráško, 2014) in outcome implications for destination management.

Literature provides two methods that can be applied further in the empirical research – Consumer satisfaction model by T.G.Vavra (1997) and Penalty/ Reward factor analysis method by Brandt (1987; 1988).

T.G.Vavra (1997) created a model of the three-factor structure of satisfaction that is based on consumer/customer satisfaction hygiene or basic service and excitement factor identification, comparing the explicit assessment of the importance of various service or tourism site attributes with the implicit or derived assessment.

The second is the so-called Penalty/ Reward factor analysis method, which was developed by Brandt (1987; 1988). Penalty/ Reward factor analysis method is adaptive to typical customer satisfaction data and is a method widely favoured by researchers for identifying the asymmetric influences of product/service attributes on overall customer satisfaction (Albayrak, Caber, 2013, Albayrak, 2018). The Penalty/ Reward factor analysis method is one of the multi-factor analysis methods and is based on the concept that the structure of a product/service is formed by two kinds of product/service attributes or factors: routine factors and exception factors. The "penalty" factors of a product/service are the elements/attributes that are badly performed (low quality performance) which causes customer dissatisfaction. The "reward" factors are the product/service elements which cause customer satisfaction to increase; however, the satisfaction does not decline if these factors are absent.

The main goal of the method is the identification of the "penalty" and "reward" factors. To apply the method, it is necessary to find out the overall level of satisfaction as well as satisfaction with specific product/service elements. The method is implemented by carrying out the regression analysis and using the so-called dummy variables, which replace the actual satisfaction assessments. The ratios gained as a result of the regression may also comprise several statistically insignificant ratios - the corresponding product/service factors which are excluded from further analysis (Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002, Matzler, Pechlaner & Siller, 2001, Fuchs & Weiermair, 2004).

Many scholars attempt to identify the most important tourism product attributes as well as the influence of these product attributes' performance on tourist satisfaction (Mittal, Katrichis, Kumar, 2001)

The same as Penalty/ Reward factor analysis, the Performance–satisfaction relationships might be asymmetric and non-linear rather than symmetric and linear, an increasing number of studies (Mittal, Ross, & Baldasare, 1998; Matzler & Renzl, 2007) have shown that the influence of attributes on overall customer satisfaction is quite possibly asymmetric.

The interpretation of the results of the research

The research is based on the analysis of data acquired from a foreign tourist survey made by the author in cooperation with the destination marketing organisation Live Riga. The foreign tourist survey was carried out in Riga in the summer of 2018, by using questionnaires in English and Russian languages. The questionnaire was designed to find the aspects of the experience of foreign tourists in Riga. 996 valid questionnaires have been gathered. The target group of the survey included foreign tourists from the high priority and priority tourism target markets of Riga – Estonia, Lithuania, Germany, Russia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, France, Italy, Netherlands, Ukraine.

Table 1

Respondent's profile

	Number of respondents		Number of respondents	%	
All respondents	996	1	Gender		
Country		Male	513	51.5	
Estonia	39	Female	483	48.5	
Finland	68	Age			
Germany	174	16-25	197	19.8	
Lithuania	38	26-35	319	32	
Norway	48	36-45	159	16	
Russia	116	46-55	149	15	
Sweden	70	56-65	114	11.4	
France	76	66+	56	5.6	
Italy	61	Did not specify	2	0.2	
The Netherlands	62	Income level			
Ukraine	30	Below average	106	10.6	
Other countries	214	Average	489	49.1	
		Above average	309	31	
		High	40	4	
		Did not specify	52	5.2	

Source: author's calculations based on Riga tourist survey $\overline{2018}$

Firstly, respondents were asked to evaluate the fulfilment of their expectations regarding their visit to Riga. Slightly more than half (50.7%) of respondents admit that Riga's visit has been better than expected, 47.7% admit it as expected, but only 1.6% (16 respondents) are disappointed in in their visit to Riga, recognizing that that it was worse than expected. The total rating of satisfaction with overall experience in Riga by all respondents is 6.2 points on the scale from 1-very dissatisfied to 7-very satisfied.

Eight most important product/service attributes and activities of the visit to Riga were included in the questionnaires and the respondents could rate them on a 7-point Likert scale (Table 2).

Table 2 Satisfaction level with product/service attributes and activities done during the stay in Riga

	Average rating from 1 – 'very dissatisfied' to 7 – 'very satisfied'	Mode	Median
Day trip out of Riga	6.32	7	7
Visiting opera/ concert	6.20	7	7
City sightseeing	6.19	7	6
Restaurants, cafés (catering)	5.92	6	6
Guided tour	5.86	7	6
Night life and entertainment	5.85	7	6
Visiting museums	5.83	6	6
Shopping	5.70	6	6

Source: author's calculations based on Riga tourist survey 2018

To find out the willingness of Riga's visitors to recommend Riga as a travel destination for their relatives, friends and acquaintances, respondents were asked to rate it on a 10-point scale. Most respondents are ready to recommend Riga as



a travel destination to their friends and relatives, evaluating this intention with 8.7 points on the scale from '1 – not at all' to '10 – extremely likely' (median = 9, mode = 10).

An important indicator is the 'Net Promoter Score', which reflects the percentage of tourists who are willing to make a positive communication - to recommend the destination to their friends and relatives. The following formula is used to calculate this indicator:

NPS (Net Promoter Score) =
$$\%$$
 of Promoters – $\%$ of Detractors, (1)

where 'Promoters' - tourists who rated the intentions to recommend the destination with 9 or 10, 'Detractors' - with 1 to 6 on the scale 1 - 'definitely no' to 10 - 'very likely'. Respondents who rated their intentions to recommend the destination with 7 or 8 are called 'Passives'.

Using the formula (1) mentioned above, the Net Promoter Score for all respondents is 54.5% (62.1% 'Promoters' - 7.6% 'Detractors'). In the previously carried out similar survey on tourist satisfaction with the tourism industry in Riga that was conducted in the year 2014 NPS was only 40% (Riga Tourist Survey, 2014).

To find out the satisfaction assessment of which activity has the strongest impact on total satisfaction with the visit to Riga and the intentions to recommend Riga as a travel destination, a correlation analysis was performed first. The results show that the most powerful impact on the overall level of satisfaction and intentions to recommend Riga as a destination is satisfaction with city sightseeing, as well as the offer of restaurants, cafes and other catering establishments.

Table 3

Correlation between the evaluation of activities done during the stay in Riga, total satisfaction and intentions of respondents to recommend Riga as place to visit

	Total satisfaction	Intentions to recommend		
City sightseeing	.552**	.511**		
Guided tour	.428**	.287**		
Visiting museums	.459**	.391**		
Visiting opera/ concert	.449**	0.086		
Shopping	.329**	.266**		
Night life and entertainment	.496**	.378**		
Restaurants, cafés (catering)	.483**	.419**		
Day trip out of Riga	.440**	.289**		
	** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)			

Source: author's calculations based on Riga tourist survey 2018

The data acquired in the survey allowed for conducting the Penalty/ Reward analysis which represents an important instrument for establishing the trip elements or factors the absence or poor performance of which (low quality) causes customer dissatisfaction (decreases the overall level of satisfaction) and the factors which cause increased customer satisfaction (raise the overall satisfaction level). In order to conduct the analysis, attribute satisfaction ratings were recoded: one set of dummy variables is created and used to quantify excitement factors and another set is created to quantify basic factors. Ratings 1 – 3 on a 7-point Likert scale are defined as the 'low performance' and were used to form the dummy variables expressing basic factors; 6 and 7 are defined as the 'high performance' levels and were used to form dummy variables expressing excitement factors, regression analysis was performed.

If the value of the reward-index of an attribute is larger than its value of penalty-index, then this attribute is an excitement factor. On the other hand, if the value of reward-index of an attribute is smaller than its value of penalty-index, this attribute is a basic factor. If the value of reward-index of an attribute is approximately equal to its value of penalty-index, then this attribute is a performance factor. The results of the analysis shown in Figure 1 reveal that none of the

attributes of visiting Riga are applicable to the excitement factors, two attributes ('Guided tour' and 'Shopping') are performance factors and three attributes ('City sightseeing', 'Night life/ entertainment', 'Restaurants/ cafes') are basic factors. Three attributes shows atypical results because both indexes are either positive ('Visiting museums', 'Visiting opera/ concert') or negative ('Day trip out of Riga').

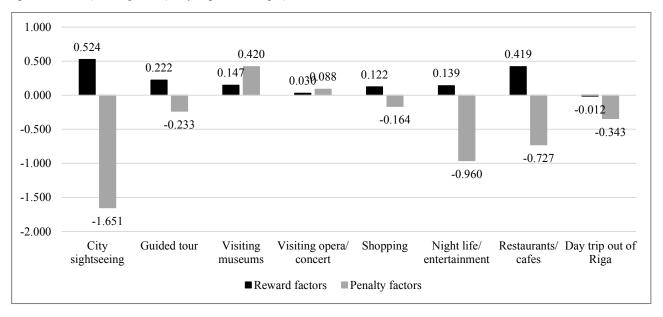


Fig. 1. Penalty/ Reward contrast analysis of tourism service attributes in Riga

Source: author's calculations based on Riga tourist survey 2018

Mikulić and Prebežac (2008) extended the Penalty/ Reward contrast analysis by calculating the scores in terms of an impact-asymmetry (IA). The IA index of an attribute is equal to satisfaction-generating potential (SGP) minus dissatisfaction-generating potential (DGP). The SGP is the ratio of reward-index over the range of impact on overall satisfaction (RIOS) and the DGP is the ratio of penalty-index over RIOS. The RIOS is the absolute sum of reward-index and penalty-index. Mikulić and Prebežac (2011) used IA-levels to classify different factor-categories as follows: frustrators (IA \leq -0.6), dissatisfiers (-0.6 \leq IA \leq -0.2), hybrids (-0.2 \leq IA \leq 0.2), satisfiers (0.2 \leq IA \leq 0.6), and delighters (IA \geq 0.6). This method provides richer levels of factor-categories compared with penalty-reward contrast analysis does, however, it involves a more complicated calculation. Table 4 shows the calculations of the impact-asymmetry analysis of tourism service attributes in Riga.

Values close to '0' ('Guided tour' -0.025; 'Shopping' -0.147) indicates that such attributes are a 'hybrid' – that is, the attribute has equal satisfaction- and dissatisfaction-generating potentials.

Values closer to '-1' ('Night life/entertainment' -0.747; 'City sightseeing' -0.518; 'Restaurants/ cafes (catering)' -0.269) indicates that these attributes are 'perfect dissatisfiers' or even 'frustrators' – that is, the attribute has only dissatisfaction-generating potential.



Impact asymmetry analysis of tourism service attributes in Riga

Attribute	Reward Indexes	Penalty Indexes	RIOS	SGP	DGP	IA		Factor
City sightseeing	0.524	-1.651	2.175	0.241	0.759	-0.518	-0.6 <ia<-0.2< td=""><td>Dissatisfier</td></ia<-0.2<>	Dissatisfier
Guided tour	0.222	-0.233	0.455	0.488	0.512	-0.025	-0.2 <ia<0.2< td=""><td>Hybrid</td></ia<0.2<>	Hybrid
Visiting museums	0.147	0.420	0.567	0.259	0.740	-0.481	-0.6 <ia<-0.2< td=""><td>Dissatisfier*</td></ia<-0.2<>	Dissatisfier*
Visiting opera/ concert	0.030	0.088	0.118	0.256	0.749	-0.493	-0.6 <ia<-0.2< td=""><td>Dissatisfier*</td></ia<-0.2<>	Dissatisfier*
Shopping	0.122	-0.164	0.286	0.427	0.575	-0.147	-0.2 <ia<0.2< td=""><td>Hybrid</td></ia<0.2<>	Hybrid
Night life and entertainment	0.139	-0.960	1.099	0.127	0.873	-0.747	IA<-0.6	Frustrator
Restaurants, cafés (catering)	0.419	-0.727	1.146	0.366	0.634	-0.269	-0.6 <ia<-0.2< td=""><td>Dissatisfier</td></ia<-0.2<>	Dissatisfier
Day trip out of Riga	-0.012	-0.343	0.355	0.034	0.965	-0.931	IA<-0.6	Frustrator**

^{*} This result is atypical because both indexes are positive

Data source: Riga tourist survey 2018

These attributes require particular attention when setting improvement priorities because their impact on overall satisfaction level varies significantly with different levels of attribute-performance.

Conclusions, proposals, recommendations

Although there are many studies in the scientific literature that identify the features of services that affect the overall level of satisfaction, it was important to find out which features of services affect the average satisfaction of Riga visitors. It is known that positive travel experience and high overall satisfaction level affect the traveller's readiness to make a positive word-of-mouth communication about the destination they have visited with their relatives, friends and acquaintances.

The total rating of satisfaction with overall experience in Riga by all respondents visited Riga is high, slightly more than half of respondents admit that Riga's visit has been better than expected.

The results show that the most powerful impact on the overall level of satisfaction and intentions to recommend Riga as a destination is satisfaction with attribute 'city sightseeing', as well as the offer of 'restaurants, cafes and other catering establishments'.

An in-depth analysis of the research results showed that those travel items that require special attention from the destination marketing organization are a 'city sightseeing', 'restaurant and cafe offer', 'nightlife and entertainment', because these attributes are 'perfect dissatisfiers' or even 'frustrators' – that is, these features have a high dissatisfaction-generating potential.

Recommendations to destination marketing organisation of Riga:

- In addition to traditional city sightseeing routes, prepare and offer thematic and specialized routes for different age and interest groups, creating traditional printed route pages as well as downloadable information materials and aps on smart devices;
- 2. Ensure tighter regulation and control of fair practices for nightclubs and gambling establishments;
- 3. Implement measures that would enhance the attractiveness and quality of the catering offer, for example, to promote a more active application of the quality label Q-Latvia, actively promote the top-chefs led restaurants;

^{**} This result is atypical because both indexes are negative

4. Provide the regulation of city guide activities and quality assurance of their offer by licensing and strict control of guides.

The future studies should also include other product/ service attributes of the city visit presented by respondents on open questions about the negative aspects of the experience of visiting Riga: 'public transport', 'tourism information'.

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