

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES VIEWED FROM THE ASPECT OF A TOURIST PRODUCT IN SERBIA - A CASE STUDY

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Abstract: *Tourism in Serbia is becoming an increasingly important economic sector with the potential of further development. This paper identifies the potential of the international conferences market in order to promote tourism. This paper presents a survey of the attitudes and impressions of the visitors of a major scientific conference meeting held in Belgrade this year, which was conducted by analyzing a sample of 175 respondents from different countries. The basic assumptions deal with: the difference in the tourist motives for visiting a certain destination, where on one hand we have the motives of the population of scientists and on the other, the motives of the average population of tourists; the analysis of the destination and the analysis of the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of conference attenders with particular elements of touristic offer. The obtained results were found useful as a better evaluation of the conference and to emphasize it out as a viable touristic product.*

Keywords: conference, importance of touristic offer, tourist satisfaction, tourist dissatisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

According to UNWTO, [1], the global spread of tourism in industrialized and developed states has produced economic and employment benefits in many related sectors - from construction to agriculture or telecommunications. According to UNWTO data, international tourist arrivals grew by 7 % in 2017 to 1,323 million and in 2017, international tourism generated US\$ 1.6 trillion in export earnings. UNWTO forecasts a growth in international tourist arrivals of between 4% and 5% in 2018.

According to the Strategy of tourism development of the republic of Serbia for the period 2016 – 2025, [2] the goal of this strategy is to approach tourism systemically, not only through economic indicators (as a possible sustainable source of creating new added value and employment in the Republic of Serbia), but also through the multiplicative effects that tourism has on overall social development, local and regional development, on the development of culture and education, etc. The strategy states that a system of management of tourist destinations and areas has not achieved an effective functional link between the economy, tourism organizations, associations and business associations, educational and research institutions to form a secure, long-term and sustainable development of tourist areas.

One of the definitions of the tourist destination is given in [3]. According to the same, “a destination is a town, city or a place which has one or more attractions for tourists. These attractions may be in the form of scenic sights, culture, leisure activities, shopping rebates, food, and excursion”. The main benefits of hosting events are related to attracting tourists whether them being a first-time visitors or repeaters, and spreading good experiences across the different locations worldwide, and to overall make positive effects of certain events on a destination.

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“With growing technologies and advertising scenario, events also include media coverage. This is how the event and destination are two different entities but yet serving each other in a manner. Destination gets a wide media coverage as well as advertising. The participants of the events and the attendees of events visit the destination to take part in the event which, on the other hand, bring lots of foreign currency to the particular destination”[3].

According to [4], “In the current ‘experience economy’ era, business providers stage experiences to create memorable events for customers”. In [5], it is shown that the desire to build unforgettable memories from experiences lived during trips follows the current trend for unique consumer experiences of goods and products.

According to [6] “usually, the expressive performance dimension of most tourism products is much more important than the instrumental one... a significant difference exists between tourism products and other consumer products - while most products are homogeneous and uniform, the tourism product is an intangible composite of many interrelated components.”

This paper is a summary of a research carried out at the conference in Belgrade, which was attended by more than 560 experts from 24 countries around the world. Data for the research were obtained through a specially constructed questionnaire, which was completed by participants at the end of their stay in Serbia, and interpreted using statistical methods and through the communication with conference participants.

The purpose of the paper is to point out the fact that the organization of major international scientific conferences significantly exceeds the scientific and educational contribution and has a significant potential to correct the image of a country, both economically and politically. It is therefore necessary to provide support for such meetings, as well as to connect the scientific and tourism sector.

2. METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVE

The observed event presented in this paper is a scientific conference held in late August 2018 in Belgrade and authors of this paper participated in its organization. It was the first time that Belgrade was chosen to be the host of a conference at that level. The conference was promoted through professional and scientific organizations, via an Internet site and personally, by the participation of organizers at other conferences and scientific meetings.

In order to improve the quality of the conference, the organizers wanted to present Serbia in the best possible way (One of the reasons for this being the several-week propaganda stating how Serbia is an unsafe country and its stereotyped image as the place where the main attraction is „night life” on Belgrade rafts).

During the preparation of the conference we contacted the Tourist Organization of Serbia and got informed about the availability of certain tourist destinations. After that, tourist programs for accompanying persons and participants of the conference were offered: sightseeing of Belgrade’s sights and 4 one-day tours that included the cultural and historical sights of Serbia: medieval monastery Manasija, archaeological sites Lepenski vir, Vinča, Viminacijum, and a wine tour on the mountain Fruška gora.

The conference itself had lasted for 5 business days, educational activities related to the conference for another 2 days, and after the conference had finished a post-conference tourism program was organized for one day. Participants of the Conference and other guests have spent between 2 and 10 days in Serbia, and the average number of nights was 5.

During the conference, pre-prepared presentations with photographs of the most attractive parts of Serbia, mountains, rivers, cities, spas, lakes, archaeological sites, monasteries, potentials for winter and summer sports, folk customs, and music were presented. The knowledge of most respondents, who did not participate in organized excursions, about natural attractiveness of Serbia, was encouraged to research (Internet) or based on these presentations.

After the conference was over, we invited participants to fill in the questionnaires, designed specifically for this purpose, and to express their impressions not only about the conference, but also about the city, tourist attractions, hospitality, natural attractions, food and what they have found were the main shortcomings.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part were questions where respondents evaluated the importance of certain elements of the tourist offer for them. The second part examined the satisfaction of respondents with the Conference and the offered tourist plan, while the third part of the questionnaire contained questions regarding the elements of the tourist offer that the respondents were not satisfied with. The questions were of a closed type, and the degree of importance of particular elements, satisfaction and dissatisfaction were offered and interpreted based on the Likert scale of 5 levels.

The questionnaires were distributed in person, at the end of the conference, as well as in an on-line form, immediately after the Conference. The survey was filled out by 175 respondents. Approximately half of the respondents answered „on-line”, and the other half filled classic questionnaire in paper form.

The data were processed by the use of the IBM SPSS 25 statistical package, and the obtained results were presented directly from the package or with the assistance of the MS EXCEL 13 program. This paper presents the results of the measurements of tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction as well as their preferences about tourist destination.

The aim of the research is to point out the conferences organization importance in touristic offer and the significance of scientific conferences in order to promote Serbia, its history, culture, natural beauty and other elements that promote tourism, especially because participants in such meetings are mostly people who have influence in the environments in which they work and therefore their opinion can be more influential.

The study proceeded from the following assumptions:

- Professional conference has the potential for tourism development.
- Motivations for travel of participants of the conference are different from ordinary tourist motives sample.
- Belgrade is a good destination for planning and organizing a scientific conference.

We proposed elements of touristic offers in Belgrade and Serbia: hospitality, cost/benefit ratio, gastronomical offer, accommodation facilities, cultural heritage, natural attractions. After collecting data, we analyzed the level of satisfaction with them.

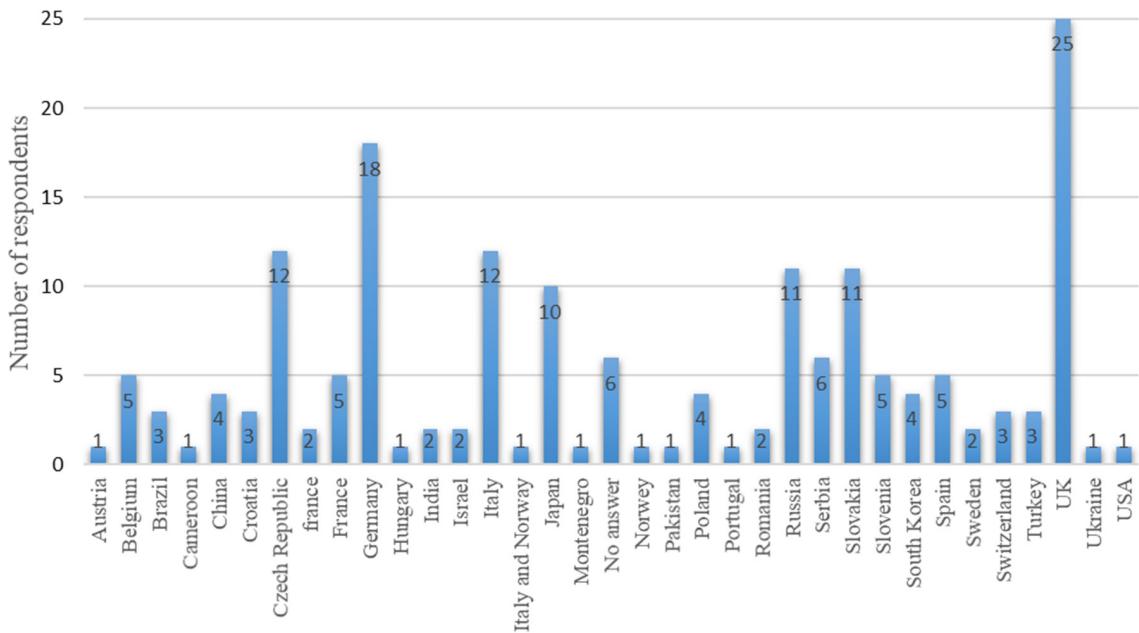


Figure 1: Country origin

Distribution of respondents by countries of origin is shown in Figure 1. Most respondents came from the following countries; United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Russia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Japan.

Characteristic	Description	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	46	26,3
	Male	129	73,7
Age	18-29	53	30,3
	30-39	49	28,0
	40-49	40	22,9
	50-64	22	12,6
	65 and more	11	6,3
Education	High	13	7,0
	University	162	93,0

Table 1: Gender, Age, Education

Sample comprises 175 respondents whose gender, age, education, professional and sex structure, status in relation to the job, income and information about their previously visits Serbia, are shown in the table 1 and table 2. The sample consists of mainly young professionals, about 60% are younger than 40 years. Since the event represents a scientific conference, the vast majority of them have university education. In fact, it can be said that the largest number of respondents (about 70% of respondents, who are employed, table 2) have the highest level of education, i.e. level of Doctor of Science. Respondents with lower levels of education were mainly represented by persons accompanying participants of the conference.

Most of the respondents were employed at faculties as professors, about 70%, and about 18% were PhD students, related to mechanical engineering. Some of the professors at the conference were the world's leading experts in the scientific field that the conference dealt with.

Respondents estimate their social status as average or above average in over 65% of cases. We assume that under average earnings were mostly students. It should be noted that a significant portion of respondents, 23% did not want to answer questions about their earnings. We can only assume this behavior is due to cultural differences.

It is important to note that the majority of respondents, about 65%, had never been to Serbia before the conference. This is extremely important to point out being that this event enabled the presentation and promotion of the country to the most educated people who come from previously mentioned countries and that had to that point either known very little about Serbia, or they may have had negative prejudices. Consequently, the effects of such an event are multi-layered and they overlap only the scientific or touristic aspect.

Characteristic	Description	Frequency	Percent
Status in relation to the job	Other	7	4,0
	Housewife	2	1,1
	Unemployed	6	3,4
	Pensioner	7	4,0
	Student	31	17,7
	Earning an Income	122	69,7
Income	Below average	21	12,0
	Average	72	41,1
	Above average	42	24,0
	I do not know / I do not want to answer	40	22,9
Previously visited destinations in Serbia	No	114	65,1
	Yes	61	34,9

Table 2: Characteristics of respondents

In the social program, that is, organized excursions, 55 respondents participated, representing 31.4% of the sample, which is presented in table 3.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Only conference in Belgrade	120	68,6	68,6	68,6
	Social program tours	55	31,4	31,4	100,0
	Total	175	100,0	100,0	

Table 3: Respondents were only in Belgrade or visited some other destinations in Serbia

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Importance of different elements of the touristic offer

The first part of the survey was about the importance of different elements of the touristic offer for our respondents: cultural / historical heritage, price / quality ratio, hospitality, natural attraction, the gastronomical offer, entertainment, accommodation, shopping, business / conference, medical tourism, sport / leisure or something else. To measure the level of importance, the following scale was applied: 1-Irrelevant, 2-A little bit important, 3- Neither important nor irrelevant, 4-Important and 5-Very important.

Level of importance	Cultural/historical heritage	Price/quality ratio	Hospitality	Natural attraction	The gastronomical offer	Entertainment	Accommodation	Shopping	Business/Conference	Medical tourism	Sport/leisure	Other
1	6,9	4,6	5,1	5,1	4,0	8,6	6,3	15,4	2,3	32,6	22,9	17,1
2	6,3	8,6	,6	5,7	5,1	5,7	5,1	11,4	,6	11,4	11,4	4,0
3	17,7	24,0	12,6	22,3	26,3	31,4	24,6	26,9	10,3	20,0	26,3	23,4
4	23,4	28,0	27,4	25,7	24,6	16,0	26,3	17,1	16,0	9,1	11,4	6,3
5	38,3	28,6	45,7	34,9	31,4	29,7	31,4	21,1	64,0	13,1	16,6	18,9

Table 4: Level of importance of different elements of touristic offer (% of respondents)

Percentage of respondents who give a certain degree of importance to certain elements of the tourist offer are given in figure 2 and table 4. It can be seen that the surveyed group of respondents identified the business event as the most important reason for traveling, followed by hospitality and cultural / historical heritage.

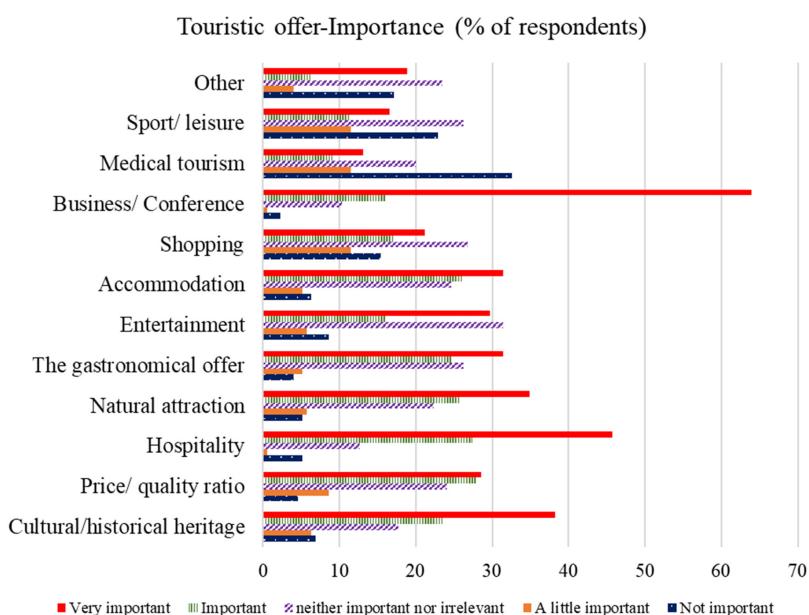


Figure 2: Tourist offer given by importance (% of respondents)

It should be noted that this is a specific group of people, whose lives are science and research oriented and therefore, whose decisions regarding business trips are made the easiest.

We tested whether the importance of certain elements of the tourist offer depends on the age of the respondents, using a statistical test for the comparison of the mean values of certain groups, named One -Way ANOVA (Analysis of variance). After checking the conditions of the test application (Levenov test of homogeneity of variance), the ANOVA analysis was performed.

We obtained a statistically significant difference in the importance of the quality of accommodation and shopping opportunities, which is presented in table 5. This difference is graphically presented in figure 3. For the other listed elements of the tourist offer, we did not get a statistically significant difference in relation to the age of the respondents.

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Accommodation	Between Groups	18,060	4	4,515	3,491	0,009
	Within Groups	205,665	159	1,293		
	Total	223,726	163			
Shopping	Between Groups	22,512	4	5,628	3,159	0,016
	Within Groups	277,898	156	1,781		
	Total	300,410	160			

Table 5: ANOVA for testing influence of age on importance of accommodation and shopping possibility

It can be seen that the demand for a better accommodation depends on years and better accommodation requires respondents older than 40 years. As far as shopping is concerned, the values are somewhat lower, but the importance of shopping opportunities is more pronounced among tourists older than 65 years, which may be a surprising result. One explanation may be that people turn to science and research during the working life, and only later on turn to ordinary living topics.

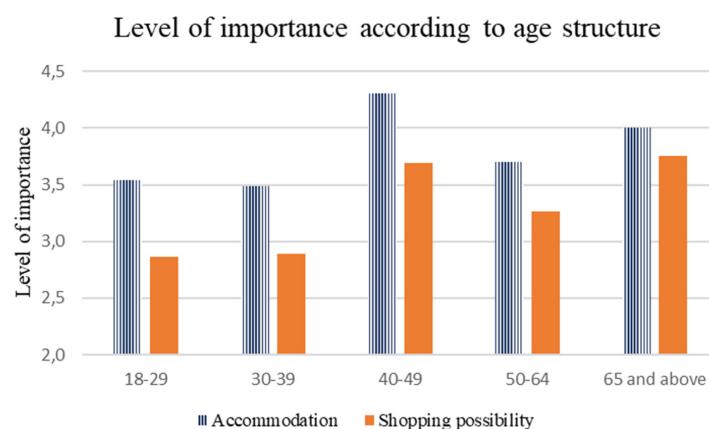


Figure 3: Tourist level of importance according to age (on Likert scale 1-5)

The results were compared with the results of the research of the Touristic Organization of Serbia (TOS), [7] from 2016. Sample of TOS comprised 2050 foreign tourists from the countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia, Slovenia, Croatia, Germany, Montenegro, Italy, Macedonia, Greece, France, Netherlands, Switzerland, Romania, Poland. TOS sample represents the common tourist sample.

The sample of respondents from the conference was broader in the range of countries from which they came. Sample characteristics of TOS research, and presented research, in percent, are given in the table 6.

Characteristic	Description	TOS (%)	Conference (%)
Gender	Female	39,5	26,3
	Male	60,5	73,7
Age	18-29	38,8	30,3
	30-39	24,9	28,0
	40-49	18,5	22,9
	50-64	13,8	12,6
	65 and more	4	6,3
Education	High	33,6	7,0
	University	66,4	93,0*

Table 6: Characteristics of Conference and TOS sample

There are more men in the sample of the conference, while sample distribution is similar for years. As far as education is concerned, there is a significant difference in the sample that at first glance may not have been noticed. The TOS sample under University means bachelor degree and master of science degree, and at the conference they were mostly PhDs and PhD students. At the conference, the field of interest is significantly narrower and more homogeneous.

Based on the TOS research, it can be seen that part of the visit to conferences, in the overall sample of the tourist visit, is extremely small (figure 7). On the basis of this fact, it can be said that the first assumption, “Scientific conference is a potential for tourism development”, was confirmed.

In the TOS survey, tourists listed the following factors that influence the degree of motivation to visit a certain destination: cultural and historical heritage, good price and quality ratio, hospitality, gastronomic offer and entertainment (based on data from the total visit of foreign tourists to Serbia with a range of occupations and education significantly larger than the sample from the Conference).

The attitude of some foreign tourists is that “Serbia does not have a clearly structured, recognizable tourism product, but offers opportunities for research and experience, and Belgrade has a soul and a living culture,” [8].

The sample of respondents from the conference is more homogenous by the education trait and they designated the conference as the main motive for travel, followed by hospitality, cultural and historical heritage and natural attraction. In this group of participants, entertainment does not fall into important reasons for traveling. Therefore, the second assumption is confirmed, “*Motivations for travel of participants of the conference are different from ordinary tourist motives sample*”.



Figure 7: Motivation for visiting the destination according TOS, 2016.

3.2. Overall satisfaction of the conference participants

By reviewing various literature, more criteria are found that can determine the degree of attractiveness of the destination for a conference. According to [9], the most important criteria involve safe destinations, free of high terrorism, theft and injuries, destinations with infrastructure, able to meet the needs of both the conference organizers (convention center), and the needs of participants in terms of accommodation and facilities.

Some of the other criteria include historical and cultural heritage of a destination which should be able to increase the interest of participants and in doing so extend the levels of participation, appropriate weather conditions that allow conferences to run smoothly, adequate availability of travel services and a variety of transportation modes so that they can be easily approached, calm environment that ensures the smooth running of conferences, without interference or disturbance from the local community. Terzi states that “a communication strategy based on the pillars of the factor “Conference Location” is able to increase the levels of participants satisfaction and by extension the levels of participation”.

According to [10], a tourist attraction system is defined as an empirical connection of tourist, nucleus, and marker. Tourist attraction systems have elementary parts which extend beyond the phenomena that are popularly thought of as “tourist attractions.”

With that reasoning, the measurement of tourist satisfaction is not easily established because of the many influential factors, that are often mutually dependent.

In [11] it is shown that a significantly positive relationships between culinary attraction and cultural inheritance and nostalgia exists, as well as a correlation between nostalgia and memorable tourism experiences. Author had suggested enhancing memorable experiences and guidance regarding reused buildings at heritage sites.

In this survey, tourist satisfaction was measured by the satisfaction of the elements of the tourist offer, such as hospitality, natural attractions, the gastronomical offer, the possibility of entertainment. Furthermore, an analysis of the satisfaction with the conference was also added.

	Hospitality	Natural attraction	The gastronomical offer	Entertainment	Business event/ Conference
Dissatisfied	0	0,6	1,7	0	,6
Little satisfied	1,1	2,3	4,0	2,9	3,4
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7,4	21,1	17,7	23,4	14,3
Mostly satisfied	26,9	33,1	34,3	29,7	29,1
Totally satisfied	62,3	38,3	40,0	36,6	52,0

Table 6: Distribution of levels of satisfaction for elements of touristic offer (%)

Distributions of levels of satisfaction with hospitality, natural attractions, entertainment and the conference are presented in table 6. Most of the respondents were mostly and totally satisfied with hospitality during the conference - 91,2%. According to satisfaction with natural attraction, the highest number of respondents answered "Totally satisfied" and "Mostly satisfied". It should be noted here, that the most of the respondents, over 68% only remained in Belgrade during the entire conference. Because of that 4,6% of respondents did not comment on this issue.

Distribution of satisfaction with gastronomical offer shows that most of the respondents were "totally satisfied" and "mostly satisfied", 71,4%.

Entertainment during the conference was organized through a cultural program which included folklore, music and officinal dinner. In relation, more than 66% were "totally satisfied" and "mostly satisfied", but a significant percent of them (more than 30%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Most of the respondents were "totally satisfied" and "mostly satisfied" with the conference.

Level of satisfaction with hospitality, natural attraction, the gastronomical offer, entertainment and business event e.g. conference is summarized in figure 4. Figure 4 shows the number of respondents who expressed a certain degree of satisfaction for the observed elements of the tourist offer, in percentages.

Mean values of satisfaction with hospitality, natural attraction, the gastronomical offer, entertainment and business event e.g. conference are given in figure 5. It can be seen that the highest average rating is expressed for hospitality, then for the event itself (i.e. the Conference) and cultural and historical heritage. All mean values of the expressed satisfaction are moving between mostly satisfied and totally satisfied.

Level of satisfaction

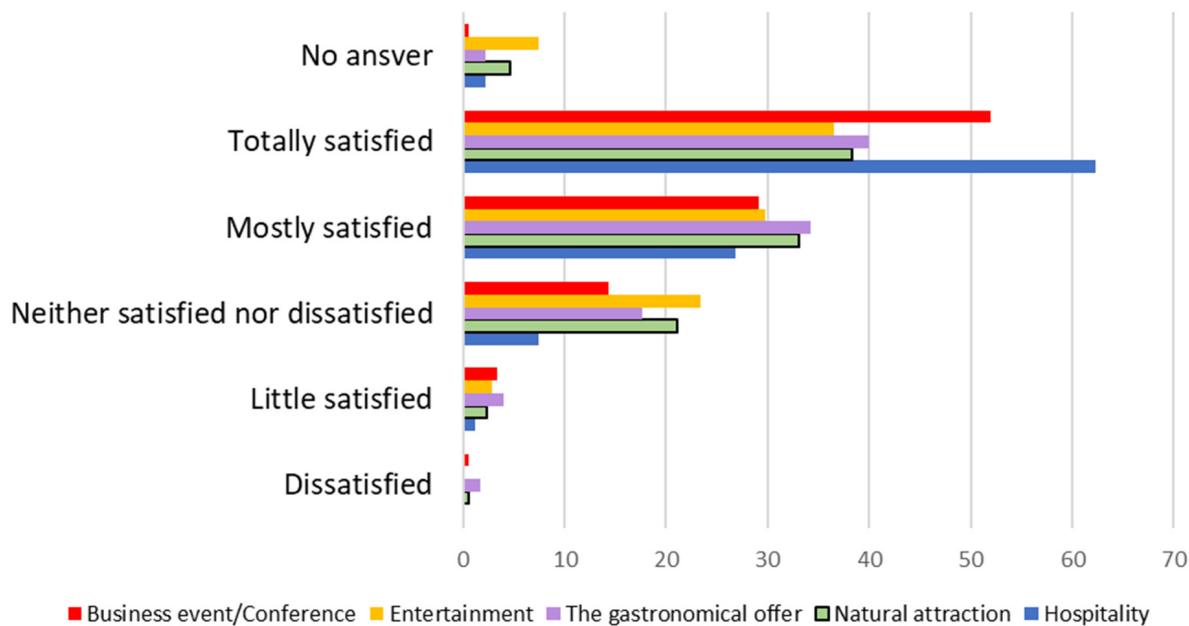


Figure 4: Level of satisfaction (%)

This is largely in line with the results of the Touristic Organization of Serbia (TOS) survey, [7] from 2016, where tourists showed the highest degree of satisfaction with cultural and historical heritage, hospitality and gastronomic offer.

Mean value of satisfaction with individual factors

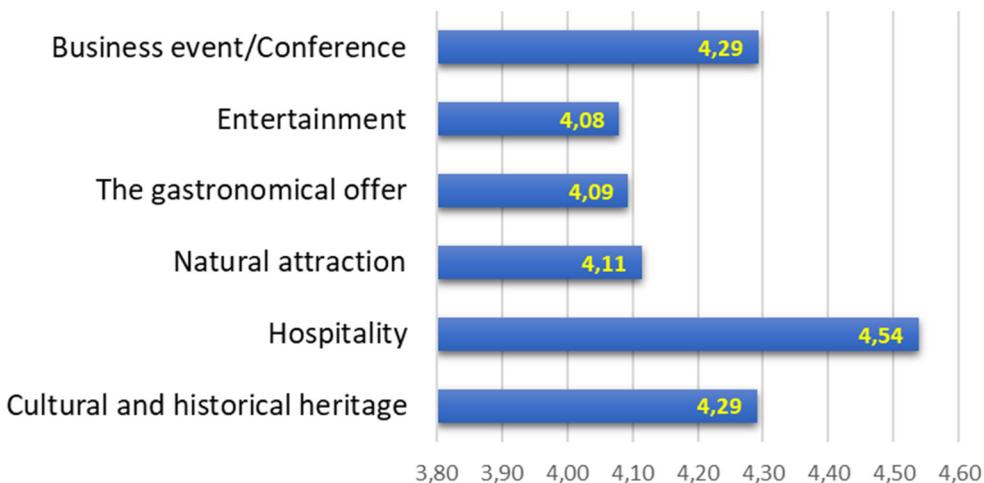


Figure 5: Mean values of satisfaction with individual factors (on Likert's scale 1-5)

In order to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the level of satisfaction for the observed elements of the tourist offer among the respondents who participated only at the conference and had the opportunity to stay only in Belgrade, and those who

took part in organized excursions, we applied statistically Independent Samples Test. Level of satisfaction grouped according to the data whether the respondents stayed only in Belgrade or visited other people is presented in the table 7.

Group Statistics					
Visits BG only or other destinations in Serbia		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Business event/ Conference	Only conference in Belgrade	120	4,20	,904	,083
	Social program tours	54	4,50	,795	,108

Table 7: Level of satisfaction related to visits only Belgrade or not

It is obvious that respondent who participated in excursions expressed a greater level of satisfaction with the conference. Their average level of satisfaction with the conference was 4.5, unlike the group that did not take part in these programs, and who assessed the level of satisfaction with the conference with 4.2.

In order to show whether this difference was statistically significant or not, an Independent Samples Test was applied. Results of the test application are given in the table 8. We have found that there is a statistically significant difference in the satisfaction with the conference in the observed groups.

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% Confidence
Conference	EVA	,675	,412	-2,100	172	,037	-,300	,143	-,582
	NEVA			-2,205	115,211	,029	-,300	,136	-,569

EVA-Equal variances not assumed, NEVA-Equal variances not assumed

Table 8: Independent Samples Test

This difference is reflected in the fact that respondents who participated in excursions and social programs express a higher level of satisfaction with the scientific conference itself as a whole. In [12] it had suggested a three-dimensional solution that people enact preferred tourist roles in destinations which provide an optimal balance of familiarity-strangeness, stimulation-tranquility, and structure-independence.

Serbia, and Belgrade meet all of the three dimensions to a considerable extent. Belgrade is preceived as different, broad and hospitable in a way that is relatable to different cultures from which the participants of the conference came.

We particularly emphasize the fact that over 65% of respondents had never been to Serbia before, and one of the main questions is whether they would ever come back again. A survey of the tourist organization of Serbia from 2016, [7] shows that 50.7% of those who visit Serbia

once, want to do it again. As an illustration we refer to the post-conference statement of a young student, a doctoral student from Belgium:

“I do not know whether it was a side-objective of the conference or not, but I must say that it opened my mind to your actually very beautiful country. Before coming, I simply had no idea of what to expect, since I have never gone so far in Eastern Europe before, and I must say I discovered Serbia with great pleasure. I only had the time to discover Belgrade, but saw many pictures of the apparently very beautiful countryside and I am planning to come again to discover it as a tourist”.

The obtained results related to satisfaction with the conference confirm the third, “Belgrade is a good destination for planning and organizing a scientific conference”.

3.3. Overall dissatisfaction of the conference participants

We wanted to explore the facts that the respondents were not satisfied with. Level of dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of the town, quality of accommodation, possibility and quality of shopping, public transport, the gastronomic offer, hospitality, tourist signalization, quality of roads, cultural and historical heritage, taxi service price and price/ quality ratio (in percent) are presented in table 9 and figure 6.

	Cleanliness of town	Quality of accommodation	Shopping	Public transport	Tourist signalization	Quality of roads	Taxi service price	Price/ Quality ratio
No dissatisfaction	21,1	45,7	28,6	23,4	28,6	23,4	37,1	43,4
Minimal level of dissatisfaction	28,6	22,9	23,4	26,9	36,6	32,0	15,4	28,0
Medium level of dissatisfaction	28,6	16,0	26,3	24,0	18,3	26,3	22,3	16,0
Significant level of dissatisfaction	13,7	7,4	9,7	7,4	9,7	10,9	9,7	6,9
Max level of dissatisfaction	6,3	6,3	1,7	5,1	2,9	4,6	6,9	4,0
Missing	1,7	1,7	10,3	13,1	4,0	2,9	8,6	1,7
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 9: Level of dissatisfaction (%)

Respondents expressed the greatest dissatisfaction with the city's cleanliness, taxi service price, quality of roads and tourist signalization, figure 6.

Some of these categories could be improved in short time, but others need big investments and time. The city's cleanliness and the introduction of certain prices of taxi services would already have a positive effect, and can be solved in a short period of time without requiring large investments.

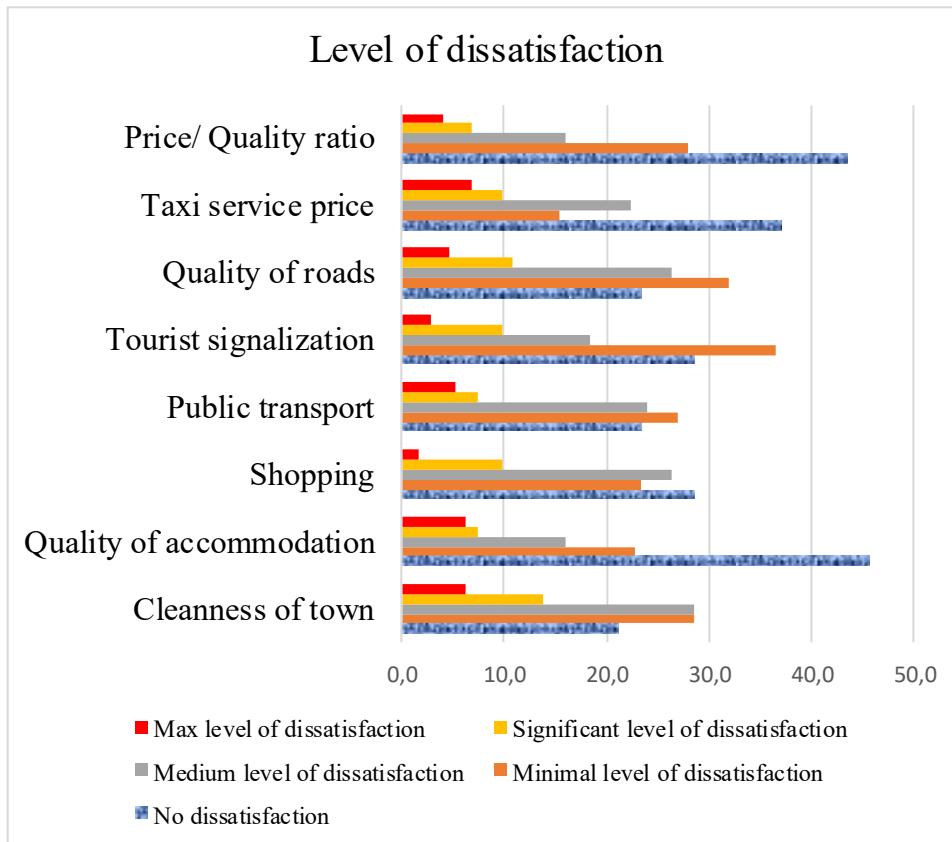


Figure 6: Level of dissatisfaction (%)

4. CONCLUSION

The economic benefits of conference events have been the topic of researchers for several decades, as it is shown in [13]. Conferences can act stimulating to the development of tourism, they are often organized after the tourist season, so they provide tourist visits in periods when there are significantly fewer visitors.

The data based on the observed case study indicate a high level of satisfaction with the conference as an event, and also with other aspects of the tourist offer, indicating that Belgrade is potentially a good destination for such events. Belgrade allows tourists to find their own balance of the familiar and the strange, not only through various structured programs of touristic offers, but also because of the possibility of exploring the city independently.

The observed sample is specific in its structure, with somewhat different expectations than the average tourist population, which should be taken into account when planning such events. The presented results showed the fact that respondents who participated in excursions and social programs express a higher level of satisfaction with the scientific conference itself as a whole.

The authors believe that holding professional conferences is extremely important for the promotion of its multilayered tourist capacities (cultural and historical heritage, natural beauty, hospitality, gastronomical offer, favorable relationship of quality / service, possibility of dealing with sports, possibility of active vacation, health tourism, wine tourism, Serbian customs, entertainment) and spreading the image of the country as an interesting tourist destination.

The importance of maintaining such events has not only an impact from the aspects of promoting the country's scientific potential and contribute to the economy, but also presents a soft way of positive influence on educated people from other countries in order to spread the positive image of the country.

Future research should be to measure the economic contribution of conferences to tourism in Serbia and to determine optimal destination with potential to hold conferences.

When conferences are viewed as a tourism product, they can also be used to revitalize rural areas, as they would involve small and medium-sized enterprises in the supply chain. In doing so, it is important support from state and local governance authorities to provide and improve necessary infrastructure in chosen destinations. Such activities should improve Serbian position in conference market share.

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