

PLANNING FOR PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM EVENTS – AN EXAMPLE OF SLOVAK CITIZENS

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Abstract: Tourism events represent a dynamic element of the destination primary offer. Destination stakeholders seek in hosting the tourism events augmentation of destination visitation, furthermore, it helps to overcome the seasonality, to enhance the destination marketing and to sustain a positive development of the area. The study investigates Slovak citizens' participation planning in tourism events while focusing on the demographic profile of individuals. The study findings are based on primary sources analysis of data collected via questionnaire survey. The purpose of this study is to investigate the frequency of Slovak citizens' participation in tourism events, their decision-making process, ways of travel organizing and main sources of information.

Keywords: *event, tourism, demand, planning.*

1 Theoretical background

The concept of tourism events has been examined by several domestic and foreign authors, such as Ritchie, Beliveau (1974), Gartner, Holecek (1983), Formica (1998), Gůčik (2001), Harris et al. (2001), Janeczko et al. (2002), Madden et al. (2002), Gibson et al. (2003, 2012), Hede et al. (2003), Šindler (2003), Cegielski et al. (2004), Deery et al. (2005), Fredline et al. (2006), Jago, Dwyer (2006), Getz (2007, 2012), Kmeco (2007a, 2007b), Jones et al. (2008), Stokes (2008), Macfarlane, Jago (2009), Musgrave, Raj (2009), Weed (2009), Crowther (2010), Robinson et al. (2010), Bowdin et al. (2011), Panyik et al. (2011), Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele (2011), Lović et al. (2012), Walker (2012), Coghlan, Filo (2013). For this reason, it is quiet demanding to find its single definition. While taking into consideration every common aspect of this term, we understand the organized event as a spatiotemporal purposefully created occasion of limited duration which in concentrated form facilitates, mediates and completes the original experience as a source of personal knowledge, making it unique in terms of both visitors and organizers.

From the point of view of roles and functions fulfilled by the tourism events, it is important to mention their capability to increase the destination incomes and to improve infrastructure facilities. Furthermore, tourism events give impulse to creation of a large variety of other tourist attractions and they increase the general awareness of the destination, stimulate the tourism development in the area, enhance the destination image and generate other positive economic, social, political and environmental effects in the territory. From this aspect, it is necessary to examine the tourism events demand.

Getz (2012) assumes that the demand of tourism events visitors differs in several aspects from the tourism demand. This is caused mainly by the fact that an event is being offered in the market as an experience, not as a concrete service. In case of tourism events, it is therefore difficult to express the relation between the amount of required goods and services and their prices. Besides, the economic determination, which gives the ratio of the number of required events and their costs, cannot be universally applicable as the entry to certain events is free of charge, or is subsidized. Price may not be considered as a key factor in the demand for events. Since participation in events can be identified with acquisition, or, buying an experience, it is necessary to emphasize its high substitutability and in case of paid events even high price elasticity.

Event participation is influenced by several factors, mostly by visitor's personality, his/her values, attitudes, lifestyle, needs and motives, personal and interpersonal factors such as culture, family, occupation, free time and expectations arising from

previous experiences and marketing activities (Getz 2012). Structural obstacles/challenges (event offer, knowledge of the event hosting, selection and event accessibility, time as a participation cost, age and health of individuals) together with personal obstacles (preferences, risk perception) and interpersonal barriers (social isolation) influence the decision-making process of each individual. A concrete decision to visit/attend the event results from consideration of the restrictions, accessible information and the possibility of substitution. The visitor's loyalty (vs. his/her desire to seek the news) and the event attractiveness pay a significant role too.

Kruger and Saayman (2012, p. 39-40) underline the need to reveal the information sources of potential visitors and the way they decide whether to visit or not a certain event (spontaneity vs. planning). The decision-making process originates at the moment of visitor's participation need recognition (eg. to attend an every-year music festival), it continues with the information search about the event offer and venue, cost judgment, evaluation of alternatives and it ends up with the decision realization. Own personal experience influences future decision-making process. Kruger and Saayman (2012) point at the fact that event participants prefer external information search before the internal. While the internal information search is related to own experience and gained knowledge, the external information search consists of the information obtained from neutral sources (tourist information centres, tourist guides), commercial sources (sales person, travel agents, brochures) social sources (relatives and friends), printed and electronic sources (newspapers, journals, radio, TV, internet).

Furthermore, Kruger and Saayman (2012, p. 40) point at the fact that while several individual event visitors do plan their participation in a detailed way and compare the event offer (basic and complex product), advertisements and prices, others are capable to decide spontaneously. Such a behavior can be either expressed via impulse buying without any previous judgment (pure impulse buying) or reminder impulse buying steaming from previous own experience or recall, suggestion impulse buying undertaken after first offer examination or planned impulse buying when the visitor travels to the destination with the aim to realize a not specified buying depending on the price, uniqueness, etc.

2 Aim and research material

The purpose of the study is to examine the way of tourism events participation planning of the Slovak citizens. The study findings are based on primary sources analysis obtained through the questionnaire survey.

The questionnaire survey was undertaken in the first quarter of year 2013. The sample selection consisted on quota selection respecting the age and gender structure of the Slovak population. From the overall 839 questionnaires obtained in the survey 23 wrong questionnaires were excluded in primary selection. Collected data were recoded and transformed into data matrix using the Excel programme. To control the representativeness of the sample, chi-square test was applied using the PASW SPSS (version 19) programme and other 42 questionnaires were excluded from further analysis.

Final research sample consisted of 774 respondents who according to the chi-square test represent the population of Slovakia from the point of view of age (Sig. = 0,994) and gender (Sig.=0.732). More than one seventh of the respondents are under 14 years, 14.3% of the respondents are between 15 and 24 years old, 17.1% of the respondents belong to the group of 25-34 years, 15.2% are between 35 and 44 years old, 14.2% of the respondents belong to the group of 45 to 54 years old, 12.4% of respondents are between 55 and 64 years old and 11.6% are

older than 65 years. The research sample consisted of 50.8% of women and 49.2% of men.

Different mathematical- statistical methods were used in order to analyze collected data. The statistical tests were verified with a reliability of 95%, ($\alpha=0.05$).

3 Study findings

Structured questionnaire focused on the participation frequency of Slovak citizens in tourism events; furthermore it examined decision-making process about the event participation, way of travel organizing and dominant information sources.

3.1 Participation frequency on the tourism organized events

More than 97.7% of respondents visit the organized events in average in a year. According to confidence interval for Mean, with reliability of 95%, between 97% and 99% of Slovak population attend organized events in average in a year. More than three quarters (76 - 82%) of the Slovak population attend the events at least few times in a year. They prefer cultural events (attendance of 92 to 95% of the population) and the least visited are the social- political events (attendance of 14 to 19% of the population). We assume that such a low percentage is caused by irregular periodicity of the events.

Table 1: Respondents' participation frequency in organized events

Type of events	Respondents attending events in%				
	never	sometimes	few times in a year	few times in a month	weekly
Cultural	6.46	33.07	52.07	6.59	1.81
Religion	63.70	21.83	10.59	1.55	2.33
Sports	30.75	31.52	24.68	9.56	3.49
Business	42.38	36.69	17.31	2.84	0.78
Social-political	83.20	12.92	3.23	0.65	0.00
Multi-theme	57.36	31.65	9.43	1.16	0.39
Other	57.36	31.65	9.43	1.16	0.39
Sum	2.32	18.73	55.81	16.54	6.60
Number of Slovak citizens in%	1-3	16-21	52-59	14-19	5-8

Source: Own elaboration based on the SPSS outcomes, 2013.

We asked the respondents whether they visit the events more often in their place of residence or outside of it. The results of the questionnaire survey showed us that with the exception of business events respondents attend the events more frequently in their place of residence. These results correspond with the theoretical background of the organized events.

Although the events attendance in the place of residence prevails, we assume that more than 10% of the respondents yearly do not attend the events. The main reason is their economic situation related to a high level of unemployment and low disposable incomes. Other reasons are lack of time, health complications, other preferences of free- time use and other reasons (unattractive event offer, lack of knowledge of attractive events, missing company, and higher age). The highest number of respondents (41.9%) attends tourism events several times in a year.

According to confidence interval, we assume with reliability of 95% that between 88% and 92% of Slovak citizens attend tourism events (between 87% and 91% of same- day visitors and between 65% and 72% of visitors with overnight stays). The

individuals visit the events more frequently as same-day visitors without an overnight stay in the destination.

3.2 The decision- making about tourism organized events participation

We aimed to reveal whether the respondents plan their attendance to the event organized outside their place of residence or whether they decide spontaneously. More than 56.8% respondents plan their attendance in a detailed way. 43.2% of respondents decide in the last moment and they do not think about own participation forward. In general, we can assume that 52 to 59% of Slovak population plans their tourism events participation in a detailed way.

According to ANOVA, the event participation planning in tourism depends on gender of Slovak respondents (Sig.=0.011, F=6.493), but as well on their age (Sig.=0.000, F=4.855) and current economic activity (Sig.=0.000, F=4.351). We did not prove any dependence on the education, marital status and region of respondents' origin (Sig.> α).

Higher tendency of planning was proved for female respondents (61.4%), while only 51.9% of male respondents plan their tourism events participation.

From the point of view of age, a detailed tourism events participation planning is typical for people over 65 (82.1%), who have enough time to rethink their programme. It is less typical for those who are between 55 and 64 (60.2%), between 25 and 34 (59.5%) and between 35 and 44 (58.62%). On the other hand, children up to 14 years old decide spontaneously (55.9%) which partially relates to their dependence on parental decisions. Lower level of spontaneity is visible in the case of respondents who are between 45 and 54 (49.5%) and between 15 and 24 (49.1%).

When thinking about the economic activity, we assume that seniors with sufficient free- time plan mostly their event participation (82.3%), followed by individuals on parental leave (76.9%), employed person who at the same time carry their own businesses (66.7%), unemployed person (57.6%) and employed (54.6%). The number of students and self- employed who plan or decide spontaneously is almost identical.

We examined the visitors' decision-making time of events held outside their place of residence.

Table 2: Decision-making time of visitors attending events outside their place of residence

Decision-making time	Respondents in%	Slovak citizens in%
Day of event	5.49	4-7
1-3 days before	19.55	17-22
4-7 days before	18.14	15-21
8-14 days before	19.55	17-22
15-30 days before	19.55	17-22
1-2 month before	14.49	12-17
More than two month before	3.23	2-5

Source: Own elaboration based on SPSS outcomes, 2013.

Most of the respondents decide in advance from one to three days before the event (19.6%), from eight to fourteen days before (19.6%) and from fifteen to thirty days (19.6%). Only about 5.5% of respondents decide to participate the day of the event (Table 2). With a reliability of 95% we confirm that more than three quarters of the Slovak population (77- 83%) decide to participate in the event less than one month before it. About 17 - 23% of the population decides a longer time period before the event hosting. In general, we propose that an intensive event promotion campaign should not start earlier than a month before its hosting.

The decision- making time of respondents depends according to the Spearman coefficient on their age (Sig.=0.000, correlation coefficient=0.137) and education (Sig=0.001, correlation

coefficient=0.121) and according to ANOVA it depends on the current economic activity (Sig=0.027, F=2.280) and region of respondents origin (Sig=0.001, F=3.399).

From the point of view of age and education, there is a weak direct dependence. With augmenting age or education the time advance of decision-making is augmenting. While 55% of respondents under 14 decide in maximum one week before, 63.6% of respondents over 65 years old decide in maximum two weeks before.

More than 40% of respondents with secondary or lower education achieved decide about their participation in maximum seven days before (59.7% students of elementary school, 42.9% of respondents with finished elementary education, 42.2% of respondents with secondary education without school leaving exams, 46.7% of respondents with secondary education with school-leaving exams), prevailing part of the respondents with higher education decide from eight days up to two month before the event (61.9% of respondents with bachelor degree, 58.1% of respondents with second level education and 63.4% of respondents with PhD).

The biggest share of students (24.9%) decide one up to three days before the event, 66.7% of employed person carrying own businesses decide between four and seven days before the event, 20.1% of employed and 30.8% of person on parental leave consider their event participation from eight to fourteen days in advance. The most important part of self-employed (20.2%), unemployed (30.3%) and seniors (22.8%) decide from fifteen up to thirty days before the event.

In reference to the region of respondents' origin, more than one fifth of respondents from Žilina region (22.2%), Nitra region (26.2%), Prešov region (33.3%) and Košice region (25%) decide shortly before the event (one- three days before). 29.6% of respondents from Bratislava region decide between four and seven days before the event. The biggest share of respondents from Banská Bystrica region (23.7%) decide from eight up to fourteen days before the event, 27.7% of respondents from Trenčín region decide between fifteen and thirty days and 34.5% of respondents from Trnava region decide between one and two month before the event.

3.3 Way of event participation organizing in tourism

Dominant part of respondents (84.2%) organize their travel and related services to the event venue held outside their place of residence on their own/individually. Only 15.8% of respondent use services of intermediaries, mostly travel agencies and tour operators. With reliability of 95% we assume that between 82% and 87% of Slovak population organize their travel to tourism event venue on their own, only between 13% and 18% use services of intermediaries. This may be the result of a non-complex offer or insufficient promotion on relevant markets.

We used ANOVA to test the relationship between travel organizing and way of event participation planning. The results of each groups averages were statistically significant (Sig.=0.000, F=22.211). About 76.8% of respondents who use the services of intermediaries when organizing their travel to the event venue, plan their participation in a detailed way. This means that beside other information search, they study intermediaries offer and compare it with the possibility of individual travel organizing. More than 23% of respondents decide spontaneously about their participation in the event and use the easiest way to obtain provision of services.

The dependence between way of organizing participation and other variables was verified, such as age (Sig.=0.000, F=4.353), education (Sig.=0.047, F=2.138), marital status (Sig.=0.030, F=23.008), and economic activity of Slovak respondents (Sig.=0.012, F=2.591).

To generalize, we assume that together with augmenting age the use of travel agencies services increases. The only exception is

represented by children under 14 who attend the events with adults, and similarly, people between 25 and 34 (representatives of the Internet generation or generation Y) who are strongly influenced by information and communication Technologies development.

When obtaining services related to the event participation outside their place of residence less than one third of the individuals (32.1%) with elementary education achieved ask travel agencies. These are followed by one fifth (20.3%) of students of elementary schools and few less individuals with PhD achieved (18.2%). Others use intermediaries' services less: only 16.3% of individuals with second university degree achieved 14.9% individuals with secondary education without school-leaving exams, 13.7% individuals with school-leaving exams and only 8.3% individuals with first university degree achieved. We presume that these are represented predominantly by university students (currently undertaking their second degree).

From point of view of marital status, widowed respondents (30.6%) and married person (15.9%) use intermediaries' services which can be related mostly to their age. Single person (12.5%) and divorced respondents (11.4%) use intermediaries' services less often.

Seniors (30.9%) and employed person carrying own businesses (33.3%) ask travel intermediaries when organizing their event participation relatively the most. This may be caused in first case by lack of experiences with individual travelling and incapability to search the information on the Internet and in the second case by lack of time. Employed respondents (13.9%), self-employed (13.3%), students (13.2%), individuals on parental leave (7.7%) and unemployed (6.1%) use intermediaries' services less often.

3.4 Tourism events information sources

Respondents gain the information about events organized outside their place of residence predominantly from the Internet (37.6%), from their family, friends and relatives (33.9%), as well as from their previous own experiences (14.8%) (Table 3).

Table 3: Main information source of events organised outside the respondents' place of residence

Information source	Respondents in%	Slovak citizens in%
Personal experience and obtained knowledge	14.78	10-15
Tourist information offices,	2.58	2-4
Tourism guides		
Sales people, travel agents, brochures	3.44	2-6
Family, friends and relatives	33.86	36-44
Newspapers, journals	3.01	2-5
radio	1.43	1-3
TV	2.15	1-4
internet	37.59	41-49
other	1.15	0-2

Source: Own elaboration based on SPSS outcomes, 2013.

With a reliability of 95%, we assume that Slovak citizens prefer external information search (between 85 and 90%) rather than internal information search (between 10 and 15%). These external information sources are mostly represented by electronic sources (radio, TV, Internet) and social sources (family, relatives, friends etc.). Slovak citizens use less often commercial sources (sales people, travel agents and brochures), printed sources (newspapers, journals) and neutral sources (tourist information offices, travel guides).

Results after ANOVA confirm a statistically significant dependence between main information sources about tourism events and respondents' age (Sig.=0.000, F=12.464), education

(Sig.=0.000, F=6.762), marital status (Sig.=0.000, F=18.361) and economic activity of respondents (Sig.=0.000, F=7.417).

While young people under 34 prefer Internet as main information source (55% children under 14, 51% of respondents between 15 and 24, 53.5% of respondents between 25 and 34), older individuals prefer predominantly social information sources, (39.2% of respondents between 35 and 44, 45.4% of respondents between 45 and 54, 44.4% of respondents between 55 and 64 and 45.5% of respondents over 65). We assume that together with augmenting age and experience the preferences of personal recommendation of visitors increase.

Marital status of respondents is partially related to their age as well. The biggest share of single respondents (50.7%) search the information about organized events on the Internet. 37.1% of married respondents use predominantly social sources and 31.4% of them uses the Internet. Almost one third of divorced respondents (30.3%) use the Internet and few less of them use social and internal sources (own experience) (27.3%). Almost one half of widowed respondents (45.7%) prefer information about tourism events from their friends and relatives and 31.4% of these respondents profit from internal sources. We assume that these are mostly older respondents who prefer some kind of experience whether own personal or mediated.

When thinking about the education achieved, Internet, as a main source of information about events organized outside respondents' place of residence, plays a vital role in case of elementary school students (54.4%) and respondents with higher university education (56.8% of respondents with bachelor degree, 37.2% of respondents with Engineer, Master, Doctoral title and 54.6% of respondents with PhD degree achieved). Opposite, respondents with elementary education achieved (42.9%) and secondary education achieved (42.2% of respondents without school-leaving exams and 40.6% of respondents with school-leaving exams) get the information mostly from their friends and relatives.

From point of view of economic activity, Internet as main source of information is used mostly by students (55.6%) and person on parental leave (46.2%), social sources are predominantly used by seniors (48.5%) and employed person carrying own businesses.

Conclusion

Slovak citizens participate more often in domestic (overnight stays) rather than outbound tourism. One of the important activities undertaken in domestic tourism is the participation in organized events (Petrík, 2008).

As proved by the results of questionnaire survey, only about 8-12% of Slovak population do not yearly participate in tourism events. With augmenting age the event participation frequency in tourism decreases. Slovak citizens participate in the events in form of same-day tourism and without an overnight stay at the venue. Cultural events are the most visited, which is in conformity with study of Petrík (2008) about the most often undertaken activities in domestic tourism. Events attractive for visitors can attract participants from longer distances, eg. other regions.

Slovak citizens consider their attendance to the events about one month before its hosting (between 77% and 83% of the population). It would be appropriate for the organizers to start an intensive promotion only one month before the event. Considering the most important source of information about tourism events, it would be desired to use predominantly the Internet.

Significant part of Slovak citizens (between 85 and 90%) use external sources of event information (electronic, social, commercial, printed and neutral), which proved the presumption of Kruger and Saayman (2012).

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