

ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC PAPER

Is Montenegro Considered as a Sports-Recreational Destination?

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Abstract

The paper aims to examine if, according to the tourists coming to the country, Montenegro is considered as a sport-recreational destination. The data used in the study is extracted from the Montenegrin survey called Guest Survey 2014, comprising of 35 questions related to the tourist travel behavior and satisfaction during their stay in Montenegro. The paper uses the results of the study to provide descriptive statistics concerning the motives of tourist to visit Montenegro (one of the question is related to sport-recreational activities). Furthermore, it verifies link between tourists' motivation related to sport -recreational activities to come to Montenegro and their overall satisfaction with sport -recreational activities. The results indicated that only around 1% of tourists in our sample who visited Montenegro indicated sport- recreational activities as the main motive for the visit, around 3% of tourists indicated sport- recreational activities as a second motive while around 5% of tourists indicated sport and recreational activities as the third motive. However, around 60% of tourists reported that they were satisfied with overall sport -recreational activities during their stay in Montenegro. This study shows that even that Montenegrin sport-recreational offer is on the satisfactory level, managers and policy-makers should provide additional effort to present Montenegro as a sport-recreational destination since very low percentage of tourists are motivated to visit Montenegro related to these activities. The paper thus concludes by setting recommendations related to diversification of Montenegrin tourism offer by pursuing sports-recreational tourism forms.

Key words: *sport tourism, Montenegro, destination*

Introduction

The paper sets the tone through the analysis of the existing literature on the sports tourism and destination branding through sports, emphasizing also the specificities of the regional tourism development and tendencies. In the second part, we address the Guest survey conducted by National tourism agency of Montenegro in order to comprehend the contemporary tourism practices in Montenegro and the possible development strategies. The main purpose of the paper is to investigate to which extent sport-recreational activities act as a motivator for destination selection in contemporary tourism development of Montenegro, as well as their overall satisfaction with sport-recreational offer at the destination. This should allow capturing the synergies between sports and tourism in Montenegro, in order to diversify the general tourism

offer by designing unique sport tourism experience.

With tourism being one of the fastest growing industries in the world of the last decades, it becomes increasingly important to understand what motivates people to travel and chose certain destination over another. Faced with the growing competition and increasingly demanding consumers, the marketers are required to diversify tourism offer by relying on less exploited, innovative tourist attractions, fostering the existing offer of the particular destination (Cohen, Prayag, & Moital, 2014). One such area is the sports tourism, identified as critical factor in many destination development strategies (Klenosky, 2002), especially when it comes to rejuvenating established tourism destinations (Agarwal, 2002). What more, as argued by Stanovčić, Peković, Celebić and Simović (2015) sport- recreational activities present a tool that could help



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firms to differentiate their product/service from others.

Sports tourism emerged relatively recently as an important part of the general tourism research field (Hinch & Higham, 2003), as number of studies pointed out that sports is increasingly seen as a critical factor motivating the destination selection (Kozak, 2002) as well as overall satisfaction with destination (Markuš, Peković, & Popović, 2017). Scholars have particularly addressed the role of popular sports events (e.g. World Cup, Olympic Games, Super Bowl) in branding tourism destination (Chalip & Costa, 2005), visitor satisfaction with sport tourism experiences (Shonk & Chelladurai, 2008), growing market of active sport tourism (Tassiopoulos & Haydam, 2008), but in recent years also aspects such as sport heritage as a feature of sports tourism (Ramshaw & Gammon, 2015) or the role of place in the interaction of activity and people in sports tourism (Geffroy, 2017).

Hall (1992) identified sport as one of the key motivating factors for the choice of the tourism destination, articulating its main concept around three tourism domains—hallmark events, outdoor recreation (adventure tourism) and health/fitness related tourism. Similar typologies have been defined by scholars throughout the years, especially regarding different types of involvement with sport activities at the destination and the general place of sport within the attraction mix of the destination. However, in this paper we adopt the framework suggested by Hinch and Higham (2011), according to which sport tourism refers to the sport-based temporary travel away from the place of residence, completely or partially motivated by participation and/or attendance of certain sport events or activities.

According to Harrison-Hill and Chalip (2005), if the destination marketers plan on capitalizing the sport's contribution to their destination's attractiveness, it is necessary to first determine the role sport plays in brining tourists to the certain destination and the ways it interacts with other tourist determinants in creating the overall tourist experience and satisfaction. This is why in the paper we attempt to address determinants of sports tourism development in Montenegro and understand the motivations and perceptions related to sports of tourists coming to visit the country. In order to do so, the paper analyses survey and interprets the results in order to draw preliminary conclusions related to whether Montenegro is considered as a sport-recreational destination.

Methods

This paper builds on the data extracted from the survey of Montenegrin tourists called "Guest Survey 2014: Attitudes and Expenditures of Tourists in Montenegro", which was conducted, analysed and published by the National Tourism Organization of Montenegro. The main objective of the survey was to collect reliable and representative data regarding tourist traveling attitudes and destination satisfaction during their stay in Montenegro. The survey was conceptualized in order to understand tourist behavior, motivation, attitudes and preferences in order to further develop Montenegrin tourism products and enhance its overall quality and competitiveness. It was conducted in the coastal area of Montenegro, as a set of personal interviews with tourists staying in commercial accommodation facilities (hotels, apartment, tourist resorts) through the summer months. The main data collection instrument was the structured questionnaire, containing 35 questions which was translated, distributed and conducted in several languages.

In our analysis, we specifically focused on the questions

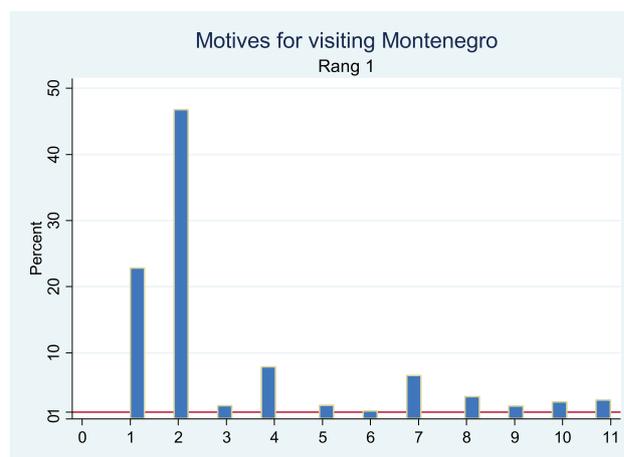
related to the main motivation of tourists for coming to Montenegro (in order to understand whether sport-recreational activities play an important role in their destination-related decision-making), as well as the overall tourism satisfaction with particular elements of the tourism offer (in particular satisfaction with sport-recreational offer in destination). In order to address our main research question, the paper thus first provides a through descriptive statistics related to the main motives of tourists to visit Montenegro (specially reflecting on the response related to sport-recreational activities). In the second part, we will verify the link between tourists' motivation related to sport-recreational activities for choosing Montenegro and their overall satisfaction with sport-recreational activities at the destination.

The question we address in the first part is: "Which are the main motives of your visit to this place?" Respondents were asked to choose three of the suggested answers (which were as follows: 1. Entertainment, 2. Passive vacation, relaxation, 3. Enjoying food and drinks, gastronomy, 4. New experiences, 5. Visiting family and friends, 6. Pursuing sports-recreational activities, 7. Getting to know natural landscape, 8. Getting to know cultural heritage and events, 9. Health-wellness activities, 10. Business, 11. Other reasons) and rang them (1 – the main motive, 2- the second most important motive, 3 – the third most important motive).

In the second part, we analyze the results of the question, in which respondents were asked to rate their tourist satisfaction by particular aspects of the offer, including the sports offer in the country. They were asked to choose a number corresponding to their level of satisfaction (1 – excellent, 2 – very good, 3 – good, 4 – bad, 5 – very bad, 9 – I don't know). Similarly, we address the question in which respondents were required to rate satisfaction with particular elements of the tourism offer in Montenegro compared to the some other chosen country they already visited (1 – better in Montenegro, 2 – similar, 3 – worse in Montenegro).

Results

The following section analyses obtained findings.



Legend: 1. Entertainment, 2. Passive vacation, relaxation, 3. Enjoying food and drinks, gastronomy, 4. New experiences, 5. Visiting family and friends, 6. Pursuing sports-recreational activities, 7. Getting to know natural landscape, 8. Getting to know cultural heritage and events, 9. Health-wellness activities, 10. Business, 11. Other reasons

Figure 1. Main motivation of tourists coming to Montenegro (first choice)

As shown in the Figure 1, most of the tourists coming to Montenegro, according to employed data, were primarily motivated by willingness to pursue the passive vacation and relaxation, which was the main motive for almost 50% of the respondents. It is also evident from the Figure 1 that for over 20% of the respondents, the motive number 1 for coming to Montenegro was the entertainment, while only about 1% of tourists indicated as their first choice when it comes to motivation the sports- recreational activities.

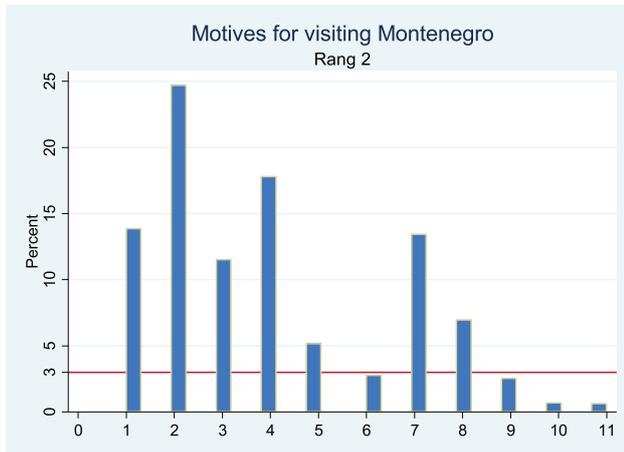


Figure 2. Motivation of tourists coming to Montenegro (second most important motive)

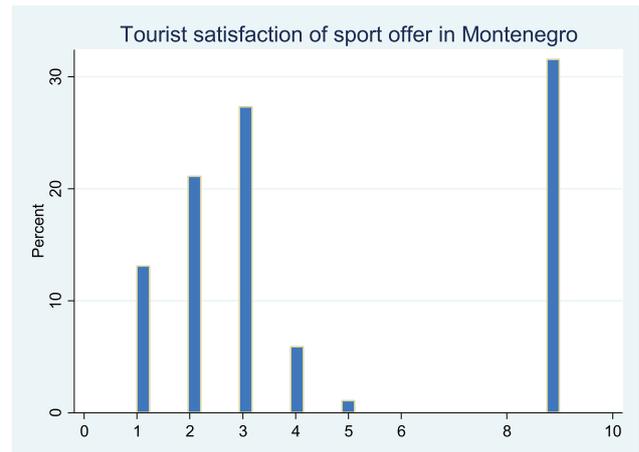
Figure 2. points out that when it comes to the second choice – or the second most important motive for visiting Montenegro, for almost 25% of respondents it was the passive vacation and relaxation. Again, only about 3% of tourists expressed that their motivation (in the second place) was based on the sport-recreational activities in the country.



Figure 3. Motivation of tourists coming to Montenegro (third most important motive)

From the Figure 3 it is evident that sports – recreational activities was chosen as the third main motivating factor for about 5% of respondents. This is slightly more significant percentage compared to the previous results, but still rather low compared to other choices (such as gastronomy, natural landscape, cultural heritage, etc.).

Concerning the question related to the satisfaction by certain elements of the tourism offer in Montenegro, on the scale from 1 to 5 (1 being excellent, 5 very bad, while 9 was the



Legend: 1 – excellent, 2 – very good, 3 – good, 4 – bad, 5 – very bad, 9 – I don't know

Figure 4. Tourist satisfaction of sport offer in Montenegro

choice for “I do not know”), the respondents in general qualified their satisfaction with sports offer as good (3) – for almost 30% and very good (2) for over 20% of respondents (Figure 4). However, it can be noted that over 30% of respondents did not have the opinion about sports offer in the country and thus could not express the tourist satisfaction with this particular aspect (number 9).

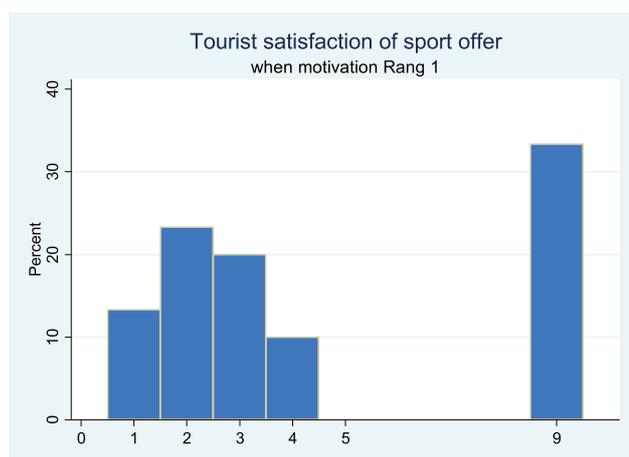


Legend: 1 – better in Montenegro, 2 – similar, 3 – worse in Montenegro

Figure 5. Comparison of sport-recreation offer in Montenegro with the one of the chosen country

As shown in the Figure 5, almost 60% of respondents evaluated sport-recreation offer in Montenegro similar to the one of the other country they visited, and about 25% considered sport-recreation offer in Montenegro to be better than the one in the chosen country. Less than 20% considered it to be worse than in other country, which clearly shows that there is a potential which may be further developed in the years to come.

When we consider the satisfaction with sports offer in the country of only tourists whose primary motive for coming to Montenegro were sport activities, we can observe high levels of satisfaction with the existing offer – almost 60% rated it as excellent, very good or good (Figure 6). Only about 10% found of tourists motivated by sport-recreational activities found the offer to be bad, and none considered it very bad. However, over 30% answered that they do not know – or cannot tell much about the sports offer in the country.



Legend: 1 – better in Montenegro, 2 – similar, 3 – worse in Montenegro

Figure 6. Tourist satisfaction with the sport-recreation offer when primary motivation sports- recreational activities

Discussion

The results highlighted in the previous chapter clearly demonstrated that, sport-recreational offer does not play an important role in the overall tourism offer or development in Montenegro. Only a very minor percentage of tourists coming to visit Montenegro are motivated by participation in sports-recreational activities, with most of the tourism in the country being driven by tourists seeking a passive vacation and relaxation, and to the lesser extent also the entertainment. Results point out that, at this point, tourists do not consider Montenegro as a sports-recreational tourism destination and they come to visit the country for different reasons.

The results are, however, far from discouraging—while not many tourists are coming to the country primarily to engage in sports activities, they find the overall sports-recreational offer in the country rather satisfying. This points out that there is a significant potential to develop sport-recreational tourism offer in the country and highlight variety of sports activities the tourists might take part into during their stay. It would be important to connect relevant stakeholders in the field (both sports and tourism strategists and managers) to reflect on these results and suggest policy framework for further development of this branch.

Taking in consideration important success in the field of sports (water polo, basketball, handball, etc.), increasingly developing infrastructure and sports facilities, as well as the number of educated experts in the field, it would be noteworthy to consider integrating different forms of sports tourism in the national tourism offer. To some extent, this has already been done in the northern part of the country—where adventure tourism, including sports activities such as rafting, canoeing, mountain bike becomes increasingly popular, attracting number of tourists to these destinations. However, it would be interesting to complement this offer with number of additional sport-tourism forms, such as sport-recreational programs for sport teams and school groups, event sport tourism (watching hallmark events such as championships) and sport tours and challenges complementary to the existing offer in hotel facilities in the country. As results pointed out that there is already rather good sports offer for tourists, it is likely that what would be most needed in near future is to further promote this offer, make it more visible and more attractive to tourists prior and upon their arrival to the destination. This would ensure the existing capacities are used

to their potential, and new further developed in accordance with the tourism tendencies in the area of sports recreational tourism.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study—the data used are from 2014, which means that we may have significant changes, since the overall tourism offer in Montenegro diversified, and the number of tourists coming to the country is showing steady increase. As this survey is conducted every 4 years, it will be interesting to compare this study with the new data in 2018 (once they are available) and try to identify patterns of development and overall dynamics of tourism offer. Furthermore, as the study mainly addressed coastal cities – where most of the tourists indeed come primarily to take rest and enjoy the seaside, and not central/mountain area where most of tourists coming for the adventure/sports tourism may be found, it is highly probable that results would be more encouraging if the sample was wider and the survey included some of the traditional 'sports tourism' destinations (Tara river, Nevidio canyon, etc.). Thus, it would be highly relevant to conduct a broader study which would overcome mentioned limitations and through interviews with tourism agencies and workers from the country increase the understanding of challenges and opportunities of promoting Montenegro as sport tourism destination.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflict of interest.

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