

SHORT REPORT

The Influence of Animation Programmes on Tourists' Satisfaction: The Role of Animators

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Abstract

Animation programmes represent a specific range of services and facilities that complement and improve the overall range of tourism service. Animation activities provide a wide range of services that are intended to provide more than expected for tourists. Therefore, to respond to tourists' various requests and needs, the role of animators in animation programmes is essential. In other words, tourists' satisfaction could be achieved via the tourist animators' competences, since they are intended to make the stay at the tourist destinations as pleasant as possible. However, it is necessary to note that there is a large gap in the literature concerning the importance of animation programmes and animators for tourism services. To overcome this deficit in the literature, this paper analyses the influence of different animator competences on the tourists' satisfaction to determine their importance for the tourist services. Using the Tobit model on a sample of 30 tourists, the results show that the relation between tourists' satisfaction and animator competences associated with patience, qualification, and organization, is positive and statistically significant. Based on the obtained results, we have suggested mechanisms for further development in this field, focusing on the constant improvement of the animator competences and animation programmes.

Key words: *animation programmes, animator competences, tourists' satisfaction*

Introduction

Tourism is considered to be a global socio-economic phenomenon that contributes significantly to the development of a destination. However, every tourist destination needs to diversify its range of services by relying on various tourist attractions (Pekovic, Perovic, Stanovic, & Vukcevic, 2018). Therefore, to expand the range, especially in terms of diversity, great potential is associated with animation and recreational activities.

Tourism-related actors are becoming increasingly aware of the need for animation and recreational activities in tourism services partly because of the competition on the market but also because these activities can play an important role in the improvement of tourist satisfaction. According to Mikulic and

Prebrzac (2011), animation/recreational programmes are a way to broaden the tourist services through many entertaining activities, thus making tourists' stay richer and more interesting and connecting them with the cultural and natural heritage of the destination.

In every field, including tourism, human capital has an essential and special role and significance (Grgona, 2013). In other words, to achieve tourists' satisfaction, employee professionalism is required since it affects the quality of the service directly. The animator's role in animation and recreational programmes is therefore crucial. The animator is supposed to satisfy the requests and needs of tourists through his skill and knowledge, which would be reflected in tourist experience at the destination (Ivanovski, 2014).



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Furthermore, Duricek and Cynarski (2017) argue that the professional attitude of tourist animator is essential since many well-organized festivities cannot attract visitors these days due to disinterested tourists. Therefore, it is the role of animators to make the programmes more appealing. In other words, the importance of the animator in tourism is in making tourists' experience complete during their stay at a destination.

In the same vein, the results of Wartecka-Wazynska (2014) show that communication skills are very important for animators, especially if the animation programmes target younger populations. Accordingly, in western European destinations, animation and recreation programmes now have a leading role and are not seen as a luxury but as a synonym for leisure time, while animators are considered to be a synonym for recreation (Rokicka-Hebel, Ziolkowska, & Patyna, 2016). Therefore, animators and their teams have the difficult task of organizing appropriate animation programmes that are suitable for various groups of tourists (Djordjevic, 2017). However, Mikulic and Prebezac (2011) point out the lack of literature and knowledge about importance of animation and recreational activities as well as of animators.

Therefore, the goal of this paper is to examine the relationship between animator competences and overall tourist satisfaction.

Methods

As indicated previously, in this research, we will examine

how animator competences affect tourists' satisfaction in Montenegro. We work on a sample of 30 tourists who visited Montenegro in February-April, 2019.

The relationship between animator competences and tourist satisfaction will be empirically analysed using cross-sectional data. The animator competences were measured using the following indicators: kindness, interaction, patient, qualification, communication, organization, and professionalism. Moreover, since our dependent variable is count one, we will employ the Tobit model.

Results

The results of the Tobit model are presented in Table 1. We can see that three competences (patience, organization, and qualification of animators) have a positive and significant impact on tourists' overall satisfaction. On the other side, the competences of kindness and communicativeness do not have significant impact on tourists' satisfaction. Surprisingly, the competences related to interaction and professionalism have a negative effect on tourists' satisfaction. Therefore, it should be noted that further investment is needed to improve those competences.

It is noteworthy that the coefficients are negative even though our control variables do not have a significant effect on tourists' satisfaction. We assume that this negative effect could be overcome by proposing diverse animation programmes in Montenegro.

Table 1. Results of the Tobit model

Variables	Coefficient
Constant	1.76***
Animators are kind	0.09
Animators encourage interaction	-0.35*
Animators are patient	0.45***
Animators are qualified	0.46***
Animators are communicative	0.10
Animators are well-organized	0.28**
Animators are professional	-0.38*
Frequency of holidays per year	-0.16
Not first time in Montenegro	-0.20
Days staying in Montenegro	-0.21
Frequency of participating in animation programmes during last two trips	-0.10
Time devoted to animation programmes	0.06
R2	0.51

Legend: (*), (**) and (***) - indicate parameter significance at the 10, 5 and 1 per cent levels, respectively

Discussion

Animation programmes are considered to have an essential role in broadening the range of tourism services (Nesic, 2010). Therefore, developed tourist destinations provide different animation programmes. For animation programmes to fulfil tourists' needs, the human role in animation and recreational programmes is significant. Tourist destinations and the hotel industry have recognized human work as an essential feature that affects tourist satisfaction (Kang, Gatling, & Kim, 2014). However, there is limited literature and a lack of knowledge concerning the importance of animation programmes and animators. Therefore, in this paper, we have analysed the importance of animators for tourist satisfaction: in other

words, whether and how competences of an animator affect tourist satisfaction.

Based on the results from the Tobit model, we may conclude that certain animator competences positively influence tourists' satisfaction. More precisely, the obtained findings indicate that competences associated with the patience, qualification, and organization of animators improve tourists' satisfaction. In contrast, kindness, encouraging interaction with guests, communicativeness, and professionalism do not enhance tourist satisfaction. Our results are in line with those of Perovic et al. (2018), who indicated the importance of intangible factors such as patience for the improvement of tourists' satisfaction.

Overall, it could be concluded that animator competences

are one of the main conditions for achieving economic benefit. Moreover, we can suggest that animations and recreational programmes, as well as animators, can allow hotels and tourist destinations to improve general expectations and tourists' satisfaction (Markus, Perovic, Pekovic, & Popovic, 2019).

Managerial implications of this paper are various. Hotel managers should pay attention to human resources management since it is related to the structure and the quality of the range of services available. Every hotel is facing a battle on the market to bring more guests not just for a few months but throughout the season. Including animation and recreational programmes in a hotel's range of services allows it to be broadened, has positive economic effects and makes their positions on the market more stable. Animation programs also represent an impulse for the implementation and improvement of new activities in accordance with tourists' needs and requests.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest. The authors started this paper when Aleksandra Djekic, Vasilije Markovic, and Milica Bojbasa were Master's students at the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, University of Montenegro, as part of their thesis.

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