

DEMOGRAPIC PROFILE OF TOURISTS (GUESTS), KEY FACTOR FOR THE HOTEL RECORDS: THE CASE OF GEVGELIJA, REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Abstract: Regardless of whether it comes to understanding guest's habits, improving service or analyzing critics, securing guest data is a new step to stay ahead of the competition. In the competitive world of hotel industry, the collection and analysis of demographic data can have a mayor impact for the hotel, as well for its reputation. And the key for competition? Guest data gathered from the demographic profile. If hotels can use what they know about their guests and adapt its data to the hotel, in addition to meeting the expectations of their guests and meeting their needs, the hotel will encourage additional value, such as brand loyalty and increased revenue.

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1. Introduction

The tourism market consists of buyers who differ in one or more ways. They may vary according to their desires, resources, locations, attitudes and buying practices. Specifically, trust in a hotel begins by establishing good success in managing the personal data, service and requests to checkout procedures. The guest data start from providing information about the advertising method that will help the hotels provide reservation and registration. For example: if the guest's history reveals that a number of reservations come from a travel agency, then the hotel should strive to maintain a good relationship with that agency.

Additionally, guest history data also provide information about the specified time period of the visit. The frequent guest, defined as a person who is staying at the hotel several times during a month or year, may be offered free accommodation (Baruca and Civre, 2012). Namely, this particular guest may require that he'd be placed in a room with a double bed instead of in a single room.

This is only a few examples where such data provision is due to demographic segmentation, a powerful but also a simple tool that enables the competitiveness of the hotels on the tourism market through the established variables: age, life cycle, sex, income, profession, education, religion, race and nationality (Birdir, 2015). From this perspective, with the possession guest's data, obtained with the help of demographics, the hotel can analyze such data and on the basis of this data can direct its offer to

the targeted type of guests: high-income seniors, millennium generation, guests with a luxurious lifestyle and other (Najdic, 2014).

2. What do demographic data mean for the hotels?

In a highly competitive tourism market for the hotel industry, it is essential that hotels understand the guests and their decision – making way if they want to have a real competitive edge (Kotler *et al.*, 2009). Although, it is necessary to mention that in addition to the demographic data that hotels usually receive, which is while the guests are making the registration in the hotel itself, for a hotel to be competitive on the tourism market it must not be limited only to this guest data, because this data is not sufficient for understanding the guest. The demographic data represent the very basis of this issue, and therefore, the hotels need this basic demographic data, because they provide the direction later in collecting data for the guests themselves.

Demographic data, as we know it, signifies the classification of guests according to characteristics such as sex, age, income level, occupational background, education, religion, ethnicity and nationality (Dimitrov, 2013), whereas the hotel accommodation facilities receive the demographic data upon the registration of the guests at the hotel.

But the authors emphasize that without combining demographic data with behavior or specific activities of guests visiting the hotel, these demographics do not have any meaning for the hotel accommodation facilities.

For example: 60% of the guests are women, with age from 30 to 40 years, with an income of 4,000 to 6,000 euro. 40% are men from 40 to 60 years, with income from 4,500 to 7,000 euro.

Thus, in this example of the demographics data, with the added activities, the proposition would look like this:

For example: 60% of the guests are women, with age from 30 to 40 years, with an income of 4,000 to 6,000 euro, who use spa treatments three times a month and spend an average of 310 euro. 40% are men from 40 to 60 years, with income from 4,500 to 7,000 euro, who use recreational services worth 200 euro.

With the second statement, we reach the definition of the point in this paper, that is, with the help of demographics data and activities, not only the hotel accommodation facilities would be able to place their self on the tourism market as spa and wellness hotel, congress hotel, family hotel, casino hotel or another, but it will also be possible to point out a specific offer (mud massage, gambling games, family activities and other).

3. Research of the hotels in Gevgelija, Republic of Macedonia and their perception of the demographic data's importance of hotel records

The demographic data are vital for the success of each hotel, therefore the focus of research in this paper will be given to the hotel accommodation facilities in the city of Gevgelija, Republic of Macedonia. For this purpose, all hotel accommodation facilities in Gevgelija will be analyzed, such as hotels, motels, apartments, apartments and villas, in order to determine which demographic data they acquire in their hotel records. Below, in Table 1, are listed the hotel accommodation facilities include in this research (Ministry of Economy in the Republic of Macedonia, 2016). The research was conducted in the period from 20th April to 4th May, 2018 in Gevgelija.

Table 1. List of the hotel accommodation facilities in Gevgelija, Republic of Macedonia

| No. | Name | Type | Categorization | Number of rooms |
|-----|-----------------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Casino Flamingo Hotel | Hotel | ***** | 60 |
| 2. | Hotel Ramada Plaza | Hotel | ***** | 130 |
| 3. | Hotel Apollonia | Hotel | ***** | 37 |
| 4. | Hotel Nar | Hotel | **** | 35 |

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|-----|------------------------|------------|-------------------|-----|
| 5. | Hotel Bozur | Hotel | *** | 26 |
| 6. | Hotel Jasen | Hotel | ** | 127 |
| 7. | Hotel Ilinden | Hotel | ** | 40 |
| 8. | Motel Vardar | Motel | * | 28 |
| 9. | Motel Senator Pool | Motel | No categorization | 25 |
| 10. | Guesthouse Asikot | Guesthouse | No categorization | 16 |
| 11. | Guesthouse Holiday Han | Guesthouse | No categorization | 7 |
| 12. | Apartments IVI | Apartments | No categorization | 4 |
| 13. | Apartments Lotus | Apartments | No categorization | 4 |
| 14. | Garden Villa | Villa | No categorization | 3 |
| 15. | Villa Magdalena | Villa | No categorization | 3 |

Source: Authors research

The purpose of this research is to obtain information from the hotel accommodation facilities in Gevgelija, to which demographic data, they require by their guests for their hotel records, when they register at the hotel.

Table 2. Demographic data in the hotel accommodation facilities in Gevgelija, Republic of Macedonia

| No. | Name | Age | Years | Education | Working relation | Income level | Ethnicity | Nationality | Religion | Profession | Hobby |
|-----|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Casino Flamingo Hotel | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 2. | Hotel Ramada Plaza | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 3. | Hotel Apollonia | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 4. | Hotel Nar | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 5. | Hotel Bozur | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 6. | Hotel Jasen | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 7. | Hotel Ilinden | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 8. | Motel Vardar | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 9. | Motel Senator Pool | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 10. | Guesthouse Asikot | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 11. | Guesthouse Holiday Han | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 12. | Apartments IVI | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 13. | Apartments Lotus | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |

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|-----|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 14. | Garden Villa | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |
| 15. | Villa Magdalena | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | | |

Source: Authors research

From the conducted research in the mentioned hotel accommodation facilities, the authors conclude that the demographic data that the hotels require from their guests are obtained only from the valid personal document, that is, identity card or passport.

In addition to the basic data as the name and surname of the guest, in the field for years, the hotel accommodation facilities place the data on the date of birth and the personal identification number. Nationality and citizenship are data that are also obtained from the attached valid document. But in addition, the address of residence and permanent residence is noted.

Important data that the hotel accommodation facilities also receive from the valid permits are: the authority from which the personal document was issued, the time when its validity and its number were issued.

This data is actually recorded from the hotel accommodation facilities in the *"Book for Home Guests"* and *"Book for Foreign Guests"*, where with the same data, then its filled the Application (Cardboard) for Domestic and Foreign Guests and thus with that, the hotel accommodation facilities report the guests to the police station. These cards should be submitted to the police within 48 hours as soon as the guest is registered in the hotel accommodation facilities.

Casino Flamingo Hotel, Hotel Ramada Plaza and Hotel Apollonia from their guests, during the registration require to fill out the Registration Card, and thus *"assure"* the guests that it is desirable to leave their data in this card, particularly in the *"Contact"* section where the hotel accommodation facilities use the example in the case of a lost object or promotion in the hotel. Through this contact, they stay in communication with the guests and send them various forms, polls where the guest evaluate the past experience in the hotel.

4. Analyzing the research data

It is undoubtedly that the demographic data of guests can affect various aspects of the hotel records in the accommodation facilities. But the question that arises is, whether by obtaining basic demographic data from a personal document, the hotel is able to form its offer and place it on the tourism market.

The results of the research show that regardless of the size, categorization and type of accommodation facility in Gevgelija, each hotel receives the demographic data for the guest from his personal document. The authors discuss the possibility to find alternatives in retrieving other demographic data for a particular guest, as hotels are always looking for new guests, but one should not forget to pay attention to keeping the existing ones.

With the limitations of receptionists in communicating with guests to collect other demographic data, the results of the research showed us that hotels must be creative and cunning if they want to keep the existing guests present as well as to attract new ones, and remain competitive on the tourism market.

Instead of collecting demographic data during the registration in the hotel accommodation facility or after leaving, the hotel accommodation facilities can create various questionnaires which will be available to the guests even during the reservation of the hotel accommodation facility itself. Because, the real experience for the guests begins at the moment they reserve a room, not at the reception desk. With the right approach, hotels could collect demographic data for the guests and personalize their experience. What, in fact, represents the very purpose. These questionnaires could be made available through applications, on the official website of the hotel accommodation facility or through intermediaries where the accommodation facilities advertise and allow reservations.

Personalization has been one of the main words that dominated in the hotel industry in 2017. And by collecting, storing and receiving demographic data, hotels can give guests a more personalized experience, and remain more relevant in a more competitive area of providing guests' satisfaction.

In addition to the possibility of introducing such questionnaires, the authors discuss the possibility for the demographic data to be also obtained through direct communication of the employees in the accommodation facilities in the other departments, where the communication between the employee and the guest is not set for a limited period of time as for the reception.

Conclusion

In a highly competitive tourism market in the hotel industry, it is essential that the hotel accommodation facilities understand their guests by collecting demographic data, if they want to gain a competitive advantage in the tourism market.

The hotel accommodation facilities in Gevgelija receive demographic data only from the valid travel document of the guest, but the importance of the demographic data lies in their contribution to helping the hotel accommodation facilities to better prepare to cope with the tourist demand. The results research made in the hotel accommodation facilities in Gevgelija showed us that demographic data can help create the profile of the guest and develop an appropriate offer that will create a personalized experience.

Whereas, although demographic data in the hotel industry is a sensitive topic and most often certain demographic data are obtained from the travel document necessary for registration in a certain hotel accommodation facilities, the accommodation facilities in Gevgelija have countless alternatives for gathering data from the guests and creating demographic profile, but a maximum investment and commitment to obtain these data is required, which would later result in a good positioning on the tourism market.

By predicting that by 2030, the population will reach 8.3 billion, the importance of finding alternatives in collecting demographic data is being emphasized. Guest profiles and preferences will become increasingly fragmented, and the competitiveness of hotels will depend on their ability to develop appropriate offers according to demographic data, where, for example, younger tourists who still work full time may require to be hotels and resorts for relaxation, while older tourists with longer free time can search accommodation facilities that offer more activities.

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