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## Motels in Serbia – what do potential guests expect?<sup>6</sup>

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**Abstract:** *The main aim of the paper is to investigate potential guests' expectations in Serbian motels. Through the literature review process, it was determined that there is a lack of research about motel guests' expectations. Based on the survey research on 237 potential motels' guests 14 dimensions of guests' expectations were determined. Statistical significant differences in guests' expectations dimensions among sociodemographic profile were also investigated (Gender, Age, Monthly Income, Occupational Status, Marital Status, Growing up Place, Reason for Traveling, Country of Origin). In Conclusions are present proposal for future motel products development based on presented results as also future research proposals.*

**Keywords:** *Motel, Guest, Expectation, Serbia, Guests' Expectation Dimensions, Consumer Behaviour, Hospitality Management*

### Moteli u Srbiji – šta gosti očekuju?

**Apstrakt:** *Glavni cilj rada je istražiti očekivanja potencijalnih gostiju u motelima u Srbiji. Pregledom relevantne literature utvrđeno je da ne postoji dovoljno istraživanja koja se bave problematikom očekivanja gostiju u motelima. Na osnovu anketnog istraživanja na uzorku od 237 potencijalnih*

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*gostiju motela, utvrđeno je da postoji 14 dimenzija očekivanja gostiju. Takođe, utvrđene su statistički značajne razlike u dimenzijama očekivanja gostiju motela u odnosu na njihov socio-demografski profil (pol, starost, mesečni prihod, radni status, bračni status, mesto odrastanja, razlog putovanja, zemlja porekla). U zaključnom delu rada predstavljena su dalja uputstva za razvoj ponude motela na osnovu dobijenih rezultata, kao i predlozi za dalja istraživanja.*

**Ključne reči:** *motel, gost, Očekivanja, Srbija, dimenzije očekivanja gostiju, ponašanje potrošača, hotelijerstvo.*

## 1. Introduction

Motels are the important part of the accommodation industry. However, until today no empirical studies have given the answer to the question: What exactly guests expect when deciding to stay in a motel? In literature it has not been identified the guests' primary and subdimensions of motel guests' expectations. Despite that, service quality in hospitality industry (especially in hotel industry) is a very popular topic in marketing and academic literature. Ariffin & Maghzi (2012) admit that not enough attention is given to the examination in which customer expectations differ according to some demographic, personal or hospitality facility factors.

The main purpose of this study is to determine the expectations of potential guests of Serbian motels. This study also has two main objectives. The first objective is to determine the most important dimensions of guests' expectations of motel services. The second objective is to investigate statistically significant differences among different subsamples according to respondents' socio-demographic profile, which includes: gender, age, educational level, nationality, income and purpose of stay.

This research asks potential guests what factors are important when choosing accommodation in Serbian motels. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to determine which factors potential motel's guests identify as important.

## 2. Literature Review

Motels are an important part of hospitality industry, defined as hospitality facilities, which provide accommodation and parking. Their rooms should be easily accessible from the outdoor area. Motels usually provide short stay accommodation and they do not offer other additional services as hotels do, such as: fitness center, wellness center, conference rooms, different type of restaurants (Clemes, Gan, & Ren, 2011).

As hospitality presents a relatively new research area, Ottenbacher, Harrington, & Parsa (2009) suggest that researchers in this area should take into account specific segments of the hospitality industry and their segments diversity. Staying in a motel involves less communication between guests and motel personnel. The main reason for this is usually shorter length of stays (in most cases just one night). For this reason, tangible dimensions of the motel product could have a key importance for guests' satisfaction.

Guest expectations present their belief about services and their relations to standards against which their performance is calculated (Zeithami, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006). Customer service satisfaction therefore directly depends on the level to which the received services match their expectations. Socio-demographic factors which have influence on this expectations could be: income, ethnicity, gender or age (Webster, 1989). Star rating is also an important factor of motel guest's expectations in a form of explicit service promise (Zeithami et al., 2006).

Lewis (1987) admits that the "standard of housekeeping and cleanliness" is the most important factor for business guests. Knuston (1988) presented five factors that business guests look for when selecting accommodation: a "clean and comfortable room", "convenient location", "available services", "safety" and "friendly employees". Weaver & Oh (1993) found through their research that very important factors for business travelers are: clean and comfortable surroundings, convenience to business, a good reputation, friendly staff, safety and security. Lockyer (2002) admits that it is essential that accommodation management understand the needs of guests and what factors they look for in the selection of accommodation.

Clemes et al. (2011) presented the hierarchical model of service quality for motel industry. This model includes three primary dimensions of motel service quality (interaction quality, physical environment quality, and outcome quality) which form an overall service quality perception. Motel guests' perceptions of service quality influence satisfaction, which affects expected future intentions. In this model, value (price) has a moderating effect between service quality and customer satisfaction.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is today very important business process and strategic imperative for firms operating in the service sector, such as hotel and motel industry. Its implementation increases customer satisfaction, loyalty and repeat which directly impacts on motel profitability (Feiberg & Kadar, 2002). Customer presents the core of the business process in CRM philosophy. The essence of CRM is to enhance a 'track and profit' process from the retained customers in the business portfolio. The implementation of CRM practice in a wide cross-section of industries, including the service sector, requires the extensive support of technology. Since the practice rotates around 'customer', maintenance of assorted

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databases and a corresponding data retrieval technique is of prime importance. Therefore, CRM is a customer-focused strategic impetus that integrates people, process and technology which has the potentiality to ensure: a. One-to-one marketing instead of mass marketing b. Commitment on long-term relationships c. Disintermediation and delayer distribution aspects d. Progressive reduction of marketing costs (Baksi & Parida, 2013).

Hsu, Tsai & Wang (2013) developed a decomposed customer satisfaction index model (CSI) for boutique motel industry that breaks down service quality into five subconstructs: Style, Room, Bathroom, Employees and Reliability. According to authors, this type of service quality models provide better explanatory power than pure models and can be used as a tool for understanding the factors that lead to better service quality.

A review of the literature of the motel industry identified an important conceptual research gap. There is not enough empirical research about motel guests' expectations while choosing an accommodation to stay. All empirical studies published until now are focused on the hotel industry (Lokckyer, 2005; Yelkur & Chakrabarty, 2006; Afiffin & Maghzi, 2012). To sum up, there is no published empirical research about Serbian motel industry that identifies the dimensions of guests' expectations. Also, there is not enough empirical studies about the effect of demographic characteristics on motel guests' expectations of accommodation and food and beverage service.

According to all presented above, three hypothesis are proposed:

H<sub>1</sub>: Room Cleanliness and Comfort is the most important dimension of guests' expectation.

H<sub>2</sub>: Motel guests' expectation dimensions will differ according to each guest's Gender, Country of Origin, Growing up Place and Reason for Traveling.

H<sub>3</sub>: Motel guests' expectation dimensions will differ according to each guest's Age, Monthly Income, Occupation Status and Marital Status.

### **3. Research Methodology**

Questionnaire survey was used as the main method of data collection. The respondents of this study involved potential guests of Serbian motels different nationalities who would be prepared to stay at least one night. The questionnaire was first pretested to examine the adequacy and clarity of the research instrument. 20 respondents were involved in this pre-test, 10 of them were local tourists and the other 10 were foreign tourists, selected randomly. The samples were selected using judgmental sampling technique based on who the researchers think would be appropriate for the study, as

proposed by Ahmad, Ariffin & Ahmad (2008). The respondents were first asked whether they would decide to stay in one of Serbian motels in the close future. If the answer obtained was positive, the person will be asked to be a respondent of this study.

In this paper, 5-point Likert-type scale questionnaire was used to collect the data. In our research we used the scale of items developed by Clemes et al (2011) and Meng & Elliot. Some items from these scales were excluded and some of them have been modified for the new research setting. All items were classified in these 14 dimensions of guests' expectations: Staff Professionalism (17 items), Accuracy of Reservation (4 items), Tangibles (7 items), Room Cleanliness and Comfort (11 items), Parking (4 items), Noise level (3 items), Security (2 items), Accuracy of Billing (2 items), Location (3 items), Pleasant stay (4 items), Restaurant Physical Environment (3 items), Food Quality (4 items), Communication (4 items) and Relationship Benefits (3 items).

Age was measured by using a numerical scale and then transformed into these categories: "early 20s" (20–25), "late 20s" (26–30), "early 30s" (31–35), "late 30s" (36–40), "early 40s" (41–45), "late 40 s (46–50), and "more than 50" (51 and more) while educational level was categorized based on four levels identified as "Secondary or High school", "Diploma/Certificate", "Undergraduate Degree", and "Postgraduate Degree". For the variable of nationality, this study attempts to compare the levels of guests' expectation between the local guests (from Serbia) and the international guests (foreign guests). The income level is classified based on three brackets identified as, "Less than 45.696 RSD", "from 45696 to 50506 RSD", and "more then 50506 RSD". The two types of purpose of stay examined in this study are "Holiday", and "Business".

The data were collected by Internet, using Google Document convenience sample of potential motel guests, 18 years and older, during the period September 1 to November 1, 2017. A total of 237 questionnaires were returned within the 2-month response period.

#### **4. Results and discussion**

Table 1 presents the descriptive results of the respondents' demographic characteristics. There are more female respondents (53.2%) than males (46.8%). Respondents are mainly in the 31-40 years age (36.7%), followed by the less than 30 years age group (26.2%). The single people group represents 43% of the sample. The most number of the respondents are "employed" (80.2%), followed by "students" (9.7%).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics: Gender, Age, Monthly Income, Occupation Status, Marital Status, Country of Origin, Growing up Place, Reason for Traveling

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	111	46,8
	Female	126	53,2
	Total	237	100,0
Age range (years)	<30	62	26,2
	30–39	87	36,7
	40–49	48	20,3
	50+	40	16,9
	Total	237	100,0
Monthly Income (RSD)	<45.696	48	20,3
	45.696 to 50.506	87	36,7
	>50.506	102	43,0
	Total	237	100,0
Occupation status	Employed	190	80,2
	Unemployed	8	3,4
	Student	23	9,7
	Pensionary	8	3,4
	Other	8	3,4
	Total	237	100,0
Marital Status	Married	40	16,9
	In a Relationship	71	30,0
	Single	102	43,0
	Other	24	10,1
	Total	237	100,0
Country of Origin	Serbia	63	26,6
	Abroad	174	73,4
	Total	237	100,0
Growing Up Place	Village	56	23,6
	City	181	76,4
	Total	237	100,0
Reason for Traveling	Business	118	49,8
	Private	119	50,2
	Total	237	100,0

Source: own research

The 14 dimensions of motel guests' expectations were tested for reliability. The Cronbach's alpha for the all items ranged from 0.63 to 0.91, all >.60, as recommended by Churchill (1979) for exploratory research. According to the results, it can be concluded that these items are a very reliable measure of their pertaining constructs (Table 2).

According to the results presented in Table 2, the most important mote guests' expectation dimension is Noise Level, the less important dimension is

Relationship Benefits. In this stage, we cannot accept the Hypothesis 1. However, Room Cleanliness and confort is rated as sixth most important dimension of motels' guests' expectation. This finding supports results present in similar studies from the area of hospitality management (Lockyer, 2005; Caro & Garcia, 2008; Clemes et al. 2011).

To test the normality of the distribution of new variables – motel guests' expectations dimension scores, Kolmogorov–Smirnov was used. According to its results presented in Table 2, statistical significance for all motel guests' expectations dimensions at the significance level  $p < 0.001$  is determined. For this reason, in further research we decided to use non-parametric tests.

Table 2. Cronach's  $\alpha$  and Komogorov-Smirnov Tests Results for Motel Guests' Expectation Dimensions

Motel Guests' Expectation Dimension	Mean	Cronach's $\alpha$	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistic	Test of Normality
Staff Profesionalism	4.553	0.65	0.179	0.000
Accuracy of Reservation	4.833	0.723	0.369	0.000
Motel Tangibles	4.406	0.672	0.188	0.000
Room Cleanliness and Comfort	4.802	0.631	0.277	0.000
Parking	4.908	0.783	0.445	0.000
Noise Level	4.94	0.91	0.501	0.000
Security	4.481	0.834	0.322	0.000
Accuracy of Billing	4.901	0.776	0.492	0.000
Location	4.533	0.743	0.268	0.000
Pleasant Stay	4.829	0.689	0.307	0.000
Physical Environment of Motel's Restaurant	4.596	0.667	0.224	0.000
Food Quality	4.708	0.788	0.31	0.000
Communication	4.099	0.801	0.202	0.000
Relationship Benefits	4.031	0.832	0.153	0.000

Source: own research

A series of Mann-Whitney U tests were used to examine if the dimensions of guests' expectations were isinfluenced by the difference in gender, country of origin, growing up place and reason for traveling. For the same purpose, a series of Kruskal-Walis H test have been used to investigate the influences of age, monthly income, occupation status and marital status on guests' expectations dimensions.

Hypothesis 2 examines the Mean Rank differences of the constructs under investigation based on four demographic groups: Gender, Country of Origin, Growing up Place and Reason for Traveling. The results presented in Table 3

show that Room Cleanliness and Comfort, Physical Environment of Motel's Restaurant and Relationship Benefits are motel guests' expectation dimensions not perceived differently among the respondents' Gender, Country of Origin, Growing up Place and Reason for Traveling. Among the Gender are perceived differently Motel Tangibles, Location, Pleasant Stay and Food Quality. Among the Country of Origin are perceived differently: Accuracy of Reservation, Motel Tangibles, Parking, Noise Level, Security, Food Quality and Communication. Among the Growing up Place these motel guests' expectation are perceived differently: Parking, Noise Level, Security, Pleasant Stay, Food Quality and Communication while among the Reason for Traveling, there are statistically significant differences in dimensions Staff Professionalism, Parking, Accuracy of Billing, Location, Food Quality and Communication. According to this, we can conclude that Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U Tests results

Motel Guests' Expectation Dimension	Z Gender	Z Country of Origin	Z Growing up Place	Z Reason for Traveling
Staff Professionalism	-0.570	-0.873	-1.939	-2.384*
Accuracy of Reservation	-2.221	-2.929**	-0.234	-1.776
Motel Tangibles	-4.222**	-3.948**	-1.198	-1.310
Room Cleanliness and Comfort	-1.357	-0.232	-0.544	-0.793
Parking	-1.951	-4.349**	-2.283*	-2.363*
Noise Level	-0.721	-5.051**	-2.989**	-1.026
Security	-0.948	-2.026*	-2.625**	-1.026
Accuracy of Billing	-0.647	-1.290	-1.188	-2.471*
Location	-2.962**	-0.955	-1.414	-2.636**
Pleasant Stay	-2.388*	-1.349	-5.443**	-1.309
Physical Environment of Motel's Restaurant	-0,378	-0.418	-0.330	-0.199
Food Quality	-2.661**	-2.804**	-4.419**	-4.338**
Communication	-0,254	-3.925**	-2.393*	-2.096**
Relationship Benefits	-1,023	-1.948	-0.055	-1.138

\*\* p<0.01; \*p<0.05

Source: own research

Hypothesis 3 examines the Mean Rank differences of the constructs under investigation based on four demographic groups: Age, Monthly Income, Occupation Status and Marital Status. The results presented in Table 4 show that all motel guests' expectation dimensions are perceived differently among



the respondents' Age, Monthly Income, Occupation Status and Marital Status. No statistically significant differences are investigated for dimension Motel Tangibles among the Marital Status, Noise Level among the Marital Status, Security among Monthly Income and Occupation Status, Accuracy of Billing among Monthly Income and Occupation Status, Accuracy of Billing among Monthly Income and Marital Status and for dimensions Pleasant Stay, Physical Environment of Motel's Restaurant and Food Quality among Monthly Income. According to this, we can conclude that Hypothesis 3 is partially supported.

Table 4. Kruskal-Wallis H test results

Motel Guests' Expectation Dimension	Chi-Square Age	Chi-Square Monthly Income	Chi-Square Occupation Status	Chi-Square Marital Status
Staff Professionalism	12,153**	19,188**	28,944**	43,702**
Accuracy of Reservation	14,971**	35,108**	16,874**	38,683**
Motel Tangibles	50,171**	15,437**	36,136**	1,980
Room Cleanliness and Comfort	22,047**	10,467**	13,402**	15,369**
Parking	18,880**	73,710**	21,973**	36,124**
Noise Level	23,532**	44,185**	9,803*	6,251
Security	21,985**	2,378	6,631	14,787**
Accuracy of Billing	24,007**	0,866	41,868**	6,861
Location	18,415**	34,967**	13,317*	8,854*
Pleasant Stay	52,739**	4,241	35,563**	29,085**
Physical Environment of Motel's Restaurant	14,128**	9,484	26,730**	33,711**
Food Quality	26,059**	3,543	49,074**	0,766
Communication	41,594**	30,529**	45,145**	16,918**
Relationship Benefits	30,995**	9,602**	34,018**	27,203**

\*\* p<0.01; \*p<0.05

Source: own research

The Gender, Age, Monthly Income, Marital Status, Country of Origin, Growing up Place, Reason for Traveling and Occupational Status exhibit on most of the motel guests' expectations dimensions. These results support the findings of similar studies conducted in the area of hospitality industry (Mattila, 2000 (Wong & Keung, 2000; Skogland & Siguaw, 2004; Chow et al., 2007; Meng & Elliott, 2008; Clemes et al. 2011).

## 5. Conclusions

Results presented in this study could be useful for moteliere in their strategic planning process and future product development. This study identifies 14 subdimensions of motel guests' expectations and can help motel managers to improve their understanding of guests' needs and important factors which create pleasant stay. As already presented, noise level was rated as the most important motel guests' expectation dimension, while customer relationship management dimensions (Communication and Relationship Benefits) are rated as the less important. It can be concluded that moteliere in their future development strategies should be focused on the most important tangible elements of the motel product.

Presented statistical significant differences among different sociodemographic guests' characteristics once again confirmed that moteliere should offer different services to different guest groups. This is especially important in making marketing strategies because one product or service does not fit to everyone.

The presented results are a good basis for the future research in this area. In our research only potential motel guests were included. Future research should measure the level of motel guests' satisfaction. The final aim is to create a new business model for Serbian motels based on a results from the two perspectives: guest expectations and guests satisfaction.

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