

CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURISTS IN THE DISTRICT OF PLOVDIV

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ABSTRACT— *The aim of the study is to evaluate the characteristics of tourists in the district of Plovdiv. Thus, the demographic characteristics, as well as the characteristics of behavior before, during and after the trip/ journey are studied through a questionnaire survey. As a result a profile of visitors of Plovdiv district is made.*

Keywords: characteristics, questionnaire, Plovdiv, tourists

1. INTRODUCTUON

In order to succeed tourism organizations should permanently do research on the characteristics and behavior of the tourists they provide services to.

In general the characteristics of tourists can be classified as: (a) socio-demographic characteristics (nationality, gender, age, marital status, education, occupation, income, etc.); (b) characteristics of behavior before travel (needs, motives, objectives, sources of information used, the preferred way of travel arrangement, composition of the group, preferred type of tourism destination, expectation from the destination, previous visits, etc.); (c) characteristics of tourists during travel and stay at the destination (length of stay, used types of vehicles, accommodation and food and beverage establishments, plasticized activities, visited attractions, etc.); (d) characteristics of tourist behavior after travel (satisfaction with the trip/ journey, intention to re-visit and recommend the destination, etc.) (Assenova et al., 2010). These characteristics of tourists should be studied with a view to tourism development at a destination.

Thus, the aim of the study is to evaluate the characteristics of tourists in the district of Plovdiv.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Plovdiv district is situated at the central part of Southern Bulgaria and occupies an area of 5972.9 sq. km, which represents 5.4% of the territory of Bulgaria. The district is characterized by a convenient transport geographic position and possesses a high natural, economic and human potential, favorable bioclimatic resources, protected areas, highly productive lands, thermal mineral waters, exceptionally rich cultural heritage. The favorable geographic position is complemented by the availability of well-built transport access infrastructure (www.pd.government.bg/bg/region.html-June, 2015).

In the paper the demographic characteristics, as well as the characteristics of behavior before, during and after the trip/ journey are studied through a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire has been prepared in Bulgarian and English and disseminated during the first half of 2014. It has been filled by 49 people. The results have been summarized. Although, they reveal just a "moment picture" of the situation, a profile of visitors of Plovdiv district is made.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The majority of respondents are domestic tourists (92%) and only 4 are international tourists (from Romania, France, Germany and Netherlands) (Table 1).

| Region of Residence | Number | Share |
|--|--------|-------|
| Bulgaria | 45 | 92% |
| Abroad (Romania, France, Germany, Netherlands) | 4 | 8% |
| Total | 49 | 100% |

Table 1. Region of residence of respondents

About two-thirds of respondents (65%) are women and one-third - men (Table 2).

| Gender | Share |
|--------|-------|
| Male | 35% |
| Female | 65% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 2. Gender of respondents

Most respondents are middle-aged - 40-49 years old (33%), followed by slighter younger (30-39 years) (27%). Next are respondents aged 20-29 years (20%) and a smaller the share of the older is - 50-59 years (10%) and above 59 years (10%) (Table 3).

| Age | Share |
|--------------------|-------|
| Up to 19 years | 0% |
| 20-29 years | 20% |
| 30-39 years | 27% |
| 40-49 years | 33% |
| 50-59 years | 10% |
| 60 years and older | 10% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 3. Age of respondents

Respondents with a university diploma dominate (37%), followed by those who have completed secondary education (28%) and secondary vocational education (17%). The lowest the shares of those who have completed elementary education (6%), college (6%) or have doctorate (6%) are. Insignificant the share of those who have completed primary education is (below 1%) and there are not respondents without formal education (Table 4).

| The last level of education the respondents have completed | Share |
|--|-------|
| Without formal education | 0% |
| Completed primary education | 1% |
| Completed elementary education | 6% |
| Completed secondary education | 28% |
| Completed secondary vocational education | 17% |
| College, between secondary education and university | 6% |
| University degree | 37% |
| Doctorate or equivalent professional degree | 6% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 4. Education level of respondents

| Employment status | Share |
|-----------------------|-------|
| Full-time employed | 64% |
| Part-time employed | 13% |
| Full-time student | 6% |
| Temporally unemployed | 0% |
| House worker | 2% |
| Retired | 8% |
| Self-employed person | 8% |
| Prefer not to answer | 0% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 5. Employment status of respondents

The majority of respondents are full-time employed (64%). Significantly smaller the share of part-time employed is (13%) and an insignificant number of respondents have another employment status (retired, self-employed, student or house worker) (Table 5).

Over a third of respondents are married (37%), followed by single (30%) and with a partner (24%) and insignificant the share of those with other marital status is (Table 6).

| Current marital status | Share |
|------------------------|-------|
| Married | 37% |
| Divorced | 4% |
| Separated | 3% |
| Widowed | 1% |
| Single | 30% |
| With partner | 24% |
| With children | 7% |
| Without children | 2% |

Table 6. Current marital status of respondents

The majority of respondents are more low-income as those with income below 250 euro prevail (44%), followed by those with income from 250 to 499 euro (30%). Fewer those with income 500-749 euro are (13%). The share of each subsequent group is insignificant and is decreasing. There are no respondents with income above 5000 euro (Table 7).

| Monthly income | Share |
|---------------------|-------|
| Less than 250 euro | 44% |
| 250-499 euro | 30% |
| 500-749 euro | 13% |
| 750-999 euro | 7% |
| 1000-2999 euro | 2% |
| 3000-4999 euro | 4% |
| 5000-7000 euro | 0% |
| More than 7000 euro | 0% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 7. Monthly income of respondents

| Activity | Mean values |
|--|-------------|
| Visiting a museum and a culture and historical sight | 3.60 |
| Participation in specific cultural events | 3.33 |
| Learning about the local culture and history | 4.00 |
| Interest in architecture, art, folklore | 4.00 |
| Interest in unknown people, communities, languages | 3.25 |
| Acquiring knowledge | 4.00 |
| Contact with local people | 3.79 |
| Discovering new places | 4.46 |

Table 8. Importance of cultural activities to the respondents

The most important cultural activity to respondents is the discovering of new places (4.46), followed by learning about the local culture and history (4), interest in architecture, art and folklore (4) and the acquisition of knowledge (4). Important to them the contacts with local people (3.79) and visiting a museum and a culture and historical sight (3.60) are. Of smaller but again above the average importance the participation in specific cultural events (3.33) and the interest in unknown people, communities and languages (3.25) are (Table 8).

Characteristics of Travel

Characteristics before Travel

The majority of respondents (above two-thirds) does not visit the region for the first time (70%) and below one-third (30%) visit Plovdiv district for the first time (Table 9).

| Answer | Share |
|--------|-------|
| Yes | 30% |
| No | 70% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 9. Do the respondents visit the district of Plovdiv for the first time?

Respondents had the opportunity to describe in their own words what their idea about the district of Plovdiv before their visit was. A large part of them state that they did not have an idea of the region before their visit. The rest have given rather positive responses, such as "good", "admiration", "a city with long history and interesting sights". There are also respondents whose idea of the region according to their own words was wrong.

Besides Plovdiv district, other destinations the respondent considered when they decided to travel are rather other regions of the country, such as Varna and Veliko Tarnovo than regions abroad or foreign countries.

Over a quarter of respondents were travelling with holiday or leisure purposes (26%). Less than one-fifth (19%) aimed at seeing culture, history or heritage. Slightly smaller the shares of respondents who travelled in order to visit friends or relatives (13%), conferences, congress, seminars (13%) and to visit natural sites (13%) are. Insignificant the shares of those, whose purposes of the visits education (8%), treatment (5%) or sport (4%) are (Table 10).

| Purpose of visit | Share |
|---|-------|
| Visiting friends or relatives | 13% |
| Travelling with holiday or leisure purposes | 26% |
| Business, conferences, congress, seminars | 13% |
| Seeing culture, history or heritage | 19% |
| Visiting natural sights | 13% |
| Sports travel | 4% |
| Treatment | 5% |
| Education | 8% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 10. Main purpose of the visit of the respondents

Over half of respondents had superficial knowledge about the culture and heritage of Plovdiv district before their arrival (51%). One-third was familiar (33%). A smaller share (10%) were very familiar and only 6% did not know anything of the region (Table 11).

| Answer | Share |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| I was very familiar | 10% |
| I was familiar | 33% |
| I had superficial knowledge | 51% |
| I did not know anything | 6% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 11. Did the respondents know anything about the culture and heritage of the district of Plovdiv before their arrival?

Culture and the cultural historic heritage played neither important, nor unimportant role in the decision of over half of the respondents (56%) to visit the district of Plovdiv. They played very important role in the decision to visit the region of 28% of respondents. For 11% of respondents culture and heritage are the main reason to visit the district. Only 6% of respondents have stated that culture and heritage were not very important when they decided to travel. There are no respondents for which the role culture and heritage have played when they decided to travel was unimportant. That is not surprising, as the district of Plovdiv is rich in cultural and historical monuments and sites (Table 12).

| Answer | Share |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Unimportant | 0% |
| Not very important | 6% |
| Neither important nor unimportant | 56% |
| Very important | 28% |
| Main reason to visit | 11% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 12. Did the culture and the cultural and historic heritage play an important role in the decision of respondents to visit the district of Plovdiv?

Respondents used various sources of information and advertisement when they decided to visit Plovdiv district. However, more often own past experience (16%) or recommendations from friend and family (16%) is used than advertisement sources. Comparatively often fairs and exhibitions are used (13%) and comparatively rarely - the brochure, catalogue, guidebook (9%), newspaper or magazine article (9%) and TV advertisement or film (9%). The rest sources are used less frequently (Table 13).

| Source of information and advertisement | Share |
|---|-------|
| Own past experience | 16% |
| Recommendations from friends or family | 16% |
| Brochure, catalogue, guidebook | 9% |
| Direct mail or e-mail | 0% |
| Newspaper or magazine advertisement | 3% |
| Newspaper or magazine article | 9% |
| Travel agent or tour operator | 6% |
| Internet advertisement or information on the internet | 6% |
| Fairs and exhibitions | 13% |
| Radio advertisement | 6% |
| TV advertisement or film | 9% |
| Science or fiction literature, books | 6% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 13. Decisive source of information and advertisement the respondents used when they selected the district of Plovdiv for their visit

The majority of respondents (75%) has organized their stay on their own or has used the help of their relatives, friends or partners. Only one-fourth (25%) has taken a trip or journey that was organized by travel agent or tour operator agency (Table 14).

| Answer | Share |
|---|-------|
| Travel agent or tour operator agency | 25% |
| The respondent, his/ her relatives, friends or partners | 75% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 14. Who have organized the stay of respondents?

Characteristics during Travel and Stay

Just over half of respondents (45%) stayed for a medium-run stay at Plovdiv district - between 4 and 7 nights. Over a third (36%) had short stays (3 nights or less) and less than a fifth (19%) - long-run stays - 8 and above 8 nights (Table 15).

| Answer | Share |
|----------------------|-------|
| 3 nights or less | 36% |
| 4-7 nights | 45% |
| 8 and above 8 nights | 19% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 15. The length of stay at the district of Plovdiv

Respondents who stayed at a hotel (35%) or rent a room (35%) prevail. Less than a quarter (23%) stayed at a house. Insignificant the shares of those who stayed at a camping (4%) and a villa (4%) are (Table 16).

| Accommodation establishment | Share |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Hotel | 35% |
| Motel | 0% |
| Hut | 0% |
| Camping | 4% |
| House | 23% |
| Rent-a-room | 35% |
| Bungalow | 0% |
| Villa | 4% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 16. Accommodation establishments where respondents have stayed

The most frequently visited by respondents food and beverage establishments are restaurants (33%), followed by fast food services (21%), alcohol houses and bars (19%) and cafes and confectionaries (17%). More rarely attraction restaurants are visited (by 11%) (Table 17).

| Restaurant establishments | Share |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Restaurants | 33% |
| Fast food | 21% |
| Alcohol or wine or beer house, bars | 19% |
| Cafes, confectionary | 17% |
| Attraction restaurants | 11% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 17. Kinds of restaurant establishments that respondents visited during their stay at the district of Plovdiv

Over half of respondents travelled to Plovdiv district by bus (55%). A smaller the share of respondents who arrived by private car is (31%). Significantly fewer respondents arrived by train (12%) and only 2% - by airplane (Table 18).

| Type of transport | Share |
|-------------------|-------|
| By airplane | 2% |
| By train | 12% |
| By private car | 31% |
| By bus | 55% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 18. How did respondents arrive to the district of Plovdiv?

In the district of Plovdiv visitors have most often used public transport - used by over a half or 56% of them. Next, less than a quarter have used a private vehicle (23%). Insignificant the shares of those who have used other means of transport in Plovdiv district are: taxi (9%), route taxi (5%), bus of a travel company (5%) or train (2%) (Table 19).

| Type of transport | Share |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Private vehicle | 23% |
| Rent a car | 0% |
| Public transport - bus, trolley | 56% |
| Route taxi | 5% |
| Taxi | 9% |
| Bus of travel company | 5% |
| Train | 2% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 19. What means of transport have respondents used in the district of Plovdiv?

Most often respondents have travelled alone (30%) or with friends (29%). Significant the share of those who have travelled with colleagues (21%) is. Less often respondents have travelled with an organized group (9%) or with relatives (a total of 11%) (Table 20).

| Answer | Share |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Travel alone | 30% |
| Husband or life | 5% |
| Child (children) | 1% |
| Parents | 3% |
| Other relatives | 2% |
| Friend (friends) | 29% |
| Organized group | 9% |
| Colleague (s), business partner (s) | 21% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 20. Who accompany the respondents during their visit?

The majority of respondents have had a superficial experience related to culture and heritage in the district of Plovdiv: have learnt a little about the culture and heritage of the region (43%) or just were mostly sightseeing, photography or seeing interesting and unusual sites (35%). A smaller share of respondents has learnt a lot (17%) and only 4% have developed a deep understanding of the culture and heritage of Plovdiv region (Table 21).

| | |
|---|-------|
| During their stay at Plovdiv region respondents: | Share |
| Were mostly sightseeing/ photography or seeing interesting and unusual sites | 35% |
| Had a chance to learn a little about the culture and heritage of the region | 43% |
| Had a chance to learn a lot about the culture and heritage of the region | 17% |
| Developed a deep understanding of the culture and heritage of the region of Plovdiv | 4% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 21. Experiences of respondents related to culture and heritage in the district of Plovdiv

Respondents have visited various cultural attractions during their stays at Plovdiv district. Most often they have visited museums (15%), followed by historical or archeological sites (12%), concerts, exhibitions and theatre performances (12%). Some respondents have visited festivals or events (10%), religious sites (9%), have learnt about local architecture (9%), about local culture (8%), about local traditions and folklore (8%) and history (7%). At least respondents have mastered ancient crafts (5%) or attended art courses (3%) (Table 22).

| | |
|---|-------|
| Attractions | Share |
| Visit museums | 15% |
| Visit historical or archeological sites | 12% |
| Visit religious sites | 9% |
| Visit a festival or an event | 10% |
| Attend a concert, exhibition, theatre performance | 12% |
| Learn about history | 7% |
| Learn about culture | 8% |
| Learn about local traditions and folklore | 8% |
| Learn about local architecture | 9% |
| Master ancient craft | 5% |
| Attend art courses | 3% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 22. Attractions respondents visited during their stay at Plovdiv district

| | |
|-------------------|--------|
| Souvenirs | Shares |
| Local specialties | 17% |
| National costumes | 3% |
| National textile | 3% |
| Silver articles | 8% |
| Copper articles | 3% |
| Golden articles | 9% |
| Wood articles | 12% |
| Ceramics articles | 16% |
| Paintings | 13% |
| Jewels | 15% |
| Magnets | 1% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 23. Souvenirs, which respondents buy in Plovdiv district

Respondents have bought various souvenirs in Plovdiv district. More frequently they have bought local specialties (17%), followed by ceramics articles (16%) and jewels (15%). Some respondents have bought paintings (13%) and wood articles (12%). Rarely golden (9%) and silver articles (8%) have been bought. The most rarely bought souvenirs are national costumes (3%), national textile (3%), copper articles (3%) and magnets (1%) (Table 23).

Characteristics of Respondents after Travel

| Answer | Share |
|---|-------|
| I am satisfied | 22% |
| I am not absolutely satisfied | 67% |
| I am not satisfied | 0% |
| I did not have an idea about the region, but I am satisfied | 11% |
| The region exceeded my expectations | 0% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 24. Did the region fulfill expectation of respondents in terms of cultural tourism?

Two-thirds of visitors (67%) have indicated that their expectations in terms of cultural tourism in Plovdiv district have not been thoroughly fulfilled. Significantly smaller the share of those who have not been satisfied with the opportunities for cultural tourism in the region is (22%). The smallest the share of those respondents who did not have an idea about the region but are satisfied is (11%) (Table 24).

Although not completely satisfied with their stay, all respondents would visit the district of Plovdiv again (Table 25).

| Answer | Share |
|--------|-------|
| Yes | 100% |
| No | 0% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 25. Would the respondents visit the district of Plovdiv again?

All respondents (100%) would recommend Plovdiv district to their friends and relatives (Table 26).

| Answer | Share |
|--------|-------|
| Yes | 100% |
| No | 0% |
| Total | 100% |

Table 26. Would the respondents recommend the region to their friends and relatives?

4. CONCLUSION

As a result from the study the following profile of visitors of Plovdiv district could be made. Among respondents domestic tourists prevail (92%) and only 8% are foreigners. About two-thirds of visitors (65%) are females and one-third (35%) - males. Most respondents are at middle age - 40-49 years (33%), followed by little younger ones - 30-39 years (27%). Respondents with higher education dominate (37%), followed by those who have completed secondary (28%) or vocational secondary (17%) education. The majority of respondents (64%) are full-time employed. Respondents who are married prevail (34%), followed by single ones (27%) and those who live with a partner (22%). The majority of respondents have low incomes - below 250 (44%) or from 250 to 499 euro (30%). Most important to visitors of Plovdiv region the discovering of new places is (4.46), important to them are also the history (4), architecture, art and folklore (4), as well as acquiring knowledge (4). Most respondents (70%) do not visit the region for the first time. Respondents have positive or do not have an idea of the district before their visits. Besides Plovdiv district, other destinations the respondent considered when they decided to travel are rather other regions of the country than foreign countries. Most often respondents have travelled with holiday or leisure purposes (19%). Most often respondents have had superficial knowledge

about the culture and history of Plovdiv district before their visit (51%). Over half of respondents (56%) have indicated that culture and historic heritage played neither important nor unimportant role in their decision to visit Plovdiv district. More often respondents have used their own past experience (16%) or recommendations from family and friends (16%) than advertisement sources when they decided to visit Plovdiv district. The majority of respondents has organized their trip or journey on their own or has used the help of their relatives and friends (75%). Most often respondents (45%) have had medium stay at Plovdiv district - between 4 and 7 nights. Respondents who have stayed at hotels (35%) or rented rooms (35%) prevail. Most frequently visited food and beverage establishments by respondents are restaurants (33%). Most often respondents have travelled to Plovdiv district by bus (55%). Most often respondents have used public transport in the region (56%). Most frequently respondents have travelled alone (30%) or with friends (29%). Most respondents have learnt a little about the culture and heritage of the region (43%). Most frequently respondents have visited museums (15%), followed by historical and archeological sites (12%) and concerts, exhibitions and theatres (12%). Most often respondents have bought local specialties (17%), followed by ceramics articles (16%) and jewels (15%). The majority of respondents have not fully realized their expectations of cultural tourism in Plovdiv district (67%). Although not completely satisfied with their visit, all respondents (100%) would visit Plovdiv district again and all respondents (100%) would recommend the region to their friends and relatives.

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