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## **CRUISING TOURISM NOVI SAD AND BELGRADE RESIDENTS' EXPERIENCE ANALYSE**

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**Abstract:** The subject of this paper are previous nautical experiences of the local population of Novi Sad and Belgrade. The aim of this paper is to determine how local population (who has already cruised, but as well as those who have not) is experiencing our country in terms of cruises. The research was based on conducting interviews with local people in Novi Sad and Belgrade. Interviews with a structured questionnaire, were performed from March to June 2010 with the task to determine past and potential cruise destinations, as well as attitudes about the potentials of Serbia in terms of nautical tourism. The importance of this paper is primarily based on the enrichment of knowledge on the segment of tourism that is the subject of this paper. Obtained results may help further studies of the causal link between cruises and experiences of local population in nautical tourism.

**Key words:** Cruises, Novi Sad, Belgrade, experiences.

### **Introduction**

During the past decade, the cruise industry has benefited from sustained growth (Dickinson & Vladimir, 1997). However, despite growing three times faster than the overall tourism sector, cruising represents a relatively small fraction (1.8 – 2.2%) in terms of passenger numbers (GP Wild International, 2007). In terms of size, the world market for cruises has steadily increased from 9.9 million in 2001 to 15.2 million passengers in 2006 (IRN Research, 2008). Today, modern cruise liners for both sea and river cruising, are a technological marvel, offering a highly viable and alternative form of holiday to many tourists (Quatermaine & Peter, 2003).

In Serbia, the main condition of manifestation of the international tourist cruises is the navigability of rivers for tourist ships. (Gavrilović & Dukić, 2002).

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However, in Serbia, the international tourist cruises take place only along the Pan-European Corridor 7, especially on the river Danube, the Sava River (only at its confluence) and the Tisa River (occasionally). Therefore, the Danube river is the backbone of international river cruises in Serbia, and Novi Sad and Belgrade are the only points where the foreign tourist boats in ports can be seen (Dragin, 2010). Corridor 7 is also defined in the framework of the United Nations (UN/ECE) by European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN) (Dragin, 2010).

The need to explore issues of nautical experience of the local population is based also on the fact that according to the Tourism Development Strategy of Serbia (MHCEF, 2005) one of the products that is of interest to Serbia is nautical tourism. Nautical tourism based on international cruises by Corridor 7 is subject to demand and interests of tourists in a number of countries in Central and Eastern Europe. They usually already have experience in cruising, and the focus of this research is the local population of Novi Sad and Belgrade, and its previous experience in this segment of tourism. The aim of this paper is to present and analyze differences of opinions between the inhabitants of Novi Sad and Belgrade towards nautical tourism.

Because of this, but also the fact that Serbia is an integral part in the offers for the international tourist cruises along Corridor 7 on the international market, was conducted analyze of the attitudes of citizens, i.e. the presence and recognition of the importance of Corridor 7 cruising in Serbia by its population, using survey research.

While prior cruising research had focused more on economic aspects of cruise tourism (e.g., Henthorne, 2000; Dwyer & Forsyth, 1998; Vina & Ford, 1998), more recent research has paid more attention to identifying different factors influencing cruise decision- making (Duman & Mattila, 2005; Petrick, 2004; Li & Petrick, 2008). From domestic authors it should be mentioned Dragin (2010) which has made a major contribution in the field of international tourist cruises along Corridor 7. Also, the specialist for nautical tourism, Pašković (2011) has given immense contribution to the academic community with his experience as a practitioner. This apparent scarcity of cruise-related research could be attributed to the domain's niche status within the tourism research community and its inherent interdisciplinarity (i.e. requiring a combination of shipping with tourism) (Papathanassis & Beckmann, 2011).

## **Research Methods**

Filling specialized structured questionnaires was conducted within the population sample which included 200 people. Research focusing on the local population of Novi Sad and Belgrade (which are political, economic, cultural, and of course tourist centers of Serbia, but also the main points of the Corridor 7 in Serbia with piers for tourist boats for mass river cruises) was conducted from March to June 2010.

For a clearer perception of previous nautical experience of the Serbian population in the main docking places of cruisers this analysis was carried out. During the survey, the following data are collected, which are going to be presented showing the individual responses to the questions from the questionnaire (opened and closed) consisting of three parts:

- Demographic profile of respondents,
- Previous travel experience of respondents in terms of international tourist cruises and
- Awareness of the population considering cruises along Corridor 7 in Serbia.

Testing was done by personal interviewing a random sample, i.e. technique „face to face“. Data gathered with surveys were entered into the SPSS database and all further analyzes were conducted using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science), version 17. Data analysis included frequency analysis and chi square test.

## **Results**

The analysis of general indicators in the first part of the research shows the structure of respondents by place of examination, gender and age structure, education, and the structure of the economic indicators (profession and average monthly salary / pension) (Table 1). 104 people from Novi Sad (52% of the total sample) and 96 in Belgrade (48% of all respondents) were interviewed. By using additional analysis, all general socio-demographic indicators of the respondents, were crossbred with questions about previous nautical experience.

By using the Chi-square test, we tried to find statistically significant differences among the residents of Novi Sad and Belgrade on the issue of attitudes associated with tourist cruises, and whether they cruised up to now and which destination they would choose for a cruise.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

	Respondents, %	Have you cruised so far?	
		Yes	No
Total, %	200 (100%)	47 (23.5%)	153 (76.5%)
<b>City</b>			
Belgrade	48%	8.0%	40.0%
Novi Sad	52%	15.5%	36.5%
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	40.5%	13.0%	27.5%
Female	59.5%	10.5%	49.0%
<b>Age</b>			
16-24	21.5%	3.0%	18.5%
25-34	20.0%	4.5%	15.5%
35-44	17.5%	5.5%	12.0%
45-54	21.0%	5.0%	16.0%
55-64	13.5%	3.5%	10.0%
65+	6.5%	2.0%	4.5%
<b>Education level</b>			
High school	33.0%	6.5%	26.5%
Associate Degree	8.0%	2.0%	6.0%
Undergraduated	58.0%	15.0%	43.0%
Postgraduated	1.0%	0%	1.0%
<b>Income</b>			
<20.000 rsd	28 %	4.5%	23.5%
20.001-50.0000 rsd	57.5%	13.0%	44.5%
50.001-100.000 rsd	13.0%	5.0%	8.0%
+100.000 rsd	1.5%	1.0%	0.5%
<b>Profession</b>			
Student	15.0%	2.0%	13.0%
Employed	74.0%	17.5%	56.5%
Retired	9.0%	3.5%	5.5%
Unemployed	2.0%	0.5%	1.5%

Chi square independent test (Table 2) showed a statistically significant relationship between the population of Belgrade and Novi Sad and their departure on cruises. Chi-square independent test (Table 2) showed a statistically significant relationship between the residents of Belgrade and Novi Sad and their departure on cruises  $\chi^2 (1, n = 200) = 4.09, p = 0.043, f_i = 0.15$ . According to Cohen's criteria (1988) effect size ( $f_i$ ) is small. The population of Novi Sad in a greater extent (29.8%) went on the tourist cruises, compared to the population of Belgrade (16.7%).

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Table 2. Chi-square test/Crosstabs (City\*Have you cruised so far?)

City	Have you cruised so far?		Total	$\chi^2$	Significance (p)	Effect size (Fi)
	Yes	No				
Novi Sad	31 (29.8%)	73 (70.2%)	104 (100.0%)	4.09	.043	.155
Belgrade	16 (16.7%)	80 (83.3%)	96 (100.0%)			
Total	47 (23.5%)	47 (23.5%)	153 (76.5%)			

The second part of the research is related to previous travel experience of respondents and attitudes associated with tourist cruises. Even 76.5% of people have not yet been cruising (Table 1). As reasons for not taking the cruise respondents cited a number of reasons, and 18% did not give any response. For the most part they pleaded the money (32%) as main disincentive factor, or lack thereof. Of the total number of respondents, 8.5% of them did not have an opportunity to cruise, while for 6.5% cruise as a form of spending free time do not interest at all. In a much smaller percentage, ranging from 1% to 2.5% cited that they do not have anyone to cruise with, not yet selected a destination, the obligations prevent them, health reasons, fear them, do not have any particular reason why they have not cruised, and lack of free time.

Table 3. Respondents' departures on tourist trips

	Respondents, N	Respondents, %
Rarely	52	26.0
Annually	72	36.0
Several times per year	76	38.0
Total	200	100.0

When interviewees were asked if they would like to cruise, or to again go for a cruise, majority - 86.5% of all respondents expressed that they would like something like that, while for 13.5% cruise is something they would not want to practice i.e. to repeat.

When it comes to cruising destinations (Figure 1) warm geographic latitudes corresponding to the Mediterranean and the Caribbean would be chosen first by 48% of all respondents, which is 2/4 of the total sample. In the third place as a potential starting point of cruise respondents cited the Danube (18.5%) and so put it in their preferences ahead of other river and marine waters. In a much smaller percentage they determined to Nil, Alaska, Yangtze Kjang, Seine, Indian Ocean.

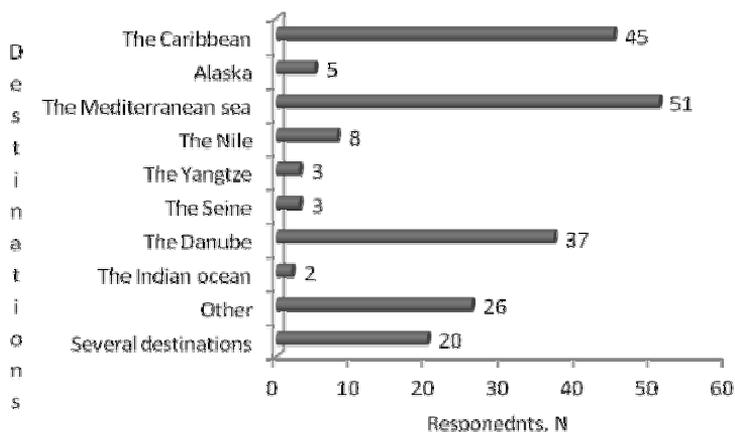


Figure 1. Potential cruise destinations of respondents

Those respondents who had cruised (23.5% of them) have spoken out about the number (Figure 2) and the destination of their cruises (Figure 3). Interestingly, a quarter (5%) of those who have had the opportunity to cruise done that more than five times. In addition are determined previous cruise experience related to different types of aquatories.

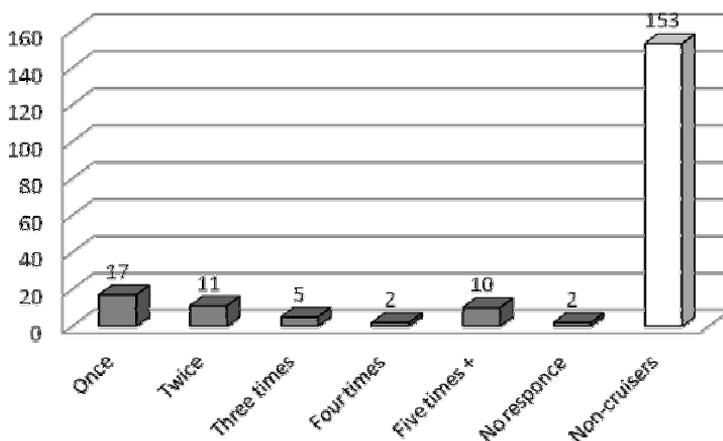


Figure 2. Respondents' departures to cruises

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The 8.5% of the respondents were cruising on seas, 5.5% on rivers, and only 1.5% on oceans (Chart 3). Of tourist destinations, so far the cruise participants visited Ukraine, Croatia, Egypt, Greece, Romania, Germany, Italy, Austria, Israel, Holland, England, Montenegro, Turkey, France, USA etc. As for the waters, they cruised on the Danube, Nile, Amazon, Dnepr, the Rhine, Vltava, Seine, Hudson River, Caribbean Sea, Mediterranean Sea, the Bosphorus, the Adriatic, etc.

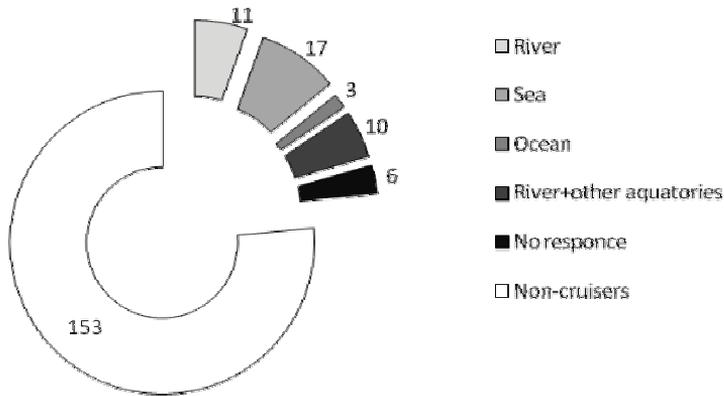


Figure 3. Respondents' Cruising aquatories

In Table 4 are presented results of Chi-square test and cross tabulation (City\* Where would you like to cruise?). Chi-square independent test showed a statistically significant relationship between the citizens of Novi Sad and Belgrade, and their wishes regarding the cruise destinations  $\chi^2 (2, n = 200) = 12.821, p = 0.002$ . The population of Novi Sad was significantly less (38.5%) interested in ocean and sea cruises, compared to the population of Belgrade (63.5%). The inhabitants of Novi Sad were more interested for river cruises (31.7%), especially for the cruise along the Danube (26%), which was later found, compared to the population of Belgrade (20.8), who for a preferred cruising destination would rather select the Mediterranean (30.2%) or the Caribbean (14.4%)

Table 4. Chi-square test/Crosstabs (City\*Where would you like to cruise?)

City	Where would you like to cruise?			Total	$\chi^2$	Significance (p)
	Ocean/Sea	River	River+other aquatories			
Novi Sad	40 (38.5%)	33 (31.7%)	31 (29.8%)	104 (100.0%)	112.82	.002
Belgrade	61 (63.5%)	20 (20.8%)	15 (15.6%)	96 (100.0%)		
Total	101 (50.5%)	53 (26.5%)	46 (23.0%)	200 (100.0%)		

The third part of the research was related to familiarity of the population with cruisers along Corridor 7 in Serbia. The respondents proved to be very informed when it comes to boats that cruise on the Danube and dock in Serbia, as 88% stated that they are familiar with it, while 12% had no previous knowledge about it. In this, persons who were cruising so far gave 92% positive answers, while those that were not 87%.

However, when they were asked if they knew that in Serbia annually dock more than 100.000 tourists cruisers their responses were negative in the majority percentage. A total of 79.5% of the survey sample said they are not familiar with that data, while 20.5% said they are. In this case, the respondents with cruising experience gave 72% negative responses, and those who did not have it 82%.

Attitudes of the surveyed population were nearly one hundred percent positive (95%) when asked about whether the cruisers are significant for improvement of tourist turnover in Serbia. In doing, the population that has not been cruising gave 94% positive answers, and one that have 98%.

The next question the percentages are somewhat expected, because 88% of respondents believe that Serbia did not regulate its banks for docking boats, and 12% think that it was done. Of those who have already cruised this think 85%, and of those who have not 89%.

Almost all respondents from all age groups of the survey sample (98% of them) believe that the Danube is one of the most important resources for improving tourist and economic development of Serbia, while for 2% some other resources have higher priority. In the same percentage (98%) in the importance of the Danube believe surveyed experienced in cruises and those without it.

Table 5. Chi-square test/Crosstabs (City\* Do you think that nautical tourism contributes to the development of tourism in Serbia?)

City	Do you think that nautical tourism contributes to the development of tourism in Serbia?		Total	X <sup>2</sup>	Significance (p)
	Yes	No			
Novi Sad	101 (50.5%)	3 (1.5%)	104 (52.0%)	.180	.671
Belgrade	95 (47.5%)	1 (0.5%)	96 (48.0%)		
Total	196 (98.0%)	4 (2.0%)	200 (100.0%)		

Chi square independent test (Table 5) showed no statistically significant relationship among the population of Belgrade and Novi Sad and their attitudes

associated with experiencing nautical tourism as a factor of importance for tourism development in Serbia,  $\chi^2(1, n = 200) = 0.18, p = 0.67$ .

### **Discussion**

In order to determine the attitudes of local people in Novi Sad and Belgrade about the presence and importance of Corridor 7 cruising in Serbia, and their nautical experience a survey was conducted on a sample of 200 persons in 2010. In this way, an analysis of the potential tourist demand was performed, and how tourists experience the Danube in Serbia, and what previously nautical experience they had.

It was found that questioned people have the lack of tourist experience when it comes to cruising. Only 23.5% of respondents in the past practiced this form of tourist movements. Cruise vacations are laden with experiential benefits and offer opportunities for tourists to engage in a socially unique and memorable experience (Kwortnik, 2006). Cartwright and Baird (1999) note that the most common reasons cited for choosing a cruise holiday on the sea or river ships are to be looked after in luxury and to be entertained (Erdeji, 2011), what are probably the reasons why the respondents have a desire for those trips. Financial resources, or lack thereof in 32% of cases were the main factor discouraging people who are not already cruised. On the other hand these people are in the lowest percentage in the range 1% to 2.5% cited that they do not have anyone to cruise with, not yet selected a destination, the obligations prevent them, health reasons, fear them, do not have any particular reason why they have not cruise, and the lack of free time.

By going on tourist trips in general, 60% of interviewees (cruising participants), travel several times during the year, so those are people with expressed travel habits. This is supported by the fact that 98% of them prefer that in the near future again go on a cruise. However, 83% of never cruised people so far would like to experience something like that, which is a positive indicator for domestic demand that it also has an interest for practising of such travel.

In the explanation which potential cruise destination they would have chosen, the Danube is in the respondents' answers to a surprisingly high third place, overall 18.5% of all respondents (both who were cruising and who were not) decided for it. Only the Mediterranean and the Caribbean seas are more desirable destinations from it. Although it is generally known that the image which the passenger has about a certain destination, often does not represent the reality of it, that image unfortunately, still influences the decision making process of

potential tourists and their choice of destination. Very good positioning of Danube in this research by that receives more on its significance because it is the first river aquatory for the cruise chosen by the local population (to which the Danube is not abstract and distant), followed by in a much smaller percentage with the Nile (4.0%), Yangtze Kjang (1.5%), or the Seine (1.5%). This is definitely a double confirmation - and the fact that people from Serbia have the desire to practice cruising, but also the fact that the Danube, i.e. Corridor 7 is their first choice of river cruises.

International tourist cruises in the world for several years back were involving different population groups, with more significant proportion of all those who are first time cruisers participants (Dowling, 2006). One third of respondents who cruised (23.5% of them) has cruised once before, and it is interesting that a quarter of those who have had the opportunity to cruise done that more than five times. Cartwright & Baird (1999) note that repeat visits among cruisers are high given that they find alternative forms of holidays inadequate.

On seas 8.5% of the respondents were cruising, 5.5% on rivers, and on oceans only 1.5%. On river in combination with another water surface 5% of respondents was cruising and not declared in this regard 3%. Of tourist destinations, so far the cruise participants visited Ukraine, Croatia, Egypt, Greece, Romania, Germany, Italy, Austria, Israel, Holland, England, Montenegro, Turkey, France, USA etc. As for the aquatories, they were cruising on the Danube, Nile, Amazon, Dnepr, the Rhine, Vltava, Saine, Hudson River, Caribbean Sea, Mediterranean Sea, the Bosphorus, the Adriatic, and so on.

It is important to note that respondents (both with and without experience in the cruises) were almost one hundred percent agree that cruisers are significant for improvement of tourist turnover in Serbia and that the Danube is one of the most important resources for improving tourist and economic development of Serbia. They also (in similar higher percentages in both categories) said that they are familiar that cruise ships dock in Serbia as well. On the other hand, their major negative responses (also with a minimum percentage differences in both groups) were related to their views that Serbia did not regulate its banks for docking boats, and that they do not know that in Serbia more than 100,000 tourists cruisers docks per year (were slightly more negative responses were given by persons who have not cruised before.)

In terms of differences in the attitudes of local people of Novi Sad and Belgrade differences have been determined in practicing tourist cruises and destination selection. The population of Novi Sad in a greater extent (29.8%) went on the

tourist cruises, in relation to the population of Belgrade (16.7%). The population of Belgrade had more interest for the ocean and sea cruises (Mediterranean, Caribbean), compared to the population of Novi Sad, who would rather go on river cruises and especially cruises on the Danube. However, residents of both cities believe that nautical tourism is an important factor for tourism development in Serbia.

Although this research contributes to the enrichment of knowledge of the nautical experiences of local people, however, it has certain limitations. The research results are limited to only two cities in Serbia - Novi Sad and Belgrade. By examination of population in various cities in our country, the results would be more reliable and more representative. In this regard, while the respondents were representative in terms of demographic profiles, the survey sample can be characterized as relatively small. Resulting therefrom that the obtained conclusions can not be generalized to the wider tourism or nautical population.

### **Conclusion**

River cruising has a symbolic share of the total tourism turnover of Serbia, but it requires and deserves special attention. The growing foreign demand for this more popular form of tourism services, in recent years shows a steady increase in its importance. Local residents in Novi Sad and Belgrade have also recognized the importance of international tourist cruises along Corridor 7 and with their comments and observations have shown that potential domestic demand also give it the significance.

This research obtained general answers to questions about the nautical experience of domestic population, with importance of its personal perception. Analysis of answers of the respondents points to some significant and indicative conclusions. The population of Novi Sad is largely went to the tourist cruises, from the population of Belgrade. Most respondents from both cities have not been cruising, but they would like. As the reason for not going on tourist cruises they stated the lack of money. The Danube has been ranked as priority destination for river cruises. It is interesting that a quarter of respondents who were able to cruise, did that more than five times. Chi square test showed that the population of Novi Sad is in less interest in ocean and sea cruises, from the population of Belgrade. However, when it comes to the attitudes associated with the experience of nautical tourism as a factor of importance for tourism development in Serbia, Chi square test showed no statistically significant relationship between the citizens of Belgrade and Novi Sad residents. Most

respondents (both those who have cruised and those who have not) are familiar to the existence of cruise tourism in Serbia and their importance to tourism.

These and similar data can be used to ensure the timely adjustment of the tourism market trends in the field of international tourist cruises along Corridor 7. Obtained results may help further studies of the causal link between the Pan-European Corridor 7 cruises and resources of receptive countries (in this case Serbia) on which this trips are based, and all this to a goal for the proper design and placement of tourist offer to foreign, but also to domestic market . Developing new markets does not happen overnight, and it will take time for the travel trade and the consumer to understand how the product works (ECC Report, 2011).

Also, future research in this area should identify the key reasons for the positive and negative experiences of tourists in nautical tourism. For example, qualitative studies to examine why some tourists more evaluate certain components of their experience in comparison to other (Hosany & Witham, 2010).

Nautical tourism represents the tourism product of strategic importance for the development of tourism in Serbia, with Belgrade and Novi Sad as potential places of long-term market attractiveness. This study in an attempt to clarify the dimensions of nautical experience used existing methods, while future research in this area may try to develop an original method to better encompass many attributes and aspects of nautical experience (Hung & Petrick, 2011).

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