THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RISK-RELATED CHALLENGES IN TOURIST DESTINATION CHOICE

Jasna Micić[1]*, Stefan Denda[1], Marius Popescu[2]

[1]Geographical Institute "Jovan Cvijić" SASA, Belgrade, Serbia; e-mails: j.micic@gi.sanu.ac.rs; s.denda@gi.sanu.ac.rs
[2]Transilvania University of Brasov, Faculty of Food and Tourism, Brasov, Romania; e-mail: popescu.marius@unitbv.ro

Abstract: There are numerous pull forces that determine destination choice. In the contemporary turbulent conditions, safety and security risks have a growing role. This is particularly evident in the Mediterranean region, bearing in mind that the political crisis in the Arab world has reflected in this region as the largest receptive market. Therefore, the study has been conducted to determine which factors are the most important in the process of choosing a destination and whether the recent crises have affected travel habits. In addition to the descriptive statistics, the data obtained by the Likert scale were analyzed by independent samples *t*-test in SPSS. The results have revealed that price, service quality, and risk-related issues are the main parameters of destination choice. In this regard, the respondents expressed their understanding of contemporary security risks in the Mediterranean (terrorist acts, militant groups, migration crisis, etc.). The research also showed the influence of different sources of information on travel habits, primarily word-of-mouth process, and mass media. The crisis has affected the demand allocation, but not trip cancellation. Based on the abovementioned we can conclude that safety and security risks are not the only and decisive factor but represent an important parameter in the destination choice.

Keywords: pull factors; destination choice; risks; Serbia; Mediterranean

Introduction

Tourism represents a valuable resource of revenue for many countries in the world, so their economies depend on tourism development (Ritchie, 2004). According to the annual report of the World Tourism and Travel Council [WTTC] (2019), in 2018 tourism provided 319 million jobs and contributed to the global GDP with 8,800 million USD. Besides, the services in international tourism represent 30% of the world's services exports (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2018).

The need for safety is a basic human need, so the destination stability has become one of the major competitive advantages (Denda & Stojanović, 2016). As Faulkner (2001) argued, the total number of disasters has increased during the last decades, in terms of economic losses and the number of victims. We can distinguish between two broad categories of risks—natural and human-induced. Natural-induced risks refer to natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes, eruptions, and tsunamis),

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health treats (e.g., vector-borne diseases), and water and food quality. Human-induced risks include political instability, crime-related incidents, terrorism, and war (Kozak, Crotts, & Law, 2007; Qi, Gibson, & Zhang, 2009; Timothy, 2006). In the contemporary world, the borderline between these two categories of risks has become very thin due to the high impact that humankind has on the natural environment (Ritchie, 2004).

The tourism industry is highly sensitive to direct or indirect crises that can threaten visitors (Law, 2006). Potential tourists' perception of safety and security has been affected by various external factors, thus it is very difficult for destination management to predict or influence it (Kozak et al., 2007). The perceived risk has a great impact on the destination choice. It could vary from simple disappointment with expectations to severe injuries and death (Fuchs & Reichel, 2011). Therefore, the authors wanted to reveal which pull factors are the most important in destination choice and to determine the role of both natural and human-induced risks in the travel decision process of the young middle-aged tourists from Serbia. Additionally, the impact of the contemporary crisis known as "Arab spring" and the related risks on the changing of travel habits was investigated.

Motivation in tourism

The knowledge of motivation is the best way to explain travel decision-making and travel behavior (Uysal, Li, & Sirakaya-Turk, 2008). Early research on travel motivation show that holiday destination choice depends on different motives classified as *push* and *pull* factors (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983). The push (psychological) factors originated from Maslow's hierarchy of needs. They are origin-related, intangible, and intrinsic desires of the individual traveler (internal or emotional aspects). On the other hand, pull factors are related to the attractiveness of a given destination and tangible characteristics (external or cognitive aspects) (Kozak, 2002). As more important, they determine when, where, and how people travel, how long they stay, and how much they spend (Oppewal, Huybers, & Crouch, 2015). Pull factors, are based on man-made (infrastructure and superstructure), natural (scenic attractions, historical sites, beaches, and climate), and socio-cultural attractions (accessibility, family and friends, tourist conveniences, historical interest, and suitability) (Seyidov & Adomaitienė, 2016; Sirakaya, McLellan, & Uysal, 1996). In that sense, Awaritefe (2004) singled out three groups of pull forces named as static (climate, natural and cultural motives, landscapes, etc.), dynamic (accommodation and other services, political situation, etc.), and current decision factors (marketing strategies and prices in destination and residential area).

Furthermore, Mayo and Jarvis (1981) defined consistency and complexity theory based on the need for variety in life. Besides, there is also a necessity for balanced consistency and complexity in life. Therefore, the travels provide the escape from the monotony of consistency and, at the same time, allow the complexity of change, novelty, and uncertainty, or vice versa, because the level of needs for variety depends on what one misses at home (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; Ryan, Page, & Aicken, 2005). Iso-Ahola (1982, 1983) and Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987) also proposed a new two-dimensional theory of tourism motivation (also known as dichotomous theory). This theory assumes that one's leisure behavior depends on two factors, which function simultaneously: escaping everyday life and environment (personal issues or roommates, family members), and seeking recreational opportunities with psychological rewards, which could be personal (e.g., exploration, relaxation, competence) and interpersonal (e.g., social interaction) (Iso-Ahola, 1982, 1983; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987). This theory indicated a relationship between human needs and the attraction of

the destination as a core of travel motivation (Awaritefe, 2004). Besides, in 1988, Pearce defined tourism motivation model named Travel Carrier Ladder (TCL) (also known as a travel-needs model). It is based on Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (Barling & Fincham, 1979) and it contains five different hierarchical stages that influence travel behavior (relaxation, stimulation, relationship, self-esteem and development, and fulfillment). This model is not focused on single motivation, because it includes all tourism patterns (Ryan, 1998). Pearce (1988) argued that every person has their own travel carrier that reflects the hierarchy of travel motives, aiming to satisfy the lower needs first (Rittichainuwat, Qu, & Mongkhonvanit, 2007).

Additionally, Cohen (1972) identified four types of international tourists based on their preference for either familiarity or novelty: the organized mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the explorer, and the drifter. On the one side of the continuum are organized mass tourists who enjoy familiarity, so they use organized package tours. On the opposite side are drifters who like to explore the destination by themselves and to be incorporated in the local culture. In the middle of the continuum are individual mass tourists who travel independently, but they still value familiarity, while explorers enjoy being involved in the host's life, but not completely (Qi, Gibson, & Zhang, 2009). Similarly, Plog (1974) suggested that people fall along two continua based on their travel preferences: a psychocetric-midcentric-allocentric continuum and an energy continuum. People high on allocentrism prefer unstructured vacations in exotic destinations away from what they are accustomed to at home. Psychocentric people prefer packaged tours and familiar destinations, visiting destinations similar to their home with many tourist amenities (Plog, 1974). Moreover, in 1991, he extended a model by energy dimension, which describes people on their preference for fast-paced versus lower-paced activities (Uysal, Li, & Sirakaya-Turk, 2008).

The role of risks in the decision-making process

The travel decision-making process is a complex multifaceted process, where tourist destination choice is a key element. According to Fesenmaier and Jeng (2000), decision-making consists of several temporal sub-decisions: core (destination choice, trip, time, etc.), secondary (activities and attractions to visit) and route decisions (shopping stops and items, the budget for gifts, etc.). This procedure is influenced by several psychological (internal) and non-psychological (external) variables.

Tourism is highly influenced by perceived risks, even more than other industries because the main purpose of taking a vacation is basically hedonism (Gonzalez-Herrero & Pratt, 1998). As Mowen and Minor argued (1998), a perceived risk is "a consumer's perception of the overall negativity of a course of action based upon an assessment of the possible negative outcomes and the likelihood that those outcomes will occur" (p. 176). Consumer perceived risk comprises the following types of risks: physical, financial, performance, social, psychological, time, and opportunity loss (Assael, 1995; George, 2010; Fuchs & Reichel, 2006, 2011). Potential tourists are more concerned about human-induced risks, so the effects of natural-induced extreme events usually have shorter effects than human-induced disasters (Timothy, 2006). One of the reasons is the fact that tourists are usually targets of terrorist attacks and criminal actions because of the different lifestyles, religion, or social norms (Baker, 2014).

Safety concerns are a significant predictor of travel intentions (Crotts, 1996/2003; Floyd, Gibson, Pennington-Gray & Thapa, 2004). Considering the perceived risk, there are three categories of tourists: risk-neutral, functional risk, and place risks tourists (Baker, 2014; Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992).

Risk-neutral tourists do not perceive tourism or their destinations as risky. The functional risk group considers tourism as risky in terms of organizational and mechanical issues, while the place risk group perceives holidays and their previous destination as highly risky. As a study conducted by Law (2006) confirmed, potential tourists would prefer destinations with low potential and perceived risks. Tourists will search for more information and will be more rational during the decision-making process as the perceived risk is higher. Eventually, they might decide to visit another destination (Fuchs & Reichel, 2011; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). On the bases of Cohen's typology, Lepp and Gibson (2003) confirmed in their study that tourists who perceive less risk aspire to novelty and excitement (explorers and drifters), compared to organized mass tourists who are risk-averse. In that sense, we could note that the level of a perceived risk has a vast impact on the destination choice, especially on international travel intentions.

Security crisis and its impact on the destination's competitiveness

The crises known as the "Arab Spring" revolution began at the end of 2010. It has led to major political changes and shifts in multi-decade-long regimes, first in Tunisia, then in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. At the same time, Morocco and Jordan experienced constitutional changes, while Syria was hit by a civil war that is still going on (Al-Shammari & Willoughby, 2019; Aras & Falk, 2015). The incidence of threats and actions have influenced the high risk of terrorism, particularly in Syria and Yemen (6–8), while North African states (Morocco and Tunisia) have the lowest impact of risk (0–4) (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2012–2016).

There are at least two links between uprisings and security challenges. On the one hand, the emphasis is on nationalism strengthening and the emergence of Islamist movements (e.g., Muslim Brotherhood) and militant groups (ISIS, Al Nusrah Front, etc.) (Hamid, McCants, & Dar, 2017; Salamey, 2015). On the other hand, the "Spring" has produced mass population displacements from MENA towards the European continent (mainly Western countries).

The "Arab Spring" and the creation of an associated negative destination image had devastating effects on the tourism industry of the whole area. The terrorist attacks and bombings in Tunisia (Bardo Museum, in the capital city Sousse), Egypt (Hurghada, Sharm el-Sheikh), Morocco (Marrakech), coup d'état in Turkey, civil war in Syria, as well as the existence of extremist groups (Daesh, PKK, Al Nusrah Front, and Al-Qaeda) dramatically reduced tourist arrivals and, consequently, had economic effects. The deterioration of the security situation was also noted in the European part of the Mediterranean (France and Spain) which has recorded low growth due to terrorism-related incidents in Nice and Barcelona.

According to the World Economic Forum indicators, Europe is a leading region with the most T&T competitive performances (Western and Southern part). Secondly, the Middle East and North African regions have increased despite terrorism incidence in the period 2013–2015. The Gulf Cooperation Countries and Morocco have the best result in the T&T sector (the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain), unlike Egypt and Tunisia. If we observe only the security indicators, the sensitivity of tourism industry is more evident, with negative direct and indirect short and long-term effects (World Economic Forum [WEF], 2011–2017).

Table 1

Number of tourists' arrivals and travel & tourism competitiveness index in the Mediterranean countries

Country	2010		2012		2014		2016	
	N	Score	N	Score	N	Score	N	Score
Spain	52.7	5.3	57.7	5.4	65.0	5.3	75.6	5.4
France	76.8	5.4	83.0	5.3	83.7	5.2	82.6	5.3
Italy	43.6	4.9	46.4	4.9	48.6	5.0	52.4	5.0
Greece	15.0	4.8	15.5	4.8	22.0	4.4	24.8	4.5
Croatia	9.1	4.6	10.3	4.6	11.6	4.3	13.8	4.4
Montenegro	0.5	4.6	1.3	3.5	1.3	3.7	1.7	3.7
Morocco	9.3	3.9	9.4	4.0	10.3	3.8	10.3	3.8
Tunisia	6.9	4.4	5.9	4.0	6.1	3.8	5.7	3.8
Egypt	14.1	4.0	11.2	3.9	9.6	3.5	5.3	3.6
Turkey	27.0	4.4	35.7	4.4	39.8	4.1	25.3	4.1

Note. Adapted from "UNWTO Tourism Highlights (2011–2017th Eds.)," by UNWTO, 2011–2017, and "The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report," by WEF, 2011–2017.

In 2010, the tourism industry accounted 6.5% of the GDP in Tunisia and 11% in Egypt, with 14.4% of foreign currency revenues (Groizard, Ismael, & Santana, 2016; Perles-Ribes, Ramón-Rodríguez, Moreno-Izquierdo, & Torregrosa Martí, 2016). Additionally, at its peak, this sector employed 11–12% of the workforce in both countries (Mansfeld & Winckler, 2015). Unfortunately, these events had an enormous impact on the arrivals in MENA region—a decrease of 6–12%; at individual level, up to 31% in Tunisia, and from 18% in 2014 to 42% in 2016 in Egypt. At the same time, the annual revenue recorded the lowest rates. The largest decline was recorded in Egypt (400%), Tunisia (200%), but also in Turkey (150%) (UNWTO, 2011–2017). Some countries are totally dependent on tourism (e.g., Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, etc.), therefore every crisis causes serious socio-economic problems (Mansfeld & Winckler, 2015).

Methodology

The research was conducted to determine which pull factors are the most important in the destination choice process. Also, the authors wanted to investigate the travel habits of the Serbian citizens and to determine whether the recent security issues in the Mediterranean region (e.g., political instability, terrorism, wars, and mass migrations) influenced the changes in the younger middle-aged tourists' behavior (age group: 19–39). Additionally, it was investigated whether there is a statistically significant difference in risk perception and its influence on destination choice between female and male younger middle-aged tourists, but also between destination-loyal tourists and first-time visitors. The Mediterranean region was chosen because its destinations have been the traditional choice of the Serbian emitting tourist market.

The authors used a self-administered questionnaire as a research instrument. The online survey was carried out during June and July 2016 among the residents of Serbia. The convenient sample included 301 respondents, while 249 were valid for the purpose of this study. The gap between valid responses and the total sample size exists due to age group unsuitability, missing data, technical errors, or contradictory answers. The questionnaire was composed of three parts. The first set of questions was dedicated to the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. The second set explored the travel habits of the respondents. The final set examined the attitudes of the respondents who generally spend their vacations in the Mediterranean region

which has been affected by numerous security risks. Most of the questions were close-ended, apart from the three open-ended ones. The third part of the survey comprised the Likert-scale questions. For the statistical data analysis, the authors used SPSS software, version 21.0 and Microsoft Excel 2010. Finally, in the data analysis, the authors used descriptive statistics and Independent-samples *t*-test.

Results and discussion

Demographic characteristics

In accordance with the aforementioned, the purpose of this research is the determination of the pull factors that are decisive for the destination decision-making process. Also, the authors intended to investigate how potential tourists' perceived risk affect destination choice. The largest percentage of the respondents was female (66.7%). Most respondents have higher education (78.7%) and are employed (53%). The wages range of the respondents (22.1% without incomes and 27.3% up to 50,000 Serbian Dinars [RSD]) indicates the poor financial situation of adolescents and younger middle-aged Serbian citizens and their low economic power.

Table 2
Respondents' general characteristics

Demographics	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender			
Female	166	66.7	66.7
Male	83	33.3	100
Age			
19-29	172	69.1	69.1
30-39	77	30.9	100
Education			
Elementary education	2	0.8	0.8
Secondary education	51	20.5	21.3
Higher education	196	78.7	100
Occupation			
High-school student	1	0.4	0.4
University student	90	36.1	36.5
Employed	132	53.0	89.6
Unemployed	26	10.4	100
Monthly incomes (in RSD)			
Without incomes	55	22.1	22.1
< 25,000	28	11.2	33.3
25,001-50,000	68	27.3	60.6
50,001-75,000	31	12.4	73.1
> 75,001	33	13.3	86.3
I do not want to answer this question	34	13.7	100
Total	249	100	

Which factors mostly affect the destination's choice?

The respondents were asked "Which factors are the most important when you choose a destination?". All the indicators were based on the pull framework from previous studies (Awaritefe, 2004; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Kozak, 2002). They were allowed to mark three factors. The results have shown that the price (29.2%) is the decisive factor for the Serbian young middle-aged tourists. Bearing in mind the salary range of most of the respondents, it is understandable why the price is the most important factor in the destination selection. The second important factor is service quality (26.4%), followed by the security situation (18.5%). The obtained results were in accordance with the research carried out by Sirakaya et al. (1996). They noted that major factors affecting destination choice include destination attractiveness, exogenous factors (safety issues), the total cost of the trip, and available time. Furthermore, there is no significant difference in the factors' rating between female and male respondents, except for the destination distance, which is more significant for men.

The same authors also wanted to investigate the types of risks (both natural and human-induced) that influence destination choice the most. The study results have shown that the three most important types of risks perceived by the respondents are terrorism (30.5%), diseases and epidemics (25.0%), and internal conflicts (12.1%). These results coincide with the finding from the study conducted by the Kozak et al. (2007) who found that infectious diseases and terrorist acts are the most important factors that cause the change of travel decisions. Similarly, Fuchs and Reichel (2006, 2011) stated that the human-induced risks (especially terrorism and political unrests), socio-psychological risks, and food safety are the most important factors for the first-time visitors during the destination selection. In accordance with the expectations, the Serbian young middle-aged tourists are the least concerned about natural-induced extreme events (10.3%), because they do not have long-term effects on the tourists' visits (Kozak et al., 2007). Besides, the results showed the differences between female and male risk perception. The female tourists are more sensitive to risks such as diseases and epidemics, terrorism, and international conflicts, while for male tourists' internal conflicts are more important.

During the destination decision-making process, the potential travelers collect the necessary information from different sources (mass media, friends and family, word-of-mouth (WOM), professional associations, etc.) and then make their own conclusions (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; J. Simpson, Simpson, & Cruz-Milán, 2016; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). The results of our study once again confirmed that potential tourists value suggestions

Table 3
Factors-gender cross-tabulation

Factors	Total (%)	Gender (%)	
		Female	Male
Service quality	26.4	61.4	65.9
Security	18.5	44.0	43.9
Destination distance	10.5	22.3	30.5
Language	1.0	3.0	1.2
Cultural differences	10.7	26.5	23.2
Price	29.2	68.1	72.0
Other	3.7	8.4	9.8

Table 4
Risks-gender cross-tabulation

Factors	Total (%)	Gender (%)	
		Female	Male
Internal conflicts	11.9	26.5	35.4
Diseases and epidemics	25.0	65.1	54.9
Terrorism	30.5	78.3	69.5
Crime rate	8.8	21.1	23.2
International conflicts	12.1	32.5	24.4
Natural disasters	10.3	25.9	24.4
Other	1.5	2.4	6.1

from friends and family the most (47.1% of respondents) (Martin & Lueg, 2013; Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol, 2008). These recommendations have a vast impact on the decision process because they affect the emotions, attitudes, and opinions of the potential tourists (Sweeney et al., 2008) and they are of high importance for the senior and seasonal travelers (Vincent & De los Santos, 1990). The second most important source of recommendations is media (27.3%), followed by the recommendations from the government institutions (14.7%), professional associations (7.5%), and other sources (3.5%). Mass media affect the perception of safety on a destination and even can ruin the destination image (Schroeder & Pennington-Gray, 2014; Tasci & Gartner, 2007). The frequency of the story appearing in the media has a high influence on the travelers' attitudes toward destination under the crises (Petty, Briñol, & Tormala, 2002). The media can help in extreme situations by publishing warnings, but also in some cases, they tend to exaggerate, so it can bring more costs than benefits. As a vast number of people participate in the international tourism, the government institutions (e.g., Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Tourism) and professional associations (e.g., UNWTO, National Tourism Organizations) publish recommendations for their citizens in terms of international tourism.

Tourists' attitudes toward politically induced risks

According to the recorded risks, respondents were surveyed about the contemporary security challenges in the Mediterranean region. Surprisingly, they have demonstrated a good understanding of the phenomena of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and the Balkan migration route (only 2.8% answered negatively). Subsequently, we found out that they were mostly informed by the mass media. The respondents expressed the highest agreement rate with the following statements: "ISIS operations disrupt the tourism industry of the Mediterranean countries" (~72.2%, $M = 3.97$; $SD = 1.019$) and "The media image of the current security situation increases the sense of insecurity of potential tourists" (~77.1%, $M = 4.03$; $SD = 0.918$). The respondents showed the most balanced attitudes towards the statements "Balkan migration route affects the decision-making process" ($M = 3.04$; $SD = 1.163$). Further, group statistics revealed that women are more vulnerable than men in terms of security implications.

Table 5

Frequencies of the tourists' attitudes

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
ISIS operations disrupt the tourism industry of the Mediterranean countries.	6	17	46	90	90
Balkan migration route affects the decision-making process.	27	51	87	53	31
The higher concentration of migrants represents the risk of spreading epidemics.	17	37	85	57	53
Increased borders control negatively influences the destination choice.	28	44	58	74	45
The services of the mentioned countries invest maximum efforts to improve security in destinations.	15	33	132	54	15
The media image of the current security situation increases the sense of insecurity of potential tourists.	4	12	41	108	84

Note. 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

In order to compare mean scores of two different groups, the authors applied Independent-samples *t*-test. In this study we wanted to investigate if there is a significant difference between two groups (males/females) regarding their opinion about the researched phenomena.

Table 6
Independent-samples t-test

Statements	M		SD		*t*	*p*	Mean difference
	f	m	f	m			
ISIS operations disrupt the tourism industry of the Mediterranean countries.	4.1	3.8	0.90	1.21	1.77	.08	0.24
Balkan migration route affects the decision-making process.	3.2	2.8	1.12	1.12	2.37	.02	0.37
The higher concentration of migrants represents the risk of spreading epidemics.	3.5	3.1	1.09	1.29	2.16	.03	0.34
Increased borders control negatively influences the destination choice.	3.4	3.1	1.27	1.22	1.86	.06	0.31
The services of the mentioned countries invest maximum efforts to improve security in destinations.	3.1	4.1	0.88	0.97	1.18	.24	0.15
The media image of the current security situation increases the sense of insecurity of potential tourists.	3	3.8	0.88	0.95	2.57	.01	0.31

Note. f = females; m = males.

The results have shown that there is a statistically significant difference regarding the three statements. The test revealed a difference towards the impact of "Balkan migration route on the decision-making process" between males and females: $t = 2.37$; $p = .018$ (two-tailed). Mean difference was 0.37; 95% *CI* = .062 to .673. The third statement "The higher concentration of migrants represents the risk of spreading epidemics" also showed the difference between genders: $t = 2.16$; $p = .032$ with mean difference 0.34 (95% *CI* = .030–.645). Further, the difference is recorded in respect of claim "The media image of the current security situation increases the sense of insecurity of potential tourists": $t = 2.57$; $p = .011$ with mean value 0.31 (95% *CI* = .073 to .554). An eta squared formula found a very small effect size (.018–.026). Hence, the results showed that there was no statistically significant difference determined in the scores of males and females regarding other items ($p > .05$).

Have the travel habits changed after the outbreak of the crisis?

During the researched period 2013–2015, the vast part of respondents traveled during the summer season (between 69.1–73.5%). The most visited destinations in this period were Greece (37.7%), Montenegro (25.7%), Turkey (9.9%), and Croatia (8.0%), followed by Italy (3.8%), Spain (3.3%), Egypt (3.3%), and Tunisia (0.7%). More than a half of the respondents (57%) were loyal to the same destination country in the researched period. In terms of transportation, 39.5% of the respondents traveled by bus, 30.9% by car, 23.5% by plane, and only 6.1% by train. Apartments (53.1%) were the most commonly used type of accommodation among the Serbian tourists, while most of the respondents combined the ways of booking arrangements (36.1%)—by using the services of travel agencies and self-booking. The length of stay in the summer destinations varied from 5 to 15 days, even though 4.8% of the respondents stayed for more than 15 days.

The authors also wanted to investigate if the travel habits have changed among the Serbian citizens in the researched period. Observing the shares of the respondents who traveled in the period 2013–2016, it can be concluded that the smallest share was willing to take the summer vacation in 2016 (36.7%). Comparing the index of changes in the tourist demand for the destination level (2016/2013), the biggest increase was recorded in the case of Greece (56.3%). On the other side, the most prominent decrease was recorded for the following destinations: Tunisia and Egypt (100%), and Turkey (80.6%), which were faced with recent terrorist attacks or political instability. In 2016 only 8.33% of respondents repeated their visit to the destinations they were loyal to in the period 2013–2015, which, at the same time, were exposed to the above-mentioned risks. It implies that these factors highly influenced the destination choice of a researched segment of Serbian tourists, as some of them explicitly indicated:

"Due to the current situation in the world, this year I will not continue the tradition of summer holidays in Turkey" (ID 87).

As a result, the tourist demand redirected towards Greece, Italy, Spain, and some alternative tourist destination, such as the USA, France, Portugal, Russia, etc., which were perceived as safe for visits by the respondents. On the other hand, observing the group of respondents who visited different destination every year, they mostly traveled to Greece or Montenegro in 2016, and they had even visited these destinations in the previous period, because of security issues in other Mediterranean destinations.

Conclusions

Various factors have a huge role in making travel decisions. Observing the key pull forces, this study showed that economic (price) and service quality dimensions were the most important factors in the process of the destination selection for the researched segment of Serbian tourism demand. On the other hand, the security indicators were high-ranked, but they were not decisive in destination choice. If we look at individual safety and security threats, we can say that terrorist acts and internal conflicts (human) and diseases and epidemics (natural) disasters had the greatest influence on the decisions.

Hence, potential tourists use different information sources during the process of vacation planning: friends and relatives, the acquaintances who have already visited the destination, various types of media, etc. This study has confirmed that the people who have already visited a destination represent the most valuable source of information. Once again, the importance of word-of-mouth during the process of travel planning is emphasized. Likewise, the media take a big share in this process, with the help of the new technology and its ability to convey the messages in a short time all over the globe.

The continuation of the research showed that the majority of respondents were familiar with the current situation in the MENA region, and its consequences, again thanks to mass media. Also, as the authors expected, the existence of statistically significant differences between the genders has been established. According to the respondents' opinion, the media has increased the feeling of the insecurity of the potential tourists. Generally, female respondents were more sensitive to risks (e.g., risk-averse tourists). The research also indicated that in the period 2013–2015, visitors from Serbia were loyal to the same destinations (mostly Greece and Montenegro). The type of booking arrangements, accommodation facilities, and ways of transportation, implicate that most respondents belong to the group of mass, individual mass, psychocentric, and allocentric tourists. At the same time, crisis events influenced the allocation of the tourism demand, but not the

cancelation of the travel. The demand has just redirected from the destination in the MENA region to Greece and other Southern European countries.

All of the foregoing proves that security challenges play an important role in travel planning. Most of the respondents are not willing to take risks, so in case of security issues in the destination, they seek an alternative solution. Therefore, the host countries would benefit from the understanding of tourists' perception as a guideline for the improvement in tourism supply. The findings could also help in creating strategies and other planning documents that direct tourism development. Furthermore, the fact that this research includes only one segment of the Serbian population (e.g., Serbian young middle-aged residents) represents the main limitation to obtain the generalized results. Besides, taking into account that push factors have been undermined, this research could be discussed only from pull motivations perspective. Nevertheless, its results could be used as a starting point for further empirical analysis based on the push and pull motivational framework.

Acknowledgments

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