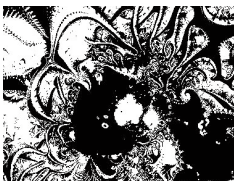

doi:10.5559/di.23.4.06

SEASON-ORIENTED DESTINATION POSITIONING FOR VISITORS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Helena NEMEC RUDEŽ, Gorazd SEDMAK, Ksenija VODEB
Faculty of Tourism Studies – Turistica, Portorož, Slovenia

Štefan BOJNEC
Faculty of Management, Koper, Slovenia

UDK: 338.48(262)(210.5)
Izvorni znanstveni rad

Primljeno: 7. 4. 2014.

Despite the widespread interest in tourism seasonality, there is little empirical research on seasonal changes of benefits sought by visitors. Destination positioning based on seasonal changes of benefits sought by visitors is addressed in this study. A Northern Mediterranean destination, Portorož is taken as a case study to investigate whether benefits design different benefit-based segments across the seasons. Cluster analysis for the spring, summer and autumn/winter seasons was undertaken on delineated factor scores of benefits on a yearly basis. The study shows that visitors who search for similar benefits across seasons are related with different demographics and travel related characteristics of visitors.

Keywords: seasonal variations, benefit segmentation, Mediterranean, cluster analysis

✉ Helena Nemec Rudež, University of Primorska,
Faculty of Tourism Studies – Turistica, Obala 11a,
6320 Portorož, Slovenia.
E-mail: helena.nemec@fts.upr.si

INTRODUCTION

Intense competition requires effective destination positioning. Market positioning is defined as "establishing and maintaining a distinctive place in the market for an organization and/or its individual product offerings" (Lovelock, 1991) and it is a part of the segmentation-targeting-positioning (STP) process. Indeed, after segmenting the market, one or more mar-

ket segments are selected to be targeted and positioning strategy should be developed for them. Destination positioning is much more complex than the positioning of a single product as it is a bundle of different tourism products. It is closely linked with destination image and branding (Gartner, 1989; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003).

A well-positioned destination should be aligned to the benefits that visitors seek. It is an important imperative in creating experience value in tourism destination (Prebensen, Woo, Chen, & Uysal, 2013). Benefit segmentation is recognized as a method that assists in understanding as well as predicting buying behavior and tourism demand (Haley, 1968). Indeed, Prayag (2007, p. 141) states that "destination positioning is about the philosophy of understanding and meeting unique consumer needs".

Destination positioning "implies a segmentation process where a destination targets the right kind of visitor" (Mykletun, R. J., Crotts, & Mykletun, A., 2001, p. 494), but it is much more challenging when targeted segments change between the seasons. Highly seasonal destinations, like the Mediterranean resorts, where climatic and bathing characteristics are crucial for choosing a holiday destination, pose the issue of how strategic destinations should position themselves to contend with the seasonal variations of the visitors' characteristics and the benefits they seek in a destination. Changes in benefit-based segments over the year can determine destination positioning practices in value creation and design of tourism products.

The paper aims to explore whether there is a need for a season-oriented destination positioning in highly seasonal Mediterranean destinations based on the benefits sought by visitors. According to the literature review, it is the first study referring to the seasonality and benefit segmentation in the Mediterranean including more than one season. Thus, it sheds some light on the seasonal variations of benefits in tourist experience value in the highly seasonal Mediterranean Basin, which is still the most important world destination in terms of tourists' arrivals. From the empirical and practical point of view, the study assesses the suitability of the present targeting tourist experience value and positioning strategy of Portorož. Besides, it also provides an in-depth insight into the structure of the visitors visiting a destination throughout the year.

ISSUES OF MEDITERRANEAN DESTINATIONS

The Mediterranean Basin – the most important world tourism destination in terms of tourists' arrivals, overnight stays and tourism consumption – has been characterized by high seasonality of tourism demand and seasonal variations in climat-

ic and bathing characteristics. Inside this area, an intense competition between 3S (sun, sea, sand) mass-oriented destinations is present. They have many similar attributes (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) and similar promotion activities where sea and sun dominate (Buhalis, 2000), and that makes them close substitutes. The majority of these destinations have become obsolete in the last twenty years. This is evident in different Mediterranean countries, such as Spain (Priestley & Mundet, 1998), Croatia (Vukonić, 2001) and Italy (Mazzette, 2004). These examples demonstrate that a sensible conceptualization in creating experience value in tourism and destination positioning strategy presents a real challenge.

Portorož, a North Mediterranean resort in Slovenia, was chosen for a case study to research seasonal variations of benefits sought by visitors. It is a small coastal town of around 17,000 inhabitants. In 2010, there were 15,050 tourist beds, accounting for approximately 13% of the country's total tourist beds. As tourism represents the main economic activity, high seasonality in distribution of tourist arrivals and overnight stays is considered to be a huge challenge for this destination. In the same year, as many as 116,940 tourists were visiting Portorož in the high season (July and August), representing 30.5% of yearly visits and creating 39.4% of yearly overnight stays (SORS, 2013).[1] However, Portorož hosted only 15% of yearly visits in the low season (between November and February); it accounted for 13% of overnight stays.

Portorož was a well-developed tourist destination with a high demand of tourists, large investments in hotels and congress centers in the 1970s and 1980s. Later, destination development slowed down. The destination reached its mature stage in the early 1990s. In that period, the destination tried to move away from the 3S mass tourism value creation strategy by developing specialized tourism products such as wellness, beach and sports activities, boutique shopping, and congress facilities. Although congress tourists partially palliated seasonality, leisure visitors are still prevailing also in hotels with congress facilities and as a result of this Portorož remains a leisure destination. The reason for this may be found in the tourism infrastructure (swimming pools, wellness) which is designed for leisure tourists. Business visitors tend to combine business and pleasure while visiting Portorož.

The current tourism destination strategy of Portorož was developed in 2009 (Municipality of Piran, 2009) and is based analytically on secondary data research. The following target tourist segments were proposed for Portorož: wellness MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and events), cultural events, sport activities, gambling and family tourists. Nevertheless,

these tourist segments do not necessarily correspond to the benefits sought by visitors in the destination. Furthermore, seasonal changes in structures of visitors and their needs as dynamic drivers of tourist experiences seem to be ignored in the document. Indeed, the 3S tourism offer still prevails in Portorož (Prasnikar, Zabkar, & Rajkovic, 2007; Nemec Rudež, Sedmak, & Bojnec, 2013) and its market position is considerably blurred at present (Sedmak & Mihalič, 2008; Brezovec, 2007). This destination image calls for a conceptualization of value creation in the tourism context of Mediterranean destinations and strategic deliberation concerning its marketing positioning. Therefore, the research should focus on creating experience value in the tourism destination development. In this way, the existing frameworks may be improved in order to include seasonal variations in the development of target marketing and positioning proposals.

SEASONAL VARIATIONS OF VISITORS' BENEFITS

The first comprehensive study on destination seasonality was undertaken in the 1970s (Bar-On, 1975). Since then, several studies dealing with destination seasonality have been conducted establishing it as one of the main issues in tourism destination research. Seasonality remains at the same time one of the major challenges for many destinations (Andriotis, 2005) and still one of the least understood tourism features (Higham & Hinch, 2002).

So far, the research on seasonal aspects of motivations to travel is focused on North America. Baum and Hagen (1999) state that the research on seasonality is well documented "particularly in relation to peripheral, cold-water regions of Europe and North America", leaving seasonality in other destinations under-researched. A recent study by Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele, and Beaumont (2013) reviews tourism studies that investigate the relationship between seasonality and segmentation. It can be derived that the present body of research still does not cover the highly seasonal Mediterranean Basin in this regard. Kozak and Rimmington (2000), Andriotis, Agiomirgianakis, and Mihiotis (2007), Figini and Vici (2012) and Cisneros-Martínez and Fernández-Morales (2013) researched seasonal issues of different segments, but the investigation was limited to visitors of one season. Studies on seasonal variations of motivations to travel date back to the 1980s when Calantone and Johar (1984) found that there are different combinations of benefits sought by visitors in Massachusetts in the USA in different seasons. Gitelson and Kerstetter (1990) came to the conclusion that dimensions of benefits vary across the sea-

sons. More precisely, they realized that some benefits are more important for visitors in the high summer season than in the shoulder or low seasons in North Carolina in the USA. Later, Bonn, Furr, and Uysal (1992) found that significant differences exist among tourists in the coastal resort Hilton Head Island in the USA in different seasons with respect to socio-demographic characteristics, travel related characteristics and tourists' activities. Spotts and Mahoney (1993) investigated motivations and travel related characteristics of tourists in different seasons in Michigan. Moreover, season specific multiple-segments tourist strategy for Canadian resorts is recommended by Owens (1994) in order to determine the all-season competitive strategy. Spencer and Holecek (2007) found some differences in activities undertaken between summer and fall tourists, researching the source market of the Great Lakes Region in North America. Jang (2004) analyzed motivations to visit destinations in different seasons proposing that selected marketing mix falls along the Seasonal Demand Efficient Frontier. In addition, Jang, Cai, Morrison, and O'Leary (2005) confirmed that different travel activities and different seasons have different demands and expenditure levels. Both studies engaged French travelers to North America. Furthermore, the study of Lundtorp, Rassing, and Wanhill (2001) revealed that visitors to the Danish seaside destination Bornholm are motivated to visit the same attractions (the nature, landscape and atmosphere of the island) in different seasons.

DESTINATION SEGMENTATION AND POSITIONING IN THE VIEW OF SEASONALITY

Pike (2008, p. 221) stresses that "effective positioning offers the customer benefits tailored to solve a problem, in a way that is different to competitors". Seasonal variations of benefits of tourists in value creation should be considered in destination positioning. Insight into the market structure and understanding of visitors' seasonal variations enables tourism suppliers and destination policy makers to identify destination positioning and competitive advantage (Dolnicar, 2008), and helps to clear seasonal variations (Fernández-Morales & Mayorga-Toledano, 2008). There are different analytical bases for splitting consumers into homogeneous groups by market segmentation. Benefit segmentation is recognized to be a better predictor of buying behavior than more traditional segmentation techniques (Haley, 1968). Johns and Gyimóthy (2002) and Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele, and Beaumont (2009) focus on the behavior of tourists and argue that while demographic and geographic segmentation cannot predict tourists' demand for

particular tourism products, the benefit segmentation analysis is far more useful in providing more accurate predictions.

Kim (1998) argues that the development of destination competitive position should match the visitors' season-oriented motives. The understanding of benefits enables the matching of destination market position with the benefits of the target market segment(s) resulting in consistent market positioning. Kotler, Bowen, and Maken (2006) state that tourism products can be developed according to the benefits sought and that the communication can be more effective when the benefits sought are known to marketers and destination policy makers.

Thus, seasonal-based segmentation analysis helps to better understand the consumers in tourism (Frochot, 2005, p. 338) and enables a good positioning and development of marketing strategies (Pegg, Patterson, & Gariddo, 2012). Benefits sought in a specific season can direct a destination to develop season-oriented dynamic positioning and dynamic drivers in tourist experience values. Molera and Albaladejo (2007, p. 766) suggest that destination positioning and market segmentation undertaken in several seasons would show whether visitors segments are stable over the year or not. More specifically, Kozak (2002, p. 222) states that "as destinations are often multi-products, some might be visiting a destination in the summer season just to relax, but others in the winter to seek adventure". Hence, benefit-focused destination positioning has to consider changing seasonal patterns of visitors if target markets change between the seasons.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Previous research identified season-specific benefit-based dimensions and market segments for Portorož in the spring season (Nemec Rudež et al., 2013) and summer season (Nemec Rudež, Sedmak, Vodeb, & Bojnec, 2014). Upgrading them in a conceptual framework for understanding how visitor benefits can be enhanced by different seasons, the present paper compares benefit-based dimensions and market segments between seasons focusing on the spring season, summer season, and autumn/winter season. In this way, the study tries to find out whether there are different benefit-based segments among the seasons and, consequently, whether the destination should use one-faceted positioning throughout the year or multi-faceted dynamic positioning adapted to the seasonal changes of benefits. Our conceptual approach largely pays attention to the first step of the STP process as an in-depth segmentation analysis framework was neglected in previous

positioning strategies and guidelines for the Mediterranean destinations (Sedmak & Mihalič, 2008).

> This paper aims to answer the following research question: How to create tourist benefit value in destination repositioning to respond to the seasonal variations in benefits sought by its visitors?

The studied population includes foreign leisure visitors to Portorož. Business visitors might looking for different benefits than leisure visitors (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007). In addition, visitors to Portorož are predominantly leisure visitors since there are approximately 1% of business visitors in the summer season and around 10% in the autumn/winter season (Sedmak et al., 2011; Sedmak et al., 2012). The mentioned statistical fact is contrary to the Mediterranean seaside destination Rimini, with the majority of business tourists in low season and their demand being complementary to the demand of summer visitors (Figini & Vici, 2012). Domestic visitors are excluded from the present research since Portorož is to a great extent a "get-away beach" for domestic tourists (Brezovec, Sedmak, & Vodeb, 2009). Finally, marketing activities are considered of minor importance for the domestic market as Portorož is practically the only seaside resort in Slovenia.

METHODOLOGY

The survey approach was used to conduct the present conceptual research. Following Tkaczynski et al. (2009, p. 170), the most common approach in tourism segmentation studies is to develop profiles of visitors. The first problem the researchers face in segmentation research is the selection of variables used to measure the benefits. The literature review of benefit segmentation studies (Frochot & Morrison, 2001) shows that some benefit variables are specific to a destination or tourism product; while other variables are common in benefit segmentation studies. The questionnaire was originally developed for the first phase of the study referring to the spring season (Nemec Rudež et al., 2013).

Research on benefit-based segments is an exploratory study. Frochot and Morrison (2001) argue that "benefit segmentation can be classified as an *a posteriori* technique since the composition of segments is unknown in advance of the analysis". Thus, the present study follows the recommendations of Dolnicar (2004), that the same sampling method and questionnaire should be used when tracking *a posteriori* segments in different periods. Proportional quota sampling using the structure

of visitors' country of origin was used, relying on the statistical data of arrivals of tourists of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SORS, 2011).

The first part of the written questionnaire used in the three seasons consisted of 17 five-point Likert-type scales in order to investigate the benefit sought (1 = completely disagree, and 5 = completely agree). The second part of the questionnaire included the information on the demographic and travel related characteristics of respondents in order to describe the segments.

Proportional quota sampling was used for each season. Country of origin of tourists of Municipality of Piran[2] was based on the data of SORS (2011) from the previous year's season to best meet the structure of visitors. Samples of the three seasons were not balanced in terms of age, accommodation or occupation because these data are available for the municipality only on yearly basis. Therefore, the representativeness of season-based samples cannot be assessed and it should be considered as a study limitation.

The surveys were undertaken in Portorož in 2010 and partly in 2011 including three seasons: shoulder season in spring (between April 15 and May 31, 2010), high season in summer (between June 15 and August 31, 2010) and low season in autumn and winter (between November 15, 2010 and January 20, 2011). The written questionnaires were completed by conducting face-to-face interviews in public areas in Portorož. The written questionnaires were available in three languages mostly spoken by foreign visitors to Portorož: English, German and Italian. Four interviewers collected 365 completed questionnaires during the spring season, 404 questionnaires during the summer season, and 246 questionnaires during the autumn/winter season. In summary, there were 1015 collected completed questionnaires in the whole sample. The profiles of respondents for each season are presented in Table 1.

Principal component analysis was undertaken for the whole sample (n = 1015) including the three seasons. Afterwards, clustering was performed for each season separately. Hierarchical clustering method was used to identify outliers. The factor scores were used to design the clusters using K-means analysis. Different solutions of numbers of clusters were considered. However, numbers of clusters were chosen with the intention to get clearly distinctive clusters in terms of demographics, travel related characteristics and benefits sought. Descriptive comparison between clusters was undertaken to analyze seasonal-based variations of benefits and descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of segments.

TABLE 1
Socio-demographic characteristics and travel-related characteristics of the respondents in three different seasonal samples (in percentage)

		Spring (n = 365)	Summer (n = 404)	Autumn/ Winter (n = 246)
Age	19 and below	1.9	4.2	2.4
	20-29	8.5	15.3	20.7
	30-39	14.6	19.8	17.1
	40-49	21.6	26.2	26.4
	50-59	23.6	19.1	15.9
	60 and over	29.9	15.3	17.5
Occupation	Employed	46.0	51.5	39.0
	Self-employed	12.3	20.3	17.9
	Student	6.0	7.7	17.9
	Unemployed/housewife	4.7	2.5	6.9
	Retired	31.0	15.3	16.7
	Other	0.0	2.7	1.6
Country of origin	Italy	37.8	29.2	37.8
	Germany	18.1	14.4	11.0
	Austria	18.9	21.0	16.7
	Other	25.2	35.4	34.5
Accommodation	Hotel	71.0	66.6	54.1
	Apartment	4.9	13.9	6.1
	Private room	7.3	3.5	7.7
	Farmhouse	0.3	0.7	1.6
	Campsite	2.7	4.2	4.9
	Friends and relatives	2.5	2.7	5.7
	Stay in other destination	3.6	5.7	9.8
	Only in transit	5.8	1.7	9.3
	Other	1.9	1.0	0.8
Spending per person per day	Up to 30 Euros	9.6	11.9	30.5
	31 to 60 Euros	51.5	26.5	29.7
	More than 60 Euros	38.9	61.6	38.2
Organization	Tour group	14.0	8.9	13.4
	Not with tour group	86.0	91.1	86.6
Children	Travel with children	31.0	41.8	35.8
	Travel without children	69.0	58.2	64.2
First visit to destination	Yes	48.8	55.4	50.8
	No	51.2	44.6	49.2
Information source*	Books	19.8	16.6	12.6
	Internet	34.1	38.9	41.5
	Friends and relatives	18.4	31.2	25.6
	Brochures	33.2	22.3	18.7
	Other sources	7.4	28.0	19.6

*Due to multiple responses the percentage sum can be more than 100%

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation detected dimensions of tourist benefits for the whole sample composed by visitors in the three seasons (Table 2). There emerged five factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 which explained 60.7% of the total variance. They were named: *relaxation, curiosity, passivity and enjoyment*, *physical activity and price convenience*, and *escape*. The latter was excluded from further research because its Cronbach's alpha was 0.345. Regression factor scores of the four factors were used for K-means analysis. Hierarchical clustering identified one outlier in the spring season and one in the autumn/winter season. They were eliminated from further analysis.

TABLE 2
Factor analysis of benefits sought (n = 1015)

	Factor loadings				
Factors	Relaxation	Curiosity	Passivity and enjoyment	Phys. activity and price convenience	Escape
Relaxation					
To release tensions	*0.794*	0.026	0.045	0.168	-0.070
To get batteries recharged	*0.732*	0.177	0.189	0.081	0.011
To get away from everyday life	*0.728*	-0.005	0.088	-0.001	0.055
To relax physically	*0.707*	0.026	0.294	0.177	-0.105
Curiosity					
To get new experience	0.006	*0.854*	-0.067	0.126	-0.053
To learn new things	-0.016	*0.818*	-0.015	0.105	-0.105
To have fun	0.394	*0.589*	0.116	-0.057	0.129
To meet new people	0.036	*0.580*	-0.109	0.364	0.341
Passivity and enjoyment					
To do nothing	0.159	-0.178	*0.705*	0.016	0.132
To enjoy tranquility	0.279	0.039	*0.661*	0.087	-0.170
To enjoy comfort	0.089	0.007	*0.658*	0.325	-0.005
To enjoy the seaside	0.112	0.476	*0.526*	-0.003	-0.206
Physical activity and price convenience					
To relax physically	0.105	0.319	-0.058	*0.732*	-0.051
Affordable price	0.024	-0.056	0.209	*0.693*	0.073
To get fit	0.315	0.146	0.222	*0.678*	-0.059
Escape					
Have good time with friends	0.035	0.179	0.102	-0.017	*0.783*
Spend time away from family	-0.096	-0.217	-0.227	0.015	*0.666*
Eigenvalue	4.135	2.349	1.397	1.348	1.091
Variance explained (%)	15.28	15.15	11.58	10.69	8.00
Cronbach's alpha	0.774	0.752	0.618	0.633	0.345

KMO = 0.798, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 4646.989 at df = 136 with a significance of p = 0.000.

A four-cluster solution was chosen for the spring season. The structure of segments shows that the largest segment is

labelled as *active and price oriented visitors* that represent 41.2% of the respondents (Table 3). These visitors seek only *physical activity and price convenience*. According to demographics and travel-related characteristics (Table 4), they are younger than other segments. They are mostly repeat visitors from Italy. *Curious relaxers* indicate consideration for *relaxation* and *curiosity*. They are mostly first time visitors from Italy and they are a bit older than *active and price oriented visitors*. *Curious enjoyers* who represent the smallest segment are characterized by *curiosity* and *passivity and enjoyment*. They are represented by older visitors who are – in contrast to other spring segments – mostly from Germany. They travel more than other segments within the tour group (43.2%). *Want-it-all visitors* seek all benefits, but *passivity and enjoyment* and *relaxation* are more exhibited. They are older repeat visitors who come mostly from Austria and Italy.

TABLE 3
Clusters of visitors in each season

Spring	Summer	Autumn/Winter
Curious enjoyers n = 37 (10.1%) seek benefit related to curiosity and passivity and enjoyment	Curious visitors n = 76 (18.8%) seek curiosity related products and slightly also relaxation	Active and price oriented relaxers n = 135 (54.9%) seek benefits related to physical activity and price convenience and relaxation and very slightly to passivity and enjoyment
Curious relaxers n = 78 (21.4%) seek benefits related to relaxation and curiosity and slightly also to physical activity and price convenience	Passive relaxers n = 109 (27.0%) seek relaxation and just mildly also passivity and enjoyment	Curious visitors n = 110 (46.1%) seek only benefits related to curiosity
Active and price oriented n = 150 (41.2%) seek only benefits related to physical activity and price convenience	Want-it-all visitors n = 110 (27.2%) seek all benefits (passivity and enjoyment are the least sought)	
Want-it-all visitors n = 99 (27.2%) seek all benefits (physical activity and price convenience are very slightly sought)	Active and price oriented visitors n = 16 (4.0%) seek physical activity and convenience	
	Passive enjoyers n = 93 (23.0%) seek only passivity and enjoyment	

A five-cluster solution was identified as the best solution for the summer season. The largest two segments are *passive relaxers* and *want-it-all visitors* (Table 3). *Passive relaxers* are middle-aged visitors mainly from Italy. They represent the only segment of repeat visitors during the summer season.

Almost half of them are travelling with children. *Want-it-all visitors* are mostly between 50 and 59-year-old first time visitors from Germany and Italy. Almost half of them are travelling with children. *Curious visitors* represent young first time visitors mostly from Germany and Austria. *Passive enjoyers* are middle-aged first time enjoyers who are mostly from Italy. The smallest segment labelled *active and price oriented visitors* seek only physical activity and price convenience. It includes only 4% of the summer visitors who are mostly middle-aged Italian first time visitors. Apart from this segment and *want-it-all visitors*, summer visitors do not exhibit the search for *physical activity and price convenience*. This is consistent with the destination pricing policy during high summer season.

TABLE 4
Demographic and travel-related characteristics of visitors by clusters in each season

Spring	Summer	Autumn/Winter
Curious enjoyers n = 37 (10.1%)	Curious visitors n = 76 (18.8%)	Active and price oriented relaxers n = 135 (54.9%)
Older (54.0% aged 60 and over) Mostly from Germany (32.4%) Retired (56.8%) Staying at the hotel (67.6%) Spending daily more than 60 Euros per person (51.4%) Not travelling with tour group (56.7%) Travelling without children (88.2%) First time visitors (73.0%) Information source: brochures and guide books (54.0%)	Young (27.6% between 20 and 29) Mostly from Austria (22.4%) and Germany (19.7%) Employed (57.9%) Staying at the hotel (51.3%) Spending daily more than 60 Euros per person (43.4%) Not travelling with tour group (89.5%) Travelling without children (61.8%) First time visitors (76.3%) Information source: Internet (32.9%)	Older (26.6% aged 60 and over) Mostly from Italy (40.7%) Employed (37.8%) Staying at the hotel (70.4%) Spending daily more than 60 Euros per person (50.4%) Not travelling with tour group (84.4%) Travelling without children (67.6%) Repeat visitors (57.8%) Information source: Internet (25.6%) and relatives and friends (26.6%)
Curious relaxers n = 78 (21.4%)	Passive relaxers n = 109 (27.0%)	Curious visitors n = 110 (46.1%)
Middle-aged and older (42.3% aged between 40 and 59) Mostly from Italy (30.8%) Employed (51.3%) Staying at the hotel (61.3%) Spending daily between 30 and 60 Euros per person (46.2%) Not travelling with tour group (84.6%) Travelling without children (69.2%) First visitors (60.3%) Information source: brochures and guide books (51.3%)	Mostly aged between 40 and 49 (32.1%) Mostly from Italy (41.3%) Employed (53.2%) Staying at the hotel (68.8%) Spending daily more than 60 Euros per person (77.0%) Not travelling with tour group (96.3%) Travelling without children (51.3%) Repeat visitors (63.3%) Information source: Internet (32.9%)	Middle-aged (30.0% between 40 and 49) Mostly from Italy (33.6%) Employed (40.9%) Staying at the hotel (34.5%) Spending daily less than 30 Euros per person (46.4%) Not travelling with tour group (89.1%) Travelling without children (60.4%) First time visitors (61.8%) Information source: Internet (60.6%)

(Continued)

Spring	Summer	Autumn/Winter
Active and price oriented n = 150 (41.2%)	Want-it-all visitors n = 110 (27.2%)	
Middle-aged (28.6% aged between 40 and 49) Mostly from Italy (54.0%) Employed (42.0%) Staying at the hotel (74.7%) Spending daily between 31 and 60 Euros per person (66.0%) Not travelling with tour group (92.0%) Travelling without children (57.3%) Repeat visitors (58.7%) Information source: guide books and brochures (56.6%)	Older (25.5% aged between 50 and 59) Mostly from Italy (25.5%) and Germany (18.2%) Mainly employed (47.2%) Staying at the hotel (66.4%) Spending daily more than 60 Euros per person (52.7%) Not travelling with tour group (86.4%) Travelling without children (62.7 %) First time visitors (54.5%) Information source: brochures and guide books (46.4%) and Internet (23.6%)	
Want-it-all n = 99 (27.3%)	Active and price oriented visitors n = 16 (4.0%)	
Older (44.4% aged 60 and over) Mostly from Austria (30.3%) and Italy (30.3%) Retired (41.4%) Staying at the hotel (73.2%) Spending daily more than 60 Euros per person (53.3%) Not travelling with tour group (80.1%) Travelling without children (80.0%) Repeat visitors (58.6%) Information source: Internet (32.3%)	Mostly middle-aged (31.3% aged between 30 and 39) Mostly from Italy (37.5%) Mainly employed (37.5%) Staying at the hotel (68.8%) Spending daily more than 60 Euros per person (62.5%) Not travelling with tour group (100%) Travelling with children (62.5%) First time visitors (62.5%) Information source: guide books and brochures (37.5%)	
	Passive enjoyers N = 93 (23.0%)	
	Middle-aged (30.0% between 40 and 49) Mostly from Italy (30.1%) Mainly employed (51.6%) Staying at the hotel (76.3%) Spending daily more than 60 Euros per person (67.7%) Not travelling with the tour group (91.4%) Travelling without children (59.1%) First time visitors (63.4%) Information source: guide books and brochures (28.0%), friends and relatives (25.8%)	

A two-cluster solution was identified for the autumn/winter season. The size of these two segments is more evenly distributed than in other seasons. *Active and price oriented relaxers* are older repeat visitors; meanwhile, *curious visitors*

are mostly first time and middle-aged visitors. The latter segment represents the only visitors to Portorož who mostly do not stay at the hotel and spend on average less than 30 Euros daily per person. The autumn/winter season depends on Italian visitors more than the other two seasons do, since Italians are mostly represented in both segments. Thus, there is a segment represented by middle-aged low spenders and a segment represented by price oriented older high spenders during the autumn/winter season.

Summarizing, visitors who seek only benefits related to *physical activity and price convenience* comprise the *active and price oriented* segment during the spring and summer seasons. This segment represents the largest segment (41.2%) during the spring season but the smallest segment (4.0%) during the summer season. During the autumn/winter season visitors seek these benefits in combination with *relaxation* related benefits indicating that physical activity and price convenience are not enough to attract visitors during the autumn/winter season. Spring and autumn/winter visitors who are looking for *physical activity and price convenience* differ in terms of age, spending, and information source.

Want-it-all visitors represent large segments during the spring and summer seasons. But these two segments differ in regard to the country of origin, first time or repeat visit, and information sources requiring different marketing channels to reach them.

Curiosity oriented visitors are present in each season – as *curious enjoyers* and *curious relaxers* during the spring season and as *curious visitors* during the summer season and autumn/winter season. Visitors in these segments are mostly first time visitors, but they differ in terms of age, spending, country of origin and travel-related characteristics between seasons. Use of their information channels indicates the need for different marketing channels with regard to different seasons. Contrary to expectations and increasing independent travel (Prayag, Disegna, Cohen, & Yan, 2013), *curious enjoyers* during the spring season travel more than other segments within a tour group.

Tourist benefits related to *passivity and enjoyment* are not present during the autumn/winter season.[3] In contrast, these benefits are very important for visitors during the spring and summer seasons. However, they differ in terms of age and travel-related characteristics between seasons.

It can be derived that Portorož is currently positioned as a price convenient destination related to physical activity during the spring and autumn/winter season. On the other hand, destination positioning is less focused during the summer season – a mixture of benefits related to *passivity and enjoyment*, *relaxation* and *curiosity* is expressed in different segments.

CONCLUSION

The paper contributes to the literature on tourism by deepening the understanding of the conceptual framework of seasonal variations of visitor benefits in destination positioning. Tourist benefit-based segments that are looking for similar benefits across seasons are connected with different demographics and travel-related characteristics of visitors. So, similar benefits are sought by visitors with different demographic and travel-related characteristics across seasons. Considering seasonal variations of visitor benefits, destination repositioning should focus, firstly, on dynamic drivers of tourist benefits and creation of experience value towards changing benefit-based segments between seasons and, secondly, on the conceptualization of value creation in the tourism destination context towards changing characteristics of visitors who are looking for similar benefits between seasons. In fact, contrary to the general findings of Baum and Hagen (1999), who argued that winter visitors to the Mediterranean beach resorts are price-sensitive elderly visitors, the present study found that there is a segment of older high spending visitors (*active and price oriented relaxers*) who spend more than visitors of a similar segment during the spring season. Moreover, middle-aged *curious visitors* during the autumn/winter season spend less than any other segment throughout the year. This gives evidence for challenges in tourism destination positioning, and future research directions toward different tourist benefit segments.

However, the study has some limitations that should be addressed in future studies. Firstly, the obtained seasonal based samples cannot be regarded as representative because of the lack of seasonal/monthly data of demographics and travel related characteristics. Secondly, Dolnicar, Grün, Leisch, & Schmidt (2014) proposed to use a conservative rule for sample size at least 70 times the number of variables for clustering, but due to financial and time constraints, the study samples could not be larger. Finally, issues for future research are dynamic drivers of tourist benefits over time and across tourism destinations' development.

NOTES

[1] Data refer to the Municipality of Piran, where the tourism offer in Portorož plays the major role.

[2] Tourism in the Municipality of Piran is concentrated in Portorož.

[3] Factor regression score is only 0.06 for active and price oriented relaxers.

REFERENCES

Andriotis, K. (2005). Seasonality in Crete: Problem or a way of life? *Tourism Economics, 11*(2), 207–224. doi:10.5367/0000000054183478

Andriotis, K., Agiomirgianakis, G., & Mihiotis, A. (2007). Tourist vacation preferences: The case of mass tourists to Crete. *Tourism Analysis, 12*(1–2), 51–63. doi:10.3727/108354207780956672

Baloglu, S., & McCleary, K. W. (1999). U.S. international pleasure travelers' images of four Mediterranean destinations: A comparison of visitors and nonvisitors. *Journal of Travel Research, 38*(2), 144–152. doi:10.1177/004728759903800207

Bar-On, R. V. (1975). *Seasonality in tourism*. London: Economist Intelligence Unit.

Baum, T., & Hagen, L. (1999). Responses to seasonality: The experiences of peripheral destinations. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 1*(5), 299–312. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1522-1970(199909/10)1:5<299::AID-JTR198>3.0.CO;2-L

Bonn, M. A., Furr, H. L., & Uysal, M. (1992). Seasonal variation of coastal resort visitors: Hilton Head Island. *Journal of Travel Research, 31*(1), 50–56. doi:10.1177/004728759203100110

Brezovec, A. (2007). *Na sončni strani: turistični konstrukt podobe države (On the sunny side: Tourism construct of the country imaging)*. Koper: Annales.

Brezovec, A., Sedmak, G., & Vodeb, K. (2009). *What is the value of cultural heritage to 3S tourists? Resorting to the coast: Tourism, heritage and cultures of the seaside*. Conference paper. Leeds: The Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change: Institute of Northern Studies, 25-29 June 2009.

Buhalis, D. (2000). Marketing the competitive destination of the future. *Tourism Management, 21*(1), 97–116. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00095-3

Calantone, R. J., & Johar, J. S. (1984). Seasonal segmentation of the tourism market using a benefit segmentation framework. *Journal of Travel Research, 23*(2), 14–24. doi:10.1177/004728758402300203

Cisneros-Martínez, J. D., & Fernández-Morales, A. (2013). Cultural tourism as tourist segment for reducing seasonality in a coastal area: The case study of Andalusia. *Current Issues in Tourism*. doi:10.1080/13683500.2013.861810

Dolnicar, S. (2004). Tracking data-driven market segments. *Tourism Analysis, 8*(2–4), 227–232.

Dolnicar, S. (2008). Market segmentation in tourism. In A. G. Woodside, & D. Martin (Eds.), *Tourism management: Analysis, behavior and strategy* (pp. 29–150). Cambridge: CAB International. doi:10.1079/9781845933234.0129

Dolnicar, S., Grün, B., Leisch, F., & Schmidt, K. (2014). Required sample sizes for data-driven market segmentation analyses in tourism. *Journal of Travel Research, 53*(3), 296–306. doi:10.1177/0047287513496475

Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2003). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *The Journal of Tourism Studies, 14*(1), 37–48.

Fernández-Morales, A., & Mayorga-Toledano, M. C. (2008). Seasonal concentration of the hotel demand in Costa del Sol: A decomposition by nationalities. *Tourism Management, 29*(5), 940–949. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2007.11.003

Figini, P., & Vici, L. (2012). Off-season tourists and the cultural offer of a mass-tourism destination: The case of Rimini. *Tourism Management, 33*(4), 825–839. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2011.09.005

Frochot, I. (2005). A benefit segmentation of tourists in rural areas: A Scottish perspective. *Tourism Management, 26*(3), 335–346. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2003.11.016

Frochot, I., & Morrison, A. M. (2001). Benefit segmentation: A review of its applications to travel and tourism research. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 9*(4), 21–45. doi:10.1300/J073v09n04_02

Gartner, W. C. (1989). Tourism image: Attribute measurement of state tourism products using multidimensional scaling techniques. *Journal of Travel Research, 28*(2), 16–20. doi:10.1177/004728758902800205

Gitelson, R. J., & Kerstetter, D. L. (1990). The relationship between sociodemographic variables, benefits sought and subsequent vacation behavior: A case study. *Journal of Travel Research, 28*(3), 24–29. doi:10.1177/004728759002800304

Haley, R. I. (1968). Benefit segmentation: A decision-oriented research tool. *Journal of Marketing, 32*(3), 30–35. doi:10.2307/1249759

Higham, J., & Hinch, T. (2002). Tourism, sport and seasons: The challenges and potential of overcoming seasonality in the sport and tourism sectors. *Tourism Management, 23*(2), 175–185. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(01)00046-2

Jang, S. C. S. (2004). Mitigating tourism seasonality: A quantitative approach. *Annals of Tourism Research, 31*(4), 819–836. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2004.02.007

Jang, S. C. S., Cai, L. A., Morrison, A. M., & O'Leary, J. T. (2005). The effects of travel activities and seasons on expenditure. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 7*(6), 335–346. doi:10.1002/jtr.540

Johns, N., & Gyimóthy, S. (2002). Market segmentation and the prediction of tourist behavior: The case of Bornholm, Denmark. *Journal of Travel Research, 40*(3), 316–327. doi:10.1177/0047287502040003009

Kim, H. (1998). Perceived attractiveness of Korean destinations. *Annals of Tourism Research, 25*(2), 340–361. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(98)00007-3

Kotler, P., Bowen, J., & Maken, J. (2006). *Marketing for hospitality and tourism.* Upper Saddle River: Pearson.

Kozak, M. (2002). Comparative analysis of tourist motivations by nationality and destinations. *Tourism Management, 23*(3), 221–232. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(01)00090-5

Kozak, M., & Rimmington, M. (2000). Tourist satisfaction with Mallorca, Spain, as an off-season holiday destination. *Journal of Travel Research, 38*(3), 260–269. doi:10.1177/004728750003800308

Lovelock, C. H. (1991). *Services marketing*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Lundtorp, S., Rassing, C. R., & Wanhill, S. (2001). Off-season is no season: The case of Bornholm. In T. Baum, & S. Lundtorp (Eds.), *Seasonality in tourism* (pp. 89–108). Oxford: Elsevier Science. doi:10.1016/B978-0-08-043674-6.50009-X

Mazzette, A. (2004). Il turismo in Sardegna: vecchi problemi e nuove prospettive. In A. Savelli (Ed.), *Turismo, territorio, identita*' (pp. 67–78). Milano: FrancoAgneli.

Molera, L., & Albaladejo, I. P. (2007). Profiling segments of tourists in rural areas of South-Eastern Spain. *Tourism Management, 28*(3), 757–767. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2006.05.006

Municipality of Piran (2009). *Strategija razvoja turizma v občini Piran 2009-2015 (Strategy of development of tourism in the Municipality of Piran, 2009-2015)*. Piran: Municipality of Piran.

Mykletun, R. J., Crotts, J. C., & Mykletun, A. (2001). Positioning an island destination in the peripheral area of the Baltics: A flexible approach to market segmentation. *Tourism Management, 22*(5), 493–500. doi:10.1016/S0261-5177(01)00004-8

Nemec Rudež, H., Sedmak, G., & Bojnec, Š. (2013). Benefit segmentation of seaside destination in the phase of market repositioning: The case of Portorož. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 15*(2), 138–151. doi:10.1002/jtr.881

Nemec Rudež, H., Sedmak, G., Vodeb, K. & Bojnec, Š. (2014). Visitor structure as a basis for destination repositioning – the case of a North Mediterranean destination. *Annales – Series, 24*(1), 53–66.

Owens, D. (1994). The all-season opportunity for Canada's resorts. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, 35*(5), 28–41. doi:10.1177/001088049403500513

Pegg, S., Patterson, I., & Gariddo, P. V. (2012). The impact of seasonality on tourism and hospitality operations in the alpine region of New South Wales, Australia. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 31*(3), 659–666. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2011.09.001

Pike, S. (2008). *Destination marketing*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Prasnikar, J., Zabkar, V., & Rajkovic, T. (2007). Should Italians, Croats and Slovenes work together in developing a Northern Adriatic tourist destination? *South East European Journal of Economics and Business, 2*(2), 57–68. doi:10.2478/v10033-007-0006-0

Prayag, G. (2007). Positioning the city product as an international tourism destination: Evidence from South Africa. *Tourism, 55*(2), 139–155.

Prayag, G., Disegna, M., Cohen, S. A., & Yan, H. (2013). Segmenting markets by bagged clustering: Young Chinese travelers to Western Europe. *Journal of Travel Research*. doi:10.1177/0047287513514299

Prebensen, N. K., Woo, E., Chen, J. S., & Uysal, M. (2013). Motivation and involvement as antecedents of the perceived value of the destination experience. *Journal of Travel Research, 52*(2), 253–264. doi:10.1177/0047287512461181

Priestley, G., & Mundet, L. (1998). The post-stagnation phase of the resort cycle. *Annals of Tourism Research, 25*(1), 85–111. doi:10.1016/S0160-7383(97)00062-5

Sedmak, G., & Mihalič, T. (2008). Authenticity in mature seaside resorts. *Annals of Tourism Research, 35*(4), 1007–1031. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2008.07.004

Sedmak, G., Nemec Rudež, H., Podovšovnik, E., Zabukovec Baruca, P., Kociper, T., & Gržinić, N. (2011). *Tržna raziskava o turistih v Portorožu, poletje 2011 (Market research among tourists in Portorož, summer 2011).* Portorož: Fakulteta za turistične študije – Turistica.

Sedmak, G., Nemec Rudež, H., Podovšovnik, E., Zabukovec Baruca, P., Kociper, T., & Gržinić, N. (2012). *Raziskava med turisti v Portorožu v zimski sezoni (Research among tourists in Portorož during the winter season).* Portorož: Fakulteta za turistične študije – Turistica.

SORS (2011). *Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia*. Data Portal.

SORS (2013). *Statistical Office of Republic of Slovenia*. Data Portal.

Spencer, D. M., & Holecek, D. F. (2007). Basic characteristics of the fall tourism market. *Tourism Management, 28*(2), 491–504. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2006.03.005

Spotts, D. M., & Mahoney, E. M. (1993). Understanding the fall tourism market. *Journal of Tourism Research, 32*(2), 3–15.

Swarbrooke, J., & Horner, S. (2007). *Consumer behaviour in tourism*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Tkaczynski, A., Rundle-Thiele, S. R., & Beaumont, N. (2009). Segmentation: A tourism stakeholder view. *Tourism Management, 30*(2), 169–175. doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2008.05.010

Tkaczynski, A., Rundle-Thiele, S. R., & Prebensen, N. K. (2013). Segmenting potential nature-based tourists based on temporal factors: The case of Norway. *Journal of Travel Research.* doi:10.1177/0047287513514296

Vukonić, B. (2001). The "new old" tourist destination. In Y. Apostolopoulos, P. Loukissas, & L. Loentidou (Eds.), *Mediterranean tourism* (pp. 64–71). London: Routledge.

Sezonski orijentirano destinacijsko pozicioniranje za turiste na Mediteranu

Helena NEMEC RUDEŽ, Gorazd SEDMAK, Ksenija VODEB
Fakultet za turističke studije – Turistica, Portorož, Slovenija

Štefan BOJNEC
Fakultet za menadžment, Koper, Slovenija

Unatoč raširenom interesu za područje sezonalnosti u turizmu, malo je empirijskih istraživanja o sezonskim varijacijama koristi koje traže turisti. Ovaj rad bavi se destinacijskim pozicioniranjem temeljenim na sezonskim varijacijama koristi. U cilju pripreme učinkovitoga destinacijskog pozicioniranja, uzeta je kao studija slučaja sjevernomediteranska destinacija Portorož, da se utvrdi kako se koristi koje traže turisti mijenjaju po sezonama. Provedena je klasterska analiza za proljetnu, ljetnu te jesensko/zimsku sezonu na utvrđenim faktorima koristi koje traže turisti tijekom godine. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da posjetitelji koji traže slične koristi tijekom sezona imaju zajedničke demografske i druge značajke povezane s putovanjem.

Ključne riječi: sezonske varijacije, segmentacija prema traženju koristi, Mediteran, klasterska analiza