

## ANALYSIS OF TOURIST SATISFACTION WITH THE QUALITY OF AGRICULTURAL FOOD PRODUCTS IN THE HOTELS OF NOVI SAD

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### ABSTRACT

*In recent years, the study of tourism as a major socio-economic phenomenon has been receiving great attention, and it primarily deals with the quality of the provided services as an imperative for success in the market. The quality of the offer is the key segment that dictates the direction and intensity of tourism development. The paper presents data obtained from the research of secondary publications, survey research performed by the authors and statistical documentation, which point to the degree of tourist satisfaction with the quality of food products in the hotels of Novi Sad. The study also touched on the issue of the percentage-wise contribution of certain foods in the daily and annual tourist consumption. The obtained results indicate that for the purpose of long-term expansion of tourism it is necessary to intensively invest into the quality of products and services, and that closer relations must be developed primarily with agriculture, as well as other economic and non-economic activities.*

**Keywords:** *tourism, quality, agriculture, hotels, Novi Sad*

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### Introductory discussion on the given topic with a brief review of the predominant views in literature on the interdependence of tourism and the agro-food complex

In the concept of economic and overall development of our country, tourism has become one of the main directions of development. This is why the city of Novi Sad seeks to provide a dynamic, but also stable development of the tourism industry as a part of the economy (Gajic et al. 2009, p.69). Special attention is devoted to the development of the catering-accommodation infrastructure. An interesting fact is that in current conditions the problem of demand exists less, while the problem of offer exists more. Nevertheless, the average annual utilization of the accommodation capacity of Novi Sad in 2008 was only 34.22% (Ivkov et al. 2003, p.520).

Tourism directly increases domestic demand, however, the indirect increase of demand is much higher, since the creation of consumer habits in tourist movements creates new jobs in service industries, creating new and expanding old facilities, which is equally affected by domestic as well as foreign tourism. Accommodation capacities represent one of the most important factors of the tourist offer of Novi Sad, and together with food capacities have the most influence on the volume of tourist traffic in the city (Ivkov 2004, p. 226).

Consideration of the needs of tourist consumers during the implementation of the provided services can be understood as a complete appreciation of the customer. The way in which they *communicate* with tourist consumers is only a part of achieving the quality of services for the providers. In conditions of great change and increasing levels of international competition as a direct result of trends of globalization and internationalization, quality is becoming an imperative for survival, growth and development (Gajic 2009, p.21).

The tourist service is an aggregate service composed of many services from other trades. In order for tourism to achieve positive results it must synchronize and include other activities with which it will successfully present tourists with complex and high-quality products and services, since most of these services are based on the reproduction material and equipment manufactured in other economic activities (Gajic 2010, p.140). The positive market effects of tourism depend on the degree and quality of repletion of the tourism industry, precisely on the relationship and interdependence of tourism and other industries. Without cooperation with other industries, tourism can not quantitatively and qualitatively form an adequate export product and thus loses the market (Anderson and Sullivan 1994, p. 132). An expected result could be that tourism remains isolated as a one-sided interest of the economy.

However, the influence and interdependence of tourism and agriculture have not been sufficiently explored. Agriculture is potentially the leading branch and activity in this region, so tourism has never had a primary function in the development of the overall economy, despite it being a significant and specific food consumer over a short period of time. Restrictive measures that were undertaken during the nineties practically abolished this interest in cooperation between economic sectors and led to further isolation of tourism. Highlighting the necessity of establishing clear stakeholder relations between tourism and the rest of the economy is intended to show that tourism can allow for the rest of the economy, especially the agro-industrial complex, to have a large export market with comparatively the most favorable conditions for export (Fournier 1998, p. 367). This should, with its own potential for a significant contribution to the balance of payments, be the main macroeconomic logic behind the existence and orientation of foreign tourism. Within this logic it is necessary to look for not only arguments, but the material resources and mechanisms of development. Agriculture primarily satisfies food supply for tourists, while the local guests do not increase the domestic demand for food. This is the case with foreign guests, who coming into the country bring with them an additional purchasing power, and demand the insurance of the same quality of food to which they are used to in their home country. They certainly do not wish to lower the standard to which they are accustomed, and even aim to increase it, both in quality and quantity. A further increase in foreign visitors in recent years brings with it an additional demand for agro-food products (Atkinson 1998, p.13).

It is certainly necessary to make great efforts to, at the right time and in the required range of products, produce all that is needed for tourist consumption, and the synchronization of production and consumption is possible only through close cooperation between tourism and the agro-industrial complex. From such a large part of the turnover, every element of cost rationalization brings a much needed increase in income for both of the partners. It can be concluded that in these conditions there is a strongly expressed mutual interest in permanent cooperation and joining efforts for optimizing the quality and producing placement (Garbarino and Johnson 1999, p.79). The tourism industry has a wide circle of business partners such as suppliers or providers of services, with which it also has permanent cooperation of different intensity (Zeithaml 1998, p. 20).

#### **Determination of the average consumption of agro-food products in the gastronomic offer of hotel facilities in Novi Sad**

Any research in the field of tourism must also be based on statistical data, for example the number of tourists or number of overnight stays (Jiang 2002, p.14). Given that this is a research of catering services, the paper will present information on the realized number of overnight stays in the hotels of Novi Sad for individual years, which will thus enable better consideration of the additional demand for food.

##### *Graph 1. Average number of overnight stays in hotels of Novi Sad for individual years*

In graph 1 we can see the realized number of overnight stays in Novi Sad for individual years. The situation is not outstanding, because it can be noted that since 1982 the average number of overnight stays and therefore the number of tourists has been declining. The main reason is the unstable economic and political situation that has within this period afflicted the state of Serbia. It was precisely that year, 1982, that achieved the maximum in terms of tourist traffic, even more than 2009 which is considered as the period of gradual growth of tourist movements. The projection of foreign tourism must be calculated with limiting factors of our tourism development, which are apart from financial opportunities also the available receptive potentials of our main tourist area, as well as other foreseeable difficulties, especially in the area of labor (Oliver 1999, p.38). In the area of domestic tourism development it is necessary to create better conditions for the effects of the economic functions of tourism, to strengthen the condition and productive capacity of the working people, as well as ensure the operation of the functions of tourism as factors of social standards of the working people. Along with this it is necessary to allow for tourism to have an impact on overall economic development, especially on the

stabilization and retardation of inflation movements on the basis of absorption of a certain amount of buying funds and balance of internal commodity-monetary relations.

In assessing food consumption, unfortunately, data from very few studies can be used, while most of the data is conducted based on the assessment of foreign tourist spending. A fact that must be taken into account is that not all foreign tourists use the full service or full board, depending on the type of accommodation of course (Gajic 2010, p.140)

*Graph 2. Average daily consumption of basic food products per tourist in the hotels of Novi Sad*

Graph 2 presents data on the average daily consumption of basic food products per single tourist, obtained through a survey and an interview with management of the hotel product-service department, as well as a review of the internal documentation of the hotel facilities. It is noticeable that meat, bread and pastries are consumed to a higher degree, with smaller amounts of fruits and vegetables. The daily consumption of meat and meat products ranges on average around 400 grams, and this group of foods includes fish as well.

In first place by consumed quantities are bread and pastries, grains to be precise, and the graph shows that the daily consumption per tourist is around 500 grams. The use of temperate climate grains that dominate agricultural production in Vojvodina is very diverse. The technology of their processing has allowed for them to be increasingly used in the form of various products. Contemporary awareness of the need for healthy living creates more room for the introduction of a growing number of nutritious foods, which includes precisely this type of grains. All temperate climate grains have to a certain extent found their place in human nutrition. The fact that most people eat grains daily because they consider them to be healthier than other food products testifies to people's positive awareness.

The popularity of grain products is growing, because they not only fit into the modern lifestyle, but also provide an excellent opportunity for the enrichment of modern man's nutrition with whole grain wheat products.

Fruits and vegetables are used to a lesser extent, as already noted, on average around 300 grams of vegetables and 250 grams of fruit. It is known that the Serbian gastronomic cuisine does not largely contain vegetarian segments as is the case in some western countries. The average daily milk consumption per tourist is around 3 dl, while the intake of fats is on average around 80 grams, and 100 grams of sugar.

*Graph 3. Consumption of basic agro-food products in the hotels of Novi Sad for the period 1982-2009*

Graph 3 shows the approximate internal data of the hotel facilities in Novi Sad, where we can observe the consumption of basic agro-food products for individual years. As the average number of overnight stays decreased so did in proportion the demand for food in the given facilities. The leading position in the hospitality-tourism consumption is held by meat products, cereals and fruit. The results are not as expected. The total consumption by foreign tourists of all food products is less than 1% of bread, 3% meat, meat products and fish, just under 3% milk, 1.5% sugar and less than 2% of fruits and vegetables, which are sold in retail trade. Regardless of the increase in the number of foreign tourists, the amounts of food they buy are small if measured in relation to the retail trade, and would be even less if measured in relation to the total amounts consumed.

The nutrition of a people is part of its spiritual and material culture, because the struggle for survival, life and the spiritual superstructure are in close relation with the methods of preparing and eating food. Vojvodina's cuisine is varied and rich, with lots of meat, vegetables, spices and fruit, and this stems from the wealth of its plains. Vojvodina's cookery is a mixture of different cuisines of peoples who have lived in this area for centuries. Here exists a wealth of culinary knowledge and mutual influences of Hungarian, Romanian and Slovak cuisine, and many dishes are derived from the German, Russian or other cuisines from surrounding areas (Ivkov, 2004). Therefore, a great role in the tourist offer can certainly have foods and drinks from the plains of Vojvodina. When you combine knowledge and skill, brought up to a form of art, and the traditional Vojvodinian hospitality, the gastronomy of these here regions can become a top quality tourist offer (Ivkov, 2005).

The question is whether and to which extent can agricultural production stimulate the development of tourism and catering, and vice versa. Tourism and agriculture are inseparable activities, as agriculture is based on meeting the nutrition needs of tourists. It must be pointed out that domestic tourists do not affect the increase in food demand to a large extent, as is the case with foreign tourists who bring an additional purchasing power into the country. Foreign tourists require that food has a certain level of quality to which they are accustomed to in their home countries. It is important to point out that tourism in Novi Sad is not of a seasonal character, and

tourists mostly use full hotel services. There are data that over 75% of domestic and foreign tourists use food services in the hotels while the rest use services outside the hotel facilities.

Based on the given study we can only confirm the fact that tourism and agriculture make up a strong and integrated system, and that they can not participate isolated in the continuous economic cycle (Barsky 2000, p.179). Tourism requires goods of a high quality agricultural origin, and it is necessary to get agricultural producers interested in this production.

#### **A brief review of the analysis of the research and collected data in the hotels of Novi Sad**

Researchers have attempted to integrate the term product quality and service quality into the overall index of satisfaction with the transaction, based on the conclusion that any purchase of products has some elements of services, elements that transcend the basic tangibility of the offer. According to some theories, the quality of the service and behavior intentions of the customer are related, and the quality of the service has a decisive role in determining whether the customer is to remain faithful to the same destination, or switch to a the competitor. When the evaluations of the quality of the tourism service are high, the customer's behavioral intentions work in favor of the given destination or service provider and he will probably remain loyal to that which has not disappointed him. When the service evaluation is low, the relationship of the customer towards the destination weakens as well, and he switches over to the competitors. The tourism development model is based on the approaches and principles of total quality assurance, where it is necessary to take into account the need to ensure tourist satisfaction with the quantitative and qualitative factors of the offer, the satisfaction of the local tourist offer participants expressed through opportunities for professional development and productive employment, the satisfaction of the local population (which has been already mentioned), always taking into account the quality of the natural environment by pointing to the positive and negative impacts of tourism on the environment.

The need for top quality accommodation and cuisine is in contemporary conditions implied, so the quality of the offer directs the "events and experiences", which need to be systematically adapted to the demands of the target customer. Today, the guest looks for that "something extra" that requires an integrated approach in the search of a destinations own identity, on the way from recognizing its own comparative advantages, through the choice of an attractive range of offer for the targeted market, through the design of a sales messages and trademark, on to the discovery of a market-accepted and recognizable brand (Barrington 1978, p.137). In favor of the above mentioned facts on quality as a factor of success we can introduce data from a survey that was conducted in three hotels in Novi Sad, categorized with four stars. The survey was conducted by the authors of the paper and the units of observation were the visitors of the hotel, namely the authors limited themselves to a total of three hotels. Research of the quality of the services provided in hotel facilities was conducted during the month of May 2009, and in accordance with the requests of management, the names of the hotel facilities will not be provided. The method of filling out questionnaires was applied, and below are the results of the survey. A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed of which 280 were completely filled out and taken into the analysis. The basic data of the survey research are given in Table 2.

The shortcomings in the research occurred in the structuring of the size of the sample itself. A cause of the problem can be stated as poor access and lack of cooperation from the hotel facilities and low interest of the visitors for the survey. However, despite the above mentioned problems, it can be said that a completely representative sample size has been determined for this research and a structure that best matches the actual structure of the visitors of the hotel facilities in Novi Sad. As the already mentioned problems existed during the study it must be noted that indicative data were obtained, and despite the fact that they are accepted with a dose of reserve, they can serve as the basis for representative research. It must be emphasized that the survey had a broader significance of the research, precisely it was designed for obtaining relevant data on the quality of food, but a task as well was to indicate the unavoidable interdependence of tourism and the agro-food complex. Very often tourist catering fails to satisfy the guest, precisely in business it is strived for to maximally satisfy the demands and needs of tourists with minimal investment (Croint 2000, p.59). This is the reason why the survey covered areas of tourist satisfaction with the gastronomic offer in the hotel facilities. Further in the paper will be listed the results of only those services that are directly related to the quality of food or agro-food products that are offered in the given food facilities.

*Graph 4. Average evaluations of individual segments of the offer in the hotels of Novi Sad (2009.)*

The segment of food quantity has the highest average rating of 4.9. Foreign visitors did not have many objections on the quantity of food that was available in the facilities where they stayed. As for the quality of the meals, tourists gave an average rating of 4.8, so it can be concluded that the highest percentage is of satisfied customers with this type of tourist offer during their stay in the city. The variety and range of foods was evaluated with 3.4 which are not very commendable, but it must be taken into account that these are foreign visitors who can be a very demanding market segment. Evaluated worse were the amounts of grains used and general availability of a vegetarian cuisine, with an average score of very slightly above 2. Opposite to this, the use of meat and meat products is on a very high level, namely tourists were satisfied, expressing this with a score of 4.

It is known that, on the territory of Vojvodina, there is plenty of arable land on which to grow high-quality products, and therefore Vojvodina's cuisine is varied and rich, with plenty of meat, vegetables, spices and fruit. This results from the wealth of Vojvodina's plains, forests and rivers. A variety of vegetable and crop plants of the central European region and moderate continental climate are grown in Vojvodina. All kinds of domestic animals, small and large livestock, are raised and forests and fields are rich with small and big game, and the waters hold various freshwater fish (Ivkov, 2004).

The survey presented tourists with an option to decide between the traditional cuisine of Vojvodina and a standard cuisine. The largest percentage of 64.2% opted for the authentic traditional cuisine of Vojvodina, while the rest of the surveyed claimed that for future business it would be best to keep the gastronomic offer that is already present which would satisfy a greater market segment.

Observations, surveys and objections of foreigners all agree that foreign guests are most satisfied when they receive the level and quality of products that are in their mind prestigious. This is why tourist food consumption emits a type of demand, such that is just being born among the domestic guests or local residents. Small and high quality packages of jams and butters for breakfast, high-quality fresh milk, cheese, cold cuts and fresh milk biscuits, are in demand. For the main courses it is important to prepare good steaks and top quality fish, with lots of fresh vegetables and fruits. Olive oil is preferred over animal fats, and the issue of how much more it costs is never raised. So this is how agriculture receives impulses from the *spoiled* guest through tourism, while tourism is trying to satisfy these visitors, in which of course there are always obstacles. Certain types of foods lose on quality, especially when it comes to fish which is not always fresh, increasing the costs of its transport, but with similar food as well which is not typical for this region. The question is how and to what extent to provide quality food at the places of concentration of foreign and domestic tourism. Tourist demand requires goods of an above average quality that will satisfy the taste and needs of highly refined guests, to which quality gastronomy and other luxuries are not an exception but a rule. To provide for such a diverse consumer demands an abundance of various high quality products of an agricultural origin, so it is necessary to interest producers into their production.

Calculation of the impact of tourism on the agro-food complex and vice versa, agriculture on the development of tourism, should for this reason be sped up. The population is the main factor in the formation of anthropogenic tourist values, thus it is necessary to do more to promote the national dishes of Vojvodina. In one able and good symbiosis of tourism, hospitality and agriculture, many factors could be found that would stimulate the development of all the given activities and surely allow for a faster economic development of entire region.

### Concluding remarks

Tourism is a distinct product of the revolutionary development of technology that provides new and strong impetus to overall economic development. In other words, tourism is conditioned by economic development, while it, on the other hand, also causes faster economic development. The biggest role of tourism is the conversion of natural, generically free and economically indifferent goods into economically specifically useful goods and the inclusion of non-economic activities into the economic cycle (Hart and Bowen 2005, p.9). Precisely for this reason we are moving further away from the economic policy of the exclusive favoring of industry or agriculture as the most propulsive branches of the economy, and increasing importance is given to their integration with tourism. Tourism has the conditions for further expansion and can serve as an equalizing factor of large regional disparities in the economic structure of certain countries. Tourism is by its nature, due to favorable tendencies for general economic growth and rising of living standards, one of the most expansive economic activities. Tourism includes isolated areas into the combination of market relations and thus to a certain sense runs the entire industry.



Changes in tourist demand will require significant advances in the field of the quality of the offer (Wood 1998, p. 279). It will have to accept a greater number of tourists and adapt more to their needs and requirements, in order to achieve a larger and better income. It will primarily be necessary to make changes in the business concept of the tourism and catering facilities in this tourist destination, to on the one hand become as attractive and quality content wise as possible on the market, and therefore the other hand raise its competitive ability on the international market and accessibility to consumers. Increasing the quality and range of the gastronomical offer in the hotels involved in the survey research will be achievable through more intensive use of high-quality food products and the introduction of some innovations. For this reason it is necessary to maximally adapt the available offer to the qualitative changes in demand, and to a large extent, is complete it with a full content in the hotels. The conducted survey research can serve or become the basis for further research in the field of tourism and catering.

The tourism industry in recent years is more and more feeling the quality of the domestic tourist demand and its stability. Observing the long-term development of tourism in the area, the domestic tourist demand is still the safest. It is necessary to invest greater efforts into creating favorable conditions for the stay of foreign tourists, which applies to all sectors of the hotel organization. It is hard to expect a higher growth of foreign tourism if certain corrective measures are not undertaken in the development of tourism and hospitality in its entirety. Tourism must be recognized in its developmental role, and in order to ensure the positive effect it is necessary to take advantage of its economic impact and social functions.

One of the mistakes of previous economic development is that the previous instruments for the stimulation of economic development were not viewed from the aspect of tourism development stimulation. Considering the multiplicative effect of tourism, the tourist industry has opportunities for involvement in reproductive wholes over a significantly wider area than just the region of Vojvodina. If tourism is a strategic choice of Vojvodina, we must look for models that will make resources available in quantity and quality, in accordance with the requirements of the tourist demand (Ivkov, 2005a).

Previous solutions in specific areas of the economic system did not allow for the positive effects of tourism to be directly expressed in their mutual relations. We should at the same time reckon that the material development of the tourism industry will be able to in a very small measure be based on its own accumulation. Significantly improved conditions of its business and its significantly better economic position should be the result of the measures of economic stabilization.

It is necessary, starting from the basic objectives, concepts and projections of tourism development, to provide the basic quantitative and qualitative elements which will together with the realization of important socio-economic assumptions enable the realization of a policy for long-term tourism development. Tourism throughout the world has earned the character of a strong individual and social need and has achieved such material and technical requirements for meeting those needs, and it has recently survived even those disorders that the traditionally stronger economic activities could not withstand. Tourism in Serbia could not follow the unfavorable trends on the international market once we started to face broader economic problems. Thus the success of tourism development in future trends will depend most on the scale and dynamics of the overall economic stabilization.

Considering that in the future we must expect the strengthening of tourist needs based on the conditions and lifestyle of modern man, and given that all forecasts of long-term economic development in the world cause a belief into further global and individual strengthening of income on the basis of higher productivity of labor and resources and reduced working hours of individuals, it is expected that in the long-term as well there will be conditions essential for the growth of tourism not only on the demand side, but with specific measures and assumptions on the quality of the tourist offer as well. An orientation towards a simultaneously coordinated construction of all the components of the receptive tourist offer must become a strategic choice, one in which the facilities of small restaurants, craft shops and communal infrastructure must receive an adequate place.

One of the priority tasks of tourism in the national economy is the cheapest and easiest way to export local products, and this is achieved by following the requirements of the tourist market when it comes to the quantity and quality of products (Williams 1998, p.279). What happened in Serbia and all its regional units during the nineties is a totally extensive and nonselective export at any cost, proclaimed and brought to the extreme by a more recent economic policy with a high encouragement for everyone to export, without any comparative advantages on the one hand, hunger of the domestic market for all goods, while on the other hand destroying every interest of the manufacturers to create product placement through tourism. Regardless of the fact that the development opportunities of tourism itself are significantly reduced, such an orientation meant for the country

an irrational and unproductive outflow of income instead of its increase. If we do not undertake strategic measures in the development of tourism, it will not be able to by itself expand export opportunities for the placement of products of numerous branches as well, which should be naturally interested in such a form of exports.

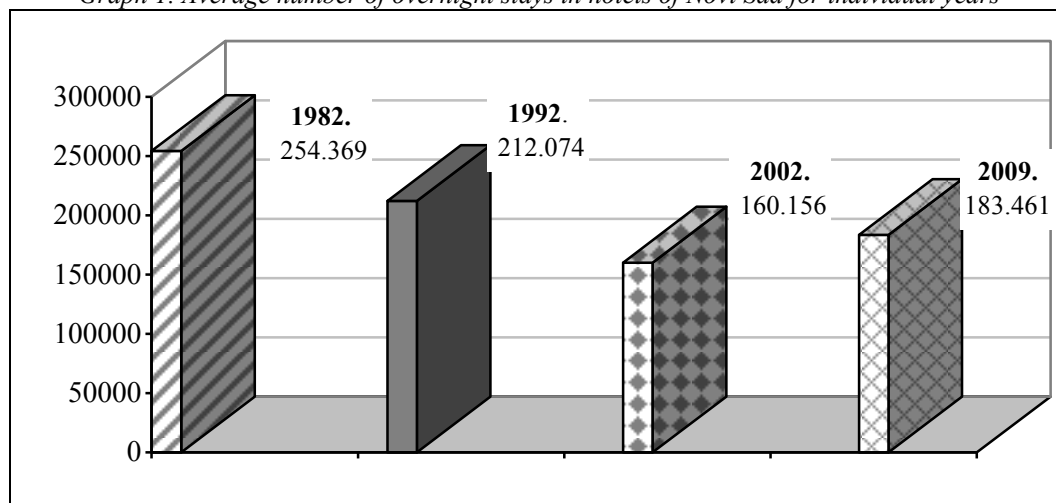
Without adequate development of quality of the segments of the offer, and in addition without an integration into the process of conquering the market of that part of the non-tourist economy without which a quality tourist product cannot be created, the necessary reproductive units and thus better revenue relations cannot be created, but nor can the demands of the tourist market be met.

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### Figures and Tables

Graph 1. Average number of overnight stays in hotels of Novi Sad for individual years



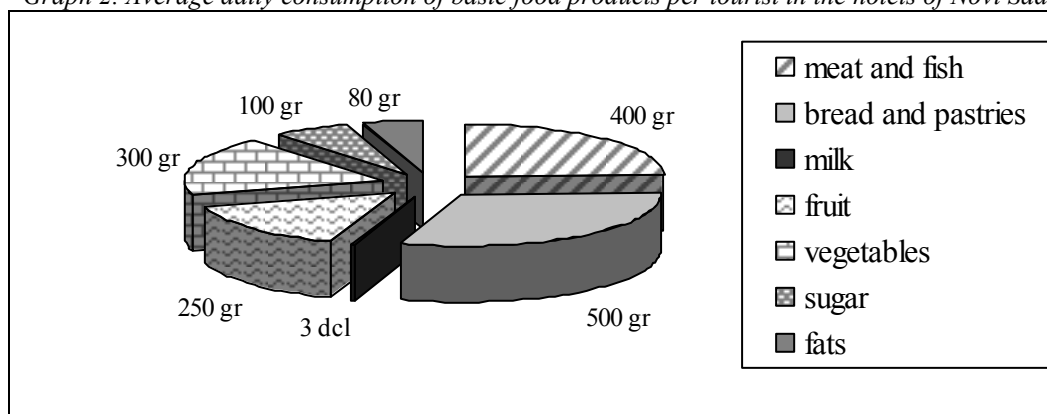
Source: Statistical Yearbook, 2009  
Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

Table 1. Arrivals / overnight stays of tourists according to types of accommodation facilities (2008)

Type of Accommodation	total	foreign
Total	330/851	104/232
Hotels and similar facilities	315/775	102/222
Hotels	250/624	78/171
First class	33/64	18/39
Second class	38/86	12/25
Third class	84/184	25/53
Fourth class	45/104	16/38
Fifth class	21/41	3/5
Uncategorized	29/145	4/11
Motels	19/34	10/15
Boarding houses	6/21	1/6
Tourist apartments	4/7	2/4
Apartment complexes	-	-
Tourist complexes	4/7	1/3
Overnight stays	21/42	7/15
Inns	6/21	2/4
other	5/19	1/4

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Serbia, 2008.

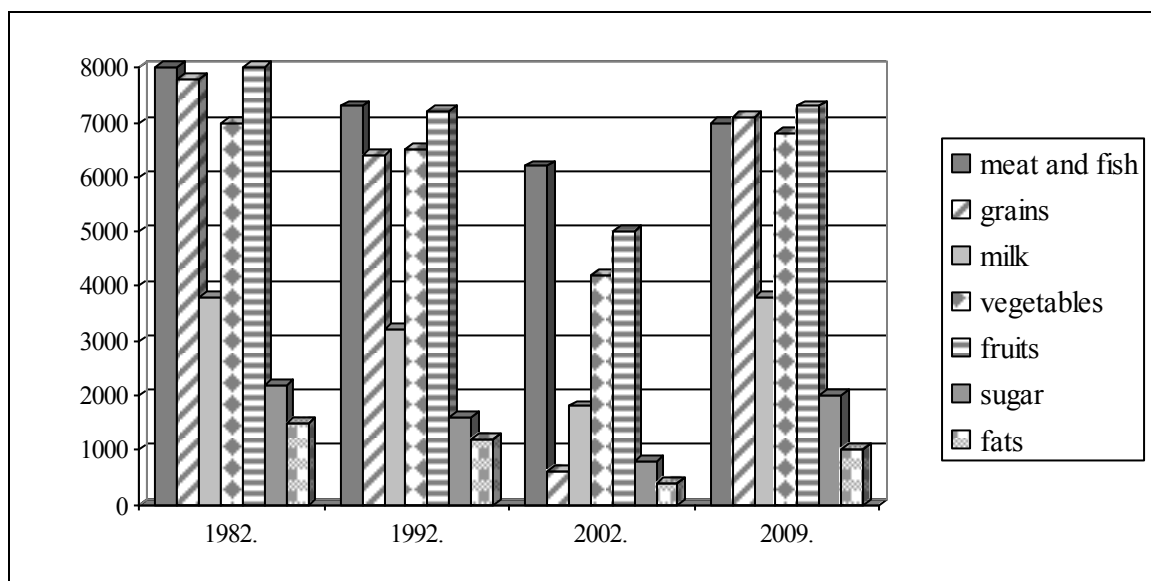
Graph 2. Average daily consumption of basic food products per tourist in the hotels of Novi Sad



Source: survey, internal documentation of hotel facilities



Graph 3. Consumption of basic agro-food products in the hotels of Novi Sad for the period 1982-2009

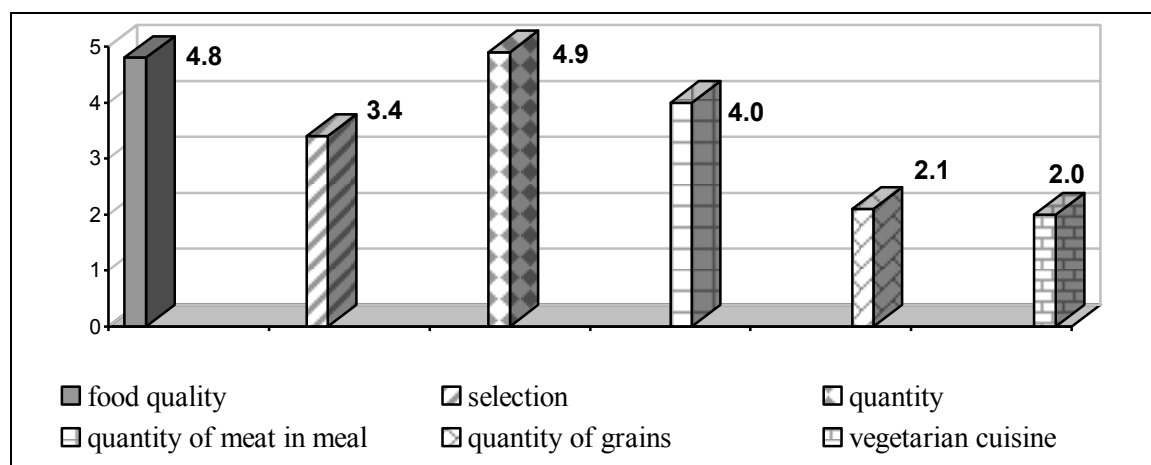


Source: internal hotel documentation

Table 2. Data from survey research

Total distributed surveys 450 Total completed surveys 280		Total surveyed	%
domestic		189	67,5%
foreign		91	32,5%
Sex structure	male	167	59,4%
	female	113	40,6%
Age structure	< 40	149	53,2%
	41-55	119	42,5%
	>55	12	4,3%
Education structure	High School	91	32,5%
	College	189	67,5%

Graph 4. Average evaluations of individual segments of the offer in the hotels of Novi Sad (2009.)



Source: data obtained through survey