

## The 'Museum Night' Event – the Demographic Profile of the Visitors in Serbia

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to consider the differences in the structure of visitors in tourist events, depending on the place of holding. The "Museum Night" tourist event was first held in Germany (Berlin) in 1997, with the aim of popularizing cultural tourism and museum complexes. This touristically considerable event has been very popular and frequented in Serbia since 2005. At first it was held only in Belgrade, when in the year 2007, gradually, other cities also joined the programme. Therefore, a public opinion poll was carried out for the purposes of this paper (analysis according to age, sex structure and economic activity). The sample of the population was divided into three age groups. The research, at the territorial level, included the cities of Belgrade and Novi Sad.

**Keywords:** *museum night, tourist event, demographic structure, Serbia*

### Rezumat. Evenimentul „Noaptea Muzeelor” – profilul demografic al vizitatorilor din Serbia

Scopul acestui articol este acela de a prezenta diferențele legate de structura vizitatorilor care participă la acest tip de eveniment, precum și dependența acesteia de locul în care se desfășoară evenimentul. Evenimentul „Noaptea Muzeelor” a avut loc pentru prima dată în Germania (Berlin) în 1997, scopul său fiind popularizarea turismului cultural și a complexelor muzeale. În Serbia, evenimentul a devenit popular și participarea numeroasă începând cu 2005. Evenimentul a fost organizat pentru prima dată în Belgrad, apoi, începând cu 2007, și alte orașe s-au alăturat programului. Pentru prezentul studiu, a fost organizat un sondaj de opinie (o analiză în funcție de vârstă, sex, structură și activitate economică). Eșantionul a fost împărțit pe trei grupe de vârstă. Cercetarea la nivel teritorial a inclus orașele Belgrad și Novi Sad.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *noaptea muzeelor, eveniment turistic, structură demografică, Serbia*

### INTRODUCTION

Previous research studies indicated that different socio-demographic factors had great significance in the analysis of the tourist market (Woodside and Jacobs, 1985; Perdue, 1985; Bello and Etzel, 1985; Jeferson and Lickorish 1988). The following biological and socio-economic characteristics, independently, or in common with other elements (geographical, psychological, etc.), have been analysed most frequently in scientific research: gender, age, education, profession, nationality, etc. They influence the formation of attitudes and opinions of visitors to certain tourist destinations. This also refers to the museums which draw large number of tourists' attention to play a significant role in the development of cultural tourism. Considering the wide spectrum of activities they realize (education, presentation of the significance of the exhibits, formation of social relations via give the impression of belonging to a community or organisation of various programmes of

entertainment, learning, etc.), museums often become important cultural centres. Cultural tourism is the contemporary inheritance of the society that makes possible, for the places of not exclusively touristic character, to make an offer of their cultural products to people. This kind of tourism is motivated by the need for places with attractive contents to become visitable, while the main function of cultural tourism is to present the national or local values to a tourist (Besermenji et al., 2008).

According to the traditional interpretation on the role of museums in the society, they could be defined as places with cultural and educational function, in which things are exhibited, studied and stored. Considering several of these institutions in the world, museums have become multi-functional institutions in large cities, while the attitudes towards their significance and function, considerably changed. The following contemporary tendencies testify of this phenomenon: the increasing number of permanent exhibitions, the transformation of museum shops into

the so-called 'supermarkets' and the appearance of such additional services within or near museum complexes, which make them besides representing places for culture, also representing the places for consumption (Gulyas, 2009). Museums extended and enriched their main activities with the aim of attracting different target groups of visitors. One of the aims was the idea of organising the 'Museum Night' event, in order to arouse the new and unconventional museum visitors' interests. Like the essence of the culture, art is also a communicational process and it always means a two-directional relationship between the creator of the work (artist) and the public, which is particularly expressed by the work of art.

The manifestations of art are found to be divided differently in scientific literature (Getz, 1997, 2008; Goldblatt, 2000, Bowdin et al., 2006; Bjeljic, 2006, Ćurčić et al., 2008). Getz (1997, 2008) divided art festivals into visual arts (painting, sculptures, handwork), performances (music, dance, theatre, cinema) and participation arts (where public and performers mixed during the performance). The manifestations of art are connected with culture and art by their contents, and they could be classified according to this content as it follows: theatre, musical, photo, film, fine arts, literature and mixed (Bjeljac, 2006). The 'Museum Night' represents a cultural event of mixed character (during the event, people visit museums, libraries, galleries, theatres and literary events, performances are held, movie projections, music events, educational programmes in ecology and science, programmes for children, etc.). It is organised by the Art production group 'Museum Night'<sup>1</sup>, in cooperation with the museums and cultural institutions (galleries, ethno houses, fortresses, town squares, etc.). People become acquainted with the museums and galleries in a new and unusual way, by means of constant animations, different exhibitions, programmes and presentations till late at night. This broadens the effects of culture and simultaneously influences the formation of cultural identity.

The first 'Museum Night' event was held in Berlin in 1997. It was called 'Lange Nacht der Museum'. The aim was to promote the city in a new way, while the concept should also satisfy high cultural standards, as well as the market needs. Several museums took part, and their permanent exhibits were enriched by additional contents (art performances, concerts, live playing, recitals, etc.). Since it was planned that museums stay opened

until two in the morning, many museum institutions expressed worry about destroying the reputation of the museum and attracting 'undesirable' public, so they did not take part in the first year of the event. However, the reception of the previous concept was favourable, and in the following years the number of participants increased. Gradually, other large German and European cities also joined these events (Munich, Vienna, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Bern, Zurich, etc.) (Petronijević, 2008).

In Serbia the first 'Museum Night' event was held in 2005 in Belgrade. Since it proved to be successful and much frequented, the event was held twice in the same year. In the following period, organisers initiated the organisation of the national 'Museum Night' and in 2007 the event took on a national character, that is, beside the capital, it was also held in other cities of Serbia (Novi Sad, Niš, Šabac and Valjevo). The number of cities (participants), as well as museums and galleries has constantly been increasing since then. In 2010, the 'Museum Night' event was organised for the seventh time, and 48 towns of Serbia took part with 271 locations.

The 'Museum Night' event was determined to occupy the second place among the cultural events in Serbia with 60 points, according to the geographical and economic group of criteria resulting from the tourist valorisation of the 'Museum Night' (Bjeljac, 2006; Bjeljic and Brankov, 2008; Goldblat, 2000). This means that it has real potentials for the improvement of the analysed criteria, by which it could become an independent tourist attraction.

## **SUBJECT, AIM AND METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH**

Today, museums arouse large number of tourists' interest, so the significant role of these institutions by the development of cultural tourism must not be neglected. The fact is that, due to large competition, the traditional understanding considerably changed the role of museums in society, and the very museums adapted to modern trends and the demand of tourists via transforming themselves into places aimed at visitors (Hadžić et al., 2005). However, research in Serbia showed that the broader classes of society still do not have the practice of visiting these cultural institutions. Organizers of the 'Museum Night' event found, according to the public opinion poll that 13% of the total sampled population do not go to museums during a year, while 55.7% of the sampled population go one to five times per year (UPG

<sup>1</sup> Manifestation established with the aim of affirming the universal values of culture and art by a creative initiative.

‘Museum Night’, questionnaire, 2009). Therefore, the subject of this research was the event, which, to a great extent, contributed to the fact that culture reaches to a broader class of the population. At a territorial level, the research comprised the city of Belgrade and Novi Sad. The ‘Museum Night’ event was first organised in Belgrade as it is the capital and the largest centre of Serbia by population, however, by getting a national character, it has also been held in Novi Sad, which is a significant macro-regional centre and the second city by population in Serbia (Table 1). Belgrade and Novi Sad represent the cities with the largest number of museums (37.8% of the total) and galleries in Serbia. The programme was held on 76 locations in Belgrade (28.4% of the total in Serbia), while 45 locations were involved in Novi Sad (16.60%)<sup>2</sup>.

The public opinion poll was used as a methodical procedure for data gathering. This method of sampling was used, because it is one of the most widely used quantitative methods in tourist market research. The method enables to gather data on the characteristics, opinions and attitudes of either precisely defined or randomly chosen groups (Unković and Zečević, 2005). This public opinion poll was carried out by asking people, randomly sampled in Novi Sad in 2009, to fill out questionnaires. The initial idea of sampling was to question people who often visit museums and other cultural institutions, but this idea was scrapped, because the event was organised especially for the reason of attracting broader classes of society, particularly those, who do not often or absolutely not visit museums. The data were obtained on the basis of exactly formulated questions in the questionnaire. The list contained questions about the gender, the age and the qualification of the participants in the ‘Museum Night’ event. Then, the obtained results were compared with the results of the questionnaires completed in Belgrade in the ‘Museum Night’ event in the same year.

**Table 1. The number of inhabitants and the number of sampled people in Belgrade and Novi Sad.**

City	Population 2008	Number of sampled people 2009
Belgrade	1,571,718	1,500
Novi Sad	319,259	309

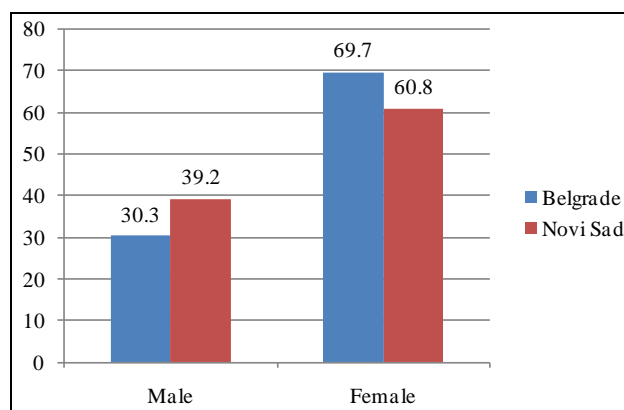
Source: Public opinion poll, Art production group ‘Museum Night’, 2009; Public opinion poll by Željko Bjeljac, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Which is 44% of the total number of locations in Serbia.

The aim of the research is to determine the differences in the structure of visitors of the ‘Museum Night’ event depending on the locality of the event. The following demographic and socio-economic indexes were chosen: gender, age and qualification. The organizer should gain advantage from the obtained results for future planning, to be able to adjust the contents of the ‘Museum Night’ events to various categories of the population. This means that the emphasis should be put on the market segment, which is most interested in the selection of the programmes of this event and towards which the actions of the tourist propaganda should be aimed.

## STRUCTURE OF VISITORS

Analysing the gender structure of visitors in the ‘Museum Night’ event in Novi Sad, it was concluded that a larger number of women (188) visit the event in relation to men (121). When these results were compared with the research carried out in Belgrade, a coincidence can be noticed, while the per cent of the female population is even higher in relation to the male population in the capital. The ‘Museum Night’ event in Belgrade was visited by 1,046 women and by 454 men in 2009 (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1. Gender structure of the visitors of the ‘Museum Night’ event (%)**

The women’s larger interest in this event was the consequence of the fact that women, mainly in larger or smaller groups, regard the visit to ‘Museum Night’ as the way to satisfy their own cultural interests by entertainment. Therefore, the groups of three, four or more women, who visited the museum exhibits in company, often took part in the public opinion poll. Although the various programmes of the event were conceived to satisfy the interests of both genders, the collective visits of the female population, at a similar age, were more frequent, which leads to a conclusion that such form

of the promotion of cultural heritage has been more interesting and attractive to female population.

The analysis of age structure of the visitors showed certain differences between the visitors of this event in Novi Sad and Belgrade. The public opinion poll carried out in Novi Sad showed that the population between the age of 26 and 45 prevails in the analysed sample (164). The population under the age of 25 was represented with 83 visitors, and the oldest population (over the age of 45) registered 62 visitors. However, the youngest population, under the age of 25, was represented with the greatest number (802) in the structure of visitors of the 'Museum Night' in Belgrade. The middle-aged group, between the age of 26 and 45, was represented by 480 visitors, while visitors over the age of 45 were represented by 218 people (Fig. 2). Considering that one of the main purposes of this event was to attract broader classes of society, who usually do not visit or rarely visit these type of institutions, it could be concluded that it was successful in that purpose, both in Novi Sad and Belgrade, because the classical museum visitors (at advanced age) were represented the least. The greatest part of the visitors in the 'Museum Night' event in Novi Sad was the middle-aged group, which was mainly constituted by university students and workers. When the event was organised, one of the main purposes, among others, was to attract this class of society, because it was supposed that they visit museums least, due to the lack of their spare time. As for the structure of the visitors in Belgrade, it prevailed the youngest population, who do not represent classical museum visitors, since they visit museums mainly within compulsory school programmes. However, it was found that the exhibitions of the museum, exhibited in an unusual way and with additional contents, have attracted youth, and made it possible for them to become acquainted with the cultural heritage by entertainment.

The oldest population was less present in the event, mostly due to the programme conception, which meant the visit of masses, visiting spatially distant locations, as well as evening terms to assure the various accompanying contents. This automatically caused that they neglected the visiting of the museums during this event and visited them independently from the 'Museum Night', within regular working hours, even if certain part of the cultural content was being missed.

The analysis of the qualification of visitors of the 'Museum Night' event in Novi Sad showed that 156 of the questioned had upper high school/university degree, 59 had secondary school

degree, while students and pupils came to 94 from the visitors of the examined sample. Doctors and masters were polled within the first group of the questioned people (29% of visitors had university degree). Besides qualification, the questionnaire also contained a question on the economic activity of the visitor. Most visitors of the 'Museum Night' event in Novi Sad were employed (54%), unemployed make 10% of polled, while retired persons make 6%. Students were analysed as a separate group (30%).

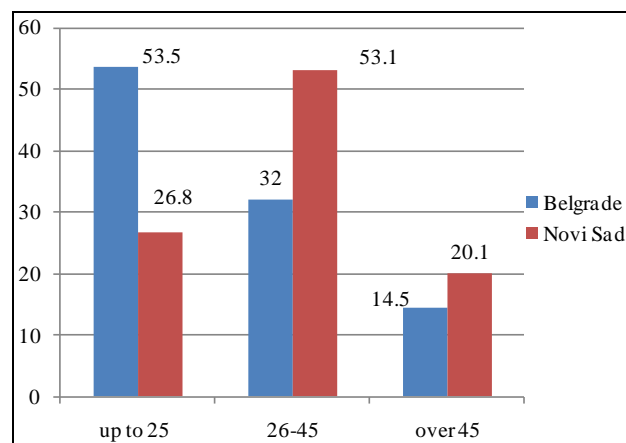


Fig. 2 The age structure of the visitors of the 'Museum Night' event (%)

Observing the structure of visitors of the 'Museum Night', in relation to the qualification, it is concluded that students and pupils make the highest number of the polled people (849), as well as the polled with upper high school/university degree (509). There were 142 visitors who had secondary school degree (Fig. 3).

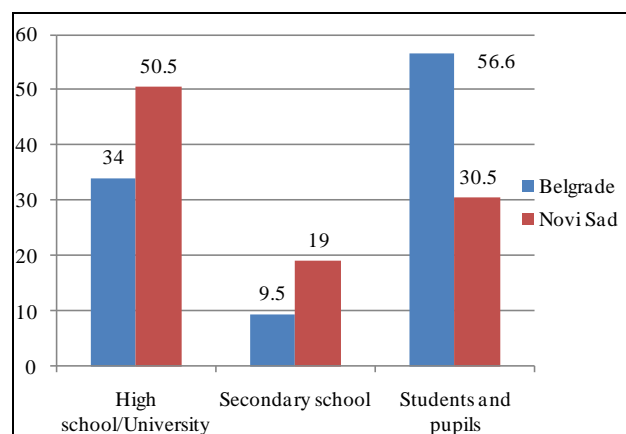


Fig. 3 The qualification of the visitors of the 'Museum Night' event (%)

Comparing the obtained results, it could be concluded that the 'Museum Night' event has mostly been visited by visitors with university degree and with needs and interests aimed at arts

and culture. Also, students of different character, visited this event to a great extent, and the students of the art school slightly prevail, as well as those, who are orientated to history, geography, philosophy, etc. Besides interests, concerning arts and culture, one more significant factor influences the large visit of the student population and it is the possibility to visit all the exhibition spaces and the attractive accompanying contents with only one ticket. The participation of visitors with secondary school degree is also not less, which is the consequence of the interesting programmes and exhibitions which stimulate the interests of this class of society. Employed population considered that the 'Museum Night' event was a good chance to visit museums, due to the unusual (evening) term, because they are usually unable to go, owing to their job duties. However, unemployed population emphasized that, besides various contents, favourable entrance fees were significant factors for them and they were able to visit all the locations they were interested in. The fewer visits of retired people is caused by the fact that there were large number of locations, at which the presented exhibitions and programmes required much walk and long-continued standing in lines, but nevertheless visitors of this group are also polled by a questionnaire and they expressed their preference for arts and culture in 6%.

## **CONCLUSION**

The data obtained by public opinion poll in Novi Sad, and then compared with the data from Belgrade, showed certain differences concerning the polled male and female people and their visit to the 'Museum Night' event. Namely, it was determined by the survey that women are a little more mobile, concerning the act of coming and visiting the locations of the event. Female population considered the 'Museum Night' event as a chance to satisfy their cultural needs in an amusing way and by collective visits, and they more often formed groups, than the male population. Male population also visited this manifestation to a great extent, but the conclusion is that, this way of the presentation of culture and the amusing contents has been more attractive to females in both of the analysed cities.

The age structure of the visitors in Novi Sad and Belgrade differs to a certain extent. However, from the questioned people, the middle-aged group (between the age of 26 and 45) prevailed in Novi Sad and the young population (under the age of 25) prevailed in Belgrade. It is necessary to mention that these classes of the society are not classical museum visitors and an intention to present the

museums to a broader public and to make them more visited by the population who do not often or absolutely not visit museums, proved to be successful.

The 'Museum Night' event has mostly been visited by those with university degree, particularly by visitors, who were supposed to have the largest cultural needs and interests associated with this form of cultural tourism. Doctors and masters were also polled and large number of students from art schools. In the 'Museum Night' in Belgrade, students and pupils made the majority of the examined sample, and the conclusion that could be made is that the event succeeded to motivate young, educated people and to present them these new kinds of cultural institutions in an unusual way. Employed population prevailed among the visitors, while unemployed emphasized the concept of visiting all locations with one ticket as the most significant motive for future visits.

The results, obtained by public opinion polls during the 'Museum Night' event in the cities with the largest number of museums (37.8%) in Serbia, (Belgrade and Novi Sad), and also with the largest number of locations (44.04%), should be successfully used by the organizers of the event, to choose the appropriate promotion activities towards the adequate market segments. The analysis of the public opinion poll is of a great theoretical and practical significance since the obtained demographic and socio-economic data of the examined structures, as well as the opinions of the polled people (which represent the subjective opinions and demands of the tourist) could be used along with the results to which tourist experts come, led by objective criteria. Moreover, the analysis should serve as a successful model for similar surveys in other cities of Serbia that participate in the organisation of this event, in order to get a real picture of the target groups. The results are also applicable and can support the decision-making on the improvement of the organisations and the effects of the mentioned tourist event. The research pointed out the great significance of the socio-demographic factors regarding the organisation of any kind of events and tourist travels in general.

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