

Research Article

Krzysztof Parzych*, Jadranka Brkić-Vejmelka

Guests' assessment of hotel facilities and services: Zadar case study

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Abstract: The availability of hotel facilities and services and their quality are one of the most important factor in selection of a tourist destination. The aim of the article was to analyse the impact of hotel location factors, prices of hotel services and detailed assessments of hotel services provided by the hotel on the overall rating of the hotel. As a case study, Zadar – a city located in the northern part of the Dalmatian coast of Croatia – was used to analyse the problem. The location determinants of hotels and their equipment were assessed in relation to the price of accommodation and tourists' evaluation of the basic components of hotel services. The analysis used data obtained from the Booking.com website for accommodation prices, including selected days of the high and low season, data on the number of opinions about the object and the rating of the object by guests in terms of the overall opinion about the object, its location conditions, the standard of services rendered, cleanliness, comfort, evaluation of staff work, access to Wi-Fi network and assessment of services rendered in relation to the price of the service. The obtained results indicate hotel location, especially its distance from the city centre, railway station and airport and evaluation of chosen elements of customers' hotel evaluation are most significant determinants of choosing accommodation for tourists.

Keywords: Zadar; Hotel; Guest's satisfaction; Tourist destination; Opinion

*Corresponding author: **Krzysztof Parzych**, Institute of Social Economic Geography and Tourism, Pomeranian University in Słupsk, Poland, 76-200 Słupsk, Partyzantów 27, ORCID: 0000-0002-1784-4539, Email: krzysztof.parzych@apsl.edu.pl

Jadranka Brkić-Vejmelka, Department of Geography, University of Zadar, Croatia, 23000 Zadar, Dr. Franje Tuđmana 24i, ORCID: 0000-0002-9332-333X, Email: jbrkic@unizd.hr

1 Introduction

The aim of the article was to analyse the assessment of services provided by visitors of hotels in Zadar in the context of selected location factors and hotel standard and to determine the main factors influencing hotel reviews.

Empirical studies on the assessment of satisfaction with the stay among hotel and others accommodation objects' guests were initiated by Cardozo (1965). Service quality has become a very important subject of tourism marketing investigation over the past few decades. An assessment of customer satisfaction in the hotel industry is an issue very often undertaken by different researchers representing different scientific disciplines (Abebaw & Endeshaw, 2018; Atkinson, 1988; Gržinić, 2007; Gupta, 2017; Hawlena, Koproń, & Chudyga, 2016; Holjevac & Markovic, 2010; Kalavathy & Swapna, 2019; Kostin, 2018; Limberger, dos Anjos, de Souza Meira, & dos Anjos, 2014; Lukanova, 2010; Marić, Marinković, Marić, & Dimitrovski, 2016; Mensah & Mensah, 2018; Napierała & Leśniewska-Napierała, 2019; O'Connor, 2010; O'Neill & Palmer, 2003; Oh & Parks, 1997; Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, 2006; Serra Cantallops & Salvi, 2014; Tabaku & Kruja, 2019; Wu & Ko, 2013; Zhou, Ye, Pearce, & Wu, 2014). Today, customer review websites are a very important source of information for visitors (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

According to Quinby & Rauch (2012), the traveller's voice plays an increasingly important role in the search process for finding the right destination package. Measuring and monitoring service quality and customer satisfaction is a very important factor for tourist enterprises and customer-oriented hotels. A lot of studies show a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Barsky, 1992; Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Dominici & Guzzo, 2010; Dominici & Palumbo, 2013; Gilbert & Horsnell, 1998; Nomnga & Mhlanga, 2015).

Numerous studies show that guests' overall satisfaction levels result in higher probability of their return to the same hotel (Nurcahyo, Fitriyani, & Hudda, 2017; O'Neill & Palmer, 2003; Ogungbayi, Olatidoye, & Agbebi, 2019; Oppermann, 1998; Schuckert, Liu, & Law, 2015; Shime-

kit, Wondoson, & Seid, 2016; Tessera, Ibiwani, & Noraini, 2016; Umesh Guanarathne, 2014; Wang & Shieh, 2006). The quality of hotel services is a determining factor for attracting and retaining customers (Baltescu & Boscor, 2014; Madar & Neacșu, 2013). Service quality has a positive direct effect on hotel image (Tabaku & Kruja, 2019). An important research issue regarding the assessment of the level of hotel customer satisfaction is to identify the main factors determining their satisfaction (Carman, 1990; Chu & Choi, 2000).

Over the last decade, customer review websites have become a very important source of information for visitors (Molinillo, Ximénez-de-Sandoval, Fernández-Morales, & Coca-Stefaniak, 2016; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). According to Molinillo et al. (2016), customers play a dual role on customer review websites. On the one hand, they can actively influence opinions by posting comments online, while on the other, they may passively consume information posted by others in order to develop their own decision-making process. According to Yoo & Gretzel (2011), over 50% of the tourists consume online content generated by others. The majority (70%) of consumer content generated by tourists in 2011 was posted on websites of online travel agencies (OTAs), including Expedia and Booking.com, while the remaining 30% was posted on specific websites or customer review websites for visitors and tourists (Molinillo et al., 2016).

Research has shown that potential customers tend to trust written comments posted online by other customers more than recommendations found on official destination marketing or hotel websites (Sparks, Perkins, & Buckley, 2013). According to a recent global TripAdvisor survey, holiday planning is becoming increasingly dominated by online resources and, particularly, customer review websites, with 69% of tourists going online to plan their holidays. This percentage is even higher in Spain where it amounts to 83% (Molinillo et al., 2016).

2 Materials and Methods

2.1 Research method

The research used various methods to assess the quality of hotel services: SERVPERF (Babić-Hodović, Arslanagić-Kalajdžić, Banda, & Sivic, 2019; Yilmaz, 2009), SERVQUAL (Górník & Świdroń M., 2010; Wu & Ko, 2013) and IPA-Kano model (Chang & Chen, 2011; Dominici & Palumbo, 2013).

The analysis of the problem was made on the basis of data regarding selected location features and hotel stand-

ard in Zadar, as well as the opinions on the quality of hotel services issued by visitors of hotels in Zadar. Booking.com website data was used as the source material for visitors' opinions about hotel facilities. The analysis took into account all the opinions about the surveyed hotels available on the mentioned website. Online evaluation of the hotel services quality plays an important marketing role. Research shows that online review by hotel guests is also important for hoteliers (Napierała, 2018).

The analysis included 44 hotels located in Zadar and in the immediate vicinity. Location features and services related to the standard of services included the price of accommodation in a double room in the high season, the object's standard (number of stars), the number of accommodation places, the distance from the city centre, from the bus station and from the airport in Zemunik. Among the parameters of the hotel services assessment, the analysis used: the total number of reviews, overall assessment of the facility, the assessments of cleanliness, location, staff work, comfort, quality of service / price ratio, facility amenities and free Wi-Fi access. The correlation matrix, principal component analysis and the multiple regression method were used to determine the factors influencing the opinions about hotels among visitors.

2.2 Study area

The Croatian coast is one of the most frequently visited coastal regions in Europe. In 2019, Croatia was visited by nearly 16.6 million foreign tourists (UNWTO, 2019). The main area of concentration of foreign inbound tourism in Croatia is the Dalmatian coast region. The vast majority of accommodation base, including hotel facilities in Croatia, also concentrates in this region. In the Dalmatian region, the main areas of international inbound tourism concentration are: the region of Dubrovnik, Split and Zadar. Accommodation base and tourist traffic were mainly located in the coastal region, with the highest concentration in the following regions: Istria (4,333,000 tourists), Split–Dalmatia (3,474,000), Dubrovnik–Neretva (2,015,000), Zadar (1,164,000) and in the Zagreb metropolitan region (1,400,000 tourists). In total, the number of nights spent by tourists at accommodation facilities amounted to 88,652,000. The highest numbers of the nights spent at accommodation facilities were recorded in the following regions: Split–Dalmatia (17,561,999), Primorje–Gorski Kotar (15,284,000), Zadar (9,591,000) and Dubrovnik–Neretva (8,051,000 nights). The average length of tourists' stay in Croatia in 2019 was close to 4.81 days. The highest average length of tourists' stay was

recorded in the following regions: Istria (6.04 days), Zadar (5.76), Šibenik–Knin (5.71) and Primorje–Gorski Kotar (5.25 days). In other regions, the average length of stay was much shorter.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Tourism Republic of Croatia (2019), there were a total of 1,266,785 accommodation places in the country, with the highest concentration in coastal counties: Istria (312,578 places), Split–Dalmatia (275,946), Primorje–Gorski Kotar (209,563) and Zadar (168,790 accommodation places). In other areas of the administrative regions, the number of accommodation places was definitely lower. In 2018, there were 8,536 accommodation facilities in Croatia. The categorised facilities were dominated by hotels, with 731 of them. The remaining facilities included 303 hostels and 291 campsites. In addition, there were also 7,092 uncategorised accommodation units (private accommodation facilities and guest rooms). Most hotels were located in the regions of Split–Dalmatia (156), Primorje–Gorski Kotar (120) and Istria (103). The number of hotel rooms in 2018 in the whole of Croatia amounted to 59,896. The largest numbers of rooms in hotel facilities were evidenced in the following regions: Istria (14,053), Split–Dalmatia (11,369) and Primorje–Gorski Kotar (10,390 rooms). The fewest hotel rooms were in the regions of Požega–Slavonia, Virovitica–Podravina, Koprivnica–Križevci. In total, the number

of accommodation places in hotels in 2018 amounted to 117,211. The largest number of accommodation places was recorded in the following regions: Istria (27,567), Split–Dalmatia (22,493) and Primorje–Gorski Kotar (20,417). The lowest number of beds in hotels in the following regions: Požega–Slavonia, Virovitica–Podravina and Sisak–Moslavina.

Zadar has a population of 71,000 inhabitants in 2019 (Worldometer, 2020). The city covers a fairly large area, 191.4 sq. km. Zadar is the administrative capital of Zadar County and an important economic and cultural centre of northern Dalmatia (Figure 1). A tourist function is a very important factor in the socio-economic development of the city. Its developments is based on historical and cultural values (numerous religious and secular monuments from the Roman Empire, as well as Gothic and Renaissance ones).

Zadar is famous town because of the specific attractions as Sea Organ and Monument to the sea located on the edge of the Zadar waterfront. Moreover, Zadar is an important hub for road, rail and international air transport because of the airport in Zemunik. The tourist function in Zadar has been developing for over a hundred years. In 1899, the first travel agency was established in the city of Liburnja. The tourist activity in the region Zadar has its beginning on a larger scale at the turn of the XIX and XX

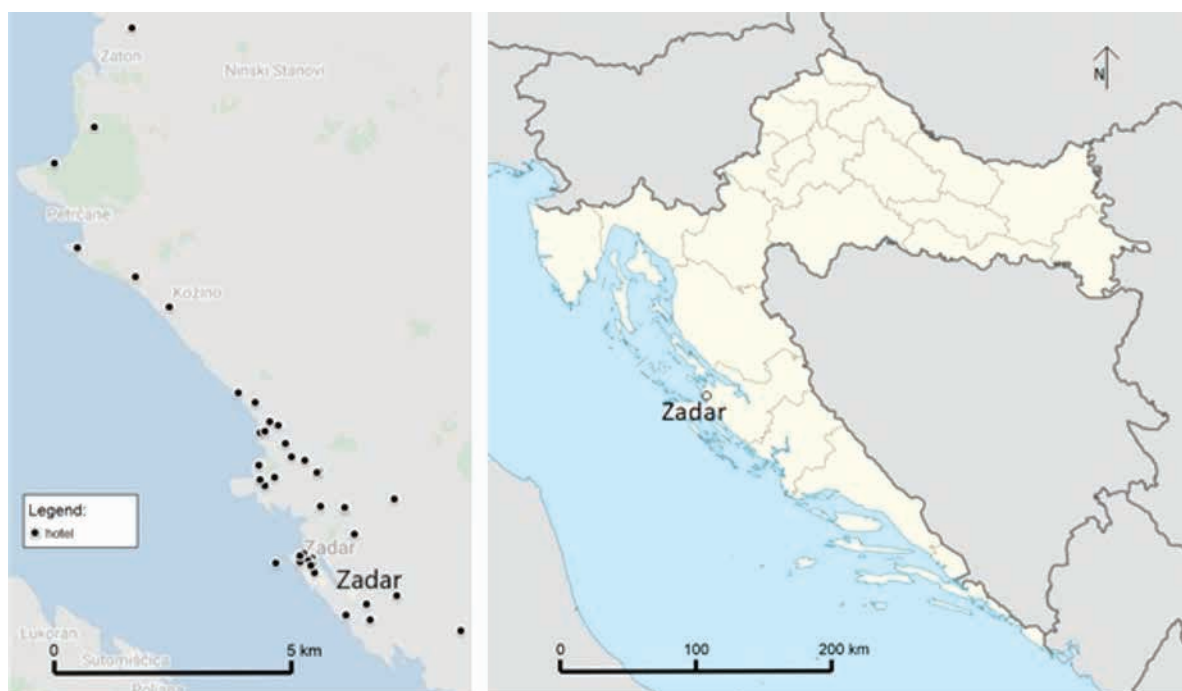


Figure 1. Location of hotel facilities in Zadar

Source: Own elaboration based on data of the Ministry of Tourism of Croatia.

century and in the period between world wars (Brkić-Vejmelka, Pejdo, & Blaće, 2015; Faričić & Mikuličić, 1998; Magaš, 1999; Magaš, Brkić-Vejmelka, & Faričić, 2000), but more dynamic development of tourism occurred after 1970s (Mikačić, 1994). During this period, tourism gained a dominant role in the economic development of Zadar region. Today, Zadar is the main centre of nautical, ferry and recreational tourism for the region of the northern part of the Dalmatian coast. In 2018, the county of Zadar had 47 hotels, with 3,290 rooms and 6,914 accommodation places.

The analysis of the research problem covered 44 hotels operating in Zadar and in its immediate vicinity. Most of them were located in the historic historical centre of the city, of which 11 objects in the immediate historical centre of Zadar (within a radius of up to 1 km distance from the city centre). There were 3,726 beds in Zadar hotels. The average number of beds was 84.7. The largest hotel had 656 beds, the smallest one had four beds. Most hotels (25) were three-star. In addition, the city has 16 four-star hotels and one five- and four-star hotel. The average price of accommodation for two persons per night in the high season (price determined according to Booking.com on 15 July 2019) was 110 euros. The average distance from hotel to the historical city centre of Zadar is 3.2 km.

3 Results and Discussion

The analysis of the assessment of hotel services provided by hotels in Zadar was conducted on the basis of opinions issued by visitors regarding the assessment of the location of the facility, cleanliness, staff work, comfort, amenities and value for money. The number of ratings issued for the objects included in the analysis was 15,923. The average number of grades amounted to 404.9.

The highest ratings were given by the reviewers to the work of the staff of the hotels visited, with an average rating of 9.1 out of 10.0, with a standard deviation of 0.7. The average cleanliness rating was 9.0, with an average standard deviation of 0.8, a maximum value of 10.0 and a minimum value of 5.5. The average rating of Zadar hotels location in the opinion of visitors was 8.8 at a standard deviation of 0.7, a maximum value of 9.8 and a minimum value of 7.1. The average comfort rating of Zadar hotels in the opinion of visitors was 8.8 at an average standard deviation of 0.7, a maximum value of 10.0 and a minimum value of 6.5. The ratio between quality and price was ranked the lowest by the guests of Zadar hotels. The

average rating was 8.5, with a standard deviation of 0.8 and a minimum of 6.0 and a maximum of 10.0.

The assessment values of selected elements of hotel services were correlated with chosen measures of location, development and hotel standard (Table 1, Figure 2). Statistically significant correlations were found for selected elements of the location and hotel standard, as well as visitors' opinions. The correlation matrix showed significant statistical correlations between the overall assessment of hotel services in Zadar hotels and the accommodation price determined for the selected day of the high season (negative correlation), with the number of accommodation places (negative correlation); distance from the airport (negative correlation); and the opinions of visitors regarding the location of the facility, comfort, value for money and amenities supplementing the offer of stay (positive correlations). The location assessment was correlated with the overall facility rating and with the comfort and facilities ratings offered to visitors during their stay (positive correlations). Statistically significant correlations were found between the comfort and location assessments, quality/price ratio and amenities rating. The value for money shows statistically significant correlations with the assessment of comfort and the assessment of amenities. In addition, there were statistically significant correlations between the hotel standard and the price and the period of operation of the facility, the period of operation of the facility and the distance from the centre, the number of accommodation places in the facility and the number of opinions (positive) and the overall rating and value for money (negative) as well as the distance from the airport and the overall rating of the facility and value for money (negative).

The main impact determining customer satisfaction with the hotel service is the quality of service (Carman, 1990; Gilbert & Horsnell, 1998; Gupta, 2017; Limberger et al., 2014). Other studies indicate the main role of price as a factor determining guest satisfaction with a stay in a hotel (Mattila & O'Neill, 2003). According to research by Gołąb-Andrzejak (2014), the most important factors when using accommodation services and choosing a place to stay include: location of the facility, level of service, room standard, cleanliness, standard of services, atmosphere in the hotel, quality of catering services and loyalty to the hotel/brand. Research results of different indicate a statistically significant relation between the size of the hotel and tourists' assessment of the hotel (Molinillo et al., 2016). According to Molinillo et al. (2016), about 75% of hotel's best ratings in the Spanish coastal destinations belonged to the smallest hotel category (hotels with capacity from 1 to 30 rooms).

Table 1: Correlation matrix of selected statistics on hotels in Zadar and visitors' opinions on selected services provided by hotels

Variable	Price	Number of stars	Age of the hotel	Number of beds	Distance from the centre	Distance from the railway station	Distance from the airport	Cleanliness assessment	Overall rating	Location assessment	Comfort rating	Relation of value to price	Facilities rating
Price	1.00	0.39	0.09	0.37	-0.09	-0.01	0.05	0.22	-0.34	-0.01	-0.18	-0.54	-0.31
Number of stars	0.39	1.00	0.37	-0.02	-0.07	0.00	0.14	0.08	-0.02	0.28	0.04	-0.22	-0.08
Age of the hotel	0.09	0.37	1.00	0.05	-0.52	-0.13	-0.15	0.18	0.08	0.15	0.16	0.02	0.06
Number of beds	0.37	-0.02	0.05	1.00	0.13	0.21	0.22	0.66	-0.35	-0.14	-0.29	-0.34	-0.30
Distance from the centre	-0.09	-0.07	-0.52	0.13	1.00	0.42	0.33	-0.15	-0.17	-0.32	-0.08	0.04	-0.18
Distance from the railway station	-0.01	0.00	-0.13	0.21	0.42	1.00	0.23	0.26	0.22	0.02	0.04	0.19	-0.12
Distance from the airport	0.05	0.14	-0.15	0.22	0.33	0.23	1.00	0.19	-0.46	-0.14	-0.32	-0.41	-0.27
Cleanliness assessment	0.22	0.08	0.18	0.66	-0.15	0.26	0.19	1.00	-0.17	-0.01	-0.23	-0.18	-0.17
Overall rating	-0.34	-0.02	0.08	-0.35	-0.17	0.22	-0.46	-0.17	1.00	0.56	0.90	0.85	0.88
Staff evaluation	-0.28	-0.15	-0.07	-0.29	-0.10	0.17	-0.42	0.76	0.89	0.40	0.80	0.82	0.83
Location assessment	-0.01	0.28	0.15	-0.14	-0.32	0.02	-0.14	-0.01	0.56	1.00	0.38	0.22	0.34
Comfort rating	-0.18	0.04	0.16	-0.29	-0.08	0.04	-0.32	-0.23	0.90	0.38	1.00	0.81	0.93
Relation of value to price	-0.54	-0.22	0.02	-0.34	0.04	0.19	-0.41	-0.18	0.85	0.22	0.81	1.00	0.79
Facilities rating	-0.31	-0.08	0.06	-0.30	-0.18	-0.12	-0.27	-0.17	0.88	0.34	0.93	0.79	1.00

Source: Own elaboration.

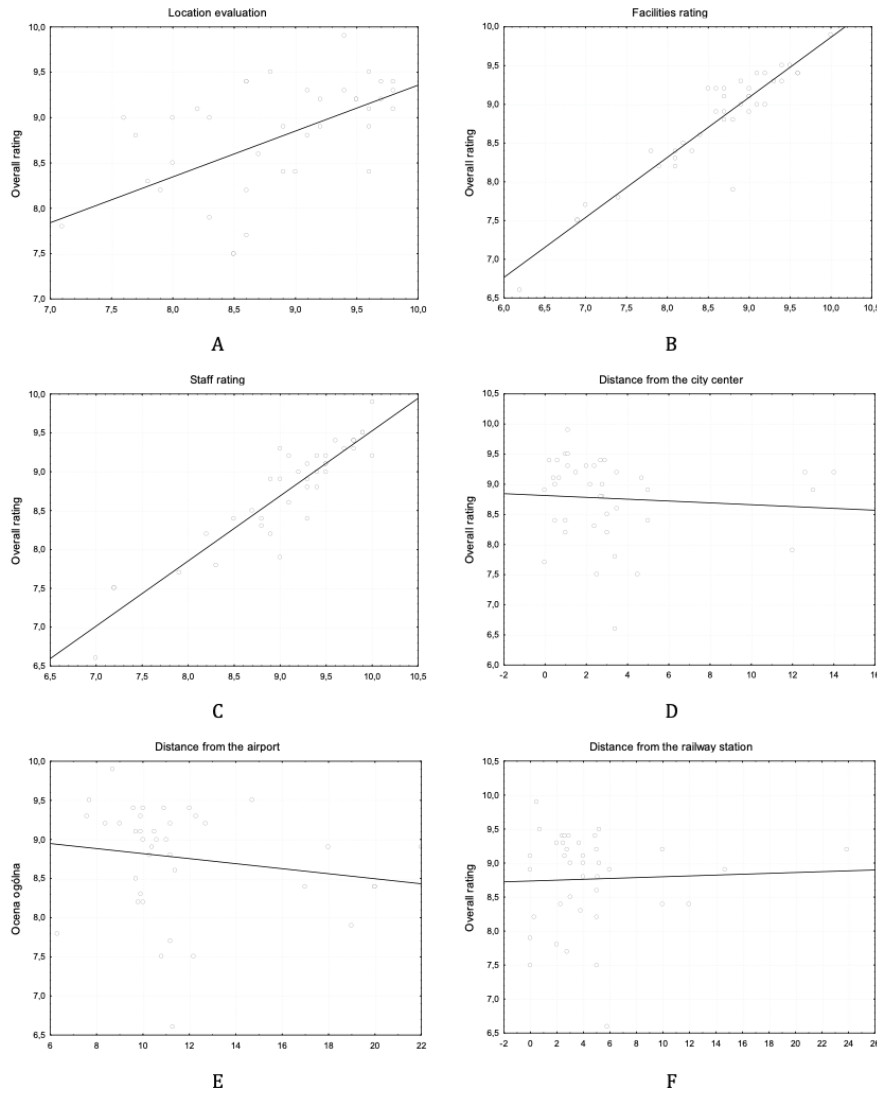


Figure 2: Dependence of selected location elements and hotel standard in Zadar with the hotel's overall rating
 Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3: Analysis of determinants of hotel evaluation by tourists with the use of multiple regression analysis

Variable	Model estimated for all considered variables		Model estimated for selected variables			
	Coef.	Error	Coef.	Error	t Test	p Level
Distance from the centre	-0.15	0.04	-0.03	0.01	-3.49	0.00
Distance from the railway station	0.20	0.04	0.03	0.01	4.79	0.00
Distance from the airport	-0.11	0.03	-0.02	0.01	-3.28	0.00
Cleanliness rating	0.18	0.07	0.15	0.06	2.75	0.01
Staff evaluation	0.27	0.08	0.24	0.07	3.44	0.00
Location assessment	0.19	0.03	0.18	0.03	5.43	0.00
Facilities rating	0.46	0.09	0.38	0.08	5.04	0.00
R ²	0.985		0.970			

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2: Contribution of selected features characterising hotels in Zadar into analysed principal components.

Variable	Contribution to principal component 1	Contribution to principal component 2
Price	0.07	0.73
Number of stars	0.00	0.60
Age of the hotel	-0.04	0.03
Number of beds	0.09	0.61
Distance from the centre	-0.04	0.66
Distance from the railway station	-0.07	0.82
Distance from the airport	0.13	0.45
Cleanliness assessment	0.97	0.04
Overall rating	-0.90	-0.12
Staff evaluation	-0.95	0.01
Location assessment	-0.44	0.32
Comfort rating	-0.96	0.12
Relation of value to price	-0.93	-0.11
Facilities rating	-0.96	-0.01

Source: Own elaboration.

The results of the analysis of the correlation matrix of selected variables characterising the location and standard of hotels as well as the opinions of visitors to hotels in Zadar lead to the following conclusions:

- The price had a minor impact on the overall rating of the hotels. The increase in accommodation prices was accompanied by a slight drop in the overall rating of the facility.
- The assessment of the hotel location by the visitors had a moderate impact on their overall assessment of the facility. The analysis of the impact of the hotel location on the overall rating also indicates a stronger relationship between the distance of the hotel from the airport with the overall rating of the hotel compared to the analogical relation between the overall rating and the distance from the historic city centre.
- There is a noticeable, statistically significant although weak negative correlation between the size of the hotel expressed in the number of accommodation places and the overall rating of the facility and value for money.
- The strongest dependencies are shown by the correlation of the general rating of hotels, with the assessments of: comfort, amenities and value for money.

In order to isolate the main factors affecting the overall assessment of hotels in Zadar, the principal components analysis was performed (Table 2). There were two components identified in the analysis. The first factor included variables related to the assessment of development ele-

ments and the standard of hotels: overall assessment, cleanliness assessment, assessment of staff work, location, comfort, value for money and the assessment of amenities. The first factor explains 40.2% of variance. The second factor explained 19.5% of the variance and contained the following variables: the price of accommodation in the high season and the distance from the hotel to the railway station.

The multiple regression method was used to assess the impact of individual factors on the assessment of the hotel by tourists (Table 3). The dependent variable was the overall rating of the hotel facility. The group of dependent variables includes the distances of individual hotels from: the centre, the railway station, the airport and the detailed assessments, especially individual location evaluation. The results of the multiple regression analysis show that the most significant impact on the overall assessment of a hotel facility had: evaluation of the location of the hotel facility, distance from the airport, from the city centre and from the railway station.

4 Conclusion

Zadar is one of the most developed and most frequently visited tourist destinations in the north of Dalmatia. The assessment analysis of the opinions of visitors to hotels in Zadar and selected features regarding the location of hotels and their standard of equipment indicates a relatively small impact of the location of the hotel, the stand-

ard and the tradition of hotel operation in urban space on the assessment of hotels in the opinion of visitors.

The results of the analyses indicate a significantly higher impact on shaping the overall hotel assessment of the partial ratings of individual components of the hotel operation, especially regarding the standard of services: comfort of stay, amenities supplementing the offer of stay, staff work.

Bionotes:

Dr Krzysztof Parzych is a professor at the Institute of Socio-Economic Geography and Tourism in Pomeranian University in Słupsk. He researches the determinants of accommodation and tourist traffic in coastal regions.

Dr Jadranka Brkić-Vejmelka is a professor at the Department of Geography in University of Zadar. She specialises in investigations of historical development of tourism in the region of Zadar and northern Dalmatia.

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