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OVERVIEW OF TOURISM STATISTICS AT THE STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

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Review

The article presents the current situation of tourism statistics whose most important part is monthly accommodation statistics. This was revised in cooperation with the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and is nowadays in line with the European standards.

Every three years two rather comprehensive sample surveys are carried out: one on the frontiers where foreign travellers are leaving Slovenia and the other in the accommodation establishments. Sample surveys are the most important source of data on inbound tourism in Slovenia.

As a part of the Household Budget Survey, the sample survey on travels of domestic population is carried out.

In the field of tourism, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia cooperates with some international organisations, such as WTO (World Tourism Organisation), Eurostat (European Statistical Office) and some others.

Key words: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, Swiss Federal Statistical Office, sample surveys, accommodation capacities

1. INTRODUCTION

The article presents an overview of the current situation in the field of tourism statistics in Slovenia.

In Slovenia, it is the task of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SORS) to collect, process and publish data. This means that the reporting units send their reports directly to the SORS. This is also the case in the field of tourism statistics.

Within the SORS, the tourism statistics covers 6 spheres:

- monthly accommodation statistics,
- monthly survey on the number of visitors at some points of interest to tourists (museums, galleries, natural phenomena), at swimming pools and in casinos,
- annual survey on the activities of Slovenian travel agencies (number of one -day or more days travels and number of travellers making these travels),
- annual survey on the number of boats and persons harboured in three Slovenian marinas,
- sample surveys on inbound tourism in Slovenia (with 3-year periodicity) and
- sample survey on tourist travel of domestic population.

2. ACCOMMODATION STATISTICS

The most important and the most comprehensive part of tourism statistics at Slovenian statistical office is certainly accommodation statistics. The data on the total number on arrivals of tourists (domestic and foreign) and their overnight stays are available from the year 1949, whereas the detailed data on different types of tourist resorts and administrative units are available since 1961 (SORS, 1997).

In Slovenia there are approximately 1000 accommodation establishments. The Law on hotels and restaurants (Official Journal RS, No. 1/95) defines the following types of accommodation facilities: hotels, motels, boarding houses, holiday dwellings, bed and breakfast facilities, inns with accommodation, mountain huts, holiday accommodations for employees, youth dormitories, tourist campsites, private tourist accommodations and temporary accommodation facilities. All types of accommodation facilities are in line with the Classification of tourist accommodation establishments and dwellings, that is valid in EU member states (Eurostat, 1997). The SORS respect the defined breakdown and also publish the gathered data in that way.

The monthly accommodation statistics collects the data on arrivals of tourists, overnight stays and facilities of the accommodation establishment, that were available in the reporting month. Beside the data on arrivals and overnight stays processed by different criteria, the data on available capacities are also available per month. Upon these data it is possible to calculate the monthly net rate of occupancy of bed-places. Even if there have been no guests in an establishment (e.g. hotel or boarding house) in the reporting month, but the establishment was open and the capacities were available, the reporting unit should by all means pass this information to the Statistical office, at least by telephone (Škafar, 1996).

The reporting units should send their reports for the reference month till 5th of the following month. If they fail to do this, they usually receive a reminder. In summer season, however, they are sent two reminders. If they still do not send the report, we contact them again by telephone.

The preliminary data are published approximately three weeks upon the reference month, whereas the final data are published with a month and a half delay. The monthly data are published in the monthly publication Rapid reports. For the whole year detailed data are available in the publication *An annual overview of tourism statistics*. In the introductory part of this publication, the methodology of the monthly accommodation survey and also that of other annual surveys is explained. (SORS, 1997).

One of the important demands of the monthly accommodation statistics is to maintain the updated list of the units which are obliged to make reports. We try to reach this objective via co-operation with administrative units, municipalities, tourist offices, different publications, advertisers and on the basis of our own knowledge in the field.

In the future, we would like to work with upgraded survey software. It is our plan to elaborate an extended form for the hotels and similar establishments. In the monthly report they should write down the arrivals and overnight stays per each day. In this way we could calculate the occupancy rate of rooms, which is one of the recommendations of Eurostat (Eurostat, 1996a).

3. SAMPLE SURVEYS ON FOREIGN TRAVELLERS AND FOREIGN TOURISTS

Every three years, during the 4 summer months, the Statistical Office implement two sample surveys to investigate in the inbound travel and tourism flows. The sample survey on foreign travellers is conducted when travellers depart from Slovenia at border crossing points on the roads or from airports. The sample survey on foreign tourists, that takes place in accommodation establishments, provides the data on the characteristics of foreign tourists and their expenditure. Both surveys were already implemented in the former Yugoslavia, under different circumstances, in compliance with the methodological guidelines of the former Federal Statistical Office. (Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1986 and 1989).

3.1 Sample survey on foreign travellers

The sample survey was implemented in 1997, from the beginning of June till the end of September, comprising 72 observation days on 29 road border crossing points. The interviews took place from 6 a.m. till 10 p.m. on selected days.

With the survey we wanted to acquire more detailed information on the characteristics of foreign travellers. These were interviewed when they were leaving Slovenia at the road exit points. The characteristics we were interested in were: nationality, age, the main purpose of visit to Slovenia, duration of visit, type of visit (a same-day visit or a visit with one or more overnight stays), which place they visited, what type of accommodation they stayed in, how much they spent, how they paid and what were their impressions). To get reliable data, the questionnaires were translated in six foreign languages.

The observation unit was determined to be a traveller in a vehicle, i.e. a car, motorbike, van and bus, with a foreign number plate, that was leaving Slovenia at a road exit point. All vehicles were counted. The questions referring to the expenses, that the travellers had during their travel and stay in Slovenia, were directed to the interviewed traveller and the members of his travel party, who shared the expenses together (Škafar, Zaletel, 1997a).

The survey was implemented by face-to-face interview following the prescribed procedure. From 6 a.m. the interviewers were counting foreign vehicles. In the auxiliary form they wrote down the number of passed and selected vehicles for each hour. For every exit point and every selected day the random beginning of selection was determined and to exclude the subjective selection of the vehicles, the selection step was determined as well. We anticipated approximately 100 foreign travellers to be interviewed per observation day, perhaps a few less or more. The selection step differed from one exit point to the other and from month to month.

The base for the sampling frame were the data on departures of foreign passengers at the exit points from June till September 1996. The monthly available data for each exit point are: the total number of foreign vehicles and separately the number of cars, buses, motorcycles and the total and separate number of passengers for each type of vehicle (Novak, 1997).

The sampling frame was stratified to 16 strata according to 4 frontiers and 4 observation months. The sample was proportionally stratified according to the number of the foreign passengers departures. The border crossing points were selected with the probability proportional to their size (PPS), the observation days were selected systematically.

Those exit points with less than 27 thousand passengers, i.e. on the average less than 300 vehicles per day in any of the stated summer months, were excluded from the sampling frame. We anticipated that not less than every third vehicle should be selected.

In Slovenia there are 94 road border crossing points for which the data are available. After the exclusion of minor exit points, 48 of them on 4 frontiers remained in the sampling frame. In the final stage 29 exit points were selected.

As already said, according to the systematical selection, we anticipated that approximately 100 interviews would be conducted per day. But this method of selection of passengers did not turn out to be the very optimal one. Actually there has never been a theoretical D-day. On some days over 200 interviews were conducted and on others hardly 60 were conducted. The total amount of the vehicles and so the selected number of interviews were heavily influenced by the weather, temperature, day of the week, e.g. it is more customary to go shopping to Italy or Hungary on a Thursday than on a Wednesday; on Sundays more Italians went swimming in Istria than on Saturdays, etc.

At the end of observation period we had a total of 7261 questionnaires, among them 700 or cca. 10 % remained non-responded, except for the data on nationality of the passenger. If we consider that according to the sampling design there had been 7200 interviews planned and take into account some complications, we must conclude that we came very close to the anticipated number.

As sample surveys of such extent are rather expensive, the data should be processed and analysed as soon as possible. A few days after the interviews were concluded, all data had already been processed with Blaise 3 software. As soon as the data from the regular monthly frontier survey were available for the whole population for 4 summer months, the data were also weighted. With the process of weighting we corrected the error of non-equal probability of selection of the vehicles and the error because of non-response of some vehicles. At some sampling units all questions, e.g. those on expenses, were not answered. Those missing items were imputed on the basis of calculation of average values in the same strata.

In the last years we present the findings of the sample surveys both with or without limitations. That means that the estimations with the coefficient of variation that is minor than 0.1 are published without limitations and the estimations with a higher coefficient are published in one or two brackets or even substituted with a point. With this method we want to alert the data users on the proper interpretation of the data or estimations respectively.

The questionnaire for the sample survey on the foreign passengers was prepared in line with the recommendations of WTO (WTO, 1995a) and Eurostat (Eurostat, 1996a), but on the other hand the continuity with the sample surveys from the previous years, when the sample survey was part of Yugoslav survey, was preserved.

3.2 Sample survey on foreign tourists

Simultaneously with the sample survey on foreign travellers that were leaving Slovenia, the SORS also implemented the sample survey on foreign tourists, that were staying in accommodation establishments. Both surveys reveal characteristics of foreign travellers and tourists during the summer tourist season in Slovenia.

The sample survey on foreign tourists investigates the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of foreign tourists, characteristics related to their stay in Slovenia, the main purpose and motives for their arrival, their expenses and impressions regarding their stay and touristical offer.

The survey on foreign tourists was implemented in accommodation establishments, that is in hotels, camping sites and private accommodation facilities since the beginning of June till the end of September 1997.

The observation unit was a tourist, who has been staying in Slovenia alone or with his travel party. Following the definition of WTO and Eurostat (Eurostat, 1996a) a foreign tourist is a person whose usual environment is other than Slovenia and who spent at least one night (but less than 12 months) in a collective or private accommodation in Slovenia.

The question about the expenses in the place of interview was set to the tourist and his travel party together. We asked him or them about his or their expenses on the previous day (Škafar, Zaletel, 1997b). This gave us the opportunity to ask them for more detailed structure of expenses. In previous sample surveys we asked the tourists about their expenses during the whole period of their stay in the place of interview (Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1989). In that case some of them did not want or could not give the more detailed or exact data, especially when the interviews were set to them in the first days of their stay in the place of interview. After having studied the questionnaires of 1997, we established that the findings show, that more tourists answered the question on expenses than in 1994 (Škafar, 1995).

The base for sample frame were the data from the monthly accommodation statistics for the period of 4 summer months in 1996. The tourism statistics distinguish the following types of tourist places in Slovenia: Ljubljana - the capitol, and the health, seaside, mountain and other tourist resorts. Only the foreign tourists from other tourists resorts were not included in the sampling frame. The type of tourist resort represented the first level of stratification in the sampling frame. The places with less than 800 overnight stays of foreign tourists in the reference period were also excluded, unless they were a part of a broader tourist area. At the final stage there were 165 accommodation establishments in the sample frame (Arnež, Zaletel, 1997a).

The sample for the survey on foreign tourists is a two-step sample design. Strata were defined according to the type of tourist resort and the type of accommodation. Finally there were 122 tourist accommodations selected for the interviews, among them 88 hotels, 25 camping sites and 9 tourist agencies.

In this survey the selected interviewers were the employees in the accommodation establishments, mostly reception clerks. On the 1st June they started to numerate the foreign tourists who arrived to their establishment. This numeration was the basis for all interviews. The first foreign tourist was selected to be interviewed at a defined random start, whereas all further interviews were carried out by a determined step for each establishment (Škafar, Zaletel, 1997b).

According to the data from the monthly accommodation statistics, the average length of stay in health resorts is longer than in other types of resorts, e.g. in Ljubljana (SORS, 1997). This is the reason that not so many interviews were planned in health resorts as in Ljubljana.

Upon the concluded field work, we believe that the survey findings could be more objective for different types of resorts if the survey would have been conducted not only in the summer season but also in other periods of the year. The summer months are the peak of the season for foreign tourists in the seaside and mountain resorts. The latter are also visited in the winter season. On the other hand there are much more foreign tourists in health resorts in autumn or spring time than in summer. It is the similar situation in Ljubljana.

As already mentioned, the interviewers should follow the defined step of selection of foreign tourists to reach the objectivity of selection. The interviewers were not very enthusiastic about the idea of extra work, especially not in the seaside resorts. The SORS could not adequately stimulate them in financial terms. So for the next survey after 3 years we will have to find another method of selection of tourists to reach the objectivity and also not to be forced to employ the reception clerk any more.

Similarly to the survey on foreign travellers, in the sample survey on foreign tourists we also processed the data simultaneously with the field work. As soon as the data for the four summer months from the monthly accommodation statistics were available, the data from the sample survey were already weighted to extend the findings on the total population of foreign tourists. Some data on expenses were also imputed on the basis of calculated averages. The survey findings will be analysed and published in the same way as the findings from the survey on foreign travellers. Both surveys present the actual state of tourism and travels in Slovenia in summer season 1997.

4. THE SAMPLE SURVEY ON TRAVELS OF DOMESTIC POPULATION

This sample survey is a part of extensive Household Budget Survey. It was in December 1993 that it has been the last time conducted in 3270 households (SORS, 1993). The members of the households were interviewed about their shorter and longer trips (holidays) in Slovenia and abroad, about business trips and one-day excursions. The reference period was the whole year. The respondents gave quite reliable answers on when and where they had been on their main holidays, but less reliable answers were given on the structure and amount of their expenses. Much trouble arose with answers about business trips and one-day excursions.

In the meantime, the household budget survey was thoroughly revised. Since February 1997 it is conducted as a 3-year continuous sample survey. Annually 1200 households are interviewed and in 3 years a total of 3600 households (Arnež, Zaletel, 1997b). Also in the revised survey there is a part of questionnaire designed for different types of trips and holidays. Questions were adapted to the new needs and

requirements of users and of course to standards and requirements of WTO (WTO, 1995b) and Eurostat (Eurostat, 1996b). Regarding the continuity of the survey, the reference period was shortened to the last half of year. At the moment we can not assure that the annually gathered data will be adequate for quality findings on travels of domestic population. It might be the case that we will have to summarise the data from three years to acquire the reliable data. The previous results show that a third of the population enjoys these holidays, longer than three days. That means that we will gather the answers for only about 400 households. That might be a too small number for the more in-sight analyses of mobility of the population.

5. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

After the declaration of independence of the Republic of Slovenia, the international co-operation of the Slovenian tourism statistics started in 1993 with the co-operation with the Swiss Federal Statistical Office. In 1994 the Swiss experts visited the SORS twice and acquired thorough insight in the situation of tourism statistics. In Switzerland the tourism statistics predominantly deals with the monthly accommodation statistics. So the main topic of their visit was the accommodation statistics (Škafar, 1994a). They prepared some proposals for improvements, specially in the field of co-operation with the reporting units (Meier, 1994). During our visit at the Swiss statistical office, we acquired knowledge of the Swiss system of accommodation statistics (Škafar, 1994b). On the basis of newly gathered knowledge, we started in 1995/96 with the revision of our accommodation statistics.

We also co-operate with the European statistical office, Eurostat. We are invited to the regular tourism statistics meetings of the EU member states. This is the most convenient way for gathering the literature from the field of tourism. With the study of the literature we get the knowledge to adapt our surveys to European requirements.

In November 1996 there has been the first meeting of Eurostat on co-operation with the Central European countries in the field of tourism (Eurostat, 1996b). We filled in the extensive questionnaires on the situation of harmonisation of tourism statistics in Slovenia. We also gave many statistical data from various surveys in tourism statistics. These data will be published by Eurostat in a common publication for all included countries.

Slovenia is also a member of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO). Annually we contribute data on Slovenian tourism. These data are published in various publications, e.g. Compendium of Tourism Statistics (WTO, 1997).

6. CONCLUSION

After the declaration of independence, the Slovenian tourism statistics kept, with some qualitative changes, the continuity established under the Yugoslavian tourism statistics. The most important part remains the accommodation statistics.

With the revision of the monthly survey we essentially improved the quality of the data. At designing the survey we bore in our minds the recommendations of WTO and Eurostat.

To get a better picture of foreign tourism and travels in Slovenia, the SORS implement sample surveys with longer periodicity among the foreign travellers and tourists. With the survey implemented on border crossings we get the data on the structure of tourists, same-day visitors, daily migrants, transit and other travellers that are leaving Slovenia, the data on their impressions and on consumption. The survey on foreign tourists brings the data on characteristics of travel and stay of foreign tourists, on their impressions and on their consumption. Both surveys are an important source for calculating the income from tourism activity.

With the sample survey on domestic population travels we investigate the travel flows of Slovenians and their consumption.

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Sažetak

PREGLED STATISTIKE TURIZMA ZAVODA ZA STATISTIKU REPUBLIKE SLOVENIJE

Rad prikazuje trenutnu situaciju statistike turizma, čiji je najvažniji dio mjesečna statistika smještaja. Taj segment je podlegao reviziji u suradnji sa švicarskim Federalnim zavodom za statistiku i danas je usuglašen s europskim standardima.

Svake tri godine provedu se dvije ankete s uzorcima: jedna na graničnim prijelazima, na kojima strani gosti napuštaju Sloveniju i druga anketa u smještajnim kapacitetima. Uzorci anketnih upitnika najvažniji su izvor podataka koji se odnose na turizam Republike Slovenije.

Također se provode i ankete za domaću populaciju, domaće goste, kao dio anketnih upitnika o Republičkom budžetu.

U području turizma, Statistički zavod Republike Slovenije surađuje s nekim međunarodnim organizacijama, kao što su WTO (World Tourism Organisation), Eurostat (European Statistical Office), i druge.

Ključne riječi: Zavod za statistiku Republike Slovenije, Federalni zavod za statistiku Švicarske, anketni upitnici, smještajni kapaciteti