

Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague

Student:	Barbora Houfková
Advisor:	Ing. David Kocourek
Title of the thesis:	The Private versus Commercial Accommodation in Selected European Cities

OVERALL ASSESSMENT (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):

The thesis submitted by Barbora Houfková studies tourism in selected European cities. More specifically, it investigates the relationship between location and price of short-term accommodation in selected European metropolies. The thesis studies three major hypotheses: 1) what is the relationship between price and location (i.e. distance from the city centre) and what is the rate of drop in prices? 2) Are the prices for hotel accommodation higher than those of apartments in the same geographical location? 3) What is the perception of the distance from the metro station when the accommodation is situated inside the city centre? Clearly stated research questions are studied by econometric analysis over the data of all available accommodations in respective cities gathered from the server Booking.com on January 17, 2016. The results suggest that with an increasing distance from the city centre the price of an accommodation decreases with the rate of price drop being 4.7% per kilometre. Moreover, the author concludes that people prefer so called „modern concept of travelling with increasing demand for privacy and individuality,” that results in ceteris paribus 13.5% higher prices of apartments in comparison with hotel type of accommodation in her analysis. Apart from the positive relationship between price and distance to the metro station, Barbora identifies a set of services that are perceived as standard and therefore do not imply any price premium (airport shuttle, bathtub, indoor pool, kitchen, parking, WiFi etc.), and, on the other hand, a second set of services that affect the price positively (breakfast, spa, terrace, tv).

I find the topic of Barbora's thesis interesting. The thesis shows author's sufficient knowledge of both the topic of tourism economics as well as analytical methods. The level of formal correctness is sufficient although I do have several reservations. The thesis have, according to my perspective, deficiencies that should have been improved. I have also found several inconsistencies in the text. Despite my complaints to the thesis, I am pleased to summarize here that the author managed all aspects of a bachelor thesis at the satisfactory level. Therefore, based on the quality of the thesis I suggest the grade "2", i.e. "good." I describe the inconsistencies of the thesis in the next sections of this report.

There are several information in the thesis that should have been cited more properly. I do not consider citing by likes to webpages in footnotes to be academically correct. Such citations lack for example time of extraction of the relevant information. I suggest to use publications whenever possible. Moreover, several parts of the text should have been cited according to my opinion while they were not; certainly not in full scope (e.g. sections 2.4 Engagement of Companies – Pricing; 2.7 Tourism in Europe; 4.2 Data Characteristics). Standard literature is, however, cited properly.

I appreciate that the author have gathered her own dataset from the server Booking.com in an interesting and advanced way. Also the technical part of data processing was done by proper techniques and instruments. I also positively acknowledge that even though she decides to deal with it in some future research, the author is aware of a selection bias that may arise in the data.

Regarding the data analysis, I would argue about a few assumptions stated in section 5.2. It is questionable if the sample was really chosen randomly if it is gathered from one provider who is unilaterally placing only offers of its own peers at its website – Booking.com. But let us say that this sample is sufficiently "random" for statistical purposes. The normality could be tested for example by the Jarque-Bera-test of normality.

As the main deficiency of the methodology and results sections I find the fact that the author does not provide exact results of any statistical test. Neither in the text, nor in the appendix. Similar situation

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making the whole work less clear is frequent indicating the results in appendix without exact referencing to particular numbers or tables.

In case of the manuscript form I found several deficiencies that should be eliminated in future academic texts. First of all, the thesis is quite long in the sense that author repeats several thoughts over and over during the text.

I also found structure of the thesis quite unfortunate. First of all, hypotheses should have been stated at the beginning, preferably somewhere around the literature review, second, motivation do not belong to the chapter 3.Literature Review and third, sections 4.Data and 5.Methodology should be definitely switched. Moreover, there are parts of the text that belongs to different sections, e.g. page 33 the paragraph about new variables should be in methodology.

There is a clear imbalance in the quality of the text throughout the thesis. The beginning of the thesis was probably written long ago and it is weak, whereas the end of the thesis has quite strong form with clear and advanced text. Moreover, she says „I will do something” when she actually does it already in this thesis. Avoiding such preventable mistakes could significantly improve the quality of the thesis.

Despite everything I wrote above I am pleased I can recommend the thesis of Barbora Houfková to defense at the IES FSV UK. I suggest the grade “2”, i.e “good.”

Suggested question for the defense:

- 1) Please, elaborate on the correlation between review and score and between price and review from section 6.1. Could this be connected to the fact that only a limited number of rich guests can afford expensive hotels and the number of reviews is therefore limited to this extent rather than due to so called negativity bias?

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY		POINTS
<i>Literature</i>	<i>(max. 20 points)</i>	15
<i>Methods</i>	<i>(max. 30 points)</i>	25
<i>Contribution</i>	<i>(max. 30 points)</i>	20
<i>Manuscript Form</i>	<i>(max. 20 points)</i>	10
TOTAL POINTS	<i>(max. 100 points)</i>	70
GRADE	(1 – 2 – 3 – 4)	2

NAME OF THE REFEREE: *Jindřich Matoušek*

DATE OF EVALUATION: *June 2, 2016*


Referee Signature

EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:

LITERATURE REVIEW: *The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.*

Strong **Average** **Weak**
20 10 0

METHODS: *The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.*

Strong **Average** **Weak**
30 15 0

CONTRIBUTION: *The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.*

Strong **Average** **Weak**
30 15 0

MANUSCRIPT FORM: *The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.*

Strong **Average** **Weak**
20 10 0

Overall grading:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE		
81 – 100	1	= excellent	= výborně
61 – 80	2	= good	= velmi dobře
41 – 60	3	= satisfactory	= dobře
0 – 40	4	= fail	= nedoporučuji k obhajobě

