

FUTURE TRENDS ON THE SPOT IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM - MODERN YOUTH EDUCATIONAL TOURISM

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Abstract

This paper is focused on the future trends in international tourism, being of outmost importance to underline that international tourism is emerging while developing new forms of tourism, as for example, youth educational tourism. Hence, there will find success those regions, resorts, businesses that rely themselves on the flexibility and creativity of their services provided, whereas using all the natural resources in an environmentally friendly way. Furthermore, this research shows that as an emerging form of tourism, youth educational tourism shall be re-designed so as to meet the needs of its beneficiaries, being a challenge for tourism providers who shall consider it as a great opportunity to start and develop new businesses and to undertake the challenges offered by the tourists' new visions in the hospitality industry. In this view, the marketing research on the consumers' needs had as general objective to identify the tendency on the Romanian market by analysing the youth's attitudes and behaviours towards educational camps.

Keywords: Youth, tourism, educational camp, marketing research

Introduction

This paper presents a concept that, as much as being used in the educational field, rarely is to be met in the specialty literature in the field of tourism, both as international and European level, the concept of educational tourism. In this view, it appears as necessary to introduce and develop such a concept so as to describe the tourism services offered and designed to students of all ages and intended for their developing personally and educationally. In this respect, the paper is divided in two parts, the first being dedicated to the presentation of educational tourism, whereas the second is a piece of research intended to underline the opportunity offered by the development of this form of tourism.

Educational Tourism – Background for Business Development

Nowadays, educational tourism seems to be a concept that should be developed in two different fields: education and tourism, both of them being both well-developed and important in the life of any human being. Therefore, it is the aim of this paper to introduce this concept and, according to us, it must comprehend the following:

- offering quality product and service packages
- offering product and service packages at prices accessible to customers
- product and service packages should combine tourism and educational elements
- product and service packages should be designed according to beneficiaries age groups and should address to all age groups
- product and service packages should be strongly promoted both internally and externally and more precisely, they should face with the powerful competition outside the country that tries as much as possible to extend in Romania

Among the tourism activities offered to the youth, we shall mention the following:

touristic trips
visiting museums and tourism objectives
sport practicing using the rich infrastructure and certified personnel (ski, skating, biking)

Among the educational activities offered to the youth, we shall mention the following:

Workshops with different topics or practice of arts and crafts

Conferences on specific topics, at beneficiaries choice

Competitions to assess and develop personal and inter-personal skills

Movie and documentaries watching

Initiation courses in different arts and crafts

Business Entrepreneurial Strategies

As regards the business entrepreneurship in the field of educational tourism, we have to underline the following:

Development strategies by designing and re-thinking products and services, by launching new products and services, by developing the old products and services so as to meet consumers' needs and to forecast the future trends in the field

Intensive growth strategies by entering the products and services on new distribution channels offered by the tourism agencies

In this respect, we shall underline the importance of the business forecasting and planning in the following constitutive parts of the business:

Marketing research: developing the business by implementing and designing products and services to highly meet customers' needs

Location strategy: the facilities of the business shall be located in attractive natural surroundings

Environment impact study: the business shall be eco-friendly and to emphasize the idea of environment protection

Infrastructure: there shall be an easy access to the educational camps as well as they shall offer reliable conditions customized for the targeted age groups of the population

Attractiveness degree: the educational camps shall be ranked according to the products and services offered, location, conditions offered and customers' satisfaction degree

Case Study of Education Tourism Development: Romania

Before the '89 Revolution, educational tourism in Romania was based on the centralized educational system of a Communist type. Every county of the country offered several tourist destinations of similar capacity, which gathered together as number of places, could not meet the market demand (for students, this was the only way of travelling by themselves, not with their parents and one of the few opportunities of having fun). Thus, what we name today educational tourism was represented by camps in some distinct tourist destinations (rarely close to the towns or villages) located at the seaside or in the mountains, but which offered few educational activities and more tourism ones.

But after the '89 Revolution, these resorts have been little by little destroyed and left undeveloped, little or even no investment being made, the environment surrounding them being damaged due to excessive exploitation, bad infrastructure, cultural or economic situation so as the number of camps decreased and so did their importance in the view of possible consumers. Moreover, as Romania has changed in mentality and consumers changes in habits, there are other forms of tourism that have been developed, as for example abroad and family tourism.

In this respect, our general main hypothesis in this research is to identify whether youth educational tourism plays an important role in the contemporary modern field of tourism or not and to establish some strategies to be implemented by business actors and

public authorities, as well. Furthermore, it is our duty to state that such businesses shall be perceived as profitable ones, both in the public field as they seem to be in the private field (at the moment, no research has been conducted in Romania so as to identify the role and importance of private educational school camps).

Marketing Research – Identifying Customers' Needs of Educational Camps:

This part of the paper is divided into three parts, the first one presenting the research purpose, objectives and methodology, the second one explaining how we conducted sampling and the research instrument whereas the third one consists of data collection and analysis. Hence, this piece of research represents a demand as it requires the characterization of the market of youth educational camps, more precisely aiming at identifying the youth's decision factors in choosing an educational camp. As previously presented, there had been remarked that the market of camps combining educational and tourism activities was emerging, so we had to identify the consumers' behaviours and attitudes towards the means to spend their holidays by themselves, without their parents, in a school camp especially designed by them.

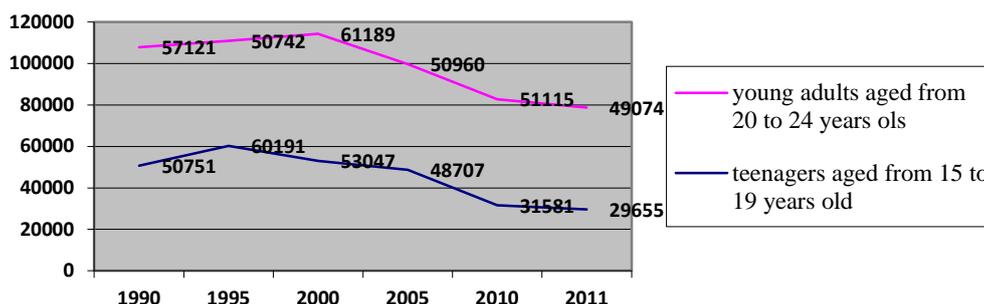
In this respect, our research general objective is to identify students' attitude towards educational camps, whereas our specific objectives are firstly to identify students' attitude towards sport activities and educational activities as main constitutive parts of the product offered, and secondly to highlight the sports that students would like practising and to identify their general education fields of interest.

Moreover, this research is of a descriptive type, our goal being to characterize a series of marketing data that shall proceed to the launching and commercialization of a touristic package of products and services by adapting the product to the marketing needs. From the point of view of the research orientation, it is an applicative research whereas from the point of view of the generated pieces of information, it is a quantitative research. In order to collect data, we used the exploratory enquiry to be applied to a sample representative for the population envisaged.

The questionnaire is based on the research purpose and objectives and it consists of 22 questions of different types and using different scales, the most complex questions being formulated in the middle of the questionnaire. The questionnaire starts with a multiple choice question introducing the topic and it assesses the respondents' preferences of activities practices during their holidays, then there is a filter-question that identifies respondents' travelling as a hobby and a question aimed at presenting whether respondents like travelling with families, friends or school-mates. Next, we address the topic by using a filter-question aimed at identifying our target population whereas the next 16 questions are centred around the topic being intended to discover respondents' attitudes and opinions with respect to past experiences in school camps, transportation means, accommodation, importance of tourist destination, ideal length of the school camp, activities and sports preferred to be practiced by respondents and the importance of such a product on the market. Last, but not least, there are two characterization questions represented by the variables gender and age group.

Furthermore, the researched population consists in this research of the youth, in general aged from 15 to 25 years (teenagers of 15-19 years old who attend to high schools and colleges and young adults of 20-24 years old who attend to universities), whereas our sample consisted of a total of 78,729 persons (registered in 2011, according to the website of the Statistics Office of Braşov County) of which 38% are people aged 15-19 years old and 62% are aged 20-24 years old, a decreasing population in number, as presented in Figure 1 below. We chose to undertake this research in the county of Braşov as this is one of the most frequented travel destination in Romania.

Figure 1. The evolution of the number of the young population in the county of Braşov, Romania, from 1990 to 2011 (Source <http://www.brasov.insse.ro/main.php?id=385> accessed on March 10, 2014)

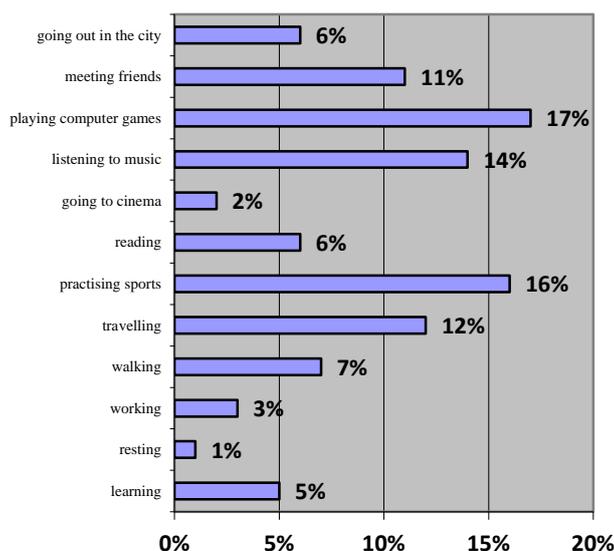


To the questionnaire, we received 321 answers, of which we identified our target sample (according to the two filter questions) of 292 respondents, of which 29% were offered by teenagers aged 15-19 years old and 71% by young adults aged 20-24 years old. In order to validate the sample, we established the measure in which the distribution of the characterization variable of the researched subjects (in this case, the two age groups) is similar to that of the population researched. As the percentages differ, we needed to re-establish our sample, by randomly taking out 26 questionnaires filled by teenagers and replacing them by other 52 newly filled in questionnaires and by taking out 26 questionnaires filled in by young adults aged 20-24 years old.

With respect to data collection, the questionnaire was applied in the last three months of 2013, whereas the answers to the questionnaire were analysed and interpreted at the beginning of 2014, the research hypothesis being represented by the fact whether there are differences between the two age groups as regards attitudes and preferences of their participation in educational camps.

Furthermore, the first data analysis presents the respondents' preferences of activities they like doing during the holiday. According to Figure 2 below, we underline that the most important activities identified were playing computer games (or more generally, using computer, in which respect there can be remarked a tendency of the parents so as want to reduce as time spent by their children), practising sports, listening to music, travelling and meeting friends.

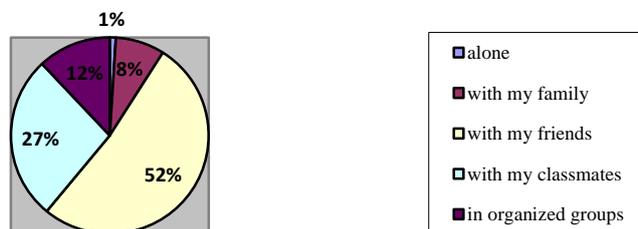
Figure 2. Respondents' habitual activities practised during the holiday



As regards the preferences to travel during the holiday, the respondents answered that 96% use to travel during their holiday, of which 60% are girls and 43% have ages from 14 to

19 years and 21% having ages of 20-25 years. In holidays, students like doing different activities, their answers to question number 3 of our questionnaire presenting that 52% like travelling with their friends, whereas 27% travel with their classmates, 12% in an organized group, 8% with their families (parents) and 1% by themselves, as shown in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3. Respondents' preferences of travelling

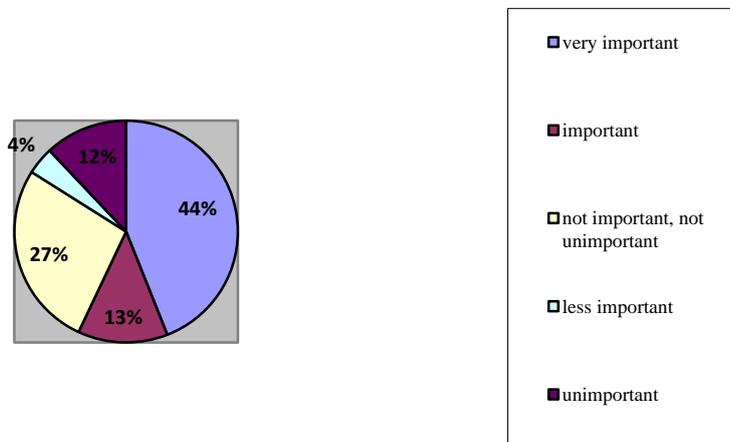


Furthermore, 32% of the respondents have been in a school camp before and of those 68% who have never been, 76% would like to go, their main reasons, according to their preferences, being having fun with their friends, brothers and sisters, practising sports and learning something new. The main reasons for which respondents have not been in a school camp are the lack of money, the past unpleasant experiences and that they have never thought about going as they have not been presented with such an opportunity.

With respect to past experiences, 43% of respondents answered that they have been pleasantly satisfied with their experiences in a school camp, the main reasons being the diversity and originality of natural and cultural resources, but we have to underline that there were not offered too many sports and educational activities, so we can conclude that this market of educational camps is a niche market to be explored by entrepreneurs and we forecast its high development in the near future.

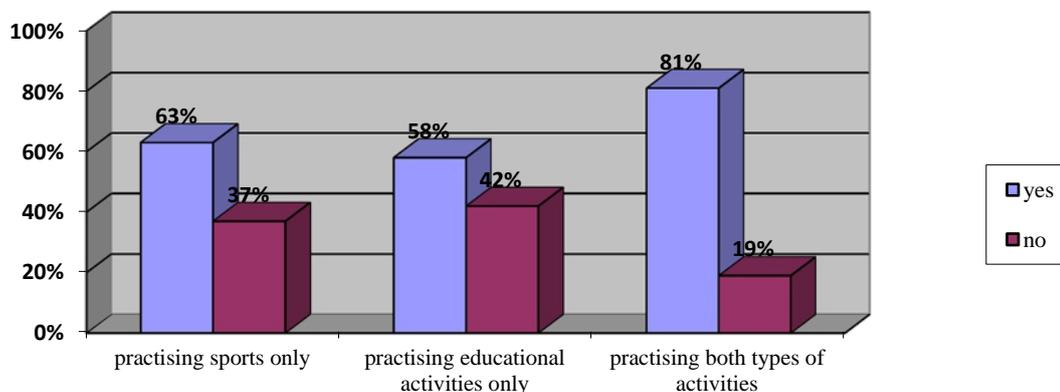
The importance of the tourism destination (as stated in Figure 4 below) is high for 44% of the respondents, whereas 27% consider that the destination is not so important, more important being the accommodation conditions and the activities offered. So, students are willing to go in a school camp with a specific educational theme and their native country (Romania, more precisely the mountainous resorts) is their main choice when thinking about the destination, stating that this country offers many locations worth visiting at affordable prices by their parents and by themselves (in the case of academic students who start working during their studies). The medium length of the school camp should be of 6-8 days whereas the most preferred accommodation units are pensions and tents.

Figure 4. Respondents' attitude regarding the importance of tourism destination



Thus, we can underline the importance of educational camps within modern tourism, and according to our research, we conclude that 81% of the respondents would like to participate in an educational camp in Romania (according to Figure 5 below), so the service product offered to people aged from 15 to 25 years shall be more complex than those offered to them nowadays. In the research, an important role is played by extreme sports (alpinism, hiking, river-drafting, bungee-jumping, snowboarding, parachuting, skiing) whereas among educational activities, arts and crafts play the most important role.

Figure 5. Respondents' attitude towards their choice of camps offering sports and educational activities



Conclusion

In this paper, we analysed educational tourism from the point of view of a new trend on the tourism market, concept to consist of both tourism and educational activities aimed especially at the young population (ages 15-24 years). In order to present such a modern concept (as opposite to the old concept represented by school camps) we have to highlight that this concept is highly influenced by globalization (the tendency of forming international educational camps networks available to consumers from all around the world) and by the changes in consumers' attitudes and needs. Thus, educational tourism is forecast to register an ascendant development path.

According to the research undertaken in this paper, we must underline the need of such services, but at a developed level meeting the consumers' needs. We found out that the youth prefer spending their time in adventurous places connected to the new technology as well as endowed with the necessary infrastructure so as they to practise a different range of sports and educational activities. By simply analysing the Romanian market of such services, the most sold packages of educational camps are those centred on using a foreign language during the period of the camp. But, in time, this market needs development as the number of European young people is important in the total number of its population, more precisely as it is our duty to educate tourists from early ages.

In this respect, our future research in this field and topic shall comprehend the design and commercialization of such a specific product, an educational camp, stating its strengths and weaknesses during its launching and growth from the point of view of the business developer and entrepreneur in this field. For such a reason, the business entrepreneurial strategies herein presented are to be put into practice by using the opportunities offered by the emerging market.

Another future development of the topic shall be offered by us when doing research on youth educational camps by comparing and contrasting the tendencies and markets offered by other countries so as to develop a national strategy for Romanian youth educational tourism.

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