

TYOLOGIES OF YOUTH TOURISM

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Abstract: *Youth tourism differentiated itself from the concept of traditional tourism by the distinctive profile of its participants. In the last 10 years this branch had a very rapid growth, contributing significantly to any countries' economy due to the amount of money that was spent by young people on different types of tourism. The aim of this paper is to present the most practiced forms of youth tourism, and their development worldwide and also in Romania. The conclusions show the most practiced types on a European and on Romanian level.*

Key words: *Youth tourism, types, educational, volunteering.*

1. Introduction

After the Second World War, in an attempt to prevent a third one by getting to know other cultures better, it became very popular for young people to go abroad in order to broaden their horizons, gain knowledge of other cultures, and to learn a foreign language [13].

At first, this kind of tourism was just a part of the traditional tourism concept, however, in time, its popularity began to grow rapidly, and the profile of the young traveller was differentiated from the profile of the classic tourist.

By the year 2010 there was estimated that around 20% of the 940 million international tourists travelling the world were young people [39].

As the popularity of youth tourism grew, so did the types of activities in which the youth engaged during these trips.

The aim of this paper is to present the most common types of youth tourism, together with an overview of its practice at European and Romanian level.

2. Conceptual framework

The concept of "youth tourism" has been broadly defined in the specific literature; however there is no clear definition universally set and accepted.

The term "tourism" is defined by the World Tourism Organization as: "activities of people who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four hours and not more than one consecutive year, for leisure, business or other purposes" [43].

The World Youth Student and Educational Travel Confederation adds to the above mentioned definition the term „independent travel", which refers to trips taken by young people independently, without being accompanied by a parent or guardian [16].

The term of „youth", according to the United Nations, is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community [42]. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group. However, the most common way to

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define it is by using this criterion. The UN, for statistical consistency across regions, defines 'youth', as the category of persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years [38].

The World Tourism Organisation, referred to the term of „youth” as people between the ages of 15 and 25 years. However, many studies have the upper age limit at 26 years in order to provide a better consistency to the studied group. [7]. This definition was extended by the Canadian Council and the North American Student & Youth Travel Association to include people up to 30 years old [13].

In Romania, according to the Youth Law, people are considered young between the ages of 14-35 [12]. However, in order to travel across the border without a parent or a legal guardian, one must be older than 18 [26].

Youth tourism was described by Haigh as young travellers who have preference for budget accommodation, place an emphasis on meeting other travellers, independently or in an organised manner, having flexible travel schedule and taking longer rather than brief holidays [5].

Studies show young tourists travel for a specific purpose, which can be one or more of the following: to experience a different culture, learn a language, volunteer, work or study [34]. They are also keen to experience the local lifestyle and meet other people [11], and also to socialize with fellow travellers [14].

The majority of young tourists travel on a strict budget. They choose cheap accommodation, enabling them to have a relatively long duration journey and spend their money on a wide range of activities [11].

Furthermore, youth tourism implies flexible itineraries, as young tourists consider that the most memorable travel experiences are often those that are unexpected, and the finest discoveries are those they make themselves [2].

Based on the above mentioned characteristics, one of the most appropriate

definitions for “youth tourism” would be the one given by the World Tourism Organisation stating that: Youth travel includes all independent trips for periods of less than one year by people aged 16-29 which are motivated, in part or in full, by a desire to experience other cultures, build life experiences and/or benefit from formal and informal learning opportunities outside one's usual environment [39].

3. Types of youth tourism

Youth tourism can have many types, however the following are the most often used: Educational tourism, volunteering, work and travel, cultural exchange, sports and adventure tourism and leisure tourism [12].

3.1. Educational tourism

The term educational tourism or education tourism refers to any "program in which participants travel to a location as a group, with the primary purpose of engaging in learning experience that is directly related to the location" [1]. It is comprised of several sub-types including ecotourism, heritage tourism, rural/farm tourism, and student exchanges between educational institutions. The notion of travelling for educational purposes is not new [4];[6];[9] and its popularity in the tourism market is only expected to increase [4];[6].

Its aim is to improve the education process, to enrich the educational experiences by providing scholarships abroad, tourist packages that include camps, excursions, language classes for any level of knowledge, including training on certain fields (medical, legal, tourism, management, etc.) or on categories of interest (fashion, design, arts, theatre, dance, etc.). It also includes summer schools, and theme camps that are organized nationally and internationally [13].

The first educational travels were made by the English youth during the Grand

Tour in the seventeenth and eighteenth century [17].

A key reason for young eighteenth-century aristocrats, travelling for between six months and three years, was the perception that travel broadened the mind, and the travels were based around an itinerary which included learning visits to classical works of art and cultural landmarks [29].

The main destinations were: France, Switzerland, and Germany [17].

Currently the European young travel to learn a foreign language, and to get in touch with other cultures.

Annually at least 500 Romanian students visit countries such as England, Germany, Spain, France, China or even Russia with educational programs, that last minimum two weeks. During this time, they can study the language, have leisure activities, such as games and contests, make trips, visit museums, go to the theatre and visit theme parks.

Totalling a number of over 1300 study weeks in 2009. The most often visited country is England, where the students have a great variety of programs to choose from. Together with studying the language, they are also interested in special theme camps such as: leadership courses, acting, public speaking, history, globalisations and so on. These are subjects that contribute to the students' personal development and also facilitate attending school in a foreign country in the future [33].

One of the most common methods to practice educational tourism is through the Erasmus scholarship.

3.2. Volunteering

It is defined as the practice of individuals going on a working holiday, volunteering their labour for worthy causes in an organised way [19]. During volunteering, they perform activities such as "aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some

groups in society; the restoration of certain specific environments or research into aspects of society or environment" [20], while also performing alongside touristic activities [36].

Historically, volunteer tourism has its roots in the early 20th century, when a Swiss businessman Pierre Ceresole, horrified by the aftermath of the First World War, established Service Civil International (SCI) as an organisation of volunteers that provided relief to those in need [18].

Thousands of volunteers now use the services of a large number of different organizations which facilitate volunteering experiences. The volunteers vary in terms of their motivation, their background and their expectations, as do the organizations that facilitate their 'deployment' throughout more than three thousand projects spanning 150 countries [19]. Among other reasons, tourists are motivated because of purely altruistic reasons; social desirability; career enhancement; cultural immersion; comradeship; and education or bonding with children [41].

Volunteer tourism endeavours can be either domestic or international. They can also vary in duration, depending on the project and the volunteer organisation involved [19].

Some might range from a week-long vacation with an afternoon spent volunteering at a local animal preserve while others might involve five days building a house with only a one-day leisure experience. Of course, everything in between is also possible. The amount of time spent volunteering versus participating in tourism activities varies depending on the desire of the volunteer and the needs of the receiving organization [41].

Globally, the number of individuals participating in volunteerism continues to rise.

In Britain, 73% of adults participated in at least one volunteer activity in 2007 [23]. In Australia, 4.5 million individuals reported participating in a volunteer activity in 2006 [22]. In the United States, volunteers provide free or inexpensive labour for more than 40,000 non-profit organization [10]. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, 60.8 million people volunteered for or through an organization during fiscal year 2007 [41]. National and local initiatives, such as the U.S. Freedom Corps, continue to grow in popularity.

The two largest groups participating in voluntourism are college students and people who were born between 1946 and 1964 and are now entering their retirement years [41].

3.3. Work and travel programmes

This type of youth tourism became very popular amongst the young people who have a passion for travelling. Throughout the program, the participants are hired at a company in the host country usually in the summer holiday (3 months). During this period, they earn an income and they also have the opportunity to travel, familiarise with the local customs, learn the language, and as mentioned before, to travel, having a whole month to do so.

The program started from the USA, being first launched by Non-Government organisations, and during the years it spread also in Australia, Canada, Greece, Spain, France and Great Britain.

According to studies, over 7% of the youth travel global market is connected in some way or another to working abroad, and these tourists spend an average of 3.200\$ [40] per trip, but 40% of the total cost is covered by working at the destination. Most young people participating in these programs make the decision to travel and work abroad based on the information gathered from friends

who participated in these programs, and the average duration of such a trip is 6 months [12].

The work and travel program gained its popularity quite late in Romania, but it had a great growth in the past 3 years, being encouraged by the people who already participated in this program. Internationally the program is attracting the largest number of young people from the East European area. Romania is amongst the first 10 countries to send students abroad with this program, based on the number of participants which was over 6000 in 2012 [32].

3.4. Cultural exchange

This notion can be defined as the exchange of individuals between different countries. This particular exchange is known to take place between students, artist, and athletes, in addition to many other types of individuals and professionals who express interested in it. Generally, this exchange takes place between two or more different countries who are trying to promote the same, if not similar, understandings [25].

These programmes, expose students to people from different cultural, religious, geographic and socio-economic backgrounds and in doing so, it provides them the opportunity to develop a greater understanding of diversity – both in their own country and worldwide. They allow the participants to interact with and learn from people who are different from themselves and to gain new and unique experiences beyond their own communities. Cultural exchange assists in developing positive relationships with others, understand a broader range of perspectives, and develop the knowledge and skills needed for participation in the multicultural society [27].

Cultural exchanges between youth started to develop after the Second World War when

cultural exchanges between young people of different nationalities were promoted, in order to avoid future conflict [12].

Traditionally, school cultural exchange programs brought together students from two or more schools to meet and interact in person, and student relationships were often maintained between visits using letter writing. Today, with new and emerging communication technologies and increased globalisation, cultural exchange programs may rely entirely on online or 'virtual' interaction, and/or incorporate these to compliment physical school (or community) visits. These developments also mean that exchanges may involve any number of school communities and are easily sustainable as regular or ongoing events.

During the program, the young people have the opportunity to live together with a family from the host country, for a shorter or a longer period of time. This can vary from one week to one year, time in which the tourist has to face the problems of the locals, and find solutions for them.

The fundamental purpose of a cultural exchange program is for students to share with and learn from others [27].

3.5. Sports and adventure tourism

Sports and physical activities are a part of the increasing variety of leisure activities and pastimes. This thriving leisure culture has led to the evolution of a sports tourism industry that has begun to earn an international reputation [28].

Sports tourism, or more correctly, Sport Tourism refers to travel which involves either observing or participating in a sporting event staying apart from their usual environment. Sport tourism is a fast growing sector of the global travel industry and equates to \$600 billion a year. "Towards A National Sports Tourism Strategy" [24].

Sports tourists are more easily profiled according to the sports they follow.

However, in general terms the bulk of the market tends to be young - between 18 and 34 years, and in the middle socio-economic groups [30].

Closely related to sports tourism is the adventure tourism, which can be defined as a type of tourism, involving exploration or travel with perceived (and possibly actual) risk, and potentially requiring specialized skills and physical exertion. One of the core features associated with adventure tourism is 'the deliberate seeking of risk and the uncertainty of outcomes' including the adrenaline rush associated with activities perceived by the participant to be dangerous or physically/mentally challenging. Essentially, much adventure tourism is a manufactured experience of adventure [3] and offers varying levels of risk [15].

Adventure tourism is a fast growing industry with an average spending per tourist of \$947 in 2012, and the average length of an adventure trip being ten days.

Based on the results of a recent market study the value of the outbound adventure travel market for the Americas and Europe is estimated at \$263 billion. These regions make up nearly 70 percent of the world's international tourism departures.

The majority of adventure travellers are male and single/never married. The higher percentage of single adventure travellers may be due to the fact that adventure travellers skew younger with an average age of 36, compared to non-adventure travellers who have an average age of 41 [21].

In Romania, the main types of adventure and sport tourism practiced by the young are the following: trekking, hiking, alpinism, mountain biking, rafting, trips through the canyons, windsurfing, scuba diving, and paragliding, during the

warm season, while during the winter, it is practiced alpine skiing, snowboarding, snow tracking and ice climbing [31].

3.6. Leisure tourism

The international youth leisure market can be broadly defined as young, independent, adventurous visitors aged 15-29 years old from overseas. This includes young people on holiday, visiting friends or relatives. The main emphasis being on the idea that this is a non working holiday and it is based on recreational activities. As a young age group, youth leisure travellers tend to have lower than average incomes and are price sensitive value seekers. Yet they are willing to stretch their budget to seek out personal indulgences and memorable experiences [35].

In the United States, Inbound and domestic leisure travel spending generated 76.0 percent of direct T&T GDP in 2011 (US\$3,056.9 billion), compared with 24.1 percent for business travel spending (US\$968.4 billion). With the new middle class in emerging countries, leisure travel will continue to outgrow business travel, which is already maturing in many emerging countries [37].

In Romania, this type of tourism is subject to seasonality, having its peaks in summer and winter. The length of the stay can be from one weekend till two weeks.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Educational tourism was one of the first types of youth tourism and its popularity is still growing. The most visited destinations in Europe were France, Switzerland and Germany. Currently Romanian students choose England as their primary educational destination due to the variety of topics that it can offer them.

The more altruistic youth choose volunteering as a means of travel, which can happen either at a national or an

international level. This type of tourism is more popular in England and in America, demand for it on the Romanian market being very low.

A cost efficient alternative for the young who don't have the necessary budget to practice educational tourism, and who would also like to earn money while travelling are the work and travel programs. It's popularity having a high growth rate in Romania, mostly because of the participating students who shared their experience about it.

The best way to get familiar with the everyday life of a different nation is through the cultural exchange programs, which allow the interaction with a local family at a day to day basis. In Europe it gained a lot of popularity, however in Romania not much interest has been shown towards this type of youth tourism.

For the most active young people, the preferred type of tourism is sports and adventure tourism, which implies that the tourist are adrenalin seekers and engage into travelling with the purpose to do sports activities. This kind of tourism had a very fast development during the last years in Europe, and in Romania is also gaining popularity, especially because of the various sites where it can be practiced.

In any branch of tourism, leisure tourism is very popular. However, in case of youth this type is mostly practiced by the ones with a stable income who seek recreation and relaxation. In Romania it is subject to seasonality due to the local climate.

As shown in this paper, there are many types of tourism that can be and are practiced by the youth. It is also shown that the preferences of the European young traveller are slightly different from the Romanian travellers'. The first difference is that, on a European level, more emphasis is placed on cultural exchanges and volunteering while in Romania work and travel, sports and adventure tourism is more preferred. However educational tourism is highly preferred by both.

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