

STUDY OF THE TOURIST BEHAVIOR AND THE PROFILE OF TOURISTS IN BULGARIA

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Abstract

The paper examines key issues in the segmentation of tourists by types of tourism in Bulgaria. The research on tourists' behavior is the main issue of concern which Bulgarian tourism is facing. The uncertainty about the desires and perceptions of tourists does not allow the defining of a clear goal in tourism product offering. This has led to paradoxes such as offering souvenirs unrelated to the given tourism environment, dishes which do not represent the specific local originality and the image of the area, etc. The analysis of tourists' behavior is a psychophysical process, as much as it is a norm of conduct of tourism-employed personnel, who observe, record, analyze and apply. The report points out some of the main elements of this process, and analyzes tourists' behavior in different types of tourist activity.

Keywords: tourism, tourist, tourist behavior

Resumo

O artigo examina questões-chave relacionados com a segmentação de turistas por tipos de turismo na Bulgária. A pesquisa privilegia o comportamento dos turistas, a principal questão de preocupação que o turismo búlgaro está enfrentando. Efetivamente a incerteza sobre os desejos e as percepções dos turistas não permite definir um objetivo claro na oferta de produtos turísticos. Isso tem conduzido a paradoxos, como oferecer lembranças não relacionadas com o ambiente turístico, pratos gastronômicos que não representam a originalidade local específica ou a imagem da área, etc. A análise do comportamento dos turistas é um processo psicofísico, tal como é a norma de conduta do pessoal empregado no turismo, que observa, regista, analisa e aplica. O relatório aponta alguns dos principais elementos deste processo e analisa o comportamento dos turistas em diferentes tipos de atividade turística.

Palavras chave: turismo, turistas, comportamento turístico

1. Introduction

The study of the tourist behaviour, as diverse as it may be, gives a prerequisite for a correct projection of the tourism industry. This is an activity that is not within the reach only of people employed in tourism - the research on tourist behaviour for the needs of the tourism industry involves psychologists, anthropologists, ethnographers, etc. Behaviour is a part of the general characteristics of the individual. It has different dimensions - it may be positive or negative, conscious or unconscious. Behaviour differs in different ethnic or ethnographic groups depending on the geographical region, the living environment, etc. An essential question in tourism is the question: Should we examine tourist behaviour and why? Naturally, the answer is YES because tourist behaviour:

- gives us an idea of the desires of the tourists;
- gives us guidelines for future action;
- enables us to find our mistakes;
- enables us to correctly project and plan our future actions.

2. General trends in the behaviour of tourists.

When analyzing this behavior, the regional differences should be summarized, but they should be segmented as well. For example, generally speaking about the so-called Western civilization worldwide, the main tendencies in the behaviour of tourists are limited to certain demographic, financial or environmental relations. According to Penerliev (2011) those relations consist of the following major aspects:

2.1. - The average number of members per household

2.1.1. Tendencies of the average number of members per household

The tendencies of the average number of members per household will continue to decline, which will provide higher disposable income and purchasing power. As a result:

- demand for luxury will increase;
- special items that can be obtained upon request will be sought;
- the number of urban and other short trips abroad during periods outside the main tourist season (mostly weekend trips) will increase ;
- the interest in "winter sun" holidays as well as remote destinations will increase.

2.1.2. Conscious attitude towards health will continue to grow.

This will not increase the demand, but will alter the choice of tourist destinations and the tourist behaviour during the trip. This means that:

- destinations that are considered unhealthy will be avoided more frequently than in the past;
- the decrease of interest in holidays offering only "sun" will continue;
- trips offering various activity opportunities will become increasingly popular;
- the demand for wellness products will grow, including spa tourism, as well as the demand for fitness centers.

2.1.3. Modern society generates increasing pressure on people's daily lives, thus stimulating their desire for more spare time for fun and leisure.

This will occur, however, in shorter periods of time, especially during weekends which will have an adverse effect on disposable income for tourism, but tourists will require a greater comfort during this shorter period of time. These features are expressed also by:

- the increase of additional supply of low-cost travels;
- imposing the need for more "rest" and "relaxation";
- the duration of the main holiday shortens in favor of a higher number of short trips.
- increase of transport infrastructure capacity (airports, marinas, railway stations) considering the concentration of tourists at the end of the working week.

2.1.4. The average level of education and knowledge increases.

So are the requirements for more art, culture, history, more intellectuality and spirituality in tourist products. This leads to:

- growing trends towards demand for specialized travel;
- offers of historical and cultural character should make up a higher share of the total cost of the combined tourist trips;
- growing role of new destinations in Eastern Europe.

2.1.5. Past tourist experience is a prerequisite for more competent tourists to organize trips themselves, according to their own interests.

This will lead to:

- alternative options for utilization of time and resources that will increasingly compete with traditional destinations and accommodation facilities;
- destinations which are not able to offer satisfactory standards will be affected more severely and for a longer period of time;
- tourists will adopt (demonstrate) variable behaviour – a certain year they will prefer a modest trip, while the next year – luxury; then the following year they may prefer a remote destination, while the next one – a trip closer to home.

The specifics of the behaviour of Bulgarian tourists, in terms of planning a tourist trip, are various. Bulgarians usually plan their trip at the last moment - from two weeks to a month upfront. For the organization of their vacation Bulgarians use mostly informal sources of information. The practice of combining information sources is relatively less common. The internet is more popular as a source of information for Bulgarians in lower seasons – spring, autumn and winter. Targeted efforts are necessary in order to promote more specific destinations within the country itself and the return of “the adventure of the holiday” in Bulgaria. Tourist promoting of Bulgaria is insufficient and unpopular as an information source. The biggest challenge is related to social media and the implementation of an adequate connection between different communication channels. In the organization of their vacation, Bulgarians prefer to do everything themselves, i.e. as far as Bulgarians are concerned, a communication campaign that reaches directly to potential tourists would be more successful. A trend of reduction of the duration of stay has been observed. During the summer, the average duration is 5-6 nights and during other seasons – 3 days.

3. Profile of tourists.

Globally, the division of tourists according to various criteria is quite diverse. It may be by type of travel, by social and financial features, by country, region, etc. All these features are important because they have a significant impact on the behaviour and the preferences of tourists during their trip. Here, we implement a division of tourists by motivational and psychological characteristics (after Cohen, 1972).

3.1. Types of tourists

Cohen (and Kusheva, 2014) differentiates the following four groups of tourists:

- **organized mass tourists** – with no prominent adventurous spirit, limiting their stay in the tourist resort and remaining detached from the host community;
- **individual mass tourists** - exercise some degree of control over their stay, but tend to be interested in tourist attractions, visited by the mass tourist;

- **researchers** - individually prepare their trip and avoid the well-known touristy locations, but generally retain their essential habits and lifestyles;
- **travelers** - seek identification with the host community, perceive their habits and customs.

The different groups of tourists have their different reasons for travelling, different idea for the organization and making of the trip. The traveler-type is not influenced by the type and quality of the accommodation facilities but instead - by the uniqueness of the tourism resources and the image of the destination. The mass tourist requires luxury, additional services and entertainment, often in separated complexes, without the search for sense of the local culture and customs and culture.

3.2. Types of tourists in Bulgaria

In Bulgaria there have been efforts to assess the behaviour of tourists, their desires and preferences. Based on demographic, financial or age differences, a "profile of the tourist" has been shaped out, which provides essential information about: the tourism product that we create and the possible users; the type and quality of the additional tourist services offered; types and categorization of accommodation facilities, etc.

The profile of the foreign tourist in Bulgaria - according to the Ministry of Tourism - a study based on the questionnaire method used among 3000 foreign tourists in Bulgaria (*Handbook of the tourism business, 2009*) shows that: the average foreign tourist in Bulgaria is 37 years old and this is their first holiday in our country; likes the Bulgarian cuisine, the local drinks and the hospitality of the people. Since they assess the merits of the Bulgarian countryside and the Black Sea beaches, the foreign tourist prefers fixed holidays in Bulgarian seaside resorts and nightlife to cultural and historical routes. Every fourth foreign tourist visits our country for the fourth time. The average duration of vacation for foreigners in Bulgaria is approximately 9 nights and the expenses during the stay are around € 340 per person. Sunbathing and visiting nightclubs were the main entertainment for nearly 68 % of foreign tourists that summer. About 33 % were engaged in shopping, cultural and rural tourism. Russian tourists are the most curious and spend time and money on additional excursions and entertainment the most.

On the whole, foreigners prefer the comforts of 3- and 4-star seaside hotels. Some 3.1% of foreign tourists - mainly English - stay at a property purchased by them or at the so-called apartment houses existing along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast.

The described profile, behaviour and desires of foreign tourists give grounds for projecting the creation of a profiled tourism product. For example, in resorts preferred by Russian tourists, it is only logically that tour operators offer additional excursions to cultural and historical sites, while the appreciation of the Bulgarian cuisine should result in various presentations and themed evenings on a regional principle, etc. This would increase the efficiency of the marketing of the tourism product.

The profile of tourists by type of tourism exhibits some differences in behaviour, preferences and demographic structure.

3.3 Profile of practicing cultural tourism

The tourist profile of those practicing cultural and educational tourism in Bulgaria is the following:

1. Men and women are distributed almost evenly, with a slight prevalence of men (men – 54 %, women – 46 %). Forty nine percent are aged between 36 and 55 years, 36 % - between 15 and 35, 73 % are employed. The share of people with higher education is 68 %;
2. Followers of cultural tourism come mainly from Western Europe, the Balkan countries and Russia; 55 % of those practicing cultural tourism have already been in Bulgaria before. They are here for “adventure” holiday and are attracted mainly by the cultural and historical landmarks, the low prices and the nature;
3. 37 % arrived through a travel agency. Nearly 2/3 of the tourists plan their trip a month or even 2-3 months upfront; A quarter of the interviewed arrived in the country without a reservation;
4. The average number of overnight stays is 6.4 days, during which they spent an average of € 80 per day per person, or € 458 per person for the entire holiday.

3.4. Profile of practicing eco tourism

Those practicing eco-tourism, on the other hand, have the following profile:

- eco-tourists combine their holiday mostly with mountainous (45 %), culinary (20 %) and cultural tourism (15 %);
- eco- and cultural tourism are perceived similarly by visitors practicing ecological tourism; therefore, it would be appropriate to consider combining those two types, even more so since both types are united by the concept of "adventure holiday";
- regarding the organization of their vacation, eco-tourists have a specific behaviour - they rely mostly on the services of tour operators – 60 % of the interviewed group had chosen to organize their trip with the help of a tourist intermediary.
- according to the generating market, eco-tourists in Bulgaria are mostly residents of the United Kingdom (about 1/3 of all) and Western Europe (about 1/4). Some 20 % come from Balkan countries and 15 % come from Russia;
- men prevail over women (58 %);

- most often "eco" tourists are aged 36-55 years (about half of all tourists), but the share of young people is also high - about 43 %. University graduates are dominant (70 %), 78 % are employed and 18 % of them - hold a managerial position.

3.5. Profile of practicing rural tourism

Rural tourism too has its own specific features in terms of behaviour and profile of tourists who prefer it. For example:

- 45 % of the target group of foreign tourists (rural tourism) have used the services of travel agencies. 1/3 of the tourists have arrived in the country without a reservation;
- 73 % of rural tourism practitioners prepare their journey from one to three months before the trip itself; the time of preliminary planning is directly dependent on the length of stay - the longer the duration of stay, the earlier the planning of the trip is;
- the average stay of those practicing rural tourism in Bulgaria is 6.1 nights. Tourists from Scandinavia and North America spend time in Bulgaria the longest (an average of 9 nights), while visitors from the Balkan countries stay the least (an average of 3.6 nights);
- the average expense per person per day in rural tourism was just under € 62, while for the whole holiday - € 326.
- rural tourism is practiced mainly by middle-aged people (36-55 years) – 58 % of all; 72 % are employed, out of which 20 % hold managerial positions. Tourists with higher education dominate (nearly 2/3 of all).

4. Segmentation as a technique for analyzing tourist behaviour.

Market segmentation is the process, an activity of dividing the market into parts according to specific criteria and principles. The group of buyers, united by a certain criterion is called a market segment. In each segment, the consumer units or market elements, are internally homogeneous and externally heterogeneous - different according to the selected criterion.

4.1. Criteria for segmentation

Segmentation is the grading of buyers by certain principles. They may be (Ivanov, 2011):

1. Geographical criteria – those are associated with groupings by criteria such as: topography, climate, territory.

2. Demographic criteria – grouping of the market by sex, age, marital status, number of children in the family units, number of the household members.
3. Economic criteria - grouping by purchasing power - high-income or low-income companies, operating with loans or using own funds.
4. Social criteria - associated with social status of the buyers. The class stratification of the society is regarded as a significant grouping.
5. Classification based on degree and level of education and jobs held.
6. Psychological criteria for segmentation.

4.2 Examples of segmentation

The easiest and practically applicable criterion is the age of the tourist. Monitoring and segmenting this criterion gives different age-based specifics of the tourists in terms of preferences, perceptions, etc. This can be very useful regarding the proposed tourism product, relevant to a given group of tourists (Tonchev and Mileva, 2004, Parusheva, 2009,).

Table 1. Segmentation of tourists by the age criterion.

| Indicator | Segment 1 18-35 | Segment 2 35-55 | Segment 3 55+ |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Share of tourism demand | | | |
| General characteristic (behavior features, values, etc.) | | | |
| Travel expenditures (BGN, €) | | | |
| Expectations: (<i>for accommodation, food, services, animation, etc.</i>) | | | |
| Sources of information used | | | |
| Susceptibility to advertisement influence, forms of advertising | | | |
| Appropriate offers | | | |

Source: Penerliev, 2011 [4]

The attached table presents some of the indicators for segmentation by age of the tourist flow to a given destination, resort or specific hotel. Monitoring performed by the staff provides exceptional opportunities for flexibility and competitiveness of the tourism market.

Tourist behaviour and its study is not an easy task. It is associated with long, scientifically-based and consequential observations of the tourist contingent by hoteliers, tour operators, psychologists, etc. Knowing the preferences of tourists makes the tourism product more competitive and market-oriented. The financial result also benefits from this activity.

5. Conclusion.

As a result of the foregoing, the following conclusions can be drawn. The typological characteristics of tourists in Bulgaria by types of tourism reveal some objective differences:

- displayed major trends in tourist behavior;
- tourists practicing alternative forms of tourism exhibit higher educational level
- younger age and higher expectations.;
- Various types of tourists have been justified;
- The practical applicability of the method of segmentation in tourism has been indicated;
- set major trends in the behavior of tourists in the world

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