

QUALITY OF LIFE AS A TRAVEL MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF SENIOR TOURISTS – RESULTS OF RESEARCH IN NOVI SAD

KVALITETA ŽIVOTA KAO MOTIVACIJSKI FAKTOR ZA PUTOVANJA KOD STARIJIH TURISTA – REZULTATI ISTRAŽIVANJA U NOVOM SADU

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Abstract

Third age persons are an increasingly developing segment of tourist demand in the world. A healthier and longer life, more free time, a realized social status and personal development are the key pull factors for the persons in third age to decide to go on a tourist trip. The research used the model of motivation in tourism for the persons in third age established by Astic and Muller (1999), and developed by Hsu, Cai and Wong (2007). The measured categories were wellbeing or a subjective assessment of the quality of life.

Sažetak

Osobe treće životne dobi sve više utječu na segment turističke potražnje u svijetu. Zdraviji i duži život, više slobodnog vremena, realizirani društveni status i osobni razvoj ključni su čimbenici za osobe u trećoj životnoj dobi da se odluče ići na turističko putovanje. Istraživanje koristi model motivacije u turizmu za osobe u trećoj dobi utvrđenih od Astica i Muller (1999), te razvijen od Hsu, Cai i Wong (2007.) Izmjerene kategorije su bile blagostanje ili subjektivna procjena kvalitete života.

Introduction

Tourism essentially manifests itself through communication – dealing with nature, objects, people, situations and cannot be satisfied, unless one does not move from oneself, from one's home, one's dwelling place. Choice of target destination, choice of programme and means of realisation or consumption of a programme is closely related to recognised and developed needs, motives for travelling; expectations and readiness for an active involvement in the process of tourism /1/. A part of the tourist desire is striving towards the psychological superstructure, growth as a result of personal engagement. Learning about new things holds special significance, as well as advancement or retaining of physical skills, relations with others, problem solving, attempts to start new activities and ideas /2/.

One of the starting points of the paper are the results of two studies conducted earlier (Holodkov & Tomka, 2009; Tomka & Romanov 2011) in Novi Sad (Serbia). The results are, unfortunately, still unfavourable in our environment. Then, taking into account all limitations of this research (primarily the small number of respondents), we reached the conclusion that the results are indicative, as they show that the potential tourists think least of their needs and expectations when choosing destinations, this being especially true of programmes of tourist trips. Potential tourists, according to this research, cannot tell whether they have benefitted from a trip and in what way. Of course, the answer to this question would also give them an answer to the questions of “why do I even travel”, “does travelling contribute to the quality of my life” or “what travels and what programmes do so”. These results set a task of

permanent education before the scientists, experts and the entire public, including the tourist one. The consciousness of all participants in tourism on the importance and values of tourism should be raised, not only from the economic and environmental aspects, but also from the aspects of social psychology, culture and health.

This led us to start a new research on the population of the "third age" category and their motivational factors for participation in a tourist event. Generally, we started from the presumption that in regard to the physiological and socio-psychological changes that a person experiences in the third age, it can be expected that they reflect on the decrease of motivation, limitation of possibilities and choice of type, duration and content of travel, as well as the increase of number of travel motives that refer to the advancement of health. On the other hand, the experience of travel of older adults should reflect on the perception of values of a timely choice of travel and a clear recognition of motives for travel and even more clearly defined expectations or benefits of a travel. Including the push factors of environment in Serbia, the motivation of older adults for tourist travels is supposed to be decreased and limited, what with the difficult life conditions of the seniors.

Who are "senior tourists" and what are they like

The fact is that today on we have waves of explosive growth of total population on Earth. But it is also a trend in most developed countries for the population growth to decrease. Decrease in growth of population appeared despite the big growth in life expectancy in those countries. According to the data of the Belgrade Institute of Social Sciences from the year 2000, among the countries with a greater population, Italy is the oldest one – more than 18% of Italians is 65 or older, followed by Greece, Sweden, Japan, Spain and Belgium. Among the 25 demographically oldest countries in the world, apart from Japan, all are from Europe. Serbia is also among them (Kosovo and Metohija region excluded), with a

share of 15,7% of population older than 65. The population of Serbia is aging rapidly and is already among the oldest nations in the world. The data of the Institute of Social Sciences places central Serbia and Vojvodina, with an average age of 40.7, at the fourth place on the world's oldest populations.

There is a sort of confusion in understanding the notion of a tourist in "third age". Some researchers place lower limit at 50, some place it at 55, 60 and 65. The definition of a senior tourist could be /3/ :

- Retired persons aged 60 and more have money and time to travel or are nearing retirement, but are still employed due to local regulations
- It can be considered a sociological golden age or a tourist with an "empty nest" (no family obligations or care for offspring)
- Those are normally passive tourist and are, as such, psychocentric (tendencies: mostly travelling to destinations where their families live, relaxing, low-level activities, prefer driving to the destination, looking for good accommodation with complementary content, prefer an intimate-family atmosphere, wish to use the full package arrangement).

According to Eurostat (2012), a significant trend of participation of seniors is noticeable, both domestically and internationally. In the EU Commission, "Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination - a new political framework for tourism in Europe" (www.euractiv.rs, 2013) clarifies the challenges of changes in the demographic trend, from the perspective of the tourism sector in Europe, with the conclusion that the tourism sector must quickly adjust if it is to remain competitive. The survival of European tourism during the years of crisis in Europe was most contributed to by the citizens over 65, who have recently increased their spending on tourist travels for as much as a third. It seems that the seniors, who have both the time and the purchasing power and who are increasingly healthy and increasingly active, hold a significant potential for the market of the tourist services. It is estimated that by 2060, almost 30% of the EU population will be 65 or more, which is why the adjustment of

tourism sector in the EU is expected. WTO also foresees the development of new trends in tourism by 2020, among which is a significant increase in the impact of the segment of tourists older than 55 /4/.

QoL as a motivation factor of travel for older adults

During the last 30 years, quality of life becomes a rapidly-growing discipline entirely accepted by many governmental organs in various countries with a demand to measure and compare the change in quality of life within and among communities, cities, regions, countries. Without dealing with the multidimensional taxonomy of the definition of quality of life, we can define the basic dimensions of quality of life: sustainable development (cultural-sociological aspects, ecological aspects, economic aspects), preventive health treatments, and maintenance of a good standard. When it comes to the older adult tourists, the travel motivation is great, thus the market of senior tourists is also heterogeneous /5/: there are persons more motivated for educational and cultural experience and perception, others are oriented towards a hedonist experience and resting in various contexts, some are oriented on physical activities (primarily hiking), spending time outdoors and enjoying the scenery, while some are oriented towards social interactions, developing close friendships and nostalgia.

QoL and motivation factors are *crucial for a concept of understanding* what makes people engage in a tourist activity /6/. Some research indicate that one of the motivation factors of senior tourists (55+ years) is *entering a cognitive age* /7/. Recognised is a trend of growth of the number of wellness and spa centres, dominated, among others, by senior tourists and *that the myth about them staying at home is wrong*, because such tourists are educated, independent and still willing to experience excitement and enjoy life on their own terms /8/. A very extensive research was conducted for the needs of a famous tourist destination Algarve in Portugal, regarding the motivation of senior tourists to come and visit that destination /9/. One of the conclusions *was that one of the most*

important criteria was: comfort. The *levels of service* present at a destination also *have an impact* on the motivation factors of the older adult tourists /10/. Another motivation factors for senior tourist travels are also positive emotions that urge one to travel /11/.

In their paper "Delighting Senior Tourist" /12/, explaining the reasons to research the needs to travel in the countries where a third of inhabitants is in its "third age" (USA, Canada), the authors identify 8 factors as beneficial from travel: excitement, family ties, self-development, physical activity, safety, social status, escape from everyday life and relaxation. The authors of one of the extensive studies /13/ developed a theoretical model through semi-structured interviews conducted on Chinese senior travellers. The model, thus set, has two main components:

- a. External prerequisites, which include social advancement, adequate personal financial means, time, health condition, support of senior's family to travel, responsibility, as well as the wish to travel
- b. Internal wishes that include the improvement of wellbeing, constant removal-displacement, socialisation, knowledge resulting from visiting a new destination, pride, patriotism, personal gain and nostalgia in the broadest sense.

On the basis of mentioned research, it is important to notice that the increasing presence of older adult tourists in the market significantly alters the once dominant picture of them travelling almost always in organised groups for rest, wellness and, potentially, meeting other cultures; that those are passive persons who spend little. According to other research, the modern senior tourist is a completely different person with very diverse motives, which almost completely overlap with the range of motives of all other tourists. The positive differences are that the older tourist has experience, knows what he wants, values expectations and benefits from tourism highly and wishes to use travel to contribute to the quality of life, aware of its finiteness.

The present study

It is the very results of others' research that led us to question and test certain findings on the territory of Serbia, which is, as of now, still underdeveloped, in which the lifestyle is still traditional, with the elderly mostly sitting in front of their houses, watching the passers-by and taking care of their grandchildren, carefully spending what little money they have. The chosen city for research was Novi Sad, a city which has, for the last 20 years, seen some great sociocultural upheavals and which is a home to senior persons of very diverse lifestyles. The goal of this research was to establish, on a sample of senior (traveller) population in Novi Sad, what the dominant motivational factors are, and the extent to which the factors of quality of life are present and featuring as important in the expectations of seniors. The results of the research will serve as a basis for other research, dealing with the relation of the seniors with the contribution of tourism to the quality of life so as to simulate the push and pull factors on a global, but also on a personal level.

Methods

Sample of the study consisted of 16 elderly individuals 60 years old or more. While some authors /14/ conduct senior tourist research on individuals 55 years old and more, dividing them in subgroups, we decided to set the lower limit to 60. Most of these individuals are already pensioners, have lower incomes and feel as seniors or are perceived as such. The oddest participant was 77 years old and the average age was 65.5 years. One half of participants were men and the other half women. Neither age nor gender was intentionally and systematically varied, since the aim was not to generalise the conclusion to the whole population, but to gain insight into the diverse phenomena concerning travelling of the elderly. Since not many elderly people are active or travel frequently in Serbia, we used a snowball sampling method. All participants belong to some associations, sport clubs, or communities engaging in arts, crafts or leisure activities. We presumed that those individuals travelled

more than the rest of the elderly population. Since the research aim is to explore the motivation of elderly tourists for travelling and benefits they perceive from it and no previous researches in Serbia were conducted related to this subject, we applied semi-structured interviews, which we designed for the purpose of this research. The questions were open ended and covered daily and travel habits of participants, their motivation to travel and the benefits they perceive from it. All interviews were conducted in peaceful, quiet places that enabled the interviewers and interviewees to talk undisturbed. The interviews were not recorded in order that the elderly feel more comfortable, but were written down by the interviewers.

Results

Before we present the answers concerning travel motives, benefits and their relatedness to quality of life, we will describe our respondents in more detail, especially their travel habits and their leisure activities. They all engage in different hobbies or sports and recreation, such as: reading, writing, photography, pottery, knitting, gardening, fishing, playing tennis, football, yoga, tai chi, swimming, cycling, hiking, etc. Only one claims to have no leisure activities, because he is tired and only wants to travel. The rest are also members of different clubs and communities. They travel throughout Serbia and mostly throughout Europe. Most of them organise their trips alone, or go in groups of friends and relatives. Others prefer using travel agencies services. Some report going on excursions as much as they can (once a month or even more), while they go on longer trips once or twice a year. Pensioners report to travel less frequently, mostly because of health issues and lower incomes.

Travel motives

Since the aim of our research was to point out different motives and reasons of elderly tourists to engage in travel, here we will present all of them. They will all be grouped, since many were repeated in different combinations throughout the interviews. Although we were

searching for typical motives for elderly people from Serbia, urban area of Novi Sad, many were consistent with previous researches conducted in other countries /15/.

Activity and movement

Some are motivated to travel in order to be more physically active. They plan their trips around different sports and activities – skiing, swimming, sailing, playing tennis, hiking, cycling, etc. “Movement makes them feel free.” Those elderly tourists mostly engage in physical activity at home as well. Some of them pay little or no attention to gathering new information about the places they visit. They prefer being free and recreating themselves.

Curiosity and new discoveries

Some interviewees see themselves as still very curious, even adventurous. Travel is a way to satisfy their curiosity and learn something new. They mostly prefer to organise trips on their own – they don’t like guided standard tours. Some say that they like to inform themselves in advance and use books on culture and history, and Internet. Rarely do they visit a place just because someone recommended it. When they arrive on the destination, they love exploring on their own, finding unusual local shops and restaurants, discovering interesting architecture and curiosities that cannot be found in official guides and tours, even by night. They visit the museums, galleries, theatres, and exhibitions. Some report having interesting experiences, such as flying in a balloon or watching Formula 1 races.

Some are more curious about nature – mountains, hills, rivers, seaside, and lakes. The others like spending time in both urban and natural surroundings.

Others are not that enthusiastic about their travel, but like visiting new places, trying out local food, wine, discovering new cultures and new people. Some say that they very often make new acquaintances during their journeys. They like to find out ordinary things about ordinary people who live there – how they live, what they like, what are their habits. They say that travel helps them change perspective – they notice some other, mostly small and trivial things in the surroundings, which

they also start noticing in their own town and country when they return.

Socialising

Respondents see journeys as an opportunity to spend more time with close friends, relatives, spouses and children. Some say that the travelling with somebody is a good way to get to know the person and get closer – it requires adapting. “When two people travel together, they experience things together and have to cooperate”, says one of the interviewees (male, 65).

One of the respondents loves going back to Paris, where he used to live. He visits the city and stays with his old friends, with whom he loves spending time. “In Paris I feel at home”, says he (male, 61). Others travel in order to visit their children and relatives, who live abroad or in other cities in Serbia.

Relaxation

One of the respondents notes: “I am a bit fed up with travelling. I prefer being alone now. I also prefer to go someplace to find my own peace, to relax both physically and mentally. I even don’t want to travel with my wife all the time – we both need to make a break from one another. I choose spa resorts or countryside. I don’t like crowded places” (male, 63).

In order to relax, some engage in recreation on a journey, since they don’t do it on a regular basis. They enjoy long walks, hiking, riding bicycles, swimming in the pools, sunbathing – as long as it is not too demanding for them. They don’t see it as a manner of exercising and staying in shape. What motivates them is relaxing and improving their health.

Change of surroundings and escape from everyday life

Travel helps them “recharge their batteries”. While on a trip, they can forget everyday work, chores at home, and “bad news they receive all the time.” One of them says: “It doesn’t matter, as long as we’ve changed something. Just changing surrounding makes you feel better – my wife and I went to the seaside and it rained for almost a week, but we didn’t mind. The important thing was that we got out of a routine we have at home” (male, 63). Some of them prefer guided tours – they want to escape from their routines and like someone else to take care of the transport,

food, accommodation and activities. They do it everyday themselves, so they enjoy when they can relax and forget about organisation. Others prefer organising on their own, since they don't want to accommodate to any kind of schedules.

Safety

Although it is not a motive to go on a trip, it is a precondition to some of the interviewees. Good organisation makes them feel safe, which is almost obligatory. They do not like risky situations and going off the track. This is in accordance with some previous research /16/.

Changes in motivation and travel habits

Some of the participants noticed no changes in their travelling habits in their sixties and seventies in comparison to their past. Some of them state that if one loves travelling, they will always find the way to do it. They also perceive many of their peers as lazy or "living in the past, when they were younger, healthier and with higher incomes." This should not be an excuse, according to them. Others note that they do not travel as frequently as before and chose different destinations, mostly closer to their homes. They prefer picnics in the natural surroundings and one-day excursions. Some have changed their preferences due to health issues. One of the respondents states that he and his wife are now older and they don't like the seaside as much as in their youth. They are too hot in the sun and too cold in the water, so they tend to shorten the length of stay. Some say that for the same reason, they search for places with warm water, such as Greece or Turkey and avoid Adriatic sea (which has colder water). Another respondent would love to go skiing, but feels he is not "in shape anymore". Others opt for spa resorts instead, where they undergo different treatments. Health improvement or maintenance is a new motive for travelling for some of the elderly. Some feel that they now have some habits or daily rhythm that they don't feel like disturbing with trips. They are also more demanding than before, as manner of travel is concerned, as well as the accommodation. Some state that they don't like travelling by bus for long, es-

pecially during the night. One of the interviewees says that he now needs commodity: "I have some habits now that I feel I cannot easily change. I used to go camping during the summer, but it is not an option any more. I need to have four walls around me, a comfortable bed, a proper bathroom... Besides, I don't like crowds and noise. I prefer staying at home with my wife or going fishing." (male, 63). Others state that they don't have travel companions and they don't like traveling alone. Among those that do travel alone, some prefer it to travelling in a group, while others feel they lack some company. One of the causes for the decrease in travel, especially as pensioners are concerned is the money. They have lower incomes since retirement and some spare money for their children. Many also state that the economy crisis in Serbia contributed to their financial problems. Many of them report that they would travel more if they had more money and some spare their last dinar for the trips. Other participants note that they travel more since their retirement from work or since their children grew up and left home. They say to have more leisure time. One of the respondents claims that has an increased desire for travelling, due to getting old and reconsidering the past: "I know now that I haven't seen many things I always wanted because I found excuses not to go – children, work... I don't want to miss the opportunities anymore, since life is short." (female, 63). Some female pensioners report travelling more since the loss of their partners. Travel has contributed to their well-being since and it has been a way for them to carry on with their lives.

Stereotypes – ageism

Discrimination of elderly is common in Serbia, not only among younger members of the society, but also among seniors themselves. They are mostly seen as physically and mentally incapable of taking care of themselves, depressive and isolated. Most of participants in this research do not share these stereotypes. Most of them are still very active – they have many hobbies, they exercise or still work (some even in their seventies). They are aware of the existing stereotypes and they notice them among their peers, but they do not attribute much significance to them. It has been expected that

the elderly who travel are still active and do not discriminate themselves in this manner. On the other hand, stereotypes and self-discrimination are not easily manifested in front of an unknown person. Thus, further research applying different methodology and focus is recommended.

Perceived travel benefits

When creating interview guides, we assumed that, when thinking about motivation to travel, the respondents do not always consider benefits, especially the influence of travel on quality of their life, so we decided to ask them directly. Some of the motives interviewees cited repeated in the answers about perceived travel benefit and some appeared only when asked directly about travel benefits. We will present them all here.

Emotional satisfaction

Most of the respondents note that they feel satisfaction and emotional fulfilment during a trip. Some just say that the benefit of a journey is satisfaction and add no explanations to it. Others feel happy and joyful because of discovering new places, spending time with friends or family, or getting to know other people.

Learning

Some respondents feel satisfied because they have learnt and experienced something new. New cultures, new people, new sites, new food, new perspectives enrich their mental life. They perceive it mostly as an intellectual benefit, not emotional. It is satisfactory because it is a new experience for them, they get new information about new places, life of other people and life in general.

Relaxation

A trip helps them relax and change routines. They manage to reduce stress they feel at work and everyday life. They tend to be physically more active and they feel "healthy fatigue" on a journey and that adds to overall well-being. They forget about obligations, chores, work, they "go to a little nirvana", as one respondent exclaimed. Some say that the memories they bring from a journey help them in stressful situations when they come back. For example, they can recall their experiences at work and feel relieved.

Personal development

Some say they feel satisfied because they managed to fulfil their wishes and visit places they wanted to see for a long time, but didn't manage in the past, due to lack of money, commitment to work or family – especially children, hesitation to go alone (without friends or a spouse) or change some routines. They perceive it as a small triumph over themselves and a proof of their personal growth. One of the respondents states that it strengthens her self-esteem and self-reliance. Similarly, some report they get to know themselves better during a trip and find inner peace. That is why some of them prefer being alone on a trip.

Health improvement

Some of the respondents think that health improvement or maintenance is the most significant benefit for them. One of the interviewees states that during and after a journey he feels calm, and has no need to take blood pressure medicines he usually does. Another is aware that his life is short and might end abruptly (like his father's), so he wants to make the most of it while he can. He also believes that travel improves his physical condition and prolongs his life.

Deepening of relations

Some participants perceive deepening of existing relations with their travel companions as one of the major benefits of the journey. They get closer to their spouses, children or friends. Common experiences bind them more closely and for some the exact destination is not as important as quality time they spend together.

Detail awareness

Some respondents report being more aware of the surroundings and small detail while on a trip – they notice something they usually do not in their own environment, which changes after they return. One of the respondents stated: "I sometimes feel sad when I go to a wealthy country, because it is worse in Serbia" (male, 65). Another one claimed that she started noticing small beautiful details at home that she hadn't prior to the trip. She sees it as a valuable experience travel brings (female, 72).

Conclusion

The answers we classified in 7 categories are similar to senior tourist models suggested by Astic and Muller /17/, based on USA and Canadian elderly tourists, and that of Hsu et al. /18/, based on Chinese elderly tourists. Although they used different names for the tourist types, In comparison to the first, Serbian elderly travellers do not seek status on their journeys. Some of our respondents see it as irrelevant, which is not the case with American and Canadian. When comparing to the Chinese, Serbian tourists do not strengthen their patriotism on their trip. This is possibly because they travel to natural and spa resorts in Serbia. They seem less interested in cultural and historical sites, but look for them in other countries, which could suggest further direction of Serbian tourism development. The other factors are very similar to the two given models, which means that the senior tourists in different cultures – in western and eastern societies do not differ significantly when it comes to perceived travel benefits and motivation. This research was based on elderly who do travel more or less frequently. They also engage in many leisure activities as well – they are members of different communities and clubs. This might indicate that they already lead an active and quality life, which could be a predictor for their motivation to travel. On the other hand, our sample did not include those who do not travel, which would be the next step for knowing more about this subject. Is it just that they lack motivation, accept stereotypes about elderly, lead an overly passive life and do not care for its or are there some other obstacles they face that prevent them to engage in travel?

Notes

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