Travel behavior and the type of holiday they choose in Greece

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Abstract

Holidays at destinations that include outdoor recreational activities are in recent years of the most chosen holiday all over the world (Dalakis, Yfantidou, Tsitskari, Kosta & Tzetzis 2016). The purpose of this research was to identify the behavior of the tourists who selected this destination. Our research took place in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, in North Eastern Greece, from 1-1-2015 to 31-12-2015 in order to monitor the tourist behavior in a year base. Participants in the survey were 3070 from seven different nationalities: Greek, English, Polish, German, Bulgarian, Cypriot and Romanian. Pearson correlations about motivation and travel type revealed important differences. The choices about the type of holiday of the English, German and Polish were different from the Greek, Bulgarian, Cypriot and Romanian. In this research we wanted to categorize the tourist behavior so as to help private business sector in the area (hotels and companies that provide outdoor recreational activities, etc.) in order to modify the marketing strategies to target potential participants with different cultural backgrounds.

Keywords

outdoor recreation activities; correlation; tourism; travel behavior; region tourism

1. Introduction

Comparative studies relating to travel motivations and behavior of senior tourists have been undertaken mostly in America and Europe. European senior tourists enjoy beauty of nature, outdoor weather and like to use spa services (Esichaikul, 2012). It was demonstrated that travel motivation could be identified as patterns and combinations of multiple motives that are influenced by previous travel experience and age (Pearce & Lee, 2005). Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) argued that previous travel experience would provide insights when studying travel motivation.

Prior research illustrates the opportunities and challenges faced by sport tourism academics and managers in understanding the complexity of motivation. Current theorizing suggests that sport-based tourist attractions have economic, social, and political advantages over other cultural attractions (Hinch & Higham, 2005; Nogawa, Yamaguchi, & Yumiko, 1996). However, what motivates the sport tourist differs in terms of the type of sport attraction and experience desired (Gibson, 1998a). In addition, the relative contribution that sport versus tourism has on motivation and behavior, or whether they are synergistic remains a topic of discussion (Weed, 2005).

In a motivational-based segmentation study of Portuguese charter tourists to long-haul destinations, Correia, Silva, and Moco (2008) show that both push motivation such as knowledge seeking, escape, and socialization; and pull motivation such as destination facilities, core attractions, and landscape features were of importance. Kozak (2002) reveals motivational differences between tourists from the same country visiting different geographical destinations such as Mallorca and Turkey (both countries comprise a warm climate). Interestingly, Aguiló, Alegre, and Sard (2005) point to new market trends reducing the importance of sun and sand mass tourism. Aguiló et al. (2005) show how the Balearic Islands have managed to develop products and position themselves toward these new trends. In buying and visiting a sun and sand tourist destination, people do so for obvious reasons such as warm and nice weather and to enjoy beach life with friends and families. However, empirical research shows that people have several other motives for visiting sun and sand destinations. For instance, Rittichainuwat (2008) reveals that Scandinavians visiting Phuket, Thailand, value beauty of nature, good climate, in addition to a number of other motivations (e.g., relaxing atmosphere, new travel experiences, and a variety of foods).

Hui et al. (2007) indicate that the global tourism industry has become increasingly competitive and that marine tourism, especially, is becoming more saturated (Yoon and Uysal, 2005). Therefore, it becomes imperative that the marketing initiatives of destinations should be guided by a thorough analysis of tourist motivation (Yoon and Uysal, 2005) in order to be successful. Knowledge concerning motivations and the application, thereof, in marketing plans and strategies may enhance competitiveness in the tourism market (Pike, 2004), ensure long-term profit, survival, and growth of tourism destinations (Saayman, 2006).

Regarding the importance of personal experience on destination image formation as well as the tendency of the need to visit novel places, an individual's travel history (the frequency of a particular type of trip taken together with the need for novelty) is of interest when addressing tourist motivation and subsequent satisfaction and intention to perform positive word-of-mouth (Prebensen, Skallerud, & Chen, 2010). Exploring travel motivations is therefore critical in effective market segmentation and it is an important part of any tourism marketing strategy (Slabbert, 2002). Further, Van der Merwe and Saayman (2008) state that different tourist attractions or destinations lead to different motives and that travel motives in respect of one destination might not be applicable to another.

Last, as motives tend to be somewhat psychological in nature, this study highlighted the importance of those tangible aspects such as accommodation, activities and attractions,

thereby supporting the push and pull theory (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979). Pull factors are external forces aroused by the object, product or destination (e.g. climate) that encourage tourists to visit a certain destination. Push factors are internal forces, psychological in nature (e.g. relaxation) creating the desire to travel. A combination of push and pull factors should therefore be used in marketing strategies to attract visitors (Van der Merwe, Slabbert, & Saayman, 2011).

Fleischer and Pizam, Reichel and Uriely (2002) reviewed previous studies and reported that seniors' most common travel motivations were rest and relaxation, social interaction, physical exercise, learning, nostalgia, and excitement. Likewise, Horneman et al. (2002) found that seniors' motivations were shifting toward more active pursuits with a strong focus on health and fitness and concluded that the most frequently identified motivations for Australian seniors were education/learning, rest/relaxation, physical exercise/fitness and visiting friends and relatives.

Littrell, Paige & Song (2004) examined tourism activities and shopping behaviors of senior travelers. In that study, travel activities included outdoors, cultural, and sports and entertainment tourism. Travel motivation relates to why people travel (Hsu and Huang, 2008). Motivations for travel cover a broad range of human behaviors and experiences. A list of these motivations might include: relaxation, excitement, social interactions with friends, adventure, family interactions, status, physical challenges, and escape from routine or stress.

At the hallmark Australian running event, the 2005 Gold Coast Airport Marathon (GCAM), it was examined motivation for a hybrid of sport event and active sport tourism categories. To guide this investigation, an interdisciplinary approach was adopted (Gibson, 1998b; Weed, 2005) to examine the complexity of sport tourism motivation through consideration and integration of three literature streams: sport involvement, travel motivation, and consumer acculturation. Tourism research has acknowledged the importance of socio-psychological and cultural-education motives for understanding travel behavior. Sport events represent one of the fastest growing niche markets for tourism (Gratton & Taylor, 2000; Jago et al., 2003) and the research of Funk and Bruun (2007), underscores the importance of understanding socio-psychological motives relevant to the sport event and cultural education motives relevant to international travel (e.g., Crompton, 1979).

Furthermore, the research of Funk and Bruun (2007) examined the extent to which socio-psychological and cultural-education motives contribute to participation in international sport events. The structural equation modeling analysis verified that level of running involvement, strength of motivation toward participating in organized running events, and attitude toward the
host country were predictive of socio-psychological motives. For cultural-education motives, a desire to experience a new culture, acquire knowledge, and attitude toward the host country were predictive. It is suggested that personal motivations and destination attributes should be used for destination positioning studies (Botha, Crompton, & Kim, 1999). Efforts to understand the factors pushing tourists to visit a particular destination and how likely it is to be different from those of others visiting other destinations could help destination management to set marketing strategies (Uysal & Hagan, 1993). This research showed that motivations differ from one person (or group) to another and from one destination to another.

The study of Kozak (2002), has been amongst the first to compare tourist motivations across various destinations and across various nationalities. His findings demonstrated that some tourist motives differ between nationalities and place they visited. The purpose of this paper is to examine the travel behavior of tourists with different nationalities according to different travel types and motivations.

2. Methodology

2.1. Sample

The survey sample was 3070 tourists. There were three age groups divided the survey sample. The first was from 17-39 years (original maturity), the second from 40-59 years (middle adulthood) and the third 60 years and over (final maturity) (Gibson, 1994). The number of the sample was similar to the previous survey whereas the Virginia's sample was 3000 tourists.

2.2. Questionnaire

The scale of Meng (2006) was used in this research which was about the Destination Competitiveness from the Tourists' Perspective. The theoretical concepts of the research were four. First the Quality of vacation Experience (with 4 phases): Pre-trip planning, En-Route Experience, Destination On-site and After-trip. Second the Perceived Destination Competitiveness, third the Tourist Involvement and fourth the Motivation.

The first theoretical concept of the research was the Quality of vacation Experience which had 4 phases. Pre-trip Planning Phase with 4 questions, the En-route Experience Phase with 6 questions, the Destination On-site Phase with 10 questions and the After-trip Phase with 5 questions. The second theoretical concept of the research was the Perceived Destination Competitiveness with 21 questions. The third theoretical concept of the research was the Tourist Involvement with 11 questions based on two scales for the involvement: Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) and Consumer Involvement Profile (CIP). The fourth theoretical concept of the research was the Motivation of tourists with 12 questions. Finally, the questionnaire had five questions regarding general travel behavior of tourists and at the last page there were 7 questions for the description of their holidays, 1 question about the area of the 13 regions of the country where they usually go on vacation and 1 question about the sport activities they choose to perform in the vacation area. The last part contained 10 questions about demographic characteristics such as residence place, gender, age of participants, marital status, number of people included in the family, the number of children and their ages, educational level, annual income and occupation.

The questionnaires were in English and translated in Greek, German, Polish and Bulgarian language adapted to different nations in order to approach foreign tourists coming to the destinations in Greece. The procedure of double translation for each of the languages was followed and afterwards the questionnaire was translated from English (original) in Greek and adapted to the needs of the research. The Romanian participants in the research completed questionnaires which were translated in English.

Sport outdoor recreation activities that were included in the questionnaire were the most known: canoeing on lakes, rivers and sea, rafting, archery, diving, sport shooting, M.T.B. (Mountain bike), hiking, orientation, climbing - rappel, Flying-fox (rope games), mountain hiking, water sports, paragliding, motor sports and other.

All the questionnaire responses were given in 5point scale of Likert from 1 "not at all important" to 5 "very important". In the case of the tourist involvement on vacation, the 5point scale of Likert was from 1 "absolutely disagree" to 5 "totally agree".

2.3. Process

Participants participated voluntarily in the survey. Informed of the content of the questionnaire and the purpose of the survey and then completed the questionnaire. The survey was conducted in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (5 counties including the islands of Thasos and Samothrace) in north eastern Greece. The places that the questionnaire was distributed were the hotel Thraki Palace in Alexandroupolis, the hotel Agriani in Xanthi,

on ships (ferry boat schedules Keramoti - Limenas Thasos Alexandroupolis - Samothrace line), at beaches (the island of Thasos and Samothrace, in Xanthi and Alexandroupolis) and at destinations where outdoor recreational activities took place (in different points of the river Nestos delta Evros river, the canyon of the river Aggitis, in Vistonida lake in Livaditi waterfall in Xanthi, the narrow river Nestos, the ski center of Falakro Drama), and at the city centers of Drama, Kavala, Xanthi, Komotini and Alexandroupoli or outdoor in the suburban forest of Xanthi, the monasteries of Xanthi, in Nymfaia area in Komotini, in St. Barbara park in Drama, at the Kavala castle in Dadia forest.

3. Results

3.1. Demographic characteristics

The participants in the survey were from 7 different countries. 1666 were from Greece (873 men and 793 women), 251 were from Great Britain (138 men and 113 women), 233 were from Germany (152 men and 81 women), 156 were from Poland (67 men and 89 women), 461 were from Bulgaria (292 men and 169 women), 67 were from Cyprus (36 men and 31 women) and 64 were from Romania (37 men and 27 women) (missing values 172). The age group was 3 to 17-39 years 69.8%, 40-59 years 24.7% 60 years and over 1,7% (Gibson, 1994). Most of them were single 49.3%, followed by married 29.7%.The majority graduated from a university 49.9%, 21% from lyceum and 16.4% from a 4-year college. The annual income varied from under 20.000€ for the 43% to 20.001€-40.000€ for the 32.9%.

3.2. Motivation correlations

Pearson correlations about motivation and travel type revealed that for the 1st factor (The external environment) and the 6 travel type questions there is only one negative statistical important correlation with question 3: Leisure activities (camping, hiking, rafting, fishing, skiing, tennis, golf, etc.). For the 2nd factor (Love and safety) there are four statistical important correlations with questions (1,3,5,6). There is positive correlation with question 1: Natural environment travel (landscapes, sea, beach, islands etc.) and negative correlations with the other three: Leisure activities (camping, hiking, rafting, fishing, skiing, tennis, golf, etc.), Festivals and Art and Visiting friends and relatives. For the 3rd factor (Self-actualization) there are statistically important correlations with all of them. There are positive correlations with question 1: Natural environment travel (landscapes, sea, beach, islands etc.) and question 4: Entertainment/Fun/Games (amusement parks, casinos, cruise, shopping, etc.) and negative correlations with the other four: Historical/Cultural heritage travel (areas of historical interest, cultural attractions, monuments, museums etc.), Leisure activities (camping, hiking, rafting, fishing, skiing, tennis, golf, etc.), Festivals and Art and Visiting friends and relatives.

3.3. Motivation – MANOVA

Multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was made, between the independent sex variables and the different marital status of the participants and the three factors of motivation (the external environment, love and safety & self-actualization). The results showed that there was no interaction between the factors. There was only a major effect on the "marital status" factor with Pillai's Trace test $F_{(6,2781)}= 1,744$, sig= .026. In the test of Between-Subjects Effects it appeared that only the third factor of motivation (self-actualization) has a statistically significant difference for both independent factors with $F_{(6,2781)}= 2,790$, sig= .010. A Post Hoc test was carried out and a statistically significant relationship was found

between the different categories of the independent factor "marital status", "free" (Average= 4.364) and "cohabitation" (Average= 4.251).

Multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was made between the independent variables of age and the level of study and the three factors of motivation (the external environment, love and safety & self-actualization). The results showed that there was an interaction between the factors, with Pillai's Trace test $F_{(12,2835)}= 3,126$, sig= .001. In the test of Between-Subjects Effects it appeared that all three factors of motivation had a statistically significant difference for both independent factors with the 1st factor of motivation "the external environment" being $F_{(12,2835)}= 3,675$, sig= .001, the second factor of motivation "love and safety" being $F_{(12,2835)}= 2,471$, sig= .003 and the 3rd factor of motivation "Self-actualization" being $F_{(12,2835)}= 1,934$, sig= .026. A Post Hoc test was carried out and a statistically significant relationship was found in the first factor of "motivation" at "level of education" "elementary" with the age of "17-39 years" (Average= 4.578) and "40-59 years" (Average= 3.400), "college" with the age of "17-39 years" (Average= 4.281) and "60 years and older" (Average= 3.771) and "doctorate" with the age of "17-39 years" (Average= 4.086) and "60 years and older" (Average= 2.400), "40-59 years" (Average= 4.217) and "60 years and older" (Average= 2.400). In the second factor of "motivation" at "level of education" "doctorate" with the age of "17-39 years" (Average= 4.214) and "60 years and over" (Average= 3.200), "40-59 years" (Average= 4.517) and "60 years and older" (Average= 3.200). In the third factor of "motivation" at "level of education" "college" with the age of "17-39 years" (Average= 4.294) and "60 years and older" (Average= 3.714), "40-59 years" (Average= 4.350) and "60 years and older" (Average= 3.714), "Universities/Technological Institute" with the age of "17-39 years" (Average= 4.390) and "40-59 years" (Average= 4.294), "college" with the age of "17-39 years" (Average= 4.390) and "60 years and older" (Average= 4.000) and "post-graduate" with the age of "17-39 years" (Average= 4.405) and "40-59 years" (Average= 4.188).

Multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was made between the independent variables of the annual family income and profession and the three factors of motivation (the external environment, love and safety & self-actualization). The results showed that there was an interaction between the factors, with Pillai's Trace Test $F_{(29,2751)}= 1,985$, sig= .001. In the test of Between-Subjects Effects it appeared that all three factors of motivation had a statistically significant difference for both independent factors with the 1st factor of motivation "the external environment" being $F_{(29,2751)}= 1,938$, sig= .002, the second factor of motivation "love and safety" being $F_{(29,2751)}= 2,748$, sig= .001 and the 3rd factor of motivation "self-actualization" being $F_{(29,2751)}= 1,876$, sig= .003. A Post Hoc test was carried out and a statistically significant relationship was found in the 1st factor of "motivation" to the level of "annual family income" of "60.001€-80.000€" with the level of "profession" "freelancer" (Average= 4.446) and "retired" (Average= 3.275), "private employee" (Average= 4.333) and "retired" (Average= 3.275) and "retired" (Average= 3.275) with "student" (Average= 4.450) and "state employee" (Average = 4.262). In the second factor of "motivation" to the level of "annual family income" "60.001€-80.000€" with the level of "profession" "freelancer" (Average= 4.515) and "retired" (Average= 3.725), "private employee" (Average= 4.567) and "retired" (Average= 3.725) and "retired" (Average= 3.725) with "state employee" (Average= 4.428), at the level of "annual family income" "80.001€-100.000€" with the level of "profession" "private employee" (Average= 4.520) and "student" (Average= 3.600) and at the level of "annual family income" "above 140.001€" with the level of "profession" "freelancer" (Average= 4.080) and "household" (Average= 5.000), "private employee" (Average= 4.091) and "household" (Average= 5.000) with "student" (Average= 3.694). In the third factor of "motivation" to the level of "annual family income" "under 20.000 €" with the level of "profession" "private employee" (Average= 4.366) and

"unemployed" (Average= 4.163), "unemployed" (Average= 4.163) with "student" (Average= 4.348) and "state employee" (Average= 4.427), at the level of "annual family income"20.001€-40.000€" with the level of profession "private employee" (Average= 4.265) and "student" (Average= 4.422), at the level of "annual family income" "40.001€-60.000€" with the level of profession "freelancer" (Average= 4.279) and "student" (Average= 4.609), "private employee (Average= 4.289) and "student" (Average= 4.609) and "student" (Average= 4.609) with "state employee" (Average= 4.298), at the level of "annual family income" "100.001€-120.000€" with the level of profession "private employee" (Average= 5.000) and "student" (Average= 3.800) and finally at the level of "annual family income" "above 140.001€" with the level of profession "household" (Average= 5.000) and "student" (Average= 3.912).

4. Conclusions

The significance of this research to the body of knowledge was the examination of differences in the set of tourist motivations between nationalities. The purpose of this research was to determine the travel motives of tourists and their travel type preference. Factor analysis produced three motivational categories: Self-actualization, Love and safety and The external environment. The results indicated that the motivational dimensions of Self-actualization and Love and safety are the most important factors in forming travel types. Also these results generally support the cross-cultural findings within international tourism literature (Chen, 2000; Crotts & Erdmann, 2000; Litvin et al., 2004; Litvin & Kar, 2004; Funk & Bruun, 2007). Therefore, this aspect needs attention by researchers across the globe. The results of this research provide some insight information of tourists for planners and marketers. In this case, it is necessary for Greece to develop certain policy measures and strategies in public and private sectors.

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