



Marital Status as a Key Factor of the Choice for Vacation Type and Outdoor Recreation Sport Chosen by Tourists in East Macedonia and Thrace in Greece

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Abstract

This research concerns the tourist behavior of people visiting the areas of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace that offer recreational activities. Holidays at tourist destinations which provide outdoor recreational activities are preferred by tourists all over the world. The purpose of the survey was to investigate whether marital status of tourists affects the vacation type of the tourists and the choices of outdoor recreational activities. The results indicate that the demographic have affected the research. The results of the study gave some important information to the public sector (municipalities, regions) and to the professionals of tourism (hotels, companies with recreational outdoor activities and travel offices) of the region which are very practical elements.



Keywords

Outdoor recreational activities, tourist experience, demographic data, tourism.

1. Introduction

States with economic systems and tourism sectors that are transitioning, evolving, with time, from being centrally controlled to becoming market-driven, must face changes that profoundly affect the countries, their economic systems, and their cultures (Andrades, & Dimanche, 2017). In particular, destination competitiveness in developed countries is sensitive to changes in the business environment, macroenvironment, and general infrastructure (Knežević Cvelbar, Dwyer, Koman, & Mihalič, 2016). A greater emphasis on the productivity-enhancing effects of investment should be made for greater efficiencies in capital expenditure, thus helping to foster destination competitiveness. Furthermore, the tourism sector requires a more highly skilled tourism workforce as tourism is a service-oriented sector where labor mainly drives overall tourism productivity growth. Tourism training and education are crucial to enhancing industry productivity (Armenski, Dwyer, & Pavluković, 2017).

2. Literature Review

2.1 General Views

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) (1960) states that "tourism is considered to be any activity involving any type of movement, either through an international border (alien) or not (domestic), lasting more than twenty-four hours and for various reasons except for reasons of immigration and regular daily work (Komilis & Vagionis, 1999). The International Tourism Academy defines "tourism" as "all human movements and activities that result from them. Since the early 20th century, many international organizations and experts in tourism, through multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, tried to define the concepts of tourist and tourism on the basis of certain structural analysis models, expanding different types of tourists (Tsartas, 1996; Βαββαρέσος, 1998). This explains the great difficulties involved in conceptual delimitation and classification of the main elements articulating the concept of "tourism". The conceptual approaches and definitions of tourism vary depending



on the particular context in which they are examined, the context refers to various disciplines (economics, sociology, geography, etc.), and various public and private planners and policy either national or international (Κομίλης & Βαγιωνής, 1999).

Tourism is a new and rapidly growing sector of the world economy, which at the same time brings about social, cultural, spatial and environmental changes in the structure of modern societies. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 2016 has defined ecotourism as "a prerequisite for integrating environmental concerns into all tourism and travel products and their consumption" (Tourism). This means that sustainable tourism development is one that moves to a level or even below this level and does not create environmental or social-cultural degradation or creates the impression for tourists that it reduces the pleasure and enjoyment of the area. This does not mean that ecotourism has no environmental impact, its impacts are less than those of mass tourism (Kokkosis & Tsartas, 2001). There are many forms of ecotourism, such as village-type developments, nature tourism that can include hiking, mountaineering, cycling, and accommodation in rural houses, bird watching and other mild activities. An increase in ecotourism is expected as a result of the increasing environmental awareness of citizens (Stanners & Bourdeau, 1995). Part of ecotourism could be sport tourism. Athletic tourism is: all forms of active and passive participation in a sporting activity, participation in an informal or organized way for commercial or business and non-purposes, requiring removal away from the place of residence and work. Alternatively, it can be described as "... a combination of sporting activities and travel" (Sfakianakis, 2000). Finally, the athlete can be defined as a temporary visitor who is staying for at least 24 hours in the area he visits and the purpose of his trip is to attend, participate or attend a sporting event (DeKnop, 1987).

2.2 Marital Status

In the present study Marital Status was the most important factor with the total annual income. In an effort to generate sufficient empirical data, researchers investigated the social, emotional moods as well as the civic and economic status of the visitors and results appear to be influenced by marital status (Finger & Gayler, 1993; Costa, 1998; Yfantidou, Costa and Michalopoulou, 2008). Contemporary hectic lifestyle and the degraded natural environment that characterize modern cities constitute outdoor recreation and participation in outdoor



recreation activities (O.R.A.), both important and highly necessary. The study was carried out in the context of outdoor recreation which conceptually involves any environmental, athletic, recreational activity of social awareness in the form of a simple exercise or structured program which takes place in natural environments (Kouthouris, 2009).

It could be an organized trip as a product that can be purchased. Another view, generally supported in the literature, is that tourist experience is a process that involves evolution through a series of stages (starting with the expectation that leads to planning, moving to the destination and return journey (Clawson, 1963; Jennings, 1997; Stavropoulou, Yfantidou & Spyridopoulou, 2010).

Bearing in mind the increasing number of tourism destinations with similar tourism supply attributes and promotion efforts, trying to attract the same market segments, it becomes evident that a clear definition of major brand determinants will become an imperative for maintaining destinations' competitiveness in the future. Results indicate that the level of tourist satisfaction is indeed significantly and positively associated with the level of branding process implementation, which is a favorable prerequisite for providing and marketing tourism products adapted to tourist needs and expectations (Miličević, Mihalič, & Sever, 2017).

The key factors that are expected to continue to shape the tourism industry (Deloitte & NYU, 2005) are:

- *Identity - Branding*: Travelers are becoming more and more demanding in matters related to the "name" and give importance to the experience of travel, and not just to the natural beauties of each destination. The logic of emerging destinations has been built on this philosophy, offering sun and sea opportunities for shopping in luxury shopping centers, sports, skiing and so on.
- *New markets* - Impact of emerging markets (e.g. China, India, Persian Gulf states) on international tourism developments: these markets also offer opportunities for developing residential complexes as cottages, which opens up a new market and creates demand for similar products (condo hotels, buy for use and let, etc.).
- *People - Demographic changes*: Different socio-political conditions (such as early retirement and more leisure time) enable more than 50 years of age to be active in tourism, being the most basic target market.



- *Technology* - Robust technology development: the implementation of new technology systems and the widespread use of the Internet are shaping the modern tourist market.

2.3. The tourist attractions and products

Even tourists from Asia (who some people think they visit places just to photograph and share with friends on the internet), are attracted to these destinations not so much from their material goods but mainly from history, myth, narrative, and feelings associated with these resources (Yfantidou, Costa & Michalopoulou, 2011).

Consequently, the main factors that attract tourists to a destination are not only their "material" and "tangible" resources, but mainly the intangible values, stories, myths and feelings to be used to describe and to promote these resources and to create the need for the tourists to experience a unique experience (Yfantidou, Costa & Michalopoulos, 2010). In the economy of sentiments and experiences, the existence, maintenance and sustainable sustainability of material resources do not lead to a competitive advantage once they are considered data and are expected (eg, a standard that everyone has). On the contrary, the activities that the tourist can participate in, as well as the feelings, communication and social ties that he / she can develop with local society and tourist businesses are the ones that will differentiate one destination from the others and will emotionally tie visitors with him or her.

Aim

The purpose of the survey was to investigate if Marital Status as independent variable was affected the vacation type of the tourist or the choices of recreational outdoor activities.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample

The sample of the survey consisted of 3070 tourists/visitors, of whom 1596 men and 1302 women, found in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, in North Eastern Greece, from 1-1-2015 to 31-12 -2015. The age of the participants was divided into three categories according to Gibson, (1994): a) from 17-39 years of age (early adulthood); b) from 40-59 years of age (middle adulthood); and c) 60+ (late adulthood) (Yfantidou, Costa & Michalopoulou, 2008).

3.2. Description of the Instruments

The questionnaire used in this research was from a similar survey conducted in 2006 in the United States of America in the context of a doctoral research by Meng (2006). The validity and reliability analysis of the questionnaire led to the selection of this questionnaire. The questionnaire contained four main factors and this paper will present a part of it. The questionnaire of this survey consisted of 4 pages.

The last page contained information among others about the type of holiday which tourists select with seven questions and about their participation in outdoor recreational activities (15 different choices) by ranking these activities.

Fang Meng's original questionnaire was in English, translated into Greek using the back to back method (Yfantidou, Costa, Michalopoulou & Tsitskari, 2010) and adapted for the specific research needs. Then it was translated back to back again in English. It also translated into German, Polish and Bulgarian. The Romanian respondents completed questionnaires in English. All the were given on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 “not significant” and 5 “very important”.

3.3. Measuring Procedure

Participants completed voluntarily the questionnaire. They were informed of the content of the questionnaire and the purpose of the survey and afterwards they completed the questionnaire. In the survey area 4000 questionnaires were shared, 3637 were returned and 3070 were considered suitable for the study (567 were removed because they had not been thoroughly completed).

The participants were located in various places, such as hotels, on ferries, beaches, in destinations where outdoor recreation activities were organized and generally at rural and urban areas of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.

3.4. The outdoor recreational research activities

The activities carried out by the participants in the survey were divided into two categories: a) moderate (canoe-kayaking at sea, river and lake, archery, athletic shooting,



orienteering and mountain hiking) and b) vigorous (rafting, diving, cycling, mountaineering, rock climbing-rappel, rope games (flying-fox), water sports, parapente and motor sports).

3.5. Design of Research

The independent variable of the survey was the marital status. The dependent variables were: the type of vacation with 7 questions and the outdoor recreational activities with 15 different choices.

Demographic analysis and one Anova analysis were conducted for the research purposes. Data were analyzed by one way Anova multivariate analysis in order to examine the independent variable with all dependent variables.

4. Results

Participants in the survey came from seven different countries and their entries in the survey are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants in the survey by country.

COUNTRY	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Greece	873	793	1666
Great Britain	138	113	251
Germany	152	81	233
Poland	67	89	156
Bulgaria	292	169	461
Cyprus	36	31	67
Romania	37	27	64



The Greek participants were living or residing in 47 of the 51 prefectures of the country. The counties have been numbered according to the Ministry of the Interior (<http://www.ypes.gr/el/regions/aytodioikhsh/statesmunicipalities/>).

The results appeared that most of the participants were “men”, “singles”, 17-39 years old, with a University degree, with total annual income <20.000€ and student.

4.1. Marital Status

The marital status of the participants in the survey was studied with seven categories (lost values 2.7%):

- Free = 49.3%
- Married = 29.7%
- Widow = 3.1%
- Divorced = 2.4%
- In dimension = 2.5%
- Reconciliation = 0.7%

The seven different questions about the vacation type are

1. Natural environment travel (landscapes, sea, beach, islands etc.).
2. Historical/Cultural heritage travel (areas of historical interest, cultural attractions, monuments, museums etc.).
3. Leisure activities (camping, hiking, rafting, fishing, skiing, tennis, golf, etc.).
4. Entertainment/Fun/Games (amusement parks, casinos, cruise, shopping, etc.).
5. Festivals and Art.
6. Visiting friends and relatives.
7. Other (please specify).



The seven different questions about vacation type answered as shown below:

1. 1492 participants answered in this question.
2. 893 participants answered in this question.
3. 94 participants answered in this question.
4. 72 participants answered in this question.
5. 295 participants answered in this question.
6. 19 participants answered in this question.
7. No one participants answered in this question.

The total was 2942 and 128 participants didn't answered this question.

The fifteen different outdoor recreation activities/sport are:

Canoe/Kayak (in sea, lake or river), Rafting, Archery, Diving, Athletic shooting, M.T.B. (mountain bike), Mountaineering, Orienteering, Climbing-Rappel, Flying-fox (rope games), Trekking, Sea sport, Parapente, Motorsport, Other (specify).

The participants choices in outdoor recreation activities/sport depend to Marital Status shown as below:

CANOEKAYAK	Free	748
	Married	551
	Widow	61
	Divorced	46
	In dimension	49

	Reconciliation	167
	Other	7
	Total	1629
RAFTING	Free	615
	Married	443
	Widow	50
	Divorced	35
	In dimension	31
	Reconciliation	126
	Other	3
	Total	1303
ARCHERY	Free	464
	Married	366
	Widow	32
	Divorced	31
	In dimension	25
	Reconciliation	103
	Other	5
	Total	1026
DIVING	Free	660
	Married	423
	Widow	33
	Divorced	30
	In dimension	29
	Reconciliation	137
	Other	5

	Total	1317
ATHLETICSHOOTING	Free	496
	Married	416
	Widow	44
	Divorced	35
	In dimension	31
	Reconciliation	132
	Other	2
	Total	1156
MTB	Free	645
	Married	448
	Widow	45
	Divorced	30
	In dimension	38
	Reconciliation	156
	Other	3
	Total	1365
MOUNTAINEERING	Free	553
	Married	394
	Widow	37
	Divorced	34
	In dimension	36
	Reconciliation	120
	Other	4
	Total	1178
ORIENTEERING	Free	308

	Married	246
	Widow	31
	Divorced	27
	In dimension	14
	Reconciliation	76
	Other	0
	Total	702
CLIMBINGRAPPEL	Free	608
	Married	411
	Widow	55
	Divorced	36
	In dimension	36
	Reconciliation	143
	Other	4
	Total	1293
FLYINGFOX	Free	604
	Married	415
	Widow	31
	Divorced	18
	In dimension	33
	Reconciliation	113
	Other	2
	Total	1216
TREKKING	Free	354
	Married	198
	Widow	27

	Divorced	20
	In dimension	17
	Reconciliation	75
	Other	8
	Total	699
SEASPORT	Free	873
	Married	413
	Widow	38
	Divorced	42
	In dimension	41
	Reconciliation	160
	Other	6
	Total	1573
PARAPENTE	Free	443
	Married	265
	Widow	18
	Divorced	14
	In dimension	20
	Reconciliation	76
	Other	0
	Total	836
MOTORSPORT	Free	274
	Married	102
	Widow	14
	Divorced	8
	In dimension	13
	Reconciliation	40

Other	5
Total	456

Data were analyzed with one way Anova analysis with one independent factor. The results shown that at six from seven questions had statistical significance. Only the first question was not statistical significant. The results analytically showed as below: First question was $F_{(6,2941)}=.307$, $p=.934$. Second question was $F_{(6,2941)}=6.851$, $p=.001$. Third question was $F_{(6,2941)}=10.697$, $p=.001$. Forth question was $F_{(6,2941)}=3.180$, $p=.004$. Fifth question was $F_{(6,2941)}=9.489$, $p=.001$. Sixth question was $F_{(6,2941)}=4.660$, $p=.001$. Seventh question was $F_{(6,2941)}=2.469$, $p=.022$. The results from post hoc test (LSD) of the survey on the different research groups that were statistically significant showed the following. Also presented are the average prices found:

2 nd question		Average
Free	Married	1,93
	Widow	1,93
	In dimension	1,93
Married	Free	1,86
	Reconciliation	1,86
Widow	Free	1,82
	Reconciliation	1,82
In dimension	Free	1,82
	Reconciliation	1,82
Reconciliation	Married	1,91
	Widow	1,91
	In dimension	1,91

3 rd question		Average
Free	Married	1,83
	Reconciliation	1,83

Married	Free	1,72
	Widow	1,72
	Divorced	1,72
	In dimension	1,72
Widow	Married	1,86
	Reconciliation	1,86
Divorced	Married	1,83
	Reconciliation	1,83
In dimension	Married	1,83
	Reconciliation	1,83
Reconciliation	Free	1,69
	Widow	1,69
	Divorced	1,69
	In dimension	1,69
4 th question		
Free	Married	1,76
	Divorced	1,76
	Reconciliation	1,76
Married	Free	1,81
	In dimension	1,81
Divorced	Free	1,88
	In dimension	1,88
In dimension	Married	1,71
	Reconciliation	1,71
Reconciliation	Free	1,83
	In dimension	1,83

5th question

Average

Free	Married	1,89
	Widow	1,89
	Reconciliation	1,89
Married	Free	1,97
	Widow	1,97
	Divorced	1,97
	In dimension	1,97
Widow	Married	1,83
	Free	1,83
	Reconciliation	1,83
Divorced	Married	1,86
	Reconciliation	1,86
In dimension	Married	1,90
Reconciliation	Free	1,94
	Widow	1,94
	Divorced	1,94

6 th question		Average
Free	Married	1,87
	In dimension	1,87
	Reconciliation	1,87
Married	Free	1,93
Divorced	In dimension	1,88
In dimension	Free	1,99
	Divorced	1,99
Reconciliation	Free	1,92

7 th question		Average
Free	Divorced	1,99
Married	Divorced	2,00

	Reconciliation	2,00
Widow	Divorced	2,00
	Reconciliation	2,00
Divorced	Free	1,97
	Married	1,97
	Widow	1,97
Reconciliation	Free	1,95
	Widow	1,95
	Widow	1,95

Data about outdoor recreation activities/sport were also analyzed with one way Anova with one independent factor. The result shown that ten from fourteen outdoor recreation activities/sport was statistical significant. Five of fourteen outdoor activities/sport weren't statistical significant. The results analytically showed as below:

SPORT	F	Sig	Mean
Canoe/Kayak (in sea, lake or river)	$F_{(6,1628)}=2.477$	=.022	Free with married 2,97 Married with free 2,60 Married with divorced 2,60 Divorced with married 3,47
Rafting	$F_{(6,1302)}=1.700$	=.117	Free with married 2,76 Married with free 2,48
Archery	$F_{(6,1025)}=2.389$	=.027	Free with married 4,77 Married with free 5,29 Married with divorced 4,03 Married with reconciliation 4,54 Married with reconciliation 2,60 Diivorced with married

			4,03
			Reconciliation with married 4,54
			Reconciliation with married 2,60
Diving	$F_{(6,1316)}=12.315$	$=.001$	Free with married 4,83
			Free with widow 4,83
			Free with reconciliation 4,83
			Married with free 6,42
			Married with divorced 6,42
			Married with reconciliation 6,42
			Married with reconciliation 6,42
			Widow with free 6,76
			Widow with divorced 6,76
			Widow with reconciliation 6,76
			Divorced with married 4,00
			Divorced with widow 4,00
			Divorced with in dimension 4,00
			Divorced with reconciliation 4,00
			In dimension with divorced 5,79

			In dimension with reconciliation 5,79
			Reconciliation with free 5,62
			Reconciliation with married 5,62
			Reconciliation with divorced 5,62
			Reconciliation with married 2,60
			Reconciliation with widow 2,60
			Reconciliation with in dimension 2,60
Athletic shooting	F_(6,1155)=1.540	=.162	Free with divorced 5,34
			Divorced with free 4,43
M.T.B. (mountain bike)	F _(6,1364) =4.229	=.001	Free with married 3,63
			Free with widow 3,63
			Free with in dimension 3,63
			Free with reconciliation 3,63
			Married with free 3,29
			Widow with free 2,76
			Widow with divorced 2,76
			Divorced with widow 4,00
			Divorced with in

			dimension 4,00
			Divorced with reconciliation 4,00
			In dimension with free 2,79
			In dimension with divorced 2,79
			Reconciliation with free 2,97
			Reconciliation with divorced 2,97
Mountaineering	$F_{(6,1177)}=3.323$	$=.003$	Free with in dimension 4,57
			Married with in dimension 4,86
			Married with reconciliation 4,86
			Widow with in dimension 4,86
			In dimension with free 3,17
			In dimension with married 3,17
			In dimension with Widow 3,17
			In dimension with reconciliation 3,17
			Reconciliation with in dimension 4,40
			Reconciliation with married 3,00



Orienteering	$F_{(5,701)}=3.065$	$=.010$	
Climbing/rapel	$F_{(6,1292)}=2.769$	$=.011$	Married with widow 5,96 Married with divorced 5,96 Married with reconciliation 5,96 Widow with married 5,09 Divorced with married 4,83 Reconciliation with married 3,50
Flying-fox (rope games)	$F_{(6,1215)}=1.312$	$=.249$	Free with divorced 5,15 Married with divorced 5,19 Divorced with free 6,61 Divorced with married 6,61 Divorced with in dimension 6,61 In dimension with divorced 4,64
Trekking	$F_{(6,698)}=2.724$	$=.013$	Free with married 4,73 Free with reconciliation 4,73 Married with free 5,33 Married with reconciliation 5,33

			Married with reconciliation 5,33
			Widow with reconciliation 5,30
			Divorced with reconciliation 5,05
			Reconciliation with married 3,91
			Reconciliation with free 2,13
			Reconciliation with married 2,13
			Reconciliation with widow 2,13
			Reconciliation with divorced 2,13
Sea sport	$F_{(6,1572)}=3.756$	$=.001$	Free with married 4,37
			Free with reconciliation 4,37
			Married with free 5,11
			Married with divorced 5,11
			Divorced with married 3,69
			Divorced with reconciliation 3,69
			Reconciliation with free 5,11
			Reconciliation with divorced 5,11
Parapente	$F_{(5,835)}=.874$	$=.448$	

Motorsport

F_(6,455)=1.672

=.126

**Widow with
reconciliation 3,86
Reconciliation with
widow 6,38**

5. Discussions-Conclusion

The general conclusions of the research are summarized as follow:

- ✚ The marital status of the participants is the strongest factor, with many differences between the different tiers of the factor.**

The "family situation" appeared to be the most important of the factors examined, since it was statistically significant in the seven different phases. Thus, the different family status of the participant seems to be of decisive importance for holidays and effects the selection of something different.

The questions natural environment travel (landscapes, sea, beach, islands etc.), historical/cultural heritage travel (areas of historical interest, cultural attractions, monuments museums etc.), and festivals and art were the most answered. The first question was not statistically significant. The reading of the results by the researchers informs us that although there was no statistically significant influence of the independent factor on the particular question, the most likely cause is the fact that the visitors of the particular region chose it because of its natural beauty and therefore did not pay much attention to the specific Question. Tourists trying to be relaxed when choosing the type of holiday in recent years consider more important things, such as what the quality of the hotel will be, the quality of the food, whether there is easy access to the holiday place, or whether other benefits are available in the area. On the other two questions the results are interpreted by the researchers as follows: the area is famous for its incredible historical data (the archaeological site of Abdera, countless Roman monuments, monuments about the Odyssey), the area is renowned for its unbelievable historical elements. The area is also famous for its famous events every year, such as festivals, theatrical performances and domestic and international sports events, as the region is very close to Bulgaria and Turkey.

The results about the outdoor recreation activities/sport showed that five of them were not statistical significant. These activities were rafting, athletic shooting, flying-fox, parapente



and motorsport. All these activities/sport were one from many similar others. They organized in special environment with some difficulties to move in this place. Except from rafting the others were lonely activities/sport. Because all the above these activities were not activities with many choices from the participants. The rest activities/sport were team activities/sport the most of them. They organized near the hotel of the participants and because of that it's very simple to participate. There were not differences between free people and married people. These two categories were the best score in all of the activities/sport. The third categories were reconciliation. Finally, the proposals that the research suggests to the public and private stakeholders in the region are to direct their advertisements upon demographic characteristics.

5.1. Proposals for future investigations

It is suggested in a future survey that the questionnaire be translated into other languages in order to be answered by tourists from other countries. Also, the questionnaire can be distributed to other regions of the country that have similar characteristics in order to make a comparative study.

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