

## WHY DO THE ROMANIAN STUDENTS TRAVEL?

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### Abstract

*The objective of this work paper is to identify the reasons why do the Romanian students travel, the amount of money they spent, what kind of destinations they prefer, how do they choose a destination. The methodology is developed according to this objective, based on Crompton's model. The research method is a quantitative one: a questionnaire-based survey. The data collected are processed in SPSS computer program. The results are important for travel agencies, hotels, transport companies, being useful in their efforts of establishing strategies and promotion of products/services addressed to this target market.*

**Key words:** Travel; Students; Reasons for travel; Destination; Holiday.

**JEL classification:** L83, M31

### INTRODUCTION

At present, tourism is the main industry in the world. Revenues from tourism exports of the receiving countries, including transport, have exceeded one trillion dollars in 2010 or 3 billion dollars a day. Tourism exports account for 30% of world exports of commercial services and 6% of total exports of goods and services, ranking the fourth position in the world, after fuels, chemicals and automobiles (WTO, 2012).

Developing countries have found in tourism the main source of income and exports, issue of new jobs and wealth. In this context, there is a great interest for studying the markets, both in terms of demand and supply. Tourism companies need information on the reasons that lead people to travel, to choose a tourist destination or another, a particular product or another one, why the Romanians travel in European countries and why the Europeans come in Romania on a lesser degree, how to explain that the Germans travel the most, or that the Europeans go mostly in Europe (Tătărușanu, 2011).

We have chosen the issue concerning the students as tourism consumers because of the limited number of researches into the consumer habits of young tourists even they influence decisions to travel, as Blichfeldt remarked (Blichfeldt, 2011, in Schänzel, 2012).

Another reason for this choice has been the importance market generated by youth today. At the level of France, for instance, the "young" tourists generate important economic effects, estimated at 4.8% of the domestic tourist consumption (Gonet, Chabret et al, in Moisa, 2010, p.72). Deforges has remarked earlier the importance of youths as tourism consumers. He wrote in 1998 that "young tourists have considerable power in shaping the characteristics

and development of tourism destinations" (Deforges, 1998, in Benckendorff et.al, 2010, p.61). Seth also shows that "young people today traveled out of their countries for foreign destinations more frequent than the rest of population" and this kind of tourism consumer will be long-distance in the future (Seth, 2006, p.332). UNWTO also found that "a substantive number of government and policy tourism makers perceive the youth/students markets are being very important to tourism industries' futures" (UNWTO, 2008, in Benckendorff et.al, 2010, p.60).

In the study entitled *The power of youth travel*, the authors consider youth travel "not just an important market segment, but also a vital resource for innovation and change" (UNWTO and Wyse Travel Confederation, 2011, p.5).

The youth travel industry is estimated by UNWTO at almost 190 million international trips in 2011, and at almost 300 million international youth trips per year in 2020. Conforming to the UNWTO study cited, young people travel because this is (2011, p.6):

- A form of learning;
- A way of meeting other people;
- A way of getting in touch with other cultures;
- A source of career development;
- A means of self-development;
- Part of their identity – you are where you've been.

In this regard, studying the consumer behavior and motivation for tourism tries to provide explanations for the choices the tourists make when they decide to travel, in order to support the companies interested in developing tourist products adapted to this kind of customers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The motivation for travel is a subjective factor, which affects the tourist traffic. It is a state of necessity felt by a traveler or a condition that makes them act. It is explained by a psychological need (of which the consumer may not be aware) or a particular purpose for travel. On its basis, explanations are provided on the question why people travel. Motivation is related to perceptions of each man on the world, but it is influenced by several external factors, such as family, work, media, cultural and social-economic factors. Among the economic and social factors, the most important ones are available free time and individual income (Cristureanu, 2001).

Studies on motivation for tourism are numerous; the most interested people on this issue are the marketing researchers, because motivation is the one that contributes to the creation of travel demand and actual consumption. Consumer behavior has emerged as a newer marketing domain in order to study "human behavior when buying and/or consuming goods and services", in the circumstances of offer diversification and increased competition among companies, in order to attract customers.

Literature explaining the motivation for travel shows, globally, approaches based on the motivational theories undertaken from consumer behavior, the most famous ones being: the motivational needs-based theories (developed by Abraham Maslow in 1943) and the theories based on values (emitted by Rokeach in 1968), while others take both in consideration (Muller's model, 1991, Witt and Wright, 1991, etc.). Furthermore, an important role in choosing one of other of destinations is played "by the mental image a tourist has about a particular area, which takes into account the interests, the beliefs and the attitudes of that person but is influenced by the common mental and public image of the destination (Obenour, Lengfelder et al, 2005, Tudor, 2012, p.34).

In 1977, Dann takes in consideration the two categories of factors, the psychological and social ones, in order to explain the motivation for travel, named push and pull factors. The first category, considered to be the one of motivator factors, includes the desire for escape, rest and relaxation, prestige, health and fitness, adventure and social interaction, family reunification and excitement, and the second one, of hygienic factors, pull factors, are those inspired by the attractiveness of destination such as beaches, recreational facilities, cultural attractions, entertainment, natural scenery, shopping and parks (Yoon, Uysal, 2005; Uysal, Perdue et al, 2012).

The tourist decides to travel due to the difficulties and contradictions of their usual environment, intending to bring peace in their life. Crompton, in agreement with the theory launched by Dann, identifies 7 push factors and 2 pull factors in 1979. It is the most widely applicable theory in the

practice of tourism marketing (Robinson, Heitmann, 2011).

According to this theory, there are seven categories of psychological factors (Figure 1) that make tourists to travel, named push factors (escape from daily life, relaxation, self-exploration and self-assessment, prestige, return to childhood, improving relationships with family, interaction with the others) and two other categories, education and novelty, which are the pull factors, their role being not very relevant for tourists (accommodation, dining and entertainment facilities) (Crompton, 1977).

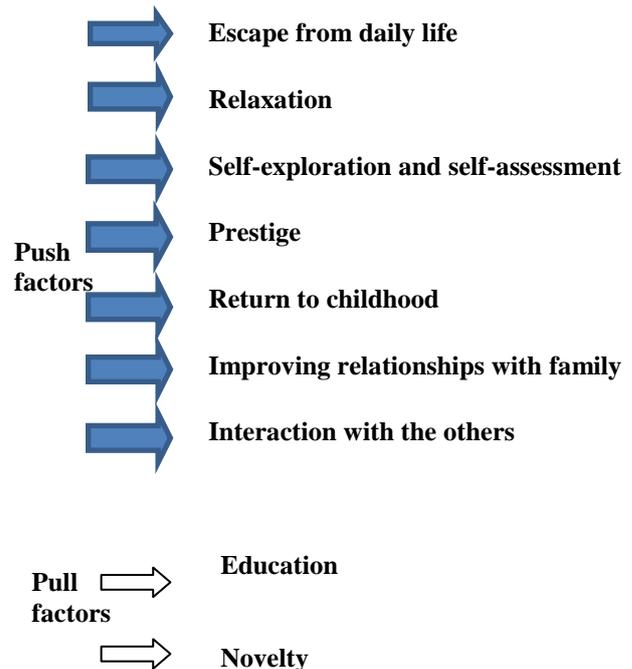


Figure 1 - Push and pull factors upon Crompton

Therefore, if a person wants to spend a relaxing holiday in a mountain resort, the push factors make them to look for information on different types of holidays in the mountains, the pull factors being those that determine the choice for a package or another, a destination or another, a hotel or another.

In the decision to purchase a holiday, other aspects are also important: the cultural, social and economic ones, with a major influence on the factors mentioned by Crompton.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this work paper is to identify the reasons why do the Romanian students travel, the amount of money they spent, destinations they prefer, how do they choose a destination, in order to support the companies interested in developing tourist products adapted to this kind of customers, according to Crompton model. The methodology is developed

according to this objective. The research methods used in this paper are:

- Analysis of the existing literature in the subject;
- A questionnaire-based survey.

The questionnaire-based survey was developed within a non-probabilistic sample consisting of 140 students from the second and third years of study, enrolled in a tourism specialization, at the two mentioned universities of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, in January-February 2012.

The questionnaire was developed according to the model proposed by Crompton to explain the tourist motivation, being included questions (closed and open ones) aiming the push and pull factors listed by the author, both filter type questions and questions regarding the importance of some reasons for going on holiday and destination choice, with answers on a 1 to 5 scale (1 - not important, 5 - very important).

The data have been collected and analyzed by using specialized software for statistical analysis (SPSS).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results obtained are presented in the lines below.

The surveyed students are aged between 19 and 24, 71% of them attending the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Economy of Commerce, Tourism and Services specialization, and 29% - at the Faculty of Geography-Geology, Geography of Tourism specialization (Figure 2), both of them included in the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University from Iași, in the second (10%) and the third year of study (90%).

Most students come from urban areas (85 %), from Moldavia area, a region with the lowest levels of income, according to national statistics.

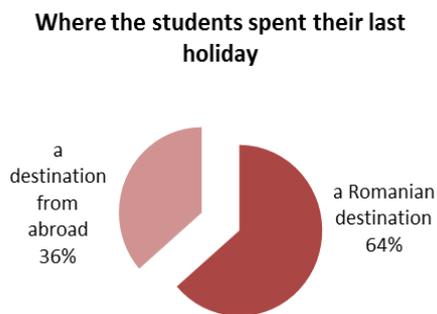


Figure 2 - Students as tourism consumers (domestic or external tourism)

Most students have traveled within the country to spend their last holiday - 64% and 36% of them chose a foreign destination (Figure 2). The types of preferred holidays/destinations were located in the mountains (43%), followed by sea (35%), cultural

destinations, including cities in the country or abroad - 8% of respondents (Figure 3).

5% of students spent their last holiday abroad to visit their parents (explained by the large number of Romanian workers abroad and whose children are studying at home). As expected, rural destinations are not very attractive for this type of customers (only 4% of them chose such a holiday), and cruises are an option only for 1% of student consumers, given the low income level of this category.

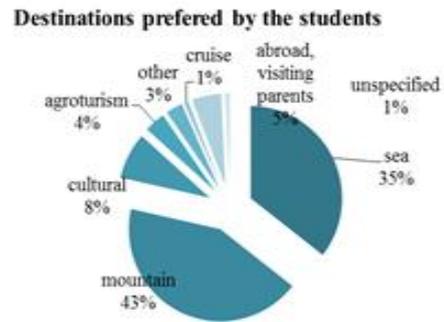


Figure 3 - Types of destinations preferred by students

The main reasons to travel listed by the students included in the sample were, in order (Figure 4): pleasure, relaxation, rest – 32%.

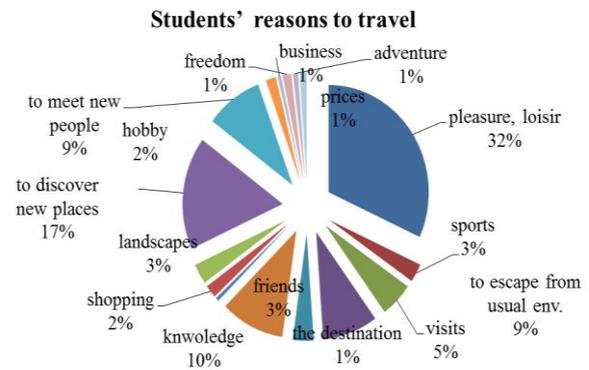


Figure 4 – Students' reasons to travel

Other reasons mentioned by the respondents were: discovering new places - 17%, knowledge - 10% (referring here to accumulation of new experiences, learning), knowledge of new people - 9%, escape from daily life - 9%, visiting friends, relatives, parents - 5%, to admire the landscape - 3% or practicing a sport - 3%. The reasons are interesting because the students mention the sport as the major purpose of travel in a extremely low proportion (the possibility of practicing a sport is highlighted in the literature as essential for the hoteliers in order to attract customers), as well as the adventure, with a very low position within the reasons listed by students, even if it is considered as a specific travel reason of young tourists. An another study found that *socialization* is highly scored by the younger attendees (Guerreiro et.al, 2011).

When students were asked to give a score on a 1 to 5 scale regarding the importance of factors that influenced their destination choice for the last holiday, 90% considered landscape beauty as very important or important (Figure 5), the destination's security being the next specified item (87%), followed by the desire to recreation (83%). Leisure time and price as factors influencing the students' choice are mentioned as important or very important for 80%. Proximity to home is less important for the surveyed students, as well as the national currency exchange rate, the agricultural or cultural events.

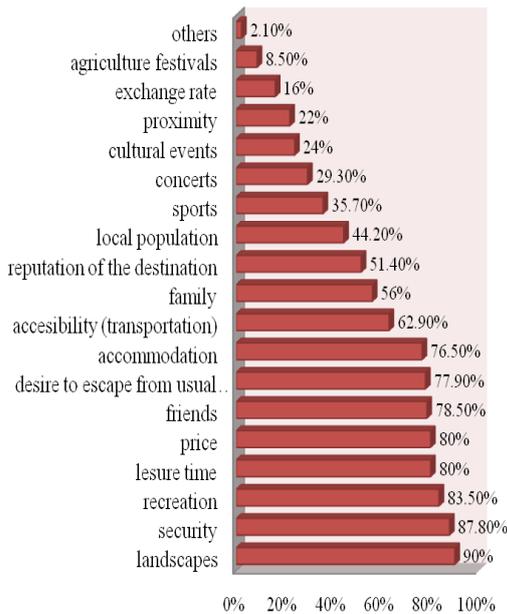


Figure 5 - The importance of factors that influence the students's choice

The study shows that the average Romanian students' expenditure per holiday is usually less than 250 euro for the most part (53% of them) (Figure 6). This amount is very small if it is compared with other countries.

One question referred to the persons accompanying students in their travels. The results (Figure 7) indicated that they travelled mostly with friends, in couple and less in family (only 9%).

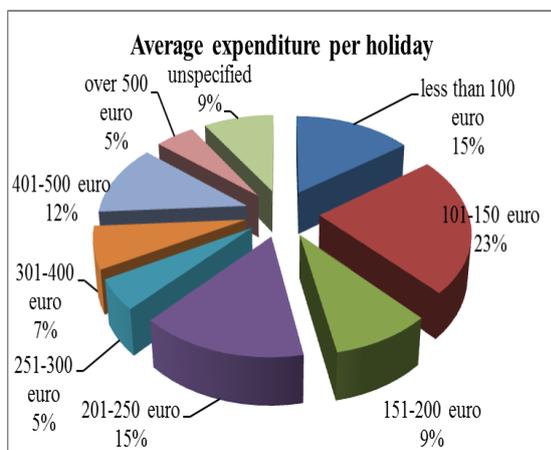


Figure 6 - The students' average expenditures

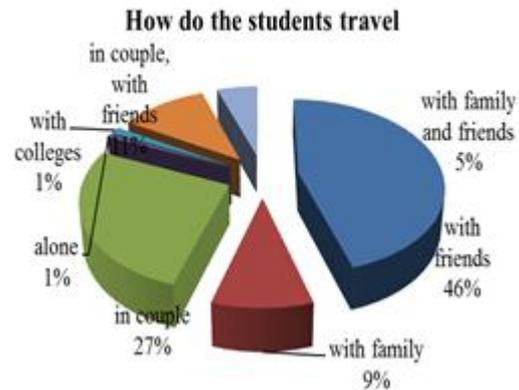


Figure 7 - The people's accompanying students during their travel

Among the study participants, to the question "Please indicate a negative experience" 32.1% did not provide any answer, and 18.6% said they had not gone through such an experience.

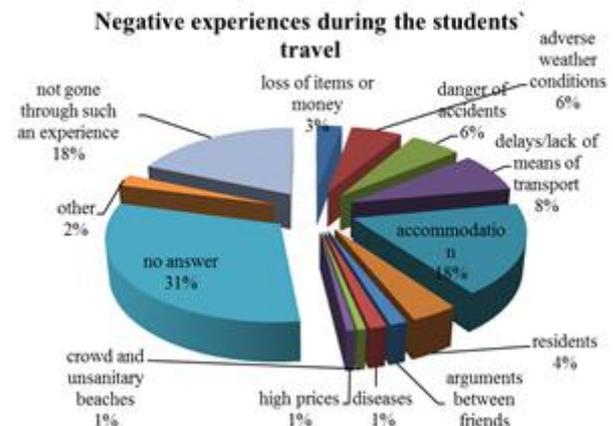
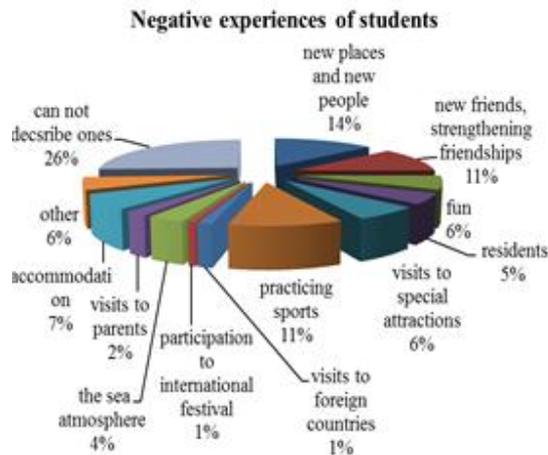


Figure 8 - Negative experiences of students during their last travel

Negative experiences were associated with (Figure 8): loss of items or money (3%), adverse weather conditions and danger of accidents (6% each of them), delays or lack of means of transport (8%), accommodation (18%), residents (4%), arguments between friends (1%), diseases (1%), crowd and unsanitary beaches (1%), high prices (1%), other (2%). Most of these experiences can be associated with pull factors.

Also, 37% of students felt that they could not describe a positive experience, because they do not remember one or it has not such a great importance to mention it. The main positive experiences described by participants in the study refer to (Figure 9): knowledge of new places and new people (14%), new friends and strengthening friendships (11%), practicing sports, especially winter sports but also extreme sports for the first time (11%), accommodation and atmosphere created by residents (7%), fun with friends (6%).



**Figure 9 - Negative experiences during the students' travel**

Other students mentioned visits to special attractions and travel to interesting, special places (6%), the sea atmosphere and sunrise on the beach (4%), visits to parents (2%), visits to foreign countries (1%), relationships with others and participation to an international festival (1%).

According to the provided data, only 31.7% of students chose this destination for the first time, the remaining 69.3% going in the chosen location for several times, proving a high attachment to it.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study indicates that the main reasons to travel of the students attending a specialization in tourism are: pleasure, relaxation, rest, discovering new places, knowledge (referring here to the accumulation of new experiences, learning), knowledge of new people, escape from daily life, visiting friends,

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relatives, parents, special landscapes or playing a sport, found in the dual factors theory (push and pull factors), both in the category of pushing and attracting factors. Or, for some respondents the latter are as important as the push factors in the decision to travel.

Social factors as welcoming of the accommodation, the atmosphere created by local people, practicing sports for the first time are mentioned as being important factors in the satisfaction of tourists regarding a destination, being included in the category of pull factors according to the Crompton's theory. In addition, however, the respondents associated also knowing new places and new people, new friendships and fun (included by Crompton in the category of push factors) with satisfaction for the destination, inducing the idea that they could act as pull factors in order to return to that destination in the future.

As other researchers showed in their works, these factors can have the same importance for tourists when they decide to go on holiday, being influenced by social, economic and cultural variables (Robinson, etc., 2011).

The results are important for travel agencies, hotels, transport companies, government, being useful in their efforts of establishing strategies and promotion products /services addressed to this target market.

The research limits concern the sample, which includes only youth studying tourism, so the results cannot be generalized to all population of students. A future research will be focused on the same category of tourism consumers which are very important today, based on a sample including students from different faculties and specializations.

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