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**The comparative analysis of senior and non-senior
package holiday travelers' tourism product preferences**

Abstract

Tourism products are systemic products which offer multiple value to tourists in multiple aspects to satisfy their needs, however, tourists' preferences vary in terms of travelers' characteristics. The current study attempts to analyse senior and non-senior package holiday travelers' preferences with respect to tourism product attributes. The surveyed sample of 463 tourists spent their holiday on the coach tours in Poland in 2013. The main implication of this research for tourism product managers is that they have to focus on providing tourists with well suited packages and position appropriately by selecting suitable communication strategies for selected target segments.

Keywords: systemic product, tourism product, tourism product attributes, tourist satisfaction.

JEL classification: L83, M31.

Introduction

Tourism is a complex service which consists of multiple products, such as tour package, price, service, attractions, etc., which together provide distinctive value to tourists [Cunha and Cunha 2005]. Tourism products are systemic products which offer multiple value to tourists to satisfy their various needs [Żabiński (ed.) 2012]. The tourism product employs physical space and social actors, resulting in joint actions of inter-related institutions to create conglomerates. Hence, it is in its truest sense, systemic multi-value product.

The direct contribution of tourism sector in Poland to GDP was 1.7% of total GDP in 2014 and is forecast to rise by 4.9% in 2015 [World Travel & Tourism Council 2015]. Moreover, the senior market shows attractive growth potential, it is complex; it is not homogeneous in terms of income, education, health, physical activity, etc. [Śniadek 2006], and the needs and preferences of this consumer market are varied. For example, senior tourists may be more willing to consume package tours than are others [Javalgi et al. 1992]. However, there are fewer empirical studies in this regard in a Polish context. Hence, the current study attempts to compare the leisure experience of senior tourists in Poland along with younger tourists so as to serve both the segments well.

Specifically, this research addresses the following questions:

1. What are senior and non-senior tourists' perceptions of the importance of tourism product attributes, including services provided by the tour operator (internal tourism product attributes) and other destination attributes (external tourism product attributes)?
2. What are the differences between senior and non-senior travelers' preferences with respect to the distinguished tourism product attributes?

In order to determine answers to above-mentioned questions, researchers hereby hypothesize that the distinguished tourism product attributes are important for both groups of travelers, which means that tourism products satisfy various customer needs, including physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs as well as self-actualization needs.

1. Literature review

According to Javalgi et al. [1992], seniors differed from non-seniors in their travel related consumption. Seniors were less educated and relied more on package tours provided by travel agents and traveled farther than non-seniors. Ananth et al. [1992] determined that older travelers needed amenities such as grab bars, night lights, extra blankets and medical facilities during their lodging. Zimmer et al. [1995] found that along with age, education level and health status the travel patterns of tourists differed. Older adults with higher education level traveled more while those with health issues traveled less than their younger counterparts. However, Fleischer and Pizam [2002] revealed that health status and income level were the influential factors in the case of Israeli senior tourists.

Shoemaker [1989] asserted that seniors market is not homogeneous and there are generational differences among seniors. The youngest of adult population are called silent generation, who are also the parents of baby boomer gener-

ation [Strauss and Howe 1991]. They are characterized by indifference and lack of imagination and are fundamentally 'silent'. Baby boomers, on the other hand, perceive themselves to be much younger than their chronological age, more self-reliant and demand challenging and adventurous experiences [Cleaver and Muller 2002; Hudson 2003]. As ageing population grows, it is likely to create changes in the demand patterns of travel choices and activities [Glover and Prideaux 2009]. According to Backman et al. [1999], younger senior travelers were more interested in relaxation and leisure where older seniors were inclined towards learning and natural landscapes.

Bonn et al. [2005] compared the perceptions of group package tourists and independent travelers. They found that the former were older and had higher income than the latter. Further, the group package tourists stayed in the destination longer, spent more money and were more satisfied than the independent travelers.

2. Methodology

2.1. Design of questionnaire

The researchers analyzed secondary data such as reports on tourist satisfaction and the results of the surveys conducted by selected tour operators regarding the quality of package holiday services. Then, in-depth interviews with the tourist companies' managers and individual tourists were conducted to identify factors that influence tourists' holiday experience. After selecting tourism product attributes crucial for visitors, the questionnaire was developed, including closed-ended and open-ended questions aimed at obtaining information concerning travelers' holiday experience regarding the distinguished tourism product attributes. Numerical evaluation of all attributes was made using 1-5 Likert scales. Tourists were also asked questions regarding the attractiveness of Poland as a tourist destination. Data was collected from tourists who were spending their summer holidays on coach tours in Poland in 2013. The subjects were selected by convenience sampling from the tours' participants. The tours were organized and sold in the form of package holidays by tour operators and travel agents in the United States, Canada, and Australia under their own brands. Mazurkas Travel, Polish Incoming Tour Operator, was a local partner responsible for arranging tourist services.

2.2. Data analysis

The research tasks include the identification of tourism product attributes crucial for senior and non-senior travelers and factors influencing their holiday experience. This study examines senior tourists who are aged more than 60, which is in line with the age categorization used by the World Tourism Organization [2001]. The rest of the travelers are considered as non-seniors.

Tourists' perceptions of the importance of each of those attributes are taken into account in this study. The study analyzes tourists' opinions on the importance of selected services provided during the tours (internal tourism product attributes) and the importance of other destination attributes (external tourism product attributes).

Internal tourism attributes include: attractiveness of the program, organization, hotels, restaurants and meals, standard of the bus, tour escort, price/quality relationship. External tourism product attributes include: climate/atmosphere of the visit, tourist attractions, nature, shopping opportunities, safety, opportunity to meet new people, weather, cleanliness, reasonable prices, tourist information, kindness toward foreigners, possibility to communicate in English, handicapped facilities.

The Mann-Whitney test is used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between senior and non-senior tourists' perceptions of the internal and external tourism product attributes' importance.

2.3. Respondents and their characteristics

Tourists spending their summer holidays on coach tours in Poland in 2013 were the subjects of the analysis. A paper-and-pencil questionnaire distributed to the tourists at the end of each tour was completed by 463 travelers. According to the survey results presented in Table 1, 59.8% of tourists were females and 40.2% males. 69.1% of respondents were over 60, 15.3% were within the age bracket of 51-60, 6.1% were between ages of 20-30, 5.4% between 41-50, 2.4% between 31-40 and 1.7% were under 20. Considering the country of residence, 83.8% of tourists were from the United States, 8.7% from Canada, 4.7% from Australia, and 2.9% from other countries. The majority of travelers were the United States residents over 60.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

Description			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gender	Valid	Female	275	59.4	59.8	59.8
		Male	185	40.0	40.2	100.0
		Total	460	99.4	100.0	
	Missing	System	3	0.6		
		Total	463	100.0		
Age	Valid	under 20	8	1.7	1.7	1.7
		21-30	28	6.0	6.1	7.8
		31-40	11	2.4	2.4	10.2
		41-50	25	5.4	5.4	15.6
		51-60	70	15.3	15.3	30.9
		over 60	317	68.5	69.1	100.0
		Total	459	99.1	100.0	
	Missing	System	4	0.9		
		Total	463	100.0		

Table 1. cont.

<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
Country of residence	Valid	United States	377	81.4	83.8	83.8
		Canada	39	8.4	8.7	92.4
		Australia	21	4.5	4.7	97.1
		Other countries	13	2.8	2.9	100.0
		Total	450	97.2	100.0	
		System	13	2.8		
	Missing Total	463	100.0			

3. Empirical results

As mentioned above, the tourism product attributes have been grouped in two categories: the internal tourism product attributes and the external tourism product attributes. The importance of each tourism product attribute was measured on a five-point Likert scale. Table 2 shows the perceived importance for each attribute. The internal tourism product attributes appear at the top of the table. Considering the importance of the internal tourism product attributes for senior tourists, it can be concluded that tour escort (4.88), organization (4.77), attractiveness of the program (4.70) and price/quality relationship (4.68) are perceived as the most important attributes. These findings concur with the studies of Holloway [1981], Patterson and Pan [2007] and Wong and Lau [2001]. It is not surprising that tour guide is the most indispensable internal tour attribute for seniors, given the multiple roles they play such as information givers, instructors, motivators, destination ambassadors, entertainers, confidants and leaders. Standard of the bus, hotels, and restaurants and meals were evaluated lower in terms of their importance, however, the perception measures score for those attributes are above 4.5, which means they are also highly important for seniors.

The importance of attributes varies to a greater extent for the external tourism product attributes. The highest rated attributes include: safety (4.70), cleanliness (4.70), tourist attractions (4.68), reasonable prices (4.55), tourist information (4.53), and kindness toward foreigners (4.52). Thus, senior tourists seek their physiological and safety needs to be met by tour providers before fulfilling their other needs. Some external tourism product attributes, such as: climate/atmosphere of the visit, nature, possibility to communicate in English, opportunity to meet new people, and weather are also very important for seniors. These results reinforce the socialization and learning motivations of senior travelers as stated in the literature [e.g. Fleischer and Pizam 2002; Klenosky 2002]. The importance measure for those attributes ranges from 4.0 to 4.5. Shopping opportunities and handicapped facilities are the lowest rated attributes (3.65 and 3.45 out of 5 respectively).

Table 2. Senior and non-senior tourists' perceptions of tourism product attributes importance

Tourism product attributes	Senior tourists			Non-senior tourists		
	N	Mean	Standard deviation	N	Mean	Standard deviation
Attractiveness of the program	304	4.70	0.557	141	4.43	0.740
Organization	297	4.77	0.465	141	4.61	0.607
Hotels	302	4.54	0.568	141	4.52	0.650
Restaurants and meals	303	4.54	0.607	141	4.50	0.661
Standard of the bus	305	4.60	0.566	141	4.28	0.796
Tour escort	304	4.88	0.334	142	4.73	0.518
Price/quality relationship	304	4.68	0.564	139	4.62	0.544
Climate/atmosphere of the visit	301	4.41	0.805	137	4.47	0.665
Tourist attractions	295	4.68	0.514	136	4.61	0.634
Nature	300	4.34	0.748	138	4.30	0.805
Shopping opportunities	297	3.65	1.096	138	3.95	0.999
Safety	302	4.70	0.539	138	4.63	0.593
Opportunity to meet new people	300	4.13	0.846	137	3.77	0.918
Weather	300	4.09	0.767	138	4.12	0.802
Cleanliness	302	4.70	0.506	137	4.50	0.643
Reasonable prices	301	4.55	0.596	137	4.43	0.673
Tourist information	302	4.53	0.635	138	4.31	0.713
Kindness toward foreigners	301	4.52	0.609	138	4.31	0.682
Possibility to communicate in English	298	4.29	0.756	138	4.13	0.844
Handicapped facilities	215	3.45	1.338	120	2.99	1.411

To better understand senior and non-senior tourists' perceptions of tourism product attributes' importance, the researchers compared the mean scores of senior tourists and non-senior tourists. Due to the skewness of the data, a Mann-Whitney test was used. The results of the u-test presented in Table 3 indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between seniors and non-seniors with respect to the assessments of such internal tourism attributes as: hotels, restaurants and meals, and price/quality relationship. However, in the case of attractiveness of the program, organization, standard of the bus, and tour escort there is a statistically meaningful difference between the two groups. The results of the analysis show that among the various factors, internal tourism product attributes are more important for seniors than for other tourists.

Moreover, the u-test reveals that there is no statistically significant difference in the perceived importance of such external tourism product attributes as: climate/atmosphere of the visit, tourist attractions, nature, safety, weather, reasonable prices, and possibility to communicate in English. Yet there is a statistically significant difference between the mean assessments for seniors and non-seniors with regard to other attributes. Thus, it can be concluded that opportunity to meet new people, cleanliness, tourist information, kindness toward foreigners, and handicapped facilities are more important for seniors than for other tourists, but shopping opportunities are relatively less important for them. This finding is in line with the results of Backman et al. [1999] which revealed that shopping opportunities are not considered important by senior tourists as their mobility may be limited by health condition and tiredness.

Table 3. Mann-Whitney test

	Internal tourism product attributes						
	Attractiveness of the program	Organization	Hotels	Restaurants and meals	Standard of the bus	Tour escort	Price/quality relationship
Mann-Whitney U	17305.000	18208.500	21140.500	20751.000	16969.000	18982.000	19691.000
Wilcoxon W	27316.000	28219.500	66893.500	30762.000	26980.000	29135.000	29421.000
Z	-4.006	-2.934	-0.138	-0.561	-4.102	-3.292	-1.435
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.003	0.890	0.575	0.000	0.001	0.151
	External tourism product attributes						
	Climate/atmosphere of your stay	Tourist attractions	Nature	Shopping opportunities	Safety	Opportunity to meet new people	Weather
Mann-Whitney U	20103.000	19351.500	20255.500	17343.000	19764.000	15937.500	20203.000
Wilcoxon W	65554.000	28667.500	29846.500	61596.000	29355.000	25390.500	65353.000
Z	-0.473	-0.737	-0.397	-2.697	-1.109	-4.010	-0.437
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.636	0.461	0.691	0.007	0.267	0.000	0.662
	External tourism product attributes						
	Cleanliness	Reasonable prices	Tourist information	Kindness toward foreigners	Possibility to communicate in English	Handicapped facilities	
Mann-Whitney U	17520.000	18892.000	17325.00	17337.000	18475.500	10530.500	-
Wilcoxon W	26973.000	28345.000	26916.000	26916.000	28066.500	17790.500	-
Z	-3.155	-1.612	-3.135	-3.206	-1.851	-2.870	-
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.107	0.002	0.001	0.064	0.004	-

Significance level at 0.05

The research results indicate that package holidays meet customer various needs. Tourism products meet tourists' physiological needs as meals served in restaurants are considered a very important tourism product attribute. Safety, hotels, and standard of the bus are also perceived as significant, which means that package holidays meet visitors' safety needs. Moreover, kindness toward foreigners, opportunity to meet new people, and possibility to communicate in English are important for tourists, so it can be concluded that package holiday meet travelers' social needs as well. Esteem needs could be satisfied by shopping opportunities and reasonable prices and self-actualization needs by a variety of tourist attractions and tourist information.

Conclusions

Tourism products are systemic products which offer multiple value to tourists in multiple aspects to satisfy their needs. Besides meeting tourists' physiological needs, package holidays meet travelers' safety needs, social needs, esteem needs as well as self-actualization needs. Moreover, tourists vary in terms of their needs and preferences depending on their characteristics. Thus, not only tour operators need to design tourism products to meet various customers' needs, but they also need to consider package holiday travelers' preferences with respect to various segmentation variables.

This article has explored the systemic nature of tourism products in package tours, especially by examining the difference between preferences of senior and non-senior tourists. It was found that two groups of tourism product attributes are important to tourists, however, the individual attributes vary in significance. Seniors attach more importance to the internal attributes than external attributes. All internal tourism product attributes are highly important for senior tourists. Seniors consider attractiveness of the program, organization, standard of the bus, and tour escort as more important attributes.

The differences in perceptions are stronger for the external tourism product attributes. The most important attributes for seniors include: safety, cleanliness, tourist attractions, reasonable prices, tourist information, and kindness toward foreigners. Some external tourism product attributes, such as opportunity to meet new people, cleanliness, tourist information, kindness toward foreigners, and handicapped facilities are perceived as being more important for seniors than for other tourists.

The main implication of this research for tourism product managers is that they have to focus on providing senior tourists with well suited packages adjusted to their needs. Thus, it is important to carefully plan tour's itinerary putting

emphasis on the variety of tourist attractions included in the program which are easily accessible for seniors as well as on good organization of the tour. Moreover, as tour guide is highly important for senior tourists, it is crucial to select knowledgeable, emphatic, and thoughtful guides with excellent communication skills.

Tourism managers should also plan communication strategy based on package holiday travelers' product preferences. Thus, information about well-planned tour itineraries, diversity of tourist attractions accessible for seniors, knowledgeable and friendly guides should be provided to senior travelers. It is also important to emphasize safety, cleanliness, and reasonable prices in communication message. Furthermore, as senior tourists attach high importance to social factors such as opportunity to meet new people, kindness toward foreigners, and possibility to communicate in English, tourist catalogues should include information with regard to those matters.

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