

15. THE POWER OF YOUTH TRAVEL

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Youth travel has become an increasingly important part of the global tourism industry in recent decades, as more young people have begun to travel more frequently and over greater distances. Youth travellers are recognised today as valuable visitors who can, not only make an important economic contribution to the places they visit, but also develop personal skills, social ties and cultural links in their quest for engaging experiences. Although the global youth travel industry is now more than 50 years old, it is only rather recently that the rapid growth of this market, combined with the increasing professionalization of the youth travel community, has drawn more attention to its potential. Youth travel is becoming more important in the global travel industry as a whole, and is stimulating the development of new market niches in areas such as specialized youth accommodation, work experience, volunteer travel, 'au pairing', language learning and educational travel [1].

Young people see travel as an essential part of their everyday lives, rather than just a brief escape from reality. This has far-reaching consequences for the places they visit. WYSE Travel Confederation research shows that: 1) young travellers often spend more than other tourists; 2) young travellers are likely to return and give more value to the destination over their lifetime; 3) young travellers are a growth market globally, while the spending power of older generations in Western economies may decline in the long term; 4) young people are less likely to be deterred from travelling by terrorism, political and civil unrest, disease or natural disasters; 5) young travellers are the pioneers who discover new destinations; 6) young travellers are at the cutting edge of using new technology; 7) young travellers gain cultural benefits from their travel, and contribute to the places they visit.

Because of the way they travel, the social and cultural consequences of hosting young people are becoming even more important than the economic effects. The added value to be extracted from youth travel lies in innovation, positioning, cultural links, international trade and exchange, social support, education, learning support for local communities, and so on [2].

Young people need to feel safe both en-route and at the destination. The price sensitivity of young people is important because their budget is relatively limited. In parallel, it appears some young people have a significant budget for certain recreational activities.

Out of the young people who book in advance, half of them make online bookings for air travel and 60% book accommodation services online also. A second way used by young people to book tourism services is through travel agencies. The main modes of transport used by young people are: bus, car and train, followed by air plane and other means of transportation. Young tourists under 26 years old prefer to travel by train, bus or with their own car or to hitchhike; and tourist over 26 years old like to travel by plane.

Recreational activities depend also on the specific of the tourist destination. For example, going to the beach is a traditional way to spend leisure time for those who visit Greece, Spain, Australia, India or Thailand; walks appeal to young people visiting Australia, South Africa, Japan, Egypt or Mexico; going clubbing is specific to destinations like Ireland, Australia and Thailand; and cultural events, visiting museums and historic objectives are the main activities carried out by young tourists visiting Japan, Egypt, England, Germany and China. India has the highest percentage of young volunteers, followed by Japan and South Africa. England and Sweden are favourite destinations for work and travel programmes, and the United States and Australia record a high number of young people who travel to study – because they are English-speaking countries, the study in a foreign country is facilitated.

REFERENCES

1. World Tourism Organization: Youth Travel Matters – Understanding the Global Phenomenon of Youth Travel. – Madrid, 2008. – P.10.
2. World Tourism Organization: The Power of Youth Travel. – Madrid, 2011. – P. 6.