

YOUNG EUROPEANS – A TOURISM OPPORTUNITY FOR THE CAPITAL CITY

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Abstract

Tourism has experienced a spectacular boom in recent years, with over one billion people spending at least one vacation in a country other than home. This is mainly due to the increase of the standard of living in more and more countries, the increase of the duration of the leave and of the leisure time in general, but also the decreasing tariffs of the tourist services and the easier access to the tourist resources. With the development of tourism, a form of it has become widespread, namely urban tourism. This is mainly due to people's growing interest in culture and knowledge of new places. The cities also offer a full range of attractions and leisure opportunities. Cities and tourism in these are very well promoted by the ministries and tourist offices in Europe, while Romania does not promote among the potential tourists the urban destinations of our country.

The present article is aimed at filling the gap related to the expectations of foreign tourists regarding Romania. The study is focused on young people, aged 25-35 years, active on the labor market, and interested in short, intense, city-break type of travelling. The results of the research are presented in the second part of the article.

Keywords: Tourism destination, urban tourism, city-breaks, young tourists, European tourists.

JEL Classification: L83, M30, O18

Introduction

Tourism has many forms, which in recent years have become more and more appreciated by consumers. In the last two decades the interest for urban tourism has increased considerably due to factors such as: the tourists' desire of diversification in terms of holidays, the desire to see as many attractions in a short time, the intense promotion of cities by tourism offices and last but not least, the existence of attractive tourist offers such as city breaks offered by travel agencies. (Kotler et al, 2006)

Cities present numerous opportunities for leisure and a well-developed infrastructure, which contains varied accommodation and food options, as well as an extensive public transport network. Thus the cities have the capacity to attract a whole series of tourists, each having a different travel motivation and other activities that they wish to carry out.

1. Literature review

The tourist destination can be defined as the place or geographical area in which a tourist decides to stop for a night of accommodation, for a longer period of time or as the main point of a consumer's vacation.

According to Holloway et al. (2006) "a tourist destination can be a resort or a city, a region of a country, a whole country or even a wider area around the globe." They also mention that the destination for cruises is the ship itself and also mentions that some tourist attractions themselves become destinations, such as the Disneyland amusement parks.

The tourist supply of a destination is given by its tourist potential, consisting of the anthropic and natural resources, but also of its infrastructure. The destination can be viewed both as a physical space, but also as an intangible entity that is represented by its inhabitants, their culture and lifestyle, their customs and traditions.

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All tourist destinations fall into two categories: either they are natural or man-made, but both types are managed to some extent by people, even parks and nature reserves are controlled more or less (Holloway et al, 2006).

The tourist destinations can be grouped according to several criteria, one of them being according to the geographical characteristics (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000):

1. Seaside destinations that include seaside resorts, beaches.
2. Rural destinations that refer to mountains and lakes, villages, vineyards, farms, parks and nature reserves.
3. Urban destinations that are represented by cities.

Another classification of tourist destinations is the following:

1. Classic destinations where visitors stay for a longer period of time, due to its charm given by the natural or cultural specificity. Some examples in this category include the seaside resorts San Sebastian or St Tropez.
2. Natural areas or natural parks containing a large number of species of flora and fauna. There are plenty of such places on the globe: from Yellowstone Park in the US to the Serengeti Reservation in South Africa.
3. Business destinations designed to attract tourists by organizing conferences, fairs and exhibitions, as well as through the facilities made available for business people. Some examples of this are Manchester, Glasgow and London, all from England.
4. Pause destinations that are located halfway between important destinations, or between the place of origin of the tourist and the final destination. These are the places where tourists can spend the night and admire the local attractions. Classic examples of this are represented by the French cities of Calais and Boulogne.
5. Destinations for short vacations are mostly represented by small cities of the province or capital cities such as Budapest, Vienna or Berlin. They attract tourists to the extent that they have tourist attractions and adequate infrastructure.

Any tourist destination needs attractions, facilities and an easy way to access it if it wants to attract many tourists. The greater the number of attractions a city has, the easier it is for travel agents to promote it. Obviously the attractiveness of a destination will also be influenced by the characteristics of the attractions: the fresh air, the beauty of the mountains, the beaches or the sea, the architecture of the buildings, the atmosphere of the cities, special places for fun or shopping.

Other aspects to consider when talking about destinations are their physical and psychological elements and the image and promotion of destinations. Destinations relate to both the physical aspects, attractions, arrangements, buildings, as well as the emotions they manage to generate, whether they generate reactions such as shock as in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Poland, or quiet and calm when they are visited, like the botanical gardens for example (Prylinska and Ratkowska, 2009). It should also be borne in mind that different destinations attract different groups of tourists. Thus, some tourists are attracted by the idea of crowding and a depressing atmosphere, while others prefer desert places. The destinations thus depend on the image that they have created over the years in the eyes of tourists. Therefore Paris or Verona are seen as designs for couples in love, while resorts in Austria are promoted for winter sports (Ashworth and Page, 2010).

Urban tourism is very important, being a form of tourism that can be practiced worldwide and has social, political and economic implications. Tourism brings economic benefits to cities, but those that depend on it benefit the least, while cities that have a varied economy make the most out of tourism. Tourism also needs varied and accessible tourism products that can be found in cities, but this does not imply vice versa.

The concept of urban tourism does not have a simple definition due to the fact that it is a complex phenomenon that includes several economic and social actions in the urban space, being an interaction

between the tourist and the host community. Urban tourism is in fact a mix between several forms of tourism such as cultural, historical, gastronomic, business, sports etc. This diversity arises precisely from the relationship between the tourist and the city and depends on how he or she uses the urban facilities.

Urban tourism has also benefited from the new approach in terms of tourism marketing, from mass marketing and tourism products made for masses of people, to niche marketing and flexible consumption. Thus short holidays or short breaks, events and shopping were promoted as a way to spend free time (Davidson and Cope, 2003).

In most cities, in the 21st century, urban tourism is characterized by the juxtaposition between the presence of international hotel chains such as Radisson or Sheraton, world-famous fast food chains such as KFC, McDonald's or Starbucks and local accommodation and food units, or regional.

The capitals of countries, such as London, have always been of interest to tourists, and the introduction of low-cost flights has attracted new market segments to both major European cities and cities in the province, encouraging short-term vacations such as city breaks.

Europe's popular cities such as Paris, Rome, Vienna, Amsterdam and London are now competing with cities such as Barcelona, Dublin, Prague, Stockholm, the latter combining the perfect elements for a getaway: good restaurants, impressive architecture, top museums, well-managed hotels and last but not least investments made by the authorities in infrastructure.

In addition to those in Europe, other cities in the world have become popular destinations for Europeans, due to low-cost flights. These include New York, Boston, Dubai, Las Vegas or Marrakech (Dunne, 2009).

One of the motivations of tourists when traveling is to discover the history, culture and heritage of some countries or regions, and most of these attractions are found in urbanized areas. For example small towns in the UK such as Oxford, Cambridge, York or Edinburgh depend on their history and the associations that tourists make between them and prominent figures in history or literature.

Larger cities such as Paris, London or New York can cope with a greater number of tourists, while smaller, but tourist-known cities such as Oxford suffer from too many visitors during the summer, with traffic jams, with buses full of tourists (Prylinska and Ratkowska, 2009). Other cities that are of particular interest to tourists are those that in the past were ports or those that are crossed by rivers and canals. Harbors that no longer bring economic benefits or economic value, have been transformed into recreational spaces for both visitors and locals, such an example being found in Stockholm. As for the cities crossed by the rivers we can only mention popular capitals such as Paris or London, but some smaller cities such as Bruges or Venice have created their popularity and attract an impressive number of tourists precisely because of the canals.

Each year, the European Union promotes two cities in Europe that have a high level of cultural activity. This has a significant impact on tourism, the respective cities attracting a lot of tourists that year, but also brings economic benefits, making investments in infrastructure.

The concept of city break is fairly new in the tourism market and there is no exact definition for it. The city break is actually a short vacation to a city (Dunne et al, 2010).

According to Travel Industry Dictionary the term city break has the following definition: *"a short-term tourist package to an important urban destination, which generally includes hotel reservations and often transportation."* (Travel Industry Dictionary, 2019).

In Romania, more and more travel agencies offer city break packages to different destinations in Europe such as Paris, London, Amsterdam, Rome, Istanbul, Prague and many other destinations.

In general, tourists prefer to visit cities for a short period of time, a city break type of holiday, which means spending 1-3 nights elsewhere than at home. Most tourists want to visit a city for such a short period because they consider that they will have been able to visit everything they wanted in a limited time (Iwanicki and Dlużewska, 2015).

City breaks are done throughout the year and there are no peak times of the season, as is the case when talking about other types of holidays. Urban tourism is less dependent on the weather, which is why tourists prefer more city breaks throughout the year, as opposed to a long summer vacation.

In *Towards an Understanding of International City Break Travel* (Dunne, Flanagan & Buckley, 2010), the authors write that a city break is a distinct type of vacation that involves a trip to a city, without overnight accommodation elsewhere.

There are several important factors that have led to the development of this type of tourism product in Europe:

- The increase in the number of low-cost flights, this leading to the existence of a much larger number of destinations at lower prices.
- The tendency of Europeans to make, in addition to a main holiday, more short trips.
- Changing the mentality of tourists, who now see in a city more than a transit point, a destination in its own right.
- Increased importance of the Internet in the process of choosing the tourist destination. Thanks to this, tourists can quickly book online hotels and air tickets.

Therefore there is a tendency to change consumer behavior, who no longer wants standard vacation packages, but rather wants a personalized experience, which can be easily achieved in cities. Urban tourism has gained increasing importance on the European tourist market, the activities that tourists can carry out being diverse. With the development of urban tourism, the agencies have started promoting city break packages that have become popular among Europeans (Iwanicki and Dlużewska, 2015).

2. Methodology

The questionnaire was completed by 174 respondents from 47 countries in Europe, over the months of February, March and April 2019. The questionnaire was administered online, within a network of social media, among 450 possible respondents. 152 people are aged between 25 and 35 years, 18 of them are under 25 years old and 5 under 18 years old. Of the 152 people who completed the questionnaire, 23 have Romanian nationality. The questionnaires filled in by people who did not meet the age group 25 to 35 years were not taken into consideration, along with the 23 people of Romanian nationality, in order to make the study relevant for the target group. Thus the results obtained and analyzed are for 129 young Europeans. Most respondents are from Poland (16), Macedonia (12), Albania (9), Greece (9) and Serbia (9). To make it easier to observe the distribution of respondents by geographical area, they were grouped in Eastern Europe (Belarus, Bulgaria, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary), Southern Europe (Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain), Western Europe (Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Holland), Northern Europe (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Sweden) and Transcontinental Europe and Asia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkey).

3. Results and discussion

The 129 people were questioned about the reasons for travel, the essentials for them when choosing a city, the factors that influence their decision, the activities they carry out in city breaks, the preferred mode of transport, the people they travel with, the amount of money they would allocate if they visited Bucharest.

Regarding the reasons they have when traveling more than half mentioned culture and visiting museums (79%), relaxation and rest (69%), visiting friends or relatives (65%) and fun (60%). A large number of people mentioned that they choose to spend a city break in a city with an educational purpose (46%). Fewer young people opted for gastronomy (23%), business (21%) and shopping (14%).

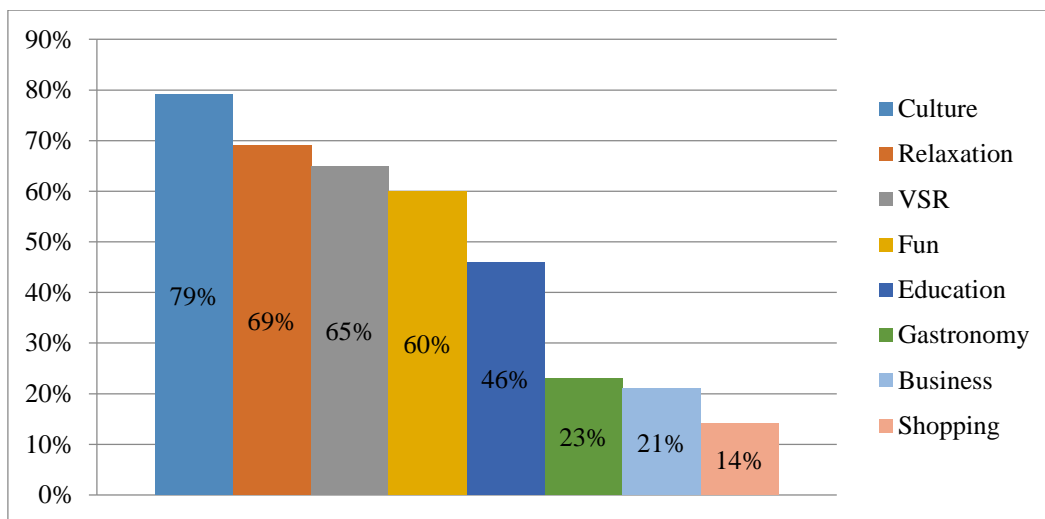


Figure no. 1: Travel motivation

Source: author, based on the results of the survey

When it comes to choosing a city as a weekend destination 38% prefer a popular city, recognized as a tourist destination, 26% want to visit a city less known by tourists, 25% look at the ratio between price and value offered, and 12% are influenced by the tourism magazines and the recommendations made by them. This suggests that young people are not influenced much by external factors and more than half would choose a less known destination or offer a value for money at the expense of a very well-known city.

Young Europeans consider important when choosing a city as a tourist destination its culture and traditions (45%), the atmosphere of the city (24%), museums and monuments (14%), its history (11%). Very low percentages consider it necessary for a tourist city to have top restaurants or cafes or shopping centers. And from this question we can see the young people's preference for culture, museums and history, while they do not neglect the atmosphere of the city.

All these factors are relatively important for foreign tourists, but what is to be highlighted is the atmosphere of the city, that plays a decisive role when young people choose a city as their destination, suggesting that they are looking for places full of energy, where they can feel that they are alive.

Regarding the activities that the respondents want to do during a city break, they can be seen in figure no 2.

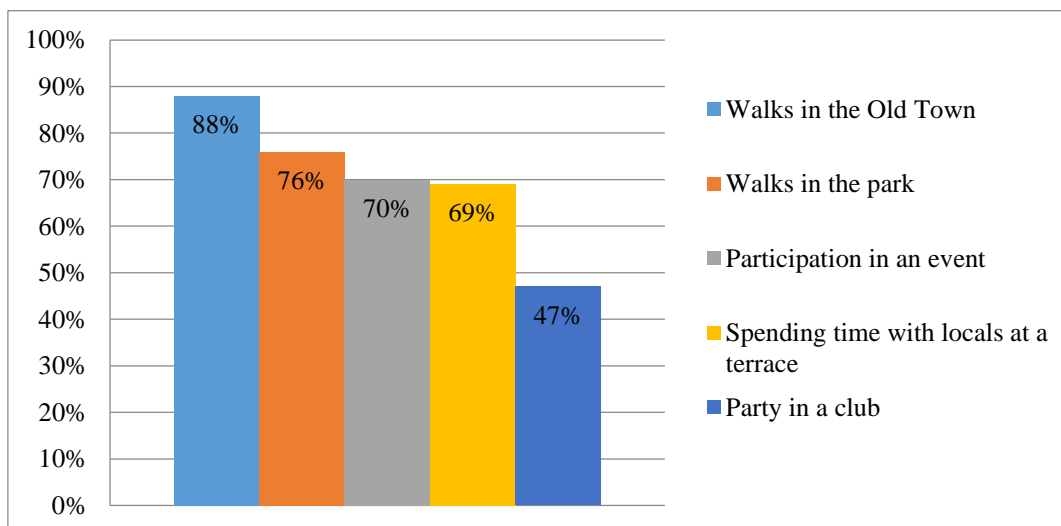


Figure no. 2: Activities preferred by young European tourists during a city break

Source: author, based on the results of the survey

It is also observed from this graph the preference of young Europeans for culture and history, as one of the activities they wish to carry out is walking in the historical center. Young people also want to relax and stroll through the park, they want the interaction with the locals and they would like to participate in cultural or sporting events. Less than half mentioned that they would like to spend the evening in the club.

Most young people prefer to discover cities by walking (71%), the rest choosing public transport (16%), cycling (7%) and using the car as a means of transport (6%).

Given that young people are very sociable, it is not surprising that most said they prefer to visit a tourist city with the group of friends (67%), followed by those traveling with a boyfriend or girlfriend/husband or wife (17%) and by those traveling alone (12%). There are thus a number of young people who want to explore new places on their own, without being bothered by other companies who might want to do other things. Also, this type of tourists interact a lot with the locals and prefer to stay in hostels where they can meet other people or couch surf. A percentage of less than 5% of the respondents said they are going on holiday with family or with a tourist group.

A penultimate question for young people refers to the budget they are willing to allocate when they go on a city break. Graph no 3 below shows the results, but they do not include the fare paid for transport to Bucharest.

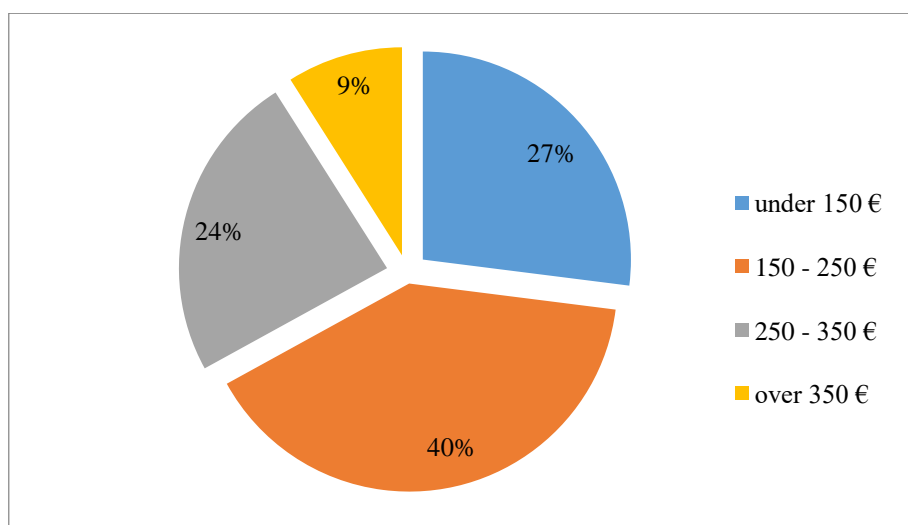


Figure no. 3: The allocated budget for a city break in Bucharest

Source: author, based on the results of the survey

Most young people have a budget between 150 and 250 euros for a city break in a city, followed by those who have a budget lower than 150 euros and those who would allocate between 250-350 euros. The fewest young people would spend more than 350 euros, which is understandable, since most of the young people are students or have low incomes compared to other age groups.

In the last question, the young people had to mention whether they would visit Bucharest in a city break and a surprising proportion said that YES (88%) and only 12% said they did NOT want this. The large number of young people who want to come to the capital can be explained by the fact that some of the people questioned interacted with Romanians who spoke to them about Bucharest, but also because they are open to new destinations.

Conclusions

The research of this article was aimed at highlighting the importance of urban tourism worldwide, what activities it involves and what are the factors that have led to an increase in the number of tourists and their interest for urban destinations. Europe remains the center of world tourism, and

major European capitals such as Paris, London, Amsterdam or Rome continue to attract large numbers of tourists. One tendency that Romania could take advantage of, and especially Bucharest, is the desire of tourists to discover other new places, besides destinations already overcrowded. Emerging destinations include Istanbul, Moscow, Barcelona, Dublin and smaller cities in Europe.

Following the growing desire of tourists to see new cities, travel agencies have created special packages such as city breaks, which include accommodation and transportation. The price of such packages is increasingly reduced due to the introduction of several low-cost flights in Europe.

Bucharest has the necessary tourist attractions and a very varied infrastructure, so that in the coming years it could become an important city break destination, especially for tourists who do not have high incomes and for those who have become bored with traditional destinations and prefer to try something new and different.

Bucharest could attract tourists through the anthropic attractions it holds, such as the Parliament Palace, the Arc de Triomphe and the museums of history, art and those that present the Romanian traditions and customs. Also Bucharest offers a wide range of food units and auxiliary services that can capture the attention of foreigners, especially due to lower prices compared to those in Western Europe.

As for the public that the tourism authorities should follow, it is made up of young people between the ages of 25 and 35, who want to explore, know the culture and the locals and improve their historical knowledge and beyond. This type of tourists is very open to new, prefer to walk and observe the architecture of buildings and have a budget allocated for a city break between 150 and 250 euros, which makes Bucharest a perfect destination for them. A single problem would be related to accommodation spaces, which are not made for groups of young people, but more for couples and business people.

Bucharest can become an important destination for young Europeans only if it manages to promote itself, and the message reaches the desired target audience. To do this, it is necessary to create special programs for young people and to promote them both in the online environment, but also through the interaction of foreigners with locals.

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