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Behaviour of Elderly People in Tourist Services Market

Summary

This article presents the behaviour of senior citizens — elderly people aged 60–75 in the market of tourist services. As shown in the report of *Future Traveller Tribes 2020*, it is the group which in the next few years will have a decisive influence on the development of the tourism market, due to demographic, social and economic changes. This article presents the findings of the study conducted in 2011 in 5 market segments, including the elderly people. They accounted for 19% of the population being surveyed in the research.

Key words: consumers, tourist sector, elderly people, tourist market

Introduction

One of the most important roles played by a modern man is a role of a consumer, and consumption in its broad meaning is a process, which is strictly related to a modern man.

The category of consumers-tourists, the participants of the tourist market, includes travellers who spend at least 24 hours outside the home. A tourist is „a person temporarily free of duties, who freely visits places away from home in order to experience change” [Przeclawski, 1997, p. 27].

A modern man feels a strong need for regaining energy, consumed through adverse living conditions at home and at work. For this reason the person undertakes tourist activity, travelling to places that can provide him the regeneration [Seweryn, 2007, p. 166].

With the civilization progress the importance of knowledge on consumer behaviour increases. The research of consumer behaviour in tourist services market is of particular importance, due to strong competition in this market, high volatility of consumer needs, constantly increasing buyers' expectations, increasing role of consumers in the market as well as expansion of factors influencing the purchasing decisions made by consumers.

Amadeus, a world leader in information solutions in tourist sector, together with a British consulting company Hantley Center Headlight Vision, in 2007 developed the report titled *Future Traveller Tribes 2020*, presenting forecasts concerning tourist services [Future..., 2007]. The report presented among others four groups of travellers, which until 2020 are likely to increase considerably according to social, economic and demographic trends [Future..., 2007]. Among consumer groups, apart from global families (international immigrants seeking better living conditions), global commuters (more and more people, taking advantage of decreasing travel costs and flexible working conditions, live and work in different countries), directors of multinational corporations (it is expected that the number of senior managers, working in companies conducting business in many countries, travellers of

Premium class, air taxis and private jets is going to increase) there emerges another group which is distinguished in the analyses — active seniors.

As emphasized in the study, the development of contemporary medicine results in the fact that people live longer, they are healthier and more active than previous generations. Active senior citizens will be experienced and confident consumers, and their travel destinations will be much diversified. Active seniors who are free of daily work-related duties will have the time to prepare for their journeys carefully, often gathering information in the Internet, and to plan their trips well in advance in order to take advantage of attractive offers.

The needs and expectations of these groups will have a significant impact on the services offered in the tourist market.

Consumers-tourists of the new era

In contemporary consumer society we may observe many changes and a diversity of factors, influencing the profile of a consumer of the new era [*Identyfikacja...*]:

- individualization of consumers and enormous social mobility — consumer expectations and habits undergo individualisation, and old class divisions and class loyalty fade;
- mobility of the population — with the advent of the common market population migration movements connected to exile, tourism and cross-border trade, ignore national boundaries;
- gender roles — stereotypes of masculinity and femininity no longer define to such an extent our expectations in relation to ourselves and the models imposed on us from outside;
- cultural communication — owing to the emergence of new information technologies we may observe that an individual may be guided by his or her individual cultural preferences and he or she no longer needs to be part of local or mass cultures;
- lack of time — many consumers lack the time to make informed consumer choices; more and more consumers are expected to seek and identify information before making a purchase;
- in families and households we observe the emergence of contrasting individual needs, desires and disproportionate aspirations;
- a fully conscious consumer does not exist — today's consumers are differentiated with regard to their consumer knowledge; we may distinguish consumers who are amateurs in the market of tourist services and consumers with a relatively high level of awareness of consumer rights;
- changing patterns of work — rising unemployment, temporary contracts, or alternative forms of employment result in the fact that many consumers and their households are struggling with the problem of limited income and social security;
- more leisure time — leisure industry is growing very quickly: people more and more frequently eat out, the popularity of various forms of physical activity increases;
- „second life” — virtual societies help to test products/ideas/services, which results in the fact that the risk related to introducing new goods into the market and purchasing them decreases.

Among the most important features of contemporary consumers-tourists we may distinguish [Żelazna, 2010, p. 77–78]:

- increase of spatial and social mobility,

- greater importance of leisure time,
- looking for new destinations of tourism exploration,
- increasing requirements in terms of quantity and quality of tourist offer,
- increasing awareness of consumer rights,
- changing patterns of tourists' behaviour and their decisions concerning the means and ways to meet their needs,
- tourists' interest in healthy lifestyle, youth, attractive appearance and active rest,
- preference for organic products,
- increase in the supply of new tourist products which enable to meet the needs of more and more diversified market segments (e.g. teenagers, seniors, singles, etc.),
- growing competitive struggle among entities offering tourism products.

Consumer behaviour as an object of scientific research has a long history. Pioneers in the field were V. Pareto, P.A. Samuelson and J. R. Hicks, neoclassic economists. The object of their observation was the behaviour of customers in the market, preference scales and the influence of various conditions on buyers' purchasing decisions [Smyczek, Sowa, 2005, p. 59].

The Polish term „zachowania konsumentów” derives from an American term „consumer behavior”, which generally defines consumer behaviour as the activity of the end user of tangible and intangible goods [Milczyńska-Kowalska, 2001, p. 118–119].

The behaviour of buyers and consumers of tourist services is perceived as „a combination of actions and activities aiming at satisfying their diverse needs through the purchase of tourist product according to the perceived preference system and actual financial resources” [Zelazna, 2010, p. 81].

Consumer choices are related to the risk which is connected with the lack of possibility to foresee the consequences of the decisions taken by them. The degree to which the consumer notices the risk of undertaken decisions impacts their behaviour in the market and in their own household.

Size of the risk perceived by the consumer is a function of many variables that affect its perception. The perceived risk may therefore rise or fall as a function of the features of goods and services, or the features of a purchasing situation or an individual consumer characteristics [Maciejewski, 2010, p. 60–65].

Shopping habits of elderly people in the tourist market

Senior citizens were one of five segments included in the research into consumer behaviour in the tourist services market¹. The group of elderly people (60–75 years old)

¹ The objective of the research is an attempt to identify behaviours in the tourist market among the following distinguished segments: single people, married people or people in relationships, people not having children, married people or people in a relationship who have schoolchildren, married people or people in a relationship who have grown-up children (over 18) who are still their dependents, who live and spend holidays with them and elderly people (aged 60–75). The study has been conducted with the application of CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) method, i.e. computer-assisted telephone interviews and interviews conducted with a PAPI (Paper&Pen Interviewing) method, i.e. direct interviews with the application of a paper version of a questionnaire, in July 2011. The study surveyed 645 adults in Poland (aged 18–75). The selection was quota sample.

accounted for 19% of all respondents. Within this segment there are people who are married or who are in a relationship, with no children (they do not have children or the children already live all by themselves). Single-person households were included in the group of singles.

This group was dominated by women — they accounted for 57%, while 43% were men. The people aged 60–75 surveyed in the study were greatly diversified in terms of their place of residence. The largest percentage (36%) are those living in cities with over 500 000 of inhabitants. Residents of cities with a total population of 101–500 000 accounted for 20% of the examined group, cities with a population of 21–100 000 — 22%, while the cities with a population up to 20 000 — 23%. Most of the elderly people (48%) rated their financial situation as good, 38% as average, 10% — very good, while 1% as rather poor. 3% of senior citizens refused to answer the question. Among the occupational group the highest proportion of older people (80%) were retirees/pensioners, 13% were people working full-time, 5% of respondents were self-employed, others worked part-time or they worked on the basis of a service contract/a contract for specific work.

The study shows that over the last three years almost 60% of elderly tourists travelled 2–4 times, 29% went for one trip in that time, 9% of respondents 5–6 times. 3% of the population in the last three years travelled 7 times and more.

Majority of the group of elderly people are loyal customers, because 43% of respondents use the services of the same travel agency. In turn, 28% of interviewees look for the travel agency which has the most attractive offer, while 15% use the travel agencies recommended by others. Only 5% of people always compare the offers in the Internet and choose the most attractive one for them.

Older people usually travel with a travel agency in the summer: 65% of the examined group gave such an answer. Trips out of season ranked second (37%), which may result from a greater amount of free time (retirement/ pension) and reluctance to spend holidays at the time of increased tourist traffic. Winter holidays (22%) were the least popular.

Older people mostly opt for holiday trips (74% of responses), 8% of respondents choose the season in which you can take advantage of cheaper offers, for 5% an important factor was limited tourist traffic, 3% because of children (most frequently grandchildren) travel during the summer holidays or winter holidays, 2% are employees of the education sector and use tourist services during their statutory holiday.

The vast majority of elderly people (80%) go with their partner for a trip organized by a travel agency for holiday or a long weekend. 12% of the examined group usually go alone, 8% with friends, 10% with the family (closer or more distant relatives), while 1% only with a child/ children.

The highest proportion of elderly people (72%) prefers practising passive tourism, following the idea of 3 x S (Sun, Sea and Sand). Touring tourism is chosen by 28%, and health tourism — 24%; 13% of respondents pointed to religious tourism in their responses, 12% — weekend tourism, while 8% — rural tourism (table 1). Automotive tourism had few supporters — 1% of respondents. The distribution of responses concerning the tourism practised at present by senior citizens was slightly different from the declared types of tourism practised by the population 3 years ago — table 1.

Table 1. Types of tourism preferred by elderly people — at present and three years ago (%)

Types of tourism	At present	3 years ago
Leisure	75	65
Touring	35	28
Qualified	5	4
Health	24	22
Religious	13	13
Automotive	1	1
Rural	8	4
Weekend	12	14

S o u r c e: The author's own work based on the report of the study.

The most commonly indicated reason for changing preferences concerning the selection of the type of tourism were health reasons, changing jobs, change of the place of residence, the change of financial situation and a new partner or husband/wife.

Among the elderly people the largest group were those who in 2010 spent at least a week holiday abroad (48% of respondents), 31% of the examined group went on a trip within the territory of the country, 18% rested both in the country and abroad; 3% of elderly people did not participate in such a trip. In 2011 the largest percentage (48%) of the examined group planned to spend at least a week abroad — table 2.

Table 2. Holiday destinations (at least a week) in 2010 and in 2011 — elderly people (%)

Holiday destinations	2010	2011
In the country	31	28
Abroad	48	48
In the country and abroad	18	17
No holiday	3	1
I do not know	0	7

S o u r c e: As above.

A coach is most preferred means of transport among the elderly when deciding to go on a trip or another tourist event in the country (38% of respondents). Every third respondent uses his/her own car, 19% go by train, and 7% by plane and 3% of respondents prefer other means of transport.

When ordering a trip abroad, the elderly people select a plane as the most favourable means of transport (68% of responses), 27% use a coach most frequently, 4% their own car, and 1% opt for a train or another means of transport.

During the holiday spent in the country most frequently (33% of responses) senior citizens use hotel accommodation; 21% of the people surveyed spend their holiday in guest-houses, 19% in holiday-houses, 15% use private (Bed and Breakfast) accommodation;

1% of responses point to campsites and 3% name other kinds of accommodation which are not listed above.

When ordering a trip abroad vast majority (87%) use hotel accommodation. 5% of the examined interviewees choose foreign guesthouses, 3% use private accommodation and holiday-houses, while 1% — campsites and hostels.

Also, in the study the authors tried to examine the way clients perceive travel agency and how they evaluate them.

As is clear from the study, the most important for older people when choosing a travel agency is a reputation and the opinion about the agency (51% of responses). For 41% of the respondents the reputation of an agency is important when purchasing a tourist service, but it is not a decisive factor when selecting an offer. Half of the respondents say that travel agencies offer a rather attractive and wide range of services, and 33% definitely say that offers are attractive and wide; 53% of people think that travel agencies rather adapt to individual needs of a customer and that they are rather flexible in price formation. More than half of the respondents are of the opinion that travel agencies can rather pride themselves on more and more attractive forms of promotion and attractive advertising materials, and 34% assigned very high scores to the services of travel agencies; 74% of respondents felt that the travel agencies can (definitely or rather) boast of attractive loyalty programmes; 55% rated the service of travel agencies as more and more professional and nice — table 3.

Table 3. Perception of travel agencies by tourists — elderly people (%)

Perception	Definitely no	Rather no	It's difficult to say	Rather yes	Definitely yes
At present, travel agencies have an attractive and wide offer	-	3	13	50	33
Travel agencies more and more frequently adapt their offer to individual consumer needs	-	3	18	53	27
Travel agencies are more and more flexible during price formation	2	5	19	42	33
Travel agencies have more and more interesting forms of promotion and attractive advertising materials	1	2	13	51	34
Travel agencies offer attractive loyalty programmes	-	2	24	43	31
Travel agency's service is more and more professional and nicer	-	3	9	55	33
Travel agencies respect consumer rights	3	6	18	59	14

Source: As above.

All in all, we can say that the evaluation of travel agencies carried out among senior citizens indicates the reliability of travel agencies and high quality of services offered by tourism businesses which are perceived by the older respondents as user-friendly.

One area of research concerned the motives of tourist trips. The most important reason for travel was exploring nature values; the next motive was visiting interesting places, and the third — the desire to improve fitness and health.

Among the six determinants of the selection of the vacation spot, distinguished for the purpose of the research, the most important turned out to be the price (55% of respondents ranked this factor first, 20% — second, and 7% as the third). Subsequently, there were: climatic conditions (18%, 18%, 16%), ease of travel (12%, 17%, 15%), accommodation (9%, 22%, 21%), distance from the place of residence (4%, 3%, 11%) and interesting monuments and museums (3%, 19%, 16%).

In the study the respondents pointed to the perceived risk when making a decision. It turned out that seniors are rather afraid of occurrence of various adverse situations that may arise during a tourist trip. The largest number of respondents fears the economic risk associated with the situation where the price paid is too high in relation to the actual quality of the trip (76% of responses), and that they will have to cover additional, unforeseen costs (73% of responses). Majority of respondents (72%) are afraid of the risk of inadequacy of the conditions of the place to the offer presented by the travel agency, and 70% of the possibility of inconvenience in the vacation spot (e.g. uncomfortable room, poor quality of service, bad food, etc.).

To summarize, we can say that although seniors evaluated the operations and offers presented by travel agencies very highly, most of them notice various kinds of risk when making a purchase of a travel service, and the risk is associated with both economic issues and issues related to the quality of service in the vacation spot.

It is worth noting that the vast majority (73%) of elderly people before making a choice of a tourist offer usually collects information from family and friends, and 57% look for information in the Internet.

The study also showed that elderly people tend to be more attached to tradition, as 41% of surveyed seniors responded. A small percentage of respondents (5%) accept the novelties, without the necessity of having time for consideration („I accept novelties, but I need a lot of time to think it over”).

Among the research issues we distinguished also an aspect of consumer awareness. Analysing the level of ecological behaviour of elderly people we should note that the greatest percentage (48%) believe that their holiday stay may be regarded as environmentally-friendly; 38% of respondents believe that when on holiday they definitely respect the natural environment, 9% of seniors responded that being on vacation they do not respect the natural environment. The majority of elderly people (87%) declared that during their tourist trip they do not throw litter, and 78% pay attention to the consumption of water and energy.

Unfortunately, most respondents do not know the rights and obligations of tourist services consumers. Almost every second respondent gave the answer „I do not know” when asked about the maximum time limit to file a complaint concerning the travel service in a travel agency; 38% of responses were incorrect statements, only 15% of respondents correctly answered that the period is 30 days.

Most respondents (74%) did not know the deadline for the travel agency to consider the complaint, of which 37% gave the answer „I do not know”, while 38% of responses were incorrect. Only 26% knew the correct term, which is 30 days.

The findings of the study clearly show that elderly people have a very low level of consumer awareness and therefore it appears to be necessary to improve consumer education on this issue, as the ignorance of the rights which the consumers have in the market of tourist services may cause many situations in which consumer, though dissatisfied with a tourist service, will not be able to assert their rights. Help in this regard may be obtained from such institutions such as: Urząd Ochrony Konkurencji i Konsumentów (Office of Competition and Consumer Protection), city/municipal Consumer Advocate, European Consumer Centre, as well as organizations such as: Stowarzyszenie Konsumentów Polskich (Association of Polish Consumers), Federacja Konsumentów (Consumer Federation), Polska Izba Turystyki (Polish Chamber of Tourism). You can also gain or improve your knowledge on consumer rights in the tourist service market, using interactive portals, e.g. www.dolceta.eu/polska or www.wieszjak.pl.

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Streszczenie

W artykule przedstawiono zachowania na rynku usług turystycznych seniorów, tj. osób starszych w wieku 60–75 lat, na podstawie wyników badania, które przeprowadzono w 2011 r. wśród 5 segmentów rynku, w tym osób starszych. Celem przeprowadzonego badania była próba identyfikacji zachowań na rynku usług turystycznych wśród wyodrębnionych segmentów: singli, osób będących w związku małżeńskim lub partnerskim nie mających dzieci, osób będących w związku małżeńskim lub partnerskim z dziećmi w wieku szkolnym, osób będących w związku małżeńskim lub partnerskim z dorosłymi dziećmi (od 18 roku życia) na utrzymaniu, z którymi mieszkają i wspólnie spędzają wakacje, osób starszych (w wieku 60–75 lat). Badanie zostało przeprowadzone metodą CATI (*Computer Assisted Telephone Interview*), czyli wywiadów telefonicznych wspomaganych komputerowo, oraz metodą PAPI (*Paper&Pen Interviewing*), tj. wywiadów bezpośrednich z wykorzystaniem papierowej wersji kwestionariusza, w lipcu 2011 r. Badanie zrealizowano na próbie 645 dorosłych mieszkańców

Polski (w wieku 18–75 lat). Dobór próby był kwotowy. Ludzie starsi stanowili 19% badanej populacji. Do tego segmentu zaliczono osoby będące w związku małżeńskim lub partnerskim, bez dzieci (w ogóle lub które już się usamodzielnily). Osoby stanowiące jednoosobowe gospodarstwa domowe ujęto w grupie singli.

Z przeprowadzonego badania wynika, że:

- w ciągu ostatnich 3 lat prawie 60% osób starszych wyjeżdżała turystycznie 2–4 razy, a 29% wyjechało w tym czasie jeden raz,
- 28% respondentów poszukuje biura, które ma najbardziej atrakcyjną ofertę, natomiast 15% przy wyborze oferty korzysta z biur poleconych przez innych,
- osoby starsze wybierają głównie wyjazdy wakacyjne (74% odpowiedzi), znakomita większość osób starszych (80%) na urlop lub długi weekend zorganizowany przez biuro podróży wyjeżdża z partnerem/partnerką,
- 72% respondentów preferuje uprawianie turystyki biernej, zgodnej z ideą turystyki 3 x S (*Sun, Sea, Sand* — słońce, morze, piasek),
- najczęściej wymienianym powodem zmiany preferencji dotyczących wyboru rodzaju turystyki były powody zdrowotne, zmiana pracy, zmiana miejsca zamieszkania, zmiana sytuacji materialnej oraz pojawienie się partnera/partnerki bądź męża/żony,
- 48% osób starszych w 2010 r. swój co najmniej tygodniowy urlop spędziło za granicą, 31% — w kraju, a 18% — zarówno w kraju, jak i za granicą,
- największe znaczenie dla osób starszych przy wyborze biura podróży ma renoma i opinia o biurze (51% odpowiedzi),
- 88% respondentów twierdzi, że biura turystyczne mają raczej lub zdecydowanie atrakcyjną i bogatą ofertę, 80% uważa, że biura podróży coraz częściej dostosowują oferty do indywidualnych potrzeb klienta, 85% — że biura mają coraz ciekawsze formy promocji, atrakcyjne materiały reklamowe, 75% — że biura są coraz bardziej elastyczne przy kształtowaniu cen, 74% — że biura oferują atrakcyjne programy lojalnościowe, 88% — że obsługa biur podróży jest coraz bardziej profesjonalna i miła, a 73% — że biura respektują prawa konsumentów (dokonana przez osoby starsze ocena działalności biur podróży wskazuje na rzetelność biur podróży oraz wysoki poziom jakości usług oferowanych przez przedsiębiorstwa turystyczne, które są postrzegane przez starszych respondentów jako przyjazne klientowi),
- wśród motywów wyjazdów turystycznych najważniejszym motywem okazało się poznawanie walorów przyrodniczych, a następnie zwiedzanie ciekawych miejsc oraz chęć poprawienia kondycji, zdrowia,
- wśród sześciu głównych determinant wyboru miejsca wypoczynku, wyodrębnionych na potrzeby badania, zdecydowanie najważniejszą okazała się cena, a następnie warunki klimatyczne, łatwość dojazdu, warunki zakwaterowania, odległość od miejsca zamieszkania oraz obecność ciekawych obiektów zabytkowych i muzealnych,
- osoby starsze raczej obawiają się wystąpienia różnego rodzaju niekorzystnych sytuacji, które mogą zaistnieć w trakcie wyjazdu turystycznego, a najbardziej ryzyka ekonomicznego, związane z możliwością wystąpienia sytuacji, że zapłacona cena okaże się zbyt wysoka w stosunku do faktycznej jakości wycieczki oraz że pojawią się dodatkowe, nieprzewidziane koszty,
- większość osób starszych przed dokonaniem wyboru oferty turystycznej zazwyczaj zbiera o niej informacje od rodziny czy znajomych, poszukuje informacji w Internecie,
- większość respondentów nie zna praw i obowiązków konsumentów usług turystycznych.

Wyniki badania jasno pokazują, że osoby starsze mają bardzo niski poziom świadomości konsumenckiej i dlatego nieodzowna wydaje się konieczność wzmocnienia edukacji konsumenckiej w tej kwestii, ponieważ nieznajomość praw przysługujących konsumentom na rynku usług turystycznych

może powodować wiele sytuacji, w których konsument, choć niezadowolony z usługi turystycznej, nie będzie umiał dochodzić swoich praw.

Słowa kluczowe: konsumenci, sektor turystyczny, ludzie starsi, rynek usług turystycznych

Резюме

Статья представляет поведение пожилых граждан, людей в возрасте 60–75 лет, на рынке туристских услуг. Как на это указывает отчет *Future Traveller Tribes 2020*, это группа, которая в течение нескольких ближайших лет будет оказывать решающее влияние на развитие рынка туризма, из-за демографических, социальных и экономических преобразований. Статья представляет результаты исследования, проведенного в 2011 г. в 5 сегментах рынка, включая пожилых людей. Они представляют 19% популяции, опрошенной по ходу исследования.

Ключевые слова: потребители, туристский сектор, пожилые люди, туристский рынок