

Young people's considerations regarding the fidelity of tourism products consumption

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Abstract. *In order to satisfy, maintain and fidelize the consumers, considering the multitude of users on the tourism market, it is necessary to implement a relational marketing paradigm, thus offering products that permanently meet the needs and dynamic wishes of tourists, and so, sustaining a certain chain of supply – delivery based on values, and respecting the interests and objectives of the partners. In order to identify the elements/components of the tourism products, towards who the respondents are faithful, and in order to learn the constant aspects in making the decisions of buying and consuming, a quantitative marketing research has been conducted on a sample of 165 people, aged between 18 and 24 years old.*

Keywords: relationship marketing, fidelity, young people.

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REL Classification: 14F, 14G.

Introduction

Given that the economic agents offer to consumers a wide range of options regarding the tourism consumption, the success of those who work in this domain depends in a significant proportion on a frame that allows to reorganize the tourism activities, and so, the relationship with the client, to be in a central position. In this paradigm of modern marketing, relational marketing accentuates the centre role of the relations and networks in interacting with the client – supplier and in building relationships, and also from the emergence of relations of the new business domains (Lindgreen and Wynstra, 2005, Möller and Svahn, 2009, Ulaga, 2003, quote from Möller, 2013, p. 325).

Conceptual framework

Within the tourism strategies and partnerships, in order to maximize the client value throughout the relationship with the company and with the suppliers in the value chain of the tourism product that is offered in order to consolidate the value for clients, it is important to maintain the collaboration between the client and supplier. Still, in order to ensure the competition of the tourism destination, the social-economic space, all the agents have the same common final objective – the sustained destination development, and so it is necessary to harmonize as much as possible, all the stakeholders, regardless if between them economic relationships of competition or collaboration are established. These policy measures are strengthened under the guidance of a vision and superior understanding of client or partner, and are consistent with the objective of relationship marketing.

According to Grönroos, relationship marketing is “to identify, establish, improve and, where necessary, end relationships with customers and other stakeholders in terms of profit so that the objectives of all parties to be established under interchange and fulfillment of promises” (Grönroos, 1994, cited in Egan, 2011, p. 38).

For the collaboration between operators at a destination level, it is necessary that they consider meaningful use of monetary resources, time, energy conditions and availability tourists, to provide a positive and memorable experience, and the development of new organizational structures to a company level (Gruen, 2005, cited in Pop, 2006, p. 35). Thus, “the competition” on these resources should also propose new approaches, where they should create new tourism experiences that should become richer by offering diverse activities, belonging to different domains/areas of interest (being offered by different entities).

Creating attachment to the tourism service company can have positive effects for all companies or brands that are in the value chain at both attitudinal and behavioral level (e.g., accommodation, transportation, recreation, treatment, counseling etc.), carrying several stages (from fidelity to loyalty) and can reach

exclusivity in the exchange relations between market actors (Pop, 2005, quote from Pop, 2006, p. 37).

Amongst the objectives of a company that uses relationship marketing as a philosophy of economic activities, those activities/measures that are necessary to fidelize the client can be found, cultivating a long term connection, which follows in the end to obtain attachment from the client (Pop, 2006, p. 39). Customer fidelization represents an assembly of all the measures taken by the company to guide the behavioral intentions in a positive manner, in relation to current and potential customers with a supplier and its offer, relative to its performance to achieve stabilization and development companies' relationships with buyers (Bruhn, 2001, cited in Pop and Petrescu, 2008, p. 111). Therefore, "coagulating the universe of destination's brands" with all the services implemented in multiple, satisfying means of leisure involves focusing all efforts of the companies at this level to honouring the standards set by the consumer and to creating and managing relationships.

Methodological framework

While knowing that a complex tourism product is not owned by a single company, actually representing the collaboration between different partners, it has been considered important to identify those elements that, due to consumer satisfaction or other reasons that imply repeated choice, remain constant in time in buying or/and consuming a product. Thus, a quantitative marketing research has been conducted, on a sample of 165 people, aged between 18-24, in order to know the elements of the tourism product to which respondents are loyal (e.g.: accommodation, transportation, food services, leisure, treatment etc.), to identify the constant elements in making buying and consumption decisions.

Of all respondents, 75.2% are female and 24.8% are male; 37% come from Muntenia, 36.4% from Bucharest, 10.9% of respondents came from Moldova, 9.7% from Oltenia, 3.6% in Dobrogea, 1.2% and 0.6% of Transilvania and 0.6% from Banat-Crişana and Maramureş.

In terms of monthly income, 60.6% had an income below 1,000 lei, 28.5% have income between 1000 to 1999 lei, 6.7% had an income between 2000 to 2999 lei and 4.2% have an income over 3,000 lei.

Research results

A first objective of the research was to determinate the way young people organize and perform their holiday, as well as the duration, type, frequency and purpose of the holiday. While only 14.5% of the respondents organize only one

holiday for themselves and 39.4% two of them, most of the respondents (46.5%) have usually more holidays in one year. Most frequently the holidays last up to one week (48.5%), short holidays of one or two days being also a significant choice for young people (41.2%), while only 10.3% have holidays that last more than 7 days. This fact offers information regarding the tourism product consumption, due to the fact that the time and frequency of the holiday influences the intensity and complexity of the tourism experience, through the activities that they held during the holiday and their duration. The first two types of tourism practiced by the respondents are the seaside tourism (27%) and the mountain-based tourism (23.9%), least of the practiced ones being the rural tourism (3.1%), urban (2.3%) and balneotherapy tourism (0.8%). Most of the respondents plan their holidays a few weeks ahead (53.3%) and only 21.8% spend a few days with the planning process. Still, 24.2% of those plan their holidays a few months ahead, fact that shows a high volume of time and energy spent for the research and evaluation stages of the options they have during the buying decision process. While most of the respondents travel with their friends (63.6%) and 34.5% with their families, only 1.2% of these travel alone. All the auxiliary information of the research process has the purpose of describing the general conditions of young people's travelling, as a starting point in the final evaluation of the selection process and the tourism consumption.

Another objective has been to identify the constant elements in the choice of tourism products. Thus, it has been shown that a constant choice mostly refers to elements regarding consumers (like a certain timeframe, a certain type of tourism and others); mainly choosing a certain hotel/restaurant/transportation firm records 2% of the answers and choosing a tourism/tour-operator records 9% of the answers (Table 1).

Therefore, young people's fidelity towards the partners in the value chain of tourism products is significantly shown. Constant elements in young people's holidays are mostly highlighted by choosing a certain timeframe of the destination (27%), a certain destination (23%) a certain type of tourism (22%), followed by choosing certain types of activities they plan to do during the trip (17%).

Table 1. Constant elements in choosing the tourism products, according to the respondents

	% of total column
Always choosing a certain agency of tourism/a tour-operator	8.9
Always choosing a certain destination	23
Always choosing a certain type of tourism, according to their destination	22
Always choosing a certain timeframe, according to their destination	27
Always choosing a certain hotel/restaurant/transportation firm	1.6
Always choosing certain activities, according to their destination	17
Total	100

Source: statistical survey conducted by the authors.

In addition, important for the research purpose has been to identify the offer of a tourism agency that is consistent with the respondents' needs, the most important elements indicating, according to the respondents, the facilitation of their access to certain destinations/tourism attractions (36% of the answers), the quality of their accommodation (30%) and the variety of recreational possibilities (28%) – appropriate elements of tourism services suppliers at the destination level, which, usually, the agency aligns and guarantees (Table 2). It is important to highlight the necessity of implementing relationship marketing, through the fact that those aspects that count mostly to the consumer, regarding the offer, are those which can be developed only by collaborating with suppliers/partners.

Table 2. *Elements of the offer corresponding to the needs of respondents*

	% of total column
Variety of recreation	27.9
Quality of the accommodation	29.7
Facilitating access to certain destinations/attractions	35.8
Assistance throughout the journey	2.4
Safety	3.6
Others	0.6
Total	100

Source: statistical survey conducted by the authors.

Regarding the fidelity towards a tourism destination, most of the respondents who mentioned that they have visited a destination more than 5 times consecutively during 5 years (60% of the respondents), think of a seaside destination (29% of the total of the sample), or of a mountain destination (16.3%). Still, all the respondents who have visited a certain destination more than 5 times consecutively during 5 years, have also visited other destinations of the same kind (in which they have practiced the same type of tourism), most of them making the same kind of voyages 2-3 times (33% of the total respondents). The conditions in which the respondents would return to the same location are various, such as: new attractions, group circumstances, accessibility over other destinations, keeping the environment and the quality/price ratio, habit, permanent modification of the offered services, including new services like wellness etc.

In contrast to the tourism destination, 85,4% of the respondents indicate the inexistence of a hotel or other accommodation where they stayed at least 5 times in a 5 year consecutive timeframe, fact that shows a low degree of fidelity towards this kind of tourism services. Also, there has been noticed that auxiliary recreational activities have contributed, in conjunction, to a very great extent, to a great extent and indifferent, 79.5% of the choice (Table 3).

Table 3. Percentage in which the auxiliary activities contribute to the choice of the hotel

	% of total column
Very small extent	4.8
Small extent	15.8
Indifferent	40
Largely	34.5
Very great extent	4.8
Total	100

Source: statistical survey conducted by the authors

Considering accommodation services, food, transportation, entertainment etc., parts of integrated experiences, respondents were asked to give importance to each category in influencing the total experience. Thus influencing the utmost satisfaction experience are accommodation services (with an average of 4.34 on a scale from 1 to 5) – 91.5% of respondents considering this to a large and very large extent – and food services (4.06) – 84.7% of respondents considering this to a large and very large extent (Table 4). Surprisingly, the lowest score was attributed to the recreational services (with an average of 3.72), even though the diversity of recreational services has recorded a significant percentage within the offer desired by the respondents.

Table 4. Contribution to the satisfaction/dissatisfaction total travel experience

	% of total column				
	Transportation services	Accommodation services	Food services	Recreational services	Tourism agencies
Very small extent	2.4	0.6	0.6	1.2	3.6
Small extent	17.6	1.2	4.9	3.6	6.1
Indifferent	26.1	6.7	9.8	29.7	30.9
Largely	46.1	46.7	57.3	53.3	40
Very great extent	7.9	44.8	27.4	12.1	19.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: statistical survey conducted by the authors.

According to the respondents, it was also important for the proposed purpose to identify those elements that would determinate the disruption of the collaboration with the 3 types of tourism services entities that have been studied (tourism agency, destination, hotel). There are elements which respondents consider unacceptable regarding the collaboration with a tourism agency like (Table 5): unreliability (30.3%) and not respecting promises (25.2%), followed by insecurity (13.1%). Regarding the experience in a tourism destination, there were considered as unacceptable the lack of leisure services (25%), the insecurity (19.4%) and the unfavorable ambiance (17.4%), and regarding the relationship with the hotel, they considered the unfavorable ambiance (22.8%), the insecurity (20.8%) and the unreliability (17.2%).

Table 5. *Conditions whose failure could lead to abandonment of certain categories of services*
% of total column

	Tourism Agency	Destination	Hotel
Unreliability	30.3	6.9	18.1
Limited offer	16.1	11.8	12.7
Not respecting promises	25.2	6.9	17.9
Lack of the guide	7.3	12	-
Unfavorable ambiance	4.1	17.4	22.8
Insecurity	13.1	19.4	20.8
Lack of leisure services	3.9	25	7.7
Total	100	100	100

Source: statistical survey conducted by the authors.

In the end, 70% of the respondents have declared that they are not loyal to a certain agency that offers tourism products. Although the respondents consider that accommodation services can influence mostly the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of the tourism experience, it shows that the level of fidelity towards an accommodation unit is the lowest (2%) – Table 6.

Table 6. *Fidelity towards companies that have different tourism services*
% of total column

Transportation	11.2
Hotel/Hotel chain	1.8
Restaurant/ Restaurant Chain	8.8
Tourism agency	7.6
None	70.6
Total	100

Source: statistical survey conducted by the authors.

This can be explained by different factors, including the fact that the accommodation, food or transport units etc. do not respect the criteria required or expected by this segment (young people), the undifferentiated nature of companies from the desired destinations, the tourists' desire to live new experiences and meet new destinations.

Limits

The services categories studied closely during this research mostly refer to the primary services that are requested by the consumers, namely the accommodation (hotels) and distribution (tourism agency). In addition, for a clear and complete view, the authors consider it is necessary to perform an extensive research, also considering the other types of services (food, transportation, leisure, cultural services, treatment services and others), that, for a certain type of destination, are essential in making a choice. Also, in order to emphasize the complex phenomenon of fidelity, it is necessary to view it from a multi-angle perspective, i.e. studies from the tourism company's point of view and also from the perspective of other segments of consumers.

Conclusions

The differences and complexity of the tourism products towards the goods, in general, and services, by means of a large scale of needs and desires, determines the specificity of certain marketing phenomena, including the fidelity towards a tourism company. Although, generally, the satisfaction is the basis of fidelity, in the case of the tourism phenomenon, accomplishing all the desired or imposed criteria of the potential consumers, does not lead to a repeated buying action of a certain product or service. Facts like the desire of living new experiences, learning new things or spending the leisure time in a way that expresses one's personality by new means, can lead to indicating new situations where consumer satisfaction could not lead to repeating the buying act. Even though, the marketing specialist should consider the characteristics whose lack of fulfillment can lead to relinquishing certain service categories, such as:

- For a tourism agency: unreliability and not respecting promises.
- For a destination: insecurity and unfavorable ambiance.
- For a hotel: unfavorable ambiance and insecurity.

While for a tourism agency and for a destination, the conditions are those expected by the authors, in the case of a hotel, the small percentage of the element "lack of entertainment services" towards giving up the accommodation unit (7.7%) can be explained by the general habit of the young people, which is mostly passive. The lack of fidelity towards accommodation, transportation, food and entertainment is relevant and shown by the respondents' answers, constant elements of the young people's voyages referring mostly to the timeframe of the trip, destination, and type of tourism. These results do not discourage the relationship marketing perspective in tourism, on the contrary, it accentuates the necessity of insuring the competitiveness, by the collaboration between economic agents in the tourism, at the level of a destination, for a better knowledge of the consumer and for offering targeted products according to their dynamic needs.

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