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Adventure Tourism: Understanding the Millennial Traveler

Advisor: José Crespo de Carvalho

Student: Nikola Mladenovic

Student Number: 3000

E-mail: 26289@novasbe.pt

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to review the current trends in tourism industry and travel behavior and preferences of Millennials or Generation Y in relation to traveling, and more specifically, adventure travel segment. Furthermore, the obtained data is compared to a recent research on adventure travel tour operators' perception of Millennials and their travel habits and preferences, in order to determine whether or not these companies understand their customer. The results indicate that the adventure travel tour operators generally understand Millennials, however, they need to stay up to date with the latest technological and social media trends.

Keywords: Millennials, tourism, adventure travel, tour operators

1. Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the biggest industries today and of an extreme importance for the world's economy. Tourism provides millions of jobs around the world and is often the main economic driver in the less developed countries. Current projections indicate that the tourism industry will only continue to grow in the future.

While the mass tourism is on the rise, consumer are also increasingly seeking more unique and meaningful travel experiences, according to Taleb Rifai, the Secretary General of World Tourism Organization (World Tourism Organization 2014). This also explains why adventure tourism is one of the most popular and growing tourism segments (World Tourism Organization 2014).

The data also indicates that the millennial generation is presently the largest consumer segment in tourism industry, which will drive its growth in the years to come. Even though

many claim to understand who Millennials are and what they really want, this research will not only attempt to analyze the latest travel habits and preferences of Millennials but also compare this data to a recent research on adventure travel tour operators/travel agencies' perception of Millennials' travel habits and preferences. Therefore, another goal of this research is to determine whether or not the adventure travel tour operators are ready to meet the needs of Millennials, and if not, offer some possible useful suggestions and strategies for improvement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tourism Industry Through History

In order to understand better the current situation in tourism industry in relation to millennial generation, it is first of all important to understand what tourism exactly is and what were some of the characteristics of tourism industry in the past. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2010), the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism defines tourism as “a social, cultural and economic phenomenon, which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure” (World Tourism Organization 2008). Geoffrey Bird (2012) further explains tourism as “a complex set of industries including accommodation, recreation, and entertainment, food and beverage services, transportation, and travel services. It encompasses domestic, inbound, and outbound travel for business, leisure, or other purposes” (Bird et al. 2012, 2).

Throughout the history, only the members of the royal families and the upper class travelled

for leisure. However, in the 19th century tourism for the first time becomes business. Thomas Cook opened the first travel agency for leisure in 1841, devised to “help Britons improve their lives by seeing the world and participating in the temperance movement” (Bird et al. 2012, 3). In 1845, Thomas Cook already organized his first railway trip to Liverpool from Leicester, Nottingham and Derby and created his first travel-related publication – a handbook to accompany the trip (Thomas Cook 2017).

From there, tourism continued to grow due to popularity of rail travel as well as technological developments in the automobile industry. However, many tie the start of the modern tourism industry with the first commercial air flights in 1952 from London, England, to Johannesburg, South Africa and Colombo, Sri Lanka and “the dawn on the jet age” (Bird et al. 2012, 4). In the years that followed, the world became accessible to a lot larger number of people. The number of travel agencies increased, and thus, the competitiveness increased as well, resulting in more new destinations and more holiday options. Essentially, the travel industry started moving towards mass tourism (Gyr 2010).

Another milestone in the development of the tourism was the arrival of the Internet. Just like it revolutionized pretty much every industry, it also transformed travel industry forever.

“Through the 2000s, online travel bookings grew exponentially, and by 2014 global leader Expedia has expanded to include brands such as Hotels.com, the Hotwire Group, trivago, and Expedia CruiseShip Centers, earning revenues of over \$4.7 billion (Bird et al. 2012, 4). One of the consequences of the Internet and these technological developments is that people lost a need to visit travel agencies in person. Today, people can do everything online – from booking a flight or a hotel room, to choosing the best options for eating out.

2.2. Adventure Tourism

Since the focus of this research is a specific segment of tourism industry - adventure tourism - it is important to define what exactly adventure tourism is and what kind of activities or

experiences it includes.

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) define adventure tourism as “a trip that includes at least two of the following three elements: physical activity, natural environment, and cultural immersion. Adventure Tourism can be domestic or international, and like all travel, it must include an overnight stay, but not last longer than one year” (World Tourism Organization 2014, 10). “Adventure tourism can also be defined by what is not - mass tourism”, since unlike mass tourism it does not rely on “the economies of scale and replication of standardized products,” that often involve large-ship cruises, bus tours, visits to theme parks and “sun and sand” package vacations, with little or no cultural immersion and education (World Tourism Organization 2014). On the contrary, as stated in the first definition, adventure tourism encourages sustainable practices and gives tourists a chance to have a more authentic experience, to involve themselves in a physical activity, enjoy the nature but also experience first-hand the life and culture of the local communities.

When it comes to types of adventure tourism and the activities it includes, the two main categories of adventure activities are hard adventure and soft adventure (World Tourism Organization 2014). The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), classifies adventure activities as following: Soft Adventure (archeological expedition, backpacking, birdwatching, camping, canoeing, eco-tourism, educational programs, environmentally sustainable activities, fishing/fly-fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, kayaking-see/whitewater, orienteering, rafting, research expeditions, safaris, sailing, scuba diving, snorkeling, skiing/snowboarding, surfing, and volunteer tourism; Hard Adventure (caving, climbing-mountain/rock/ice, trekking); and Other (attending local festivals/fairs, cruise, cultural activities, getting to know the locals, learning a new language, walking tours, visiting friends/family, visiting historical sites) (World Tourism Organization 2014, 12).

2.3. Adventure Tourist

According to the 2013 Adventure Tourism Market Study the average adventure traveler is a 36 year-old single male with a university degree and \$46,800 average yearly income. The same study found that males comprise 57% and females 43% of adventure travelers. 71% of these travelers have a valid passport. They spend about 10 days and \$947 on average per trip, without transportation costs and equipment (Adventure Travel Trade Association 2013).

Compared to non-adventure travelers, adventure travelers tend to plan their trips ahead of time. In fact, 68% of them plan their trips four or fewer months in advance (Adventure Travel Trade Association 2013). While preparing for the trip, 69% of adventure travelers rely on the Internet and online research as their primary source of information (Adventure Travel Trade Association 2013). However, interestingly enough, the same study found that even though adventure travelers do not rely on travel agents and travel programs as their primary source of information, and 56% of them prefer to organize their adventure activities by themselves, they are “more likely than non-adventure travelers to use professional services” (Adventure Travel Trade Association 2013).

The 2017 research conducted by East Carolina University, the Adventure Travel Trade Association and the Outside magazine on Adventure Traveler, found that travelers are today focused on “being in a natural environment, learning, and meaningful experiences” (Viren, Murray and Vogt 2017). The top 5 motivations for adventure travel according to the same study are: transformation, expanded worldview, learning, nature & discovery, and mental health (Viren, Murray and Vogt 2017). Adventure travelers today most associate hiking, kayaking, rafting, backpacking and trekking with ‘adventure’, and list New Zealand, Australia and South America as top 3 destinations they would like to visit in the future (Viren, Murray and Vogt 2017).

2.4. Generation Theory

Sociologically, a generation refers to “a cohort of people born within a similar span of time (15 years at the upper end) who share a comparable age and life stage and who were shaped by a particular span of time (events, trends and developments)” (McCrindle 2010). The Generational Theory was introduced by Karl Mannheim in the essay, “The Problem of Generations,” where he argues that the world views of a specific generation are swayed by major global events that occurred during their formative years of life (Benckendorff, Moscardo and Pendergast 2010). Furthermore, William Strauss and Neil Howe agree that “generations are shaped by a particular span of time: A generation is a group of people who share a time and space in history that lends them a collective persona” (McCrindle 2010). Finally, McCrindle (2010) concludes that a generation consists of “a group of people born in the same era, shaped by the same times and influenced by the same social markers - in other words, a cohort united by age and life stage, conditions and technology, events and experiences”(McCrindle 2010).

2.5. Millennial or Generation Y

Since this research is focused on Millennials and their travel habits, it is important to define some of the major characteristics of this generation.

The Millennial generation, also known as generation Y, is a section of population roughly born between 1980 and 2000. Members of this generation are also the first real digital natives since they were born during the Information Age (Beckendorff, Moscardo and Pendergast 2010). Furthermore, “the simultaneous alignment of Generation Y and The Information Age has had an enormous impact, creating a larger than usual generation gap – or values and character-trait difference – between previous generations and the Y Generation, a gap accentuated by what is now recognized as the most significant shift in our society to date” (Beckendorff, Moscardo and Pendergast 2010).

According to Kathryn Tyler (2007), “Generation Y is tech savvy and is the first generation to

use email, instant messaging, and cell phones since childhood” (Tyler 2007). Thus, this generation is the one that is most comfortable with technology and often prefers digital communication over face-to-face. They are also good multitaskers who require quick access to information and have a low tolerance for delays (Beckendorff, Moscardo and Pendergast 2010). Additionally, they are achievement oriented, quite individualistic but also very creative and innovative (Loretto 2017). Carol Hymowitz further claims that the Millennials are quite pragmatic and more optimistic and idealistic than some of the other generations (Hymowitz 2007).

2.6. Motivation Theories

Motivation theories will be used a theoretical framework for further analysis of the travel habits and preferences of millennial generation. Understanding the motivation behind the decision to travel and behavior during the trip is essential for tour operators and travel agencies when designing and marketing their products and services. Motivation theories will be used to better explain particular travel preferences of millennial generation as consumers in relation to adventure travel tour operators and tour agencies. After all, tourist motivation is considered “a critical variable and a driving force behind tourist behavior” according to Crompton (Hsu and Huang 2008).

2.6.1. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Probably the most influential motivation theory in sociology and social psychology, and widely used in tourism research is Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory. Abraham Maslow essentially claims that all human needs can be classified into 5 main categories: biological/psychological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and finally, self-actualization personal growth and fulfillment (Hsu and Huang 2008). The idea of this theory is that a human being does not feel a specific need before the previous one on this “pyramid of needs” has been satisfied. Therefore, a person cannot reach a self-

actualization level, before the needs for esteem (achievement, reputation), belongingness (family, relationships), safety (protection, stability), and basic life needs (air, food, drink, shelter, sleep, sex), have been satisfied, in that order (Hsu and Huang 2008). According to Maslow himself, there are exceptions to this rule, however, and one need does not need to be fulfilled 100% before the next one appears (Hsu and Huang 2008).

Applying Maslow's hierarchy of needs to tourism industry, Pearce (1982) found that people are attracted to traveling by the opportunity to fulfill, in following order, self-actualization, love and belongingness, and psychological needs. On the other hand, the same author found that people are discouraged to travel due to the fear of inability to satisfy the needs of safety, psychological, love and belongingness and self-actualization, in that order (Pearce 1982).

2.6.2. Travel Career Ladder (TCL) and Travel Career Patterns (TCP) Models

The two models, TCL and TCP that directly arise from application of Maslow hierarchy of needs to tourism industry may also be used in order to better understand and predict the behavior of millennial generation in relation to adventure travel.

The TCL model is based upon conceptualization of psychological maturation towards a goal of self-actualization according to Chris Ryan (Hsu and Huang 2008). Similarly to Maslow hierarchy of needs, traveller's needs or motivation are classified in a "pyramid," which progresses from relaxation at the very bottom, to safety/security needs, relationship needs, self-esteem and development needs, until it reaches fulfillment needs at the very top. The main idea of this model states that people's travel motivation changes with accumulated travel experience – as they gain more experience, they move up the ladder (or stay at the same level) until they meet their fulfillment needs (Hsu and Huang 2008).

TCP Model builds onto TCL model and it was created as a result of further research conducted by Pierce and his colleagues. According to their findings, people with more travel experience "give more emphasis to externally oriented motivation factors such as self-

development through host site involvement and seeking nature,” while people with less travel experience focus on “internally oriented motivation factors such as self-enhancement, kinship (belonging), romance and autonomy” (Hsu and Huang 2008). As people gain more travel experience, their motives shift from internally oriented to more externally oriented (Pearce and Lee 2005). Out of these findings, Pearce constructed a three-layer model, where core layer consists of the most common travel motives (such as novelty, enriching relationships, escape/relax), surrounded by the layer of moderately important travel motives, which change from internally oriented to more externally oriented motives (Hsu and Huang 2008). The final layer surrounds the two previous ones and consist of more common, less important travel motives (such as nostalgia, isolation, social status) (Hsu and Huang 2008).

2.6.3. Escaping and Seeking Dimensions Model

Another model useful for understanding tourist behavior, and thus also the behavior of millennial travelers in relation to adventure travel, is a two-dimensional tourist motivation model developed by Mannell and Iso-Ahola. According to this model, “two motivational forces simultaneously influence an individual’s leisure or tourist behavior” (Hsu and Huang 2008). Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987) claim that people motivated to travel because they want to escape from personal problems and every day routine, but also obtain certain personal or interpersonal rewards. Personal rewards can be “self-determination, a sense of competence or mastery, challenge, learning, exploration and relaxation,” while interpersonal rewards come from social interactions (Hsu and Huang 2008).

Furthermore, the researchers argue that “tourism should represent more of an escape-oriented rather than a seeking-oriented activity for most people under most circumstances” (Hsu and Huang 2008). This essentially means, that the majority of people travel in order to escape their over-stimulating or under-stimulating realities. Those who are escaping over-stimulating situations tend to relax more and seek fewer activities during their vacations, while those

escaping less-stimulating environment seek more novelty and attach more importance to intrinsic rewards (Mannell and Iso-Ahola 1987). Behind this argument is the psychological concept of “optimal arousal,” which is “important in understanding travel and tourism motivation” (Hsu and Huang 2008).

3. Tourism Industry Dynamics

Over the past 60 years, tourism has witnessed continual growth and diversification to develop as one of the biggest and fastest-growing economic sectors. Various new destinations have emerged around the world, adding to variety in the industry previously dominated by Europe and North America. “Global business travel spending hit a record-breaking \$1.2 trillion in 2015, up five percent from the previous year” (Deloitte 2017). Over the years tourism has proven to be a strong and resilient sector, demonstrating almost uninterrupted growth in spite of sporadic setbacks (World Tourism Organization 2017). The numbers confirm this claim. According to UNWTO data worldwide tourist arrivals have boosted “from 25 million globally in 1950 to 278 million in 1980, 675 million in 2000, and 1,235 million in 2016” (World Tourism Organization 2017). Consequently, destinations around the world have witnessed their earnings surge “from US\$ 2 billion in 1950 to US\$ 104 billion in 1980, US\$ 495 billion in 2000, and US\$ 1,220 billion in 2016” (World Tourism Organization 2017).

About 53% or 657 million of travel visits in 2016 were for leisure purpose, mostly holidays and recreation, 13% travelled for business, while 27% of all international tourists traveled for the purpose of visiting friends and family, religious or medical reasons (World Tourism Organization 2017).

Considering some of the negative recent trends that could impact tourism globally, one must mention the rise in terrorist attacks and political unrest. However, according to 2016/2017 ITB World Travel Trends Report, terrorism and political instability did not affect the overall

number of outbound trips (ITB Berlin 2016). In spite of these possible threats, the tourist industry continues to grow.

The ITB World Travel Trends Report estimated 4-5% growth in tourism industry for 2018 (ITB Berlin 2016). At the same time, UNWTO expects international tourist arrivals to grow by 3.3% a year between 2010 and 2030, until they reach 1.8 billion by 2030 (World Tourism Organization 2017). Another interesting fact that illustrates just how important the tourism industry is for today's economy – is that “international tourism (comprising both earning in destinations and passenger transport) represents 30% of the world's services exports (World Tourism Organization 2017). In the fact, tourism is a 3rd biggest worldwide export category after chemicals and fuels, bigger even than automotive industry products and food (World Tourism Organization 2017).

This promising industry's targeted growth will be led by the technology-savvy millennial generation, according to ITB Travel Trends Report, as this generation is seen as the key market by many in the international tourism industry (ITB Berlin 2016).

3.1. Adventure Travel Segment Dynamics

Since adventure travel is one of the fastest growing segments of tourism industry, and since this research is primarily focused on tour operators/tourism agencies that offer services related to adventure tourism, it is important to find out some of the major trends in this segment specifically.

As previously seen, the global tourism industry is on the rise, as since adventure tourism is one of its fastest growing segments, it has also seen high growth in the recent years.

According to the UNWTO Global Report on Adventure Tourism, the global value of adventure tourism grew by 195% just from 2010 to 2013, from USD 89 billion to USD 263 billion (World Tourism Organization 2014).

Similarly to the overall international tourism departures, 69% of adventure tourism departures originate in Europe, North America or South America (World Tourism Organization 2014). According to the same source, the major emerging markets are Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa. However, the top spenders come from China (World Tourism Organization 2014).

Due to developments in technology, the adventure travelers today almost never travel without a phone or tablet. Furthermore, thanks to the Internet, they are able to reach even the most remote corners of the world (World Tourism Organization 2014). In order to reach and properly communicate with adventure travelers, UNWTO suggests that businesses today need a good Internet connect, a website and other online platforms.

Another recent trend in adventure tourism is disintermediation – or exclusion of a tour operator or travel agent (World Tourism Organization 2014). Normally, tour operators or travel agents would connect a consumer with a provider at a chosen destination. However, due to ease of access of information, including the information about provider and trusted reviews, a consumer is more likely to book a trip or activity directly from the provider, thus cutting the costs of using the middle-man. One study in the United States has shown that as many as 71% of adventure travelers make travel arrangements independently (World Tourism Organization 2014). Another, previously mentioned study, found that 69% of adventure travelers rely on the Internet and online research as their primary source of information (Adventure Travel Trade Association 2013).

These findings lead us to formulation of the **first hypothesis** (H_1):

***H₁**- The majority of all Millennials would never use a tour operator/travel agent while planning a trip.*

3.2. Understanding Millennial Travelers – Adventure Tour Operator's Perspective

As the previously reviewed studies and data have shown – tourism industry, together with its adventure travel segment will experience high growth in the coming years. The key market that will generate that growth is the millennial generation. Therefore, it is crucial to review how adventure tour operators and travel agencies currently perceive this generation in order to determine whether or not they are ready to address appropriately this market. This research will attempt to answer this question by testing several hypotheses.

A recent, 2016 research by Nikolova and Rainbolt evaluated the perception adventure tour operators and travel agencies have of the millennial travelers. The total of 46 tours operators and travel agencies were surveyed (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016). The questions were divided in 4 groups and addressed Millennials' motivation for travelling, trip planning and behavior during the trip, and the use of technology and social media. During the time the survey was conducted, each one of the businesses was a member of the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) and was offering trips that involved adventure travel activities (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016).

When it comes to motivation for travel among millennials, the majority of businesses believe that Millennials take 2-4 trips a year and are motivated to travel in order to try new activities or new food and drinks, experience a new culture, explore the specific place, and escape from their daily routine (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016). According to previously discussed Travel Career Patterns (TCP) model, people with less travel experience focus on internally oriented factors such as novelty, enriching relationships, and escape/relaxation (Hsu and Huang 2008).

This leads us to formulation of the **second hypothesis** (H₂):

H₂- The majority of all Millennials take 4 or fewer trips a year and are primarily focused on internally oriented factors.

Regarding the planning and the activities Millennials engage in during the trips, the majority of tour operators agrees that Millennials make travel arrangements 1-3 months before the trip

(Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016), contrary to the previously mentioned study that found that 68% of adventure travelers plan their trips up to 4 months in advance (Adventure Travel Trade Association 2013). Furthermore, the tour operators believe that Millennials are most likely to travel to mountains, lakes, glaciers and forests; try local food and drinks while on a leisure trip; take part in hiking, cycling, canoeing or kayaking when it comes to active experiences; go to a concert or a club when it comes to relaxation activities; and finally, volunteer or go on a working holidays when it comes to activities with an impact (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016). According to Escaping and Seeking Dimensions model, tourism is more of an escape-oriented activity during which those escaping less-stimulating environment seek more novelty and intrinsic rewards (Mannell and Iso-Ahola 1987).. This leads us to formulation of the **third hypothesis** (H₃):

H₃- The majority of all Millennials travel to escape their under stimulating environments and engage in soft rather than hard adventure activities while on a trip.

Finally, adventure travel tour operators believe that the most important needs related to technology for the Millennials are access to free wi-fi and possibility to charge their electronic devices (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016). Furthermore, they believe that Millennials post mostly during their trips on social media networks, using primarily Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat, in that order of preference (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016). This leads us to formulation of the fourth and final hypothesis (H₄):

H₄- The perception of adventure travel tour operators/travel agencies regarding the use of technology and social media by millennial generation matches the actual Millennials's needs regarding technology and behavior on social media.

3. Methodology

An in-depth review of existing academic literature, documents, academic journals and

publications, recent reports and research was conducted in order to gain a better understanding of some of the recent travel industry trends, more specifically in relation to adventure travel segment and the millennial generation. However, in order to respond to the research question and gain a better insight into the travel habits, attitudes and behavior of millennial generation in relation to travel, it was necessary to conduct a direct research. The recent research previously conducted by Nikolova and Rainbolt (2016) provides the necessary data on opinions and attitudes of adventure travel tour operators and travel agencies towards the millennial generation. However, the same research does not provide information on consumer preferences, in this case millennial traveler - the segment these tour operators and travel agencies are targeting. Therefore, it was crucial to construct a questionnaire similar to the one previously created by Nikolova (2016), necessary for the direct comparison, and conduct a separate research. Due to the ever-changing travel trends, and the nature of the research question itself, it was necessary to conduct a quantitative analysis in order to answer it.

The aim of the questionnaire was to collect data on Millennials', most recent, travel habits and preferences. The gathered data was later on analyzed and compared to the previously done research on the way the adventure travel tour operators and travel agencies view and understand millennial travelers and their travel habits and preferences. Finally, the collected and analyzed data was compared to the formulated hypotheses in order to make some conclusions.

The target group for this survey's data collection was Generation Y members / Millennials born between 1980 and 2000, and living in Europe or North America at the time the research was conducted. The research is focused on Millennials living in Europe and North America, since the previously conducted research by Nikolova (2016) surveyed only the adventure travel tour operators and travel agencies based on these two continents.

The survey was distributed online using the social media channels and email, and the responses were recorded in a single period from November 1 until December 1, 2017. The social media channels and email were used due to the ease of access and popularity of social media among the Millennials. The survey was also conducted only in English language, assuming that the younger generations that travel possess the basic knowledge of English language necessary to complete the survey.

The survey consisted of 21 closed-ended questions. The 21 closed-ended questions included 3 questions on demographics. Depending on the type of a question, a single or multiple responses were possible. An open-ended option for “other” was added to some of the questions, and it had to be included in this quantitative research, since Schuman and Presser state in “The Open and Closed Question,” that it allows for all the possible answers to be captured and it avoids bias (Singer and Coupor 2017). Furthermore, the use of open-ended option is appropriate since the questionnaire is answered by a random sample of target population, and the responses are captured digitally, making them easy to analyze (Singer and Coupor 2017). However, the majority of the questions are close-ended as they guarantee a consistent set of responses and are easy to complete, allowing for more questions to be asked according to Smith (2017). Moreover, since this research is focused on attitudes and travel habits of Millennials, it is appropriate to use closed-ended questions as they are “used to describe a person’s attributes, beliefs, or attitudes (Dillman, Smith and Christian 2014).

The random sampling was used in order to collect the responses from the millennial population. By using this method, “each member of the population has an equal and known chance of being selected” (StatPac 2017). A total of 202 people started the survey, however, 169 completed it. Out of those 169, 14 responses had to be disregarded, as they did not fit in the age group or the appropriate region. Finally, 155 responses could be used

for this research. The margin of error is 8%, taking into consideration the millennial population in the United States and Europe of about 125 million, the sample size of 155, with the confidence level of 95%.

4. Results

In the following section, the results of the conducted survey of 155 millennials will be presented and the results will be primarily compared to Nikolova and Rainbolt's (2016) research but also to previously reviewed theory, in order to evaluate the four stated hypotheses.

First of all, the survey results have shown that the first hypothesis can be rejected. Only 23% of Millennials have stated that they would be never use services of a tour operator to help them plan and book an entire leisure trip. Both Millennials and tour operators agree on top two reasons for choosing the help of a tour operator, and those are safety concerns and tour operator's expertise regarding the "off-the-beaten-path" places. This result is also in accordance with Travel Career Ladder (TCL) model, which states that safety/security needs are at the lower level of the ladder and need to be satisfied in order for a traveler to move up this ladder (Hsu and Huang 2008).

The second hypothesis, however, has to be accepted. The majority or 56% of Millennials take 2 to 4 trips a year, as correctly assumed by 76% of tour operators/travel agencies (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016). Both Millennials and tour operators rate online research and recommendation from a friend as the two most important sources of information when deciding to go on a trip and choosing a destination. The following are the top five reasons for choosing to go on a trip according to the Millennials: taking a break from an every day routine; desire to visit a specific attraction; experiencing a new culture; relaxation; and trying new things such as food and drinks. Although in a different order of preference, the

tour operators have correctly identified 4 out of top 5 reasons why Millennials choose to go on a trip. One motivator that tour operators have missed is relaxation, as only 13% of them believe relaxation could be the reason behind a Millennial's decision to travel, while 40% of Millennials have placed relaxation as the 4th most important reason for going on a trip. Nevertheless, the survey results are in agreement with the Travel Career Patterns (TCP) model. Since millennial generation is still a young generation with not so much travel experience (only 2-4 trips a year), they seem to be motivated to travel by internally oriented factors such as novelty and escape/relaxation.

When it comes to planning, the majority of Millennials (61%) do in fact start making their travel arrangements only 1 to 3 months before departing. The tour operators have also correctly recognized the fact that the majority of Millennials like to plan major components of a trip in advance such as location or transportation, but also prefer to leave some space for spontaneous decisions during the trip. The Millennials have ranked the places they like to visit in the following order: outdoor places such as mountains or lakes, beach, large cities, and national parks. The tours operators have correctly chosen those 4 places in the following order of preference: mountains/lakes, large cities, beach, national parks (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016). They have also correctly identified the cultural activities that Millennials would prefer: trying different food and drinks, sightseeing, going on a concert/festival and visiting local markets (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016).

Regarding the choice of active experiences, both groups have placed hiking at the top, however, while tours operators believe cycling would be the second most preferable active experience for the Millennials (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016), this generation has placed it at the 5th spot. Both groups have also placed canoeing/kayaking in the top 3 spots, where Millennials also have scuba diving. The main conclusion here is that Millennials definitely prefer soft over hard adventure. The only hard adventure in their top 10 choices is trekking

as the 8th on the list.

The main entertainment/relaxation activities are the same for both groups. Both have identified attending a concert, going to a social event or to a club/bar, as the top 3 options. However, when it comes to activities with an impact, the tour operators believe that Millennials are most likely to engage in volunteering activities (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016), while Millennials give preference to teaching abroad or doing a working holiday. Out of the 4 options, Millennials have volunteering and donating as the last two. Consequently, these findings only confirm the 2nd hypothesis and also indicate that 3rd hypothesis should also be accepted. Volunteering is an extrinsic activity, and thus not the first choice for the Millennials, who are seeking more intrinsic and also more stimulating activities. Based on their preference of activities they like to engage in while travelling, the 3rd hypothesis has to be accepted, as it seems that Millennials are indeed escaping under stimulating environments and do prefer soft over hard adventure.

Finally, access to free wifi, possibility of charging electronic devices, and usage of localization apps, both groups have identified as the three most important technological needs. On the other hand, the tour operators don't seem to fully understand Millennials' behavior on social media. While 57% of tour operators believe that Millennials post on social media mostly during their trips (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016), the majority of Millennials or 38% state that they post on social media mostly after returning home from a trip. Furthermore, both groups have correctly identified Instagram and Facebook as the two most important social media channels, however while Millennials place blog as the 3rd most important social media outlet, tour operators have placed it at the very last, 6th spot (Nikolova 2016; Rainbolt 2016). These findings indicate, that the 4th hypothesis needs to be partially rejected. Even though tour operators seem to have a good understanding of Millennials' needs when it comes to technology, they still do not fully understand their

preferences related to social media.

5. Limitations

Even though this paper attempted to provide an extensive review of relevant literature, conduct a valuable research and analysis and provide useful insights into the travel habits and preferences of the millennial generations, there are, however, several limitations to this research.

First of all, the research took into consideration only the Millennials living in Europe and North America. In order to provide more valuable and accurate insights regarding the travel behavior of the Millennials, a research would need to cover other continents as well.

This research may not accurately reflect travel habits and preferences of a Millennial living in China or South Africa. Likewise, it would be useful to further evaluate the regional differences among the Millennials who did participate in this survey. Doing so would provide further insights into their travel habits and behavior and allow the tour operators/travel agents to better target consumers in different regions. However, due to time constraints, it was not possible to further compare and analyze the differences and similarities between the Millennials living in North America and Europe for example or Eastern and Western Europe. Nevertheless, the obtained data could be useful for some future research.

Another limitation of this research is that it did not analyze travel habits and behavior of other generations besides Millennials. Surveying other generations, and analyzing and comparing the data among different generations would make it possible to identify more accurately some of the characteristics unique for the Millennials. Currently, it is also not clear whether or not tour operator/travel agencies employ different strategies when targeting the Millennials and other generations.

Additionally, due to the lack of data and research of tour operator's perception of Millennials and their travel habits and preferences, this paper heavily relied on the research previously conducted by Nikolova and Raibolt (2016). Comparing the obtained results to data obtained by other researchers on a similar topic, would allow for more accurate conclusions to be drawn. Finally, due to the time constraints and the aim to provide a direct comparison to a previously done research, a limited number of closed-ended questions had to be used. This could account for a certain bias in the responses given by the Millennials, as they were somewhat limited in giving the most accurate responses and influenced by the already given options.

6. Conclusions

In spite of mentioned limitations, a several valuable conclusions can be drawn from this research.

Firstly, even though there is an increasing number of people who tend to rely less on the tour operators/travel agencies and rather organize their trips by themselves, there is still a strong need for the services of tour operators and travel agencies, especially as safety is becoming an increasing concern around the world, while at the same time, the Millennials are seeking more unique, off-the-beaten-path experiences.

Secondly, the tour operators/ travel agencies need to keep in mind when creating and marketing trips to the Millennials, that they are mostly traveling in order to escape their every day routine and under-stimulating environment, while seeking more intrinsic rewards. Nevertheless, Millennials still do prefer soft over hard adventure, and the adventure travel tour operators needs to give a special attention to the activities such as hiking, canoeing/kayaking and scuba diving.

Finally, the adventure tour operators/ travel agencies seem to have an overall good

understanding of Millennial's travel habits and preferences. However, the same is not so true when it comes to use of technology and social media. Considering that the trends and habits regarding the use of social changing are constantly changing, the tour operators needs to be well-informed about the latest trends and preferences in that sphere if they wish to work with Millennials.

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