ATTRACTING YOUNG TRAVELLERS TO A TOURIST DESTINATION: EXPLORING MILLENNIALS' DREAMS

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to examine Millennials' selection of future travel destinations especially destinations they dream to visit as well as to identify pull factors that attract them to dream destination. As Millennials are becoming dominant travel segment it is important to explore how they evaluate and based on what characteristics they select their dream destinations they plan to visit.

Design/Methodology –The empirical research aimed to explore Millennials' dream destination. Research framework is based on Morgan and Xu (2009) and Kapferer (2008) research. Also, information seeking patterns of Millennials are explored. Empirical research collected data of 420 European travel Millennials. Results were analysed using qualitative and quantitative research techniques.

Findings – Research results indicate that young travellers prefer to visit countries in South and Mediterranean Europe. Mainly choosing countries that are famous for their physical attributes and cultural interactions. Several pointed out beautiful nature, cultural heritage and sea & sun. Dream travel destinations are chosen as they offer destination-oriented and socially-oriented attributes.

Originality of the research – The paper contributes to understanding Millennials motives for planning future tourist destinations. Also, it contributes to identifying Millennials' perspective in process of selecting future experience as tourists. The research results are valuable to marketing managers in tourist destinations to help them identify future travellers' motives in selecting a tourist destination.

Keywords Millennials, tourist motivation, tourist destination

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary tourism research increasingly addresses young people (Generation Y or Millennials) as a significant segment of the international tourism market. According to UNWTO (2017), youth travel has become the fastest growing segment of international tourism, representing more than 23% of the over one billion tourists travelling internationally every year. Young consumers, Millennials, are considered to be the travellers of the future (Monaco 2018). They were born in the period between 1977 and 1999 (Lancaster and Stillman, 2003 in Dlačić and Kadić-Maglajlić 2013, UNWTO 2017) and are experience-seekers (Morgan and Xu 2009). Among Millennials, 72% of them will go on a dream holiday in the near future (Future foundation, 2016) and for them experience is everything they are searching for when planning a future travel.

Different travel patterns, different inspirations and motivations are noticed among Millennials (Future foundation, 2016). They strive for social media presence, are motivated by reducing stress and inspired by experiencing local culture in selecting their dream destinations. Their desire for authentic cultural experiences (ITB 2016) is expressed and are not intimidated by going alone on a holiday. Traditional mass tourism offering will not be dominant in future (Karayilan and Cetin 2016), as new emerging market segments are searching for something different. Millennials, as emerging market segment, are focused on experience, verified authenticity (Millennial travel report, 2016), giving more importance to social media and interactions through them related to their online engagement. Having all this in mind it is evident that Millennials represent new market segment with high potential for tourism.

This represents a challenge for marketing managers in tourism who need to develop marketing strategies to attract this significant market segment. Therefore, in order to attract the Millennials to the destination, it is important to know their behavioural patterns, especially the process of choosing a tourist destination and factors affecting it. In this regard, the objectives of this paper are (1) to explore which destinations Millennials consider as their dream destinations; (2) to determine the pull factors of tourist destinations that the millennials dream about, and (3) to identify ways Millennials search for information and plan their trip.

The article is structured as follows: after the introduction, a brief conceptual framework is given. Following with description of the methodology and the results of the primary research. Finally, there is conclusion, which includes recommendations for managers in tourist destinations as well as recommendations for further research.

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Tourism consumer behaviour can be considered as the ensemble of its acts, attitudes and decisions regarding choosing, buying and consuming tourism products and services, and also its post-consuming reactions (Fratu, 2011). In order to reach its target market successfully, marketing experts in tourism need to know all the phases as well as factors influencing this process. The complexity of the decision-making process in travel planning is a challenge for marketing experts. Namely, consumer behaviour in tourism is characterized by high involvement in the purchase decision, high consumer commitment, strong influence by other people, long-term decision, considerable emotional significance, tourism product and provider of the tourism product, high level of information search and high level of insecurity linked to intangibility (Honer and Swarbrooke, 2016, p. 111). Moutinho (2000, p. 73) states that a vacation tourist behaviour model consists of three parts: (1) pre-decision and decision process; (2) post-purchase evaluation; and (3) future decision-making. Pre-decision and decision-making are of great importance, as the two other phases depend on them. Further, Hyde (2008) elaborates the first phase of the decision-making process and states that "pre-vacation decision-making may be conceptualized as comprising three phases – a search for travel and destination information, the making of a plan for the vacation, and the booking of selected elements of the vacation, such as the means of transport and places of accommodation".

The focus of this paper is the pre-trip phase of travel, which starts by identifying needs, that is, by dreaming about traveling. The question that emerges is which destinations attract young tourists and why? The research carried out by Morgan and Xu (2009) on a sample of British students has shown that the students dream about different destination, mostly about Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific islands, followed by the Caribbean and African countries. Only 2 percent of students dream about Mediterranean countries, while 16 percent did not cite a single destination. When asked about the reason for choosing a specific destination, most (43.9%) did not give a reason, or want to see different destinations (Morgan and Xu 2009). In another research Xu, Morgan and Song (2009) have been established that British and Chinese students enjoy beach holidays, and place importance on having fun and relaxing. They are motivated to discover somewhere new and prefer to eat the local food of the destination. Hence, research results are pointing out that there is a need to explore students, that is Millennials, also in other countries.

In the tourism literature a lot of research on motivational factors has been conducted and theories have been developed (eg. Crompton, 1979; Yuan and McDonald, 1990; Uysal and Jurowski, 1994; Turnbull and Uysal, 1995; Oh, Uysal, and Weaver, 1995, Pesonen et al. 2011; Bozic et al. 2017 etc.). In the tourism literature, destinations are considered as the pull factors for tourists (Karayilan and Cetin 2016). These pull factors consist of attractions, facilities, infrastructure, transportation and hospitality (Mill and Morrison 1985 in Cetin and Bilgihan 2016). Starting from Kapferer's brand identity prism (Kapferer 2012), Morgan and Xu (2009) have explored the memorability of tourist experiences and motivational factors that attract young tourists to the destination. Six dimensions were used: (1) physical attributes of a destination, (2) destination image (personality), (3) benefits, (4) meanings, (5) social interactions and (6) cultural interactions. So, destination's external (pull) factors comprise the physical attributes of the destination and destination image (personality) (Morgan and Xu 2009). The destination image is perceived as the "total impression the destination makes on the mind of tourists" (Morgan and Xu 2009). A destination's internal (push) factors comprise benefits and meanings. Benefits that tourists seek from engaging in tourism activities are the core of motivational studies in the tourism and leisure literature (Otto and Ritchie 1996). Meanings are created by tourists' "memories, interest and concerns as much as by their encounter with the attraction" (Morgan 2008, p.83). Social and cultural interactions are an essential part of tourist experiences. In visiting a tourist destination, social interaction, as a cross-cultural encounter, emerges between tourists and between tourists and the host community (Morgan and Xu 2009). Regarding this, and in relation to focus of our research, factors that attract Millennials into the destination are explored.

The phase of dreaming about travel is followed by the gathering of information. Tourism information search includes internal search and the multiple external information sources used (Ho et al., 2012). Information search is considered crucial to tourists' destination choices (Jacobsen and Munar, 2012). Nowadays, many influences come from new media, especially in the information gathering phase. According to research of Xu, Morgan and Song (2009), the main sources of information for students used in planning the trip are the Internet, and friends and family. Therefore, this research builds on this and extends to explore reasons for using and information seeking patterns.

2. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Objectives of this study are related to exploring Millennials travel patterns related to pre-trip phase of the customer journey. That is to identify destinations they consider as their dream destinations and to identify pull factors of the dream destination. Also, objective was to analyse how Millennials search for information in pre-trip phase in order to plan their trip.

Research framework is based on Morgan and Xu (2009) research related to a dream destination that will provide specific tourism experiences, as well it is based on Kapferer (2008) destination identity prism that points out different facets of destination tourism experience. Also, research from Jalilvand, Ebrahimi and Samiei (2013) and Munar & Jacobsen (2014) was used for identifying travel patterns of information search in pre-trip phase.

Research was conducted during May and June 2017 on purposive sample of Millennial travellers. Online questionnaire was used to collect the data. Questions used in questionnaire were related to identify dream destination of each individual and reasons for dreaming about them. Also, their travel patterns related to pre-trip phase were identified in order to provide suggestions for destination managers. As open questions were used, a qualitative content analysis was applied for analysing data. Quantitative questions were analysed using SPSS version 21.

Data gathering collected 420 usable questionnaires. Hence, respondents profile of these 420 respondents is analysed in Table 1.

Table 1: **Respondents' profile (%)**

CHARACTERISTICS			
Country		**Age**	
Croatia	42.9	Up to 19 years old	5.5
Austria	23.3	20 – 25	67.6
Poland	9.0	26 – 30	15.0
Spain	3.3	31 and more	11.9
Italy	2.1	**Gender**	
Germany	1.7	Female	66.7
Latvia	1.2	Male	33.3
Russia	1.2	**Level of education**	
Turkey	1.2	Primary school	0.5
France	1.0	Secondary school	18.3
Other	13.1	Higher education	80.2
Accompanying person during travel		Other	1.0
Friends	46.0	**Employment**	
Family	15.5	Student	69.5
Alone	9.0	Employed	25.0
Group of tourists	1.7	Unemployed	4.0
Other	3.6	Other	1.4

Source: Research results

Respondents profile indicates that Millennials in our research sample (N=420) are represented as following, come from Croatia (42.9%) or Austria (23.3%), mostly travel with friends (46%), have 20-25 years (67.6%), are female (66.7%) and students (69.5%) with finished higher education (80.2%).

Following from stated research objectives, firstly we *explored destinations which Millennials consider their dream destinations and which they wish to visit in the future*. Performing content analysis on dream destinations 392 responses were identified as some of them (N=28) didn't pointed out some specific destination like "there are too many places in the world I dream to visit", "doesn't matter where I go as long as I travel", "there are many beautiful different countries" or "every country that has sea and beautiful beaches". Also, some respondents (N=20), identified multiple destinations like "Croatia and Scandinavia", "Sri lanka and Vietnam" or "Thailand and Dubai". Consequently, these answers were excluded as not possible to relate to specific destination and our analysis continued with 372 respondents. In classifying destinations UNWTO (2017) criteria was used. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: **Tourist dream destination by region**

DESTINATION/REGION	RESPONDENTS	
	Frequency	**%**
Southern/Medit. Europe	70	16.7
South-East Asia	56	13.3
North America	52	12.4
Central/Eastern Europe	48	11.4
Oceania	35	8.3
Caribbean	26	6.2
Western Europe	19	4.5
South America	16	3.8
Sub-Saharan Africa	13	3.1
North Africa	11	2.6
Northern Europe	10	2.4
South Asia	7	1.7
North-East Asia	5	1.2
Middle East	4	1.0
More than one country	20	4.8
No answer	28	6.7

Source: Research results

From previous Table 2 it is evident that the most popular dream destination are countries in Southern and Mediterranean Europe (16.7%) like Italy (N=23), Spain (N=21), Greece (N=17), Portugal (N=5) and one answer for other countries like Montenegro, Malta and Canary Islands. Second largest dream destination for Millennials is South-east Asia (13.3%) with Maldives (N=18), Thailand (N=13) and Japan (N=9). Other countries have smaller number of answers but dream destinations mentioned are Bali, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malesia, Myanmar and Philippines. While in North America group (12.4%) dominant dream destination is USA (N=25) with pointing out several destinations like Hawaii (N=11) and some cities like New York or Los Angeles. It is interesting that even if research was mainly conducted on Croatian Millennials (see Table 1, 42.9% of total

sample) around 75% of respondents in category Central/Eastern Europe indicated that their dream destination is Croatia.

Identifying pull factors for Millennials from dream destinations, second research objective, pointed out 530 different respondent's answers. Several respondents mentioned two or up to six factors that are the reasons for a specific destination to become their dream destination. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table3: **Reasons for dreaming about specific tourist destination**

CHARACTERISTICS	RESPONDENTS	
	Frequency	Percentage
Beautiful nature	103	15.25%
Culture	97	14.35%
Sea & sun	71	10.50%
Architecture	57	8.43%
Climate	49	7.25%
People (relaxed, friendly)	39	5.77%
Food	38	5.62%
History	28	4.14%
Tourist offer	26	3.85%
Way of life	22	3.25%

Source: Research results

From previous table (Table 3) it is evident that beautiful nature is dominant reason for dreaming about tourist destination (15.25%). Respondents point out characteristics like "beautiful beaches", "clean nature", "I like the scenery", "interesting nature", "sea, beaches and beautiful places", "beautiful diversified landscape, warm weather all year", "because it has everything a person would look for mountains and sea". Second most mentioned category of reasons for dreaming is culture with 14.35%. Respondents point out "because I want to try new things and their culture", "video games are part of their culture", "because of specific culture". But culture is seldom mentioned alone. In majority of the answers it is related to nature, food and history like "cultural diversity, unique nature & wildlife", "the sea, food, culture", "diverse landscape, inexpensive, good food, culture, beaches". Also, respondents pointed out several categories related to local inhabitants like people are relaxed and friendly (5.77%) or way of life (3.25%).

To categorize these answers, we used Kapferer (2008) methodology and grouped respondents answers to six categories according to brand identity prism. Several respondents (N= 71) have not pointed out what in tourist destination is motivating them to dream about it. Other answers are grouped into physical attributes, destination image, benefits, achievements, social and cultural interactions. Results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: **Reasons for choosing a dream destination**

CHARACTERISTICS	RESPONDENTS	
	Frequency	%
Destination-oriented attributes		
Physical attributes	*164*	*39.0*
Destination image	*8*	*1.9*
Personally-oriented attributes		
Benefits	56	13.3
Achievements	2	0.5
Socially-oriented attributes		
Social interactions	11	2.6
Cultural interactions	97	23.1
No reason was given	71	16.9

Source: Research results

From previous table it is evident that physical attributes (39%), and cultural interactions (23.1%) dominate in reasons for dreaming of a specific tourist destination. That is, they represent the majority of pull factors for Millennials when dreaming about a destination. They are followed by perceived benefits in a dream destination (13.3%). Hence, destination-oriented attributes represent 40.9% of motivation for Millennials to dream about specific destination. They are followed by socially-oriented attributes that represent 25.7% of pull factors from Millennials dream destination.

Additionally, we analysed importance of different pull factors that is reasons for choosing a dream destination, across different dream destinations. Results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: **Importance of facets of tourism experience by dream destination (% of respondents answers)**

DESTINATION	DESTINATION FACETS					
	Physical attributes	Destination image	Benefits	Achievements	Social interactions	Cultural interactions
Northern Europe	77.8%		22.2%			
Western Europe	7.1%		35.7%		7.1%	50.0%
Central/Eastern Europe	65.1%		16.3%			18.6%
Southern/Medit. Europe	46.0%		12.7%		1.6%	39.7%
North America	39.5%	7.9%	23.7%		5.3%	23.7%
Caribbean	33.3%	4.2%	16.7%		4.2%	41.7%
South America	58.3%				16.7%	25.0%
Middle East	100.0%					
North Africa	20.0%		10.0%			70.0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	54.5%		9.1%		18.2%	18.2%
North-East Asia	60.0%			20.0%		20.0%
South-East Asia	54.2%	2.1%	16.7%	2.1%		25.0%
Oceania	77.8%	3.7%	7.4%		3.7%	7.4%
South Asia	16.7%		16.7%			66.7%
All regions	48.5%	2.4%	16.6%	0.6%	3.3%	28.7%

Source: Research results

Analysis shows that not in all destinations Physical attributes or Cultural interactions are equally present as pull factors in that destination. Also, chi-square results are indicating that are present differences among destinations in importance of pull factors (χ^2 (75) = 133.253, p<0.000). Dominant on all regions level are Physical factors (48.5% of respondents) following by Cultural interactions (28.7% of respondents). But in some destinations it is all about that constitutes Millennials dreams related to Physical attributes (Middle East with 100%, North Europe and Oceania with 77.8%, Central/Eastern Europe with 65.1%, North-East Asia with 60% or South America with 58.3%). While Cultural interactions are dominant in North-Africa (70%), South Asia (66.7%) or Western Europe (50%). Benefits are not so important but still in some destinations they form respondents dreams like in Western Europe (35.7%) or North America (23.7%). Social interactions are most important in Sub Saharan Africa (18.2% of the respondents). While Destination image is not so important in dreaming about a destination and forms dreams in 7.9% respondents in North America. Achievements are only important in two destinations North-East Asia (20% of respondents) and South-East Asia (2.1%).

Research focused also on third objective, that is *to identify ways Millennials search for information and plan their trip*. Several characteristics of Millennials behaviour in planning their trip are explored like, daily hours spent on Internet, usage of internet in gathering information while planning a trip, reading comments and number of comments from other individuals that visited that destination and reasons for reading comments and experiences. Results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: **Respondents characteristics related to trip planning**

CHARACTERISTICS	Frequency	Percentage
Daily hours spend on the Internet		
Less than 30 min	11	2.6
30 min to 1 hour	47	11.2
1 to 3 hours	162	38.6
3 hours and more	200	47.6
Usage of internet in gathering information in planning a trip		
Always	308	73.3
Occasionally	104	24.8
Do not	8	1.9
Reading experiences and comments on tourist destination		
Always	209	49.8
Occasionally	191	45.5
Do not	20	4.8
Reasons for reading experiences and comments on tourist destination		
To collect information needed to make a purchase or travel decision	129	30.7
Because I want to hear first-hand experience.	88	21.0
After I have made a purchase decision to know what to expect from the tourist product or service	47	11.2
Out of curiosity (even though I have no intention of traveling, or am not able to travel in the near future)	25	6.0

CHARACTERISTICS	Frequency	Percentage
I am not interested in the comments and experiences of others.	14	3.3
Unspecified reason	117	27.8
Number of comments read in planning a trip		
Up to 5 comments	94	22.4
Between 6 and 20 comments	162	38.6
More than 20 comments	40	9.5
Unspecified number	124	29.5

Source: Research results

Millennials, according to our research, spend on average 3 hours and more per day on Internet (47.6%) or 1 to 3 hours per day (38.6%). In planning a trip phase, they always use Internet in gathering information (73.3%), they always (49.8%) or occasionally (45.5%) read experiences and comments of other Internet users regarding travel and tourist facilities, they read between 6 and 20 comments (38.6%) when gathering information from informal communication sources. Respondents read experiences and comments of other Internet users regarding travel and tourist facilities: to collect information needed to make a purchase or travel decision (30.7%) or because they want a first-hand experience (21%).

Also, respondents were asked to select different information sources they use for collecting information about tourist destination. Several possibilities were offered to them. As they had the possibility to select multiple information sources we collected 1540 answers. Hence, indicating that Millennials use different information sources simultaneously. Results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: **Information sources used to gather information in trip planning**

INFORMATION SOURCE	Frequency	Percentage
Official Website of the destination	268	63.8
Official Website of the hotel and other tourism products	233	55.5
Pinterest	32	7.6
Online forum	132	31.4
Google+	41	9.8
Facebook	189	45.0
Twitter	10	2.4
Instagram	105	25.0
LinkedIn	4	1.0
Blog	92	21.9
TripAdvisor, Booking.com, etc.	276	65.7
YouTube	122	29.0
News Websites	36	8.6

Source: Research results

Respondents in gathering information use TripAdvisor and Booking.com websites (65.7%), official Website of the destination (63.8%) and official Website of the hotel and other tourism products (55.5%) followed by Facebook (45%). The least important information sources while planning a trip are LinkedIn (1%) and Twitter (2.4%). To better understand respondents' behaviour they were also asked to explain reasons for reading online reviews. They provided answers on 5-point Likert scale anchored at 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: **Reasons for reading information sources to gather information in trip planning**

ITEM	Mean	SD
I often read other tourists' online travel reviews to know what destinations make good impressions on others.	3.53	1.187
To make sure I choose the right destination, I often read other tourists' online travel reviews.	3.50	1.208
I often consult other tourists' online travel reviews to help choose an attractive destination.	3.11	1.209
I frequently gather information from tourists' online travel reviews before I travel to certain destination.	3.41	1.151
If I don't read tourists' online travel reviews when I travel to a destination, I worry about my decision.	2.35	1.248
When I travel to destination, tourists' online travel reviews make me confident in travelling to a destination.	3.19	1.092

Source: Research results

In previous table it is evident that respondents read information sources on Internet to search for destinations that make good impressions on tourists ($\bar{x} = 3.53$) or to reassure themselves that they made a good decision in selecting a tourist destination ($\bar{x} = 3.50$) they want to visit.

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Research results indicate that Millennials consider mostly destinations in Southern/Mediterranean Europe as their dream destinations which is contrary to the research of Morgan and Xu (2009), who found that only 2% of British students dream about Mediterranean destinations. They are followed by South-East Asia and North America. In determining pull factors to that dream destinations the most important are destination-oriented attributes like physical attributes of the destination (beautiful nature and sea & sun). This pull factors in dream destination are followed by socially-oriented attributes like cultural interactions (specific culture of a destination, architecture, food and history).

Research also indicated that Millennials have different information seeking patterns when planning a trip. They dominantly consider Internet and collect other tourist experiences and to find information about dream destination. For them it is important to read first-hand experience of a destination and find out how destination impressed other

tourists. Different travel websites are important sources of information about dream destination for Millennials alongside with official Website of the destination.

This research contributes in following ways. By indicating importance of different pull factors to a specific destination. Hence, it is not important just to identify pull factors for Millennials but also to acknowledge that between different destinations have different pull factors for Millennials. Also, research contributes in providing an empirical evidence that pre-trip phase in customer journey is an important phase. Marketing managers and destination management organizations should take care about tourists also in their phase of dream destination. In this dream phase opinions and comments found on web sites like TripAdvisor and through social media, not necessary just from friends and family, shapes tourist opinion. So, marketing managers in a tourist destination have to be aware that pre-trip planning is equally important as services they provide in a destination. But, in this pre-trip planning phase travel websites and comments as well as experiences from others are shaping dreams of future visitors. As providing authentic experience is a key driver of Millennials, it should be shaped through online channels by providing authentic experiences of past visitors and emphasising physical aspects of a destination. Also, marketing managers in creating their destination image have to figure out what pulls their target market to visit that destination. As research indicated that Millennials indicated different pull factors for different destinations.

This research as many others has some limitations. First, although the sample consists of Millennials from several countries it does not include all countries in Europe. Further research could focus on broadening the sample to include more Millennials from different countries and to have more gender balanced sample. Also, it would be interesting to explore specific destinations how they are successful in providing information through online channels related to characteristics that Millennials valued as important pull factor for that destination.

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