

Tourist roles, and the influence of gender and age in Greece

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Aim of paper and research questions

The purpose of this study was to determine which tourist role preference men and women of different ages display. It was expected that statistically significant differences exist between men and women of different age concerning the preference they have for performing a particular tourist role.

Literature review

With the increase in global tourism in the 1990s, tourism increasingly is viewed as a highly specialised commodity. In light of this trend, researchers focused on exploring the experience of tourists, and the importance of the type of tourist experience (Yfantidou, Costa, Mavrommatis & Michalopoulos, 2008; Foo, Mcguiggan & Yiannakis, 2004; Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002). Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) devised a comprehensive classification of leisure tourists and designed the Tourist Roles Preference Scale (TRPS) consisting of 15 tourist roles: Sun Lover, Action Seeker, Anthropologist, Archaeologist, Organised Mass Tourist, Thrill Seeker, Explorer, Jetsetter, High Class Tourist, Seeker, Independent Mass Tourist I & II, Drifter, Escapist I & II, Active Sport Tourist and Educational Tourist. Gibson (1994) reported that the preference of tourist roles changes with age. Some roles as the 'Action Seeker' and the 'Thrill Seeker' decrease in preference with age while the 'Anthropologist' and the 'Organised Mass tourist' increase in preference with age. Other roles such as the 'Escapist' and the 'Independent Mass tourist' remain constant in preference regardless of age. In addition, women appear to prefer travelling with friends and children while selecting "women-oriented" activities.

Research design and data analysis

Data consisted of a stratified sample by age and gender of 1675 general tourists (Age Mean= 36 years) from about fifty countries who visited Greece in summer 2007. The questionnaire is based on the "TRPS" of Gibson and Yiannakis (2002), and translated in Greek, German and Russian by Yfantidou, Costa & Michalopoulos (2007). The questionnaires were distributed at the two main airports in Greece: Eleftherios Venizelos at the city of Athens and Macedonia airport at the city of Thessaloniki. The questionnaires were distributed to tourists after the check in at the airport when departing Greece to their countries or for Greeks to their town after their visit to Greece for vacation. The questionnaire included 89 Likert Questions or closed questions that record: a. description of tourist's activities that reflect motives, b. description of vacation destination, c. examination of major human needs, d. demographical and personal data and e. certain destination preference.

Cronbach α was used to examine the reliability of the questionnaire. PCA and MDS were conducted as exploratory analysis used to verify the tourist roles. Each tourist role was checked via Crosstabs concerning the independent variables. The non parametric test Chi-square (χ^2) was also used in order to determine the relation between tourist roles, age and gender.

Results

Cronbach α was used to examine the reliability of the questionnaire, in particular for the part of tourist roles ($\alpha = .81$). A principal component analysis (PCA) and multidimensional scaling (MDS) were the exploratory analysis used to verify the tourist roles. PCA and quartimax rotation was used to verify the validity of TRPS questionnaire of the 34 variables of the tourist roles, for the specific sample. The analysis identified eight variables, which explain the 57.69% of the total variance. Furthermore, to verify the validity of the TRPS, a multi-dimensional scaling model (MDS) was developed for the entire sample and for males and females. The pairs of variables that presented high loading at principal component analysis and logical proximity at dimensional space, were accepted for measuring the same tourist role. The variables which satisfied the above criteria were sustained and the new variables – tourist roles were created. Tourist role preference was then dichotomised into high and low preference (low “0” points 1-3 scale chose and high “1” points 4-5 scale chose).

Tourist role preference at life eras

Age was recorded according to Gibson’s model (1994), in three life eras: *Era 1*: Initial Adulthood (17-39 years), *Era 2*: Medium Adulthood (40-59 years) and *Era 3*: Final Adulthood (60 years and over). Each tourist role was checked via Crosstabs concerning the independent variables life eras (age) and gender and was created a table 2x3. The non parametric test Chi-square (χ^2) was also used in order to determine the relation between tourist roles, age and gender.

Discussion and conclusion

There were no significant differences between life eras and gender regarding preference for “Sun Lover”, “Archaeologist”, “Organised Mass Tourist”, “Thrill Seeker”, “High Class Tourist”, “Seeker”, “Independent Mass Tourist II”, “Drifter”, “Escapist I”, “Escapist II” and “Educational Tourist”. But there were differences between men and women at life era 1 at “Action Seeker” (more men than women), “Anthropologist” (more women than men), “Outdoor Explorer” (more men than women) and “Active Sport Tourist” (more men than women). Also there were differences between gender and life era 3 for the “Independent Mass Tourist I” (more women than men). It is important to mention that no preference was revealed for life era 3 for the tourist role “Jetsetter” and “Active Sport Tourist”. A comparison of the results of men and women revealed more similarities than differences. These results indicate that the gender differences disappeared but they still exist at sport tourism (Active Sport Tourist and Outdoor Explorer), so something must be done to be more democratic such as creating sport activities that are suitable for women and for different ages.

References

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