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LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND TRAVEL HABITS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE LIGHT OF A SURVEY

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Abstract: In our article we deal with leisure activities and travel habits of 150 college students from Szolnok. We have analyzed the relationship between the frequencies of watching TV, that is: the time spent watching TV and doing sports. Furthermore, we have also investigated the frequencies of travels, and main motives of choosing travel destinations.
We have found that college students have several hours of leisure time daily. Among the recreational activities, the ones that occurred predominantly are watching TV, doing sports, and travelling. It is interesting to note that the relationship between the frequency of watching TV and doing sports has not been significant while the relationship between watching TV occasionally and doing regular physical activity has turned out to be significant. Students who play sports for 1-2 hours a day spend significantly less time in front of the TV compared to their peers who do not do sports.
92% of the students travel at least once a year. The participants of youth tourism are quite price-conscious. In choosing travel destinations favorable prices play an important role.

Key words: free-time activities; youth tourism; travel motives; pastime habits

According to Bettina Pikó "lifestyle is such a frame of our life that includes our everyday activities, is closely related to our identity and determines our place within the society and smaller groups." (*Pikó 2005*) Therefore, it determines our personality, and inserts us into the society in different forms and ways. The category of lifestyle is a very complex concept. At the same time it is a treasury of opportunities, which force us to take decisions.

There is a wide variety of choices. In many cases it may cause several problems especially for today's young people. Making good decisions is not easy. Considering so many options we can unwittingly get confused in the process of decision-making.

A good example of this might be the possible problems of a career choice, which is perhaps t one of the most important decisions in young people's lives, because it is their first steps towards life in real life and at the same time it is also the time of closing a very important phase of their lives.

Man's life and lifestyle are highly influenced by the place where he lives, by the way of life, mentality and culture of the given country (*Barabás 2006*).

Leisure-time activities are closely related to one's way of life. These two are inseparable. The concept of leisure has already been identified by several researchers. The concept of leisure by Miklós Szántó is as follows: "Leisure time as a time frame is part of non-work frame, which is left off for activities which are beyond those material, that is economic, social, physiological constraint-based activities.*"(Szántó 1967)*

Christine Reichlin defines leisure time as follows: "leisure time comprises all the activities in which individuals take part voluntarily either in order to relax or have fun, or to improve their social relations, or perhaps to continue advanced studies." (*Reichling 2007*)

In fact, both definitions reflect the same meaning, but in a different approaches to the subject. The first definition sees leisure time as time when individuals act freely, and perform what they want. The latter definition includes all the activities that an individual can pursue in his free time: recreation, entertainment, maintaining relationships and learning.

The latter activity offers a pretty wide choice: trainings in order to widen our knowledge, possibilities to improve skills in our existing hobbies or even trainings to improve our fitness; that is doing sports. It is also important to examine the connection among leisure time, travelling and tourism since they are inseparable. We can travel to our favourite destination only in our disposable free time.

Tourism can be divided into several smaller units. One of these units is leisure tourism.

"Leisure tourism comprises voluntary activities done in one's free-time outside one's permanent residence and is motivated by the human need for variety." *(Reichling 2007)* This form of tourism includes several activities. Primarily,

activities that belong here are the ones people do with pleasure in their free time: sports, excursions, different hobbies, visiting thermal baths.

It is not easy to identify who exactly belongs to this group. In one of the articles of *Trends in Tourism* the following issue has appeared: "According to the definition of the WTO the age-group of Youth Tourism are travellers between 16–26 years of age". *(Juray 2007)* Other definitions define the age-limit line differently. However, we can agree that this is the age-group which is able to travel independently, on its own merits, so from this point of view this categorization is totally acceptable. The younger representatives of Youth Tourism can travel only in the care of a parent or a teacher.

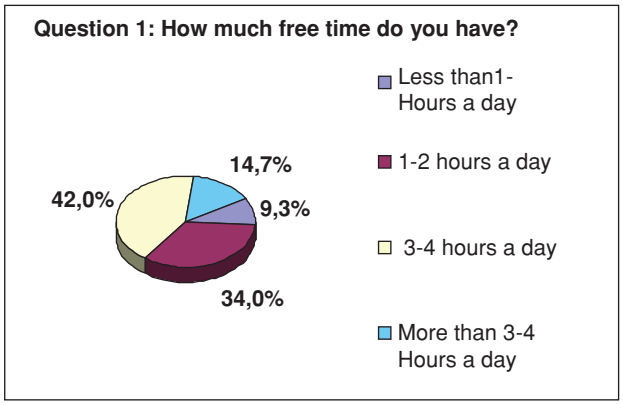

Figure 1. The amount of free time of the respondents

Research objectives

The main aim of the research is to describe pastime and travel habits of young adults aged 20-24 and to highlight their main motivations in choosing travel-destinations.

In order to achieve the main goal of the research we conducted a questionnaire survey, which is a type of primary research.

The research was conducted in the spring of 2009. (Borbás László, a college student, took an active part in carrying out the research in 2010.)

Hypothesis

In the case of young people, the time spent watching TV significantly influences the amount of time spent doing sports and taking part in cultural activities.

Furthermore, travel habits of young people are highly affected by their low discretionary incomes, so their motives of choosing a travel-destination are mostly influenced by favourable prices.

The socio–demographic data of the sample

We start the presentation of the sample by introducing the proportion of the male and female respondents. Only 22.7% of the respondents were male (34 people) and 77.3% were female (116 people).

All in all, we can say that 112 students out of 140 live in a town with more than 10.000 inhabitants the ratio of which shows around 80%.

Results

On the basis of the given answers only 9.3% of the students have less free time than 1–2 hours a day, but it is possible that there are also some of them who absolutely cannot afford to relax. They represent the lowest segment regarding the sample as a whole. The majority of young people can generally insert at least 1–2-hours' free time a day into their agendas. However, there are also the ones (42%), who can pursue some 3–4-hours' leisure activity a day and can freely live for their hobbies.

Slightly more than one third of the respondents have 1–2-hours' free time a day. 22 young people, i.e. 14.7% of the students have even more than 3–4 hours' available time per day.

A separate issue dealt with examining the question of who the students like spending their free moments with.

They could give several answers to this question. Overall, the vast majority of the students like spending their free time either with a partner or in the company of their peers.

Only 16 of the respondents, (equivalent to 10.7%) indicated in the questionnaire that they also like being alone in their free moments, but apart from this alternative they have chosen other alternatives as well, which proves that they do not totally cut themselves off from the world.

Answering the question, the respondents also "betrayed" whether they were living in a relationship or not. On the basis of the results it must be concluded that at the time of this interview slightly more than three-quarters (75.3%, respectively) of the 150 students surveyed had a boy or girlfriend whom he or she liked spending his or her free time with.

In addition, the students could indicate even family members, friends and/or peers as well. The answers given to this question showed a great variety. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (65.3%) referred to their families in their answers. The number of students (82.7%) who spend their non-work time with their friends and girlfriends was outstanding. These figures also show that there are a lot of overlaps, i.e. the majority of students indicated more than one answers.

In some cases students underlined all the answers. Very few peers were identified (only 6 people, 4% of the respondents). The results of the research show that, young people like making friends with people who have much the same way of thinking, and belong to a similar or to the same age-group. There were only few students who had friends dominantly from the younger or the older generation.

Another issue pointed out how the students spend their leisure time. Relating to the matter we assumed that the students would indicate only pastimes which they often pursue. However, a lot of different answers were given. Almost one third of the respondents (32%) would spend their free time with their friends or family. Examining the answers separately,

33 respondents indicated that they enjoyed being with their friends in their free moments. 15 of the students interviewed liked being with their families in their disposable free time. Slightly more than 40% of the young people surveyed do sports with pleasure in their free time. Exactly 61 students responding liked doing sports. A very wide range of sporting activities were mentioned from football through riding to aerobics. On the basis of the research the most common leisure activity indicated by the students was doing sports.

Many of the respondents are also engaged in some cultural activities. The following activities were mentioned in this category: going to the cinema or theatre, reading books or listening to music. Only 10 out of the 150 students wrote that they go to the cinema in their free time. Only one student goes to the theatre on regular basis. However, 21% of the respondents (32 students) read a book if they can afford to do so. Within the range of cultural activities listed it became the most popular. 14 young people spend their free time by listening to music. In addition, singing and cultural studies were mentioned among the cultural activities carried out by the different students. All in all 59 respondents (39.3%) are engaged in some kind of culture-related activities.

A relatively large number of students (24 persons, i.e. 16% of respondents) chose travelling, touring and trekking, as active pastimes. Of course, these answers do not reveal whether they prefer travelling inland or abroad. However, since these activities are carried out in one's free time, it is more likely that they refer domestic trips, excursions, and hiking, because they require less travel time, and are usually cheaper as well. We have already discussed this topic in the section on Youth Tourism.

Besides the popularity of active recreational programs the passive activities do not fall behind either. In total, 47 students have indicated watching TV and surfing on the net, which accounts for 31% of the sample. The first one was chosen by 23 students and the latter one was indicated by 24 ones. 12.6% of the respondents, i.e. 19 people chose relaxation, as a free-time activity. 13 students considered sleeping as a recreational "activity". There were nine students who practiced some fun activities more regularly. Among them there were students who selected "partying".

Results of the questions related to sport activities

In the following section we describe the results of the questions related to sports. A separate question dealt with examining whether the students have opportunities for doing sports within their own permanent residences. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (134 persons, 89 3%) answered "yes ". 16 gave 'no' response. However, just over half the students asked (77 persons, 51.3%) took part in some form of regular sports activity. From that comes that although many people have the opportunity to take exercise, they do not do it for various reasons.

I have already written that about 40% of the students like sports. On the basis of this, it can be concluded that about 11% of the surveyed students do sports regularly, but they do not like taking exercise, they just do it under pressure (such as improving posture). Among the various sports activities aerobics seemed to be the most popular one. Nearly one third of the regular athletes (32.5%) do this sport. It means 25 people out of 77. It is not surprising that this sport appears only among ladies. Besides aerobics, running (13 people), football (11 people), cycling (9 persons) or swimming (also 9 people) are considered to be the most popular sports activities among students.

Of course there are other sports that the athletes do regularly, but they occur in small numbers. Six of the respondents train regularly in a gym. There were some other types of sports that were pursued by five students. These were: tennis, fitness and frisbee. Among the ball games handball (3 people) and basketball (2 people) were mentioned. The sample also included a student who does not despise martial arts. Tai-chi, Thai boxing and Taekwon-do were mentioned by three students. There is a student who has affection for such a sport as Pilates gymnastics. This sport primarily strengthens the muscles of the human body. (*www.idealistestsuly.hu/pilates.htm)*

There was a young man in the sample who is a fan of spinning and spin-racing. Dancing and folk dancing were also mentioned as popular activities.

Various winter sports were also evaluated in the assessment. Two of the respondents go skiing regularly. There was a student, who likes skating. A student who would sit on the saddle and go for a ride was also involved in completing the questionnaire. Someone pulls his bow and tries to shoot as many arrows in the target as he can. The other one loves walking outdoors. Another one lives for foot shuttlecock. This sport is the same as badminton; the difference is that instead of a racket the players forward the ball with their feet. *(www.labtoll.hu/Default.aspx?ID=sportagrol_jatekszabalyok.htm)*

There are students who, besides doing regular sports activities are also members of a sports club. Among those surveyed, only 11 people are members of such associations.

The figures revealed that 71 students out of 150 (47.3% of the total) sit in front of the TV screen on a daily basis, which is a good indicator of its popularity. Secondly, if we take into account the replies of the others, we can become even

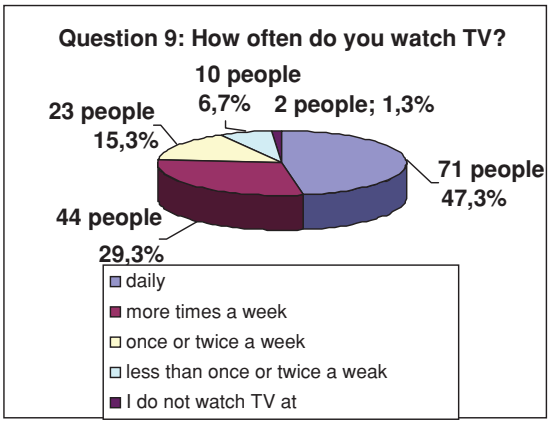

Figure 2. Frequency of watching TV

more convinced. 44 people watch TV several times a week. A further 23 students spend time watching TV once or twice a week. After the analysis of all these data, the results show that 138 respondents (92% of the total respondents) certainly sit in front of the TV at least once or twice a week. 10 students from the "residuals" sit in front of the screen less than once or twice a week. Two of the students do not show any interest at all in this recreational activity.

A comparative analysis was performed between the frequency of watching TV and doing sports. The study has undergone a Chi2-test, whichgave the following results. 70 among those students who play sports regularly (77 persons) turn on the television at least once or twice a week (90.9%). While 68 out of those young people who are not engaged in regular sports activities (73 people, 93 %) watch television at least once or twice a week. We can see that there is only a slight difference between the number of students and the percentage. It turned out that this relationship is not significant ($p > 0.005$). This result shows that the more time we spend in front of the TV the less time we spend doing sports.

The results of the questions related to travel

The students' leisure activities include travelling and hiking as well. From the three questions belonging to this category we could learn the basic principles according to which the students choose their travel destinations, how often they can afford to relax, and what activities they enjoy doing while their travelling.

First, I present the method of selecting a destination, which is also illustrated in the form of a diagram. In this case students could choose from several alternatives.

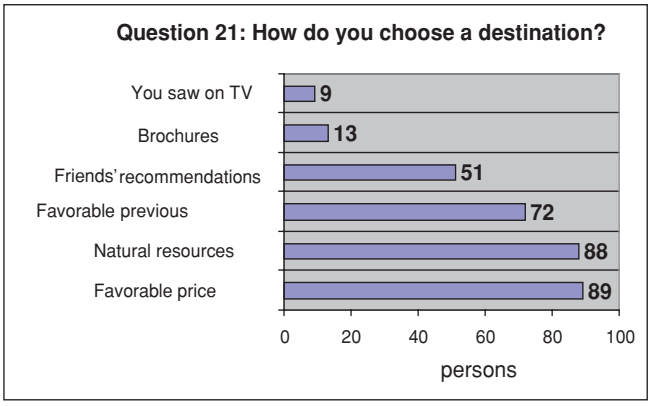

Figure 3. Different factors influencing the students' travel decisions

The results of this question show that the majority of the students interviewed are very price sensitive. Their discretionary incomes do not allow them the freedom of travelling anywhere in the world. 89 respondents asked consider favorable prices play an important role in selecting a destination. It gave 59.3% of the total. Similarly, the natural resources of the selected destination are also of a great importance since 88 students identified it in their responses. It shows that according to many respondents the chosen place should have sufficient tourist attractions. Students also take into account their previous positive experiences, since 72 of them (48%) chose this alternative. From that also comes that some of the students like to return to a previous well-established destination. However, since many students did not choose this variant, I think that many young people like visiting new places, which have not been previously visited.

They are not only influenced by their own experiences but by those of other ones as well. The respondents, slightly more than one third (51 people, 34%) usually ask their friends' opinions before making a decision, that is the personal recommendation of their friends is important to them. Only 13 people (8.7%) consider important what is written in brochures. Even fewer, only nine students select a destination on the basis of what they can see on TV. The role of this traditional marketing tools is decreasing. Much information can also be found on the Internet, and the so-called word-of-mouth recommendation can be also credible, if the explanation comes from relatives, acquaintances, and friends.

The research examining the travel habits confirmed the hypothesis propounded, according to which low prices significantly affect the young people's motives in choosing a destination.

We also inquired about the frequency of travels.

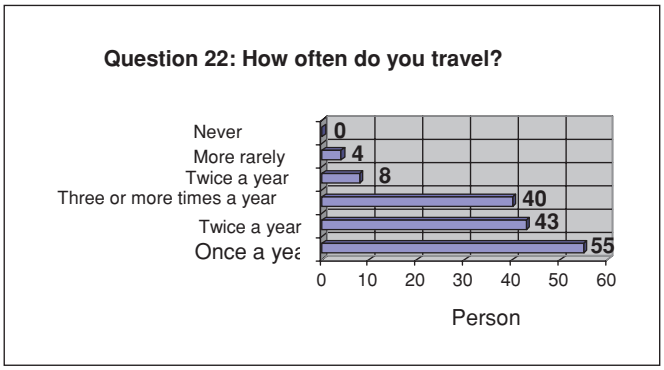

Figure 4. The frequency of travels by the respondents

Looking at the figure, it is clear that the vast majority of young people (138 people, 92% of respondents) plan a trip at least once a year. The figures do not indicate the length of the planned trips, but it is now less important. The point is that 36.7% of the respondents (55 people) go on trips once a year, 28.7% (43 people) twice a year, and 26.7% (40 people) three or more times a year. Eight students go on trips only in every second year and four of the students can afford a trip even more rarely.

There are not any respondents among the ones asked who have never planned any trips. It shows that everyone recognizes the benefits of these, and looks for the opportunity to go away somewhere certain intervals.

We also inquired about the activities they do while travelling. Interesting results were obtained. 37 students, i.e. 24.7% of respondents take their bikes with them on the trip, because they cycle during their trip. Of course, it is also possible that they rent a bike for themselves on the

spot. Furthermore, it can also be possible that they cycle to the destination and plan bike tours on the spot. Exactly 10% of the respondents, i.e. 15 of the students like fishing while travelling. 129 students, 86% of the respondents go to beaches. 114 students (76%) opt for swimming. Many more of them plan hiking tours while travelling (69 people, 46% of the respondents). In addition, many people "voted" (96, 64% of respondents) for trips in the nature. The students could supplement the given alternatives with their own answers as well. 33 of them did so.

Most of them are fans of cultural tourism (20 people).

It includes visiting local sights, going on sightseeing tours or visiting museums. Many of them do sports during their trips: swimming, skiing, horse riding. The list was amended by some more "extreme" types of sports: scuba diving, rock climbing, water skiing, canoeing. Six of them especially love having fun during their travels. Three of them tried out some wellness activities, such as a sauna or lie under the hands of a masseur to experience a type of a massage as well.

Summary

College students have several hours' free time a day. Among their recreational activities watching TV, doing sports, and travelling occur predominantly. The survey revealed an interesting fact, which shows that the relationship between the frequency of watching TV and taking part in a regular sport activity is not significant while the relationship between watching TV occasionally and doing a regular sport activity turned out to be significant. Students who play sports for 1-2 hours a day spend significantly less time in front of the TV compared to the ones that do not do sports.

This research confirms the increasing demand for Youth Tourism, since most of the age-group studied (92%) supported the need for various trips.

Since discretionary incomes of young people are low, favorable prices and low costs highly influence their travel decisions.

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