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Profiling UAE Youth Travel: Application of Push and Pull Theory

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Abstract
Youth in the GCC countries have higher economic resources compared to their peers in other areas of the world. Existing studies have mainly focused on American, European and Asian youth travelers with different cultural background, preferences and behavior from Arab youth. In response to the emerging youth travel market in the rich GCC countries, this study sets out to fill the gap in research in this regard. The purpose of the study is to highlight the main factors that motivate Emirati youth to travel, the main information resources they use and their tendency to purchase packaged tours. The study applied the push and pull motivational theory to define the most significant UAE youth travel motives. A quantitative web-based survey was used to collect the required data. The findings of this study have proved that pull factors are more significant determinants for UAE youth travel than the push factors. Besides, it was revealed that the majority of UAE youth depend on the internet for travel information. Finally, the study finding shows that UAE youth prefer independent travel over packaged trips. The findings of the study have many implications for tourism suppliers and marketers who wish to target this lucrative market.

Key words: UAE, youth travel, push factors, pull factors, information resources, packaged tours.

Introduction

Youth today are more knowledgeable, more adventurous and like to travel more frequently than other tourists' segments. Youth travel is one of the fastest growing travel segments. In 2010 travelers aged 16 - 29 counted for around 20% of international tourists according to World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimations. In 2015, their segment grew up to 23% of global international travelers (UNWTO, 2016).

It is certainly expected that youth will be active travelers in the future since they consider travel a vital part of their lives (Barton et al., 2013). Therefore, many believe that youth represent the future of tourism industry and consequently the tourism sector has to understand and cater for their needs.

Many of the research focused on youth tourism, but unfortunately, they were limited to European, American and Asian countries such as Kim, Giri and Jeonghee (2006), Moisa (2010), Govender and Rogerson (2010), Demeter and Bratucu (2014) and Njagi et al. (2017) and Cavagnaro et al. (2018). However, there is a big gap in research profiling youth travelers from the Middle East and from GCC countries in particular. As the economic, cultural, and religious aspects of youth population in GCC countries are totally different from western countries, the main purpose of this study aims at strengthening our knowledge in regards to the most significant motivations for youth travel in GCC. UAE youth market was taken as an example for the application of this study.

Youth travel definition

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation (WYSE) has defined youth tourism as "as independent trips for periods of less than one year, undertaken by people aged 16-29 who are motivated, in part or in full, by a desire to experience other cultures, build life experiences and/or benefit from formal and informal learning opportunities outside their usual environment." (UNWTO & WYSE 2011, p. 7). The age group mentioned in the definition is known as the millennials. The millennials are those born from the late 1980s onwards. This group is fortunate with the internet on which they depend mostly for travel information and this distinguish them from previous generations such as the Baby Boomers and the Generation Y (Cavagnaro, Staffieri, and Postma, 2018). Youth now view travel as an important part of their personality development, identity formation, and as a way to comprehend other cultures (Perrett, 2007)

Economic value of youth travel

In 2015, youth travel represented 23% of global international travelers. In regards to expenditure, youth travel segment produced US$ 286 billion in 2014 compared to US$ 165 billion in 2010 and estimated to reach US$400 billion by 2020 (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2011; WTO, 2016; Richards, 2006).

Youth often stay in the destination longer than other segments of travelers, this means higher expenditure though their limited budget compared to typical travelers. The WYSE Travel Confederation survey in 2014 showed that youth travelers spent a total of US$2,160 in average per trip, compared with US$1,097 for other tourists' fragments in 2013 (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016). In Australia for example, the average young travelers spent AU$7,278 in average in 2013 compared to AU$3,326 per trip by other international tourists (Australian Government, 2013).

Parents represent one main source for youth travel. In 2009 for example, 36% of young travelers were funded totally or partially by their families (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2011). Besides, over the past two decades, it is popular for youth to live with their parents longer. This helps youth to spend their money on entertainment and travel (Perrett, 2007).

Another source for youth is to work and earn some money while travelling. Many destinations actually allow youth travelers to work while on destinations (UNWTO, 2016).

In addition, the 'lifetime value' of youth travel is an added-value for the destinations. They usually revisit destinations they have visited before when they were younger. In Australia, for example, research has shown that it is likely or very likely that 58% of young travelers would revisit the country within the next five years (UNWTO, 2016). Governments around the world started to recognize these vital economic impacts of youth travel and to undertake more actions to improve products, services and marketing strategies directed to young people (UNWTO, 2010).

Non-economic Importance of youth travel

As well as being a significant economic force, youth travel has many non-economic positive impacts for destinations. First, youth are more resilient than previous generations. Socio-political or environmental stress does not prevent them from visiting destinations. They are less worried to travel because of terrorism, political conflict, infections or natural tragedies than other travel segments. In 2009 and 2010, figures from WYSE indicated that the youth travel sector declined because of the economic crisis, however, the drop was less and the recovery was faster than the other tourists' segments (UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2011). Another research by WYSE Travel confederation survey indicated that the global anxiety in 2014 because of Ebola epidemic had the least impact on youth travel (UNWTO, 2016).

Second important feature of youth travel is that they mostly spend their money directly with local people. The millennial traveler survey conducted by WYSE Travel Confederation in 2014 indicated that youth travelers prefer to deal with local suppliers and to purchase local products which in turn reduces the economic leakage and produces more economic, social and cultural benefits to the communities (UNWTO, 2016). Research by tourism Australia showed the 68% of backpackers' expenditures were spent in Australia in 2008.

Thirdly, it has been noticed that there was a shift in youth travel purposes from leisure to study, language learning, work and volunteering. These purposes help youth towards personal development and also positively impact the destinations visited. In USA, revenues from international students supported 340,000 jobs and generated USD 26.8 billion during 2013-14 academic year into the American economy. The expenditure of international students also supports developing facilities not only in the educational institutions but also in the host communities (UNWTO, 2016).

Finally, youth are adventurer and explorers by nature. They love to discover new and faraway places. It has been stated that youth original choices attract new segments of travelers and developers towards new destinations (Cavagnaro et al., 2018; UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2011).

UAE youth population

According to the Arab Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Program, 60% of the Arab population was under 25 years old in 2009. Therefore, this region is considered one of the top regions in the world in terms of the proportion of young people among its population, with an average age of 22 years compared to of 28 years as global average (United Nations Development Program, 2009).

In 2010, 51% of the Middle East population was less than 25 years old, and by 2050, it is predictable that it will drop to 34%. Though, the population under 25 years of age in this area will still form the largest age group with over 140 million children and youth by 2050.

In 2017, youth aged 15-24 represented 26.6% of total local population and 19% of labor force in UAE. They work as junior employees and get mid-upper income (The official data portal of the UAE, 2017).

The six GCC countries, with high oil revenues and small population bases, rank among the top 40 countries in the world in regards to their citizens' annual average income. From 2000-2011, UAE came second after Qater as highest GDP per capita among all Middle east countries. The fast-economic development in GCC countries has led to higher incomes not only for their nationals but also for the expatriates living and working in GCC countries (World Tourism Organization & European Travel Commission, 2012). In 2010, the expatriates comprised more than (80%) of the United Arab Emirates' population (The Official portal of The UAE Government). Their proportion in UAE is the highest in all GCC countries.

The average tourist spend per capita of the Middle East is estimated at US$ 250, compared to the world average of US$ 134. UAE came second (5,063,000) after Saudi Arabia (6,032,000) as top Middle East countries in the period between 2000-2010 (World Tourism Organization & European Travel Commission, 2012).

A study done World Tourism Organization (WTO) & European Travel Commission (ETC) in 2012 about The Middle East Outbound Travel Market, revealed that family groups, young couples, honeymooners and youth (groups of friends) are the segments with the maximum potential for travel to Europe. The study defined the young travelers as 18-24 years; high school/college graduates, students, junior employees, single/married, and or part of an extended family household. There is already a strong youth travel tendency in UAE, with groups of friends travelling together on holiday or as single travelers. Further, it is expected that honeymoon tourism from UAE to Europe will grow exponentially as there is an increasing trend among the newly-weds to undertake honeymoon trips in 'exotic' and romantic destinations overseas. European countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Switzerland and Turkey are already popular among the affluent youth for honeymoon tourism.

The youth in UAE are privileged with better-off economic resources as they are descending from rich families or have their own personal resources through the jobs offered to them by the government especially the natives. This factor facilitated frequent travel for UAE youth; either the locals or the expatriates. Therefore, this market is very lucrative for tourist suppliers and so, it is essential to understand its travel motivations and drives.

Push and pull theory

The tourists' travel motivations determine their decision-process. Moreover, understanding tourist motivations help in designing better products and services and hence improve customer satisfaction and retention (Crompton & McKay, 1997). Therefore, it became a necessity to comprehend tourists' motivations in order to understand how tourists select their destination and accordingly design the most effective marketing strategies. (Crompton & McKay, 1997; Baniya and Paudel, 2016).
Push and Pull (PP) motivation theory have been used by many studies to define traveler's motivations. Studies such as Dann (1981), Iso-Ahola (1982), Baloglu and Uysal (1996), Yoon and Usyal (2005), Njagi et al. (2017), Preko et al. (2018) and many others have applied PP motivation theory to study tourists' motives and destination choice.
According to PP theory, the tourist's choice for a particular destination is determined by two key aspects: push factors and the pull factors. The push factors are related to the tourists' internal motives and desires. The pull factors on the other hand are associated with the destination attributes (Crompton, 1979; Yoon and Usyal, 2005). The logic in this model is that tourists are first pushed to practice travel by their own psychological or physiological needs, then they are pulled towards a specific destination where they expect their needs to be satisfied by the especial attributes and features of this destination (Baniya and Paudel, 2016, Njagi et al., 2017).

Push factors

Many studies were conducted to define the 'Push' factors and their relative significance as travel motivations. For example, Uysal and Hagan (1993) categorized 'Push' factors into: Motivations (such as: escape, rest and relaxation, self-esteem, prestige, adventure, social interaction, personal interests, and benefit expectations, etc.); Socio-economic and demographic factors (such as: age, gender, income, education, family life-cycle and size, occupation, second home ownership, etc.); and market knowledge.
In 1990, Yuan and McDonald involved four countries into a study to define the factors that push the individual to travel. They identified five push factors that included: escape, novelty, enhancement of kinship relationships, prestige, and relaxation/hobbies. According to the study, novelty and escape were identifies as the most important push factors.
Moreover, Lee and Pearce (2002) identified 14 motivators as push factors in the travel framework they developed. They ranked those factors as: novelty, escape/relaxation, self- actualization, nature, self-enhancement, romance, kinship-belonging, autonomy, self- development (host-site involvement), nostalgia, stimulation, isolation and recognition (Njagi et al., 2017).
It has been noticed that novelty, scape, relaxation, prestige, and self- actualization were common factors between all these previous studies.

Pull factors

Pull factors are observed to be the destination associated attributes that makes a tourist prefer a particular destination after the decision to travel has been taken (Baniya and Paudel, 2016).
In a study by Yuan and McDonald (1990), seven pull factors were defined as follows: budget, culture and history, ease of travel, wilderness, cosmopolitan environment, facilities and hunting.

Njagi et al., (2017) divided pull factors into: a) destination attributes (such as climate, historical places, natural beauty, cultural events, recreational facilities, etc.); b) destination approachability, maintenance or situational factors (such as safety and security); and c) the perceived quality of services and facilities.

Correlation between push and pull factors

Battour, Battor, and Ismail (2012) anticipated that push and pull sets of factors are both independent and interdependent. Some studies tried to examine the relationship between PP motives and the possibility that one type might influence the other. Dann (1981) stated that push factors act on the individual first before the pull factors and hence push factors influence pull factors. Klenosky (2002) agreed with previous theory when he mentioned that the PP factors work separately at two different stages, however they are interrelated and together they guide the traveler towards the final travel decision. For example, if the traveler’s internal motive is rest and relaxation, most probably he will focus on destination attributes such as weather, natural beauty, recreational facilities, and safety. He/she will not be interested in attributes like historical places or cultural events.

Research Methodology

Questionnaire design

Questions and variables used in the questionnaire are derived from past research (Uysal and Hagan,1993; Crouch et al., 2004; Mohamad and Jamil, 2012; Mutinda and Myaka, 2012; Njagi et al., 2017; Kim, 2008; Klenosky, 2002).

The questionnaire contains four parts that are demographics, push and pull factors, information resources, and the tendency to buy inclusive prearranged packaged tours. After a pilot study, more refined form of the questionnaire was developed considering the suggestions and comments of the respondents. The questionnaire was written in Arabic as it is the mother tongue of the respondents. Each questionnaire took about 3 to 5 minutes to be completed.

Sample and Data Collection

Web-based survey method was used to collect the data (Google forms). The researcher and some colleagues, who agreed to cooperate with her, sent email messages to all their possible students in the University of Sharjah. Students were required to answer an online questionnaire through the URL given in the email. Also, respondents were asked to forward the URL through all types of social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.) to all their friends and relatives in high schools or in college. Only locals and Arab youth expatriates were targeted because of cultural similarities. Besides, comparing some study attributes for both groups (local and expatriates such as the significance of push and pull factors) may deepen our understanding of the differences and similarities between the two groups.

A total of 349 responses were collected, only 237questionnaires were usable for analysis. The rest were incomplete or outside the age-group and therefore were excluded.

The respondents were asked to rate the relative significance of the push and the pull factors influencing the choice of the destination on a five-point Linkert-type scale with “1” indicated Least significant to “5” Most significant. In addition, the significance of different sources of information, i.e. the internet, word of mouth and social media, personal experience, travel agents, radio and TV were also tested on a five-point Linkert-type scale with “1” indicated Least significant to “5” Most significant. The likelihood to buy packaged holidays was also tested on a five-point Likert Scale varying from "1" Most unlikely to "5" Most likely.

Study limitation

The focus of this study is on the travelers within the age group of 15-24 years old. In other words, the student youth travelers who travel for leisure purposes. Youth above 24 years old and students who travel for academic purposes are beyond the scope of this study.

Data Analysis

The data was entered and coded onto SPSS program. Cronbach's alpha reliability test was conducted on 22 push and pull factors to determine the reliability of the data. In overall, the reliability coefficient was 0.841, which is an indication of strong item homogeneity.

Study Findings

Respondents' profile

As mentioned earlier, the majority of United Arab Emirates' population are expatriates, this is why youth expatriates are included in this survey. Emirati youth represent (67.9%) of the respondents. Females were majority with 63.7% of the whole sample. Most of the respondents were single (75.5 %). The majority of the respondents were 19-24 years old (72.6%) while those aged between 15-18 years old represented (27.4%). 73.4% of the respondents were college students and the rest (26.6%) were high school students.

More than half of the respondents (53.2 %) had an average family income of 15.000 AED (US$ 4084) per month, 21.9% had average income of 25.000AED (US$6806), 4.2% had 45.000 AED (US$12251) as average income and only 8.9% had above 51.000 AED (US$13885). Table 1 reviews the demographics of the respondents.

Table 1: Respondents demographic characteristics

Characteristic		Frequency	Percentage
Nationality	Citizen	161	67.9
	Expat	76	32.1
Age	15-18	65	27.4
	19-24	172	72.6
Gender	man	86	36.3
	woman	151	63.7
Social status	single	179	75.5
	married without kids	19	8.0
	married with kids	39	16.5
Education	high school	63	26.6
	college	174	73.4
Income	10.000 -20.000 AED	126	53.2
	21.000 - 30.000 AED	52	21.9
	31.000 - 40.000 AED	28	11.8
	41.000 - 50.000 AED	10	4.2
	51.000+ AED	21	8.9

In regard to travel funding, over 80% of the respondents depend on their parents and relatives as the main source to fund their trips, 15 % used their personal income and savings, while around 5 % used incentives from schools, colleges, place of work or as volunteers.

Travel frequency of youth in UAE.

The majority of the respondents (55.3%) had taken one trip for the last one year, 21.5% travelled twice, 5.9% travelled three times, and 4.6 had more than three trips (See Table 2). This indicates that most respondents are active travelers and appropriate for the study.

Table 2: Number of trips per year

Number of trips per year	Frequency	percentage
None	30	12.7
One trip	131	55.3
Two trips	51	21.5
Three trips	14	5.9
Four or more	11	4.6

Tendency to travel with the family

The study revealed that the majority of respondents (72.6%) prefer travelling with the family which is uncommon among youth from other nationalities who prefer independent travel or with group of friends. However, male respondents were much for independent travel. 47.7% of male respondents stated they do not prefer to travel with the family. As per female respondents, situation was different, the majority 84% prefer to join the family while travelling (Table 3). This could be explained by the conservative nature of the Arab Muslim community that does not allow the females to travel independently without a male relative companion.

Table 3: Tendency to travel with the family

Respondents	Do you prefer to travel with the family?	Frequency	Percentage
All	no	65	27.4
	yes	172	72.6
man	no	41	47.7
	yes	45	52.3
woman	no	24	15.9
	yes	127	84.1

Travel motivating factors

To rank the significance of the motivating factors (push and pull), it was important to calculate the class intervals. Class intervals are computed by dividing the range of data (i.e., the difference between the highest and lowest data points) by the number of classes. The class intervals accordingly were: Average points 4.21 – 5.00 = most significant; Average points 3.41 – 4.20 = much significance; Average points 2.61 – 3.40 = moderate significance; Average points 1.81 – 2.60 = little significance; Average points 1.00 – 1.80 = least significant.

The 22 factors tested were generally noted to be significant as none of them was perceived of low significance. The analysis revealed that mild weather, personal safety, seeking a place to just relax, doing nothing at all, outstanding scenery, availability of recreational and entertainment activities, and unpolluted environment are the most significant factors when deciding for the destination. On the other hand, buildings and places of historical or archaeological importance, travel time and distance, going places visited before by my friends or relatives, meet new and different people of different ethnic background, travel for health care and fitness are much less in significance (see Table 4).

It has been noticed that the pull factors are more significant than the push factors when deciding for the holiday destination (see Table 4).

Table 4: Significance of motivating factors

Factors	N	Mean	Level
Mild weather	237	4.69	most significant
Personal safety	237	4.6245	most significant

Seeking a place to just relax, doing nothing at all	237	4.57	most significant
Outstanding scenery	237	4.53	most significant
Availability of recreational and entertainment activities	237	4.50	most significant
Unpolluted environment	237	4.49	most significant
To find thrills and adventure	237	4.36	most significant
Religious considerations (Halal food, prayer areas,…)	237	4.19	Much
Prices at the destination	237	4.18	Much
How easy to get the visa	237	4.15	Much
The reputation of the people in the destination in terms of their acceptance and welcoming Arabs and Muslims	237	4.14	Much
Holiday period	237	3.84	Much
Experience new and different culture and lifestyle	237	3.78	Much
Language spoken in the destination	237	3.74	Much
Going places my friends have not been	237	3.68	Much
Good shopping chances	237	3.65	Much
Availability of packaged travel arrangement.	237	3.43	Much
Buildings and places of historical or archaeological importance	237	3.21	Moderate
Travel time and distance	237	3.18	Moderate
Going places visited before by my friends or relatives	237	3.02	Moderate
Meet new and different people of different ethnic background	237	2.94	Moderate
Visiting friends and relatives	237	2.81	Moderate
Travel for health care and fitness	237	2.76	Moderate
Valid N (listwise)	237		

Push factors

As shown in Table 5, seeking a place to just relax, doing nothing at all, to find thrills and adventure, experience new and different culture and lifestyle, going places my friends have not been to were identified as the most significant internal (push) factors motivating youth travelers in UAE. However, going places visited before by my friends or relatives, meeting new and different people of different ethnic background, visiting friends and relatives, and travel for health care and fitness were perceived as the least significant (see Table 5).

Table 5: Push factors significance.

Push factors	N	Most significant (5)%	Significant (4) %	Total (4) + (5)
Seeking a place to just relax, doing nothing at all	237	74.7	12.7	87.4
To find thrills and adventure	237	62.9	17.7	80.6
Experience new and different culture and lifestyle	237	39.2	21.9	61.1
Going places my friends have not been to	237	39.2	21.1	60.3
Going places visited before by my friends or relatives.	237	13.5	23.6	37.1
Meeting new and different people of different ethnic background	237	19.8	13.1	32.9
Visiting friends and relatives	237	20.7	11.4	32.1
Travel for health care and fitness	237	16.9	10.5	27.4
Average significance				52.4

Pull factors

Mild weather, personal safety, outstanding scenery, unpolluted environment, availability of recreational and entertainment activities were recognized by respondents as the most significant pull factors. On the other hand, buildings and places of historical or archaeological importance and travel time and distance were perceived as the least significant (see Table 6). Generally, pull factors average significance rated 70.4.1% compared to 52.4% average significance for the push factors (Table 5,6 and 7). This finding also implies that the pull factors are more significant than the push factors for the respondents.

Table 6: Pull factors significance.

Pull factors	N	Most significant (5)	Significant (4)	Total (4) + (5)
Mild weather	237	78.5	14.3	92.8
Personal safety	237	78.9	10.5	89.4
Outstanding scenery	237	71.7	15.6	87.3
Unpolluted environment	237	71.3	13.9	85.2
Availability of recreational and entertainment activities	237	71.7	12.2	83.9
Religious considerations (Halal food, prayer areas, etc.…)	237	60.8	15.6	76.4
The reputation of the people in the destination in terms of their acceptance and welcoming Arabs and Muslims	237	57.0	16.5	73.5
Prices at the destination	237	54.4	19.0	73.4
How easy to get the visa	237	58.2	15.2	73.4
Language spoken in the destination	237	39.2	17.3	56.5
Good shopping chances.	237	36.7	19.8	56.5
Availability of packaged travel arrangements.	237	33.8	18.6	52.4
Travel time and distance	237	25.7	17.7	43.4
Buildings and places of historical or archaeological importance	237	25.7	15.2	40.9
Average significance				70.4

Table 7: Ranking youth travel motivation factors

N	All factors	Total (4) + (5)
1	Mild weather	92.80
2	Personal safety	89.40
3	Seeking a place to just relax, doing nothing at all	87.40
4	Outstanding scenery	87.30
5	Unpolluted environment	85.20
6	Availability of recreational and entertainment activities	83.90
7	To find thrills and adventure	80.60
8	Religious considerations (Halal food, prayer areas, etc.…)	76.40
9	The reputation of the people in the destination in terms of their acceptance and welcoming Arabs and Muslims	73.50
10	Prices at the destination	73.40
11	How easy to get the visa	73.40
13	Experience new and different culture and lifestyle	61.10
14	Going places my friends have not been	60.30
15	Language spoken in the destination	56.50
16	Good shopping chances.	56.50
17	Availability of packaged travel arrangements.	52.40

18	Travel time and distance	43.40
19	Buildings and places of historical or archaeological importance	40.90
20	Going places visited before by my friends or relatives.	37.10
21	Meet new and different people of different ethnic background	32.90
22	Visiting friends and relatives	32.10
23	Travel for health care and fitness	27.40

Comparing cases by gender, similar results were revealed in regard to the most influential factors, expect for the personal safety which topped other factors for female respondents while came third after mild weather and seeking a place to just relax, doing nothing at all in case of male respondents. This finding is very rational as male youth are more adventurous than females.

Besides, when comparing cases by nationality, almost same results were revealed for both push and pull factors except for two factors; prices in the destination and how easy to get the visa (See Table 8 a & b). For the expat group, these two factors scored higher significance compared to natives. This result is quite logical and explains the relative weakness of economic resources for expatriates compared to citizens, in addition to the difficulty of obtaining tourist visas especially for some Arab nationalities to Western destinations.

Table 8 a: Significance of Destination Prices and Visa Attainment to Expats and Citizens.

Factor	Nationality	N	Mean	Level
Prices in the Destination	Expats	76	4.59	Most significant
	Citizens	161	3.99	Much significant
How easy to get the visa	Expats	76	4.41	Most significant
	Citizens	161	4.03	Much significance

Table 8 b: Significance of Destination Prices and Visa Attainment to Expats and Citizens.

	Factors	N	Most significant (5) %	Significant (4) %	Total (4) + (5) %
Natives	Prices in the destination	161	45.3	21.7	67
	How easy to get the visa	161	53.4	15.5	68.9
Expats	Prices in the destination	76	73.7	13.2	86.9
	How easy to get the visa	76	68.4	14.5	82.9

Information sources

The study revealed that (72.6 %) of youth travelers in UAE depend on the internet when planning their vacations, (64.2 %) depend on word of mouth and (64.2 %) depend on social media and (64.1 %) on personal experience as key sources for travel information (See Table 9).

Table 9: Information sources.

Source	N	Most significant (5) %	Significant (4) %	Total (4) + (5) %
Internet	237	51.1	21.5	72.6
Word of mouth and social media	237	40.1	24.1	64.2
Personal travel experience	237	36.3	27.8	64.1
Travel agents	237	25.7	16.9	42.6
Radio and TV	237	17.3	11.8	29.1

Tendency to buy inclusive packaged tours

Analyzing data has shown that only 28.7 % of respondents prefer to buy inclusive packaged tours. When classifying the sample by gender, it was clear that both male and female youth travelers prefer independent planning for their trips over inclusive packaged tours (See Table 10).

Table 10: Tendency to buy inclusive packaged tours

Respondents		N	Most significant (5) %	Significant (4) %	Total (4) + (5) %
All		237	16.9	11.8	28.7
	Male	86	18.6	10.5	29.1
	Female	151	15.9	12.6	28.5

Conclusion and recommendations

Youth travel is an important segment of the tourism industry in UAE. However, there is a big gap in research concerning the characteristics of this segment. This study aims to provide greater understanding of the UAE youth tourists' motives and preferences. In the following part, the important findings of the study will be discussed and some relevant recommendations will be provided.

First, the study found out that respondents' most significant motivation factors are: mild weather, personal safety, seeking a place to just relax, doing nothing at all, outstanding scenery, availability of recreational and entertainment activities, and unpolluted environment. On the other hand, buildings and places of historical or archaeological importance, travel time and distance, going places visited before by friends or relatives, meet new and different people of different ethnic background, travel for health care and fitness are the least significant factors to the respondents. Hence, it could be said that youth travelers from UAE have highest interest in leisure tourism and natural excursions. Hence, it is recommended for tour operators and travel agents to design travel packages for leisure purposes when targeting this segment. Destinations marketed should have elements desired mostly by the customers such as mild weather, outstanding scenery, and availability of recreational and entertainment activities.

On the other hand, UAE youth travelers have the least interest in cultural tourism and sightseeing tours. They are willing to travel to faraway places that have possibility to satisfy their motives, language is not a barrier to them, they have little interest in visiting places visited before by friends and relatives, however they like to show off as pioneers by visiting new places never visited by friends or relatives before. Therefore, marketing newly discovered and faraway trips by tour operators could be very desirable by UAE young tourists.

Besides, unlike most youth travelers in many countries around the globe, financial resources do not represent a major restriction for youth in UAE especially the natives. This makes UAE youth travel a very lucrative segment for tourism suppliers who market top-end packages.

Moreover, the findings of this study have proved that pull factors are more significant determinants for youth travel in UAE than the push factors. This finding is very interesting and motivating for destinations and tourism suppliers as they can, to a great extent, control those factors. In other words, they can develop products and services that satisfy the desires and expectations of UAE youth travelers and hence increase their share from this market.

Further, having the internet as the major source for travel information among youth travelers in UAE means that tourism suppliers have a better chance to stand out if they present their products online. Consequently, tour operators, attraction operators, hotels companies, and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) should focus on direct online marketing through establishing well developed websites with more interesting, comprehensive and updated information.

Finally, the study has shown that UAE youth prefer independent travel planning over typical inclusive packaged tours. Therefore, local and international tour operators who target this profitable segment should develop more independent customized trips as per the expectations, the desires and the financial ability of its individuals.

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