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**CHALLENGES OF YOUTH TOURISM**<sup>1</sup> *Alice V. Khoshpakyants*<sup>2</sup> *Evgeniya V. Vidishcheva*

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The article deals with the prospects of a new, fast-growing sector in the international tourism – youth tourism. It provides basic definitions of the essence of youth tourism, and statistics for the sector over the last decade as well as the most popular destinations.

**Keywords:** youth tourism, tourism destinations.

Young travelers are becoming an increasingly important market for tourism industry players. According to a study released by the World Youth, Student and Educational Travel Confederation and the UNWTO, youth travel creates approximately 20 per cent of all international arrivals. This sector is clearly one of the fastest growing within the tourism industry.

The study – “Youth Travel Matters: Understanding The Global Phenomenon of Youth Travel” identifies number of trends in connection with this segment of the industry. Young tourists are not only budget travelers. In fact the present day young traveler spends even more than the mainstream tourist. Average spending of a young traveler per trip accounted for €1,915 in 2007 which is a 40 percent increase over the year 2002. However, the youth travel market has extended to 30+ years, which naturally increases the figures. These older backpackers are called ‘flashpackers’.

The study has also identified that majority (70 per cent) of young people travel for purpose. They travel abroad to learn a language, volunteer, work or study. This kind of tourism could be considered as a definitely positive one since 80 per cent of the travelers say they have become more tolerant and respectful of other cultures after the trip. Many authorities therefore develop attractions to lure this segment of the market. Young travelers could be attracted by adventure tourism or sport activities.

The favourite regions for the latest major travel of the youth have been Northern Europe (30 %), Southern Europe (16 %), North America (16 %) and Western Europe (8 %), with a considerable number of visits to South-Eastern Asia and to Australasia.

The other tourist regions have a high number of tourists who come for the first time in these countries, especially in the Indian sub-continent (60% come for the first time), South America, South-Eastern Asia and Australia (approximately 50 % of the young travelers come here for the first time). These are destinations that must be seen at least “once in a life time”. The regions that are visited by a larger number of tourists with ages over 26 are South and Central Africa (44 %), South and Central America (25 %), the Middle East (21 %) and South-Eastern Asia (20 %). These regions

are considered “difficult”, and this explains why experienced travelers prefer these destinations, while most young people prefer Europe and North America.

Although it is a largely underappreciated niche market, youth travel in the US is becoming more and more popular. Youth organized are now a major force. So far, just one major survey has been carried out to assess the impact teenagers have on the US tourism industry. The survey was carried out by Michigan State University and the results were somewhat surprising. It was found that the majority of American 12-18 year olds take trips without their parents, spending an average of \$10 billion per year. The survey was carried out via traditional mailing, online questionnaires and follow up telephone calls. As fewer than 10% of the teenagers taking part in the study own passports, it is only natural that the trips were found to take place within the United States. The most popular destination was California, with the youngsters clearly attracted by the sun and sea, being alerted to the state by its constant exposure on regular television programs and in magazine articles. Over half of the trips (52,1 %) were organized by high schools and other institutes of higher education. There was also a link noted between the amount of time the students spent travelling and academic results. It seems that well-travelled scholars achieve the best grades. Similarly, and most encouragingly for the tourism industry, it has been suggested in the aftermath of the survey that the younger people start to travel, the more they want to travel. This has led to advertising campaigns throughout the US being focused upon even younger ages.

So why are youngsters venturing abroad so much more than in years before?

The first answer is in the availability of loans. Youngsters now have easier access to borrowed money and often devote it to travelling abroad. Secondly, borders are opening up around the globe and the general state of worldwide bureaucracy seems to be more favourable to foreigners than beforehand. Less people have such issues with visas. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, more youngsters are using the internet to book trips and with more regularity than adults.

Let's consider the challenges youth tourism has faced recent years.

The economic challenge: Youth tourism is an important sector; many people in a number of countries are working in this branch. It should also be noted that in many countries, tourism is the second source of income after agriculture! There are two other economic dimensions: the high costs of infrastructure and the difficulty of guaranteeing full-time jobs.

The social challenge: Youth tourism is social in the sense that it creates jobs but there is also an equally important aspect: during holidays, one can properly relax, which is especially important for the underprivileged youth. From this point of view, holidays can be a means of integration. It was observed that in cities, where youth holidays had been organized, juvenile delinquency had diminished. This is obviously a major challenge: giving a majority of young people access to holidays and travelling – for the good of the entire community.

The educational challenge: Learning a foreign language is very valuable, be it as a complement to school teaching or in order to heighten one's competitiveness on the job market. An essential aspect is the discovery of a new environment, a different culture and unknown places. We must recognize that mass tourism has never taken into account this dimension. It is time for youth to become aware of the importance of these values, and act as a model for the following generations.

The international challenge : Young people grow up in a corner of the world with their own ideas on their neighbours and stereotypes, well anchored in their mentalities. It is therefore important for them to meet other people and discover

other ways of living, in order to broaden their views, thereby contributing to a better understanding of people.

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Статья посвящена перспективам развития нового, быстро растущего сектора в международном туризме – молодежного туризма. Приводятся основные определения сущности понятия молодежный туризм и статистика развития сектора за последнее десятилетие, а также самые популярные направления.

**Ключевые слова:** молодежный туризм, популярные направления туризма.