

## Current trends in tourist motivation

Elena-Cristina Mahika<sup>1</sup>

The Academy of Economic Studies Bucharest  
PhD, 1<sup>st</sup> year, Business Administration

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### ABSTRACT

Currently, in an evolving economy, the study of tourist behaviour is crucial for the field specialists. Influenced by a variety of factors, tourists tend to change their behaviour in time. An important indicator of tourist behaviour, tourist motivation has the purpose of revealing consumer's desires and aspirations when opting for a vacation. The analysis of tourist motivations has the advantage of preparing tourist practitioners, and therefore to prepare and forecast the offer of tourism products that match the current and future demand.

This paper is an exploratory research, based on data and studies on recent evolution of the travelling reasons, in order to identify the changing trends.

### KEYWORDS

tourist motivation, consumer behaviour, tourism market, tourist destination.

### JEL Classification

D11, L83, P46

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### Introduction

Studying tourist motivation has always been an important factor for tourism management. The ways of expressing and the changes that develop in time in tourist motivations directly influence tourism demand and supply. In order to survive in a market in constant evolution and change, characterized by fierce competition, in an economy in crisis, suppliers of tourism products and services need to know and anticipate changes in the motivations that determine tourists to buy a holiday package.

Broad topic, heavily debated, tourist motivation can be defined as a psychological stimulus able to determine the desire to travel.

Modes of expression and travel motivation trends over time are crucial in determining the tourism offer, and represent a decision-making factor in production and marketing of goods and services. Depending on the changes that occur in the motivations of tourists, we can determine consumer desires and can predict the most important aspects in creating the tourist offer.

By analyzing motivation in tourism we can determine several types of motivations, based on which forms of tourism were developed. Physical motivations derived in tourism recreation, sport, health, cultural motivations derived in cultural tourism, spiritual motivations derived in religious tourism, pilgrimage etc.

Motivation as a variable is a major issue for specialists in the field, and it was considered for a long period of time the only one that intervenes between stimulus and response to consumer behavior. (Catoiu, 2004).

Over time, researchers proposed various methods for the classification of reasons. After their origin, they were classified as primary or biological reasons, that underline the meet of physiological needs of consumers, and secondary or psychogenic reasons. Tourist motivation belongs to the secondary reasons category, generated by the fact that consumer lives in a society. The purpose is to satisfy

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<sup>1</sup> Author's contact: cristinamahika@yahoo.com

consumer's psychological needs such as prestige, belonging to a particular group or recognition by peers.

Another classification suggest there are fundamental and selective motives, fundamental reasons referring to the idea of satisfying the need for travel, and selective reasons underline the choice making process of selecting a particular destination, a particular form of travel or a particular travel agency.

Choosing between rational and emotional reasons, we can say tourist motives are more of an emotional kind because their purpose is the satisfaction of consumers psychological needs.

### **General aspects of tourist motivation - factors and classifications**

There are two categories of factors that influence the tourist in buying a holiday package: motivational factors that motivate tourists to want to buy a package holiday, and determining factors that determine whether the tourist is able to purchase the desired product.(Swarbrooke, 2004).

In the study of motivational factors should be taken into account several fundamental characteristics of tourist product, which distinguishes it from other products and services on the market:

- tourism product is complex, containing both tangible elements, as well as intangible elements;
- tourists buy an experience rather than a clearly defined product;
- there are certain phases in the tourist experience: anticipation phase, consumption phase and remembrance phase;
- tourist is part of the production process in tourism, which means that attitudes, emotions, expectations affect tourist experience evaluation;
- tourist experience is strongly influenced by external factors, which are not in the tourist or holiday package organizers control (factors such as weather, possible conflicts or wars, diseases, etc.).

In current literature there are available numerous classifications of motivational factors. In „Consumer behavior in tourism” (Swarbrooke,J.,Horner,S.,2004) paper two such classifications are proposed. The first divide tourist motivations into two categories: motivations that lead a person to choose to travel and motivations that lead a person to choose a particular holiday, in a certain destination, at a certain period in time.

The second classification is more complex and is accepted and used by many specialists. According to it, the motivations are:

- psychological (relaxation, sun tan, exercise and health, sex);
- emotional (nostalgia, romance, adventure, escape, fantasy, spiritual needs);
- personal (visits to relatives and friends, new friends);
- personal development (raising the level of knowledge, learning a new skill);
- status (fashion, exclusivity, getting a good offer);
- culture (sightseeing, experience of other cultures).

In “Tourism economy” paper, Rodica Minciu speaks about the necessity of identifying tourist motivations from the perspective of the importance of consumer behavior and expenses made by tourists evaluation. She also supports the importance of classify motivation in:

- leisure, recreation and holiday;
- visits to relatives and friends;
- business and professional reasons;
- medical treatment;
- religion / pilgrimage

- other reasons (aircraft crews and vessels for the public transport).

In 1983 Beach and Ragheb have developed a model called Ragheb LMS, which classifies motivational factors in four categories, based on Maslow 's model:

1. intellectual component - that show how individuals are motivated to engage in activities that require mental activity such as learning, exploration, discovery;
2. social component - that show how individuals engage in leisure activities for social reasons. This implies the need to meet two major needs - the need for friendship and inter-personal relationships and the need to be respected by others;
3. competence of acquiring skills - show how individuals engage in recreational activities to achieve, to lead, to challenge and compete. These activities usually are physical, in nature;
4. competence of avoiding stimulus - show a desire to escape from stressful life situations. This is the moment when tourists seek to avoid social contact, seeking solitude, peace, relaxation.

In the study of tourist motivation, the tourist has a crucial role as an entity. Each traveler is different and as different are the factors that motivate them. The most important factors that determine the motivation to travel for an individual are:

- his personality (gregarious/loner, adventurous/cautious, confident/timid) ;
- his lifestyle (there are different reasons for people concerned with fashion or health, for people who want to travel alone and the ones who want to make new friends, people who like parties);
- past experiences (the experience of being a tourist in general, but also in certain types of holidays; are taken into account both positive and negative experiences);
- the past (nostalgia for certain destinations);
- perceptions (on the strengths and weaknesses);
- status (the way they will be perceived by other people)

Also, it should be noted that motivational factors change over time in response to changes in the circumstances of individuals personal life. These circumstances are family (marriage, children's appearance in a couple), economy (increased or decreased income), health (appearance / disappearance of health problems, illness), experience (changing expectations as a tourist).

Regardless the main motivation the tourist has, it is unlikely to be influenced by a single factor. In most situations, he is influenced by a number of factors when making the decision. Most holidays are a compromise between the various reasons a tourist has. In this situation a motive becomes the dominant one, so the tourist purchase a holiday that meets that reason, or the tourist purchase a holiday where every reason is partially satisfied. (Swarbrooke, J., Horner, S.,2004),

Important in the study of tourist motivation is also the study of groups traveling together (shares motivations). People who travel together influence each other regarding decision-making factors. Most trips are a compromise between the members of the group. It is possible that the group has a dominant member, whose motivations influence the whole group. During a trip there is a period of time when group members spend time separately in order to meet their own individual needs, but most of the time the group will stay together and each will have an influence in choosing the activities.

Belonging to a particular group or social class influences the behavior of tourists. Those who are part of a higher social class choose holidays in exotic destinations, use luxury means of transport like private jets, yachts, limousines, choose luxury services. Middle-class tourists are turning to less pretentious offers, choose forms of accommodation such as camping, hostels, hotels from one star to three stars, choose holiday packages with advantageous price, even discounts.

In tourist motivations research a problem was always the discrepancy that exist between the reasons for traveling tourists declare and their real reasons (Swarbrooke, J., Horner, S.,2004).

Reasons for tourists not to declare their true motivations for traveling can be based on their desire to appear different than what they are, or the need to claim another status, another personality around other people. The explanation may also be the fact that many times people do not realize their real reasons for traveling, they do not think about them rationally.

The reasons tourists have depend also on the age segments. Teenagers, young people, parents, elders have different reasons to undertake a journey.

The gender of the tourists can influence to some extent their choice for a holiday. For example, women choose shopping holidays, or holidays that include beauty and body treatments, spa and men can opt for sports holidays such as golf tournaments, or participate in various sporting events (tennis championships, football games etc). Studies have shown that women put more value on physical and emotional relaxation in a trip. (Swarbrooke, J., Horner, S.,2004).

Cultural and nationality differences influence the choices tourists make regarding a holiday. This is the case of tourists from cold areas traveling on holiday in warm areas, or those from warm climate choosing holiday destinations in cold areas.

Motivational factors can depend also on the time when the purchase was made. Some tourists opt for tour packages for which they make reservations with months in advance, others take advantage of offers such as those of last-minute booking to receive discounts.

Marketing specialists are trying to link the products they develop with their target segment motivating factors. There are different motivations for different types of products, but there are also common motivations, such as social status.

Philip Kotler believes that factors that influence consumer behavior and whose action can be independent or combined can be grouped as follows (Kotler., Ph., 1997):

- psychological factors, intrinsic to the tourist, such as motivation, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes;
- personal factors: personality, self image, wealth, lifestyle, occupation, age;
- cultural factors: the system of norms and values that influence an individual's way of behaving in society;
- social factors: family, social classes and groups, opinion leaders.

### **Current trends in choosing a holiday**

It is very important to identify in time the changes in tourist motivations because those changes influence the mutations of the supply and the way the offer is being presented to clients.

Internationally in the last ten years one can note the existence of two important trends in tourist motivation. Much more tourists have opted for beauty and health holidays and for intellectually active holidays (Ban, Olimpia, 2007).

In Romania, beauty holidays have become a fashion among the female population due to the emergence of a large package offer in spa centers. These centers have emerged as a result of a demand forecast with latent potential, and the occurrence of such offers on the international market. Spa centers are located in major cities to attract both tourists and locals, as well as businessmen. There are also present in mountain and seaside resorts, thereby increasing the number of activities in those areas.

Tourists who choose intellectually-active holidays are those who want to use their free time for learning new skills, visiting museums, art galleries, places of cultural importance, they are those who want to learn something new or increase their knowledge. The holiday time is no more a "dead" time, for rest, but for learning.

Surveys conducted by the Spanish tour operator agencies have brought to light the high-income tourists desire for ecotourism and adventure tourism. Customers, especially those with incomes above average, have shown a desire to purchase unique, novel packages, that offers an unforgettable experience. For this reason, tourists have opted for active, interactive holidays, in exotic places.

Therefore, there is a noticeable change in the motivations of tourists on holiday luxury category, which previously opted for luxurious, cosmopolitan locations and exclusive services. (survey published in July 2009 by Paradizo Spanish tour operator, source: consiliervacante.ro).

Ecotourism or "green tourism" is gaining ground in recent years and eco resorts are increasingly preferred by tourists who appreciate this form of tourism, rather than traditional hotels. Reasons to travel are not simplistic, they are always nuanced. Society is changing, change is much faster in this age of information. Motivations suffer many radical changes. Tourists do not choose anymore relaxing, sedentary tourism products. Tourists require increasingly more unique tourism products, that are new, sensational. Specialists speak of four categories of experience that facilitates tourism: exploring experience, social experience, biotic experience and optimized experience.

Motivations such as the desire to relax, rest, stay inactive are now replaced with the desire to discover new places, to learn, meet people, to live new experiences. Increasingly more tourists want holidays that stimulate them mentally (Ban, Olimpia, 2007).

The features of the targeted customer segments are important indicators in the study of the tourist motivations. Worldwide there is an "aging population" tendency, aspect to be considered in creating packages for the segment of the population of 50-70 years. In this segment tourists have more free time, eager to travel, some of them have average to high income, willing to pay a significant amount of annual income for tours in major cities of the world (Ban, Olimpia, 2007).

In terms of tourist destinations chosen by Romanians in recent years, a study made by 360insight for Business Magazine showed that in the current economic crisis 42% of Romanians have given up on summer vacation this year. The study was conducted on a sample of 800 people, aged between 16 and 64 years, urban representative. Among those who went on vacation just about a quarter (26%) chose to spend their holidays abroad (Business Magazine).

The main destinations chosen by Romanians abroad were European countries Greece, Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, France and Germany. Greece was the first among the Romans preferred countries as holiday destinations, with a rate of 19%. The second country is Bulgaria with a preference of 18%, followed by Spain with 14% and Italy with 13%. 7% of Romanians have chosen France, 5% chose to spend their holiday in Germany. The following ranking countries are: Turkey (4%), Hungary (4%), Austria (3%), England (3%), Egypt (3%), Tunisia (2%) and Canada (2%) (Business Magazine).

Figures published by the European Union statistics office, Eurostat shows that Romanians are Europeans who are most often traveling inside their own country (94%), followed by Spanish people (92%), Bulgarians and Greeks (91%) . 34% of Romanians prefer long vacations, for more than 4 days (Eurostat).

### **Study on the changes in tourist motivation for Romania**

Eurostat data for tourism help us observe current trends in Romania in terms of number of tourists, number of nights or the tourism arrivals in hotels and other establishments.

By analyzing the overnight stays spent by tourists in hotels and similar establishments in 2004 – 2010 period we can see an ascending trend during 2004 - 2008, a peak in 2008, followed by a decrease trend in 2008-2010. A similar trend can be observed for the number of arrivals in hotels and similar establishments. For all the other categories is valid the existence of ascending developments in the period 2006-2008 and a decreasing developments in 2008-2010, with maximum values in 2008 (table nr.1). The descending evolution from the period 2008-2010 was certainly influenced by many factors, including global economic crisis.

## Evolution of main indicators in the period 2004-2010

Table 1

Indicator/Year (1000)	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Nights spent in hotels and similar establishments	13980	14094	14929	16259	16580	13932	12733
Tourists	3839	3583	3152	5086	5264	5213	4289
Trips	4249	3857	3387	5402	5474	5420	4403
Arrivals in hotels and similar establishments	5295	5545	5967	6717	6859	5919	5889
Arrivals in other collective accommodation establishments	316	237	232	235	239	202	164

Source: Eurostat

By calculating the average growth index for 2004-2010 we can speak of a decrease with 2% in the number of overnight stays, the number of tourists has increased on average by 1.8%, the number of visits increased on average by 0.6%, the number of arrivals in hotels and similar establishments experienced an average increase of 1.7 percentage points and the number of arrivals in other establishments has decreased on average by 10.4%.

Particularly important for this study is the analysis of indicators such as number of tourists, number of visits and number of tourists as the main reason for the trip. For this study we used data from Statistical Yearbook of Romania. The three main groups of tourist motivations considered are: visiting friends and relatives, business and other professional reasons and other reasons (treatment, pilgrimage etc.).

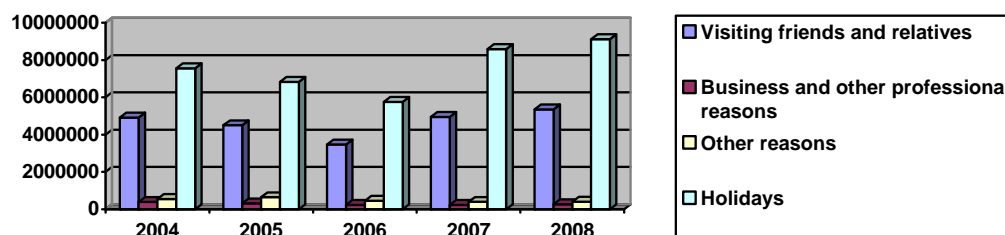


Fig. 1 The number of tourists by main reason for traveling (Data according to the Statistical Yearbook of Romania)

According to data published by the Statistical Yearbook of Romania, the number of tourists increased by 15% during 2004-2008, with highs of 9,7 million tourists in 2008. Years 2005 and 2006 can be characterized by a decrease in the number of tourists, by 8.2% and 17.42%. Year 2007 brought a spectacular increase in the number of tourists by 43 percentage points, to increase again in 2008, this time with a rate of 6%.

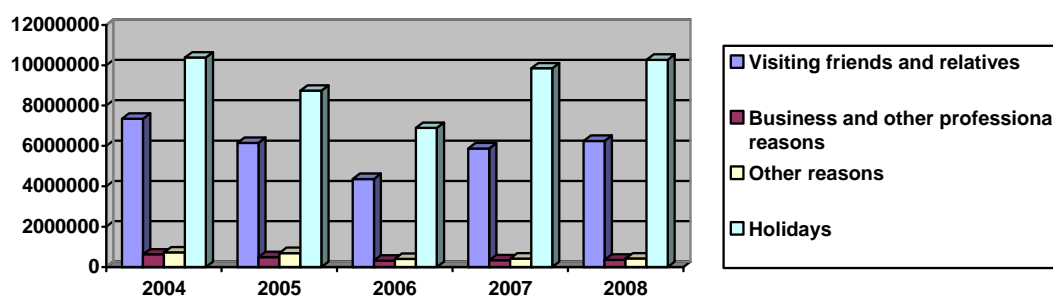
In terms of the motivations tourists have to undertake the holidays, it can be seen that the main reason was to visit friends and relatives at a rate of about 85%. For 2008, 89% of tourists were traveling to visit friends and relatives, 4.24% of tourists and business traveled for other professional reasons, and 6.7% had other motivations, such as treatment or pilgrimage.

The number of tourists who traveled to visit friends and relatives has decreased with 29.5 percentage points in 2004-2006, in 2007 the number has increased with 42.61%, reaching a value of 4,95 million

tourists, with 23,475 tourists more than in 2004. In 2008 the value increased slightly, by 8.16% and reached the highest value of the period (5,3 million visitors). The evolution of this segment was similar to that of the total number of tourists.

The decline suffered by the business travel segment in the 2004-2006 period was much higher than the one in the first group. It went from 383,830 tourists in 2004 to 225,977 tourists in 2006, with 41.12 percentage points less. In 2007, there was not such a spectacular increase. In this segment the number of tourists increased by only 2.7 percentage points, so that in 2008 to grow by 9.73%. (Figure nr.1)

On average, in the studied period, the number of tourists that have as main motivation for travel visits to friends and relatives have a share of 88%, those interested in business and other professional reasons, 4.7%, and those who travel for other reasons have about 7.3%. By implementing the method of Markov chains, we estimate for the next years percentages of 91% for tourists who visit their friends and relatives, 3.75% for those who travel on business and 5.25% for those with other motivations.

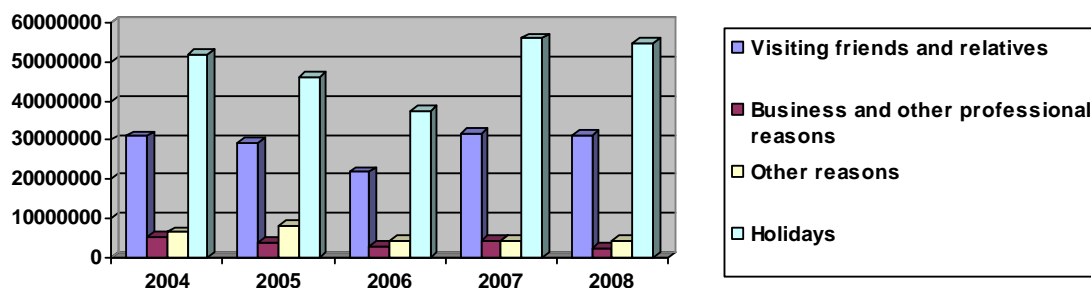


**Fig. 2. Number of trips by main reason of travel**  
(Data according to the Statistical Yearbook of Romania)

The number of trips has declined in 2004-2006, in 2006-2007 it has increased by 39%. In 2008, there was an increase compared to 2007 by 4 percentage points, reaching a value of 11,05 million travel without reaching the value of 11,7 million in 2004.

In 2008 88.85% of trips were made to visit friends and relatives, 5.09% were made for professional reasons, 6.05% for other reasons. In the growth period 2006-2008, the number of trips taken to visit relatives and friends increased by 43 percentage points, the number of business trips increased by 12.5%, while the trips made for other reasons increased by 4.73%.

Although the number of trips grouped by three categories of motivations have experienced a similar evolution, all with a decrease in growth between 2004-2006 and 2006-2008, we can see that the evolution of the number of trips to friends and relatives is clearly superior to the other two groups of motivations. (Figure nr. 2)



**Fig. 3. Number of nights spent by main reason of travel  
(Data according to the Statistical Yearbook of Romania)**

In number of nights category we can see a trend slightly different from the evolution of the number of tourists and number of trips. If for the first two categories analyzed, the period 2006-2008 is a period of growth, with a maximum figure for 2008, in the evolution of number of overnights there is an increase of 52.33% from 2006 in 2007, and in 2008 the number of overnights drops by 5.39 percentage points. We can see that in 2004-2006 there was a decrease in the number of nights with a minimum figure achieved in 2006, the same like the other two categories.

In 2008, the percentages of the three main groups of tourist motivations are as follows: 83.47% for visiting friends and relatives, business 5.85% and 10.67% for other reasons. The evolution of the number of overnights for the three groups of motivation is similar to that of the total overnight stays: a decrease in the period 2004-2006, spectacular growth in 2006-2007, followed by a decrease in 2008. (Figure nr.3)

In the analysis of destination choice we have been taken into account the following destinations: spas, resorts in the coastal zone, excluding the city of Constanta, in the mountain resorts, including the Danube Delta Tulcea, Bucharest and county capitals, excluding Tulcea, other cities and tourist routes.

**Arrivals of tourists in the tourist areas with functions of tourist accommodation,  
by type of tourist destinations, in total number of arrivals (%)**

**Table 2**

Destination/Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Spas	12.1	11.2	11.3	10.6	10.2	10.4	9.3
Seaside resorts, excluding Constanta	13.4	12.3	11	11.4	11.7	12.8	11.6
Mountain resorts	14.8	14.2	14.1	14.3	14	13.5	13.4
Delta Dunarii area, including Tulcea	1.3	1.3	0.8	1.1	1.4	1.2	1.1
Bucharest and county capitals, excluding Tulcea,	46.5	47.5	48	47.5	47.2	47	49.5
Other cities and tourist routes	11.8	13.5	14.7	15.1	15.5	15.1	15

Source: insse.ro

For 2010, the largest number of arrivals is held by the Bucharest and county capitals (49.5%), mountain resorts holds 13.4% , seaside resorts have 11.6%, tourists opted for spas at a rate of 9.35%, Danube Delta area has a rate of 1.12%. Percentages for the 2004-2010 period in the total of arrivals vary slightly.

In the case of all tourist destinations analyzed, indicators have reached maximum values in 2007-2008.





Fig. 4. Arrivals of tourists according to table 2

After the analysis of tourist destinations chosen by Romanians, it can be concluded that they remained constant in their motivations in 2004-2010. The large number of arrivals in Bucharest and county capitals is due to trips made for business and professional reasons, as well as leisure, culture and last but not least, in order to visit friends and relatives. Choosing to travel in the mountain resorts is motivated by the desire for recreation, leisure, and for practicing summer and winter sports. In seaside resorts tourists are looking for recreation, leisure, rest. Spas areas are visited by tourists for health and medical treatment. Danube Delta area is suitable for recreation, walks in nature, sightseeing of unique flora and fauna.

### Conclusion

The study on tourist motivation is a powerful instrument in the hands of tourism practitioners. In response to changes in time, companies that sell travel products can make decisions regarding the holiday offer in the coming years, they also may decide to introduce new, innovative products, they may withdraw or reduce the number of those products for which there is a declined demand. By knowing the motives that make the tourist to opt for a holiday, local management can take measures to encourage certain forms of tourism and to increase the number of tourists in their area. Also, by knowing tourists wishes and needs, they can prepare themselves to provide additional services that will increase revenue from tourism and help the local economy as a whole.

After this analysis we can conclude that in our country the number of tourists has decreased lately and that Romanian tourists keep the same general preference for tourist destinations. However, you may notice changes in the activities held in those destinations. Increasingly more tourists are opting for interactive, mentally stimulating holidays. They choose activities that allow them to acquire new skills. Female segment of the population opt more often for beauty holidays, for spas, for shopping holidays abroad, during sales season.

After analyzing the changes in the travel motivations, travel agencies can take measures such as:

- promote cultural tourism in Romania for foreign tourists, but also for Romanian people, who want to know more about their country's history;
- promoting tourism packages for shopping in European capitals, in periods of seasonal discounts;
- investors of most important resorts can focus on opening spas and centers where tourists can practice various sports;
- local communities can take steps to develop further activities in resorts, like opening sports facilities, learning centers, centers where tourists can see presentation of local history; they can conduct marketing activities to stimulate interest in local museums, etc..

This work may be considered a starting point for an extensive study on ways in which changes occur in the motivations of tourists through implementation of polls and opinion surveys. This way we can find to what extent tourists change their behavior when choosing a holiday and what drives them to do so.

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