TOURISTIC SERVICES FOR THE SENIORS FROM ROMANIA

SERVICII TURISTICE PENTRU SENIORII DIN ROMANIA

C. NEGRUŢ[1], SIMONA CĂTA[2], RAMONA VIOLETA VASIESCU[1], ELENA TONEA[3]

[1] Tibiscus University, Faculty of Economic Sciences, Timisoara, Romania; ramonavasilescu@yahoo.com
[2] West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Timisoara, Romania
[3]Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Timişoara, Agricultural Management Faculty, Timisoara, Romania ;

Abstract: *In this work of older people will be referred to as "senior". This work brings into question the issue of supply of tourist services for seniors. The subject is interesting because senior tourism had increased by 40%, given that there is financial crisis. The cultural differences between Romania and the seniors in developed countries are high. In our country the concept of active aging is difficult to understand.*

Key words: *tourism, seniors, marketing, Romania*

INTRODUCTION

In this work, older people will be referred to as "seniors", avoiding the word "retirement", which has become a symbol of labors uncovered by authorities in Romania. Attitude towards seniors in Romania shows varied: from public charity, elections, to the hidden contempt when crowds appear to take advantage of promotions.

In recent years there is a tendency to believe that people who remain active seniors know how to optimize their opportunities to remain in a state of good health and to participate in various activities, be they economic, social, spiritual, cultural and civic. An active aging allows the seniors to maintain their high social status and potential psychological and mental level.

Of course, cultural differences between Romanians and the seniors in developed countries are high. In our country the concept of active aging

is difficult to understand. Unfortunately, the signals from the political and the media, puts people in the category of 50 year-olds. Under these circumstances, offers of tourist services for seniors, at first sight, may be a niche offering, addressing a small number of people.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The senior position in our country is known mainly through TV programs through which we most often see elderly standing in queues to pay the tax or promotions, producing an indescribable rush. Other instances occur in which seniors are going to a special meal for them at New Year's or a diamond wedding celebration. Whatever the situation, debates built around it are passionate and full of electoral enthusiasm.

However, no matter how difficult the senior position in Romania is, under the assumption that seniors have learned to enjoy the benefits offered by life, we can assume that they are seeking ways of relaxation and leisure for their specific age. Seniors dedicated study materials are found to be those for elderly people (in Romanian "persoane varstnice", "personae de varsta a treia", or "pensionari").

In this paper we discussed the tourist services dedicated to seniors. For this paper the authors have used the Internet and search engines, a simple and effective way to find offers from Timisoara and other cities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSIONS

According to a study by the Ministry of Culture, Romania, in terms of cultural, seniors fall into two categories:

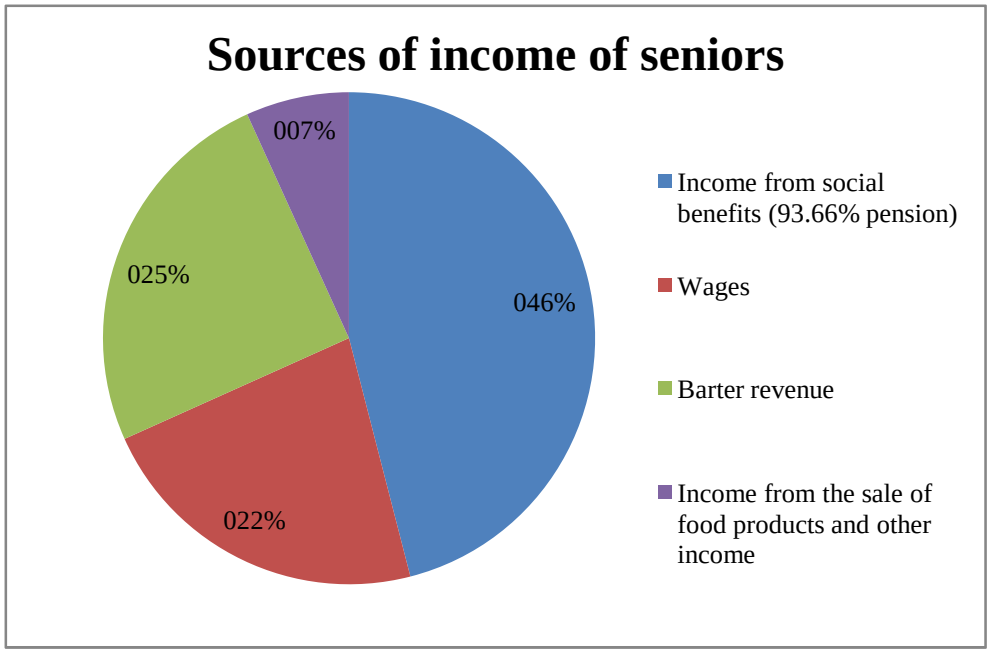
- Those with low income, mostly rural, where culture has little significance;
- Those with incomes above 50 lei per family member, mostly in Bucharest, where cultures has great significance and who are equipped with latest technology apparatuses and even an Internet connection.

Sources of income of seniors in Romania are presented in Figure 1. As shown, pension plays an important role in the lives of seniors who have an income from social benefits.

Even during the financial crisis, the national tourism of seniors

increased by 40%. However, the resorts offers presented by the Pension Fund (Casa de Pensii) have known a decline in demand at times. For instance, in the Maramures County, from 7532 tickets only 5336 were used. In terms of beneficiaries, the offers were not attractive for reasons such as:

- Large distance from the resort town to the residence of the beneficiary;
- Periods in which the treatment series were inconveniently placed (too early in spring or late in fall);
- Relatively high cost of transport to the resort and back.



Source: Socio-economic situation of the elderly in Romania and other EU countries, the National Council of Senior Citizens, March 2009
(*Situația socio-economică a persoanelor vârstnice din România şi din alte ţări ale Uniunii Europene*, Consiliul Național al persoanelor Vârstnice, martie 2009)

Whatever the offer, the senior should be able to contact the travel agency easily. Travel agencies must take into account that older people are more critical and likely to spend money when they have it.

Offers for seniors destination countries are numerous and well organized. Thus, in rural locations, offers for grandparents accompanied by grandchildren are well appreciated and sought. In addition to the benefits of life in the nature, the grandchildren can participate to animals care. Other offers include sophisticated guesthouse accommodation and visits to various places of tourist interest: museums, monasteries, ceramics workshops, sheepfolds, etc. For example the Giulia Tour company provides a log for each grandchild where the child can describe each day spent with grandparents - which gives the trip emotional value.

Offers are not hard to find; even a word search *grandparents with grandchildren* (*bunici cu nepoti*) gets 436,000 results. Even on the first page of results, there is a link to a website with tips about how to easily find offers for holiday's grandparents with grandchildren. Of course you can refine your search by adding additional keywords such as vacation or pension.

Although the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is very important both for seniors and children, the offers for holidays for seniors are extremely numerous. For instance, an initial search by keywords holiday for seniors gets 10 million results. The offers are abroad (Spain, Bulgaria, Greece, etc.).

The offers are numerous, with travel agencies often planning departures even several times a month. For example, the Agency "Travel Solutions" has departures in April on the following dates: 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 23 and 24. Among the multitude of offerings, with little effort you can find offers with discounts and specific facilities for seniors.

Seniors can choose from many offers, whether to spend a vacation in a three star rating hotel or renting a villa or an apartment where they can be householders themselves.

CONCLUSIONS

The offers for seniors are not hard to find when using search engines effectively. Of course, seniors may experience some minor difficulties but with a little help, they can overcome the apparent obstacles of the new technologies.

Sites have pages dedicated to seniors; there are well placed bids for outings. Generally, the offers are well highlighted with important details; some fees are not included in the trip (airport taxes, sightseeing etc. entries.).

The number of offers is so great that there should be a portal for seniors. This portal may contain a section dedicated to tourism. Of course, this section may contain, in turn, sections dedicated to spa tourism, religious tourism etc. Unfortunately, such a portal requires spending some money, which is hard to find. Unfortunately, existing NGOs make their presence known only when they are failing more than they "should", through their cry of mercy, not when the Romanian society should be driven by positive examples. We believe that the existence of such a portal would be a positive example. A hope in this direction is on pensionari.ro site, which is likely to become in future a true portal.

In fact, Internet searches reveal an important aspect of social life of seniors in Romania. Despite the belief of all pensioners being extremely poor (the exceptions being retired from the magistracy), pensioners who lead an active life in old age have appeared in Romania.

Of course, in time, and in Romania the concept of active aging will gain more ground. We dare to say this because more dense interaction with other countries will change the Romanian society more and more.

We dare say that in order to increase the success of programs, travel agencies should promote their separation in the media of bias related to age. In support of this effervescent affirm stand offers on web pages. Even if the media touches to tears through the presentation of retired social cases, they have to balance this with positivism given the fact that seniors can travel, either together with grandchildren or by themselves, they can find their places as they wanted to during their peaks in youth.

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