

A Review on the Definition of Youth Tourism

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Abstract: A review of literature suggests that research in the area of youth, especially youth tourism, is not well developed and has mostly been ignored in the past. It is only in the recent times that the interest of the world has started to shift towards this segment of tourists because of their considerable increase in number and their global significance in the tourism industry in terms of their economic contribution. However, problems arise while trying to correctly identify the segment as there has been a wide range of definitions for youth as well as youth tourists in different literature. Various governmental and non-governmental organizations in the world have defined the concept differently to serve their purposes. Thus, this paper is an attempt to shed some light on the concept of youth and youth tourism by reviewing some relevant literature in the subject area.

Keywords: Youth, Youth Tourism, World Tourism Organisation, Independent Trips.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to the UNWTO Secretary-General [18], "Tourism is a sector of hope" (pp. 5). Tourism has no doubt become one of the biggest and fastest growing industry in the world over the years and the economic benefits and contribution of this sector to the world economy cannot be overlooked. As per the UNWTO Tourism Highlights-2017 [17], the Global tourist arrivals have significantly climbed to as high as 1,235 million in 2016 and it is further estimated to grow and touch the 1.4 billion mark by the year 2020 and 1.8 billion by the 2030. This is very encouraging since international tourist arrivals were only 25 million in 1950 and 278 million in 1980 and 674 million in 2000. Similarly, the global receipts from such arrivals rose from US \$ 2 billion in 1950 to US\$ 495 billion in 2000 and US \$ 1220 billion in 2016. Now, tourism sector contributes around 10 percent of the world's GDP and generates around 7 percent of world's export in goods and services thus, making it the third largest export category in the world.

Youth travel represents a distinct, an important and a rapidly growing segment of this tourism industry. The Global Report on the Power of Youth Travel (2016) [16] estimated that of the one billion or more international tourists, more than 23% was represented by the youths alone. Also, around USD 286 billion represented the travel expenditure of the youth in the global market in 2014. The same is expected to rise to over USD 400 billion by 2020. Not only this, there are significant domestic markets which are earning a substantial part of their revenues from youth travellers alone.

The youth now-a-days follow different lifestyles, are better off in terms of income and savings and free time. Such factors and others have led to the expansion of the market and more youngsters travelling abroad [10], [1]. However, majority of the countries in the world do not see student and youth tourists as distinct from the general tourists. As per a survey by UNWTO, there is a significant gap between the importance of this segment and the extent of government policies and actions with only 41 out of 121 countries surveyed recognised youth and/or student travel as a distinct tourism market segment although developing countries in Asia and Africa give higher priority to this segment [24].

Despite their emergence as an important part of the tourism industry, there is a lack of a single universal definition to perfectly categorise the youth and identify the young tourists and their problems and prospects. Therefore, the focus of this paper is to shed some light on the concept of youth and youth tourism by reviewing some relevant literature in the subject area. Various definitions have been suggested by various authors or important bodies in the field of tourism regarding the phenomenon of youth travel. This paper, thus, attempts to have an overall understanding of its meaning and its classification in terms of the overall tourism market segment. For this purpose, relevant journals and research papers have been reviewed as well as relevant websites have been referred to in order to gather the required information.

II. YOUTH

Research on youth has been a deserted and a less developed area in sociology [6] and so is the case of research on youth tourism [10], although the young tourists have been in rise since the Second World War and has grown significantly in the recent years so much so that it would not be wrong to regard it as an important and a separate tourist segment in its own right. Studies on youth experienced a boost only in the later part of the century, particularly from the mid-seventies [6]. Since then there has been a wide range of definitions as to who can be regarded as ‘young’. The presence of multiple and diverse definitions for the concept of youth has continuously led to confusion on the matter.

Rosenmayr (1968) [8] referred to youth both as a stage or a process in the development of a person as well as a group or section of the society or the population in general. The author roughly indicated the age group of youth to be between 13 and 24 years but also asserted that one must distinguish between adolescents and the young adults while there are also other meaningful ways to subdivide youths. Hollingshead (1949) in Ruiz (2010) [6] regarded youth as that period when the society no longer considers or treats a person as a child but also at the same time does not regard him the status of an adult. Schonhammer [11] described youth travel as “a part of transition to adulthood” and “an expression to expand the region of free movement” (pp. 19).

Despite various viewpoints, ‘age’ has been the most common and simplest criteria used to define youth tourism. The United Nations (UN) in 1981 suggests a universal definition of ‘youth’ to include people between the 15 and 24 years of age [22]. The UNESCO uses this universal definition for its global or regional level activities on youth [23]. According to the UN, ‘youth’ is often referred to include those between the ages where one moves from completing necessary education to obtaining their early jobs [22]. It specifically describes ‘youth’ as “a period of transition from dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence” (pp. 1). However, the meaning varies significantly in different societies which cannot be disregarded.

Thus, accordingly, several other definitions exist within the different entities of UN which they use depending upon the purpose, changing demography, varied economic or socio-cultural variables etc. which is highlighted with the help of Table I below:

TABLE I: DEFINITIONS USED BY DIFFERENT UNITED NATIONS ENTITIES/INSTRUMENTS/REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Entity/Instrument/Organization	Age	Reference
UN Secretariat/UNESCO/ILO	Youth: 15-24	UN Instruments, Statistics
UN Habitat (Youth Fund)	Youth 15-32	Agenda 21
UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA	Adolescent: 10-19, Young People: 10-24, Youth: 15-24	UNFPA
UNICEF /The Convention on Rights of the Child	Child until 18	UNICEF
The African Youth Charter	Youth: 15-35	African Union, 2006
Entity/Instrument/Organization	Age	Reference
UN Secretariat/UNESCO/ILO	Youth: 15-24	UN Instruments, Statistics
UN Habitat (Youth Fund)	Youth 15-32	Agenda 21
UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA	Adolescent: 10-19, Young People: 10-24, Youth: 15-24	UNFPA

Source: United Nations

III. YOUTH TOURISM

The World Tourism Organization defines tourism as [3]: “activities of people who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty four hours and not more than one consecutive year, for leisure, business or other purposes” (pp. 102). Youths comprise an important part of this overall tourism segment. Due to the changes in the socio-economic conditions, increased income, more leisure time, increased use of technology, simplified travel procedures etc. the number of tourists including youth tourists are on the rise worldwide. Now, youth tourism is a high value market and has great potential. In the year 2010 itself, the youth travellers were responsible for around USD 165 billion global receipts [15]. As per a WTO report in 1991, every sixth arrival in the world is a young tourist [4].

Earlier, youth tourists were just seen as a part of the mainstream tourism sector with little differences setting them aside. Mostly, they were regarded as just the younger version of the general tourists. Gradually, the size of youth tourists began to rise and their style and travel patterns gave way to new trends. Now, with the passage of time, youth tourism is no longer a niche market segment [15]. It is continuously growing and developing as a tourism segment. It was in 1991 when the UNWTO emphasised the importance of youth tourism [5] and since then, the interests of people have rapidly increased. According to the UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, the youth travel market has developed now to be an important component of the tourism sector. The most popular forms of the youth travel market are educational, volunteer, work and travel, cultural exchange, sports and adventure and leisure tourism [4], [13].

For young travellers, travelling is a part of their identity and a way to learn and to meet new people, to explore new cultures. They also see it as a means to career as well as self-development [15]. As per Richards and Wilson (2003), the main motivations of the young travelers to travel are to explore new cultures, excitement and knowledge enhancement [5]. It has been found that the youths travel more frequently than other tourists, stay for longer durations and discover and venture to farther or unique destinations that other tourists may be reluctant to go. They are budget travellers but often spend more than other tourists due to longer stays. They attract others to the destinations and often return themselves in the future to the destinations they like [15]. As concluded by Richards and Wilson [5], youth and student travellers are experience seekers who explore in pursuit of memorable experience, building a travel career and widening their horizon by opting for challenging destinations.

Moisa (2010a) [3] has highlighted the various labels that have been used in various times to recognize youth. Some of them are ‘Generation X’ (born during 1961-1981), ‘Baby Booms’ (born during 1943-1960), ‘Generation 2000’, ‘Generation MTV’, ‘Generation Y’ (born after 1981) etc. According to Moisa (2010a), the term ‘Generation Y’, also referred to as the ‘millennials’, is the most frequently used term by academicians.

Tourism among youths has been traced back to Europe in the time of the seventeenth and eighteenth century by Adler (1985) [7]. He specifically mentions the Grand Tour of the young upper class that started at that time. Although youth were not the only ones to be a part of the road or tramping culture, yet the event was regarded to be more connected with the younger people. This trend evolved into an upward moving phenomenon with more and more middle-class youths adopting it. This tramping culture ended during the First World War or transformed into a tourism or recreation activity rather than employment related activity.

Numerous studies on youth tourists and their travel have been conducted till now, especially in the recent years. The studies have focussed on the significance and diversification of youth tourists and their rising numbers. Although the youth tourism market is, in reality, a component of the mainstream tourism market and has many similarities, yet research in the area has revealed significant differences when it comes to youth motivations and characteristics of their travel [4].

According to the UNWTO, the young travellers are those between 15 to 29 years. As per the Industry Review No. 1 Youth and Student Travel Market - WYSE Travel Confederation 2011 [15], the traditional age of 18-24 years for youth has now shifted to 15 to 30+ years. Thus, the definition of youth tourists now include even those who are above 30 years of age [1], [15]. However, different countries have different practices and thus, the concept of youth tourists vary among in terms of age limits.

Some examples of the age range used in some countries are given in Table II. Whereas in some countries, the young people are considered as those who are still dependent on their parents, some countries use a broader definition which includes even the people in their 30s. However, the most common age ranges are between 15 and 24-26, or 15-30. In France, three different groups are recognized within the definition of youth. They are: children (0-15 years), student and youths (15-25 years) and young couples and singles (25-35 years) [24].

TABLE II: AGE LIMITS FOR YOUTH TOURISM USED IN SOME COUNTRIES

Country	Age of young tourists
Poland	15-19
France	0-35
Argentina	20-35
Finland	15-24
Morocco	15-25

Italy	15-26
Philippines	15-24
Thailand	Under 25
Pakistan	15-29
Nepal	16-30
Slovenia	15-29
Hungary	Under 30

Source: UNWTO, 2005

Moisa (2010a) [3] also analysed many definitions of the term youth travel from world over, used by both government and non-government organisations, to get a clear insight into the phenomenon. The Canadian Council and the North American Student & Youth Travel Association have extended the definition to 30 years old [3]. Further, the Youth Law prevalent in Romania considers youth to be between the ages of 14 to 35 years [3], [13], [19]. A survey sponsored by Google Travel Spain that culminated into The Phocuswright Report segregated young travellers into two categories – one between 18 to 24 years and the other between 25 to 34 years [15]. The Department of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports in India recognises those people falling in the age group of 15-29 years as youth [20]. Around 40 percent of the total population of India is represented by youths. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) uses 15-29 years to define youth [21] while the Nigerian National Youth Policy-2009 recognises youth as those between 18-35 years old [25]. Table III highlights some definitions of youth tourists.

TABLE III: DEFINITIONS OF YOUNG TOURISTS

Source	Age of young tourists
UNWTO	15 - 29
WYSE Travel Confederation	15 - 30 +
Canadian Council	15 - 30
North American Student & Youth Travel Association	15 - 30
Romanian Youth Law	14 - 35
Phocuswright Report (Google Travel Spain)	18 - 34
OECD	15 - 29
Nigerian Youth Policy	18 - 35
The Department of Youth Affairs (India)	15 - 29
Moisa (2010a)	15 - 30

Source: Various

Carr (1998) also highlighted the diversity in the definitions of young tourists which is presented with the help of Table IV [10]. Here we can observe how the author shows that the definitions range from as low as 15 years to as high as 38 years of age. This shows that there seems to be no accepted parameters as to who can be considered young. This has resulted in difficulties in estimating the size of the market properly. The definitions, thus, can range from 15 years (minimum age defined by the World Tourism Organisation) to 38 years (highest age used by American Adventures operators). Due to a lack of a general definition [2], [13], problems have arisen while trying to properly identify and study the young tourist segment [10], especially in the light of the changing times where the youth are becoming more dynamic and the category is no longer a flexible one that is bound by a definite age but more so is recognised by their lifestyle, attitude and behaviour.

TABLE IV: RESEARCH AND ORGANISATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF YOUNG TOURISTS AS REVIEWED BY CARR (1998)

Source	Age of young tourists
Kale, McIntyre & Weir, 1987	18-35
Aramberri, 1991	15-25
Bywater, 1993	Under 26
World Tourism Organization, 1991	15-29
Club 18-35 ^a	18-30

Escapades ^a	18-30
Sundance ^a	18-30
American Adventures ^a	18-38
Oasis ^a	20-35

A Commercial organizations

Source: Carr, 1998

Another important aspect is the growing life expectancy of people and delay of marriage and kids which have created a class of adults that resembles more the spirit of young. Current trend suggests that people now a days stay young for longer years, marry late, and indulge in adventurous and exiting activities which is more reflective of those we consider as young. As such what is happening is that the age of the youth is being pushed back [10] to include such tourists who exhibit youthful features. It is evident from the above table 2 that the age of the youth has been pushed from previously 24-29 years to 35-38 years with the progress of time. The young tourists are constantly evolving, making new trends, creating their own style and identity, their own culture thereby creating an image for themselves as distinct from their older and more general tourist counterparts.

From the above discussion, it will be appropriate to state the definition given by the World Tourism Organisation for general understanding. According to UNWTO Youth tourism refers to [14] “all independent trips for periods of less than one year by people aged 16-29 which 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 one’s usual environment” (pp. 97). The World Youth Student and Educational (WYSE) Travel Confederation adds the term ‘independent travel’ to explain the concept which means travels made by the youth by themselves without being accompanied by parents or any guardian [3], [13]. Seekings (1995) in Moisa (2010a) [3], uses the age range of 16-25 years to define the category. Moisa [3], however, defines youth travel as “a phenomenon of modern times, resulted from the movement and stay of young people aged up to 30 outside the place of their residence, for at least 24 hours...” (pp. 105).

However, Due to the differences in the definitions of youth in different literature, the concept of youth cannot simply be correlated or associated with any age [3]. The many definitions makes it difficult for us to define the segment of the young tourists. Yet, a person who is aged 15 to around 30 years or is in his early 30s can be considered as a young person in present times and even this may get pushed back in the future as the current generation is staying younger for longer times and the tendency to stay youthful is in rise. Lury (2001) in Cardwell (2005) opines that instead of age ‘youth’ relates more to youthfulness as an attitude or a culmination of different qualities, habits and beliefs [12]. The definitions may, thus, change according to time and the changes in the society and its values and norms. The diversity in the nature of student and youth tourism is mostly the reason for the wide range of definitions [24]. In India, proper statistics on youth tourism as a specific segment is lacking as it is yet to get the required attention it deserves. Majority of the young Indian tourists spend overnight trips mostly for holiday, leisure and recreation purposes [9].

IV. CONCLUSION

According to literature, the youth tourist segment has been comparatively slow in development and until recent years there were very few research in the area even though youth tourism has great market potential. Young tourists have generally been considered as a niche market but it has now evolved considerably in the last decades and generate considerable revenue. Identifying and understanding the young travel segment is, thus, essential for formulating policies for its successful integration with the general tourism market.

Because of the lack of a universal definition in the field for youth and youth tourism, problems arise in terms of generation of accurate information and statistics. This makes it difficult to estimate accurately their size, their preferences, motivations etc. However, the existing literature can provide a good insight into the phenomenon. People roughly between the ages of 15 years to those in their late 30s can be more or less said to fall in the category of ‘youth’ and the same can be used to define the segment of youth tourists. Yet, this definition should not be taken too strictly as being young or youthful is also as much of a psychological thing as it is physical. In this light, it is somehow difficult to define the concept of youth or youth tourism by restricting it to a particular age group. Rather, youth tourism should be seen as a movement, a dynamic segment and a potentially attractive dimension of tourism industry.

Still, it is no less important to estimate or segment the tourists as youth tourists for marketing purposes and for the purpose of developing the tourism market to cater to their needs and this could be possible more effectively only if an age range could be defined to identify them. And although this defining age range need not be taken as a rigid line for understanding such tourists, but for marketing and policy purposes it could help in identifying the young tourists more efficiently and collect and compile better statistical data regarding the segment. Only then it would be possible to address the issues related to the promotion and development of the youth tourist market. This is highly important keeping in mind the fact that these young travellers are going to become the future tourists and will present great potential for future visits as well as attract other tourists to the locations. Thus, the destinations that can meet their present needs effectively can profit more in the long run. Also, it would be of great convenience if the definition is more or less similar across the countries as it will help in making more coordinated efforts. However, the age range may need to be revised at intervals to adapt to the changing times and perspectives if required.

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