THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FIT AND ORGANIZED TOURISTS – A COMPARISON

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Abstract - The development of technology and the entrance of the low cost carriers increased the share of the independent tourism within international tourism. The characteristics of Free Independent Tourists(FIT)differ from those of organized tourists. The purpose of the current research is to distinguish between the factors effecting independent tourism and organized tourism. The current research is based on a data set collected from 46,008 tourists at the conclusion of their visit to Israel between 2016 and 2018.Initial results indicate that the groups do not differ in age or income level, however, they differ in almost all of the other variables like: length of stay, party size, level of satisfaction and intention to revisit. The results of the current study imply that suppliers of independent tourist services should market Israel using the internet.

Keywords - Expenses, FIT tourists, organized tours, tourism.

I. INTRODUCTION

The number of International tourism in 2018 was 1.4 billion,two years ahead of the forecasts, and their expensestotaled 1.7 trillion dollars. About two-thirds of these tourists are independent tourists (FIT). For example, in 2012 independent tourists accounted for around 70 percent of all tourists in China (Kristensen, 2013). The number of international tourists in Israel is also increasing. In 2017the number of tourists that came to Israelreached a record of 3.6 million (Israel Ministry of Tourism, 2017), generating 5.5 billion dollars in income. In the past, most tourists to Israel came on organized tours, but recently the number of independent tourists increased significantly and is now about two third of the tourism to Israel. Understanding the different characteristics of those two groups of tourists is crucial for the Israeli ministry of tourism and for the tourism suppliers.

The characteristics of independent tourists differ from those of organized tourists, yet most research does not differentiate between the two types. Independent tourists often have more experience with destinations and more knowledge of foreign travel. The independent touristare more educated and are looking for challenges and self-realization. Moreover,independent tourists spend more money during their trip and therefore have a greater impact on the economy.

The purpose of this research is to focus on the different characteristics of the independent tourist and organized tourist visiting Israel in order to allow the Israeli ministry of tourism and the tourism suppliers to address the proper market when advertising Israel.

II. METHODS

This research used a questionnaire distributed among tourists at the conclusion of their trip to Israel. The survey included tourists that stayed in Israel at least one night. A company that conducts surveys for the Israel Ministry of Tourism administered the survey at all Israeli borders. The survey was conducted between 2016 and 2018 and included 46008 tourists. Respondents were told that participation in the study was voluntary.

According to company reports, the response rate was 95 percent. We used independent T test to identify the differences between both tourist types regarding each variable separately and a logistic regression where the dependent variable was tourist type and the independent variables: first time visit (yes/no), gender, length of visit, number of persons traveling and total expenses.

III. RESULTS

The survey included 46,008 tourists: 26603 (65.4 percent) independent tourists and 14,095 (34.6 percent) tourists that came on organized tours.

Tourists that come on organized tours usually come for touring (17.8 percent) or for religious purposes (72.4 percent), while, tourists that come as FIT come for variety of reasons: touring (20.4 percent), visiting friends and family (41.2 percent), recreation (13.6 percent) and business (17.4 percent). For most tourists that came as FIT this was not the first visit to Israel (61.3 percent), while for most of the tourist that came on package tour it was the first visit to Israel (87.6 percent).

The source of information is also very different between those two groups. Tourists that come on organized tours get their information from travel agent (38.3 percent) or their church and community (30.1 percent) while the FIT relays mainly on the internet as their source of information (42.3 percent) or friends (21.8 percent).

In order to identify the differences between the groups we performed T-test for independent variables.Table 1 present the results of independent t tests.

	Tourist type	N	Mean (std)
Numofnights	FIT	26603	11.98* (19.55)
	Organized	14095	7.54 (5.77)
Numofpersons	FIT	26603	1.44* (0.82)
	Organized	14095	1.27 (0.549)
Overallsatisfaction	FIT	21932	4.24* (0.626)
	Organized	12062	4.48 (0.592)
Valueformoney	FIT	21737	3.22* (0.931)
	Organized	12010	3.25 (0.855)
ReturntoIsrael	FIT	18607	4.56* (0.791)
	Organized	9547	4.04 (1.014)

Table 1: T test results.

The results indicate that there is a significant difference in all the tested variables between the two types of tourists. FIT come for an average of 12 days while organized tourists come for an average of 7.5 days. The group size of FIT is 1.44, while of organized tourist it is 1.27. The overall satisfaction of the organized tourists is higher (4.48) with a value for money of 3.25 compared to overall satisfaction of 4.24 for the FIT tourists and 3.22 value for money. However the intention for a return visit is higher for FIT (4.56) compare to (4.04) for the organized tourists.

The results indicate that most of the tourist to Israel are between the ages 35 to 45 and that there is no significant difference between the two groups. In addition most tourists that come to Israel have an average income. Among FIT there is no difference between the percentage of men and women that visit Israel.However, among organized tours the percentage of women is higher (60 percent) than the percentage of men. In order to differentiate between the variable that effect the FIT tourist and the organized tourist we used a logistic regression in which the dependent variable is the means of organization. The results of the regression are summarized in table 2.

		B	Exp(B)
Step 1[a]	Num_of_nights	-.114	.892*
	Num_of_persons_	-.240	.787*
	First_visit	-2.075	.126*
	TOT_exp	.001	1.001*
	Gender	.761	2.141*
	Constant	.744	2.105*

Table 2: logistic regression results.

The results of the logistic regression indicate that tourist that come on organized tour come on smaller groups for a shorter stay. They are usually women that come for the first time and the level of expanses is higher.

IV. DISCUSSIONAND CONCLUSIONS

Due to the increase number of international tourists in the world today and in Israel specifically and therefore the increased importance in the country's economics it is extremely important to understand the characteristics of those tourists. In the past most tourists to Israel came on organized tours , but recently the number of independent tourists increased significantly and is now about two third of the tourism to Israel. Understanding the different characteristics of those two groups of tourists is crucial. The study resultsindicate that FIT tourists indeed differ from organized tourists, both in their demographic characteristics and in their trip characteristics. The FIT usually stays for longer period of, gets most of the information regarding the tour on the internet or from friends. For more independent tourists this is not the first visit to Israel and they intend to visit it again in the future. More womencome on organized tours. The party size of FIT is larger than the average party size of tourists that come on organized tours.

The results of the current study imply that tourist suppliers should aim advertisements of packaged tour to women and market via travel agents or the religious organization. When addressing the independent tourism the internet should be used as the main platform of advertisement, as this is the FIT main source of information. In addition, the advertisements should distinguish between first-timers who often come on organized tours and those that have visited Israel before who tend to come as FIT.

This study has some limitation. In order to fully understand the different effect of the two groups on the country's economics, it is important to understand the amount each group spends on its trip. Unfortunately, the survey did not include valid data regarding the tourists spending.

Future research should include more data regarding the tourists spending.

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