

# How do young people travel? - Evidence from Croatia and Serbia

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## HOW DO YOUNG PEOPLE TRAVEL? – EVIDENCE FROM CROATIA AND SERBIA

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### **Abstract**

*Purpose* – Young people represent a significant segment of the tourism market, accounting for 23% of the total tourism market, according to UNWTO. This segment provides socio-economic opportunities for local communities as young travellers boost local tourism businesses, foster closer social interaction with host populations, and engage in environmental protection. The purpose of this research is to identify the basic characteristics of travel among young people from Croatia and Serbia and to determine which elements are most important to them when choosing a destination, while also determining whether there are differences between respondents from these two groups. *Methodology* - an online survey was conducted in Croatia and Serbia. The sample includes young people between the ages of 15 and 30. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to create the sample profile. Pearson's chi-square tests and Mann-Whitney U tests were performed to detect significant differences between young respondents from Croatia and those from Serbia.

*Findings* – The results of this study show that marketers can consider Croatian and Serbian youth travellers as a single market segment, because they are indistinguishable in many ways. Their motives and activities at the destination are similar, as are the elements by which they choose their holiday destination. Their attitudes toward sustainability issues also do not differ.

*Originality of the research* – There is a considerable amount of academic research on young people and their travel. However, few studies have examined the travel of young people from Southeastern Europe or the attitudes of young people who experienced the pandemic. This study aims to fill this gap by providing insights into the attitudes of young travellers from Croatia and Serbia and what they look for when choosing a travel destination. Another important contribution is that this study also captures the views of young people from neighbouring countries, which provides an opportunity for comparison. This information will enable the destination management targeting young tourists to create tailored offers for the young population, which will have a positive long-term impact on the economy and the local community.

**Keywords** youth tourism, young people, travel, Croatia, Serbia

### **INTRODUCTION**

Youth tourism is considered as one of the very important and fast growing tourism markets (Mannaa, 2018; Mohamed et al., 2010; Moisa, 2010a; WYSE Travel Confederation, 2014). In 2009, the value of the international youth tourism market was approximately US\$190 billion (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016a). According to WYSE Travel Confederation (2018), around 304 million trips were taken by young travellers in 2017, with an estimated market value of around USD 250 billion. When it comes to defining youth tourism, age is one of the most commonly used criteria (Saikia & Goswami, 2019). However, sometimes age does not need to be a category to define youth tourism,

as individuals can behave according to the behavioural pattern of young people while exceeding the age criteria (Carr, 1998). According to Richards (2008), youth tourism is defined as independent travel by people aged between 16 and 29 that last less than a year and is motivated by a desire to experience other cultures, build life experiences and or benefit from formal and informal opportunities outside usual environment. Often, youth tourism is defined differently in different countries considering the age category (Saikia & Goswami, 2019). Public laws in Croatia and Serbia consider all people between the ages of 15 and 30 to be young people, which will also be the case in this study (Hrvatski sabor, 2007; Narodna skupština Republike Srbije, 2011).

Young people not only derive cultural benefits from travel, but also provide socioeconomic opportunities for the places they visit (Yunusovich, 2018). This particular segment of tourism demand is becoming the focus of research from a variety of perspectives, with young people's travel motivation related to elements in destination choice being one of the most common topics (Tibon, 2012; Moisa, 2010b; Wangari Njagi et al, 2017; Tomić & Božić, 2015), followed by studies involving main travel components such as price, accommodation, means of transport and length of stay (Hancuk et al., 2020; WYSE Travel Confederation, 2014, WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016a). Issues related to sustainable travel are also not to be neglected (Ahmad et al, 2012; Cavagnaro et al, 2018; Buffa, 2015; Šaparnienė et al, 2022). Buffa (2015) suggested different profiles depending on how interested young people are in sustainable travel, while Šaparnienė et al. (2022) found that sustainable behaviour is more prevalent in everyday life than in travel. A higher number of trips during studies and education improves awareness of (Priyanto & Andrianto, 2022). Millennials are not considered a homogenous group of tourists (Cavagnaro et al, 2018; Ketter, 2021). Nevertheless, some main characteristics of youth travel can be identified. As far as Southeastern Europe is concerned, there are several studies involving young people from countries such as Croatia and Serbia (Klarin & Gusić, 2013; Tomić & Božić, 2015; WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016b). However, there are no studies comparing the travel characteristics of youth from these two countries or the attitudes of young people who experienced the pandemic. This study aims to fill this gap, as its main purpose is to identify the main travel characteristics and attitudes of young Serbs and Croats and to determine whether there are differences.

## 1. LITERATURE BACKGROUND

Youth tourism can be seen as a special form of tourism, independent from the other forms. At the same time, youth tourism is divided in different ways in the literature. Educational/student tourism, volunteer tourism, work and travel, cultural exchange, sports and adventure tourism and leisure tourism are considered as forms of youth tourism (Demeter & Bratucu, 2014; Moisa, 2010a). The uniqueness of the youth travel demand segment is reflected in the length of the trip, budget and accommodation. Travel motivations also differ between youth and other generations. According to the WYSE Travel Confederation (2018), the estimated average length of stay for young people's main trip in 2017 was 52 days. This rather long length of stay is related to the fact that in this research, nearly a quarter of respondents reported living abroad (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2018). As the new tourism trends on a global level propose to replace one long trip with several shorter ones, it can be assumed that the youth will follow

this path. Also, new forms of remote education and work allow young people to travel throughout the year and not only during school vacations. On the other hand, several studies have shown that young people take between 1 and 1.5 trips per year (Mannaa, 2018, Staffieri et al., 2017). The number of trips is likely to be influenced by the level of development of a particular region of the country or the country as a whole (Burlăcioiu et al., 2019; Staffieri et al., 2017). Young people have limited disposable income (Slabbert et al., 2012), and travel budgets vary from destination to destination. Studies show that young people spend around 2,867 euros on a trip (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2018). For young people from the UAE and Malaysia, parents are the main source of money for travel (Mannaa, 2018; Mohamed et al., 2010). In addition, young people also use their savings, scholarships, student loans, partners, or boyfriends/girlfriends for travel (Carr, 2005). Research by Klarin and Gusić (2013) showed that Croatian youth are not considered “big spender youth”, as the majority spend between 133 and 199 euros per trip. Regarding Serbs, Božić and Tomić (2015) found that one of the main barriers to travel is the poor economic situation throughout the country. In 2013, the WYSE Travel Confederation conducted a detailed profile of young Serbian tourists abroad. The survey shows that educational tourism and work-and-travel programs have a major impact on travel. Most, young tourists from Serbia were students visiting the United States of America. The main purposes of their visits were language learning, work experience and holiday. It is also noticeable is that the average length of their trip was 85 days and they spent about 3.100 euros (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2014).

It is estimated that between 50 and 100 thousand Croats and between 100 and 500 Serbs couchsurf (Hancuk et al., 2020). Globally, the most popular form of accommodation young people is still the youth hostel (Demeter et al., 2015). Couchsurfing is a new form of accommodation where people experience staying in other people’s homes for free. In addition to hostels, youth also tend to stay with families or friends (Richards & Wilson, 2003; Slabbert et al., 2012), usually to save more money (Lim et al., 2015). Some of the most common criteria when choosing a place to stay are: hospitable, affordable price, location (Aceron et al., 2018; Veríssimo & Costa, 2019; WYSE Travel Confederation, 2015). The means of transportation can vary based on the distance to the destination, the length of the trip, and the available funds. The mode of transportation also determines the price of a trip, as it is almost always the most expensive part of the final travel product. Bus was the most common means of transportation for young Croatians (Klarin & Gusić, 2013). In 2017, air travel became the main mode of transport leaving bus travel behind (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2018), which can be explained by the expansion of low-cost flights and the general decline in prices in this industry (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2018; Shoham et al., 2004).

On this basis, the research question was formulated as follows:

What are the main travel characteristics of young Croats and Serbs in terms of length of stay, travel expenditures, type of accommodation and means of transportation, and are there differences between the two groups?

Motivation of young tourists was also one of the main research topics. Understanding motives helps to understand tourists’ satisfaction, develop an appropriate offer, and understand tourists’ decision-making process (Crompton & McKay, 1997). Richards and Morrill (2020) presented the key details from the New Horizons Survey research.

The research shows that the main motives for youth travel in 2007 were learning about other cultures, expanding knowledge and mental relaxation. Seven years later, a similar study revealed somewhat different main motives. The top three were interacting with locals, expanding knowledge, and exploring other cultures. Similar motives are observed among the young population from Kenya and UAE. The main motives of this group are to have fun, visit new places not yet visited, and learn about new and different ways of life (Wangari Njagi et al., 2017). UAE youth are mostly motivated by the mild weather; personal safety and simply having a relaxing time (Mannaa, 2018). Young Serbs value above all good hospitality, a good restaurant offer, and affordable accommodation. The factor that has the least influence on visiting a city is available and cheap vacation, more precisely; couchsurfing and a short travel distance (Tomić & Božić, 2015).

In this context, the following research question was formulated:

What are the main travel motives of young Croats and Serbs and are there differences between the two groups?

Digitalization is an important part of daily life and also of travel. As expected, the literature suggested that the internet is the main source of information (Mannaa, 2018; Monaco, 2018; Pencarelli et al., 2020) and for young people it is also one of the main ways to book a trip (Pencarelli et al., 2020). In addition, it is important for them to stay in touch with the rest of the world because, besides location, the most important feature when choosing where to stay is free Wi-Fi (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2015). When it comes to sharing their experiences, reviews are more likely to be left by post-Millennials, while older youth (Millennials) read reviews, but are less likely to leave their own. In either case, negative reviews influence the decisions of both groups and may influence their choice of accommodation or restaurant (Monaco, 2018).

Since one of the most well-known definitions of sustainable development emphasises the importance of improvements for future generations, it is necessary to analyse the opinions of young people on this issue. This generation is aware of the sustainability problems caused by tourism development, such as: the use of non/renewable and limited resources, the impact on biodiversity and natural and historical heritage (Šaparnienė et al., 2022). Young travellers have a positive attitude towards tourism and value sustainability, they are aware of the importance of the environment and are willing to create a better world on an ecological level (Šaparnienė et al., 2022). At the destination, they prefer local food and are willing to participate in local events (Buffa, 2015; Šaparnienė et al., 2022). In addition, youth see littering as a major problem at their destination and are willing to volunteer to help the local community (Kasim & Wicknes, 2020).

In this context, a research question was formulated:

What are the attitudes of young Croats and Serbs towards sustainability issues and are there differences between them?

Young people's travels have not been the focus of researchers internationally (Staffieri et al., 2017), so there is still room for new research. The importance of further research cannot be overstated, as youth travel has positive effects on education, self-confidence, skill development, maturation, cultural growth, cross-cultural communication and individual change (Priyanto & Andrianto, 2022; Staffieri et al., 2017; Stone & Petrick, 2013).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the research was to identify the travel characteristics of young people from Croatia and Serbia and to find out which elements are most important for them when choosing a travel destination. At the same time, the aim was to determine whether there are differences in the attitudes of respondents from these two groups. This is important as nationality can cause differences in the way of travelling and activities, since behaviour is determined by individual background and culture (Blomgren & Ljungström, 2018).

Croatia and Serbia are countries with people of the same origin, a common history, and a similar economic and political background. Since independence, the path of these two countries went in different directions, especially in terms of economic aspects. Today, Croatia has been a member of the European Union for almost a decade and Serbia has been an EU candidate country for the same period. Since membership in the EU brings different political, economic and trade benefits, it would be interesting to observe to what extent young people from these two countries can benefit or not from being a member of the EU or a candidate country. It can be assumed that it is easier for young Croats to travel overall.

Data were used from an online survey conducted as part of a scientific student project at the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, entitled "How do we travel?: Youth tourism - the key features of travel". The online survey among young people aged 15 to 30 from Croatia and Serbia was conducted from March to May 2022 using Google Forms. The questionnaire was distributed via various social networks, platforms, and emails through snowball sampling. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous, and included young people who had travelled in the past five years. A specific region or city was not a requirement for participation in the survey and respondents were young people living in different places in Croatia and Serbia.

A questionnaire containing 33 items captured socio-demographic information, motives, activities undertaken in the destination, travel characteristics, attitudes regarding sustainability issues and the importance young people attach to certain characteristics when choosing a travel destination. The items were adapted from previous researches: Buffa, 2015; Hancuk et al., 2020; Klarin & Gusić, 2013; Bubalo-Živković & Lukić, 2015; Moisa, 2010b; Tomić & Božić, 2015; Wangari Njagi et al., 2017; WYSE Travel Confederation, 2018; Šaparnienė et al., 2022; Šimková & Holzner, 2014.

Data were analysed using SPSS 25.0. Descriptive analysis provided the profile of the sample.

Table 1: **Sample profile**

	<b>Croatia (n = 73)</b>		<b>Serbia (n = 85)</b>	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	11	15.1	22	25.9
Female	62	84.9	63	74.1
Age (mean)	22.8		23.9	
<b>Average monthly income</b>				
≤ 500 euro	9	12.3	16	18.3
501 - 1.000 euro	15	20.5	57	67.1
1.001 - 1.500 euro	16	21.9	0	0.0
1.501 - 2.000 euro	17	23.3	9	10.6
≥ 2.001 euro	16	21.9	3	3.5
<b>Status</b>				
Employed	30	41.1	44	51.8
Unemployed	43	58.9	41	48.2
<b>Place of residence</b>				
Urban	51	69.9	62	72.9
Rural	22	30.1	23	27.1
<b>Social network user</b>				
Everyday	73	100	79	92.9
Few times a week	0	0	5	5.9
Not a user	0	0	1	1.2

Source: Authors

In both samples, the vast majority of respondents are female. On average, respondents from Croatia are 22.8 years old and those from Serbia are 23.9 years old. Of Croatian respondents, 45.2% reported that their average family income is above 1,501 euros, while the majority (67.1%) of Serbian respondents reported an average monthly family income between 501 and 1,000 euros. 58.9% of Croatian respondents are unemployed, while among Serbian respondents 51.8% are employed. In both groups, more respondents live in urban areas and the vast majority use social networks (Table 1).

### 3. FINDINGS

One of the aims of this study was to find out how young people travel and what are the characteristics of their travels, and whether there are differences between the two groups of respondents (from Croatia and from Serbia). For this purpose, Pearson's chi-square tests and Mann-Whitney U tests were performed. Since the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated that the assumption of normal distribution for the variable of interest was violated, a nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test was used to detect significant differences between the young respondents from Croatia and those from Serbia.

As shown in Table 2, Pearson's chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 17.247$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) suggests that there are differences between the two groups of respondents in terms of travel planning. Cramer's V coefficients show that there is a statistically significant and moderate relationship between the variables. Respondents from Croatia are more likely to organize their trips individually than respondents from Serbia, who are more inclined to use the services of tourism intermediaries. Bizirgianni and Dionysopoulou (2013) reported that about 33% of respondents were more likely to use tourism intermediaries in their travel planning, but in this study only 14% of respondents used their services. When it comes to who young respondents travel with and how much they post while traveling compared to at home, no statistical significance was found between groups at the 0.05 level (Table 2). Almost 44% of Croatian and Serbian respondents travel with friends, which is in line with previous studies (Horak & Weber, 2000). 33% of young Croats and 39% of Serbs travel most frequently with family.

Bizirgianni and Dionysopoulou (2013) reported that 74% of respondents in their study posted content on social media after completing their trip. In contrast, the majority of respondents in this study in both groups posted more content on social media while traveling than at home.

Table 2: **Travel characteristics**

	Croatia (n = 73)		Serbia (n = 85)		$\chi^2$ -test
	N	%	n	%	
<b>Travel organisation</b>					$\chi^2 = 17.247$ $p < 0.001$
individually	62	84.9	46	54.1	
travel agency	5	6.8	17	20.0	
combination	6	8.2	22	25.9	



<b>Travel the most</b>					$\chi^2 = 8.828$ $p = 0.066$
alone	5	6.8	0	0	
with friends	32	43.8	37	43.5	
with partner	24	32.9	33	38.8	
with family	9	12.3	9	10.6	
school/faculty/association	3	4.5	6	7.1	
<b>Posting contents on social media – travelling vs. home</b>					$\chi^2 = 5.462$ $p = 0.243$
I don't post	3	4.1	11	12.9	
I post less while traveling	3	4.1	9	10.6	
I post the same	25	34.2	19	22.4	
I post more while travelling	39	53.4	46	54.1	
missing	3	4.1	0	0	
<b>Length of stay</b>					<b>Mann-Whitney U test</b>
previous travel (days)	5.12	6.986	5.55	3.530	$U = 2596$ $p = 0.075$
next travel (days)	4.85	2.529	6.95	4.714	$U = 2064$ $p = 0.006$

Source: Authors

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test show that there are no statistically significant differences between the two groups of respondents in terms of length of previous tourist stays ( $U = 2596$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), but there are significant differences in terms of planned length of stay on future trips ( $U = 2064$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), with respondents from Serbia planning a longer stay (6.9 days) on a future trip than respondents from Croatia (4.8 days).

Table 3: **The importance of elements in the choice of destination**

Elements	Croatia (n = 73)		Serbia (n = 85)		Mann-Whitney U test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
various activities and facilities offering	4.16	1.014	4.22	0.943	$U = 3043.5$ $p = 0.823$

safety and security	4.16	0.958	4.08	0.991	U = 2953.5 p = 0.604
new and different experiences	4.14	1.109	4.45	0.852	U = 2665.5 p = 0.087
preserved nature	3.93	1.171	3.98	1.234	U = 2989.5 p = 0.676
accommodation quality	3.93	1.058	3.86	1.037	U = 2935.0 p = 0.540
traffic connection	3.92	1.127	3.76	1.172	U = 2881.0 p = 0.419
clean	3.86	1.071	4.18	0.915	U = 2610.5 p = 0.070
low accommodation prices	3.77	1.137	3.96	0.932	U = 2866.5 p = 0.389
cultural offer	3.58	1.224	3.85	1.107	U = 2738.0 p = 0.181
detailed internet information about the destination	3.53	1.259	3.73	1.199	U = 2838.0 p = 0.340
proximity to the destination	3.49	1.18	3.39	1.328	U = 3024.5 p = 0.779
possibility to interact with locals	3.36	1.284	3.55	1.305	U = 2831.5 p = 0.328
digital destination	3.14	1.337	2.76	1.517	U = 2639.5 p = 0.099
nightlife offer	3.11	1.253	2.6	1.373	U = 2436.5 p = 0.018
developed sports infrastructure	2.34	1.272	2.31	1.397	U = 2976.0 p = 0.646
visited by celebrity	1.47	0.783	1.54	1.097	U = 2952.5 p = 0.510

Note: mean values range from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important);

Elements that respondents in both groups place a high value on when choosing a destination include the availability of a variety of activities and facilities, as well as new and different experiences, safety, and an intact natural environment (Table 3). Interestingly, for both Croatian and Serbian respondents, the least important factors in choosing a destination are the offer of nightlife, developed sports infrastructure, and the fact that the destination was visited by a celebrity. Similarly, Bickikova (2014) found that among the students in the study, the natural environment, a warm climate, and a rich cultural heritage were among the most influential factors, while the destination's reputation as a party destination and a good selection of sports opportunities seemed to have the least influence on choosing a holiday destination.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test show that for 15 of the 16 elements offered, there is no difference in the importance that respondents from Croatia and Serbia attach to them. Only for the nightlife element, the mean rank ( $U = 2436$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) shows that respondents from Croatia attach a statistically significant higher importance to this element than respondents from Serbia.

Table 4: **Travel motives and activities in the destination**

	Croatia (n = 73)		Serbia (n = 85)		Mann-Whitney U test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<b>Motives</b>					
new experiences	4.42	0.832	4.51	0.781	U = 5679.0 p = 0.611
events and opportunities for entertainment	4.41	0.831	4.02	0.988	U = 2389.0 p = 0.007
rest and relaxation	4.37	1.149	4.67	0.73	U = 2801.0 p = 0.164
contact with new cultures	4.34	0.961	4.44	0.808	U = 3015.5 p = 0.728
learning opportunities	4.19	1.05	4.28	0.934	U = 3023.5 p = 0.762
discovery of new landscapes	4.1	1.18	4.2	1.033	U = 3048 p = 0.836
cultural events and facilities	4.07	1.084	3.92	1.093	U = 2835.0 p = 0.324
local gastronomy	4.04	1.184	3.87	1.142	U = 2767.0 p = 0.216

being in contact with nature	3.89	1.173	3.84	1.243	U = 3040.0 p = 0.819
meeting with the locals	3.71	1.359	3.65	1.099	U = 2876.0 p = 0.413
getting to know yourself	3.66	1.293	3.82	1.255	U = 2857.0 p = 0.371
live like the locals	3.29	1.486	2.98	1.406	U = 2723.0 p = 0.175
learning new languages	3.12	1.384	3.21	1.292	U = 2990.5 p = 0.688
publishing content on social networks	2.48	1.281	2.21	1.372	U = 2695.0 p = 0.139
sports	2.32	1.311	2.24	1.342	U = 2976.5 p = 0.644
<b>Activities</b>					
sightseeing	4.58	0.848	4.69	0.69	U = 2910.5 p = 0.361
enjoying nature	4.36	0.933	4.44	0.823	U = 3019.0 p = 0.739
visiting bars and restaurants	4.22	0.932	3.76	1.065	U = 2335.5 p = 0.005
beach activities	4.14	1.182	4.32	0.954	U = 2915.0 p = 0.468
visiting museums, galleries, exhibitions	3.66	1.216	3.69	1.185	U = 3032.0 p = 0.799
visiting festivals	3.38	1.174	3.13	1.298	U = 2779.0 p = 0.246
shopping	2.96	1.086	2.71	1.233	U = 2688.0 p = 0.132

learning languages	2.82	1.273	2.92	1.365	U = 2986.0 p = 0.678
mountain climbing	2.67	1.491	2.93	1.387	U = 2766.5 p = 0.230
other sports activities	2.56	1.394	2.56	1.393	U = 3090.0 p = 0.964
skiing	2.52	1.556	2.65	1.624	U = 2992.0 p = 0.687
visiting religious sites	2.18	1.206	3.29	1.223	U = 1619.5 p < 0,001

Note: mean values range from 1 (never) to 5 (very often);

In both groups, new experiences, rest and relaxation, entertainment events and opportunities, exposure to a new culture, and learning opportunities are the most common motives (Table 4). These results are consistent with previous findings (e.g., Bickikova, 2014; Eusébio and Carneiro, 2015; Horak and Weber, 2000; Nicolau and Más, 2006; Richards and Wilson, 2003). Horak and Weber (2000) stated that young people are motivated to travel to relax, sightsee, or participate in various forms of outdoor recreation, learn about the host culture, and further their education. In this study, using the results of the Mann-Whitney U tests, it was found that for 14 of the 15 motives, there was no difference in the frequency with which respondents from Croatia and Serbia attribute to them. Only for the motive entertainment events and opportunities there was a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of respondents from the observed countries. The mean of the ranks ( $U = 2335.5$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ) shows that events and entertainment are a more frequent motive for respondents from Croatia than for respondents from Serbia.

The activities undertaken at the destination are very often sightseeing, nature experiences, visiting bars and restaurants, and beach activities for both groups of respondents (Table 4). This is again consistent with previous research such as that of Eusébio and Carneiro (2015), who identified four primary activity categories, including culture, fun, sun and beach, and nature. In addition, Frändberg (2010) found that young tourists show some heterogeneity in terms of their engagement in different activities. In the case of this study, it was found that for 10 of the 12 activities offered, there is no difference in the frequency with which they are undertaken by respondents from Croatia and Serbia. Only in the activities of visiting religious sites and visiting bars and restaurants there was a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of respondents from the observed countries. The mean of the ranks ( $U = 2335.5$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ) shows that respondents from Croatia visit bars and restaurants more often than respondents from Serbia when they are at the destination. On the other hand, respondents from Serbia visit religious sites more often than respondents from Croatia. Destination activities are a key factor in attracting tourists to the destination. The preferred activities of young people the opportunity at

the destination give destinations whose target groups are young people to develop and modify an offer tailored to this target group. This also helps other destinations to target young people as preferred customers.

Table 5: Transport means, type of accommodation and trip expenditure

	Croatia (n = 73)		Serbia (n = 85)		Mann-Whitney U test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<b>Means of transport</b>					
car	3.71	1.429	3.44	1.515	U = 2785.5 p = 0.250
car-sharing	2.52	1.591	1.76	1.221	U = 2259.5 p = 0.001
train	2.47	1.444	2.48	1.359	U = 3041.0 p = 0.825
bus	3.6	1.222	4.14	1.037	U = 2309.5 p = 0.004
plane	3.08	1.543	2.61	1.513	U = 2565.5 p = 0.54
ship	2.03	1.027	1.86	1.146	U = 2715.0 p = 0.147
<b>Type of accommodation</b>					
camp	1.55	0.929	1.39	0.725	U = 2855.0 p = 0.276
hotel	3.23	1.439	3.6	1.32	U = 2663.0 p = 0.115
hostel	2.64	1.531	2.39	1.31	U = 2847.0 p = 0.357
renting private accommodation	4.07	1.295	4.11	1.195	U = 3091.0 p = 0.965
own accommodation	1.67	1.155	1.71	1.233	U = 3100.0 p = 0.991
friends and relatives	3.21	1.554	3.01	1.384	U = 2845.0 p = 0.357

couch surfing	1.41	0.940	1.38	0.801	U = 3068.5 p = 0.500
Expenditure per trip					
	Mean (eur)	SD	Mean (eur)	SD	
on the last trip	483.4	476.034	382.12	333.015	U = 2638.0 p = 0.253
on the next trip	577.8	824.449	479.9	507.458	U = 2629.5 p = 0.500

Note: mean values range from 1 (never) to 5 (very often)

As for the means of transportation, respondents from Croatia most often choose the car, while respondents from Serbia choose the bus for their trips. The results show that there are statistically significant differences in the frequency of choosing some of the offered means of transport. (Table 5), for example, respondents from Croatia more often choose the car sharing option than respondents from Serbia (U = 2259 p <0.005). Also, the results (U = 2309, p <0.005) show that respondents from Serbia more often choose bus as a means of transportation for a tourist trip than respondents from Croatia. Shoham et al. (2004) also reported differences in transportation use across their four samples, with airplane use being highest in the Israeli sample and train use being much lower in all samples (Israelis, South Africans, private U.S. college students, and public U.S. college students).

The results show that there are no statistically significant differences in the type of accommodation chosen by respondents from both countries. Respondents from both groups most often choose private accommodation, accommodation with friends or relatives, and hotel accommodations (Table 5). There are also no significant differences between the two groups of respondents in terms of spending on the last trip and planned spending on the next trip. On average, Croatian respondents spent 483.4 euros and Serbian respondents 382.12 euros.

Considering the importance of sustainable tourism (as well as the goals set by the UNWTO in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) (Hanchuk et al., 2020), which requires responsible and sustainable behaviour from all stakeholders involved in its activities, it is of great importance to study how young tourists perceive sustainability aspects during their travels. For this purpose, the next part focused on the statements about the economic, sociological and environmental aspects of tourism and the young tourists' reflections on these aspects. As can be seen in Table 6, the results of the Mann-Whitney U tests show that there are no statistically significant differences between the views of respondents from Croatia and Serbia on certain elements of sustainability.

Table 6: Sustainability aspects – respondents' attitudes

	Croatia (n = 73)		Serbia (n = 85)		Mann-Whitney U test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
For me it is important that the destination pays attention to the ecological aspects of the environment	3,42	1,105	3,51	1,161	U = 2958.0 p = 0.600
I am willing to pay more for eco-products.	2,97	1,236	2,85	1,249	U = 2874.5 p = 0.413
I prefer local food and drinks at the destination	4,21	1,054	4,26	0,902	U = 3086.0 p = 0.950
It is important to me that as much money as possible stays in the community	3,18	1,206	3,16	1,335	U = 3070.0 p = 0.907
It is important to me to get in touch with local people	3,19	1,319	3,51	1,24	U = 2655.0 p = 0.773
I am willing to pay more for local products	3,55	1,281	3,52	1,13	U = 3022.5 p = 0.773
I try to make sure that my tourist stay does not have an economic impact on the destination	3,34	1,272	3,55	1,286	U = 2791.5 p = 0.264
I try to make sure that my tourist stay has no ecological consequences for the destination	4,01	1,124	4,22	1,159	U = 2686.5 p = 0.113
I try to make sure that my tourist stay does not have sociological consequences for the destination	3,88	1,224	4,11	1,155	U = 2759.0 p = 0.200

Note: Mean values range from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

Respondents from both countries show the highest level of agreement with the statement that they prefer local food and beverages in the destinations where they stay, whereupon they emphasize that they try to ensure that their stay does not have a negative impact on the environment. According to UNWTO (2011), many young people have a desire to interact with locals during their travels, and in this study, it is also very important for 42.2% of respondents to interact with locals. Reisinger (2009) indicated that the frequency and depth of these interactions are strongly related to an individual's desire to learn more about other cultures. These interactions can lead to increased knowledge and deeper attachment to the destination, making repeat visits more likely and creating higher revenue for the local community (UNWTO, 2011).



Furthermore, the results revealed that both groups of respondents are, on average, unwilling to pay a higher price for eco-products and care little about the extent to which money from tourism stays in the local community of the destination where they stay (Table 6). The importance of understanding the sustainable behaviour of young tourists opens opportunities for destinations to enrich their offer. Planning activities in the destination that are in line with sustainable development goals additionally gives young people the opportunity to develop more responsible behaviour.

Field (1999) pointed out that differences in the type of travel and what activities one take part in can also occur due to nationality, culture, background and gender whereby Moscardo and Benckendorff (2010) stated that people who grow up under similar circumstances develop similar behaviours and values. Since no differences were found between respondents from Croatia and Serbia for the majority of the elements examined in this study, the results of this study do not show any specific differences to a particular nationality.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding tourism-related behaviours and attitudes of young people is worth exploring because they will shape the future of tourism (Caber et. al., 2020). The literature review revealed that few studies have examined the travel behaviours of young people from Southeastern Europe or the attitudes of young people who experienced the pandemic. This study aims to fill this gap by identifying the motives, attitudes, and travel characteristics of young tourists from Croatia and Serbia and examining whether there are differences between the two groups. The results showed that the main differences between young tourists from these two countries, in terms of travel, are not recognised. Both groups prefer to travel with friends, and they tend to organize trips alone. The main motives, activities and elements for choosing a destination are almost the same. Nightlife, developed sports infrastructure and visiting celebrities are the least important factors for choosing a destination. The most valued motives are new experiences, rest and relaxation, entertainment events and opportunities, with the last motive being slightly more important for young people from Croatia. A difference is also evident in the activities at the destination. Serbs are more interested in visiting religious sites, while Croats are more inclined to visit bars and restaurants. One of the most important conclusions is that young people from both countries are willing to spend more time and money on their future vacations. When it comes to sustainability, young people show more interest in environmental and social aspects than in economic ones. As Asan (2021) noted, features such as year-round demand and small-scale applicability make youth tourism sustainable and thus desirable. Understanding the preferred destinations, accommodation options, activities, motivations, and sustainable behaviour patterns helps destination management develop an appropriate offer for young people. By adapting the offer, the destination can potentially attract a larger number of visitors from this target group.

There are few limitations to this paper. The main limitations are related to the sample size and the fact that the majority of the respondents in the sample are female. Therefore,

the sample should be expanded in both countries and should be more balanced in terms of the gender of the respondents. This would help to get a better picture of the main characteristics of young travellers from these two countries. In addition, the survey often relied on previous travel, that may have changed significantly due to the pandemic, which ultimately affects the actual results. More people under the age of 18 should be included in this survey.

Future research can go in several directions. It might be valuable to find out what factors influence the attitudes of young tourists when it comes to sustainable travel and giving back to the host community. Moreover, it might be interesting to extend the same study to other countries to obtain new information about possible differences between young tourists from developing and developed countries.

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