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# MARKETING PHENOMENON RESEARCH OF „ALTERNATIVE TOURISM“

## ISTRAŽIVANJE MARKETINŠKOG FENOMENA „ALTERNATIVNOG TURIZMA“

ANDRLIC, Berislav; OBERDORFER, Valerie & MRSIC, Leon Matija

**Abstract:** *The development of tourism suggests an important role that marketing concept and consumer behaviour have due to contemporary business trends. This paper is intended to be an exploratory study of a community of people who engage in an activity called "alternative tourism", especially using services as Couchsurfing, HomeExchange, Hostel Accomodation, etc. Authors also offers some proposals on future development in this sector of e-marketing.*

**Key words:** *Internet, tourism, consumer behaviour, marketing*

**Sažetak:** *Razvoj turizma ukazuje na značajnu ulogu koju marketinški koncept i ponašanje potrošača imaju u suvremenim poslovnim trendovima . Ovaj članak prezentira pilot istraživanje zajednice turista koji sudjeluju u tzv. „alternativni turizmu“ , posebno korištenjem usluga kao što su Couchsurfing, HomeExchange, Hostel Accomodation, itd. Autori također nude prijedloge o budućem razvoju u ovom sektoru e-marketinga .*

**Ključne riječi:** *Internet, turizam, ponašanje potrošača, marketing*



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## **1. Introduction**

The modern marketing in tourism means a business activity which connects production and consumption in such a way that fully and with maximum profit meets the needs of tourists that are usually referred to as tourism market demand. Companies nowadays cope with greater difficulties arising from challenges of growing e-markets and rapidly changing factor of customers' behaviour called "alternative tourism". Based on empirical research, this paper aims to provide analysis on the usage of services as Couchsurfing, HomeExchange, Hostel Accomodation on sample of tourists in Germany. Also, paper presents further directions and suggestions which could develop e-marketing strategies in tourism in this region.

## **2. Theoretical approach and trends of e- tourism market**

Tourism market, its development and quality is characterized with external factors in the macroenvironment of tourism company. These trends represent "noncontrollables" that the tourism company must monitor and respond to. They can be classified into several groups [1]:

- characteristics of social and economic country system
- accumulated economy ability of the country
- foreign-exchange policy
- input prices in tourism
- investition policy
- credit policy and terms for foreign capital investment in tourism sector
- government standpoint against tourism as a part of national economy
- intensity of tourism services demand
- structure of tourism country services according to social and economical characteristics of tourism services demand carriers
- educational structure of employees in tourism sector
- development and implementation of new technologies.

Every mentioned group of factors, directly or indirectly, has influence on creating tourism bidding on specific market segment. In extension, the focus will be on informatic technology factor, and its influence on marketing implementation in tourism. Special attention is dedicated to Internet, which is in the tourism sector, as in other business sectors changed classic business activities, and is used as communication, transaction and distribution channel. These technological trends are changing market demand in tourism and shape opportunities and pose threats. It is possible to talk about appearance of completely new strategy, called e-Business. E-Business, or Electronic Business, is the strategy of implementing business via the Internet. This strategy consists of the buying and selling of goods and services, along with providing technical or customer support through the Internet. e-Business is a term often used in connection with e-commerce, but includes services in addition to the sale of goods. According to the existing considerations, the main focus of this paper is on the one part of e- business, called e- marketing. There are several

definitions of electronic marketing. One of possible definitions is suggested by Panian: "Electronic marketing (e-marketing, telemarketing) is a means of realizing company's marketing activities through intensive application of information and telecommunication (internet) technology. [2]

During the last decade, many tourists have developed some form of Internet presence and behaviour, which is the key point of further empirical research.

### **3. Alternative tourism considerations - Couchsurfing example**

Alternative tourism is not strictly defined and limited term, it's a definition where new kinds of tourism are included. According to the Word Wise Dictionary, a word „alter“ means to change or to make something or someone change, and a word „alternative“ means different from what is usual or accepted, can be used instead of another. Thus alternative can also mean allowing a choice, therefore alternative tourism may give more opportunities, options and choices for travellers. Alternative tourism is a literal alternative to the mass tourism and the traditional tourism model. Being active, innovative and not taking part in destroying the nature became the main motivation of individuals participating in alternative tourism. [3]

Consumers are seeking advice from other consumers through the internet and „skilled consumers“ are increasingly likely to know more about niche products than many travel professionals. Alternative tourism includes many different forms of tourism as well as and recently created social hospitality Couchsurfing network.

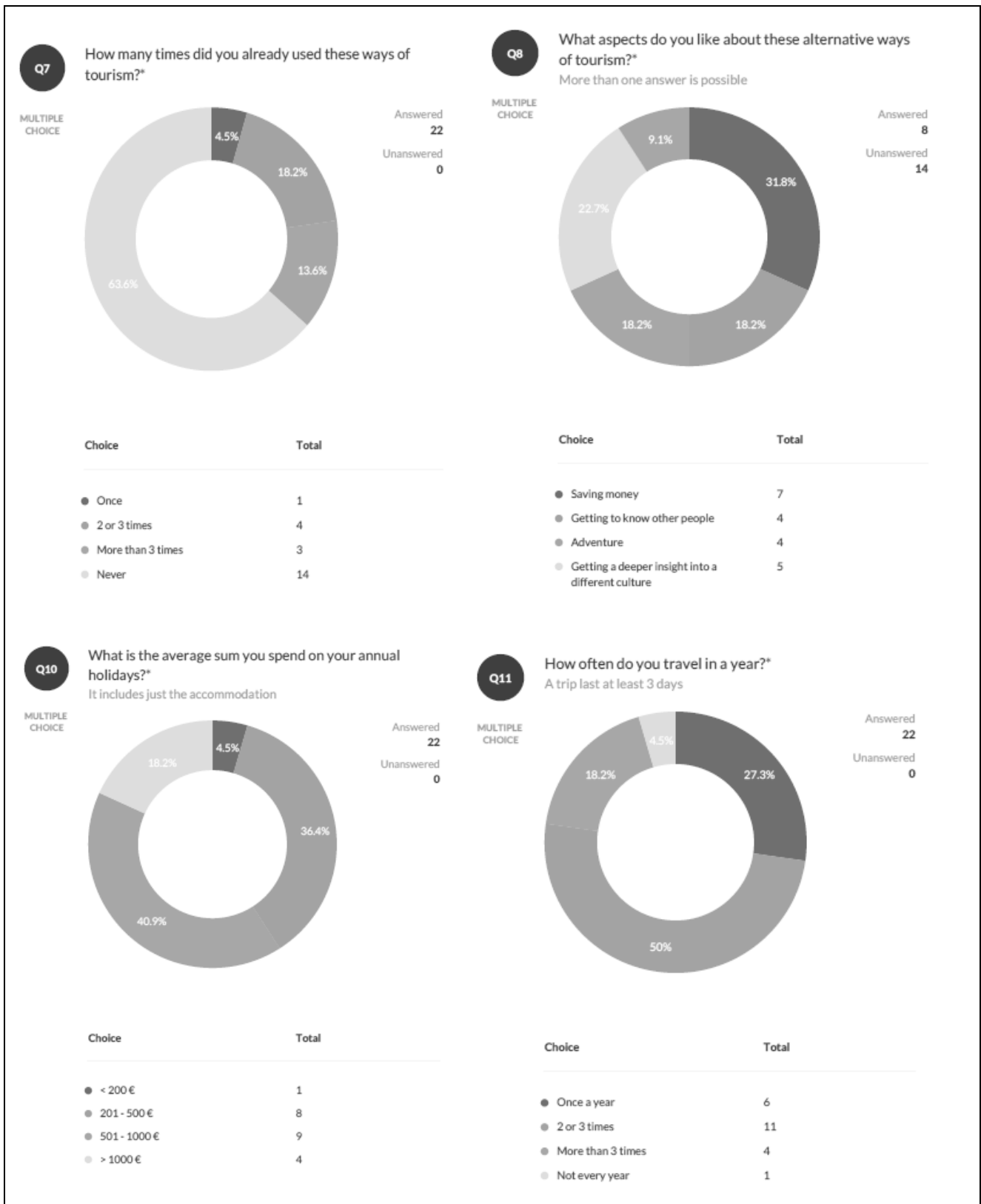
The Couchsurfing project, which was founded in 2004, is a world-wide net of travellers who seek a different travel proposal. It has attracted people from 239 countries. This project arises from the idea of facilitating knowledge interchange, collective consciousness and understanding among peoples, according to the content of the official website. The couchsurfing project comes from the idea of which the persons, staying at the home of others, they maintain a more deep contact with other cultures that makes it easy to exchange knowledge, the collective conscience and the understanding between the people, according to principal content of the site. [4]

### **4. Methodology and research results**

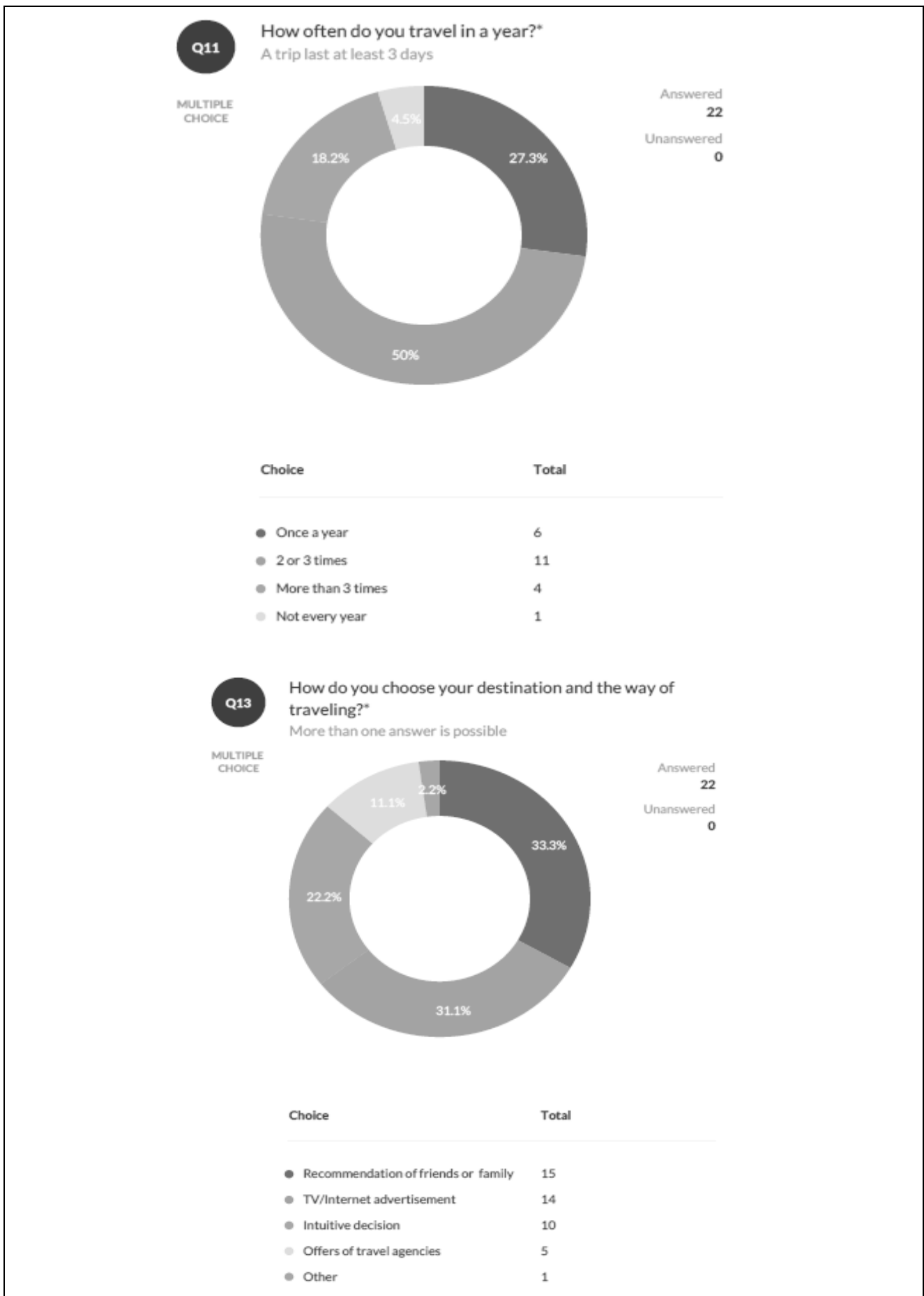
This paper presents the research conducted during 2016 in Germany, with online survey technique, on sample of 22 tourists. Research covered the period from April to May 2016, with aim to evaluate potential and concrete results in use alternative tourism behaviour. The methods of synthesis and analysis, so as deductive and inductive methods were applied. Inductive method based on the general part of the research tried to confirm / deny hypotheses of level of usage Internet in alternative tourism, in order to gain a clearer picture about the topic of research. Deductive-logical methods was used in making more accurate conclusions on the basis of the empirical results. Further data shows empirical results of study.



Picture 1. Demography and tourist behaviour



Picture 2. Tourist behaviour in alternative ways of planning [6]



Picture 3. Tourist behaviour in alternative ways of planning- part 2 [6]

Other part of survey was like type of essay with the following results: [6]

Q5: What kind of accommodation do you usually stay at?

Others: with friends

Q6: Which alternative ways of tourism do you know?

Others: renting a boat, wwoofing

Q8: What aspects do you like about these alternative ways of tourism?

Others: hearing and sharing (travel) stories with others

Q9: Why didn't you use these alternative ways of tourism yet?

- not contemplated so far due to other alternatives
- not interested
- it is not for me , does not meet my expectations guest wants to be independent in the resort
- Have never tried it, too direct contact with the people I do not, do not want to be in strange apartments with personal belongings of the resident. Maybe I could imagine Housesitting.
- Stay overnight rather in the hotel room, as with strange people
- Preference for overnight stays in hotels, distrust of the party
- I would have to know exchanger. It would be too risky otherwise.
- In a hotel it is better ... Otherwise you can also stay at home
- So far, not yet in use, or not convinced 100 % of it.
- Uncertainty over party
- My husband and I usually have less than a week to go away. I would like, if we go on vacation indulge me around.
- Not really interested, you never know what kind of people you will meet
- Never looked for it

Q12: Are you interested in exploring new places and ways of traveling and why?

- New places are always interesting. Every year Mallorca would be boring. In the mode of travel I am less keen to experiment
- Not necessarily, like old also proven
- No. There is already a great deal. That's enough out of me.
- I am married and have small children so are my options limited.
- Yes, they enrich my life
- Yes, it interests me to discover and learn new things. The other scenery, food, people, culture.
- Yes. Want to learn many foreign countries and cultures.
- Yes, I'm interested in new destinations for scenery, food, ...
- I'm not necessarily interested in other forms of accommodation



- New is always good to know. It broadens the mind.
- Yes, it's interesting.
- Yes, the travel can be well relax and meet new mentalities.
- No, I am satisfied with recent offers and forms
- I'm not interested in all places, but when it comes to nature, I am very curious and open-minded. I like to go hiking through landscapes and getting rewarded with a great view.
- Yes, I always enjoy meeting people and getting to know a country, its culture and way of life.
- Trying to see as much of the world as possible on a restricted budget can be challenging so alternative ways are always interesting. Plus getting to know new people and the way they live their lives under completely different circumstances then we are used to here is fascinating.
- I'm very interested in exploring new countries, because I like getting to know new cultures/ people/ food etc.
- yes also interested, i'd like to see new places as long as travelling is possible for myself (i think it's more difficult to travel with kids e.g. to asia, the us...). also i want to explore new cultures
- I lived and travelled in a simple campervan for several months And the best hing abtut it was waking up at different places nearly every day...sometimes a campground but more often a nice spot in the middle of nature or even someone's driveway...by travelling this way sooner or later you understand that there is no need to always have a plan as 'life is what happens while you're making plans'
- New places for sure, i love to explore. House sitting sounds like fun
- Getting to know new cultures, especially food cultures.

From this reserach we can see that new generation of tourist are seeking for new techniques of travelling using „free of charge“ tourism ways, but in average amount, but it will grove in the future, especially in developed countries. Tourists are interested in experience, the cultural identity of other peoples and traditional lifestyle and to participate in adventurous and close to nature activities.

According to Young&Rubicam there are seven kinds of people in the world: the explorer, the aspirer, the succeder, the reformer, the mainstream, the struggler and the resigned. [4]

People participating in alternative tourism are the explorers, who search for new sensations. They are driven by a need for discovery, challenge and new frontiers. Explorers are often the first to try out new ideas, and experiences.

A recent form of alternative tourism is Couchsurfing and it is predicted to be popular in the future. This international non-profit social hospitality network online allows people to stay at the home of others, maintain a deeper contact with other cultures which simplifies exchange of knowledge, the collective conscience and the understanding between each other. Couchsurfing members are travelers who get to

know other people, usually a tourist at his destination meets local inhabitants, who are willing to share their traditions, knowledge, show their lifestyle and much more. People using Couchsurfing social network are called "couchsurfers". [5]

## 5. Conclusion

World tourism has undergone momentous changes throughout the last few years. The development of modern Internet technology, provides a number of new possibilities in marketing in tourism of European Union. However, it is difficult to imagine that exist tourists that are not present on the network if only through their social profiles and this alone can form a basis for the beginnings of e-marketing usage. Internet has been seen as an opportunity for tourists to improve their competitive position and to give tourists higher level of service, especially in destination searching and decision making. For the future, according to survey results, we can predict development of new tourism behaviour using „free“ and alternative accommodation. Also, alternative tourism are different forms of tourism connected to various interests of tourists, not the traditional tourist product 3S (sun-sea-beach). All of those forms of tourism involve activity, innovation and nature in order to replace the dangerous for the future mass tourism.

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