

LEISURE SERVICES CUSTOMERS' BEHAVIOR – WHAT FACTORS ARE CRUCIAL?

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Abstract

The research paper provides the results of leisure services customers' behaviour based on the empirical survey done in 2012. The goal of the paper is to disclose the factors, which influence the leisure services customers' behaviour, and to identify the most urgent. A few of the relations were calculated, such as the relation between frequency of commercial and non-commercial services consuming and motives for leisure, preferences for leisure services paid, and value appreciated by a customer. The correlation between practitioners to spend leisure time at home, not far and far from home (home-based, relax-based and trip-based) and their preferences to different kind of leisure services was measured. Factors for increasing the demand for these services were disclosed, too.

The practical implications of the paper could be provided for businessmen who are engaged in the leisure business, as well as Government, deciding on the policy of leisure and guaranteeing non-commercial leisure for a society.

The type of the article: *Research report.*

Keywords: *leisure services; services customer's behaviour; factors of influence; alternatives of leisure.*

JEL Classification: *D12, L83, L84.*

1. Introduction

Introducing the problem. Leisure services in the modern economy show the increase already for several decades. The entire industry starting from daily leisure to occasional leisure covers a variety of different services, values, satisfied needs, and requirements of a customer. Both demand and supply of leisure services is developing nowadays. Leisure services customers are more and more demanding (Liao, 2012; Chang & Beise-Zee, 2013). That is why the suppliers should think about the ways of entering the growing competition market.

Developing the background. However, a leisure service has been a rather scarcely analysed phenomenon in the scientific literature till now. The specifics of the leisure services determines that they are consumed during leisure time, free from responsibilities and duties (Lin & Pao, 2011; Rodríguez, 2011). The consuming of the leisure services could act as a prevention means from illness, stress and other negative aspects of life (Hofer, Honegger, & Hubeli, 2012). The direct correlation between leisure services' consuming and wellbeing of an individual is identified (Yang *et al.*, 2012). The working time could also be defined as leisure if an individual enjoys it (Leither & Leither, 2012). The growing attention to our life and values forces to analyze more deeply what determines customers' actions. Scientific research (Page, Connell, 2010) showed that qualitative leisure time is crucial for representing the status of individuals. That is why young people after the graduating the school do not enter universities – they travel around the world, and only after two-three years start to think about their studies. The supply of leisure services is very large: from non-commercial to commercial services (Tribe, 2011); from leisure home-based to recreation and travel-based services (Langviniene, 2012). The non-commercial services could be used by anyone who has free time and a possibility to go to the place of the destination. The commercial services' consuming is usually limited by costs, purchasing power of a customer,

getting the agreement with his / her family and friends to spend the time together, accessibility of services supply, and, of course, the time for consuming. As leisure services usually are not the services of the primary use, costs and the time for leisure services are competing with the costs for food, clothes, security, etc.

Research problem is formulated as follows: what factors are crucial for a customer when he (or she) decides what leisure services he (or she) needs, what value (tangible or intangible) he (or she) expects?

Stating the aim: the paper seeks to disclose the factors influencing the leisure services customer's behaviour, and to identify, which are the most urgent.

Methodology: scientific literature analysis, descriptive statistical analysis, and comparative analysis. Primary data was obtained on the basics of the survey-in-written.

Rationale background of the research report is grounded on the originality of the chosen object – leisure services customers' behaviour. The factors for the choice of the leisure services were identified. The results of the research are significant enough for making strategic decisions for leisure services marketers and businessmen.

2. Literature overview

The leisure as phenomenon relates to the activities, which are consumed during the leisure time, free from responsibilities, constraints, duties for the job, and for the family members. *Leisure* as a term has already been analysed for many years. The authors (Lin & Pao, 2011) agree that leisure is vital for the balance of individuals' lifestyle. Both in developed or developing countries the leisure is understood as the necessary time for the passive or active rest, for the communication with family members and friends, the time for relief from the routine and stress (Page & Connell, 2010). The leisure brings a possibility to enhance the health state of an individual, to get wellness effect, and to reduce cognitive dissonance (Chang & Beise-Zee, 2013). Qualitative leisure time is the key for the prevention of illness (Trenberth, 2005), especially mental, spiritual, and physical (Yang *et al.*, 2012). The impact of the leisure services and activities on the health status of an individual in the recent research literature is frequently analysed. Sometimes the leisure could be associated to the job if the people are engaged in the activity, which is pleasant. The other situation is known if individuals transform their hobby to their job, i.e. to the paid activity. Professional athletes, trainers, and leisure businessmen could be such samples. Individuals are free to choose: to use more passive activity, which usually is not paid, self-assisted, or to search for the possibilities to go from home, far from the working place for meeting friends, visiting museums, and to go for a longer trip, which is similar to tourism, travel activity. Langviniene (2012) defines three variations – home-based, recreation-based, and travel-based leisure services – on the ground of a place where the leisure services are used. Torkildsen (1999) uses the similar classification. He defines groups of the leisure activities in the correlation to the distance to an individual's home: 1) the services used at home; 2) the services used not far from home; 3) the services and products used far from home. Activities of leisure, according Tribe (2011), could be defined as commercial and non-commercial services. The non-commercial services sometimes could be more attractive, for example, visiting museums, parks, social events, which are initiated by Municipality, any other non-commercial, charity organization, etc. However, a few the studies (Lin & Pao, 2011; Langviniene, 2012) show that the commercial leisure services are used more frequently than the non-commercial ones.

The leisure time is an integrated phenomenon. Its impact on an individual and a society is divergent enough. Motives for consuming the leisure services differ (Edginton *et al.*, 2006; Lin & Pao, 2011): enjoy the nature, to train, to reduce tension, to rest from the noise and a crowd, to learn in the nature, to share values with the affinity group, to feel independence, to spend the time with the family and pleasant people, to stipulate the achievements, to rest, to learn and to study, to take a risk or reduce it, etc. Younger people want the leisure requiring more energy, senior people – a mix between the rest and acquiring the knowledge, a mother with a child looks for the possibility to engage him / her into the activity, which enables to play and learn. The primary motive for the

leisure is the rest for an individual. However, he (or she) uses different activities, exercises during his / her leisure time. The choice of the leisure services in the individual's life is determined by three groups of the factors, according to Page and Connell (2010): 1) the personal factors, which cover individual and physical leisure aspects; 2) social and environmental, which cover social and economic factors of an individual such as incomes, job, occupation and state of the body; and 3) the factors, which cover possibilities.

The samples of the factors according to these three groups are presented below (see Figure 1). The existence of the factors from one group does not guarantee actions of a customer. For example, the young people are healthy, strong and want to travel around the world. However, it does not mean that they have enough money for it. The overlapping of three main groups of the factors for consuming the leisure enables the positive actions of individual's behaviour only.

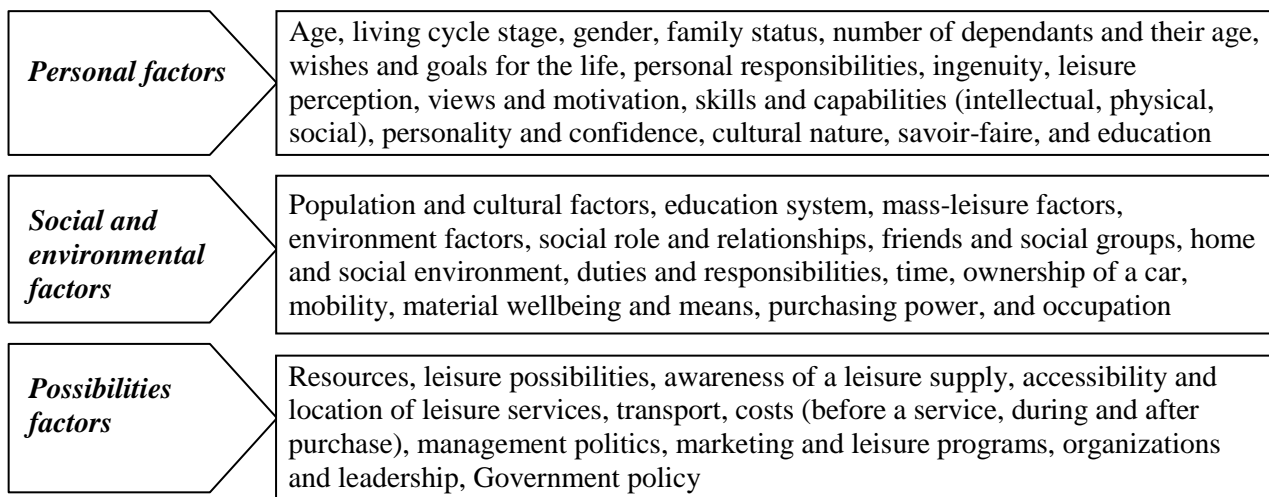


Figure 1. The factors influencing the leisure customer's behaviour

The leisure services' classification is not unique. Tribe (2011) defines the three groups upon the place of consuming. The similar classification is used by Page and Connell (2010). Other authors do not try grouping them. However, they define which services could be defined as leisure (Torkildsen, 1999; Edginton *et al.*, 2006). Modern economics brings to a society more and more leisure services such as coastal leisure, shopping leisure, etc. Leisure services industry will not be analyzed more deeply in this paper. Still seeking to reach the goal of the paper, some points about the leisure services consumer specifics should be pointed out. The main value of a leisure service is that a customer is satisfied with it. It does not depend on the activity intensity (Vogel, 2011). Sometimes a value of leisure services could be even negative, as drinking alcohol (Rojek, 1999). Sometimes a value of leisure is that it acts as prevention before illness, decreasing criminals (Hodgkinson & Hughes, 2012). In summing up it should be noted that the leisure is the time for an individual's choice: passive or active. Individuals decide themselves what they want and are able to use on the ground of different factors influencing the choice between leisure alternatives.

3. Method

The purpose of the empirical research was to identify the factors influencing leisure services customers' behaviour.

The questionnaire was distributed in the spring of 2012. During the survey, 472 respondents were inquired. The selection was non-stochastic and handle. All questionnaires were filled face-to-face with respondents. The questionnaire design was grounded on the questions disclosing the viewpoint of the respondents on the practice in their leisure, services used during the leisure time, and the factors, which influence the rising demand for leisure, preferences paid to the leisure

services, etc.

The estimation was processed on the Likert's five points scale base, from '1' – totally disagree to '5' – totally agree. The means of the answers were calculated. The relations between the answers were identified, too. The relation among some of the answers was analysed. The relation among the intensity of the leisure services consuming and preferences paid was measured. The consumers, who consumed the commercial leisure services, were grouped. Frequent users were the consumers who consume the leisure services once per day, two-three times per week, and once per week. Occasional consumers were identified as individuals who consumes more rarely. The same relation was evaluated for the non-commercial services – which preferences for leisure services are paid upon the frequency of consuming. The relation among the place of consuming the leisure services – at home, not far from home and far from home – and preferences to the leisure services was evaluated. The relation among the practice for leisure and factors of demand were identified (more time from responsibilities and duties, more available costs for leisure, more friends for common leisure, wider choice of leisure, and easier accessibility of leisure). The practice for leisure was grouped to three groups:

- 1) the individuals preferring the leisure spent at home;
- 2) the individuals preferring the leisure spent not far from home and
- 3) the individuals preferring to spend leisure time far from home. The relation between the practice for leisure and the preferences for the commercial and non-commercial services, a value appreciated by individuals was analysed.

For the processing the findings of the survey, the SPSS and Microsoft Excel were used. The graphic simulation and comparative analysis were performed. The descriptive statistical analysis and comparative analysis were provided.

The limitations of the survey are as follows: the majority of the respondents were young, to 24 years old, as the survey was done with the help of the students who spread out the questionnaires among their age people. In total 65.3 percent of all respondents were the individuals till 24 years old. The second group of the respondents consists of 13.3 percent out of were 25-30 years old. Practically half of them were students (45.7 percent), or who were students and employees at the same time (23.4 percent). The employees made 27.2 percent of the respondents. Women were more than men (61 and 39 percent respectively).

4. Results

As the findings of the survey show (see Figure 2), from personal factors group – interests, motivation, and individuals occupation have made the largest (means is 3.89 score from 5 available according Likert's scale) influence on the leisure services choice and consuming. After that – the family status, physical possibilities, dependants, responsibilities, and ingenuity (3.82) – impact the customer's behaviour, too. Less influence is made by the traditions, interest of the family and friends (3.43). The available time, incomes and material means make the largest impact from the social and environmental factors and from all factors (4.08). Besides that, friends, colleagues, the nearest relatives influence the consuming, the behaviour of a respondent (3.5), too. The occupation, social status and responsibilities averagely influence the consuming of the leisure services (3.26). From the possibilities' factors – the supply of the leisure services, the distribution, places for the trade influence more (3.79) than a transport accessibility to reach a supplier and costs for it (3.7), or even leisure services marketing and leisure programmes (for example, non-commercial services) (3.51 score).

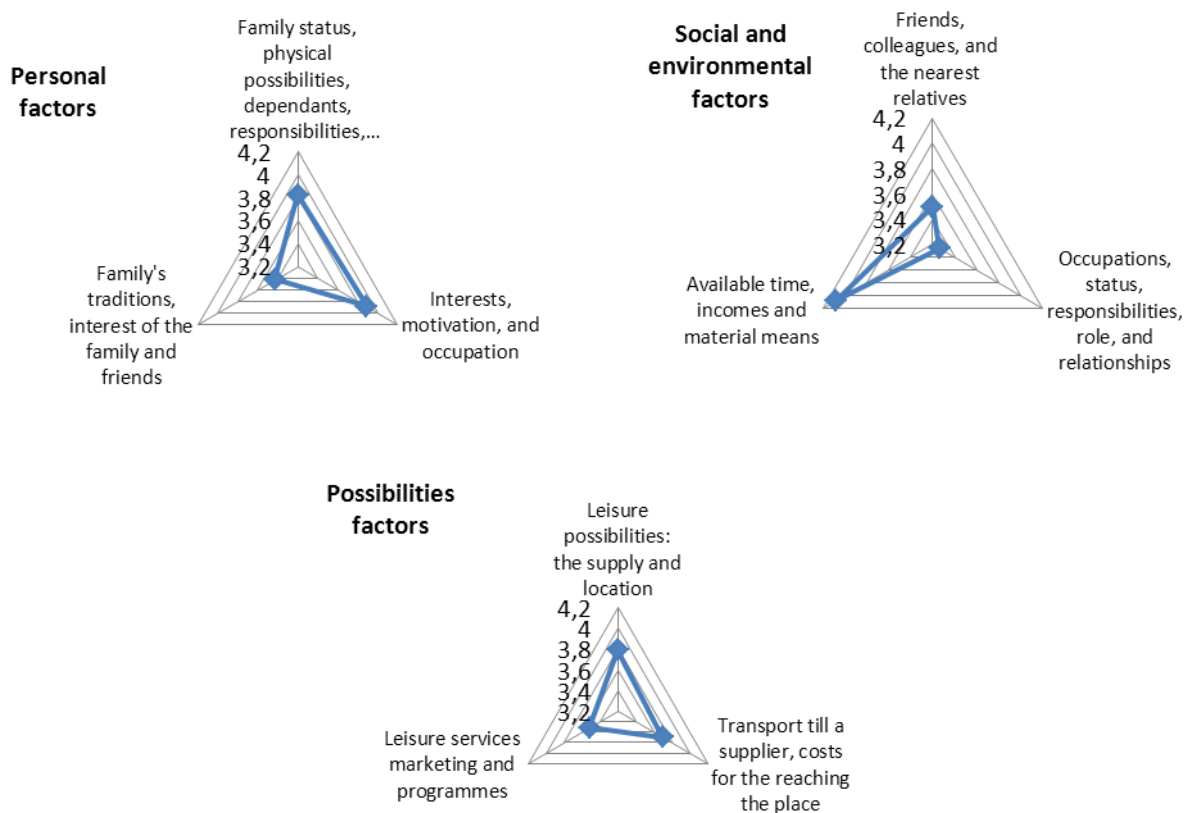


Figure 2. The evaluation of the different factors influencing the customer’s behaviour

It is interesting enough that the respondents pointed out that they consumed the commercial services more frequently than the non-commercial ones. Approximately one third (34.3 percent) of the respondents consumes the commercial services once per week, a little bit less (26.7 per cent) – two or even three times per week, and similarly the same part (25.6 percent) – once per month. The non-commercial services were consumed once per month by a third of the respondents (34.3 percent) and a little bit less of them (28.7 percent) – once per week.

As the findings of the survey show (see Figure 3), home-based services for the respondents enable to rest for the mind, spirit and pass the time upon the wishes (mean is 3.76 score from 5 available); engage into the activity, which is pleasant (3.68). The physical and mental wellbeing, according to the respondents, is more seldom evaluated as motive to spend the leisure at home (3.47). The leisure, which is spent not far from home, acts as motive for the engagement into the pleasant activity and chooses among the alternatives: to rest, to recreate, or to meet friends (3.9). It should be noticed, that the leisure services consumed not far from home were appreciated as higher motive upon all criteria, comparing to the services used at home – they enable to choose the activity for the leisure time (3.7), or engage into the activity improving the competences (3.6), health, wellbeing (3.66), to rest for the mind, spirit, to pass a leisure upon wishes (3.6). The services consumed far from home enable the rest for the mind, spirit, to pass the leisure upon the wishes (3.81) and to improve health, wellbeing (3.8). The services consumed far from home are more seldom evaluated as motive for engage into the activity improving the competences of individual, hobbies, interests (3.59).

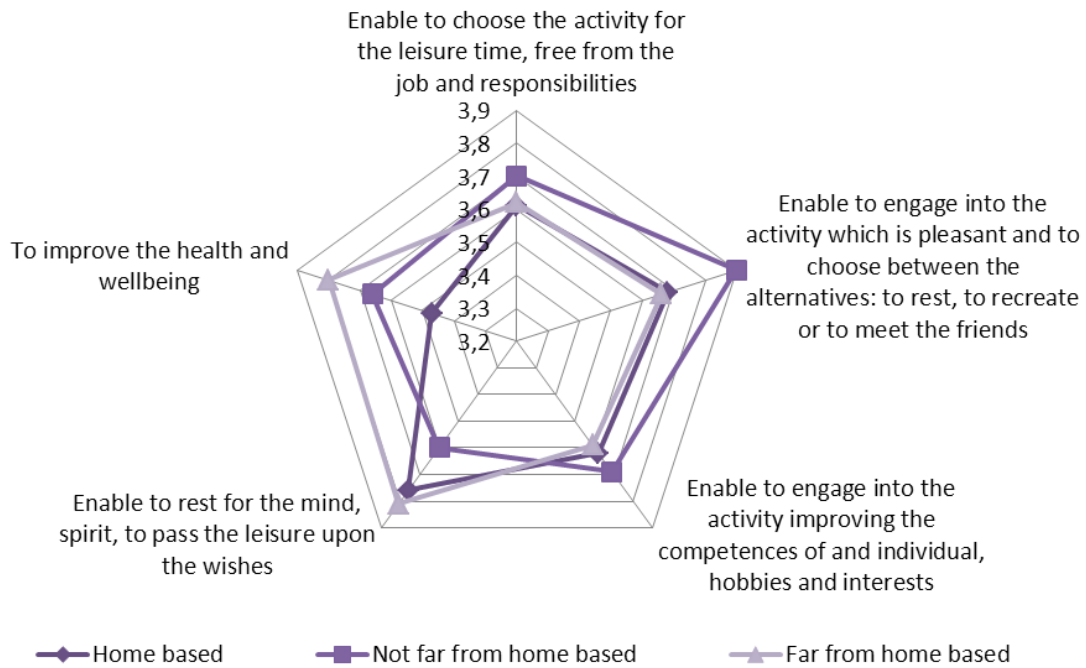


Figure. 3. The evaluation of motives for leisure services consuming depending on the place

There are significant differences among the commercial leisure services consuming frequency and preferences paid to leisure services (see Table 1).

Table 1. Preferences to the leisure services in the relation to the frequency of commercial services consuming

No.	Preferences to the leisure services, giving the value	Frequency of the leisure services (commercial) consuming, %		
		Frequently	Rarely	Total
1.	Services, which help to improve the spiritual competences, help to educate, to train	4.9	17.2	9.1
2.	Services, which enable to get free from the thoughts, stress about the job or from home troubles	30.5	32.5	31.2
3.	Services, which help to improve the state of the body, health, and give the tangible value	14.8	8.9	12.8
4.	Services, while individual is able to meet the friends or to get the new ones	23.6	14.6	20.6
5.	Services, which shape the one's experience	6.6	4.5	5.8
6.	Impossible to identify, as preferences are shaped on various factors	19.7	22.3	20.6
	Total	100	100	100

Notes to the values: Pearson Chi-Square=25.260, degree of freedom (df)=5, probability (p)<0.05 (...000)

The reliable difference is visible in the relation among who consume frequently and consume rarely and the preferences to the services, which help to improve the spiritual competences, to educate, and to train (1 answer). The reliable difference is visible among the frequency of the consuming and preferences to the services, which enable to meet friends and to get new acquaintances (the 4th answer). In generally evaluating (total answers, not excluding upon the frequency of consuming), it should be noticed that consumers, who consume the commercial leisure services, appreciate the possibility to get rid of the stress (the 2nd choice) and to meet friends, get the new ones (the 4th choice of the answers).

There are significant differences among non-commercial leisure services consuming frequency and preferences of a customer paid (Table 2), too.

Table 2. Preferences to the leisure services in the relation to the frequency of the non-commercial services consuming

No.	Preferences to the leisure services, giving the value	Frequency of the leisure services (non-commercial) consuming, %		
		Frequently	Rarely	Total
1.	Services, which help to improve the spiritual competences, help to educate, to train	5.8	12.3	9.1
2.	Services, which enable to get free from the thoughts, stress about the job or from home troubles	30.4	32.2	31.3
3.	Services, which help to improve the state of the body, health, and give the tangible value	16.5	8.5	12.4
4.	Services, while individual is able to meet the friends or to get the new ones	23.7	17.8	20.7
5.	Services, which shape the one's experience	6.3	5.5	5.9
6.	Impossible to identify; as preferences are shaped on the various factors	17.4	23.7	20.7
	Total	100	100	100

Notes to the values: Pearson Chi-Square=15.660, df=5, $p < 0.05$ (...008)

Reliable differences are visible in the relation among who consume non-commercial services frequency and the services, which help to improve the spiritual competences, to educate, to train (1 choice), also the services giving the tangible value (3 choices of the answers). Evaluating the findings of the survey, the consumers, who use non-commercial leisure services, also want to get rid of the stress, as consuming commercial leisure services (31.3 percent). Preferences are paid to the meeting old and new friends, too.

No reliable differences were identified in the relation among the practices to spend the leisure time and the preferences to the leisure services (Table 3). Even if the differences among the respondents were identified; they are not statistically reliable according to the p value. The respondents, who practice to spend their leisure time at home, prefer the services enabling to relax from the stress. Active-goers prefer the leisure when they can meet their friends for the relax activity. The individuals, consuming the leisure services far from home want to improve the state of the body, the health, want to get the tangible value, too.

Table 3. Preferences to the leisure services in the relation to the practice to spend the leisure time

No.	Preferences to the leisure services giving the value	Practice to spend the leisure time, %				Total
		Passive, at home, at TV, reading, housekeeping	Active, getting out of home, meeting the friends	Active, getting far from home	Harmony of the leisure: various forms of the leisure	
1.	Services, which help to improve the spiritual competences, help to educate, to train	14.3	9.3	0	9.4	9.1
2.	Services, which enable to get free from the thoughts, stress about the job or from home troubles	30.6	32.0	34.9	31.1	31.6
3.	Services, which help to improve the state of the body, health, and give the tangible value	10.2	13.3	23.3	11.5	12.8

No.	Preferences to the leisure services giving the value	Practice to spend the leisure time, %				Total
		Passive, at home, at TV, reading, housekeeping	Active, getting out of home, meeting the friends	Active, getting far from home	Harmony of the leisure: various forms of the leisure	
4.	Services, while the individual is able to meet the friends or to get the new ones	16.3	24.0	27.9	18.9	20.3
5.	Services, which shape the one's experience	6.1	5.3	4.7	5.9	5.7
6.	Impossible to identify as preferences are shaped on the various factors	22.4	16.0	9.3	23.1	20.5
	Total	100	100	100	100	100

Notes to the values: Pearson Chi-Square=16.839, df=15, p>0.05 (....329)

The findings of the survey showed that the individuals, not depending very much on the practice to spend their leisure time, would consume more commercial and non-commercial services if they have had more leisure time (1 choice of the answers) and more money (Table 4).

Table 4. Factors influencing the consuming of commercial and non-commercial leisure services in the relation to the practice to spend the leisure time

No.	Factors enabling to increase the consuming	Practice to spend the leisure time, %				Total count
		Passive, at home, at TV, reading, housekeeping	Active, getting out of home, meeting the friends	Active, getting far from home	Harmony of the leisure: various forms of the leisure	
1.	More free time from the job and duties	48.9	56.2	46.2	56.9	250
2.	More available costs for the leisure	59.6	54.8	35.9	63.7	270
3.	More friends for the common leisure	17.0	9.6	17.9	6.4	41
4.	Wider choice of the leisure	8.5	21.9	20.5	13.2	67
5.	Easier accessibility to the leisure place	21.3	24.7	15.4	20.3	94
	Total count	47	73	39	295	454

Notes to the values: the percentage and the total counts are based on the respondents, as a few of the answers were available

No reliable differences are visible in the relation among the most appreciated value in the commercial and non-commercial leisure services and the practice to spend the leisure time (Table 5). However, we can see the differences in the respondents' answers, such as individuals who practice spending their leisure at home – they appreciate the leisure services, which enable to recover after the stress, illness (27.7 percent) and the services for the choice upon the wishes (25.5). The similar situation is while individuals practice spending their leisure not far from home. The leisure services consumers who practice getting far from home appreciate also the feeling of the freedom (19.0 percent) besides the physical and spiritual rest (40.5 percent).

Table 5. The value of the leisure services appreciated in the relation to the practice to spend the leisure time

No.	The value appreciated	Practice to spend the leisure time, %				Total
		Passive, at home, at TV, reading, housekeeping	Active, getting out of home, meeting the friends	Active, getting far from home	Harmony of the leisure: various forms of the leisure	
1.	For the individuals' self-education	14.9	16.4	7.1	10.0	11.3
2.	For the social networks, for the communication with the friends	8.5	11.0	7.1	12.1	11.1
3.	For the physical and spiritual rest, for the recovery after the unfavourable situation	27.7	26.0	40.5	20.7	24.2
4.	For the keeping the balance between the spiritual and body state	8.5	12.3	9.5	8.9	9.5
5.	For the feeling of independence	14.9	13.7	19.0	15.7	15.6
6.	For the free choice of the services pleasant to the spirit (upon the traditions of family, the practices, the hobbies, etc.)	25.5	20.5	16.7	32.5	28.3
	Total	100	100	100	100	100

Notes to the values: Pearson Chi-Square=17.489, df=15, p>0.05 (...291)

5. Discussion

The dominating factors influencing the behaviour of a customer from a group of the personal factors are: individual's interests, motivations, and occupation. The following factors from the social and environmental factors are crucial: time, incomes, and necessary means for the leisure services customer. Leisure services assortment and accessibility, alternatives for the leisure, transport facilities to reach a supplier act as the most important from the group of possibilities factors.

There is a clear relation among the practices spending the leisure time at home or to go out of home (far or not very far) and motives for the leisure consuming. Home-based services consuming correlate with the motives for the rest, pleasant activity engagement. Not far from home the leisure services should guarantee the balance between the pleasant activities, communication with the friends and improvement of the individual's competences. The trip-based services should provide the tangible value, such as health, wellbeing improvement, and free choice of the alternatives of the leisure.

A customer suspects to get the possibility to get rid of the stress, troubles as well as to meet the friends and get the new ones both from the commercial and non-commercial leisure services consuming.

There are significant differences between the frequency of leisure services consuming and the preferences to leisure services. Commercial services are preferred by a consumer if these services provide the improved competences and enable to meet the friends. Non-commercial services should help to improve the individual's state of the body, a health; it is giving the tangible value.

There are not significant differences in the relation among the practice for the leisure and preferences. However, the consumers using the passive leisure want the services, which enable to

get free from the stress. Active leisure practitioners prefer the relief from the stress and to communicate with other people. Active leisure users, going far from home, vary: some of them want socialization, others – to improve the health and the body, a part of them – to reduce the stress.

The most important factors for the increasing of the consuming of the leisure are: 1) more time; and 2) more money. However, the survey has shown that individuals, who practice spending their leisure passively, appreciate the free choice of the services pleasant to their spirit, and to rest from the stress and from the difficult working conditions. The active leisure services practitioners prefer also the feeling of the independence while they use the leisure which is not very crucial for the home leisure users.

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