

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND TOURISM TRENDS IN POST-PANDEMIC CONTEXT: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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Abstract. We live in a time where changes in technology, travel and tourism trends, economic and political systems, migration, and population density have created a world where we increasingly come into contact with and interact with people of different cultures. This paper explores and analyzes the connection between intercultural communication and, one of the most closely related concepts, tourism. On the other hand, in recent years, all economic structures, including tourism, have been strongly affected by the negative consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. In this, already post-pandemic time, all key stakeholders in tourism are encouraged to reconsider and rethink new, modern, and innovative post-pandemic tourism characterized by new tourist trends. In this paper the authors present and elaborate, by analyzing and systematizing key and current literature, the connection between intercultural communication and tourism, emphasizing current tourist trends in the post-pandemic context.

Keywords: communication, tourism, post-pandemic society, intercultural communication, theoretical considerations

INTRODUCTION

Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2013:6) quote Huston Smith as pointing out that “When historians will think about our century, it may not be remembered for space travel or the use of nuclear energy, but as a time when the nations of the world were started to take each other seriously”. In a globalizing and increasingly connected world, intercultural communication is one of the concepts that is put in the foreground in public discourse. At the same time, intercultural communication represents communication between different cultures, and above all, it emphasizes how to overcome stereotypes and prejudices in communication and

business with people and colleagues from different cultural and business cultures from which these people come. One of the current elements of modern tourism is getting to know other people and cultures and establishing contacts, dialogue, and equal cooperation to improve mutual understanding and togetherness, thus reflecting its intercultural dimension. It is precisely in the relations between tourists/visitors and hosts that an intercultural dialogue develops, which becomes a genuine intercultural communication.

In recent years, the global economy has been hit by the coronavirus pandemic, which caused a global economic crisis with numerous negative consequences in all economic structures. According to the European Travel Commission (2020), tourism is one of the most severely affected sectors in national economies, mostly in Europe. The pandemic crisis encouraged the development of new, post-pandemic tourism, as well as tourist destinations and their key stakeholders, to review the past development of tourism and to rethink future development, and above all it resulted in the development of new tourism trends.

In this paper, the authors pose a research question about the impact of COVID-19 on tourism trends with an emphasis on intercultural communication. The first part of the paper follows the theoretical framework of intercultural communication. Taking into consideration the theoretical complexity of the topic, the authors analyze and define the key concepts of culture, interculturalism, and intercultural communication, as well as its connection with tourism, using key and capital literature, as well as current papers. After that, through a discussion, and analyzing the literature, they elaborate on the key current tourist trends in the post-pandemic context with an emphasis on intercultural communication. At the end of the paper, they synthesize the research and present key conclusions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Kielbasiewicz-Drozdowska and Radko (2006:75) state that “in the past most people were born, lived and died in one specific geographical region, never meeting people from different cultures. Nowadays, however, one can hardly meet people who live their entire life without entering any interaction with people from a different culture”. It is precisely around this claim that the authors elaborate the theoretical framework taking into consideration the following keywords: culture, interculturalism, intercultural communication, and tourism.

Culture is a complex and multilingual concept that has many meanings in different disciplines and different contexts, and it is emphasized that cultures exist so that people, living in a community, can adapt to their environment. An analysis of anthropological literature, conducted in 1952, indicated that there are 164 different definitions of culture (Eagelton, 2017; Samovar et al., 2013). In doing so, the authors emphasize the definitions of authors Hall (1977), Harrison and Huntington (2000), Loner and Malpass (1994), and Triandis, who define culture as an artificial part of the environment, programming of the mind, a series of artificial and subjective elements, and that it includes language, religion, values, traditions, and customs. Samovar et al. (2013) state that the key elements of culture are history, religion, values, social organizations, and language. Culture is associated with a key term such as multiculturalism - recognition and promotion of the diversity of human societies and cultures in a specific area or the world as a whole - and above all interculturalism. Contemporary societies, under the influence of many changes, are becoming increasingly pluralistic in the cultural sense. The model of multiculturalism represents the idea that individuals and culturally different

groups can be incorporated into society without losing their particularities. The shift from multiculturalism to a higher level is achieved through intercultural dialogue as the most important instrument for reducing differences between minorities and immigrants, especially in the fight against social exclusion (Jelinčić et al., 2010).

Samovar et al. (2013:9) point out that intercultural communication occurs when a member of one culture sends a message to a member of another culture, and their generally accepted definition states that intercultural communication “involves the interaction of people whose cultural perceptions and symbolic systems are different enough to change the act of communication”. Intercultural communication is also defined as a „process of communication with people representing different cultures using a verbal and non-verbal communication channel and with the use of different ways of transmission“, and there are a few types of it:

- intercultural communication – between different ethnical or national cultures;
- cross-cultural communication – between different groups within one nation;
- international communication – between different national cultures (Kielbasiewicz-Drozdowska, Radko, 2006:76).

Intercultural communication usually implies interaction with speakers of different languages. For communication between them to be successful, it is necessary to know the verbal as well as the non-verbal code system that determines the community uses because only a part is exchanged with the verbal code system message during communication (Bašić, 2014). The basic components of communication competence are motivation, knowledge, skills, and character. At the same time, the key problem in intercultural communication is the search for similarities, anxiety, desire to reduce insecurity, stereotypes, prejudices, racism, abuse of power, ethnocentrism, and culture shock (Samovar et al., 2013). Samovar et al. (2013) highlight several key tips for improving intercultural communication:

- get to know yourself;
- apply empathy;
- pay attention to cultural differences when listening;
- develop communication flexibility;
- understand intercultural conflict;
- learn about cultural adaptation.

According to Albu (2015:11) “For sustainable development of the tourism industry, communication in all sense and levels, between all emitters and receivers of tourism messages and tourists, has become a key element“. Jelinčić et al. (2010) state that the Italian anthropologist Pietro Clemente defined tourism as a form of knowledge of our time that unites experience and imagination while thinking above all about getting to know the Other. This is exactly how tourism and tourist experiences encourage and represent a modern way of recognizing and acknowledging the Other, which is why tourism represents interculturalism, thus encouraging intercultural dialogue and intercultural communication. It is considered that tourism greatly benefits the local community, but the lack of tourist local resident relations can also cause negative consequences. Tourist-local resident contact is two-way contact, and negative consequences include inequality in the treatment of guests, fake tourist information, fraud, and stereotyping of national/ethnic identities. Jelinčić et al. (2010) according to MacCannel (1984) point out that it is necessary to turn ignorance

about the Other into knowledge, defining the relationship between tourists and residents as temporary and unequal resulting in stereotypes. As an example, it is stated that the behavior of tourists on a vacation does not correspond to their behavior in their country of residence, so individual nations are often characterized according to characteristics that are not typical of them (Jelinčić et al., 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the first half of 2020, the world was hit by the global crisis of the COVID-19 virus pandemic, and the negative consequences of the crisis were reflected in all structures of the economy. Kulich et al. (2021) in their research analyzed key current research on the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on intercultural communication and concluded that: „some research areas and applications potentially affected by COVID are highlighted, including our sense of national/international identity and cooperation, our mediated or actual social networks, our ways of framing or carrying out intercultural or cross-cultural cooperation, new issues emerging in inter-group contact, how we apply cross-cultural taxonomies or dimensions to analyze data, and how these ultimately affect our relationships with each other across all levels of culture (from dyads to groups, sub- or co-cultures) or express and affirm interculturality at such times“.

On the other hand, research indicates that the paralysis of tourism both nationally and globally as a result of the lockdown policy in various countries, made tourism one of the most severely affected sectors; stopping international tourist movements, closing tourist destinations, and firing a large number of tourism workers. However, a review of research by different authors (Afrić Rakitovac, Urošević, 2023; Čorak, Živoder, Marušić, 2020; Golja, 2021; Varzaru, Bocean, Cazacu, 2021) indicates that the coronavirus pandemic has prompted a reconsideration of the uncontrolled exploitation of resources and certainly represents a period of transformation of human values and experience of what tourism is and should be. The pandemic crisis also represents a new opportunity to move to more sustainable tourism development, a new start for the reorganization of the tourism sector, emphasizing sustainability, the development of special interest tourism, greater involvement of key stakeholders, active participation of the local community in the tourism development of destinations and the preservation of natural and cultural resources. It was precisely the changes in tourism trends caused by the pandemic crisis that encouraged the creation and shaping of new post-pandemic tourism experiences.

The pandemic period stopped intercultural communication, intercultural dialogue, and tourism, and that's exactly how communication moved online. Golja (2021) points out, according to Future Foundation and Amadeous (2015), well-known tourist trends and characteristics: seekers of simplicity, cultural purists, seekers of social capital, bounty hunters, obligees, and ethical travelers. Golja (2021) indicates in her research that during the pandemic crisis, the following tourist trends were present: wanderlust - an insatiable desire to travel, vital value - greater value for money, local travelers and not tourists, escape from reality, security, awareness of encroachment on the environment, remote work, small joys and spontaneity and technology. Precisely thanks to the analysis of key research during the pandemic, Golja (2021) also elaborated on key tourism trends, and the following stand out: domestic demand, sustainable and responsible tourism, local experience and

knowledge, authenticity, digital ecosystems, SMART destinations, personalization, special interest markets, interactivity, and education.

However, adapting to new tourist trends, which have been constantly changing in recent years and cannot be specified, certainly creates an opportunity for the development of creativity and innovation in tourism. Post-pandemic tourists are looking for authentic and different experiences that are local, unique, educational, and inspiring. It is precisely the post-pandemic era that encourages and places even more sustainable development in the foreground, intercultural dialogue, and communication, as well as the growing need to understand other and different cultures and combat prejudices and stereotypes.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic COVID-19 crisis stopped all mobility and travel, thus also reflecting the interruption of personal and live intercultural communication. Today, in the period we define as post-pandemic, we are faced with trends in tourism that are constantly changing. It was the pandemic crisis that encouraged all key stakeholders of all tourist destinations to reconsider new and innovative tourism trends, putting sustainable development and special interest tourism in the foreground. Above all, this is precisely the opportunity for overtourism destinations to transition from mass to sustainable-selective tourism, in which the destinations would valorize their unique local natural and cultural resources through models of participatory development and management which connects all key stakeholders; private sector, public sector and local community. Also, tourism, through which intercultural communication is mostly reflected, above all through the tourist-local resident relationship, represents a real tool for getting to know the Other, suppressing and removing barriers, stereotypes, and prejudices. The authors of this paper believe that the pandemic crisis and the possibility of free traveling and intercultural communication have accelerated and brought to the foreground the previously mentioned views. Education and the establishment of personal relationships with individuals from different religious, cultural, and racial groups, as well as the introduction of intercultural communication as a subject in schools, could be the best way to combat cultural stereotypes and prejudices and raise awareness that we are all living in an increasingly connected - intercultural world.

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