GLOBAL CHOICE OF CULTURAL DESTINATIONS VIA NEW TECHNOLOGIES

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ABSTRACT

The scientific report aims to reveal the opportunities for global choice of cultural destinations via new technologies. The role of the global information society is emphasized by providing contacts and interaction between different cultures. Globalization process is reviewed as a stimulus for implementing changes in tourism. The importance of global electronic and communication technologies and media for tourism development is underlined. The opportunities for creating global transparency in choosing tourism destinations are indicated. Levels and factors affecting globalization of tourism are identified. The global network is viewed as a mean for dissemination of global culture. Attention is focused on the role of new technologies for traveling throughout the world. Special accent is given to the expansion of short-term trips to exotic and cultural destinations worldwide. Issues concerning establishment of growing interest in cultural destinations are discussed and attractive cultural destinations for the year 2012 are analyzed in details. The interrelation 'choice - image' of a tourist destination is explained. Special attention is drawn to cultural values as a key to successful destination development. The author considers that the new technologies are a

helpful instrument for attracting tourists to unknown locations having great cultural potential.

Keywords: Globalization, Tourism, New Technologies, Cultural destinations

INTRODUCTION

International tourism is the most visible expression of globalization. Its economic dimension represents the global movement of the largest flow of people, goods and capital. The development of global tourism is associated with the availability of common information space. The entities in tourism industry are elements of the global network. Tourist travels everywhere in the world connects more and more tourist destinations in the global economy. Global tourism is a process of a constant contact and interaction between representatives of different cultures. It is a field where the tolerance of a huge number of people is being verified.

GLOBALIZATION AS A STIMULUS FOR CHANGES IN TOURISM

Globalization stimulates the growth of tourism through global electronic and communication **technologies and networks**, and the **global media**. Electronic technologies help to implement fast-functioning and economical systems for transport and hotel reservation services all over the world. Contemporary media, especially **Internet**, creates a global transparency thus multiplying the potential in choosing tourist destination.

The impact of globalization on tourism takes place on **two levels**:

1) Creating prerequisites and conditions for performing tourist activity;

2) Changing the postmodern tourist's lifestyle relating to formation of motivation for tourism.

There are a number of **factors** that play a significant role in the process of tourism globalization (Mpoful, 2009). These include:

• Expansion of global business and trade;

- Technological development in transport and communication;

- Increasing cultural and political interdependence

- Development of multinational and transnational corporations.

Globalization of the world economy plays a key role in implementing changes in **business tourism**. Trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) are associated with travel abroad. No doubt they contribute to further globalization and growth of the hospitality industry. The removal of trade barriers stimulates business tourism (Tadarakov, 2012). The development of global tourism and movement of tourist flows are facilitated by the transition to free markets.

Modern man may obtain information through the **global network** about hundreds of destinations and attractions all over the world. That is one of the ways in which globalization affects the choice of cultural destinations. Effective marketing helps attracting more tourists to a particular tourism destination. Thus, visitors can experience **culture and customs** of the tourist place and become familiar with the specificities of the region, and the indigenous people.

The geographic enlargement of connections between tourist places has become a major factor in global tourism development. It is leading to internationalization of tourism, **global culture**, effective use of leisure time, **global tourist flows** worldwide and increased competition. The phenomenon of globalization is contributing significantly to the **global tourist journey** to the most remote places of the Earth.

THE ROLE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR WORLDWIDE TRAVELS

Implementation of new technologies is one of the frequently discussed drivers of globalization. Technological improvements in transportation and communication have contributed to the movement of foreign tourists. New opportunities for business, trade and internet banking are found out. Globalization process has advanced significantly via technological development of **transport, communication, internet, computer reservation systems** (CRS), and **e-commerce**.

Due to the growth of **air transport**, global travels to distant destinations become shorter in terms of time and distances. **Internet** is an important achievement in

favor of globalization. It makes national borders become 'invisible'. Internet expands capabilities of the potential tourists in searching for **new information** and opportunities for **global travel** to various destinations in the **global world** (Parusheva, 2012b). Many international and regional agencies, airlines, hotels, travel associations and public sector organizations maintain their own **web sites** targeted to promote tourism in the **global environment**. The purchase of online-based entertainments has facilitated the **global spread** of new forms of leisure services. This has strengthened the role of the **global media** in the social construction of the desired lifestyle.

The emergence of **low cost airlines and cruise lines** is a growing trend in tourism industry. The new transportation vehicles are distinguished not only by their speed and convenient in overcoming great distances. They affect fashion in travel and tourism, tourists' motivation and imagination (Pencheva, 2011). The most important factors in determining travel routes during a given epoch are the means of transportation, their features and price. In XVIII century Spain and Portugal are considered as **exotic destinations** by the British and the Central Europeans. Nowadays, the transport innovations change the place of exotics to the Caribbean, Africa or less known places in Asia. Sociological studies indicate that Asia is the most preferred place for cultural tourism by the modern Europeans.

The modern air transport plays an important role in tourism development. Studies show that low-cost airlines are causing expansion of the short-term trips targeted to **cultural tourism**, aiming at visiting cities with huge cultural heritage.

Information technologies are a great achievement in organization and management of tourism. The introduction of computerized reservation systems (CRS) and global distribution systems (GDS) support **global supply** of tourist services (Parusheva, 2010). Studies show that above half a million terminals of the global distribution system have connected the major portion of world airlines with potential tourists. They have allowed passengers to choose airline, check flight time, and get acquainted with the rules of travel and book tickets online.

Nowadays, along with the rapid progress of information technologies and transport, the **global phenomena** change societies in the world. The contemporary globalization radically transforms the global economy and the **global society**.

GROWING INTEREST IN CULTURAL DESTINATIONS

Tourism develops rapidly and turns into a modern global economic sector. It becomes a fundamental **tool for world development**. Globalization is establishing new configuration of social time, which reflects in **global mobility** and **fragmentation of vacation time**.

Today, despite the tension of the everyday life and stress, people go on holidays and vacations which sometimes are for longer periods, but in most cases they last shorter time. Geographical mobility has changed its static character. More and more "holiday hunters" could be met at any spot of the globe. This process is favorable for the development of tourism and increases the demand for **cultural tourism**.

According to World Tourism Organization in 2020 more than 720 million foreign tourists (non-Europeans) will spend their holidays in Europe. The 'International Business Times' has presented a study of the top 20 destinations of the year 2012. Following the trend of increasing interest in cultural tourism, special attention is paid to cultural destinations. The most attractive cultural destinations in 2012 follow hereunder (Parusheva, 2012a):

Muscat, Oman

Unlike its neighboring Arab countries, which are using their oil wealth to build skyscrapers, mega shopping malls and convention centers, Oman pays attention to construction of opera and theater halls. Muscat has become an attractive destination for cultural tourists from all over the world.

Bentonville, Arkansas - USA

Have you ever heard about Bentonville, Arkansas? This is the hometown of the retailer Wal-Mart. This small town, situated in the center of the United States, has become a cultural destination of world-class. The most impressive of all is the Crystal Bridges Museum of American art.

Trinidad, Cuba

Only a three and a half hours distance southeastwards from the Cuba's capital of Havana spreads a city with a 500-year history, named Trinidad. According to tourists the whole city is like a museum. UNESCO has officially recognized and entered in their lists its cobblestone streets, Spanish colonial architecture and the colorful houses specific for this country.

Hampi, India

Hampi is one of the fastest-growing tourist cities in India. It combines both desert and oasis. The ruins, still visible today prove that its population numbering 500,000 has lived in splendor, could be compared with those of Angkor Wat.

Portovenere, Italy

Portovenere shares its UNESCO status together with Cinque Terre and it is just as picturesque as the latter with its boats, towering catholic churches and meandering trains. The town streets are filled with history and breathtaking sea views.

Guimaraes, Portugal

In 2012 Guimaraes become the European Capital of Culture. This city is a symbol of Portuguese nationality from the XII century and it skillfully manages to combine both authenticity and modern look. Guimaraes is developing due to its young population and rising arena of culture

Kazan, Russia

Kazan, the third capital of Russia combines in harmony Christian and Muslim culture. The city is famous for its museums, theaters, restaurants and river views. They all create reminiscent of Central Asia. Sport is one of the major interests of the people of Kazan.

The cultural tourism has **magical potential**. It brings additional incomes due to the inexhaustible resources of the tourist place. In recent years, it has gained a great importance in the **global community** as a foundation for economic development.

THE INTERRELATION 'CHOICE - IMAGE' OF A TOURIST DESTINATION

Tourism is highly dependent on the development ability of the **cultural attractions**. An important feature of the cultural heritage is that to a large scale it determines the **image of the tourist destination**. The heritage is not only a source of historical knowledge that affects the attractions themselves, but it also affects the destination as a whole.

Every tourist has the opportunity to choose among a **set of destinations** offering multiple products and services. A strong influence on the choice of destination may play the so-called **"push" and "pull" factors** that determine the tourist's motivation to choose one destination over another. "Pushes" are the primary factors associated with instinctive desires of individual tourists (such as: desire for escape, rest, relaxation, adventure, prestige, etc.). "Pull" factors are mainly related to the **attraction of destination** and the external physical characteristics (such as: beaches, ways of accommodation, relaxation facilities, cultural and historical resources, etc.). The success of "pull" factors depend on the personal preferences of the individual tourist.

A huge proportion of cultural tourists come mainly from the neighboring countries. They are usually aware of the specificity of **cultural values**. However, the more distant destinations are, the more attractive they are. Cultural tourists have a high level of knowledge of cultural life. They are attracted both by the experience and memories of past visits, and by their personal knowledge about the cultural heritage.

Forecasts indicate that tourism will continue to dominate on the international travel scene. Therefore it is considered to be the **key to a successful destination development**. At any part of Earth tourism is treated as a **source of profit** and an instrument contributing to better **environmental protection**.

FINDINGS

•   Globalization of tourism provides high potential in choosing cultural destinations via new technologies.

•   Cultural tourism has a major market share in the world tourism.

•   Modern communication technologies "bring" attractive tourist destinations to prospective tourists.

CONCLUSION

The major economic asset of the global tourism is the cultural wealth of the tourist destinations. The cultural heritage and attractions more and more sensitively are becoming centres of attraction for the majority of tourists and improving the image of the particular tourist destination. New technologies could be a helpful vehicle for attracting visitors to less-known places that possess great cultural potential.

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