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Review

## SOCIAL IMPACTS OF MODERNISATION IN THE CHOICE OF TOURIST DESTINATION

*This work deals with the influence of the socio-cultural factors in the tourist' decisions upon the choice of tourist destinations. The author's attention is primarily directed towards the analysis of social background consisting of "uncontrolled marketing variables" which are essential in the segmentation of the tourist product of destination. The work is composed of two parts. The introductory, theoretical part refers to the analysis of the socio-cultural atmosphere in which the attitudes, the aspirations and the needs influencing the tourist conduct are shaped. In the other, empirical part of the work the authors analyse the results of the longitudinal research of the socio-cultural aspects of the tourist demand made in the period between 1994. and 1997. in the hotels in the Istrians district. The influence of the publicity means in the choice of Istria as a tourist destination is examined in correlation with socio-cultural and demographic variables such as: sex, age, qualification, profession, as well as in the context of the modernising processes in the emitting countries. The special aspect of the research is presented by the socio-linguistic analysis of the slogans which, in the opinion of the tourists, express the peculiarity of the Istrian tourists product best. By this, the experienced dimension of the Istria as a destination is affected.*

*Key words: tourist destination, publicity, socio-cultural influence, advertising slogans.*

An inquiry about the convenient tourist destination opens a vicious circle of questions and answers that seem not to have a way out. On the one hand, the observations about the crisis in the mass tourism concept asks for a radical intervention into the main characteristics of the existing destinations which, on the other hand, still continue to function as if nothing happened. Nowadays it is clear that the development of a destination must not be based on a "worn out" model of mass tourism. The dynamics of development will depend on the changes in the more extensive social surrounding of tourist activities. It is, therefore, necessary to analyse the changes in variables that influence the shaping of aspirations, motivations, needs and expectations on the tourist travel. For these reasons this paper will deal with the influence of the modernisation process in the choice of tourist destination.

## 1. TOURISM AND MODERNISATION

Tourism is considered to be *par excellence* a modern phenomenon, not just because it appears within the development of modern industrial society. The fundamental reason for such a statement lies in the correlation between tourism and modernisation. Tourism and the concept of a tourist, ascribed to a French writer Stendahl by Dumazedier [6, 48] have their origin in the modernisation process. Theoretically, modern society is based on (uncritically accepted) idea of the limitless progress in the philosophy of Enlightenment, and, practically it is based on industrialisation as “an established fact of modernisation process” [7, 68]. Contrary to the optimistic stands taken by the economists, the sociologists and the anthropologists formed a radical and critical attitude towards the banality of the mass tourism as a way of manipulation and alienation from the beginnings of the sixties. Ever since Boorstin analysed mass tourism as “pseudo-events” at the beginning of the sixties till Mac Cannell’s “Tourist” [2] and the appearance of “Golden Hordes” by Turner and Ash in 1975. [3], tourist travelling has been understood as one-dimensional reflex of reality, as “universe without space”, as “set authenticity” or “symbolic universe separated from the reality of space and time” [4, 208]. Despite the essential differences between these authors and their approaches, the Israeli sociologist E. Cohen is right when he says that a concept of the tourist emerging from this tradition is “no more than a caricature” [5, 43]. In this early phase the most important contribution to the development of the sociological and anthropological attitude towards tourism is probably in the corrections of short-sighted economic optimism prevailing in estimates of mass tourism. From that point of view, tourism is presented as a component in the modernisation process, even as its special form in which the modernisation takes place. Therefore, the criticism of mass tourism should be aimed at a special form of modernisation that causes the creation of mass culture and mass society in general, so the tourist behaviour basically cannot have different characteristics, either. It all makes A. Savelli right when he says: “the characteristics of modern industrial society must be questioned. If most of the people are not to be considered stupid, it is to be supposed that their conduct is conditioned by compulsion and manipulation” [4, 210]. In this case the “cost and benefit” model becomes out of date in its theoretical and practical sense since tourism is no longer considered as a special characteristic of a particular society. On the contrary, it is considered as a globally characterised phenomenon growing out of the “interaction among individual societies” [8, 75].

The detailed analysis of the relation between tourism and modernisation presents a complicated problem and it would demand much more time and space. The mentioned notes are of primarily methodological significance. Actually, if it is true that the tourist conduct is determined by the characteristics of more extended modernising processes in their home culture as well as in the local culture of destination, the explanation for the crises, but also the way out of the vicious circle of mass tourism should be searched for in modified characteristics of the so called *late modernisation*. In this sense one of the key questions is the influence of the socio-cultural factors, as the product of modernisation process, in the choice of a tourist destination. The most characteristic processes, from the sociological point of view, affecting the choice of destination will be denoted in changes of the class structure.

## 2. SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND TOURIST BEHAVIOUR

The traditional theories of modernisation sought and found the roots of changes in firmly institutionalised forms of conduct such as economic system. Accordingly, leisure, as well as tourist conduct were mainly understood as the consequence and not the cause of particular aspects of the home culture. The global changes caused by modernisation result in the modified social structure referred to as "post-modernism" or "late modernisation". The changes affect all the segments of society, tourism included, and the new middle class is their main subject. The concept itself refers to renunciation to the values and the forms of conduct dominant until then and the inauguration of the new ones. The heterogeneous interests and social fragmentation are their essential characteristics, which directly calls in question the homogeneity of the mass tourism concept. It is the process of transition of mass tourism into post modernist tourism, which is one of the characteristics of the present-day holiday industry. In contrast to mass tourism concentrated in the European part of the Mediterranean, the postmodernist tourism spreads spatially into the Third World countries. The holiday becomes flexible and includes a personal attitude towards the tourist destinations and is organised by specialised and non-conventional tourist agencies. The new middle classes seek for authenticity and originality of the destination. Tourist operators meet their wishes by distant destinations in Caribbean, New Guinea, etc. The small specialised agencies, being the holiday producers, are more and more sensitive for the consumer's wishes and they are able to adjust quickly to the new needs of the tourists and "make their wishes real" [10, 12]. Different adventurous activities (rafting, mountain biking) are combined with the intellectually-scientific (historical, anthropological, archeological, etc.) aspects of tourism. They also include an ecological, "green holiday". At the same time, the interest for other people's culture, religion and ethnicity increases, especially for the simple and authentic societies just lightly touched by the processes of modernisation. Getting to know what is "radically different" becomes a substitute for religiosity that has been pushed aside as well as a part of the spreading postmodernist nostalgia. The specific habitus of the new middle class also includes the experience of tourist travels which presents a basis for "class reproduction and differentiation" [10,14]. For Munt there are three fundamental characteristics of post-modernist tourism: 1) intellectualisation of the holiday instead of relaxation predominant in mass tourism; 2) professionalism – university graduates, members of new middle class demand a better quality and often an expert presentation of the destination, which includes anthropological, sociological and similar knowledge; 3) the cult of individualism and authentic practice confronted to limitless "beach frying". However, the tourist behaviour is not determined only by those fundamental divisions, but also by the ones that are not the immediate product of work. In this sense the practical significance in research is given to those divisions which traverse transversely the stratificational divisions in the modern society. It refers to sociological and demographic peculiarities of tourists.

## 3. PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF STRUCTURAL CHANGES: AGE, GENDER AND FAMILY SITUATION

The changes of the age structure of the population represent one of the main socio-demographic terms of reference which influence the choice of a tourist destination. The participation of the senior citizens is a characteristic typical for the

late-modernisation society. At the end of the century one out of seven inhabitants of USA and Japan will be 64 and more years old. In Europe one out of four inhabitants will be 55 and more. The retirement age decreases and the number of non-working senior citizens increases. The researches dealing with the influence of family life to tourist conduct show that the family income increases fastest in the ages between 55 and retirement. It is the phase of the so called "empty nest" without the expenses for children's support and schooling, while the main materialistic problems have already been solved. The research of the senior citizens' tourist market in USA shows that the Americans aged 50 and more and having an income of 800 milliards US dollars, control 70% of USA wealth [11, 713]. This group makes the group of people aged from 55 – 64 the most interesting one on USA and West Europe markets [12, 207-208]. What's more, it is the generation that started the mass tourism tyde in the sixties, they started searching for the alternative, distant tourist destinations in the seventies, and nowadays they influence notably the segmentation of the tourist market.

The second group, according to age, are the children. Although in indirect way, they have significant influence in the choice of tourist destination. The process of making decisions about travelling is determined by the group conduct since these are mostly group travels. Family groups are the most common ones, therefore the research of the decision-making process is primarily aimed at the influence of the individual members of the family. Until the fifties the man as the head of the family was considered to have most influence in decision-making process. The recent approach (Sharp & Mott) shows that in the majority of cases husband and wife equally participate in making plans for a holiday. According to various researches, a woman is predominant in information gathering phase, especially in families with small children [13, 288]. Some authors emphasise the role of children in defining one's contentment with the tourist travel since their conduct influences greatly the contentment of the adults. The influence of children in families where mothers are not employed is bigger due to a deeper closeness of mother and child. The roles of children can change from the passive to the active one. For example, the destination the child doesn't want to visit could become the cause of dissatisfaction for the whole family. This is also intensified by the fact that children are very fastidious consumers. They notice things the adults rarely notice, especially those regarding the cultural varieties manifested in dressing, cuisine or linguistic differences [14, 126]. Finally, it must be kept in mind that children are the future grown-up holiday-consumers and their later decisions in the choice of the destination will be greatly influenced by their previous experiences.

Gender is also the peculiarity connected with the decision-making process in the family group, it's role changes in late-modernisation society. Until recently prevailed the opinion according to which the tourist conduct was group defined (especially by family groups), and not individual. Therefore, gender seemed not so important in the case of tourism as it is in regard to other products [8, 313]. The latest researches in tourism show different dimensions of the influence of sex and gender to tourist conduct. M. Swain stresses three questions essential in understanding the relation between gender and tourism: 1) tourist processes appear in sexually structured and arranged societies; 2) in all the societies involved in tourist development there is constant mutual influence in formation of relations between sexes, as well as

economic, political, social, cultural and ambiental dimensions of life; 3) in tourist practice the model of inequality (power, control) as well as the models of equality are shown through racial, class and sexual characteristics. The conclusion follows that "men and women are involved in creation and consumption of tourism in different ways" [15, 249]. The late modernisation changes in a radical way the relation between sexes both in the home countries and the tourist destinations. The feminization of some professions, the decrease of birth-rate, the increase in the number of single households, frequent matrifocal structure of a family, these are all the elements pointing at deep changes in family models. They will surely increasingly influence the segmentation of tourism and tourist conduct in the future.

#### 4. THE CHOICE OF ISTRIA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

After marking the world tourist trends, a question can be asked about how much the hotels in Istria fit into those trends. The results of four-year research *Socio-cultural aspects of tourist demand* will serve as a basis of this analysis. A public opinion poll carried out in approximately 70 tourist accommodation objects in Istria in the period between May and October 1997 included 1815 (mostly) foreign guests. The questionnaire included 62 variables. By means of a computer processing the absolute and relative frequencies were calculated. Afterwards the crossings of individual questions were done, the contingency tables were formed and the contingency coefficients were calculated. Further processing was done by using the ONE-WAY ANOVA statistic procedure.

##### The influence of advertising means

The measurement of the influence of touristical advertising in the choice of Istria as a holiday destination was put to practice by a group of questions in which the examinee valued seven of its aspects. Of course, the subjective estimate made by the examinee need not be regarded as the only criterion in determining the influence of advertising to the examinee. This is caused by two reasons: 1) there is a possibility that not all the people are equally capable of estimating the outside influences onto their viewpoints and conducts; 2) the second reason is the influence of advertising on unconsciousness and subconsciousness of men. Nevertheless, these information's present an excellent indicator of the interaction among the seven advertising patterns offered. The examinees' answers were turned into the continuum of numerical rates (from: not at all – 1, till the decisive – 4) and due to the ranking of the answers the arithmetic centre was calculated. That made the difference among the particular segments of advertising more transparent. Out of seven advertising means the greatest influence is attributed to the earlier visits which are considered as an important or a decisive factor in making choice by 45% of the examinees. The high rank of this modality is partly consequence by people's inclination to find the reason for their behaviour in making autonomous decisions, minimising, in that way, the influence of the outer factors. The recommendations of friends are ranked second and their big influence is admitted by 38% of the examinees. The third position goes to the agencies and is the best way to promote professional models of advertising. If compared with the research results dating from 1996, it shows an increasing influence of these means

of advertising. The influence of mass media: newspapers, magazines and especially radio and television on tourist home markets is still insufficiently used. Only 10 – 20 % of the guests get to know the Istrian tourist offer by means of the most influencing media of our times.

The crossing of the examinees' general peculiarities (sex, age, profession, country of origin) and this group of questions show the statistically important correlation's only with age variable. The older examinees are in general willing to accept the greater influence of tourist advertising when making decisions. The loyalty to the destination (often to the object, too) happens to be the common characteristic of the guests to Istrian hotels, and it indicates the widespread traditional approach to tourist travel. The factors nowadays listed about the reasons for coming to Istrian hotels are identical to those 25 years ago. Namely, one of the first researches in Croatia, dating from the years 1972 – 1978, also states "examinee's personal experience from previous visits and recommendations of friends and relatives" [16, 79] as the most important reason for his tourist travels.

### Forms of advertising to be intensified or reduced

In the second group of questions referring to the advertising of Istria, the examinees were asked to determine the necessity of positive or negative corrections of the various ways in which the Istrian tourism is presented on their home markets. Most of them agree that advertising must be intensified by all means (30 – 55%). On the other hand, who state that there is too much advertising and that it should be reduced can be entirely neglected (2 – 4 %). Most of the examinees agree that mass media is the most effective way of advertising. A significant percentage of the examinees didn't answer this question (26 – 41%). The main reason for such restraint could be the uncertainty of the examinees towards "hidden influence of advertising means". The examinees' peculiarities variable doesn't determine any group of people here, so despite the differences in gender, age and social position, the general impression is that the advertising of Istrian tourism is insufficient.

### Activities during vacation

Intellectualisation, seeking for adventure and the discovery of the unknown are some of the characteristics of travelling in the period of late modernisation. To which extent do the visitors to Istrian hotels follow the world trends and how much do they fit into them? What is it that attracts guests from Istrian hotels and which interests do they show while on vacation? The research in this area was carried out by a question about the interest of tourists shown for 10 activities on vacation. As expected, most of the tourists are interested in bathing and sunbathing (77%). The percentage of the tourists not interested in these activities can be neglected. It is indicative that this variable is not determined by the socio-economic peculiarities of the examinees. Regardless of gender, age, class position and the country they come from, the tourists are in Istria primarily due to bathing and sunbathing. Does this fact, established in the researches dating from the '70 and typical of mass tourism, present a good or a bad luck for Istrian tourism? Is it a consequence of a specific structure of our tourism to which the guests adopt? Is the guest attracted by natural comparative

advantages of our coast, the limiting factor of alternative / selective approach to tourist offer? To answer these questions it is necessary to understand the subjective (guest) and the systematic component (the tourist offer structure) in their correlation. Namely, the beginnings of intensified development of mass tourism in Istria collide with the shaping of motifs and interests of the tourists who, in the course of time, become traditional guests of Istrian hotels. Naturally, the tourist offer that was for a long time directed towards such types of visitors cannot be radically modified and redirected. On the other hand, the modern trends leave trace on tourist conduct of visitors to Istrian hotels. This becomes obvious when with the fact that the category "getting acquainted with other cultures and customs" was placed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> position (51%). The modern tourist obviously, along with relaxation that is most important, doesn't want to be just the object of vacation. Instead, he also wants to get acquainted with the local cultural features. The majority of the tourists also show significant interest in trips and visiting the places of historical interest. The bottom of this list is left to cultural performances, shopping and dances and discotheques. The structure of answers referring to vacation activities implies the interlacement of traditional and innovative elements.

### **Contentment and problems of vacation in Istria**

The complex of questions about the satisfaction with some elements of the vacation is divided onto three spatial levels:

1. Istria as a destination,
2. Place of resort,
3. Place of accommodation.

In evaluation of the elements of global tourist offer in Istria the highest mark was given to nature and kindness (more than 4,10). The service on boarder crossings, ecological conditions and tourist information system are also highly evaluated. The evaluation of the service on border crossings shows the tendency towards reversed proportion according to the nearness of the tourism market. Namely, the visitors from the nearest countries, Slovenia and Italy, demonstrate the most critical attitude towards the quality of the boarder crossing services (one third are dissatisfied). However, only one out of twenty British visitors is dissatisfied whereas the majority of them (70%) have the positive impressions from the boarder crossings. The British tourists mostly arrive to Istria by plane, so the crowds and waiting at the airport are the troubles that don't exist for them. The special welcoming program is often organised, too. But the guests who arrive in their own cars, especially in the peak of the season, which includes waiting for a few hours to cross the boarder, do not have so positive experiences. The lowest mark, as expected, was given to the condition of the roads (2,96). They are considered the biggest problem of vacation by most of the examinees. The lack of the parking lots and the public transport problems mustn't be put aside, either. The greatest number of complaints comes from the guests coming from the more distant countries, for example the British who come by plane. Those tourists don't have their own means of transport available. At the same time, they are very much interested in getting acquainted in the cultural and historical heritage of Istria.

Various middle marks were given to the tourist offer in resorts. The highest marks were given to the tidiness of the place and security (mark 4), while entertainment and services other than accommodation (amenities) were ranked a bit lower. As expected, shopping and cultural events and activities were ranked lowest.

The contentment of the guests by the tourist offer in the place of accommodation is higher than the previous two indicators. All the average marks are very high. The staff kindness and the tidiness of the lodging come first (above 4), the food quality falls just a little behind (3,97). Accommodation conveniences and potentials for sports and recreation are also ranked fairly high (3,72). Organisation of the trips and prices take the lowest position although these elements are also satisfactory to one half of the examinees (3,5 or more). The general contentment with the vacation in Istria is ranked very high (4,19), which means that the examinees are generally satisfied with their vacation despite some objections.

The guests also express their dissatisfaction with the cleanliness of the sea and tidiness of the beaches. It shows that people working in tourism sometimes overvalue the natural peculiarities of Istria, at least when it refers to its ecological aspects. The percentage of the foreign tourists who complain about the cleanliness of the sea is not to be underestimated. The West European ecological criterion increase daily, and the ecological problems of the Adriatic are getting more strained. The lack of sandy beaches, the poor equipment of toilets and untidiness are also frequently mentioned. The lack of children's facilities presents a particular problem. The insufficiency refers to the entire tourist offer. On the whole, the criterion of the examinees stand high, and that is best noticed among the tourists with "rich" experience in being tourists, gained in remote destinations with higher standards of hotel accommodation, transparent sea and sandy beaches.

### **The slogans of Istrian tourism**

The question of "the most successful slogan" in promotion of Istrian tourism was used to indicate the tourist types. The slogan helped to get an insight into the impressions of Istria as a destination, which can be a subtle indicator of motivation as well as (dis)satisfaction. The examinees were expected to decide about the convenience of one of the slogans used in the advertising campaign, or to give their own "impression" of Istria as a tourist destination. The following slogans were offered:

1. "SO NEAR AND SO UNIQUE"... ISTRIA,
2. "SOMETHING SO NICE IS SO NEAR",
3. "SOMETHING NICE IS SO NEAR  
(WELCOME TO YOUR NEIGHBOURS)",
4. "WELCOME TO ISTRIA".

The supposition about the two sides of Istrian tourism is in a way confirmed with the distribution of the answers. More than one third of the examinees prefer the first answer (34,72%), even though it sounds a bit "post-modernistic". It contains the miraculous elements and singularity that needn't be looked for in more remote destinations. The last slogan occupies the second position (22,56%). It is a traditional expression and, as a stereotype, most acceptable for the homogeneous forms of



conduct typical for mass tourism. The two remaining slogans were much less accepted (11,6 and 6%). 252 sample tourists formed their own suggestions.

It is impossible to analyse all of them in this work, but it would show the heterogenousness of these formulations as well of the tourist's impression by the destination. Still, the majority of the suggested slogans can be placed into a few basic categories confirming in that way the split nature of the actual tourist conduct. On the one hand there are slogans belonging to the "sea and sun" category. The typical examples are "Sea, sun and nothing else" or "Sun-water-air-freedom". The slogans stressing rest are close to them (26), such as "Istria – simply the rest". Mentioned groups of slogans present the typical forms of mass tourism. At the same time the postmodernist type of slogans such as "discovery, adventure, dreams" (46) and "simplicity, miracuolousness, exoticism" (37) have been constructed. Slogans such as "Istria-the fairy tale you should get to know", "Istria – one place, one dream" or "Istria – romantic and wild" are included into this category. Various categories of slogans that have the transitive character are located within these extremes. Two main groups of such "interventional" slogans can be recognised in the suggestions made by the guests to the Istrian hotels. The ones belonging to the first group tend to value nature, natural beauties and ecology such as "Istria is a wonderful and clean invitation". The second transitional group consists of slogans dealing with the social interaction of a host and a tourist, such as "hospitality", "neighbourhood and intimacy" and "culture" (38). Still, such slogans are not numerous.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The discussion about the socio-cultural factors in the choice of a tourist destination in the period of late modernisation initiates many theoretical and practical questions. It is impossible to answer them in a common sense way. On theoretical level the answers present the repeated speculation about the relation between tourism and the developing modernisation processes. The tourist activities and conduct can no longer be considered as a consequence of the modern culture but as an element that creates modern life. This general supposition should be used as a base for theoretical research in sociology and anthropology if we intend to create a meaningful context for empirical research of the motifs, aspirations and interests that function in the context of travelling, destinations and vacation.

The second level, based on the same questions, is of the empirical nature and deals with the relation between modern and post-modern elements in tourist behaviour. The longitudinal research in Istria as a tourist destination draws a conclusion that the actual moment in the development of tourism can be best understood as a transitional period from mass to post-modern type of tourism. At the moment the old model is still functioning but the denotations of a new one imply that the former is worn-out.

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### Sažetak

## SOCIOKULTURNI ČIMBENICI ODABIRA TURISTIČKE DESTINACIJE

*U radu se razmatra utjecaj socio-kulturnih čimbenika na odluke turista o odabiru turističke destinacije. Pozornost autora je prvenstveno usmjerena na raščlambu sociološkog backgrounda kojeg čine "nekontrolirane varijable marketinga", a bitne su za segmentaciju turističkog proizvoda destinacije. Rad se sastoji od dva dijela. Uvodni, teorijski dio predstavlja analizu procesa modernizacije i socio-kulturnog okruženja u kojem se uobličuju stavovi, aspiracije i potrebe što utječu na turističko ponašanje. U drugom, empirijskom dijelu autori analiziraju rezultate longitudinalnog istraživanja socio-kulturnih aspekata turističke potražnje što je provedeno u razdoblju od 1994. do 1997. godine u hotelima na području Istarske županije. Utjecaj sredstava promidžbe na odluku o odabiru Istre kao turističke destinacije razmatra se u korelaciji sa socio-kulturnim i demografskih varijablama kao što su: spol, dob, stručna sprema, zanimanje. Poseban aspekt istraživanja predstavlja analiza slogana koji po mišljenju turista najbolje izražavaju osobitosti turističkog proizvoda Istre, čime je u analizu uključena doživljajna dimenzija Istre kao turističke destinacije.*

*Ključne riječi: turistička destinacija, promidžba hotela, socio-kulturni utjecaj, promidžbeni slogani.*