

A Survey of Intercultural Communication in the Development of Regional Tourism¹

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Abstract

Communication is involved in all social life acts, being the constituent factor of creation and of cultural processes. Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are intensely discussed topics in today's society which is marked by globalization. Cultural differences are the core subject for studies addressing intercultural communication. Good knowledge of other cultures is a necessary step to get to recognize the nature of these differences and to relate to others through attitudes of understanding and tolerance which are premises for genuine intercultural dialogue, especially in the tourism industry. While communication is an act of human relationships, culture is the motive of this act. In tourism, quality of communication is related to the level of the culture involved and to the degree of improvement of the means of which is done. Intercultural communication experiences help tourists to know and to appreciate other cultures, but also help them to a better understanding of their own culture. Tourism professionals' linguistic and intercultural skills have been identified as pivotal assets towards upgrading the quality of the service they provide and contributing to successful communication and intercultural dialogue. Accordingly, the paper considers the features of the intercultural communication in relation to the tourism sector. The advantages of the intercultural communication are determined. An attempt was made to use the methodological apparatus in the study of the regional tourism sector in the formation of the "portrait" of a modern tourist. The results of an in-depth interview and questionnaire conducted among the guests of the Kazan city are presented. The paper analyses the experience of using intercultural communication, and considers the possibilities of their use in the strategic planning of regional tourism. Accounting for intercultural research will allow more rational management of regional tourism to carry out.

Keywords: Tourism; Culture; Intercultural Communication; Regional Tourism.

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1. Introduction

According to the seminal insight offered by Gavin Jack and Alison Phipps, “tourism matters because it provides both a lens onto and an energy for relationships with everyday life” (2005, p.1). Hence the relevance of “tourism’s contribution to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies” addressed in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (UNWTO, 2001, p.4). Indeed, the mundane practices promoted by tourism exchanges foster social interaction and may contribute to cultural diversity as an essential dimension of intercultural dialogue (UNESCO, 2009). On the other hand, these same practices may, to a certain extent, challenge commodification and cultural standardization, frequently pointed out as predicaments of the activities conducted by tourism under the auspices of globalization (Richards & Wilson, 2006).

Tourism is a nowadays phenomenon, based on increased need for health recovery and for changing environment, as well as for “the birth and the development of a sense of openness for beauties of nature” (Ionescu, 2000). People always have focused on widening spatial and temporal horizon of knowledge of their existence. One of the main means of achieving that objective was travels (Ferenț, 2007). Somehow involuntarily travels are marked by communication in many ways in which this can occur: between tourist and tourism service provider, among tourists from different cultures, between employees of different nationalities of travel agencies etc.

Good communication is not just transmitting information, but also a mutual understanding of each other's wishes and needs. Communication may be difficult if one of the parties is dominant and rejects intercultural dialogue, this fact influencing negatively the forms of tourism taking place in a particular destination. Sometimes, it may appear negative aspects of communication, from the rejection of the idea of dialogue, up to violent manifestation of its own position. In the tourism industry, this event can appear especially when tourists interact with local population, which, in this case, would consider tourists some intruders in their own culture (Namaziandost, Sabzevari, & Hashemifardnia, 2018).

Communicative behaviors of individuals are the result of complex interactions between cultural factors, contextual factors, knowledge and emotion. The way we communicate is anchored culturally, shaped by attitudes, values, practices and specific expectations of an ethnic group, which are created and circulated in the communication process. Communication situations involving individuals from different cultures are called intercultural communication situations. In the process of intercultural communication, tourists from different cultural backgrounds “negotiate their cultural identities, rules of meaning, perception, effects which may occur in the interaction process” (Șerbănescu, 2007).

In intercultural communication situations within tourism can arise communication barriers, misunderstandings caused by differences in behavior,

perceptual or of meaning, that exist between tourists coming from different cultures as well as negative stereotypes activation. Communication barriers may exist between tourists and staff from a specific tourism company (hotel, restaurant, travel agency, etc.). Misunderstandings, wrong interpretations, communication gaps are an inherent feature of intercultural communication. The experiences of intercultural communication help the individual to know and to appreciate other cultures, but also to better understand its own culture (Namaziandost, Neisi, Mahdavi-rad, & Nasri, 2019).

In an anthropological sense, culture is "the collective programming of the mind by which members of a group or social categories are distinguished from others" (Hofstede, 2012). Intercultural communication operates with this anthropological concept of culture defined by Geert Hofstede as the "software of the mind". If you have forgotten everything you learned, if all the information gathered was deleted from your memory, what remains is just this software that represents culture.

Culture influences communication: the study of intercultural communication focuses not only on language use; the study of intercultural communication recognizes how culture outlines who we are, how we behave, how we think, how we speak (Dodd, 1995). We recognize and respect the way which cultural footprint justify differences in communication style, vision and personality of everyone.

Cultural features were often attributed to heredity because philosophers and other scholars from past did not know how else to explain the remarkable stability of the differences between cultural patterns of human groups. They underestimated the impact of learning from previous generations and the transmission to the next generation of what we ourselves have learned. Ethnic conflicts are often justified by unfounded arguments of "superiority or inferiority of culture" (Hofstede, 2012; Tahmasbi, Hashemifardnia, & Namaziandost, 2019).

In Russia, such studies began to be carried out with the development of market relations and with the development of the need for research, as well as abroad, in the field of advertising and marketing.

The settled forms of human being found their corresponding expression in their work, interests, opinions, which are most directly reflected in the tourist choice of consumers (Bunakov, 2016; Nasri, Namaziandost, & Akbari, 2019).

Demographic and psychographic methods can complement each other, and their joint use opens up new possibilities. If in such an area of research as demography, quantitative indicators, for example, age, gender, and education, are included, then psychography is focused on the analysis of such categories as motives, interests, and values of individual individuals.

The cultural differences act in different ways. From the multitude of terms used to describe the manifestations of culture, the next four types cover well