

Tłumaczenia artykułów

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Exotic cultural tourism (trends, tour operators, participants)

Key words: exotic travel, globetrotter, tour operators, offers, participants, guides

Abstract: In the article, the author draws the reader's attention to a dynamically developing segment of tourism: exotic tourism, i.e. to non-European countries. The text touches upon the issue of the specific character of exotic trips as well as the rules for organizing such trips. It also draws a profile of the tourist planning to take such a trip and it identifies the most important tour operators, indicating the ten most important in the national exotic trip tour operator market.

Introduction

Each year billions of people¹ leave their place of permanent residence and become participants in the phenomenon known as tourism. Huge crowds of tourists travel to places considered the most attractive, fashionable, well-known from advertisements and easily accessible. This is mass tourism, most often associated with passive recreation. Some people, however, choose a different route, thinking that going where everybody else is going is as bad as going nowhere. They definitely do not want to be tourists because since travelling the world became so widespread the term "tourist" now has pejorative connotations, often simply meaning a mentally-limited and cognitively passive intruder (Wieczorkiewicz, 2008).

Among the many categories of tourists we find those who choose places and countries which are exotic to them, as their destination. The literature distinguishes them from tourists by calling them travellers (Winiarski, Zdebski 2009): sometimes they call themselves globetrotters. Their profile is aptly characterized by Beata Pawlikowska in *Poradnik Globtrotera/The Globetrotter's Guidebook* (2007, p.309).

"The traveller, who tries to understand the local culture and speak the local language, quickly gains the confidence and affection of natives, who often allow him or her to visit places inaccessible to strangers. Only an experienced traveller is able to overcome the cultural and linguistic barrier dividing him or her from the natives, ceasing to be "alien" and becoming "one of us". The key features of a traveller include curiosity, respect for all people and their traditions, honesty, the ability to adapt to new situations, ease of establishing contacts and courage. Only a traveller is able to penetrate the local culture and understand it". While analysing "exotic tourism"² as singled out from the vast number of forms of tourism mentioned in the literature it is worth determining its nature, and geographical and social range.

Exoticism itself is defined as the set of characteristics assigned to countries with a different climate, culture and unique to our civilization, which means that exotic travel involves destinations rather distant in terms of both space and cultural standards. This is reflected in the offers made by the organizers of such trips, an analysis of which is presented later in this article.

¹ According to the UN data the WTO in 2009 recorded 890 million of international tourists, the number of people travelling within their own countries is far greater.

²The term "exotic tourism" does not indeed exist in classic divisions of forms of tourism but in fact it is increasingly being used by tour operators to describe a tourist destination beyond the frontiers of our continent. The term is met both in brochures of travel agencies or Internet portals commonly describing transcontinental travel, e.g. www.egzotyka.tv, travel agencies Prestige Travel & Holiday.

Exotic tourism is considered to be a form of cultural tourism. Mikos von Rohrscheidt (2008) defines it as "tourist expeditions, aimed at the participants meeting with foreign and distant existing cultures or the traces of old remote cultures outside their own continent, or undertaken by participants attempting to achieve such meetings"³. Regarding a trip or a kind of tourism as exotic, is determined by the itinerary of the trip aiming at getting to know other cultures which are exotic for the traveller, and with meeting with their representatives at the destination. This allows exotic leisure tourism to be separated from other travel motivated by leisure (e.g. a stay in an exotic spa on Bali) or the intention of climbing Mt Kilimanjaro for example. These latter exotic trips meet the criteria of cultural tourism to a limited extent, due to the design of the itinerary. There is no way, however, to rule out the possibility of contact with the local culture, even during organised trips. During leisure tourists can both enjoy the offers of local escorted excursions to cultural attractions and can have daily contact with products of the local, exotic culture, often then experiencing classic culture shock. The term "exotic cultural tourism" is used by Mikos von Rohrscheidt (2008) to define private and individual travel by people generally interested in foreign and distant countries and their culture, undertaken without a predetermined specific itinerary. Only specific sightseeing, visits and meetings in populated places ultimately make these trips cultural expeditions. It should however be agreed that the purpose of the trip and its itinerary is the most important criterion characterising exotic cultural tourism⁴.

The turn of the 21st century has brought significant development of exotic tourism. This dynamic growth has many causes. On the one hand it is associated with an increase in wealth of the population in popular tourist centres (Europe, North America, Japan). On the other hand, it is connected with opportunities for visitors to regions in Asia, Africa, Australia or South America. An important role is also played by both the reduction in the cost of air travel and the progressive shortening of their length. In the calculation of exotic expeditions, travel costs account for two thirds of trip costs. Exotic travel has gradually become relatively cheaper and does not differ drastically from travel within one's own continent (e.g. Europe).

An important role is played by the active promotion of such travels and the colourful presentation of the charm of these destinations in the media. The widespread development of the Internet helps to promote exotic tourism and makes organizing and supporting such trips easier.

Both among the tour operators and participants the phenomenon of searching for new destinations can be observed. The former try to anticipate new offers by the competition, and the latter try to impress family and friends with a more "exotic" trip. The latest fashionable trends include China, Indochina with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, the countries

³ It is arguable if exotic trips can only be taken outside one's own continent; if we take into account the diversity of motivations, the desire to experience something other than relaxing on the beach, enjoying the classic urban centre of western civilization of a downtown type, visiting a prestigious collection in renowned museums, then also in Europe will we find exotic places. It is enough just to go back to classic literature, the books by Andrzej Stasiuk, who finds the exotic in the Hungarian Pusztá, in the Romanian Carpathians, the Albanian outback or even the Beskid Niski (see items *Opowieści galicyjskie/The Tales of Galicia*, *Jadąc do Babadag /Going to Babadag*, *Dziennik pisany później/Diary written later*). The climate of his descriptions and associations is amazing. The exotic elements can be found here and now, just a suitable perspective is needed and the capability of emotional experience inspired by the travel destination. Stasiuk keeps away from Paris, New York or even closer to him geographically Krakow (he lives in a hamlet of Wołowiec, village Sękowa in the Beskid Niski), which for him have no value perceived through the prism of writer's understanding of exoticism.

⁴ German-speaking authors prefer the term "*Fernreise*" (travelling far) which they use to define exotic tourist trips (K. Dietsch, *Kulturtourismus* 1997). The term referring directly to exotic cultural tourism is "*Fern-Kulturtourismus*" (cultural tourism to distant countries) used for the first time in the classification of cultural tourism by R. Jatzold. The criterion for classification to *Fernreisen* is the distance between place of residence and destination (transcontinental travel).

of Southern Africa, the Pacific region with Australia and New Zealand and South America. In price and prestige however, these destinations are overtaken by trips to the Antarctic and the Arctic regions.

A characteristic feature of exotic tourism is long duration, which is usually more than 11 days. This allows for optimal use of travel expenses, and visiting all the places worth seeing in the target region, as this is often a once-in-a-lifetime trip. Exotic cultural tourism is primarily a tourist tour, with changes of accommodation almost every day, taking into account the maximum number of places worth visiting in the destination countries which are often far apart. Participants in exotic trips are aware of coming to areas of another culture, a different climate and time zone, and with distinct ways of communication and behaviour. On the one hand, it is exciting for those hungry for new experiences and adventures, but some tourists are exposed through this to stressful situations.

An analysis of brochures for exotic holidays allows for the identification of their major components. Trip itineraries vary depending on the main purpose of the travel, because the itinerary is built differently for a study group, focused on learning about one cultural element, and differently for a group recruited on the basis of so-called "free acquisition". The latter is a typical compilation with all the attractions and most typical places squeezed in, in order to give participants the most complete picture possible of the target country or region. The itineraries of such trips include both historical sites and objects of the world's cultural heritage and nature. It is essential to get to know the most interesting and picturesque protected areas. In their itinerary marketing, tour operators consider attractions such as a night spent in primitive conditions, for example, in a Vietnamese village, or a visit to a living museum in a village in Papua New Guinea. The offer of the tour operators includes both big productions and elite cultural events, as well as for example street festivals and national dance shows. Other options insisted on by local trading partners may include meetings with the artisans of local folk culture or visits to neighbouring carpet factories. Such an itinerary gives you a huge mosaic of impressions, which makes it difficult to reflect more deeply on the values of the culture of the country visited. On the other hand, the structure of the itinerary shows many aspects of the local culture or the multiplicity and diversity of the neighbouring cultures in the visited area (Mikos v. Rohrscheidt, 2008).

A characteristic feature of exotic travel is the use of various means of transport. This is justified logistically by quick access to a specific location using the optimal means of transport or is the result of tourists' own wishes to experience traditional methods of transport (such as boats, rickshaws, elephants, camels). The motivation for the specific choice of means of transport, is also a desire to expand the degree of attractiveness of the expedition (catamaran cruises, journey by great historical railway routes, etc.).

Exotic travel aims to show different aspects of people's life and the products of their history, but also their everyday culture. As a result we often have to deal with the effects of so-called culture shock where there is great contrast between the high culture and everyday material culture of tourists' country of origin and the host country. This effect is the basis of the intended or unintended sensations and experiences during exotic trips.

Such a clash of cultures allows the participants on the trips to get to know what is strange and new, but also by the very intense immersion in these foreign elements and the intensive observation of a different kind of living environment, as if from within, they learn to understand and respect different understanding of the world and ways of life. They learn tolerance of the cultural and religious needs or customs of immigrants in their own countries, and even, maybe, a different way of coping with the problems of their own lives, applying to the assessment of those problems appropriate scale or finding new ways of solving them. Achieving this effect is highly dependent on the intensity and authenticity of the dialogue with the regional culture of the destination achieved by proper construction

of the itinerary (Mikos v. Rohrscheidt, 2008). In the scientific, as well as the specialist literature two synonymous terms for exotic tourism are used: tramping and backpacking⁵.

The essence of backpacking is travelling without comfort, different ways of organising the trip, most often independently, where for the least money you can experience and see the most (Łopaciński 1990). In backpacking time and comfort do not count. The most important consideration is the low cost, the great freedom to determine the on-site itinerary, and minimum or no services or benefits reserved in advance. This form of travel can be accessible mostly to young people, mainly students, who are financially less well-off, but is not big business for tour operators. Backpacking, unlike exotic travel can be implemented without time constraints due to their long holidays. Backpacking, like religious tourism, can therefore be to distant destinations as well as within one's own continent or even country.

The exotic trip market in Poland

Contemporary international travel, as rightly pointed out by Dean MacCannell (2002), works on the principle that certain places have to be visited. For this segment of travellers, it is important to see and experience as much as possible in a shortest time. They require a lot from tour operators starting with a sensational itinerary, decent standards of accommodation, a variety of means of transport with a preference for flights for long distances. They are demanding but wealthy customers and therefore are the subject of particular concern and marketing effort by tour operators. The remaining part of this article offers an analysis of the key organizers of exotic travel in Poland and the factors determining the growth of this segment of the tourist market.

In the last decade there has been an increased interest in exotic travel. In this market there are different fashions, and the length and direction of travel is affected by the economic situation, e.g. the dollar rate or by the political situation (security). Self-organization of trips to remote regions is associated with high uncertainty and a lot of obstacles. Travelling to China on your own is quite problematic. For example, apart from the former colonies of Hong Kong and Macau, a tourist cannot hire a self-drive car.

Tour operators come to the aid of travellers interested in exotic travel by offering proven and reliable trips. These offers include all parts of the world, and all seven continents, from China to India, Nepal, Chile, Iran, Senegal, Jordan, Cuba, the Seychelles, the Maldives, and even Antarctica. Tour operators constantly adapt their products to the needs of customers. You can go with an organized group or opt for an individual offer. Many clients come to travel agents with their own exotic travel plans, and with knowledge gained from the Internet, the media, or from friends. For them, the most important factor is the itinerary and the price often does not play a substantial role.

Tour operators prepare their itineraries with various target groups in mind. Thus, they have trips for enthusiasts of diving, lovers of meditation, even trips for couples who dream of having a wedding ceremony on Hawaii or in Lapland. Teresa Górecka of LogosTour reports that the winter holiday hits of 2011 were not the Italian Dolomites, but Kenya and Valentine's trips to Indochina. Laos, in her opinion, is the perfect place for people in love⁶.

Due to the specific needs of tourists there has been a natural diversification in the tour operator market with some focused on mass tourism and others looking for their own niche segment of consumers⁷.

At present there are a number of tour operators in Poland who cater for the "exotic travel enthusiast" end of the market. This map of operators has changed in recent decades. During the People's Republic of Poland period hardly any operators could be classified into

⁵ backpacker - this term describes not wealthy, mostly young tourists travelling often to exotic countries.

⁶ Indeed, the atmosphere in Luang Prabang in Laos is ideal for a romantic experience in an idyllic retreat.

⁷ Tour operators specializing in exotic travel even cut themselves off in their promotional slogans from mass tourism and package holidays (M. Śliwka, www.logostravel.pl)

this category (except PBP Orbis, youth agencies Almatour, Juventour and Harctour, and above all LogosTour). Right now there are many major tour operators specializing in such trips. Presented below are ten of the most active companies in the sector in recent years⁸. In the case of at least some of them we can speak about specialization in the field of cultural tourism while others have made it an important segment of their offer.

- Travel Agency ZNP LogosTour, (Warsaw)
- Logos Travel (Marek Śliwka, Poznań)
- Prestige Holidays & Tours (Kraków, Jacek Torbicz, Globetrotter)
- Travellers' Office Flugo (Bydgoszcz)
- MK Tramping, (Kraków) in cooperation with "Martyna Adventure",
- Almatour (Warsaw),
- Marco Polo, (Warsaw),
- Air Tours, (Kraków),
- Adventure Explores, (Warszawa),
- Alco-Tours Kafarski, (Ostrów Wielkopolski).

Among the former operators who have survived is : LogosTour, formerly the Polish Teachers' Union office though now its relations with the PTU are very loose. It has a large group of regular customers, among whom academics and teachers dominate. The LogosTour offer covers all continents, it is good in terms of service standards and at the same time not too exorbitant in price. For example, the most expensive trip from the LogosTour brochure is indeed Antarctica with Argentina for 29,000 PLZ⁹, but Australia with New Zealand for 15,000 PLZ is cheaper than with other tour operators. This agency has its base in Warsaw and branches in several major Polish cities. It offers a loyalty card, communicates with travellers via its website and on Facebook (www.logostour.pl) and has a fan club of 400 internet users.

Logos Travel from Poznań¹⁰, has a similar name and is a private agency owned by Marek Śliwka, the holder of an MA in tourism and recreation from the Physical Training Academy (AWF) in Poznań. The options from this company include trips to nearly 100 countries which are sold by about 2000 agents throughout Poland. Although the office is located in Poznań, most people choosing distant, exotic escapades come from the capital region, Silesia and Kraków.

Marek Śliwka's Office is known for the fact that it is constantly introducing new directions or new trails to its options. These include, among others, an expedition to West Africa on the Senegal - Mali - Burkina Faso - Benin route, Canada and Alaska, one to Tibet offering the chance to travel around the sacred Mount Kailash and finally a 14-day escapade to Chile - Easter Island - French Polynesia. According to Marek Śliwka right now is the time for distant, exotic journeys. This is confirmed by the company's turnover, which in 2009 increased by 450%. Logos Travel is, alongside Logostour the leader in the Polish exotic tour operator market. In 2009 240 groups, with 6,000 participants were sent on exotic tips. It means that 20 - 35 groups were sent every month. 2008 was a record year for the company (good dollar exchange rate) when at the expense of increasing the size of the groups, 30% more tourists were sent on exotic trips.

The third exotic tour operator is Prestige Holidays & Tours from Krakow, run by a famous traveller, Jacek Torbicz the editor of the magazine 'Globetroter' This tour operator devotes unique attention to the correctness of the offer, the standards of service and relationships with regular customers. Before introducing a new offer to the brochure (which, by the way, has a distinctively elegant form) the owner of the business personally

⁸ This is author's selection based on his observation of the current market.

⁹ Antarctica is the most expensive offer in the brochures of all the exotic travel tour operators due to the necessity of hiring a small cruise ship.

¹⁰ Logos Travel separated from the branch of LogosTour in 2001, currently the company is estimated to be operating about 30 % of travelling and globetrotter's trips

checks each route and the attractions offered to travellers. Prices correspond to the quality, e.g. a trip to Burma, Bhutan and Bangladesh here costs \$US 5000. The agency organizes small group trips. It also prepares incentive trips at the request of banks, telecommunication and pharmaceutical companies, as well as for individual travellers¹¹. In 2009 groups were sent to over 60 countries on 7 continents. In total 1000 people a year participate in exotic travel organized by Prestige Holidays & Tours. The most interesting events proposed by the operator apart from Antarctica include trips to South and East Asia (Bhutan, Burma, Indonesia), Nepal, India, China, West Africa, Australia and New Zealand. There is also the option of a 25-day-long trip round the world. Prestige Holiday & Tours specializes in "tailor-made" journeys for organized groups and incentive trips for companies.

Another organizer of exotic travel is Travellers' Office Flugo which was founded in Bydgoszcz in 1998 by tour guides. The passion of the founders, their vast experience, knowledge and understanding of the realities of travel and their professionalism have contributed to the success of this company in the tourism market. Currently Flugo organizes trips to more than 100 countries.

Their core offer is addressed to travellers limited by holiday time. These are tours rich in attractions, short and to a high standard. Those who have extended leave can go on "adventure trips". These are lengthy and attraction-packed round trips and backpacking expeditions.

The list of the first five exotic travel tour operators is closed by MK Tramping from Krakow. The company has been organizing exotic trips since 1995. Its offer is divided into categories/brand names which give the customer the opportunity to choose not only a part of the world that he or she would like to visit, but also the standard of travel and accommodation, and the nature and duration of the event. MK Tramping offers trips under four brand names:

adventure – tramping/backpacking trips, where accommodation is based on cheap hotels and local means of transport. The customer has the opportunity to learn about the country "from behind the scenes"

travellers – exotic trips for demanding clients, lasting less time than adventure trips.

The customer receives benefits of a much higher standard,

survival – trips for clients who like a real challenge and in-depth exploration of the site, aimed at people who are mentally and physically resistant to great inconvenience,

family – exploring the world mainly with family or friends.

MK Tramping works closely with Martyna Adventure Ltd., up to recently called MK Tramping, and since 2009, a separate partner company, whose principal activity is organising incentive trips for companies and individual trips for demanding VIP clients. Among the shareholders of the company are Mateusz Karasiński (owner of MK Tramping) and Martyna Wojciechowska, editor-in-chief of National Geographic Poland. In 2010, MK Tramping and Martyna Adventure opened a branch in London to cater to the Poles working in the British Isles.

There are five other organizers of exotic trips which treat this type of travel as one of the forms of their activities, in addition to recreational trips. Among them are both the largest student travel agency Almatour along with its branches in most academic centres, as well as Marco Polo which specialises in cruises. Apart from Adventure Tours from Warsaw, another company worth mentioning is Air Tours from Kraków, cooperating with Polish Airlines LOT. The majority of exotic expeditions operators have their main offices in large agglomerations such as Warsaw, Kraków, or Poznań, but there are also operators who run their businesses from smaller centres such as Alco-Tours Kafarski from Ostrów Wielkopolski.

¹¹ Among the offers for incentive trips worth noting were: an integrative safari in Kenya and conferences on a ship down the Amazon.

The principles of travel organization

Typical exotic travel operators avoid organizing package holidays and passive forms of recreational travel. All the above companies emphasize on their websites that they specialize in trips and tours with a particular character. Each trip for client-globetrotters is supposed to trigger new reflections and thoughts to allow them to form their own perceptions and judgements about all the important and less important matters of the world (Marek Śliwka, Logos Travel).

Tour operators prepare their exotic travel options by the owners checking all new routes on a reconnaissance trip beforehand. Such trips are usually full of surprises since most activities are not organised before arrival. Many operators invite travellers with extensive travel experience to join in such pioneering journeys, people who are not afraid of contradictory slogans such as “the worse, the better”. Any unforeseen events are recalled often many years later, with fondness by the travellers (M. Śliwka)

Participants in exotic travel

Tour operators specializing in exotic travel look to more wealthy clients who are willing to spend thousands of dollars on a several- week long trip , whose main concern is a lack of time, not money. These people are experienced in travelling, they know the most attractive tourist places in the world. They often want to see new and exotic places for reasons of prestige.

The statistics obtained from Logos Travel, MK Tramping and Prestige Holiday & Tours show a systematic development of exotic travel. MK Tramping organized over 213 brochure journeys, between 1995 and 2008 for 1,163 clients. Among them there were 366 clients, who travelled more than once. Both the number of trips, which in recent years exceeded 40 per year and the number of participants (more than 300) have been systematically increasing. For MK Tramping 2007 was the best year both in the number of trips and participants. In 2009 a slight decrease in the number of trips was associated with the global crisis, noticeable also in tourism.

Taking into account the information obtained from Logos Travel and LogosTour the Polish leaders in the exotic travel market, it can be estimated that every year, about 30,000 people go on such trips. The number of young people going backpacking is difficult to estimate, due to their informal organisation. The research conducted by the Institute of Tourism in 1989 (Łopaciński 1990) shows that 1200 youth backpacking trips are organized every year, of which 400 are organized by youth travel agencies and 800 by social organizations.



Covers of Prestige Holiday Tours and Traveller's Office Flugo brochures



Cover of Logos Tour brochure and the travellers' magazine "Globetroter"

Who are the participants in exotic expeditions? These are people of both genders, although more often middle-aged women. The trips organized by MK Tramping in Krakow reported 65% of participants aged 27-56 of whom 42% were between 27 and 46 years old, 18% were older people between 47-56 with 60% women and 40% men. The participation of students and young people in such trips is occasional (for financial reasons). Occupations listed by travellers in questionnaires include doctors, scientists, lawyers, and business people of all kinds. The trip to New Zealand and Australia with LogosTour in 2008 was dominated by academics and doctors, as well as the owner of a nursery garden, a developer the owner of construction machines, one student and a retired researcher. There are similar demographics on other such trips.



Photo 1 Clients on a LogosTours trip to New Zealand in Milford Sound (photo Z. Kruczek)

Every year exotic trips are taken by more and more Poles. Observations show that apart from the 50+ segment there are more and more young but well-to-do people travelling. These people are convinced that they should not put off travelling to the distant future, simply because their age, condition and state of health may prevent them from going on such trips in the future¹². Trips to the most remote corners of the world are now available for average earners, e.g. you can go on a trip to Kenya for 5000 PLZ, which is 1.5 times the average monthly salary, and the expedition "Whole China" costs 1,000 PLZ less. Similar prices are offered for Goa and Sri Lanka. Polish tourists can be found even in quite exotic destinations like Hawaii, Kamchatka, Greenland and even Antarctica. Mateusz Karasiński of MK Tramping/Martyna Adventure claims that they provide services to more and more young people aged 30-40 who work hard, earn well, often abroad in order to spend their holidays in exotic settings. Expeditions to Alaska or to the Amazonian forests offered by him are for those looking for adventure (Adventure Travel) and who are in good shape for such expeditions. In his opinion, "These people are tired of watching the world through the windows of a bus or car. They are interested in something more. They want to talk with the locals, go to the countryside to experience the customs and culture of the country visited". This profile of a tourist fits well into exotic cultural tourism. These trends are confirmed by other tour operators. Andrzej Glapiniak from the portal Easygo.pl adds that such expeditions are being sold more and more strongly, and in 2010 his website reported 70% growth in sales of exotic travel¹³.

Growing demand for exotic trips is the result of changes in the motivation of Poles travelling abroad. Teresa Górecka of LogosTour says that "the representatives of the middle class, more frequently prefer to travel to get to know a foreign culture, customs and wildlife, rather than lie on the beach and swim in the warm sea".

Qualifications for exotic travel tour leaders

A successful exotic trip it is not only an appropriately formulated offer, a thought-out and tested route and good hotels and transport. During such trips a huge role is played by the tour leader. In guiding/piloting exotic trips it is not only high organizational efficiency that is required from the tour leader but also extensive knowledge of the countries visited and the ability to interpret for people from the European cultural circle often complex issues such as religion, customs or political relations.

Every year about 2000 groups of tourists go abroad on their exotic journeys. Most of the tour operators of exotic travel have staff composed of solid, verified tour leaders, people doing their job with passion, specialists in the fields of knowledge useful while travelling, authors of guidebooks and articles about the countries visited. They form an elite of tour leaders in Poland. Travel operators are aware that the success of the event and the entire company rests in the hands of the tour leader, therefore, they employ the best and proven people. Often a tour leader is the owner of the travel agency him or herself¹⁴.

Tour leaders of exotic trips deal (as previously stated) with a demanding, client who is well-read and familiar with the world, from previous trips. Therefore it is not only high organizational efficiency that is required from the tour leader but also extensive knowledge of the countries visited and the ability to interpret for people from the European cultural circle often complex issues such as religion, customs or political relations. Thus, the tasks of a tour leader go beyond the traditional role and participants treat the tour leader as "a link" with all they want to experience (Mikos von Rohrscheidt 2009).

¹² Grażyna Starzak, *Świat w portfelu. Coraz dalej, coraz drożej*. [The world in your wallet. Getting further, getting more expensive]. Dziennik Polski 21.01.2011, p.7

¹³ Grażyna Starzak, *Świat w portfelu*.op.cit.

¹⁴ For example Torbicz from Prestige Holiday & Tours, Marek Śliwka from Logos Travel or Bogusław Nowak from Green Lite Travel -Polish Travel Office Auckland lead the tours.

Bearing in mind the expectations of travellers one can attempt to determine the competencies needed by an exotic trips tour leader. At the top of the list is language skills, basic knowledge of the language used in the destination region is desirable, at a level enabling communication with the local population. Knowledge of the local language is an added value, because each tour leader speaks English - the language commonly used in the tourism industry around the world, understood regardless of latitude in airports, hotels and restaurants.

An important feature of an exotic trips tour leader is good awareness of the local customs and the ability to sensitize the participants of a tour to comply with them, which will not only avoid potential conflicts, but it can get the group kindnesses from the local population. A good knowledge of local law is essential, especially for those aspects and standards, which differ from those applicable in the home country of the group members. A failure to observe differences in this area (e.g. the possession and consumption of certain substances or attempts to initiate intimate contacts with the locals could cause serious problems with representatives of the local authorities or system of justice for the tourists (Mikos von Rohrscheidt 2008).

An exotic trip tour leader should know the specifics of the local cuisine, the products used for cooking, as well as local recipes. It is often the tour leader who will advise tourists on the selection of dishes, interpret the menu and comment on the composition of dishes. As a way of prevention, a tour leader will often warn the clients (to avoid problems with finding a doctor and hospital) before tasting some of the dishes.

Particularly during exotic trips the role of the tour leader is to reduce, as far as possible the discomfort factors which cause so-called "cultural confusion" in tourists. (Banaszkiewicz 2011). Tour leaders are the most important people involved in intercultural relations. The more exotic the cultural circle (for example, during a trip to Bhutan), the more important the role of tour leader is, and thus the more difficult. A good tour leader should know the local language, have good organizational control over the group, take care of their basic needs such as accommodation and food. He or she should be a bridge, facilitating knowledge of the new culture. For this reason, tour leaders are often called cultural intermediaries (cultural brokers)¹⁵. Tour leaders work on the border of at least two cultures. They should know perfectly both their own and the clients' culture, as well as the indigenous, local culture. They serve as intermediaries for tourists and locals as mediators and specialists in communication. The function of a tour leader consists of a number of obligations – the cultural broker acts as a mentor, guide and interpreter (Banaszkiwicz 2011) .

A tour leader often acts as a so-called "information filter". This results from the basic principle of providing information where the tourists often rely on the tour leader, and they only see what the tour leader shows them and find out only what they are told. Problems may arise when the tour leader has insufficient knowledge of local conditions and regional culture. This may result in the phenomenon of "tourists' confusion" and sometimes leads to misleading them (not necessarily consciously). As a result, visitors can, for example, commit some offence against the local law, as they were not informed properly by the tour leader (Banaszkiewicz 2011).

A tour leader should have the personality attributes that promote the acquisition of intercultural competence. These include: cognitive flexibility, cultural sensitivity, awareness of the relationship between values and cultural attitudes, willingness to make efforts towards the empathetic understanding of other cultures, innovation in the perception of goals and forms of communication. Typically, these traits should coincide with the personality types of the people who work as tour leaders (Banaszkiewicz 2011).

¹⁵ J. Willigen, *Applied anthropology: an introduction*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002, pp. 130-131, op.cit. Banaszkiwicz 2011.

There are three main factors that can improve the quality of intercultural competence¹⁶. The first is knowledge, not limited to academic knowledge, theory, learned only from books. It is more "practical knowledge" about other people, the principles of communication, in a situational and cultural context. You can read in a book how to shop in an Arabic bazaar, but only when you make a transaction yourself, can you really understand what it is all about. Another aspect that is worth noting is motivation. On the one hand, a person can be motivated by opening up to another person, by a willingness to understand the values that are important for the partner in the communication. Then the opportunity to develop intercultural competence is much greater than when somebody's behaviour is directed by stereotypes, prejudices and a large social distance. If we believe that Asians are dirty, dishonest, uncivilized, then we will never be able to appreciate their cultural achievements, or discover the beauty of this exotic region. The last feature is the skills that should to some extent be associated with the competencies gained previously. For tour leaders practical experience therefore counts for a great deal. The more diverse the trips, the greater must be the ability and opportunity to tackle even the most challenging and surprising situations.

Here are the features a good tour leader should have to effectively play the role of intercultural mediator (Banaszkiewicz 2011):

1. Openness - noticing that people are different,
- 2 Acceptance - acknowledgement of the otherness of those you meet,
- 3 Empathy - sensitivity to the needs of others, attempts to identify with their attitudes,
- 4 Adaptation - adjusting to the situation, behaving by the rules of the culture,
- 5 Self-reflection - looking at yourself through the eyes of others.

These features characterize the attitude appropriate for each tour leader living in the world of continuous learning, curiosity, and absorbency. Let us remember that the tour leader has to be a model of behaviour for tourists and one of his/her tasks is to awaken the sensitivity of people to the beauty of nature and creations of the culture.

The way to achieve a high level of competence by a tour leader of exotic travel is by so called "inculturation" (Mikos von Rohrscheidt 2008, p. 143). The best solution would be to attend specialized studies to explore language, culture, professionalism and freedom of interpretation of issues interesting to tourists. Another solution, proposed by Mikos von Rohrscheidt (2008) is hiring a person from "over there" who has studied in Poland, knows the country and our culture, our mentality, interests and expectations, communication barriers and historical sensitivity. This solution is often used by employing tour leaders employed by our travel agencies at Polish tourists' holiday destinations .

A tour guide for exotic and cultural travel, accompanying tourists during the whole expedition, serves as a guide, both in its global aspect (all the time providing information, introducing to local reality, explaining and warning, answering questions) and often he or she acts as a guide locally and specifically: in places and about objects, during meetings and events. A tourist looking for genuine contact with the culture visited will therefore also required a tour leader to be somehow "under the skin" of this culture (opinion expressed by Mikos von Rohrscheidt at Gniezno Forum of Experts, November 2010).

An exotic tour leader is not only a narrator and presenter for his/her visitors, but also to a very high degree a cultural interpreter of the destination country, its history and cultural circle, social institutions, religion or religions, typical behaviours, creations and art (the latter frequently requires this interpretation) music, and even the original cuisine. Of course, no one is able to fulfil all these tasks perfectly, even a local tour guide, because he or she may lack an efficient way of transferring information or the original cultural transmission may collide with a perceptual or interpretational barrier of our tourists.

¹⁶ I am quoting an excerpt from a study by M. Banaszkiewicz included in the *Compendium of the tour leader*, ed. XI of 2011, Proksenia Krakow concerning intercultural competences of a tour leader.

Case study - Exotic destinations

Papua- New Guinea

It is one of the world's last wild lands, so exotic travel enthusiasts count on a real adventure here, getting to know nature and unaltered by the urban civilization culture of Papuans. West Guinea known as West Irian was incorporated into Indonesia. The country experienced an intensive process of colonization mainly by settlers from Java. This action was carried out in the name of the chief slogan of Indonesia, "strength in diversity". Until World War II Western Guinea belonged to the Dutch, who limited their economic penetration to the coast. In 1938, Richard Archbold while flying by seaplane discovered Baliem valley populated by Papuans, and situated on a plateau, near the Snowy Mountains and announced the discovery in "National Geographic". Later missionaries arrived there. Lush tropical jungle hid a village of Papuans whose population was estimated then at about 100,000 .

Currently Baliem is a destination for very few groups of tourists. You can get here only by light aircraft from Jayapury (the capital of Irian) as there are no land roads. The town of Ndjamena with a population of 7,000 residents is the only enclave of civilization with shops, streets, an airport and a few modest hotels. All goods, building materials and gasoline are imported by air. The Baliem Valley is inhabited by the Dani, Lani and Yali tribes representing an ancient culture. They live in huts made of clay and reeds, men walk around with bows and arrows, wearing "kotekas"¹⁷, women cover only their hips with skirts made of plant fibres. All financial settlements are not in dollars but in pigs.

Gradually the influence of urban civilization is cutting the tribes of Baliem off from their traditions and beliefs. Nevertheless, tour operators have appeared who have made the Papuans believe that their outfits, beliefs and habits have become a commodity. The souvenir trade (which is more and more intrusive) is blooming and naked Papuans wait in the vicinity of hotels for tourists with their handicrafts. If asked by a travel agency they will stage a battle between families ending in agreement, dances and a feast shared with tourists. All of this is nicely staged, but less and less authentic. Experienced travellers consider it a "folk show".



Photo 2 The staging of a feast by the Papuans of New Guinea (photo Z. Kruczek)

¹⁷ Special covers for a penis, different in size and shape depending on the tribe.

In Wamena there are gradually more and more hotels. When in time it is connected by road to Jayapura, more tourists will come and the stage of exploration of this isolated region will reach the stage of penetration. The area of jungle will be replaced by a civilized, suburban zone among the fields of crops and Papuan villages may survive only as relics. They will survive because they will become a tourist product. The Baliem Valley will be trampled by tourists, while disappointed "explorers" will move into the jungle, perhaps to the vicinity of the less accessible highlands of Puncak Jaya (reaching the highest summit in Australia and Oceania is necessary to complete the "Seven Summits peak bagging").

In the hilly country of the Toraja tribes on Sulawesi

The limestone mountains and karst highlands of Sulawesi (formerly Celebes) are inhabited by the Toraja tribes. Legend says that they came from across the ocean in canoes, because their houses resemble boats with upturned prows. The Torajas are famous for their funeral celebrations which still practised today, with accompanying funeral receptions which go on for a week. Families who are invited bring hundreds of pigs and buffaloes to the feast as a sacrifice for the gods. Killing the animals is supposed to provide the deceased person with a safe passage to the afterlife. The corpse is placed in a coffin of sandalwood on a platform in front of the granary. In the meantime an effigy of the deceased, called a *tau tau*, is made from a jackfruit tree. Eventually the coffin together with the *tau tau* is placed in one of the caves. The funeral celebrations take place from July to September, and participation in them is an amazing experience for tourists, an authentic attraction on every trip. A visit to the land of the Toraja is offered by many exotic trip operators. I had the opportunity to watch the funeral ceremonies with a group from Prestige Holidays and Tours in Kraków.



Photo 3 Funeral celebrations of the Toraja tribe (photo Z. Kruczek)

Travelbit - Travellers' portal

For travellers, especially those making exotic voyages by themselves, a very important source of information is the Travelbit service established in 1976 as BIT, i.e. Bank Information of Tramping. It was founded next to the student travel agency Almatour in Kraków. It quickly became a huge archive collecting information from travel to all corners of the world. What is more, for many years BIT carried out this activity through the mail (it had a special separate post office box). In 1994, it was transformed into Travelbit, and in 1997 it

appeared on the Internet. The creator of BIT and Travelbit is a traveller and a doctor Andrzej Urbanik. Currently the portal is created by its founder, along with a group of travellers and is becoming in its nature a social networking site.

This portal is a great platform integrating the circle of travellers in Poland. It has a discussion forum, links directing users to a huge number of sites useful for travellers, and a comprehensive archive of reports from trips. Through www.travelbit.pl you can join in meetings of travellers across the country, especially in the renowned OSOTT (National Meeting of the Globetrotters, Tramps and Tourists) the most prestigious travellers' meeting place in Poland, organized continuously since 1985.

Travelbit is also the publisher of the book "Across the World" (subsequent volumes have been published since 1996) consisting of accounts of travel to the most interesting parts of the world (<http://travelbit.pl/v2/>).

Travelling and planning an exotic trip in particular, involves getting relevant, often very "specialist" information. Access to it was once very difficult. Meetings and slide shows were the primary form of exchanging travel experiences. In the Internet age and with the surge in the variety of publishers, the traditional forms of meetings have not died out. Travellers want and love to meet. They like it, because they tend to be sociable, and they want to because they know that some things cannot be passed on in any other way than in a direct conversation. There are more and more such meetings and you will find a list of them for example on pages of Travelbit.

Concluding remarks

Among various forms of tourism, based on the distance and specific elements of the itinerary, exotic tourism which for many belongs to the category of cultural tourism can be separately identified. Globally, it is a distinctive trend in the tourism market and is among the 10 fastest-growing forms of tourism.

The analysis of exotic travel market in Poland indicates that the market is significant and growing rapidly. The number of "exotic travel enthusiasts" is systematically growing supported by specialist tour operators. Logos Travel and Logostour and Prestige Holiday & Tours stand out among them as far as the number of groups and participants sent on tours is concerned. Most offices specializing in exotic trips are located in large cities, where the majority of clients come from. It is estimated the number of participants on these trips is about 30,000 per year (not including participants in youth backpacking journeys) and about 2,000 organized groups of tourists. Exotic tourism in the form of backpacking (tramping) is done mainly by young people, mostly students. The forms organized by commercial travel agencies are frequently participated in by people who are financially well-off but limited by time. It is a very demanding segment of the tourism market.

Organization of exotic trips requires a specific amount of work in preparing the offer. The success of such a trip, beside the efficient organization of the work, is determined by the contribution of the tour leader, towards whom the expectations of the tour operator and participants are particularly high.

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Egzotyczna turystyka kulturowa (trendy, organizatorzy, uczestnicy)

Słowa kluczowe: podróż egzotyczna, globtroter, organizatorzy wyjazdów, oferty, uczestnicy, piloci

Streszczenie: W artykule autor zwraca uwagę na dynamicznie rozwijający się segment turystyki – turystykę egzotyczną, tzn. pozaeuropejską. Tekst porusza kwestię specyfiki wyjazdów egzotycznych, zasady organizacji takich wyjazdów, zarysowano profil turysty decydującego się na dalekie podróże oraz przedstawiono najważniejszych organizatorów takich wyjazdów, wskazując dziesięć najbardziej liczących się na krajowym rynku turoperatorów wycieczek egzotycznych.