INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENT OF LOCATION

Ingrida Smuka¹,², Dr.paed. research assistant

¹ Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences
² Latvian Academy of Sport Education

Abstract. At the times of modern technologies, a contemporary traveller differs from a traveller ten years ago. Tourist’s motivation and desire for adventure has changed.

In the past ten years culture and tourism relations have been one of the main drives promoting growth of the tourism industry. Therefore, the use of intangible cultural heritage in tourism and research would be topical.

The aim of the present research is to determine the impact and describe the use of intangible cultural heritage in tourism on the local community and location.

The question of the research: What is the impact of the use of intangible cultural heritage on development of the territory?

The author of the research used theoretical (studies of scientific literature, analysis of documents, analysis of international experience) and empirical research methods (partly structured interviews, observations).

Eight culture experts from Latvia and Poland were interviewed during the research. The author also analyzed 23 laws, regulations, binding documents in the Latvian, Lithuanian, English, Spanish and Polish languages.

After analyzing data of literature sources and interviews, it can be said that the activities and events organized in Latgale culture centres are quite uniform and similar. There is not much attention paid to intangible cultural heritage as a tourism product. Preservation of intangible heritage promotes awareness of the community’s national identity, promotes the economic and social development of the location in a long term.

Key words: intangible cultural heritage, tourism, development.
JEL code: R 11

Introduction

Ruta Cibule said in her Master’s Thesis: “The way we are speaking about values of our nation determines whether they are heard or ignored by others. Today, there is a conflict in preservation of intangible cultural heritage. On the one hand, we are aware that cultural heritage is the basis of the diverse cultural identities of the humanity. On the other hand, its preservation is under threat today because its functionality is decreasing.” (Cibule R., 2009)

Today, when people speak about humanism so much, it is worth remembering that humanism is based on values of human beings. Presence and development of humanism values are closely related with cultural heritage (Pukis M., 2011) manifested in the values achieved, accumulated, inherited in the previous centuries and millenniums. Humanism is based on diversity of the cultural heritage but national self-confidence is based on the different forms of this national expression. National culture is one of the basic elements of national identity (Pukis M., 2011).


The goal of the Convention is to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage; to ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned; to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the tangible cultural heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof; to provide for international cooperation and assistance (UNESCO, 2015).

The Convention defines intangible cultural heritage: "The "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus, promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity” (UNESCO, 2015).
The Convention explains manifestation forms of the intangible cultural heritage: oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship (UNESCO, 2015).

Among the countries of the world, Japan was the first to internationally raise the issue on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in 1950 when it adopted the first law on intangible cultural heritage in the world, regulating protection of cultural values (Jarutis, 2013). Then Bolivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religion in 1973 sent a letter to the UNESCO director general, saying that all existing instruments were aimed at the protection of tangible objects, and not forms of expression, such as music and dance (Hafstein V., 2015).

Living in the EU, we have to be aware that respect towards cultural diversity of its countries is a joint European value, uniting the EU Member States. Protection and development of the cultural heritages is one of the priorities of this union (Pukis M., 2011).

In the era of modern technologies when people have so many other alternatives for spending their leisure time, the natural transmission ability is disappearing and it is necessary to look for new forms and ways to preserve intangible cultural heritage and its viability. The concept on safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage says that in the 21st century protection of the intangible cultural heritage, especially in the expressions of Latvian ethnic culture, is becoming endangered as its functional necessity and usefulness has decreased when intangible cultural heritage skills lose their topicality in everyday routines, being replaced by more convenient methods to solve everyday problems and ways to spend leisure time (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, 2008, ER). Even though today, despite the fact that a large part of people’s minds is occupied with new technologies, their achievements and material values, the public attention is tending to focus also a great deal on active lifestyles, there are more discussions about healthy living and the role of recreation in people’s lives (Smuka I., 2012). This opens an opportunity for intangible cultural heritage in the quality of a tourism product as research suggests that in the past ten years culture and tourism relations have been one of the main drives promoting growth of the tourism industry. Contemporary people are witnesses of the growing role of creativity that adds to the existing models based on cultural heritage and culture tourism with new forms based on intangible cultural heritage and contemporary creative work (OECD, 2014).

The profile of a contemporary tourist has changed from what it was ten and more years ago. Today many tourists are looking for active recreation opportunities and emotional, physical, social and psychological engagement. They are looking for authentic experience, rejecting mass tourism and standardized packages (Ferrari S., 2013).

But what are social or economic benefits to the local community?

The research has been developed with the support of the National Research Programme EKOSOC-LV 5.2.8. project.

Research results and discussion

In order to answer the above-mentioned question, the aim of the research was defined: to determine the impact and describe the use of intangible cultural heritage in tourism on the local community and location.

The following theoretical research methods were selected:

1) studies of scientific literature (research, scientific publications);
2) analysis of documents (legislation, manuals, methodological materials);
3) analysis of international practices.

Empirical methods with direct participation of the author:

1) partly structured interviews to analyze the existing situation in the use of intangible cultural heritage in tourism;
2) observations with an aim to analyze attitude of other nations to preservation of their intangible cultural heritage and its transmission to further generations.

Eight culture experts from Latvia and Poland were interviewed during the research. The author also analyzed 23 laws, regulations, binding documents in the Latvian, Lithuanian, English, Spanish and Polish languages. As use of intangible cultural heritage in tourism has not been studied much in Latvia or abroad, the majority of the analyzed studies dealt with problems in preservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage. During the research, the author...
studied the situation regarding use of intangible cultural heritage in cultural centres of Latgale.

Based on analysis of literature sources, it can be said that all cultural resources have their scientific, educational, historical and aesthetic value, and both tangible and intangible cultural heritage have a potential to be used in tourism. Both tangible and intangible cultural heritage have the attraction, and elements of rest, recreation, culture and history (Puente et al., 2012). A contemporary tourist prefers activities based on authenticity, cultural heritage and uniqueness as well as rural communities (Hodur N. M., 2010), thus, tourism organizations when making their tourism offers prefer such components as dances, traditions, practices as nowadays it is a strong tourism resource, and by combining them, a new tourism product can be developed that would promote the region’s economic and social growth (Puente et al., 2012).

One of the most popular forms of intangible cultural heritage in Latvia and abroad used for attraction of tourists is traditional festivities. Spanish researcher Javier Escalera underscores that organization of traditional festivities brings economic benefits to the local community, ensuring workplaces in the accommodation and catering sectors as well as giving work to craftsmen who are making, for example, flamenco outfits and jewellery, as well as to carpenters, blacksmiths and others throughout the year. In the conclusion it is said that organization of traditional festivities undoubtedly brings large economic benefits to the community and is a strong instrument for attraction of tourists to Andalusia (Escalera J., 1998). Speaking about the above-mentioned craftsmen, craftsmanship as use of intangible cultural heritage in tourism can also benefit to the community. As Polish professor Jan Adamowski has said in an interview, demonstration could also be a tourism product (interview, 2015). Development of craft (theme) villages can be mentioned as the good practice in use of craftsmanship in tourism. There are such examples in Latvia and Poland.

For example, education and crafts centre “Roskosz” (Poland) is located in the border area – 25 kilometres away from the Belarus border and 30 kilometres away from the Ukrainian border. The goal of the centre is to ensure conditions for youth development and promote international cooperation.

On July 31, 2015 an education and crafts centre “Roskosz” completed a project that ensured 120 hours of training to young people in traditional crafts: baker, shingle, bricklayer, wheelwright, blacksmith, weaver and potter.

In the summer of 2015, 30 youngsters of the age of 18-25, lived in the village and were trained in crafts. There were 20 instructors in the programme. The main goals of the project were to protect the traditional crafts skills from oblivion and extinction, and allow youngsters to obtain professional qualifications in a traditional trade by their choice. The project was financed by the European Social Fund. The project coordinator in a conversation underscored that the majority of participants in the project (80 %) received a job offer in October 2015 or developed their own individual companies (interview, 2015).

In Poland, there is no much information about such theme villages in tourism centres which is the reason they do not have many visitors. In Poland, festivals that can be called “business” festivals are more popular for attraction of tourists, for example, porridge festival, dumpling festival and other food festivals. Every region is organizing its own festival. Every municipality is aware of the role of intangible cultural heritage in improvement of the economic situation therefore local mayors are cooperating with tourism organizations, organizing conferences, publishing books, for example, there are five books about Lublin’s region folklore alone – songs, games, dances (interview, 2015).

Development of theme villages as the activity to safeguard and transmit the intangible cultural heritage took place in Latgale through a cross-border project in 2012-2014. Theme villages were developed under the project “Development of Theme Business and Expansion of Opportunities of Theme Village Teams in Latgale and Radviliskio Regions”. The general goal of the project was to promote cross-border economic and social development, expanding the idea of theme village business based on traditional activities, develop entrepreneurship and labour market, improve living conditions, increase population’s capacity and attractiveness of the region (Latgale Planning Region, 2015).

As a result of the project there are 20 new theme villages developed in Latgale region, information about them is published on regional Internet portal www.latgale.lv. Business plans for the Hemp Village in Kalkune county of Daugavpils district, the Spotted Dowry Chest Village in Sakstagals of Rezekne district, the Forest Goodies Village in Ziguri of Vilaka district were developed under the project. Consultants also
developed samples of theme village brands for Liksna village of Daugavpils district, Sakstagals village of Rezekne district, Ziguru village of Vilaka district in addition to the business plans. The developed brand concepts can be used by any theme village involved in the project. The theme villages are being operated successfully so far.

The research of the World Tourism Organization on intangible cultural heritage and tourism has collected several good practice examples in several countries of the world, demonstrating how intangible cultural heritage is used in tourism products, bringing financial and social benefits to the local community. The good practice example in Senegal: Senegal, international folklore and percussions festival in the city of Louga. The goal of the festival is to promote tourism as one of the main economic and social drives for small local communities through the rich Senegalese music cultural heritage. During the festival visitors get acquainted with the intangible culture of the community, including in folklore evenings with local storytellers, visits to music instrument workshops, learning the local language, attending percussions and dance classes. At present, the offer of cultural activities in tourism is very important for Louga as the city is using it to solve the region’s swelling problems in a long term, such as economic problems and emigration among young people. This project is a good example, showing how to make culture the drive of social and economic development in the region or city where several ethnic communities have merged (WTO, s.a.).

Such festivals or culture activities might also bring side effects, for example, a festival in Bosnia and Herzegovina was attended by 10,000 people, and one third of them were tourists from different countries of the world, while another 1,000 people visited the location of the festival also during other seasons. Local residents also benefit from getting involved in the process as the crafts workshops and other workshops and training programmes receive financial support. The value of the local culture is raised and safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage is ensured through tourism thanks to these activities. There are, however, also negative features in all mentioned above, including restricted resources, low business infrastructure level, low ecological awareness, and in this respect tourism might cause significant problems (WTO.s.a.)

Art festival in India (Kolkata) is another good example. The art festival was started out by 3,200 artists from six economically underdeveloped Bengali regions. The idea of the art festival was to achieve sustainable development of rural regions and to reduce poverty by using intangible cultural heritage and creativity of the local communities. The document says that this project visibly shows that cultural heritage can be used as a resource to improve people’s level of living. Such festivals are an important part of tourism marketing when developing cultural heritage as a tourist destination (WTO.s.a.)

The Estonian Ministry of Culture representative Anton Parn in his research speaks about social and economic benefits of the location. It is interesting that not only the community benefits from that but also the location benefits from sensible management of its cultural heritage and cooperation in the area of intangible cultural heritage. The researcher says that the old manors should be grateful for their survival to the fact that schools, orphanages and shelters had been housed in their buildings. Thanks to that they are in such a good condition today. In the 1950s, out of the 227 schools located in different municipalities, every fifth one was located in a building of a manor. The Estonian Association of Schools, local governments and property owners were involved in solving problems related with preservation and renovation of school buildings. These joint activities resulted in introduction of training for school directors and municipal officials in preservation, renovation and maintenance of buildings and organization of tourism seminars, attraction of tourists. Teachers and pupils obtained basic skills in tourism management and were motivated to develop tourism activities. Tourism game “visit manors” was a popular tourism product. During the visit, school staff members guided a 30-40-minute excursion around the manor, after the excursion tourists could enjoy a local cake in the local café, and finally receive a recipe of this cake. Tourists were also able to buy souvenirs made by local artists and craftsmen. During the visit of a school in a manor, it is possible to see uniqueness and interaction of the object. Preservation and renovation of the historical manor ensemble is conducted in line with the contemporary requirements. Preservation of the unique historical object through use is underscored and there are many beneficiaries in this process. One of the beneficiaries is the object that is well-maintained, pupils are also beneficiaries as they are being trained at school in the necessary skills in maintenance of preservation of such an object, and also the society in general who has access to such objects (Pärn A., 2009).
Looking at the situation in Latgale in use of intangible cultural heritage in tourism, analyzing the interviews with cultural workers (heads of culture centres), one can say that there might be problems in a long term with use of craftsmanship in tourism because there are fewer and fewer old craftsmen and the new generation is not eager to take over the trade: “It is often so that one cannot make a living with this trade and people find a different workplace. Initially Latgale had quite many craftsmen but they have found other jobs. The average age of weavers is the retirement age. When they are retired, then they can weave and earn some extra money” (interview, 2015).

Different activities are organized in the surveyed Latgale culture centres to preserve intangible cultural heritage, for example, “vakaresana”, joint handicraft evenings, or cooking classes in Silukalns culture centre, different year-round festivities, such as Meteni, masked processions of winter, or Ligo, celebrations of the summer solstice, and collection of local folk songs in Atasiene culture centre. All the events in Silukalns and Atasiene are free of charge also for tourists. The surveyed municipalities, though, do not think about tourism development. It was admitted by Atasiene culture centre, “... in fact, we could think about tourism but we are not doing it.” (interview, 2015).

Based on research, it can be concluded that the situation is not unambiguous. One of the problems in the tourism sector today is the use of intangible cultural heritage in tourism, neglecting its protection and preservation. Referring to what has been said in the previous chapter on economic benefits from using intangible cultural heritage, responsible promotion of tourism would create new workplaces, help reduce poverty and stop outflow of youth from the rural regions as well as would increase the sense of pride and loyalty into their own community.

There are many studies reflecting importance of intangible cultural heritage in tourism today, speaking about economic and social benefits but several authors admit that organization of activities to attract tourists might also bring negative consequences to authenticity of the intangible cultural heritage. For example, Spanish researcher Javier Escalera says about organization of events in Andalusia that such a form of tourist attraction is a “big furuncle” on the body of Andalusia. The dates of traditional festivities are frequently changed, adapting them to the needs of tourists, and organizers are making new festivity offers to tourists which are not natural, not authentic but created artificially just to attract tourists (Escalera J., 1998).

Anna Goral in her research “The Role of Local Government in Sustainable Management of Intangible Cultural Heritage” emphasised that there was an alarming trend that use of cultural heritage might become too commercialized and turned into a business commodity, often disarranging the natural relations among local communities. The research demonstrates the role of the local community in preservation, development, transmission of the cultural heritage in the context of sustainable and harmonic development of the local community (Goral, 2013).

Ilze Griezane, the head of Latgale crafts centre, said in an interview that “when using intangible cultural heritage in tourism, it should always be born in mind that the tourism product at some point will be adapted for the needs of tourists” (interview, 2015).

A Bulgarian researcher, meanwhile, underscores in her research that there is no clear vision in Bulgaria on intangible cultural product as a tourism product and local development resource (Ganeva-Raycheva V., 2013).

Therefore, in the conclusion, it can be said that using intangible culture heritage in tourism has a positive impact on the community both socially and economically, still the question is open about what we want to offer to the tourist. What is the goal of the event? Is the goal just to have a good time and entertain or to offer something authentic and special? How will the economic and social impact change as the goal of the event is changed?

Conclusions, proposals, recommendations

1) During the research the author analysed studies of 16 scientists from different countries. Based on analysis of literature, it can be said that the contemporary tourist has changed and is looking for more than just traditional tourist sites, the tourist is looking for new attractions and adventure. Tourists have started to prefer activities and attractions that are based on authenticity, cultural heritage and uniqueness.

Practices of other countries also show trends of using intangible cultural heritage in attraction of tourists, offering tourists experience through engagement in different processes.
2) Judging by results of interviews, it can be concluded that the organized activities and events are quite similar. One of the most popular activities using intangible cultural heritage in local culture centres to attract local and foreign tourists are annual festivities, craft fairs and Christmas gift fairs. Organization of such activities is mostly related with interests of the local community but less so with attraction of tourists and benefits from that. Latvian local communities are not aware of the role of intangible cultural heritage in tourism and development of the location, and there is little thought given to tourism development. Analyzing the situation in Latgale, it can be said that the events organized to promote intangible cultural heritage are uniform.

3) Use and preservation of intangible cultural heritage promotes awareness of the community’s national identity and its use in tourism may be the drive for social and economic development of the community. There is a long-term and direct benefit from use of intangible cultural heritage in tourism. It means that the value of the tourism product is higher than the immediate economic value it can ensure.

In order to correctly and properly use intangible cultural heritage as a tourism product in a long term, it would be necessary to educate and explain to the stakeholders, especially representatives of the community, concerning the role of the intangible cultural heritage, and that it may not be used as a source of income only. If the earned income is invested, for example, in new community projects or education programmes, it will promote long-term development. Use of intangible cultural heritage in tourism may promote solution to the economic and social problems, such as emigration of youth or shortage of workplaces. Threat to authenticity of the intangible cultural heritage is a negative trend in this respect.

Acknowledgement

The research was supported by the National Research Program 5.2. EKOSOC-LV project 5.2.8.

Bibliography


