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13TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION AND NEW LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

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INFORMATION LITERACY IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY AND FUTURE CURRICULUM DESIGN IN TOURISM EDUCATION

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Abstract

A successful definition of the nature of tourism can be given only if its complex nature is considered. So, admitting its interdisciplinary character and taking into account its added value to national economies, tourism includes a wide set of economic measures, actions, relations and interactions. Tourism developments goes hand in hand with the development of the new technologies. Thus, the research of the contemporary tourism, to a great extent, should relate its transformations to the issues of information literacy.

In view of many scientists the term Information Literacy (IL) can be revealed in view of academic-exchange and as such it can be understood only as a tool for achieving a more socially inclusive education. Additionally, IL has been located at the intersection of education and student learning. Much in this vein, this research widens this intersection and includes the tourism as well.

From the viewpoint of theory and practice of tourism and when discussing some main characteristics of the tourism, it becomes evident, that *information literacy* (IL) can present a variety of interactions which originate from the tourism domain. Over the years, researchers have voiced a broad range of concerns with the high dynamics of tourism activity as a main sphere of social, economic and cultural interaction. Education in tourism is profiled by a wide set of theoretical and practical implications. By focusing on fundamental studies from the field of geography, marketing and economics, human resources, on the one hand, and practical implications form the field of service, hospitality and leisure, on the other hand. Another important determinant is the education of tourism specialists and the inclusion of the principles of the global sustainable goals. It is also aimed at an efficient interaction between all participants in the tourism education (students, educators, practitioners). This kind of interaction represents only one side of the coin. The other side is made up by tourists, host communities, tourist establishments, tourist attractions and sites, and tourists' service providers. These circumstances shape the tourism and the needs for the tourism education in a very specific way.

Since IL cannot be limited to any scientific or applied field of theoretical field of human knowledge, the authors claim that for the field of tourism a specific type of literacies exists, namely the *tourism information literacy* (TIL). TIL can be viewed as consisting of specific subtypes. The main goal of this research is to define the tourism information literacy (TIL) and to describe some of its main variables, i.e. tourism destination literacy, cultural heritage literacy, travel literacy, leisure literacy, tourism attraction literacy, environmental literacy. In line with this goal a content analysis is provided. For the identification of the new types of information literacies the authors applied a deductive approach. As a result, the subtypes of the TILs are conceived as being of paramount importance for the following levels: (i) the level of tourism education,(ii) the level of tourism services for hospitality, travel and leisure and (iii) the level of host-guest interaction.

Keywords: Information Literacy, tourism education, curriculum design, tourism interaction, types of information literacy in tourism, tourism in times of COVID-19 pandemic.

1   INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of new technologies, when information becomes one of the most valuable resources, effective Information Literacy (IL) plays a leading role, both in the personal development of scientists and in their ability to pursue basic scientific research. In today's information and knowledge based society, we are witnessing the expansive development of information and communication technologies (ICTs), which has led to the globalization of information and a new "revolutionary wave", the so-called information wave or wave of knowledge [1]. Some authors call this turning point "the second Gutenberg advent" [2]. The amount of electronic information flow is growing exponentially and

is reaching the so-called information boom. As Alvin Tofler points out, the creation and dissemination of information has become a major activity and source of power for humanity [3].

According to some authors, the increase in the growth of electronic information flow is due to the advancement in the field of printing, the multiplication of traditional sources of information and their dissemination on the Internet with the use of web technologies.

Information literacy has become a concept since the beginnings of the 70s, and is embedded in many international projects, programs and initiatives, with the main task not only to promote information literacy, but also to promote it as one of the possible solutions to overcome the "digital divide" [1], [4]. IL is one of the key competences that builds the fundamental knowledge of modern society. Its upbringing was the initial step in the ability and ability to seek and use the huge information flow.

The achievement of information literacy, which not only corresponds to the contemporary social practice, but also advances its development, is based on adequate educational models. At the heart of each modern educational model are values, standards, methods and requirements, with the research process based on them being the main approach to training in the context of transdisciplinary topics. In line with this principle, the structure of educational models typically incorporates a specific research program, which includes innovative training, in order to achieve both its educational and scientific objectives.

2   INFORMATION LITERACY (IL): THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

The introduction of the term "information literacy" in the scientific space is associated with the name of Paul Zurkowski and his 1974 report "Priorities and Relationships in the Field of Information Services", prepared for the US National Library and Information Science Commission, which is a of the most cited titles on the topic of "information literacy". In his report, he notes that "information is not knowledge, it is concepts or ideas that enter the individual field of perception, are evaluated and assimilated by strengthening or changing personal perceptions of reality and / or ability to act" and to " to be information literate means to be able to discover what is known or known in every field.'

Throughout its almost 40-years history, the concept of information literacy and its importance in the educational process and in the context of lifelong learning has been the subject of a number of studies, analyses and international forums, forming the basis of influential opinions, such as:

- The Prague Declaration: Towards an Information Literate Society - adopted at the 2003 Information Literacy Experts Meeting in Prague, organized by the US National Library and Information Science Commission and the National Forum for Information Literacy- NFIL, and supported by UNESCO. 23 countries from 6 continents are taking part in the meeting [5];

- In the Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning - adopted in 2005 at the High Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning, organized by UNESCO, the National Forum for Information Literacy and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions - IFLA [6];

- In the Fez Declaration on Media and Information Literacy - adopted at the first international forum on media and information literacy organized by UNESCO, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University (Morocco), the Organization for Islamic Education, Science and Culture (ISESCO), the Arab Bureau of the Gulf Education (ABEGS) and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), held on 15-17 June 2011 in Fez, Morocco. This forum is attended by more than 200 participants from 40 countries representing the 5 continents [7];

- The Moscow Declaration on Media and Information Literacy, adopted at the UNESCO and IFLA conference in Moscow on 24-28 June 2012, which identified the need for society to increase both its knowledge of media and information literacy and to increase interest in this type of literacy internationally [8].

The leading international organizations involved in this issue also provide their wording on information literacy. For example, in 1989, the final report of the Information Literacy Committee of the American Library Association (ALA) stated that "in order to be information literate, one must be able to recognize when there is an information need, to have the skill to determine locate, assess and use the necessary information effectively."

Information literacy (IL) is defined as the set of knowledge and skills needed to discover, analyze, remember and use information. IL is the ability to personal selection in the information age. Information literate people know how to find, evaluate, and use information effectively to solve a problem or make a

decision, whether the information comes from a computer, a book, a news agency, a movie, or any kind of additional resources. According to the definition in the Alexandria Declaration adopted at the High Level Colloquium on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning, held in the Alexandrina Library, information literacy is defined as "the ability of people of different social backgrounds and occupations to effectively seek, evaluate, use and create information in order to achieve their personal, social, professional and educational goals ".

In the context of this study, we could not miss the wording of the 2003 UNESCO experts, who define IL as: "knowledge of what the information is about and what information need it can satisfy and the ability to identify, find, evaluate, organize and effectively create, use and transmit information to resolve certain issues and problems; it is a prerequisite for effective participation in the information society and is part of the basic human rights to lifelong learning " [1].

The most common definition of IL, which is accepted in most countries around the world, is the definition given by the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), which reads as follows: "Information literacy is a set of skills that require people to recognize the need for information, to find and evaluate information, and to use it effectively. " In other words, IL forms the basis of lifelong learning. It is a common literacy for all subjects, for all learning environments and for all levels of education. IG allows people to be more independent and have control over their own lives [9].

From a brief overview of the basic definitions and definitions of IL we see that they all put information first as a means to achieve goals of different nature, but this is the time to put on the agenda the question of the relationship of information literacy with learning in the field of tourism.

3 THE RELATION BETWEEN INFORMATION LITERACY AND TOURISM CURRICULA

The second decade of the 21st century confirms the role of information and the way it is used. The place of information and media literacy is becoming more and more established. This type of literacy is undoubtedly beneficial to every individual, regardless of their professional affiliation, personal interests and behavioral motives, including in leisure and tourism. Good information literacy guarantees skillful choice in the selection of information sources and can be a prerequisite for adequate application of information for all kind of tourism activity. Information literacy in tourism (TIL) is in closer relation to the use of the domain *knowledge for tourism purposes*. Another necessity for acquiring TIL is its more appropriate use and application in vocational and higher education in the field of tourism. Since, according to a number of scholars, information literacy is mostly related to the field of academic-exchange [9], [10], [11], [12], as such it can be also better discussed and problematized within the professional field of tourism. Additionally, the role of information literacy is found against the background of the fact that it is a tool for achieving more socially inclusive education [13], [14], including tourism education.

The authors expect that such connections should not only stay open, but they have to be conceived as integrative fo touirism. Indeed, in the very near future, training programs in the areas *tourism, leisure and hospitality* are expected to take into account the applied aspects of information literacy since they are in line with the global changes and digitalization processes. Based on the easy-going applicability of information literacy in the field of tourism, curricula in general, and individual disciplines individually, are expected to undertake a more precise approach to the type of tourist information. In this sense, the importance of TIL in general may be revealed in the following directions: for the tourists: when choosing a destination and the type of tourism to practice; when choosing the type of transport to visit tourist places; when getting acquainted with the culture of local communities. TIL is also essential for providers in tourism and for local communities, and TIL is a key factor in specialized tourism education.

4 METHODOLOGY

In order to problematize the application of information literacy in the academic environment, on the one hand and to apply it to the scope of tourism, on the other hand, the authors undertake a parallel analysis to investigate the relationships between the necessary types of competencies in tourism, and information literacy.

The research methodology goes through two stages. In the first stage, relevant scientific literature is selected and discussed, whereby the aim is to brigde some existing gaps in regards of the place and role of information literacy, especially for the purposes of curriculum design in the field of tertiary

education in *tourism, hospitality and leisure*. The approach applied here is deductive, and the investigation subject relates information literacy to the theory and practice of tourism education. Secondly, the study applies a descriptive approach in order to analyze specific parallel relationships between competencies thus resulting from the specific dimensions of information literacy in tourism. Through this type of relativity, knowledge transfer of specific subtypes of tourist information literacy is seen as highly probable, proposed as beneficial and rated as recommended.

5   RESULTS

5.1   Observations

One of the starting points in determining the scope of information literacy according to many scholars is that information literacy (IL) has been located at the intersection of education and student learning [15], [16]. Much in this vein, this research widens this intersection and includes the tourism as well. More than ever, information and skills about what, how and where are becoming an integral part of all areas of sustainable development, the economy and social life. In tourism, the role of information can positivle affect tourist flows by imposing new trends, creating strategies, and at the same time giving a better answer to the questions *why to visit a place*, why is this place worthy to be seen. The benefits obtained can be achieved by using the means of IL, and possible risks can be overwhelmed when tourists become information-literate tourists. Having this in mind, information literacy together with media information litracy and digital literacy are important key determinants within the information-based tourism and knowledge for sustainable tourism development. In addition, an important role for achieving the sustainable development goals for the sake of tourism plays the way tourism information literacy is applied in education as well. At the same time, the environmental knowledge in all its sub-types can also be included in the setting of IL and together with the requirement for a digitization can make information literacy in the field of tourism particularly valuable.

Looking back to the near past, tourists were supposed to get information about a tourist place only at certain places. These were educational institutions and specialized schools, libraries, museums, exhibitions, fairs, and of course information centers. In their study and analysis on this issue, in 1995 Fesenmaier & Kingsley [17] emphasize the role of information kiosks. Nearly ten years later, the role of information places for tourism was seen again against the background of tourist centers [18]. In the mentioned period and within the framework of Bulgarian tourism the situation was the same. Today, within the frame of the technologically competent society, it is difficult to find a functioning tourist center. In Bulgaria, they exists only at important touirsts sites. The reason is, on the one hand, the global pandemic. On the other hand, it can be said that the role of information literacy of the tourist has reached its next step in its development. Mass tourism is increasingly using the tools of the travel enterprise and is developing according to the rules of "ICT-dependent home-based travel agents" [19]. The process of transition from information-dependent tourist to information-literate tourist does not happen without the participation of the media. In the transition from one type of tourist information literacy to another, main contributors are specialized television programs, travel channels, which are part of the so-called entertainment media literacy. Much in this vein, Kitsa, Mudra & Kuznetsova [20] investigate the influence of TV information travel programs in the way they inspire people to travel more. But along with these intentions there is one more encounter becoming evident. There is a free niche for information literacy implications, which can be filled in the coming years mainly by refreshing the learning models for tourism activities, as stated by Martin [21]. Since information and communication have already attested their place in the domain of tourism and travel, this is not a surprising issue.

5.2   Postulating the place of information literacy in the field of tourism practice and theory

The role of information literacy in tourism is confirmed predominantly by the very essence of knowledge related to the subject of tourism itself: travelling, leisure, recreation and tourist experiences. Having these settings in mind, a wide range of activities can be provided: (i) *information about tourist sites* (including primary information on tourist locations, nature and climate), (ii) *information about archaeological sites*, (iii) *information on cultural heritage dating from many centuries and millennia ago*, (iv) *information about events and opportunities for organising leisure*, (v) *information about specialized forms of tourism according to the personal interest of tourists*. Thus, information literacy in tourism can have *quantitative* and *qualitative* characteristics. Quantitative characteristics reflect the volume of information, while qualitative characteristics relate to the source of information. The so-called co-

designing courses during the collaboration between professors and librarians contributes immensely to the speed of information transfer and volume exchange [22]. In this regard the use of the existing information funds, museums, festivals, tourist fairs and tourist exhibitions are of great importance. The new forms for storing and displaying of unique exhibitions and complexes also have a major role. Archaeological research and excavations and the new opportunities for exhibition and preservation of the sources of information related to resources tourism have an important task in improving the quality characteristics of information literacy. Still a little-discussed issue is the funds for storing this type of information. Many local, regional and national funds, in fact, are experiencing difficulties in storing both the sources of information themeselves, and the exhibitions possibilities. The funds of the regional museums are overcrowded, the exhibition space (with rare exceptions) is very often scarce. As a negative effect, many artifacts are inaccessible to interested tourists, visitors and anyone who needs to acquire specialized information literacy in tourism. A possible solution to this problem is offered by the open-air archeological museums, the traveling exhibitions, and especially the digitalization of the cultural and historical heritage. It is a matter of future actions to develop the sector for services to tourists and more targeted development of the associated infrastructure. Another problem that needs to be solved is that, as a rule, visiting places related to the provision of information literacy for the purposes of tourism (museums, exhibitions, tourist eco-complexes) are limited only to single exhibition visits which is not enough to acquiring a sophisticated tourism information literacy. There is a lack of specialized development of centers of a new type with specific places for tourist services, entertainment, on the one hand, and more targeted activities for knowledge sharing and acquisition of tourist information literacy (TIL), on the other.

5.3   The liaison between: tourism - cultural literacy – cultural heritage

According to Ksenija Tokić, the Tourism as an interdisciplinary phenomenon is emerging at the intersection of needs, interests, wishes, possibilities and abilities of tourists to actualize their own experiences related to vacations away from their place of residence, but also for hosts to produce profit for themselves and for the local community using local resources to serve and accommodate the tourists [24]. For this interaction to occur easier, there is a need for harmonization different political, financial, industrial, cultural, educational, traffic and other sorts of activities, both in the places tourists are coming from and the places tourists are going to, as well as all the places in between.Tourism has historically been regarded in most economies as a second cousin to other economic sectors ranging from resource industries to manufacturing. Indeed, in the past several decades of economic reporting, tourism expenditures were always hidden in various service categories [24].

In this regard, if looking at the cultural literacy, one can speak of the more appreciated recognition of the cultural heritage in views of community benefits and respect for the national identity. This recognition can happen when taking into account different levels of culture, different levesl of discourses used, the existing cultural values, and all fields that affect human action, including the concepts tourism information literacy. In their combination digital literacy, computing, audiovisual literacy are the underlying foundations of community based society of the future. Tourism information literacy can contribute to the more flexible culture of society enlightening the spirit of that society wherein cultural expressions and activities are valuable phenomena manifestations. The culture of each society forms the identity and existence of that society, and TIL can find its place as part of the overall settings of social life. Thus, as represented in this research, developing the tourism information literacy can be an important factor to attract tourists and affect their satisfaction [25], [26].

6   CONCLUSION

Currently, some of the basic skills, qualities and competencies such as information literacy are becoming increasingly important in the global market of knowledge. At the same time, autonomous and critical thinking, rapid adaptation to changes in the educational and social environment have been declared a priority in training in all professional fields [27]. The ratings of higher education institutions also comply with the new educational standards and the requirements of staff users. In its applied orientation, education in tourism, should look for a new educational product, whether as a selective or obligatory study subject. As identified areas in need of specific knowledge in tourism, some existing areas such as sustainable tourism, new emerging forms of tourism and modeling of tourism behavior should be expanded [28]. Other areas such as digital technologies in cultural and historical heritage, smart technologies in profiling individual tourism demand, anti-crisis behavior and safe tourism have yet to enter tourism curricula, whether as stand-alone, as elective or as part of fundamental tourism disciplines. The study confirmed the prospects for the application of information literacy in tourism and presented

the TIL concept based on a state-of-the art study and a relative analysis of competencies needed for tourism. The proposed function of information literacy in tourism seems to become an issue of a greater importance for tourists, practitioners and educators and thus contributing to knowledge transfer and qualitative resources usage.

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