

“New Trends in Tourism at ITB”

Assistant Professor, dr hab. Zygmunt Kruczek
University School of Physical Education in Cracow

Paper Type: Review

Trade shows are an extremely important marketing instrument and in the sphere of tourism, they have provided an excellent opportunity for observing the behavior of the tourist market. These direct encounters between tour operators creating a given tourist product, between providers of individual services (hotels, transport, restaurants, tourist attractions) and the consumers of tourist offers, are of great help in the process of decision making and defining the strategy of product development. The Travel Trade Show which has been held in Berlin ever since the year 1966 (ITB) is currently the biggest tourist trade fair in the world. It is organized annually at the beginning of March and it attracts representatives of the tourist trade from all over the world. The show aims to attract specialists and practitioners representing the broadly understood tourist trade. Participation in the show enables one to trace the current trends in tourism and creates an opportunity to get acquainted with the results of academic research which is important both for government administration, the local authorities as well as for tourism entrepreneurs themselves. Numerous seminars, congresses, academic conferences and workshops are held during the travel trade show. Most of the countries taking part in the show organize press conferences during which they inform the journalists about the current state of tourism in their countries as well as about the activities which are being planned in the near future.

The International Travel Trade Show (ITB) in Berlin is traditionally held at the exhibition grounds of the Berlin Trade Fair which comprises jointly 26 exhibition halls as well as the modern Congress Center ICC Messe Berlin; the latter is regarded as one of the biggest, best-equipped and most functional centers in the world.

In the year 2013 over 10 thousand exhibitors from 188 different countries of the world were reported to have taken part in the show. The number of visitors continues to be at a high level; in the current year, as many as 170 thousand visitors were said to have visited the show, although one also comes across opinions that compared to the previous years, the number of visitors has slightly decreased. The ITB Berlin Convention registered record levels of attendance. A total of 21,000 took part in the 200 lectures, discussions and workshops, 25 percent more than in 2012. Social Media and Mobile Travel Services proved to be major visitor attractions.

In the current year the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel has visited the ITB for the first time. In her address to the participants, she stated that a round-the-world trip in 80 days is a thing of the past, as at ITB, one can circle the world in 80 minutes.

The Berlin Travel Trade Show is the biggest world presentation of tourist destinations; here the demand for offers meets the supply. It is a place which offers an inexhaustible review of tourist attractions from around the globe; it is also a place which constitutes a pivotal point of business encounters and an extraordinary space for international cooperation. In the current year, even South Sudan had its own stand at the show. For tour operators, participation in the show constitutes an occasion to verify their offers and to either increase or decrease their sales, depending on the visitors' interest.

Apart from what has been mentioned above, the show constitutes an excellent place to conduct research in. For in a single place we come across all agents who create a tourist product – tour operators, organizers of transport services, hoteliers, managers in charge of tourist attractions as well as potential tourists – visitors who come to the show. The research studies and analyses carried out by the organizers of the show, point out that during the show over 80% of the exhibitors make new contacts and the value of the contracts negotiated during the show reaches the sum of 60 million euros. Individual countries and regions also exhibit their products at the show and their exhibitions have an image objective. The national stands, often arranged with immense panache, particularly by the African or South American countries, are to encourage potential tourists to visit these destinations. In the current year the Russian and Ukrainian stands were particularly impressive.

The Travel Trade Show in Berlin constitutes an excellent opportunity to present new trends in tourism as well as in other affiliated disciplines. In the year 2013, the leading theme of nearly all exhibiting countries was the presentation of the wellness and spa offers. For instance, a special exposition organized in the Polish pavilion entitled the “Wellness Island”, was meant to constitute an encouragement for tourists to take advantage of the rich Polish offer of spa services as well as offers belonging to the scope of esthetic medicine. It is worth mentioning

The national stand of Columbia (photograph by Z. Kruczek)



The national stand of Nigeria (photograph by Z. Kruczek)



here that for the Germans, Poland constitutes one of the most important destinations as regards health tourism.

The annual travel trade show in Berlin also presents new technologies in the tourist industry. The theme of the use of technology, the internet, as well as of the various systems and applications is presented in a number of pavilions. A separate topic which the travel trade show focuses on is that of institu-

tions which educate the cadres for the tourist sector; we come across educational offers, offers of in-service training courses, as well as a wide range of job offers for the graduates.

In spite of the economic crisis in Europe and the unrest in the north of Africa, the last few years have not been at all bad for the tourist sector. The number of tourists has clearly risen; the UN WTO announced that in the year 2012, the number of

international tourists has for the first time exceeded the figure of 1 billion. The travel trade show is an event whose aim is, among others, to counteract the negative consequences of the economic slowdown in the sphere of tourism. The show also serves to improve the image of the destinations which are currently being associated with danger. Such was precisely the aim of the Egyptian representation in the current year who assured the visitors to their pavilion of the stability of their offer as well as of the safety of tourists in their country.

In summation one may state that travel trade shows in general and the ITB show in particular constitute a specific type of encyclopedia of knowledge relating to the tourist sector. The authors of this encyclopedia are the creators of offers whereas its readers are the potential tourists. For the academics, the travel trade shows are a source of information on tourism and a perfect place in which to conduct research in, while for the pedagogues and students the travel trade shows are an excellent way of combining theory and practice.

Assistant Professor, dr hab. Zygmunt Kruczek – University School of Physical Education in Cracow
