

## Theoretical Assumptions Regarding a Tour as a Social Phenomenon

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**Abstract.** The article based on meta-analysis of scientific and methodical literature examines a tour as a social phenomenon as well as highlights its main assumptions. This work also presents the tour structure with respect to the change of the concept as well as its main components and functions.

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### Introduction

The Amended Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Tourism [1] states that a tour is visiting objects or areas by a planned route in the presence of a guide that is less than a day long. Similarly, a relatively succinct description given in general Lithuanian dictionaries [2-4] is often repeated by Lithuanian authors. Most of the publications in Lithuanian [5-8] are primarily intended for practitioners and students studying tourism business. Only a few Lithuanian authors [6, 9-13] try to look at this phenomenon from an academic perspective, analyzing its separate components.

Looking at it from a more global aspect, we can see that both: tours as well as their participants, i.e. guides and tourists, are analyzed from various scientific aspects. English-speaking authors [14-15] barely analyze the phenomenon compared with the attention it gets from the scientists in Russia and Russian-speaking countries [16-20]. However, having analyzed existing scientific, methodological and legal literature on tourism business and a tour as one of its components, it is clear that a tour as a social phenomenon is analyzed rather fragmentarily.

The problem is the lack of focus in the scientific discourse on the phenomenon of a tour is mostly attributed to practice rather than scientific area. The aim is to reveal the main theoretical assumptions regarding a tour as a social phenomenon. The article was prepared using the methods of meta-analysis, comparison, and generalization of scientific and methodological literature.

### 1. The Change of the Tour Concept

Journeys which are aimed to get to know the surrounding world often in order to conquer it, had been widely described

by various Antique authors. Journeys on foot, horses, carriages, ships when the rich purposefully would travel to Egypt and Greece bathing waters, sea resorts as well as holy places were often mentioned in various literature sources. As it is well known, the ancient Rome is associated with the appearance of the first hotels (or their prototype). In 476 after the collapse of the Roman Empire the demand for the trips and, therefore, accommodation declined.

Travelling revived only in the Middle Ages when trading and pilgrimage became more active. According to Svetikienė [21], at that time the number of religious trips increased - people would go to bow to the Christian and Muslim shrines. The Renaissance and the Enlightenment, however, revealed a new motif of travelling - individual trips for educational purposes. The society believed that only the ancient world had what was useful and graceful to a man. Quite often at that time, following the traditions of the nobles, education of a young man would be completed with a large tour around Europe in order to successfully launch a professional and political career in the country.

One of the most striking examples of the Grand Tour that survived up to these days and has become a classical example of epistolary prose, is the correspondence between the famous British politician F. D. Stanhope and his illegitimate son while on the latter's Grand Tour around Europe [22].

In the XVIII century there was an increase in trips for medical purposes. People were attracted by mineral springs with unique healing properties, thus creating or expanding cities there, building health resorts as well as nursing homes. Naturally, along with the treatment, there was a need for a variety of entertainment. As a result, special organizers offering various leisure activities began to emerge.

A bit later, at the end of the XIX century and the beginning

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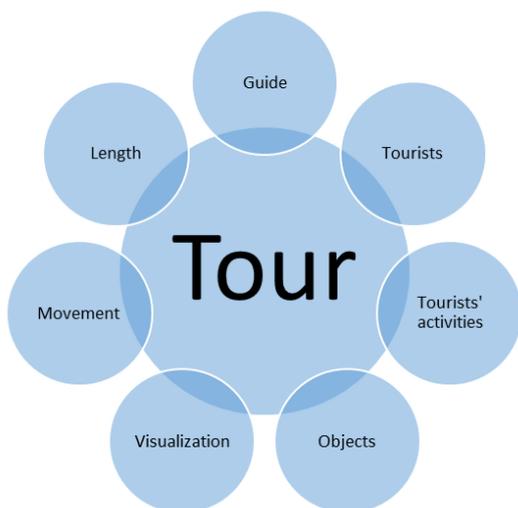


Fig. 1. Key Tour Features.

of the XX one, especially after World War II, mass tourism began to develop. It is claimed that during this period the real tourism business was formed, keeping pace with the other industries in terms of its scope, network of institutions and organizations, product diversity, organization management methods. At that time, a wider range of travel motives and objectives, i.e. recreational-therapeutic, business, sightseeing, scientific, etc., were formed as well.

Tour as a term translated from Latin means an attack. *Current Lithuanian Dictionary* [4] describes it as an outing while *Glossary of Tourism Terms* [3] states that a tour is visiting objects or areas by a planned route in the presence of a guide that is less than a day long. It should be noted that a wide range of definitions can be found in various literature sources [16, 10] which essentially focus on several major components of a tour as a social phenomenon, i.e. outing and visiting the objects. Also, the definitions highlight a purposefully acting professional, i.e. guide.

## 2. Key Tour Features

A tour is defined by specific features that connect or separate phenomena and objects from each other (see Fig. 1). The latter (often their groups), obviously, give a sense to the state of individual social phenomena, helping to recognize and deal with the phenomenon contextually and holistically. According to many authors, lack of one of those general features results in the fact that the activity cannot be called a tour. It should be also noted that, in addition to the mentioned general features, specific characteristics are assigned to each tour type (e.g. bus tours need a vehicle (e.g. a bus); museum tours introduce tourists to exhibitions (e.g. in museums); technological tours demonstrate operating objects (e.g. machines, equipment, etc.).

The relationship between the tourist and the guide, their collaboration is very important in any tour. Qualitatively performed the communicative function helps to achieve the

ultimate aim; therefore, guides get the most important role of the tour. According to Chuskonen and Glushanok [18], during a tour they are the people who help tourists to see the objects, who unveil the theme, learn the necessary information about these objects, experience the historical value or cultural context of an event or an object, gain practical skills of observation and analysis (emphasis on the ability to see and value, see Fig. 2).

Tourists' ability to see depends on how interestingly and expressively information is provided by a guide as well as on their interest in the tour theme. For example, in order to see architecture they need to be able to understand architectural details, colors, lines, their coordination as well as dependence on the angle of perspective, light, weather conditions and viewing. To be able to understand the historical context of the architectural object tourists need to understand the cultural stratification, timeline chronology, have the knowledge of the object's history. Tour objects along with purposefully formulated and targeted information professionally managed by a guide provide tourists with the opportunity not only to see, hear, feel, observe or analyze the object, but also to reflect and evaluate. As a result, a tourist then becomes an active participant.

## 3. Tour Structure

From the thematic perspective, all tours are different. While choosing the theme, things such as: who the participants of the tour will be, what phenomenon, object or event a guide will try to reveal, the purpose of the tour, etc. are always taken into account. However, regardless of the type, themes, the form of their conduction, all tours are similar. They include the introduction, main part and the end - see Fig. 3.

The introductory part of a tour is for making contact between the guide and the tourists as well as solving organizational issues (e.g. getting acquainted with the group, establishing rules of conduct, etc). Usually, along with this, information regarding the tour (brief presentation of the theme, the duration of the tour, etc.) is provided. However, it should be noted that the introductory part is not linked to specific

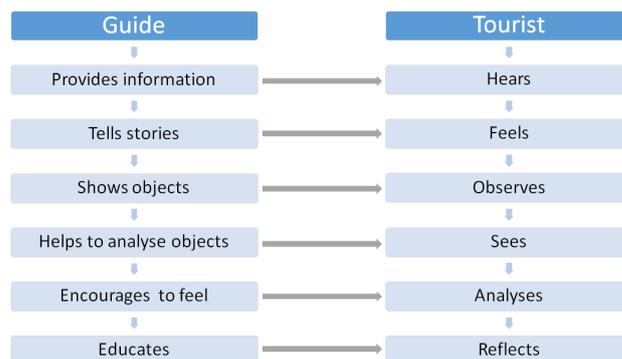


Fig. 2. The Process of a Tour

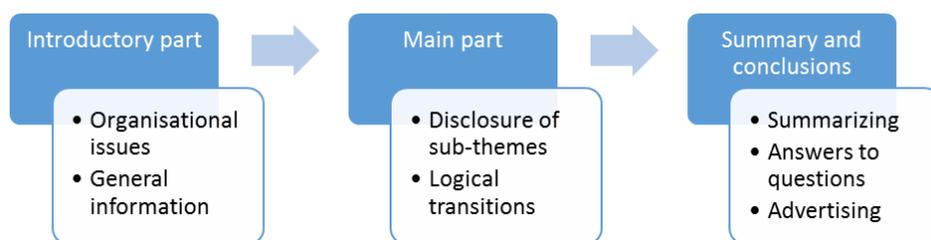


Fig. 3. Tour Structure

tour objects and most often takes place during the meeting with the tourists.

The main part is developed from a combination of showing specific tour objects and telling more about them. Its content consists of several sub-themes which are realized in order to reveal the general theme and show the objects. Usually, there are from 5 to 12 of them. As a result, it is important, while developing a tour, to select such objects that will help to reveal the content of its theme. Managing time effectively is also of uttermost importance. This part is for showing the objects, telling stories about them through the use of visual aids in an organized way.

The final part, as the introduction, is not related to tour objects. It takes 5-7 minutes and consists of 2 parts, i.e. summary of the tour (answers to tourists questions and conclusions) and promotional information on the other tours (e.g. which can expand and deepen the knowledge gained during the tour).

#### 4. Tour Functions

Various dictionaries (Current Lithuanian Dictionary, Dictionary of International Words) define function as the purpose of an object or work forms as well as duties and the field of activity. To function means to act, to work, to accomplish some purpose. As is known, a tour is joint activities of a guide and tourists; therefore, the former help the latter to see objects through which the theme is revealed as well as to get the most important information, to understand an event or an object, etc. that helps to acquire practical skills to observe and analyze tour objects.

As it has been pointed out by many authors [11, 17], the main tour functions despite having common features are unique in terms of their purpose (see Fig. 4). For example, the scientific function is special because information provided on tours is based on the scientific potential. The content of a tour, therefore, is formed with regard to modern science, the latest technological achievements, new knowledge. As a result, accurate, verified and relevant scientific facts regarding politics, philosophy, science, art, etc. are selected and shared on the basis of the tour theme and its aims. The function of linking theory and life shows links between the tour material and life, the reality and practices.

The informative function says that every tour provides spe-

cific knowledge on the achievements in history, medicine or biology as well as on archaeological discoveries and the nation's achievements in the cultural life. Comparing the media, i.e. newspapers, radio, television, with tours, visualization is much bigger in the latter.

The recreational function refers to the fact that all tours focus very specifically on leisure, i.e. time after the working day which everyone can spend according to their needs for self-education purposes. A tour, however, is not only some kind of rest, but also intellectual work which requires tourists' concentration and thinking. Tours educate people culturally, expanding their general cultural knowledge as tour participants receive knowledge about history, art, architecture, literature, etc. According to Emelyanov [17], a tour is a synthesis of several cultural forms. This may include fragments from artistic, scientific or documentary films, testimonies of witness or researchers, listening to various pieces of music and so on.

The function of forming people's interests says that the tour objective is to give the audience some knowledge as well as arouse their interest in a particular area. Thus, a tour can be a reason for further interest in one or another topic. For instance, after a literary or historical tour a person shows interest in the life of a particular literary or historical character, his/her work and, perhaps, might start analyzing the peculiarities of a certain period or historical event, its reasons and consequences.

By giving certain criteria, Bodytė-Garbačiauskienė and Stulpinaitė [23] draw attention to the effect tours might have on a tourist:

- tour is the ability to create and use knowledge;
- tour is a new way of understanding the value of knowledge;
- tour opens a path to human cultural socialization;
- tour forms cognitive competencies;
- tour is educational and improves communication.

All things considered, it can be seen that each specific tour has a range of possibilities which can help to realize one or several distinct functions. This, however, primarily depends on the type of tourists. For example, tours for children and teenagers usually perform the cultural recreational function although sometimes they can fulfil the educational and educative one as opposed to tours for a group of foreigners which would serve the informative function.

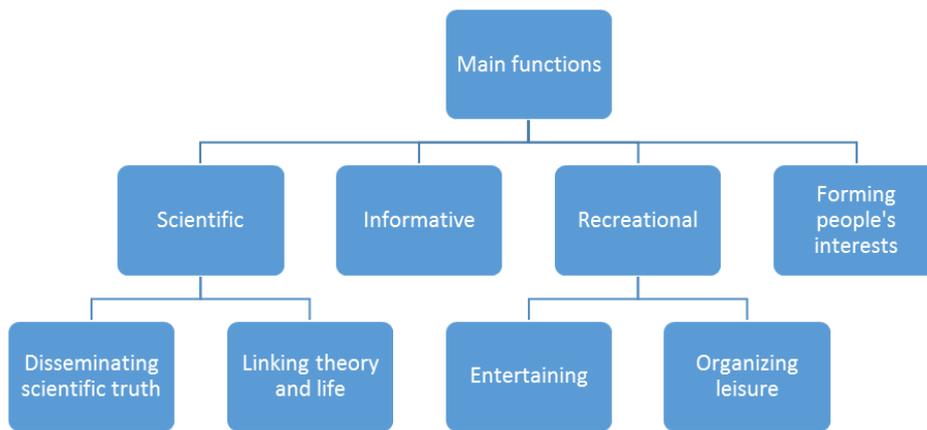


Fig. 4. Main Tour Functions

## Conclusions

Learning about tours as a social phenomenon begins with distinguishing the components of the concept in order to gain scientific knowledge. The definitions given in the scientific and methodological literature highlight a few very important features - guide, tourist, outing and visiting objects. The analysis of each of them helps to have better insights into a tour as a social phenomenon.

From the thematic perspective, all tours are different, but, regardless of the type, topic, and the form of conducting them, structure-wise all of them are the same. They include the introduction, the main part and the end.

Each specific tour has a range of possibilities which can help to realize one or several distinct functions. This, primarily, depends on the kind of tourist group and has to fulfill their expectations.

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