COMMODIFICATION OF CULTURE: SELLING INDIA

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The aim of this paper is to summarise recent ideas regarding commodification of culture and to take a brief look into various forms of this process in India, especially those related to tourism, and we discuss the views of K. Meethan and R. Shepherd. This issue involves a discussion about the concept of authenticity ("authentic culture", "authentic past") as well as homogenisation and heterogenisation of culture in relation to tourism: nations and localities are attempting to present themselves as different, possessing singular qualities of space and culture, and this also provides the means by which the sense of national or local identity can be constructed. Seeing tourism as a series of spatial narratives, semiotics was chosen as a methodological tool for this brief analysis. The main themes of Indian culture for sale are outlined: glorious past, spirituality and the mysterious land of Secret.

1. Introduction

The process of culture commodification in relation to globalisation and tourism will be discussed outlining several trends. Postmodern society has become much more businesslike, while at the same time more products are designed as deliberately "cultural", though traditionally "culture" and "commerce" are presented as incompatible oppositions. Tourism in this line is perceived as something inherently bad, destroying what is local, original, traditional, authentic and becomes "internationalized, homogenized and demonized" (Shepherd 2002: 183).

Tourism destination is usually perceived by tourists through its mythology, narratives, stories and biographies that surround the place and create it; in this sense spatial forms might be "read" in much the same way as a text. Therefore the second part of the paper will be assigned to analyse various forms of the commodification process found in tourism texts about India: presentations of "authentic" forms of culture, creation of cultural identity and production of tourism mythology. This part of the analysis will be based on tourism catalogues, brochures and literature released by governmental tourism offices of India as well as private tour operators and acquired in November 2003, during World Travel Market in London, one of the biggest tourism exhibitions in the world.

2. Commodification of culture

2.1. Globalisation and commodification

A discourse on globalisation always involves discussions about postmodernism, the commodification of culture and shift of economic processes to the post-Fordist model. Despite hot

debates regarding the concept of globalisation and its meaning, most of debaters agree that we are facing changes which are if not new, then at least evolving at the unseen pace. Transnational links worldwide have become much closer than ever before in terms of the increasing flow of technology (IT, electronics, genetics), financial information (MNC, whose functioning is based on the same capitalist economy system worldwide), media images and information (mass media), ideologies and values ("westernization" of East and "easternisation" of West) and people (tourists, immigrants, workers). Tourism in this context might be seen as part of the globalisation process: it brings people to different parts of the world by using global technologies, finances, information and mass media for this specific "people logistics."

It is argued also that globalisation is closely related to the process of commodification: with the shift from modern societies to post-modern and the increasing influence of capital flow, people, places and cultures become objectified for the purpose of the global market. Thus, Shepherd suggests to "view all objects and experiences as *potential* commodities" (2002: 194), and Meethan underlines an interdependence between cultural meanings and their economic utilisation. In this sense, "tourism is one aspect of the global processes of commodification rather than a separate self-contained system." (2001: 5)

2.2. Commodification of culture

There are a lot of different understandings and conceptualisations of culture. Bearing in mind the warning of Meethan regarding the tendency of over-generalisation of such a complex phenomenon, we understand culture as a mode of communication, as a symbolic system by which and through which people create and recreate shared values (Meethan 2001: 117).

As de Gay has noted, culture in postmodern society has become much more businesslike, while at the same time more products are designed as deliberately "cultural" (even up to an absurd level, e. g., the advertising of coffee as noted by Jackson (2002: 5)). This increased interrelation requires to include history, time and space as aspects of culture into this consumption cycle, though traditionally "culture" and "commerce" are presented as incompatible oppositions. "Culture", associated with meaning and creativity, imagination and aesthetic practices that are immaculate from the pursuit of economic profit and "commerce" on the other hand, is traditionally regarded as a vulgar and materialistic world, in a sense of tourism destroying what is local, original, traditional, authentic. However, this kind of "critique of binaries" trying to protect secret culture "from the jungle of market"[1] fails to acknowledge that commerce is also a meaningful/symbolic arena of social action and "marketplace is also a means by which cultures can be maintained" (Meethan 2001: 133).

Contemporary importance of commodities lies as much in their sign value as in their use of exchange value, or, to put it in Lefebvre's words: one consumes signs as well as objects (1996: 115). In postmodern society objects become representations: they obtain a symbolic value which can be modified, packaged, and consumed. Consumption rather than production becomes dominant and

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[1] Witty remark by Shepherd 2002, 190.

the commodity attains the total occupation of social life, becoming what Debord (1983) calls the "spectacle". Tourism becomes a commodity to be consumed that has always been concerned with the visual and the spectacular: its object is the object of the tourist gaze; the tourist sight becomes a systematic and organised encounter on which one gazes (Urry 1990).

However, according to Meethan, the visual aspect – the gaze – has been overemphasised talking about tourism and consumption. Instead, he is highlighting the particularity of tourism as part of symbolic economy of space, which connects production of space and production of symbols – urban, material forms and symbolic meanings derived from them (Meethan 2001: 26). One way to analyse this interconnected relationship is Lefevre's conceptual framework of production of space, encompassing spatial practices (the way space is used, economic (re)production of space), representations of spaces (the way space is presented and conceptualised by tourism planners, officials, managers, mass media) and representational spaces (the way space is perceived and experienced by local population, forms of local knowledge and practice).

As MacCannell observed, "the commodity has become a means to an end. The end is an immense accumulation of reflexive experiences which synthesise fiction and reality into a vast symbolism, a modern world" (MacCanell 1976: 23). The destination is more perceived by tourists through its mythology, narratives, stories and biographies that surround the place and create it – a lot of post-modern tourism destinations are chosen mainly for their symbolic value, including pastiche and a variety of stylised reconstructions of imaginary other places and other times. Therefore, we can say that the social lives of commodities can be understood as a series of narratives. The symbolic nature of commodities is not fixed, and different tourists can give diversified understandings and meanings derived from material practices. According to Meethan, spatial forms might be "read" in much the same way as a text, in a language of semiotics we can call it discourse – the system of signs and meanings. Thus, commodification is presented by Meethan as a two-way process: in terms of the images and narratives created by travel industry operators and presented in brochures, catalogues and other forms of media, and as experiences derived from representational spaces "and organised into more or less coherent narratives at a personalised level" (Meethan 2001: 86). What is special about this latter form of commodification is that these personal experiences, organised into material forms (stories, photographs, postcards, etc.), are used for self-identification or positioning, in other words – as forms of social distinction and segmentation (Meethan 2001: 86).

2.3 Homogenisation and heterogenisation of culture

Conceptualising tourism as the process of consumption of different experiences involves a discussion about local/ global culture as well as about heterogenisation/ homogenisation of culture. Meethan supports none of these oppositions: he relates such distinctions to modernity and argues that this differentiation is no longer easy to maintain (2001: 118).

Indeed, with the global exchanges of people, places and symbols tourism might be seen as a homogenising force of culture represented in such terms as "Americanisation", "westernisation",

"McDonaldisation" and "Disneyfication" occurring in many debates around globalisation. This view also implies a distinction between elitist and mass culture, which can be evaluated as descriptive and prescriptive at the same time: it is normative, restricting to what is allowed and what is not (Meethan 2001: 117). Tourism in these discourses appears as something inherently bad, "internationalized, homogenized and demonized" (Shepherd 2002: 183), causing loss of traditions and cultural degradation: there was a pristine and natural place outside the West, then tourism arrived and what once was pure and authentic has become spoiled, commodified and culture was lost. However, this kind of rationale fails to realise that the notion of "lost culture" is clearly fallacious: people never loose their culture, they are never without culture – it may transform into other, new forms, blend with other cultures, it might be different, though it does not mean that it's not culture anymore.

A similar critique of "narrowness" might be applied to the thesis of McDonaldisation, alarming that the world is going to global standardisation and homogeneity and implying a contrast with the authentic past and the shallow and inauthentic here and now. As Meethan comments it, "the assumed homogeneity of the McWorld rests on a conceptualisation of culture as being composed of essential and unchanging attributes which can only succumb to the onslaught of modernity and rationalisation, rather than adapting and changing" (Meethan 2001: 122).

The concept of "westernisation" in our days is not easy to support anymore, either: with the cultural influences from East, especially explicit in the music, fashion, food, leisure, etc. industries, we could talk not only about "westernisation" of the East but also about "easternisation" of the West. During the late 1990s it became "cool to be Asian", and once an underground culture now it flushed into the mainstream fashion with mehandi paintings on hands, mixing elements and colours of Eastern clothes, Indian food becoming almost national British kitchen, yoga classes as a must for healthy lifestyle and books "How to reach enlightenment for lazy ones"... Indeed, the same process might be observed in South Asia: "ethnic revival" in India during late 1990s was not only returning to the rural, traditional, authentic, but mainly mixing them with the global urban cultural trends (Jackson 2002: 12). The forms of "ethnicity" here are used with the play, pastiche and stylisation; it's more of (re)creation of the tradition, marking emergency of new cultural forms than regaining of the tradition or authenticity. What might be much more interesting to analyse in this case instead of attaching labels of "westernisation" or "easternisation" is the same logic driving those processes in different parts of the world. Just over ten years ago "capital had fallen in love with difference", with things which enhance our sense of uniqueness and individuality, in other words, "cultural difference sells" (Jackson 2002: 16).

Tourism relies on both the specificity of localities and the global reach of markets. Global forces impinge upon local situations where they aren't merely received; rather they are reformulated. Tourism is very unevenly distributed and is concentrated in specific locations. These destinations have their own economic, environmental and cultural attributes which transform the global forces into unique local experiences, and seemingly small but distinctive characteristics of places and peoples are accorded special status and marketed accordingly (Harvey, 1989). "Places from nation states to localities are attempting to commodify and present themselves as different, as

possessing singular qualities of space and culture, as being composed of essences" (Meethan, 2001). The production and consumption of narratives of space not only provide the means by which a sense of national or local identity can be constructed, they are also one of the means by which commodities are produced for the global tourist system (Meethan; 2001: 136). Thus, tourism might be seen as having a dual function: at the same time it is a homogenising and differentiating phenomenon as global forces are mediated by the local conditions. Both the local and the global are functioning at the same time to create hybridised and mixed cultures, best described by "de-differentiation", which refer to more diversified and multinational forms of cultures and are best considered as a more complex form of differentiation.

2.4 Commodification of culture and authenticity

The notion of authenticity has been the topic of many debates in the global circle of sociology of tourism. MacCanell (1989) argues that tourists do seek the authentic: they are modern pilgrims seeking authenticity in other places and times. Cohen (1979) has suggested that tourist motivations differ: some seek varieties of authentic experience, but many are simply seeking entertainment. According to him, the search for authenticity varies in relation to the level of alienation in society: existential tourists who are highly alienated seek another, authentic culture, and diversionary tourists who are lowly alienated don't think authenticity is important (Cohen, 1988). Meethan suggests that some tourists are motivated to seek out the "real" and "authentic", but whether this is for personal or existential fulfilment or for the purposes of accruing some form of cultural or social capital is open to debate (Meethan 2001: 93).

The concept of authenticity implies that certain spaces have inherent essential qualities, which make them unique, pristine and therefore valuable. This kind of conceptualisation raises a few problems. The first is related to essentialism in cultural discourses: very often culture is conceived as a sort of the "black box", combining a bit of everything and thus becoming a vague and not functional concept. Related to the problem of authenticity, essentialism means the implicit assumption that there is only one way of interpreting other cultures and deciding which one is the "real" or "authentic" one.

Another problem is related to either/or chose: this binary opposition of "authentic" vs "inauthentic" rests on more basic dichotomies like nature vs culture, sacred vs profane, etc., which Meethan considers to be the "heritage" of modernity not applicable to recent conditions any more: "both authenticity and heritage can be seen as critiques of modernity as representing perhaps a desire to return to an imaginary past where things were reputedly less complex" (Meethan 2001: 111).

Authenticity is a relative rather than an absolute term and, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.[2] Cohen (1989) argued that authenticity is a socially constructed concept, and its social connotations are not given but are "negotiable" and might be judged differently in association with

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[2] "Everything what is beautiful is beautiful – to whom it is beautiful" – this tautology as an expression of the subjectivity of beauty perception might be well relegated to authenticity as well.

varying types of visitor profiles (Wang 1999). Meethan (2001: 95) argues that the non-fixation nature of commodities' meanings is open to reinterpretation on both an individual and social level. People may work on their own identities through the construction of personalised narratives through commodity forms. Therefore, there is a close relationship between the identities and the social and material elements on which they are constructed. As a result, authenticity should be understood as a constructed value or a set of values, as a category that is created and recreated in contingent circumstances (Meethan 2001: 90).

On the level of tourism market, the term "authenticity" is very important and drives the whole tourism economy: tourists are hunting for "authentic" culture and "authentic" experience. Hence this instrumental use of the term is not relevant for analytical purposes: cultures are not stable, monolithic, spatially bounded and territorially coherent, migration of objects and people existed always, so labelling something as "authentic" or "inauthentic" becomes insignificant. As Shephard states, "if we can agree that culture is dynamic and fluid, then today's staged hokiness stands a good chance of becoming tomorrow's authentic cultural tradition" (2002: 193). According to Urry, cultures travel as well as people and what initially seemed to be foreign, exotic and alien could rapidly become indigenised and accepted as an integral and natural part of the culture (Meethan 2001: 120). This process to a higher or lower degree is characteristic of all nations round the world. As an example we may take the highly eclectic culture of India, which is a real mixture, "masala", which has absorbed many influences, from the matriarchal Indus valley civilisation, Aryan, Dravidian, Tibetan cultures, Muslim cultural invasions, colonial British inheritance to the recent global trends. This will be kept in mind moving to the following chapters where specific features of commodification of Indian culture will be briefly addressed.

3. Selling India: Commodification of Indian culture in tourism texts

The following chapters are dedicated to taking a brief look how India as a destination for cultural tourism is presented in recent tourism texts. The information gathered in November 2003 at World Travel Market, the biggest tourism industry event will be used as a source. Of course, the analysis of such a complex phenomenon as commodification should involve not only printed materials but also visual representations, tourism strategy and planning documents, perceptions of tourists as well as analysis of back and front stage of culture actions in a host society. Printed materials are selected in this study as the source for analysis due to space limitations of time and also trying to keep coherence of the study: involving all the levels mentioned above also requires to take into account a much broader spectrum of methodological aspects.

3.1 Methodological remarks

The analysis presented here is very brief; nonetheless it requires some methodological remarks.

Semiotics is selected as the methodological basis for further analysis. Semiotics, named by French semiologists also semiology, very often is seen as a paradigmatic form of structuralism, which has been (and still is) enormously influential in cultural studies.

The formation of semiotics is related to "the linguistic turn" in philosophy in the beginning of the 20th century and the foundation stone is counted to the works of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Semiotics is defined usually as a study of signs, sign systems and signifying practices understood as production and interpretation of meanings. In order to make the following analysis easier to read, we will remind some basic principles of semiotics:

1. The sign is a two-level model consisting of the signifier (the form that the sign takes) and the signified (the concept it represents). Thus, a sign is standing for something other it represents, "car" is a sound or written image signifying the concept of the car, which is different for everyone. The world is perceived through the systems of signs, therefore semiotic analysis involves not only verbal texts, but also visual (painting, photography), oral (music, rhetoric), social structure (anthropology) systems.

2. The relation between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary – there is no reason why "pig is called p-i-g", in other words, the reality is encoded by the cultural convention. Certain values or ideologies are always prevalent in sign systems: certain cultures have signs/words that are non-existent in others or they have the whole spectrums of signs to signify the differences of the concept. It means that every meaning has a value, which is culture-specific, so reading a text or a sign system is an active making of meaning. Therefore semiotics usually refers to the *reader* instead of the *receiver* and the *text* instead of the *message*.

3. The language signs (this is applicable to any other sign system as well) have linear and vertical relations, which are defined as syntagm and paradigm. Words follow each other forming a syntagmatic relation (I love you) and at the same time a sign is chosen from the whole range of alternative signs which compose the paradigm (I love/ like/ want/ need you). The latter is closely related to the definition of connotation, i. e. socio-cultural, personal associations attached to the meaning of sign.

4. The meaning is understood by semiotics as the result of differences' effect – we know the meaning of "small" in comparison to "big". Thus, a semiotic analysis of the texts is especially interested in the paradigmatic level of the language and is looking at the opposition between the choices that are made and those that could have been made. One of the tools of this kind of analysis of meanings is the semiotic square of binary oppositions, introduced by A. J. Greimas.[3]

There are only few attempts to use semiotics as a methodological starting point in the analysis of tourism. One of them is done by Deborah P. Bhattacharyya in the paper called *Mediating India,* which is claimed to present "a semiotic analysis of the most popular of the guidebooks to India, published by Lonely Planet" (Bhattacharyya 1997: 371). Without going into details we would argue that this work didn't step outside the attempt and "the characteristics of the narrative style of the book" (Bhattacharyya 1997: 372) are from a not semiotic analysis yet. It is much more similar to content analysis with some insights into communication functions that the book carries.

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[3] The examples of semiotic square are online: <http: //www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem05.html>. Some other online sources are available from: <http: //carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/semiotics.html#topics>; <http: //www.sla.purdue.edu/academic/engl/theory/narratology/modules/greimassquare.html>.

3.2. India in tourism texts

Due to the limitations of space, the following readings by no means should be considered as a semiotic analysis. They are brief outlines of commodification signs and meanings in tourism texts of India drawn under the guidelines of semiotics.

3.2.1. Selling past

Cultural tourism is the most prevalent form in India: it is much more elaborated as compared to adventure, wildlife or leisure tourism. What is "Indian culture" in tourism texts? How is it presented? What forms of culture are for sale at "the travel store" and what is veiled?

Culture of India is the past of India – this is the prevailing feature appearing with the stunning frequency in all tourism texts. A tourist buying a tour to India is buying a trip to its glorious past: this is the meaning of all cultural texts. What is striking here is the proportion given to the ancient magnificent past and the recent history of sixty years (after independence of India): only one paragraph about modern India in the main brochure released by India Tourist Office, and only few examples of modern art in the brochure "Museums and Art Galleries". Among the whole bunch of tourism literature to which this critique is applicable, there is only one surprisingly different brochure, clearly falling out of the common tendency, called "101 things to do". The "speaking tone" is lowered here from exaggeration to the familiar language and the attitude is much more open to the diversity of culture: "Practically everything about India surprises. Most are wonderful or amusing, some are wacky and weird". Advises start from such a simple thing as "pop a 'golgappa' [sort of crispy stuffed puffs cooked in oil – L.K.] in your mouth" and include a lot of experiences of daily life, which are very poorly covered by other texts, like to design palms with ornaments called mehendi, play cricket in a park, watch Bollywood masala movie, sip tea at a wayside stall or read the matrimonial advertisements in the newspaper.

Hence in most texts India is described as "timeless", "ancient", "traditional" and "pristine", promising the escape from noise, work, stress, rush and pollution of everyday metropolitan life to the place which is still serene, natural and unspoiled. Thus, Timeless Excursions invites to "experience timeless India", South India is promised to be still untouched: "As it was, so it is today", and ancient history is reminded from the first lines of most brochures, as in the one dedicated to Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE): "For five thousand years, it has witnessed the birth and development of one of the most ancient civilizations of the world". The city of Jaisalmer is described as "almost untouched by the twentieth century" and Varanasi praised with the help of Mark Twain: "older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend". This exaggeration about the past, primitive and regression reaches sometimes even extreme forms, as in the travel guide for India's North East, where the Arunachal Pradesh state is refered to as "Mysterious, Magical, Mystical": "Its [the state of Arunachal Pradesh] very isolation has been a blessing in many ways, having protected it from the ills of over-development and its consequent problems". In this small example there is a typical semiologic structure organised by oppositions:

isolation	{interconnectedness}
blessing	ills
{underdevelopment}	over-development
protection	problems
{eternal time}	{changing time}

The left column represents attributes of sacred mythological and standing time while the right one refers to modernity, profane and changing time. Thus mythologisation of reality here also means its sanitation: the land is blessed as far as it is primordial (over-development brings ills), the living reality of our days is eliminated and there is no shadow of problems caused by the recent state of underdevelopment. In general, there is a clear avoidance to speak about present India (with its enormous problems), or the information provided is very laconic. Most photographs in tourism brochures present reality under a heavy "make-up": the vast, empty beaches, huge temple complexes without a person, cities with blooming gardens or a few tourists travelling on the back of an elephant towards a temple on the horizon, golden in the sunset light, through a vast field of flowers. This typical marketing strategy points to the one of the biggest problems regarding tourist satisfaction, involving also travel consultant – client relationship: the presented information is far incomplete and images far different from reality, making the duty of the travel consultant to provide practical information about destination a real challenge. Though it might be observed with other destinations from the developing world too, in the case of India it is definitely more frequent.

This gap between India of representations and representational India points to a certain paradoxical relation: developed countries are claiming support for developing ones, initiating various programmes to reduce poverty, develop economy and empower local population. At the same time we like "off-the-beaten-track" holidays there because it's exotic, adventurous, diverse and challenging – all those qualities are characteristic of such "underdeveloped" countries. Following this line, one could remember the concept of "tourist as a child" and a quest for the lost mythological Golden Age as well as the issues of tourism as a language of social control.

3.2.2. Selling spirituality

From the times of romanticism through the years of hippies until now India has been considered to be the land of gurus, temples, powerful yogis, wisdom and spirituality. Without questioning its reality[4], we will take a brief look how it is commodified in tourism texts.

Ayurveda, the ancient system of healthcare, and Yoga are two famous Indian products for "Body, Mind & Soul". Ayurvedic treatment, from the root a very manifold science requiring long years of mastering, now is completely incorporated into the Indian spa-resort business, making this rich tradition reachable globally. Ayurveda presented for the western world as "the top of holistic

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[4] We would say that it's impossible to accept or deny this perception: in our opinion, this phenomenon is much more complex than a simple yes–no choice.

cures" in fact is described with accuracy as "holistic cure, but no quick fix". Many resorts are famous for excellent Ayurveda specialists, and besides servicing hotel clients they also keep Ayurvedic research centres. The strict certification system and strong professional ethics keep the trust in this tradition. Ayurveda in this sense might be an example of a properly functioning commodification cycle: the consumption of tradition keeps it alive and the preserved quality raises satisfaction of consumers.

The things with Yoga seem much more complicated. One of the eight *Astika*[5] group Vedantic philosophies originated 400–500 BC, it usually is reduced to "a system of exercises for physical and mental well being", nevertheless proclaimed to be "the panacea for man's problems". So simplified and belittled, with the courses of 1–2 weeks, it really seems to be a product for western market, resounding the body cult with rejuvenation, self-care and "forever young" ideas as a fashionable mainstream in developed countries. As Uzzell puts it (cited in Dann 1996: 46): "Tourists are not motivated by the specific qualities of the destination, but rather the matching of a destination's major attributes to the tourist's psychological needs."

Interestingly enough, this process is openly acknowledged: "What is novel and exciting is that never before has its rejuvenating spirituality been packed in such an enticing manner".[6]

Besides Ayurveda and Yoga there is one more "speciality" of India to experience or to consume – religions and temples. India is called officially "a land of temples", which is covering some other names, not used officially very often, such as "a land of gurus, sadhus, wisdom and enlightenment". This is also a promise of self-discovery, "the most soulful journey of your life" or more generally "the journey of a lifetime". As in the case of Yoga, the shift is from the tradition itself to its representations: "we look into a mirror instead of out a window, and see only ourselves" (Dann 1996: 66).

3.2.3. To travel to the Real India

"Travel with Indus and live the real India", as one company invites. What is the "real India" travellers are invited to discover? There is no answer to this question in tourism texts; the veil is left uncovered leaving to discover this mystery of India for travellers themselves. In the main brochure, released by India Tourist Office, the country is presented in a purely emotional language: "Ahh... India. Incomparable, infinite, inspired, intoxicating and inimitable, India simply does not compare with anywhere else in the world. It possesses such a bewildering wealth of sights and sounds, tastes and textures that the term holiday fails to do India justice... an experience to savour, to relish, to treasure is closer to the mark."

Started with the sigh, description follows with antonym adjectives as if the real sense "out there" would be unreachable, inexpressible, ineffable and only possible to grasp by framing it with what it is not: incomparable, infinite, inimitable, etc. There is nothing clear and logical about India in this description, the words used either denominate emotions (sights, sounds, tastes, savour, relish), or

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[5] *Astika* or the orthodox group (nyaya, vaiseshika, samkhya, yoga, mimansa) of philosophical schools accepts the authority of Vedas, in contrast to the *Nastika* group (Jainism, Buddhism, Carvaka).

[6] From the MICE catalogue for incentive travel.

fantasies (bewildering wealth, experience, treasure). In many texts India is "Mysterious, Magical, Mystic", promising "endless discovery", it is a land of Secret, where everything may happen, and your fantasies first of all. This aspect of diversity, surprise, wonder, astonishment was even chosen as a logo (very successful, by the way) for the marketing campaign by Indian Ministry of Tourism: Incredible India. What is interesting here is the credibility issue: extreme poverty, pollution, hustle are absent in the slogan of "incredible India" and the exaggeration of magic, mystic and mystery is quite far away from daily life in India.

4. Conclusion

Tourism in this paper is seen as part of the globalisation process, implying an increasing interconnectivity, economic "depth" and the extension of commodity relations into realms that have been previously seen as free from such influences. Indeed, internationalisation of tourism industry (airlines, hotel chains, tour operators), new technologies facilitating the movement of people and capital are the key premises of such processes.

Focusing on the process of culture commodification in tourism, we discuss the views of K. Meethan and R. Shepherd. They both question the idea of commodification as a priori negative and suggest seeing commodities as possessing not fixed attributes but the attributes that can be recreated in relation to a different time, situation and subject. Together with the subject of commodification, the questions of homogenisation / heterogenisation and authenticity of culture were discussed, arguing that the either–or choice is not relevant in this situation and the complex nature of the issue should be taken into account. One of the aspects of globalisation is the reassertion of a region or locality as the basis for social interaction, so it does not itself lead to cultural homogeneity; rather, it creates a much more diversified map of the world.

Authenticity is argued to be not a universally valid category: the notion of "authentic" is dependent on who use it, why and what they use it for. Moreover, authenticity implies the degradation of a once pure and authentic past, though cultures as well as people are travelling (Meethan 2001: 119) and hybridisation, changes or mixing of cultures should be seen rather as a transformation but not as the loss or degradation of culture.

The second part of our paper was aimed to give a few examples of culture commodification, featuring the tourism texts of India. Seeing tourism as a series of spatial narratives, semiotics was chosen as a methodological tool for this brief analysis. The main themes of Indian culture for sale were outlined: glorious past, spirituality and mysterious land of Secret. Culture of India is the past of India – this is the keynote of tourism texts dedicated to India. The living reality of our days is eliminated, and there is a clear avoidance to speak about present India. Leaving this aside, India is presented as a country of spirituality and tradition, with Ayurveda and Yoga as the main practices widely included into the cycle of culture commodification and tourism.

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KULTŪROS KOMODIFIKACIJA: PARDUODANT INDIJĄ

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S a n t r a u k a

Straipsnyje aptariamas kultūros komodifikacijos[7] procesas Indijoje ir įvairūs šio proceso aspektai, susiję su turizmo industrijos formuojamu Indijos kultūriniu įvaizdžiu. Šiuolaikinėje postmoderniojoje visuomenėje daugybė produktų pateikiami kaip „kultūriniai", nors tradiciškai „kultūra" ir „komercija" yra suvokiamos kaip nesutaikomos priešybės. Turizmas šioje priešybių kritikoje figūruoja kaip globalizacijos įrankis ir komercinis blogis, ardantis victines bendruomenes, griaunantis tradicijas ir naikinantis autentišką kultūrą: kažkada egzistavusi nepaliesta ir natūrali vieta anapus Vakarų atsiradus turizmui prarado savo autentiškumą ir kultūrą, tapo ne atrandama patirtimi, o perkama prekė. Nepaisant tam tikrų įžvalgų, tokia duali „arba-arba" kritika per daug supaprastina sudėtingus kultūrinės komodifikacijos, autentiškumo, globalizacijos, kultūros heterogeniškumo ir homogeniškumo ryšius. Vienas iš globalizacijos aspektų yra etniškumo ir lokalumo sustiprėjimas: tradicijos reprodukuojamos siekiant pabrėžti unikalumą ir individualumą. Šis procesas rodo ne tik kultūrinių skirtybių paklausą, bet ir atskleidžia, kad pasaulio žemėlapis, kuriame yra įvairių sinkretinių kultūrų, tampa kur kas labiau įvairialypis nei homogeniškas. Be to, „prarasta kultūra" tėra klaidingas silogizmas, nes nėra žmonių be kultūros. Kultūros „keliauja" lygiai taip pat kaip žmonės, jos gali įgauti naujų formų, integruotis su kitomis, tačiau kultūros transformacija nėra kultūros praradimas.

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[7] Terminas „komodifikacija" šiame straipsnyje vartojamas kultūrinių reikšmių ir jų ekonominio vartojimo priklausomybei žymėti.

Turizmo destinacijos paprastai yra suvokiamos per mitus, istorijas ir biografijas, visus tuos naratyvus, kurie supa ir formuoja tam tikrą vietą, suteikdami jai tam tikras būdingas reikšmes. Pasak K. Meethano, erdvinės formos gali būti „skaitomos" lygiai taip pat kaip ir tekstas, semiotikos terminais kalbant – diskursas, ženklų ir reikšmių sistema. Pasitelkus pagrindines semiotikos nuostatas, antrojoje straipsnio dalyje skaitomi Indijos turizmo tekstai – brošiūros, katalogai, reklaminiai, informaciniai leidiniai, gauti 2003 m. kasmetinės Londone vykusios vienos iš didžiausių turizmo parodų *World Travel Market* metu. Siekiant atskleisti, kaip Indija reprezentuojama turizmo leidiniuose ir kokią „tradicinę Indijos kultūrą" keliautojas nusiperka kartu su kelione, išskirtos kelios pagrindinės turizmo tekstuose pasitaikančios temos. Indija čia yra mistiškas paslapties kraštas, šalis, turinti šlovingą praeitį, pilna dvasingumo, kurį spinduliuoja medituojantys guru. Tačiau pagrindinis šių tekstų bruožas yra šiuolaikinių Indijos realijų eliminavimas: turizmo industrijos proteguojama Indijos kultūra yra Indijos praeitis.