

EXCURSIONS AS A TOOL OF SOCIAL PROGRAMMING IN TOURISM

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Introduction. Contemporary scholarship in tourism increasingly moves beyond interpreting the excursion solely as a recreational or educational practice, instead conceptualizing it as a socially organized mode of interaction capable of influencing participants' perceptions, attitudes, values, and behavioural patterns. In this context, the excursion emerges not merely as a means of conveying information about a destination, but also as a mechanism for shaping socially desirable ways of perceiving, interpreting, and consuming it. This perspective aligns with a broader understanding of tourism space as a socially constructed environment in which meanings are neither neutral nor self-evident, but are produced through interpretive practices, symbolic representations, and social interactions. Within this study, the excursion is conceptualized as a structured and guided experience in which tourists engage with intentionally organized narratives, cultural codes, spatial symbols, and behavioural models transmitted through excursion-based communication. For this reason, the excursion may be interpreted not only as a form of familiarization with a site of visitation, but also as an instrument of social influence involved in the production of normative orientations and value-based attitudes.

The relevance of this approach is further supported by contemporary empirical observations in the field of tourist behaviour. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and tourism behaviour specialists, tourists demonstrate a significant willingness to modify their environmental practices when provided with appropriate informational and interpretive support, which is essential for minimizing the negative ecological impacts of tourism within the framework of sustainable development [1]. Furthermore, evidence from ecotourism programmes in Costa Rica suggests that participation in tours centred on biodiversity interpretation is associated with increased pro-environmental engagement among tourists, particularly in the form of voluntary donations, volunteer participation, and repeat visitation [2]. These findings indicate that the excursion experience may serve not only informational and emotional functions, but also contribute to the development of more enduring behavioural orientations. Theoretically, this influence may be explained through a combination of behavioural and social constructivist perspectives. In particular, the Theory of Planned Behaviour allows the excursion to be interpreted as a communicative environment within which attitudes, perceived social norms, and behavioural intentions are shaped and may subsequently translate into actual behaviour [3,4]. At the same time, social constructionism emphasizes that tourism space is not merely presented to participants, but socially constructed through the selection of meanings, the interpretation of local culture, the hierarchization of symbols, and the normalization of particular modes of engagement with the destination. In this sense, the excursion operates as an instrument of soft social regulation, guiding behaviour not through formalized control, but through the cognitive structuring of experience, emotional engagement, and value mediation. Particular scientific value in this context lies in examining the excursion not only as a factor of individual influence, but also as a mechanism capable of generating broader socio-cultural effects at the destination level. The growing demand for authentic, ethical, and meaningful tourism experiences encourages host communities to institutionalize local cultural forms, including craft practices, thematic events, festivals,



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memorial routes, and educational and interpretive formats. As a result, excursion activity may function not merely as a channel for transmitting knowledge or providing emotional experiences, but also as a factor in the reproduction of collective identity, social norms, and locally embedded development models.

Despite the substantial body of research devoted to sustainable, cultural, educational, and interpretive tourism, contemporary scholarship still lacks a sufficiently developed conceptualization of the mechanisms through which excursions exert normative, value-based, and behavioural influence on both tourists and host communities. In particular, there remains a limited number of approaches in which the excursion is analysed not as an auxiliary component of the tourism product, but as an autonomous instrument of social programming capable of shaping perceptions, interpretive frameworks, and practices of engagement with cultural and natural environments. Within the framework of this study, social programming is understood as a purposeful, though largely indirect, influence on the formation of knowledge, meanings, values, and behavioural patterns of individuals through structured experience, communication, and symbolic mediation. In the tourism context, excursions may be regarded as one of the most effective formats of such influence, as they integrate information provision, interpretation, emotional engagement, and social interaction within a coherent experiential environment. This, in turn, necessitates their scholarly reconsideration not only as a form of service delivery or cultural representation, but as an instrument for constructing socially significant orientations in contemporary tourism.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Recent research on tourist behaviour has increasingly emphasized the role of interpretive communication, social norms, and interpersonal interaction in shaping tourists' behavioural orientations. Within this line of inquiry, particular attention has been given to the mechanisms through which tourism experiences influence not only the cognitive perception of destinations, but also attitudes, intentions, and behavioural practices. A distinct body of scholarship has examined the interpretive mechanisms embedded in tourism experiences. In particular, empirical evidence suggests that the narrative and meaning-based structuring of experiences can modify not only destination perception, but also tourists' behavioural intentions. In this context, studies have shown that anthropomorphic interpretive cues – that is, the presentation of natural or cultural objects through personalized narratives and imagery – enhance meaningful experience and narrative immersion, which in turn increase tourists' willingness to engage in more responsible and socially desirable behaviour. Accordingly, interpretive cues, environmentally oriented messages, and other forms of meaningfully constructed interpretation may be regarded as important triggers of normatively oriented behaviour in tourism contexts [5]. A substantial strand of contemporary scholarship concerns the application of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to explain tourism-related decisions and behavioural patterns [6, 7]. Within this framework, particular attention has been paid to studies that analyse tourism decisions through the lens of normative determinants, demonstrating that behavioural intentions are shaped not only by individual evaluations, but also by socially and culturally conditioned expectations [8]. More specifically, research indicates that tourist intentions are predicted not only by subjective norms, but also by personal norms and cultural norms – that is, by perceptions of socially approved, morally appropriate, and culturally relevant behaviour. In this respect, TPB remains one of the leading analytical frameworks in tourism studies, although contemporary research increasingly points to the value of extending it through the incorporation of emotional, narrative, social, and contextual factors [9]. Accordingly, subjective, injunctive, and culturally conditioned norms may be considered important predictors of revisit intentions, responsible attitudes toward destinations, and readiness to engage in behaviour aligned with expected social standards [10]. Related studies further underscore the importance of reference groups, interpersonal interaction, and the broader social environment in shaping responsible tourist behaviour. In this context, tourist behaviour is interpreted not as an isolated individual choice, but as the outcome of a continuous alignment of one's actions with group expectations, communicative cues, and socially approved modes of interaction [11]. Within Ukrainian academic discourse, excursions have traditionally been conceptualized primarily as forms of cognitive, cultural-educational, and communicative activity that facilitate engagement with the socio-cultural space of a destination. From this perspective, guided tourism experience functions as a setting within which not only knowledge is transmitted, but also cultural meanings, symbolic significance, and socially acceptable behavioural models are internalized [12]. In this context, the excursion emerges not merely as a form of familiarization with a destination, but as a communicatively organized mode through which the tourist enters the cultural, symbolic, and social space of place. In this regard, Bahrii, M., Kushnir, L., and Terletska, O. have shown that the excursion functions not only as a tourism service, but also as an instrument of cultural representation, adaptation, and the

maintenance of the local symbolic structure of space [13]. A similar line of reasoning is evident in the study by Sydoruk, A., and Omelianenko, H., where excursions are conceptualized as instruments for engaging with socio-cultural space and interpreting local cultural meanings [12]. At the same time, Starynets, O., Shestel, O., and Matviichuk, L. document a gradual shift from a descriptive and information-oriented model of excursions toward more interactive and communicatively enriched formats, thereby providing grounds for understanding excursions as dynamic communicative products rather than merely traditional forms of familiarization with tourist attractions [13]. A distinct strand of contemporary Ukrainian scholarship further examines the excursion as a deliberately designed tourism product, the effectiveness of which depends on its scenario, interaction format, and mechanisms for assessing impact [14]. An analysis of the existing literature indicates that most contemporary studies focus either on the educational and interpretive functions of excursions or on specific behavioural effects of tourism experiences, particularly pro-environmental, normative, or communicative ones. At the same time, insufficient attention has been paid to the excursion as a complex mechanism of social influence that combines cognitive structuring, emotional engagement, symbolic mediation, and the shaping of behavioural orientations. Its conceptualization as an instrument of social programming – that is, as a mechanism of purposeful influence on norms, values, meanings, and behavioural patterns – remains insufficiently developed.

Objectives of the article. This article aims to identify the mechanisms of social programming embedded in excursion activity and to assess their influence on tourist behaviour and destination development. The study conceptualizes tourist excursions as a socio-cultural environment of influence and focuses on the mechanisms of social programming through which they shape tourists' behavioural orientations and contribute to destination development. Methodologically, the research draws on the analysis of academic sources and literature, systematization, comparative analysis, and content analysis of excursion practices, as well as the synthesis of empirical examples and case-based evidence. Specifically, the study seeks to examine contemporary approaches to tourist behaviour, social norms, and interpretive communication; identify the key mechanisms of social programming operating at the cognitive, emotional, normative, and behavioural levels; systematize the instruments of social influence embedded in excursion activity; and assess their potential role in shaping tourists' behavioural orientations and influencing destination development.

The main material of the study. Contemporary tourism is increasingly moving beyond its recreational function and can be understood as a socio-cultural environment of influence in which culturally sanctioned modes of perception and behaviour are reproduced, transmitted, and reinforced. In this context, tourist behaviour is shaped by values and social norms: values are conceptualized as fundamental beliefs and guiding principles, while social norms are understood as socially accepted rules regulating interpersonal interaction. Studies based on the Value–Belief–Norm framework and related approaches demonstrate that values, environmental beliefs, awareness of consequences, and personal norms represent important predictors of tourist behaviour [15, 16]. At the same time, the diffusion of behavioural patterns within tourist groups increases the likelihood of their reproduction by individual participants, which is consistent with the propositions of Social Learning Theory [Bandura, 1965; 1986]. In tourism practice, this is manifested through the collective imitation of travel routes, modes of engagement with space, and responses to cultural objects. Accordingly, tourism may be viewed as a sociocultural institution embedded in broader societal structures and involved in the formation and reinforcement of behavioural orientations.

In the present study, the concept of “social programming” is understood as a structured sociocultural influence on the interpretation, normative orientations, and behavioural intentions of excursion participants. Within this perspective, the excursion is viewed as a normative–interpretive design of the tourist experience through which meanings are selectively framed, space is emotionally encoded, evaluations are legitimized, and socially acceptable modes of interaction with the destination are modelled. By means of ritualized practices, standardized narratives, and symbolic representations of space, excursions contribute to the formation of relatively stable patterns of tourist perception, evaluation, and behaviour. This is particularly evident in museums, cultural centres, heritage tours, and dark tourism contexts, where structured routes and interpretive narratives shape collective understandings of the past and moral evaluations.

The social-programming potential of excursions is realized through cognitive, emotional, normative, behavioural, and symbolic mechanisms (Table 1).

The use of the instruments presented in (Table 1) during excursions facilitates the internalization of cultural values, normative representations, and behavioural patterns.

Table 1

Instruments for the implementation of social programming in excursions

Instrument	Mechanism of influence	Examples in excursions	Type of social programming
Storytelling	Through the sequential presentation of events and the integration of cultural and moral elements, it shapes cognitive and emotional frames of perception	Guide narratives about historical events, city legends, local stories, and anecdotes associated with cultural symbols	Cognitive, emotional
Symbolic narratives	Through associative and symbolic connections, they shape moral evaluations and cultural representations	Memorials, architectural landmarks, sacred sites, thematic exhibitions, cultural artefacts	Symbolic, discursive
Visual markers	Reinforce comprehension, memorization, and spatial orientation; contribute to the formation of cognitive maps	Route maps, photo panoramas, interactive exhibits, museum installations	Cognitive, symbolic
Group interaction	Enhances the internalization of values through social learning, group imitation, and reflection	Discussions during excursions, collective interpretation of observed objects, group exercises	Behavioural, normative, emotional

Source: compiled by the author

Accordingly, the mechanism of social programming in excursions may be conceptualized as a sequence of five interrelated stages that reflect a gradual transition from information perception to the potential transformation of tourist behaviour. This perspective allows for the integration of contemporary approaches to cognitive structuring, emotional engagement, and behavioural modelling identified in recent research (Figure 1):

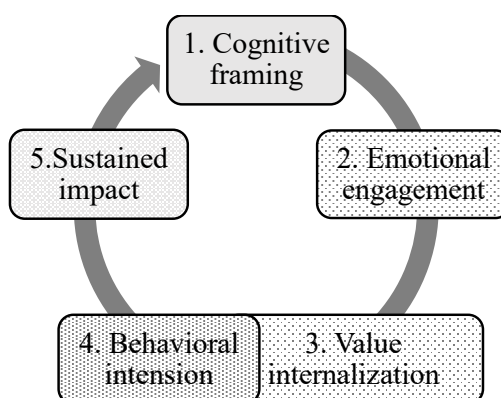


Figure 1. Mechanism of social programming in a tour: five-stage sequence

Source: developed by the author based on [19, 20]

The proposed sequence (Fig. 1) allows the excursion to be understood not as a one-off act of information transmission, but as a staged process of influence that integrates cognition, emotion, value-based interpretation, and the potential for behavioural transformation.

Cognitive framing – the formation of basic knowledge, contextual understanding, and an interpretive framework for the perception of the destination.

Emotional engagement – the activation of feelings through storytelling, symbolic imagery, visual stimuli, and sensory interaction.

Value internalization – the integration of the presented cultural, social, or environmental values into the tourist’s own system of beliefs.

Behavioural intention – the formation of intentions to act in accordance with internalized values and norms (for example, adherence to environmental rules, respect for local culture, or support for heritage preservation).

Sustained impact – the potential transfer of internalized meanings, attitudes, and behavioural orientations into everyday social practices after the completion of the journey.

Given the multidimensional nature of the social-programming influence of excursions, it may be appropriately represented in the form of a typology reflecting the key mechanisms through which meanings, norms, emotional responses, and behavioural patterns are shaped within the structure of the excursion experience (Table 2).

Typology of social programming within the structure of the excursion experience

No.	Type of programming	Function	Manifestations in excursions	Theoretical framework
1	Normative	Regulation of behaviour through socially sanctioned rules, expectations, and acceptable modes of interaction	Restrictions on photography, silence requirements, rules in sacred and memorial spaces	Sociology of norms and social order
2	Behavioural	Scripting of participation and reinforcement of action patterns through repetitive practices	Movement along a route, scheduled stops, modes of participation	Interactionist approach (theory of social interaction)
3	Cognitive	Formation of interpretive frameworks, cognitive schemas, and semantic emphases	A single version of events, emphasis on key meanings	Social constructionism and critical approaches to knowledge
4	Emotional	Modelling of emotional engagement and affective perception	Sadness, admiration, tension	Affective approach (theories of emotional regimes)
5	Symbolic	Construction and reinforcement of meanings through symbols, signs, and spatial representations	Symbolic routes, iconic places	Symbolic interactionism (theory of symbolic power)
6	Ritual	Normalization of collectively significant practices through repetitive symbolic actions	Memorial tours, historical reenactments, ceremonies	Ritual theory and collective practices
7	Discursive	Formation of interpretations, evaluations, and socially legitimate meanings through language and narrative	Key words, evaluative descriptors	Critical discourse analysis

Note: The typology has been generalized and systematized by the author on the basis of classical and contemporary approaches in sociology, cultural studies, and tourism studies, including the ideas of Émile Durkheim on social norms, Erving Goffman on the scripted nature of social interaction, Michel Foucault on the relationship between knowledge and interpretation, Pierre Bourdieu on symbolic power, Clifford Geertz on culture and ritual, Norman Fairclough on the discursive construction of meaning, as well as contemporary studies of affective regimes and emotional experience in tourism.

Source: compiled by the author

The influence of excursions may be observed at multiple levels:

1. Individual – transformation of the tourist's knowledge, values, and behavioural orientations;
2. Sociocultural – reproduction of local practices, symbolic positioning of place, and support for local economic activity;
3. Sustainability-related – heritage preservation, community support, and social cohesion.

In crisis and post-conflict settings, excursions also perform additional functions. Memorial routes, war-aware tours, and integrative formats designed for internally displaced persons, veterans, and local communities contribute to the preservation of collective memory, processes of social adaptation, and the strengthening of cultural resilience.

The analysis undertaken made it possible to identify the following categories of excursion influence when conceptualized as an instrument of social programming (Table 3).

Table 3 systematizes the principal categories of excursion influence when understood as an instrument of social programming, encompassing the strengthening of local cultural practices, the formation of the destination's cultural identity, the role of communities in sustainable development, and the use of cultural tourism as a resource of social influence. It underscores the multidimensional nature of the excursion experience and its capacity to shape value-oriented behavioural patterns among tourists.

Conclusions. The findings of the study confirm the relevance of conceptualizing the excursion as a multilevel mechanism of social programming that integrates cognitive, emotional, normative, symbolic, discursive, and behavioural dimensions of influence. The analysis has shown that interpretive narratives, the role of the guide, group dynamics, the symbolic coding of space, and repetitive interactional scripts shape tourists' perceptions, evaluations, and behavioural orientations. In this sense, the excursion may be understood as a mechanism of soft social influence, implemented through interrelated interpretive instruments and social mechanisms.

Categories of excursion influence as an instrument of social programming in tourism

Category of influence	Description of influence
Strengthening of local cultural practices	Event-based and interpretive excursions activate local crafts, gastronomic traditions, cultural scripts, and modes of heritage representation, thereby contributing to their preservation and transmission to future generations.
Formation of the destination's cultural identity	Through the repeated interpretation of local symbols, practices, and narratives, excursions create and reinforce tourists' perceptions of the uniqueness and authenticity of place.
Role of communities and sustainable development	The involvement of local residents, artisans, cultural actors, and small-scale producers in excursion practices contributes to social cohesion, economic benefits, and the inclusion of the community in the tourism process.
Cultural tourism as a resource of social influence	Series of thematic excursions, event-based tours, and interpretive formats contribute to the long-term preservation of heritage, the development of intercultural dialogue, and the formation of visitors' values and behavioural patterns.

Source: compiled by the author

The study systematizes the principal instruments of social influence embedded in excursion activity and proposes a five-stage model of the social-programming influence of the excursion, which explains the transition of tourist experience from cognitive perception to the potential transformation of behavioural orientations. It is also demonstrated that the influence of excursions extends beyond the boundaries of individual experience and encompasses broader sociocultural processes, including heritage preservation, the reproduction of local practices, the support of cultural identity, the strengthening of community roles, and the formation of sustainable development patterns. These findings indicate that excursions may also contribute to destination development by reinforcing local cultural identity, supporting community participation, and fostering socially and culturally sustainable forms of tourism development. Accordingly, excursions may be regarded as a key instrument of sociocultural regulation, meaning-making, behavioural orientation, and destination development in contemporary tourism.

Future research should focus on examining the cross-cultural effectiveness of social programming and assessing the behavioural effects of excursions in different tourism contexts.

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Kateryna Vovk, PhD in Tourism, Associate Professor at the Department of Entrepreneurship, Trade and Tourism Business, Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics. **Excursions as a tool of social programming in tourism.**

This article conceptualizes excursions as a tool of social programming that shapes tourists' knowledge, values, normative perceptions, and behavioural orientations. Drawing on social constructionism, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, social learning theory, and interpretive approaches in tourism studies, it examines the mechanisms through which excursions influence tourist behaviour and destination development. The findings indicate that excursions function as structured guided experiences in which interpretive narratives, symbolic coding of space, group interaction, and participation scripting shape socially legitimized patterns of perception and behaviour. The article proposes a typology of social programming within excursion experience, encompassing normative, behavioural, cognitive, emotional, symbolic, ritual, and discursive forms of influence. It also adapts a five-stage sequence of social-programming influence to the excursion context, spanning cognitive framing, emotional engagement, value internalization, behavioural intention, and sustained post-tour impact. The study demonstrates that excursions may serve as a mechanism of soft social influence and offers practical implications for designing excursion products that foster responsible tourist behaviour, strengthen local cultural identity, enhance community participation, and support sustainable destination development.

Key words: excursion; tourism; tourist behaviour; social programming; social norms; destination cultural identity; sustainable development.

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Вовк Катерина Михайлівна, доктор філософії з туризму, доцент кафедри підприємництва, торгівлі та туристичного бізнесу, Харківський національний економічний університет імені Семена Кузнеця. **Екскурсія як інструмент соціального програмування в туризмі.**

У статті обґрунтовано доцільність розгляду екскурсії не лише як форми пізнавального або рекреаційного туристичного досвіду, а як інструменту соціального програмування, здатного впливати на знання, цінності, нормативні уявлення та поведінкові орієнтації туристів. Теоретичною основою дослідження виступили підходи соціального конструкціонізму, теорії запланованої поведінки, соціального навчання, а також сучасні інтерпретаційні та поведінкові моделі у туризмознавстві. Метою статті є визначення механізмів соціального програмування в екскурсійній діяльності та оцінка їхнього впливу на поведінку туристів і розвиток дестинацій. Використано методи аналізу наукових джерел, систематизації, порівняльного аналізу, контент-аналізу екскурсійних практик та узагальнення емпіричних кейсів. Визначено, що екскурсія функціонує як структурований супроводжуваний досвід, у межах якого через інтерпретаційні наративи, символічне кодування простору, групову взаємодію та сценаризацію участі відбувається формування соціально схвалюваних моделей сприйняття і поведінки. В роботі запропоновано типологію соціального програмування в структурі

екскурсійного досвіду, що охоплює нормативний, поведінковий, когнітивний, емоційний, символічний, ритуальний і дискурсивний типи впливу. Також у межах дослідження адаптовано до екскурсійного контексту п'ятиетапну логіку соціально-програмувального впливу, що охоплює когнітивне структурування, емоційне залучення, ціннісну інтеріоризацію, формування поведінкових намірів і тривалий посттуристичний ефект. Доведено, що екскурсії можуть виступати механізмом м'якого соціального впливу, який реалізується не через прямий контроль, а через інтерпретацію, емоційне посередництво, символічне структурування простору та нормалізацію певних способів взаємодії з дестинацією. Практична значущість дослідження полягає у можливості використання його результатів для проектування екскурсійних продуктів, орієнтованих на формування відповідальної туристичної поведінки, підтримку локальної культурної ідентичності, посилення ролі громад та забезпечення сталого розвитку дестинацій.

Ключові слова: екскурсія, туризм, туристична поведінка, соціальне програмування, соціальні норми, культурна ідентичність дестинації, сталий розвиток.