

Perceptions of Istanbul among Tourists from Bulgaria

Magdalena Elchinova

(Summary)

The author discusses the results from a fieldwork study of the knowledge and views of Istanbul among tourists from Bulgaria. The study is based on interviews with people between the ages of 21 and 50, university graduates or students, representatives of the so-called mass-tourists. Several factors that have determined the formation of the perceptions of the Turkish megalopolis are pointed out – historical and ideological influences, media, the Internet, advertisement, soap operas, accounts by friends and relatives, personal experience. Despite the individual variations, there are many similarities in these perceptions, determined by the shared tourist experience from the standardized organized trips, as well as by the shared stereotypes about Turkey and the Turks, shaped by national myths, historiographies and dominant ideologies and circulating in everyday life. It has been found out that immediate experience takes prevalence over the stereotypical notions, often leading to their fading-away or rejection by individuals. What immediately stands out in Bulgarian tourists' opinions of Istanbul is the relation with the present-day, the modern and dynamic nature of the megacity, the culture contrasts and the amalgamation between the familiar and the unfamiliar.

Keywords: Istanbul; Bulgarian tourists; fieldwork; tourism; images; stereotypes

Magdalena Elchinova
New Bulgarian University
Montevideo St., 21
1618 Sofia BULGARIA
melchinova@nbu.bg