

## Original research papers

# FESTIVAL TOURISM OF FOLK GROUP DANCERS FROM SELECTED COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD

MARCIN BOCHENEK

*The Josef Pilsudski University of Physical Education in Warsaw,  
Faculty of Physical Education and Sport in Białą Podlaska, Department of Tourism*

Mailing address: Marcin Bochenek, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport,  
2 Akademicka Street, 21-500 Białą Podlaska,  
tel.: +48 83 3428724, fax: +48 83 3428800, e-mail: marcin.bochenek@awf-bp.edu.pl

### Abstract

**Introduction.** Artistic trips and tourism are inseparable parts of the activity of folk groups associated in CIOFF®<sup>1</sup>. Folk festivals organised around the world give folk groups a chance to learn about traditions and customs and to come into close contact with indigenous people. The correlation between tourism and activity of folk groups is visible mainly with regard to selected forms of cognitive tourism. The aim of the work was to present the destinations and frequency of artistic trips of CIOFF® folk groups from selected countries of the world. Trips to dance festivals abroad and their connection with heritage tourism were analysed. **Material and methods.** The study with the use of a diagnostic poll including a questionnaire, interview and document analysis was carried out in July and August 2010. 243 dancers and 16 instructors-choreographers of dance groups from 12 randomly selected countries of the world participated in the study. **Results and conclusions.** Folk festivals under the auspices of CIOFF® are organised on all the continents. Artistic trips of folk groups from 12 selected countries were most frequently organised on the “old continent”. A small percentage of dancers from European countries had an opportunity to participate in festivals outside Europe. Artistic trips of the groups were connected with heritage tourism, while travelling became one of the reasons for participating in folk dance classes.

**Key words:** cultural tourism, festival tourism, folklore, dance

### Introduction

Folk music, dance, festivals and concerts are the reasons and the basis for organising numerous trips. Selected areas of the world which offer cultural heritage, festivals, events, unique music and dance are becoming much more attractive and give a possibility to lengthen the tourist season.

The combination of culture and tourism with a proper use of both of these factors may be an attractive product; however, there must occur a close cooperation between the organisers in two sectors, i.e. culture and tourism [1].

Tourism is an element that has become an inseparable part of the activity of folk groups. Foreign trips combined with artistic performances are basic elements of this activity. The presentation of culture, customs, traditions, dance and music from one's own region and country is the reason for organising numerous trips to distant areas of the world. Artistic trips provide a possibility to gain new experiences, get to know cultures and attractive places and are a perfect way to integrate and create bonds in a social group. Apart from numerous performances, folk groups frequently make use of tourist and sightseeing programmes, and each trip is prepared in accordance with the guidelines for organising trips and tourist events.

The correlation between tourism and activity of folk groups is visible mainly with regard to selected forms of cognitive

tourism, such as cultural tourism, festival tourism and ethnic tourism.

Folk festivals organised around the world give folk groups a chance to learn about traditions and customs and to come into close contact with indigenous people. Artistic tourism may include elements of ethnic tourism perceived as a human desire to see how others live in their natural surroundings. Organising festivals around the world is connected with receiving foreign guests in the environment that has not been changed for tourism reasons. Very often members of the invited groups do not stay at hotels or guest houses but with families of dancers from their host country. This way of travelling allows them to explore customs of foreign cultures fully. In numerous cases the relations with ethnic tourism of sentimental character may be found. Folk groups present music and dance as well as folk art and customs in an unchanged stylized manner and through this they become a source of memories and experiences for many emigrants, which serve as a reason for travelling.

The activities of folk groups around the world, as well as the organisation of folk festivals and events connected with folk art are coordinated by CIOFF® Conseil International des Organisations de Festivals de Folklore et d'Art Traditionnels.

CIOFF® – International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts was created in 1970 in Paris as an initiative of 9 member countries (Belgium, France, Hungary, the

<sup>1</sup> Conseil International des Organisations de Festivals de Folklore et d'Art Traditionnels – International Council of Organizations of Folklore Festivals and Folk Arts

**Table 1.** CIOFF® festival activity in the years 2007-2011

Year	International festivals	National festivals	Foreign groups	National groups	Participants	Spectators
2011	260	61	1 668	3 170	125 925	10 263 419
2010	271	77	1 561	3 647	132 576	10 774 102
2009	245	52	1 466	3 107	161 879	9 604 170
2008	263	47	1 695	2 904	123 524	9 159 892
2007	223	54	1 430	254	110 724	7 569 662

Source: CIOFF® Annual Report 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). The organisation includes 72 national sections and 18 associated sections. Since the beginning of its existence CIOFF® is a member of UNESCO as an official non-governmental consulting organisation [2, 3, 4].

### Study aim

Folklore, customs and traditions are one of the distinguishing features of regional and national identity in the era of globalisation. They also become a tourist product and provide millions of people around the world with reasons for artistic trips. The aim of the study was to present destinations and frequency of artistic trips of members of folk groups from selected countries of the world and reasons for participating in dance classes. The analysis included International Folk Festivals CIOFF as the background for foreign trips of dancers from selected groups, their range and correlation with heritage tourism.

### Material and methods

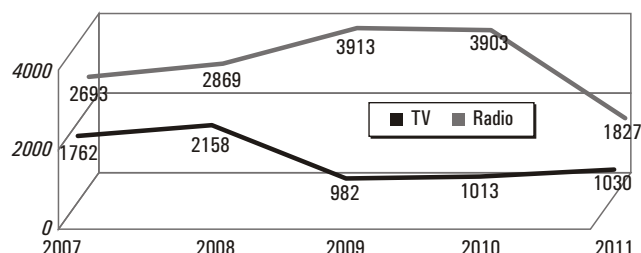
The study with the use of a diagnostic poll including a questionnaire, interview and document analysis was carried out in July and August 2010 during the International Folk Festivals with the consent of the Polish Section of CIOFF®. 243 dancers and 16 instructors-choreographers of dance groups from 12 randomly selected countries of the world, i.e. Poland, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Croatia, Serbia, Greece, Turkey, Kenya, Paraguay, Mexico and Costa Rica, participated in the study. The questionnaire and interview were prepared in 6 languages: Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, English, Spanish and French.

### Results

Folk festivals under the auspices of CIOFF® are organised on all continents. They provide many opportunities to travel both in the country and abroad (Tab. 1).

Festivals and events under the auspices of CIOFF are popularised through mass media, mainly through television, radio and the press. Information concerning cultural events are presented on a large scale both before and after the festivals (Fig. 1).

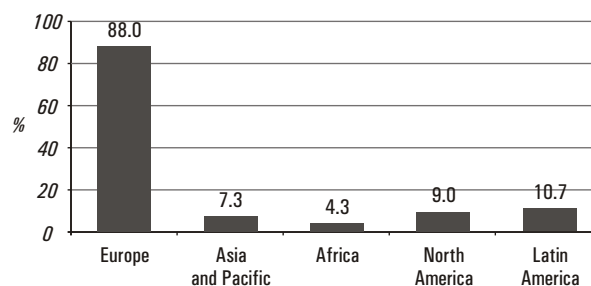
The analysis of the results in light of CIOFF activity made it possible to distinguish the most popular tourist destinations of the selected folk groups.



Source: CIOFF® Annual Report 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

**Figure 1.** The popularisation of CIOFF folk festivals on TV and in radio broadcasts in the years 2007-2011

Dancers from the selected countries participating in festivals and cultural events in 2010 travelled most often within Europe (88.0%). Significantly fewer trips were made to Latin America (10.7%), North America (9%) and Asia and Pacific countries (7.3%). The lowest percentage of the subjects (4.3%) participated in festivals organised in Africa (Fig. 2).

**Figure 2.** Destinations of artistic trips of dancers participating in CIOFF folk festivals /N=234/

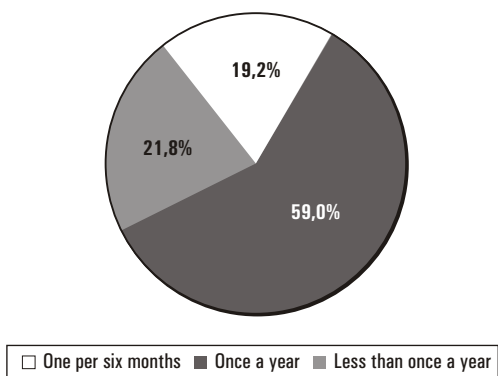
The most trips to all regions of the world were made by dancers from Costa Rica. The highest percentage of them participated in festivals organised in Europe (80.6%), North America (45.2%) and Latin America (32.3%). 25.8% of the subjects travelled to Asia, while 3.2% visited Africa. The examined dancers from folk groups in Russia went mainly to European festivals (97.5%). A low percentage of Russian respondents (2.5%) participated in concerts in Asia, North America and Africa. Cultural events on three continents were attended by dancers from Kenya, Mexico, Paraguay and Croatia. European festivals were attended by dancers from these countries most frequently, i.e. by 100% of the dancers from Mexico, 91.3% from Croatia, 77.7% from Kenya and 56.3% from Paraguay. Subjects from Belarus, Ukraine and Serbia participated only in festivals

organised in Europe, while dancers from Poland, Greece and Turkey travelled to two continents (Tab. 2).

**Table 2.** Destinations of artistic trips of folk group members from selected countries participating in CIOFF festivals in 2010 [%]

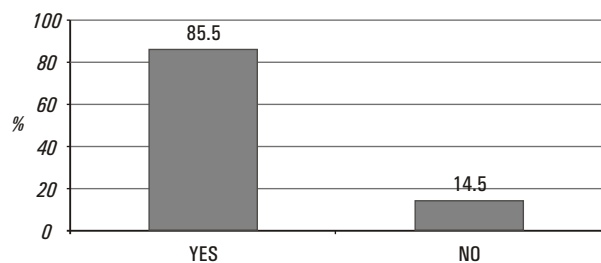
Countries /N=234/	Europe	Asia and Pacific	Africa	North America	Latin America
Kenya	77.7	11.1	55.5	-	-
Belarus	100	-	-	-	-
<b>Costa Rica</b>	<b>80.6</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>45.2</b>	<b>32.2</b>
Paraguay	56.3	12.5	-	-	43.8
Greece	93.1	-	3.4	-	-
Poland	100	-	7.7	-	-
Turkey	60	5	-	-	-
Croatia	91.3	13.1	4.3	-	-
Serbia	100	-	-	-	-
Mexico	100	-	-	100	66.6
Russia	97.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	-
Ukraine	100	-	-	-	-

The biggest group of subjects (59%) participated in folk festivals once a year. 21.8% of the dancers travelled with their groups to folk festivals less than once a year, while the lowest percentage (19.2%) of the respondents participated in such events once per six months (Fig. 3).



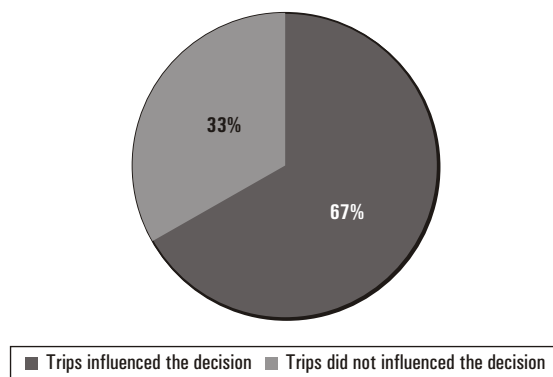
**Figure 3.** The frequency of trips made by CIOFF® folk group dancers /N=234/

A large group of subjects (85.5%) claimed that during trips to international festivals a tourist and heritage programme was realised and apart from concerts, meetings and workshops there was time for sightseeing and visiting new places (Fig. 4).



**Figure 4.** Participation in festivals connected with tourist and heritage programme /N=234/

According to dancers, the possibility to travel and visit various parts of the world is an important element of folklore activity. When joining a folk group 66.7% of the respondents took into consideration trips to festivals abroad and were aware of the fact that they are connected with getting to know new cultures and customs (Fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** Trips abroad as a reason for joining a folk group

Over half of the subjects took up folk dance classes because of their fondness of this form of activity. According to 47% of the respondents dance classes make it possible to get to know folk culture and customs. An important reason for joining a folk group is the participation in concerts and festivals (38.9%) and social life (33.8%).

The main reason for a group of 28.2% of the respondents is the possibility to participate in foreign trips organised by the group (Tab. 3).

**Table 3.** The main reasons for the respondents' participation in dance classes

Reasons for the participation in folk dance classes	N=243	%
Fondness of dance	138	59
Getting to know folk culture and customs	110	47
Participation in concerts and festivals	91	38.9
Possibility to meet new people	79	33.8
<b>Chance to participate in foreign trips of the group</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>28.2</b>
Conviction of the attractiveness of this form of physical activity	37	15.8
Persuasion of acquaintances, friends and relatives	36	15.4
Willingness to improve dance skills	27	11.5
Coincidence	11	4.7
Other reasons	10	4.3
Colourful and attractive costumes	9	3.8

\* it does not add to 100% since the respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer

## Discussion

Apart from providing physical activity, developing knowledge, promoting folk culture and customs, folk dance gives a chance to get to know new places and is closely connected with such forms of heritage tourism as cultural tourism, ethnic tourism or festival tourism.

The issues analysed in this study have not been the subject of thorough analyses of other authors. In literature not much

space is devoted to the aspects of folk dance and music with regard to tourism; however, there are studies which present the meaning of folklore in selected forms of heritage tourism.

Folklore is present in selected tourist offers and it may be the main factor generating tourist movement or an element of the complementary offer for mass tourism or rural tourism [5]. Folk dance as cultural heritage may be one of the products of the so-called regional tourism. Polish literature includes studies on folklore from Łowicz region and its cultural potential with regard to tourism [6].

In numerous regions local action groups and institutions try to combine tourism and selected paths with folk art, disappearing professions, handicraft, customs and traditions. These offers also highlight dance, mainly during festivals, folk concerts and particular events [7].

In a different context, dance combined with tourism may constitute a significant source of sustainable income for the local inhabitants. This form is an excellent way of passing traditions to younger generations and attracting tourists or generating income. It can be observed among the inhabitants of the Amazon region in Peru, who present folk dance and handicraft trying to attract tourists in unique and less visited regions [8].

Dance offer connected with tourism is visible mainly in Andalusia – flamenco dance is perceived by a foreign tourist as a value typical of the whole country. It spread from Seville, regarded as one of the main places of origin of this dance, to other places which also present this art because of tourists' needs [5]. A similar correlation with tourism may be observed in the case of Argentinian tango, which is an attractive tourist product and a big group of tango enthusiasts choose Buenos Aires as their major tourist destination.

Dance being part of a performance of local or foreign folklore may be an element attracting large groups of participants as well as spectators, as presented in the CIOFF report 2007-2011. In the literature of the subject, the issues of the so-called event offer are more and more common. Due to a growing number of various cultural events, tourist mobility is also increasing. Numerous festivals presenting such aspects as music, film, theatre, literature, multimedia, new technologies, visual arts, etc. appear both in Poland and abroad. They constitute a basis and the reason for travelling for many enthusiasts of such cultural events. When asked about the reason for their visit in a particular place, tourists themselves mention the participation in a particular event [9]. High-rank festivals and cultural events may also serve as a basis in development strategies of selected regions and towns [10]. Event tourism is developed on a global scale in electronic dance music which attracts millions of participants around the world [11].

Cultural events presenting folklore and in some cases also connected with dance are visible. They include Spanish fiestas, i.e. local holidays of the inhabitants of various regions of the country, which are becoming more and more attractive for tourists [5, 12].

The combination of tourism and dance folklore in terms of travelling and participation in festivals with a proper flow and programme offer may be compared to the so-called event tourism in the form of theatre festivals and theatre play premieres as they require a proper reflection on the correlation between cultural policies, models of culture management and cultural tourism [13].

The combination of these two issues discussed in this work as well as the analysis of the influence and correlations may be an interesting research phenomenon. This fact is definitely strengthened by the phenomena occurring in the presented folk organisation, i.e. CIOFF®, which is present in nearly 90 countries of the world, various nationalities and cultures. This organisation conducts “a controlled flow of tourists-dancers” to concerts, workshops and other folk events in various parts of the

world. As a result of this type of activity, cultural heritage is protected and regional identity is highlighted. There exist selected elements of culture such as music, handicraft, disappearing professions, etc. which are unique and are worth presenting and passing from generation to generation [1]. The chance to show this heritage to broad audience is connected with the organisation of festivals, fairs, shows, etc., which, combined with tourism and migration of those interested, are becoming an attraction both for tourists and for indigenous people.

Tourism, which is closely connected with sightseeing should additionally complement and cooperate with the sector of culture for the good of the two fields discussed [1, 14]. Traditional and folk dance and music are becoming a reason for undertaking activity in the field of cultural tourism [15].

## Conclusions

Artistic trips of folk groups from 12 selected countries were most frequently organised on the “old continent”. However, only a small percentage of dancers had an opportunity to participate in festivals outside their own continent, while the biggest group of subjects participated in folk festivals only once a year.

Artistic trips are connected with heritage tourism, while travelling became one of the reasons for participating in folk dance classes.

This topic may be a starting point for further discussion and defining broader correlations between tourism and folk dance.

## Literature

1. Krajnovic A., Gortan-Carlin I.P. (2007). Possibilities of music heritage tourist valorization – an example of Istria. *Tourism & Hospitality Management* 13(2), 469-482.
2. Filippou F., Goulimaris D., Mihaltsi M., Genti M. (2010). Dance and cultural tourism: the effect of demographic characteristics on foreigners' participation in traditional Greek dancing courses. *Studies in Physical Culture & Tourism* 17(1), 63-71.
3. International CIOFF (2006). The brochure compiled by CIOFF Working Group on Public Relations. CIOFF.
4. <http://www.cioff.org> CIOFF® (1997). Cultural Policy.
5. <http://www.cioff.org> CIOFF® (2008). Cultural Policy.
6. Widawski K. (2009) *The influence of folklore and traditional folk culture on the development of tourist movement on the example of Spain*. Wrocław: Wyd. Instytut Geografii i Rozwoju Regionalnego, Uniwersytet Wrocławski. [in Polish]
7. Jessa M., Wyszowska I. (2011) Characteristics and the meaning of Łowicz folklore in regional tourism. *Turystyka Kulturowa* 10, 13-45, [www.turystykakulturowa.org](http://www.turystykakulturowa.org). [in Polish]
8. Bochenek M. et al. (2008). *Selected aspects of culture of indigenous Bug river area inhabitants*. Biała Podlaska: Wyd. AWF ZWWF Biała Podlaska. [in Polish]
9. Ingles P. (2001). Performing traditional dances for modern tourists in the Amazon. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration* 1(3/4), 143-159.
10. Ratkowska P. (2010). About a festival in the context of cultural tourism – event tourism once again. *Turystyka Kulturowa* 6, 26-46, [www.turystykakulturowa.org](http://www.turystykakulturowa.org). [in Polish]
11. Popescu R.I., Corbos R.A. (2012). The role of festivals and cultural events in the strategic development of cities. Recommendations for urban areas in Romania. *Informatica Economica* 16(4), 19-28.

12. Świergiel S., Buczkowska K. (2009). Trips to electronic dance music events as a form of cultural event tourism. *Turystyka kulturowa* 5, 28-40, [www.turystykakulturowa.org](http://www.turystykakulturowa.org). [in Polish]
13. Buczkowska K., Majchrowicz E. (2010). Spanish fiestas – still local festivals or only tourist attractions? *Turystyka Kulturowa* 4, 17-37, [www.turystykakulturowa.org](http://www.turystykakulturowa.org). [in Polish]
14. Ćwikła M. (2012). Event tourism and new trends in preparing artistic programmes of festivals and theatre institutions. *Turystyka Kulturowa* 10, 5-17, [www.turystykakulturowa.org](http://www.turystykakulturowa.org). [in Polish]
15. Dunbar-Hall P. (2001). Culture, tourism and cultural tourism: boundaries and frontiers in performances of Balinese music and dance. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 22(2), 173-187.

Submitted: February 18, 2013

Accepted: June 6, 2013