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Modern Aspects of Cultural and Historical Heritage Involvement in Tourism Activities in Russia

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on problems and prospects of cultural tourism development in Russia. The results of overall research at national, regional and local levels and case studies held in several regions of Russia are presented. They confirm that Russia's huge cultural and historical heritage is still inefficiently used in tourism. In recent years the growing demand for cultural tours remains largely pending due to lack of modern tourist products and their insufficient promotion. The use of iconic and flagship attractions for increasing the destination attractiveness as well as culture-tourism interaction in regional development are being discussed. Currently, particular attention is paid to events based on cultural and historical sites. "National Calendar of Events" and national "Russian Event Award" are established to encourage event tourism growth. State policy in cultural tourism management in Russia is now changing mainly from the separate "growth points" development to the organization of interregional tourist routes based on diverse cultural heritage. Effective interaction of cultural heritage and tourism industry requires special measures and platforms based on the partnership of a vast number of stakeholders.

Keywords: Tourism; Cultural Heritage; Attractions; Events; State Regulation in Tourism

Статья посвящена проблемам и перспективам развития культурного туризма в России. Приводятся результаты общих исследований на национальном, региональном и местном уровне и конкретные примеры по нескольким регионам страны. Они подтверждают, что обширное культурно-историческое наследие

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России до сих пор слабо используется в туризме. В последние годы растущий спрос на культурно-познавательные программы остается отложенным из-за нехватки современных туристских продуктов и их недостаточного продвижения. Рассматривается использование культовых и флагманских достопримечательностей для увеличения привлекательности дестинаций, а также взаимодействие культуры и туризма в процессе регионального развития. В последнее время особое внимание уделяется событиям, основанным на использовании культурных и исторических объектов. Для развития событийного туризма создан «Национальный календарь событий» и национальная премия «Russian Event Award». Государственная политика в области культурно-познавательного туризма в России переходит от развития отдельных «точек роста» к созданию межрегиональных туристских маршрутов на основе разнообразных объектов культурного наследия. Для эффективного взаимодействия культуры и туризма предлагается создание специальных платформ и механизмов на основе партнерских отношений широкого круга заинтересованных сторон.

Keywords: Туризм; Культурное наследие; Достопримечательности; События; Государственное регулирование туризма

Introduction

Russia has huge cultural and historical heritage, which is of exceptional significance for the whole country with its multinational population and serves as an integral part of the world cultural heritage. According to the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation (www.mkrf.ru) there were more than 156 thousand cultural heritage sites in the country including 2,758 museums in 2015. The total number of exhibits in Russian museum funds reached 88 million. The growing interest in cultural heritage attracted 115.3 million visitors (+12% compared to 2014).

There are three levels of cultural heritage sites – of federal, regional and local importance – and three main categories – monuments, ensembles and attractive places. There are also specific forms of cultural heritage sites such as museum-reserves, Russian estates, churches and monasteries. Currently, there are 75 museum-reserves and 31 museum estates in Russia (Russian Research Institute for Cultural and Natural Heritage Report, 2014).

The World Economic Forum Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index 2015 ranks Russian Federation 45 among 141 countries. Although Russia ranks rather low on seeing tourism as a national priority (90th), its high scores on natural (4th) and cultural (10th) heritage sites show that tourism industry could potentially play a more important role in its economy. Cultural tourism forms the basis for domestic and inbound tourism in Russia. More than half of inbound flows and over 20% of domestic flows refer to cultural tourism (State Report, 2015).

Geographical distribution of cultural heritage is very uneven: the overwhelming number of cultural sites and museums is concentrated in the European part of Russia while the Asian part of the country stands for the unique natural heritage. There are 26 UNESCO World Heritage sites in Russia now and all the 16 cultural sites are in the European part of the country. The unique natural heritage sites are mainly in the remote parts of the Asian Russia. It's worth mentioning that several cultural heritage sites are already included in the World Heritage Tentative list and three of them are in the Asian Russia. In order to show its cultural diversity and to ensure its better protection Russia has joined the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention and now has two elements on the List – the Cultural Space and Oral Culture of the Semeiskie in Buryatia and the Olonkho, Yakut Heroic Epos – and both are in the Asian part of the country. Consequently, there is a tendency to put an end to the imbalance in the cultural heritage sites distribution in Russia.

Despite its diversity and affluence Russia's cultural and historical heritage is still inefficiently involved in tourism. The majority of cultural sites are not used in any type of tourism activities due to different reasons. The heritage sites of regional and local levels are mainly in bad condition and have financial support shortage. According to the Russian Institute of Natural and Cultural Heritage Report, 44% of museum buildings are in unsatisfactory condition and under the risk of destruction. Less than 1% of the state budget is spent annually for the heritage sites support. The experts admit that only about 6,000 cultural sites (about 4%) including churches and monasteries for pilgrimage are now open for tourists. It shows that the demand for cultural tours in

Russia, though growing, remains largely pending, mainly due to the lack of modern tourist products and their poor promotion. Nowadays the question of cultural and historical heritage involvement in tourism activities is particularly important for Russia. Despite problems and difficulties there are new positive trends in the cultural tourism development in the country.

1. Increasing the attractiveness of destinations through cultural resources

One of the main trends in modern Russian cultural life is the growing interest in museums that keep outstanding samples of artistic, historical and cultural heritage. Some of the most famous Russian art museums such as the Kremlin and the State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, the Hermitage and Russian Museum in Saint Petersburg are among Top-100 Most Visited Art Museums in the world (according to The Art Newspaper Special Report, 2014). In 2014, the Hermitage with 3.2 million visitors ranked 10th among the most visited European museums. In the same period the Louvre, the most visited art museum in the world, received 9.3 million visitors (TEA/AECOM Global Attractions Attendance Report, 2014). Russian museums-reserves such as Peterhof, Tsarskoe Selo, Kazan Kremlin, Vladimir and Suzdal, Pavlovsk are also visited by millions of tourists and visitors every year.

All the sites listed above can be considered as cult or iconic attractions of Russian capitals and their neighborhood. They are of outstanding cultural and historic value and serve as symbols or “visiting cards” of the country. That is why they are included in all tourist programs as people who come here want to see them every time, even during recurrent visits. The problems caused by this include their excessive loading, hence – overpricing and limiting the number of visitors.

Iconic attractions form the important part of cultural awareness of any society. They are similar to cult brands or legends, which are eventually surrounded by myths and mysteries. For example, Mount Fuji is the iconic attraction for Japan. The image of the mountain – the smoking volcano of accurate conical shape always covered with ice and at the same time a Shinto shrine – has been continuously used in Japanese literature and drawings and has become a well-known symbol of the country. The pearl of Indian architecture, the Taj Mahal tomb, can be given as another example of iconic attractions. The history of this masterpiece has strongly entangled facts and romantic legends about love frozen in snow-white marble.

The Eiffel Tower, the most famous symbol or the “visiting card” for Paris, has undergone several image transformations in public cultural awareness. From a symbol of technological innovations of the 19th century it has changed to a contemptuous “clumsy skeleton” and “a giant chimney” and finally became the charming “iron lady” of the 20th century. Now the Eiffel Tower is regarded to be the most visited paid attraction in the world with 7 million visitors, mainly foreigners, annually. More than 250 million visitors have come to this place since its opening in 1889 (www.tou Eiffel.paris).

To achieve the balance in destination development there is a need in another type of attractions – core or flagship attractions. This is not a scientific notion but it is used to emphasize the scale of the object and its role as a “focal point” of the destination. Flagship attractions form large tourist flows and, as a rule, are internationally renowned. They can serve as instruments for economic growth and revival and trigger processes of social transformation and rebranding of tourist destination. The London Eye in the United Kingdom, one of the largest ferris wheels in the world, or the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, located in one of the world’s most spectacular buildings in deconstructivism style, are typical examples of flagship attractions.

The Disneyland Paris is a flagship attraction in France. From the very beginning it was considered to be much more than a big theme park and, as a result, became one of the growth poles for the eastern part of Paris metropolitan area. The project realization contributed to the comprehensive development of the area. The public-private cooperation of the French government and the Walt Disney Corporation resulted in a truly new city of Marne-la-Vallée, near Paris. Disneyland Paris does not just attract tourists. The environment for successful business has been formed, which is becoming more demanding not only to operational conditions but also to the urban space quality. The park benefited for the revival of business and regional development, investment and population growth, employment and local economy diversification (Alexandrova & Sedinkina, 2011).

Flagship attractions have no historical value or authenticity. They are aimed at economic outcome. That is why they have a particular management strategy aimed at attracting the highest possible number of visitors. In contrast, iconic landmarks are not among the most visited places but they help to improve the destination image and to attract tourists. The difference between flagship and iconic attractions affects their management methods. Flagship sites can generate the economic growth through attracting considerable numbers of visitors while iconic attractions do not have to meet this requirement. It would be incorrect to think that there is a big gap between these types of attractions. Over time flagship attractions can change to the iconic ones; the transformation in the opposite direction is also possible under certain conditions.

In this context it is interesting to discuss the case of “Veliky Ustyug – Ded Moroz Homeland”, one of the most successful regional tourism development and branding projects in Russia in the last fifteen years. Founded in 1147, Veliky Ustyug is considered to be one of the oldest towns of the Russian North with great historical significance and original architectural appearance. The city has more than 150 cultural heritage sites of federal and regional levels, including the masterpieces of white-stone architecture such as the main Cathedral Square built in 17th-18th centuries, Archangel Michael Monastery of the second half of the 17th century, the earliest surviving monument of the local art school and one of the most impressive town churches – the Ascension Church (1648), and others. Many of the churches and monasteries are incorporated in the state historical, architectural and art museum-reserve.

Despite the fact that Veliky Ustyug is a historical town with particularly valuable cultural heritage, until recently it was deprived of tourists’ attention. In 1998, the tourist flow was about 3 thousand visitors. The town used to have only one travel agency. About 50 persons were employed in the local tourism industry (Vologda

Regional Tourism Committee Report, 2009). Due to the insufficient financial support many historical and cultural monuments of the town were in bad condition.

The project “Veliky Ustyug – Ded Moroz Homeland” (comparable to Santa Claus Village in Rovaniemi, Finland) started in 1998. It has largely increased the number of tourists in the town and considerably improved its socio-economic situation. Now this project has gained national appreciation and has become an important part of educational activities for children and families. From 1998 to 2014, the total tourist flow to Veliky Ustyug increased by 74 times. The town is gradually transforming into a modern destination for cultural, educational, event, social and business tourism. The case of Veliky Ustyug shows that tourism can act as a key factor of the social and economic progress in the depressed areas. It helps in creating new jobs, infrastructure and communications development and boosts the local production revival (see Alexandrova & Vladimirov, 2016). Modern technologies in tourism help to construct cultural tourism attractions in any area or settlement.

2. Principles, instruments and forms of culture-tourism interaction

The problems of interaction between culture and tourism are being discussed in many articles (e.g. Richards, 2007; Greffe et al., 2005) and documents of international organizations such as UNESCO, UNWTO, OECD, the European Commission on Tourism, ATLAS and others. The main international principles for culture and tourism interaction include the continuity of activities in the field of culture; the social activity development and local people contribution to tourism activities; culture and tourism interaction based on full-fledged local economy development; interconnection of activities in the field of culture and tourism to provide “cluster effect”; institutional capacity, availability of organizational structures to offer the necessary conditions for culture-tourism interaction.

Thus, international principles put the emphasis on the local level. The local context is of paramount importance for providing efficient interaction between culture and tourism. There are several examples of successful implementation of these principles in Russia, however, sporadic. The revival of Vyatskoe (old trade village in Yaroslavl region) as a tourist destination is one of the most prominent. The private initiative investment project attracts domestic and foreign tourists interested in rich history and culture of the Central Russia villages as well as in traditions and crafts of Yaroslavl region. The investments made by a local Yaroslavl collector allowed to purchase and restore 30 monuments of architecture, to establish ten museums, to build a hotel and a restaurant and to employ 100 local residents (Vladykina, 2016). As a result, the historical and cultural complex of Vyatskoe became the first member of Russia’s Most Beautiful Villages Association in 2015.

Culture and tourism represent complex social phenomena. It is necessary to set up special instruments and platforms for their effective interaction based on partner relations of all stakeholders. It is also important to realize the importance of culture not

only for enhancing tourist destination attractiveness but also for creating a comfortable environment for living, working and investing.

Cooperation between culture and tourism can be a complicated subject as different, sometimes conflicting issues such as market or public benefits, profit or nonprofit motivations and other factors drive them. It is often difficult for cultural institutions to get direct economic benefits from tourism development, as they are really insignificant in some cases.

Both cultural institutions and tourism enterprises are interested in attracting people. But while tourism business perceives tourists as consumers or customers, cultural institutions focus primarily on local community and its sustainability. However, these differences can be overcome if we regard tourists as part of cultural community.

It is vitally important to build up partner relations not only between cultural institutions and tourism industry but also to develop cooperation that turns the entire “state-business-society” system into a broad social partnership. For instance, regional partnership helps to reveal cultural and historical resources of the area and to present more vivid and vibrant tourist programs. Public administration and business community can work together to solve key social problems on mutually beneficial conditions. Organization of tourism and recreation clusters based on local cultural heritage resources can be presented as an example of joint projects in domestic tourism based on public-private partnership.

The project of tourism and recreation cluster “Nikola-Lenivets” can be discussed as an example. It is based on sustainable development concept, principles of culture and tourism integration and public-private partnership instruments for regional development. The cluster is located in the “Ugra” National Park and adjacent areas (Kaluga Region). Its mission has a broad formula – “to create a natural environment for living, leisure, work and creativity in harmony with nature” (www.kalugaturizm.ru). The cluster area is divided in several thematic areas: “Art Cluster Zvizzhi”, “Art Residence and Workshops”, “Education Cluster”, “Art Park”, “Festival Area”, “Landscape Experiments” and “Farm”. Thematic areas have different concepts and development strategies as well as special infrastructure. The cluster forms the largest art park in Europe with a 600-hectare area and introduces landscape installations by famous Russian and foreign artists. Starting from 2006 “Nikola-Lenivets” hosts “Archstoyanie” – an international festival of landscape objects.

The project became viable as a result of state and private investors partnership. In 2013-2018 it is planned to invest 1.5 billion rubles in the project: 20.5% are from federal and regional budgets and 79.5% from non-budgetary sources. The cluster development plans are to increase the tourist flow from 30 thousand in 2012 to 421 thousand in 2018 and to create 200 additional job places (www.kalugaturizm.ru).

The project of “Nikola-Lenivets” tourism and recreation cluster is ultimately aimed at establishing high quality living standards in this area. It is of key importance for the destination competitiveness. Studying the attractiveness of the place, it is important to pay attention not only to the reasons motivating people to come, but also to the reasons that force them to stay.

Culture and tourism interaction is carried out in different forms. Many tourists are attracted by projects that combine cultural heritage and event management. Since

2013 “National Event Calendar” project is being implemented in Russia. The project contains information about the most interesting and attractive events in all regions of Russia and acts as a social network where users can make lists of favorite events, post comments, photos and videos, share information with friends and do other things. In 2015, a special national “Russian Event Award” was established to encourage event tourism growth.

“The Circle of Light” Moscow International Festival (started in 2011) is annually recognized as the best cultural event of the year. During the festival front parts of prominent buildings, cultural monuments and other architectural sites in Moscow are used for 2D and 3D multimedia and light installations. Thousands of tourists as well as Moscow residents are attracted by the unique possibility to see famous cultural sites in a new amazing form.

It is necessary to point out the growing popularity of historical reconstructions, which are not only a form of heritage conservation but also an effective tool for attracting tourist. “Times and Epochs” (www.historyfest.ru) is a historical festival organized annually since 2011 in Kolomenskoye museum-reserve near the Church of the Ascension (1533), the UNESCO World Heritage site. The project has become a national cultural event and is included in Moscow Tourism Development Programme. The most important and interesting periods from ancient to modern history of Russia and other countries are chosen as themes for the festivals. About 50 thousand visitors came here in 2011. 300 thousand visitors (including 20 thousand foreign tourists) attended the festival in 2015.

In recent years a real boom of festivals happened in Moscow. The festivals held in the city can be attributed as life-style events as they combine music, cinema, fashion, food and other aspects of culture. It’s hardly probable that Moscow will host a massive music festival (like Primavera in Barcelona or Sziget in Budapest) in the future. But in general event and festival business in Moscow has grown considerably and continues to develop rapidly. The city tourism authorities and tourism industry have successfully converted these events into event tourism products.

Moscow cultural and heritage tourism achievements were awarded with the FIJET “La Pomme d’Or” in 2015. Moscow was marked as cultural and heritage tourism capital and the most dynamic tourism destination in this area.

3. State regulation of cultural tourism development in Russia

The gradual convergence of culture and tourism contributing to the increasing tourist attractiveness of countries and regions leads to essential changes in governing structures at national and regional levels. There are many countries where culture and tourism are supervised by a single management. Russia supports this trend. The state policy and normative legal regulation, public services and state property management in the field of tourism in the Russian Federation are attributed to the Ministry of Culture as a federal executive body. The Federal Agency for Tourism is included in its structure.

State tourism policy in Russia has not formed at once. At first, the law on special economic zones was adopted and a new type of regions, special economic zone of tourist and recreational type, with special benefits to their residents appeared. The second step was connected with the Federal Target Program “Development of Domestic Tourism in the Russian Federation (2011-2018)”. The program is aimed at the state support for new tourism infrastructure projects in the form of tourism and recreation clusters as well as for reconstruction of the existing projects. Consequently, new growth points in tourism industry appear in the regions. The next step in state support of tourism development in the country is to link the growth points together. The National Tourism Portal “Russia.Travel” (www.russia.travel) and the network of tourist information centers around the country with new tourist navigation system are organized.

The strategic direction for inbound and domestic tourism development in Russia is connected with transition from growth points to tourist routes. Russian tourism authorities have started a number of large-scale interregional tourist routes such as “The Great Silk Road”, “The Great Tea Road”, “Russian Mansions”, “Silver Necklace”, “Patterns of Russian Towns”, “Red Route”, “Eastern Ring of Russia” and others to promote national cultural heritage and historical places. The interregional tourist routes project will contribute to increasing cooperation between culture and tourism.

The National program of tourism development for children is aimed at presenting the cultural heritage and the national history to school children and students by means of tourist routes. The 2014 program included six cultural tourism routes for children and young people in six regions of Russia — “Moscow and The Golden Ring”, “My Russia: City of Peter”, “Yasnaya Polyana for Children” and “Peterhof for Children”, “Treasures of Ancient Kazan” and “Culture of the Crimea for Children”. 770 groups were arranged and more than 25 thousand school children from all regions of Russia took part in this cultural project (State Report, 2015).

The main problem of the state regulation in cultural tourism is to combine two opposite tendencies – the heritage conservation and the tourism development – in a way they go together instead of contradicting each other.

Conclusion

The key role of cultural assets in attracting tourists is evident. That is why close interaction between culture and tourism has become the most important condition for increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of tourist destinations in all parts of the country. Its tangible and intangible cultural heritage plays a particularly important role in authentic tourist product construction and maintains its distinctive national character. The loss of connection with the cultural environment leads to the destruction of a destination’s local identity. Tourism contributes to the preservation of the national cultural heritage and cultural development and helps to involve people in cultural practices, to give life experience, to reveal their creative potential and to bring up national feelings and social responsibility.

The role of tourism in culture and heritage preservation should be significantly strengthened. The active development of tourism through modern tourist products and technologies is an effective means for the revival and preservation of cultural and heritage sites. It should be carried out with the state support on the basis of a wide-range long-term strategy including the federal concept and special programs to support cultural, educational, event and other types of tourism in Russia. However, the current state efforts to maintain heritage sites in Russia are not enough. There is an imperative need for joining efforts of state authorities of different levels, business structures of various specializations and local communities with their informal approach and initiatives. As a result, the strong connection between culture and tourism will help the destinations to become more attractive for living, travelling, working and investment.

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