

TOURISM AND RECREATION: FUNDAMENTAL AND APPLIED RESEARCH IN RUSSIA

Starting in 2006, Moscow State University (Faculty of Geography), the Russian Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Tourism, the Russian International Academy of Tourism, and the Russian Union of Travel Industry have been conducting in Russia the annual international research and practice conference *"Tourism and recreation: fundamental and applied research."* The conference has been also supported by the Federation Council of Russia, the State Duma, the Ministry of Sports Tourism and Youth Affairs, Federal Agency for Tourism, and the Chamber of Commerce. A conference of such a high profile and the set of its members indicate the urgent need for scientific and human resources support of the rapidly developing tourism industry in Russia. Each year, the conference involves 150-200 participants from different regions of Russia, CIS, and the republics of the former Soviet Union. They are representatives of academic and university research fields, tourism industry, legislative and executive authorities of different levels, and undergraduate and graduate students. In total, the conference was attended by over 1000 people; nearly 700 reports were made at the plenary and breakout sessions and roundtables. All announced reports were published in the annual Proceedings of the International Research and Practice Conference; the conference resolutions were sent to the legislature and the executive governmental bodies for practical application.

The conference discussed the following research areas:

- theoretical and methodological foundations of studies of tourism and recreation;
- tourism and recreational potential and regional characteristics of tourism development;
- actual problems of recreation and tourism;
- crisis management of tourism;
- tourism market: state and forecast for development;
- problems and prospects of development of tourism and recreational systems (TRSs);
- safety and sustainable development of tourism and recreation;
- personnel training, continuous education, and skills development.

The development directions listed above point to a wide range of scientific issues that are important in Russia and abroad. Tourism has been declared the phenomenon of the XX century. In the beginning of the XXI century, it became actually one of the leading areas of socio-economic and cultural life of most countries. One can argue (and it has been the experience of many countries, including Russia) that tourism is becoming an essential part of the life support of human activities aimed at restoring and developing human physical, spiritual, and intellectual potential. One of the main tasks of the state and its legislative and executive bodies at all levels is the organization of recreation and tourism as the most important needs and standards of living in Russia. Tourism performs an essential preventive function associated with the human health and is one of the most steadily growing source of revenue for the state, making a significant contribution to sustainable development. In this case, we use the definition of sustainable development by N.S. Kasimov, and Yu.L. Mazurov, i.e., "the process of modernization of society based on the synthesis of traditions and environmentally friendly innovation."

Successful and sustainable tourism development is impossible without conducting basic and applied research on comprehensive investigation of recreational features of the territories. A sharply increased interest in

tourism and recreational development in the regions, the transition to the path of innovation development of economy, and other factors dictate the search for new theoretical and methodological approaches to the investigation and development of recreational areas and promote growth of tourism industry. Among a variety of scientific areas, we will consider only three topics studied in detail at the conference. These are the studies of territorial TRSs, of tourist and recreational clusters (TRCs) and mechanism of their formation, and of the system of professional training.

Russia, like many other world's countries, is actively integrating into the global tourism sphere. Countries and regions of the world differ markedly from each other in terms of tourism development. Due to the multidimensional economic ties and the flow of tourists, the world tourist community is making a transition from coexisting countries to a coherent complex and dynamically evolving system of global recreational space. This space combines national recreational space of the countries with different levels of tourism development. In Russia, already established centers of tourism activity exist along with semi-peripheral and peripheral regions with different levels of development of the tourism industry.

Every region should be studied by isolating TRSs of varying complexity and consisting of the territorial integration of holidaymakers, natural and cultural environment, utility and recreational facilities, personnel, and management systems.

Tourism and recreation studies should be conducted at the federal level and within regional and municipal boundaries. Given that the system of territorial management is confined to the boundaries of territories of administrative divisions, it is feasible to isolate three levels of TRSs corresponding to three levels of administrative division: municipal, regional, and federal. Within municipal boundaries, it is more effective to develop basic TRSs, consisting of compactly located tourism sights, recreation areas, and recreational enterprises. There may be several TRSs located usually within the

municipal administrative boundaries. In the case when a TRS is located within adjacent municipalities, there are often problems of its management as a single recreational entity. A combination of TRSs within the boundaries of a particular region forms its tourism and recreational specialization that, depending on the tourism potential and diversity of natural, cultural, and historical factors, can be of either a cross-sectional or of a mono-profile nature of development of different types of tourism and recreation.

Within selected boundaries, TRSs consist of interrelated tourism-recreational infrastructure elements. There are three types of infrastructure, specifically, areal, linear-nodal, and ethno-social. The areal type includes geological, geomorphological, landscape, ecological, residential, cultural, and historical elements. The linear-nodal type includes transport, energy, information, water and sewer (utility), etc. The ethno-social type consists of local residents and holidaymakers and it is the "living connective tissue" of the tourism-recreational territory. The types of specific elements of the tourism-recreation infrastructure and their combination determine the degree of difficulty of designing and developing of TRSs and the amount of required financial costs. For the design purposes, TRSs should be also categorized in terms of their development stages. As a rule, three states can be identified. The first stage is the most simple combination of tourism-recreation infrastructure elements, with the emphasis on the linear-nodal type. The final stage is characterized by the maximal saturation of TRSs with all necessary elements and their combinations, ensuring its effective functioning, and the largest influx of tourists. Creation of the TRSs would ultimately lead to employment growth, human welfare enhancement, and economic development, as well as to promotion of favorable conditions for development of tourism and recreation of Russian and foreign citizens. The ultimate goal of the recreational development is the creation of a unified TRS in the country, ensuring tourism and recreation needs of the population.

In thematic literature, territorial concentration within the production system have been

termed a *cluster*. According to M. Porter, a cluster is a group of geographically adjacent interconnected companies and related organizations operating in a certain area, sharing a common activity, and complementing each other. Geographical extent of a cluster can vary from one city or a state to a country or to even a number of neighboring countries. A cluster is formed by a special innovative environment that enhances competitiveness of its member firms and the prosperity of the region. M. Porter states that a cluster can be defined as a system of interconnected companies and institutions whose importance as a whole exceeds the sum of its parts. As practice shows, the cluster approach plays a crucial role in the formation and operation of tourism space and functioning of tourism centers. The essence of a *tourism- recreation cluster* (TRC) becomes apparent through the relationships of its member firms, which appear in the form of a value-added chain and a value accumulating system. In a TRC, partner companies receive a number of benefits from joint activities. These are reduction in risk and uncertainty, restriction of competition, dominance of the market, technological and organizational innovation, strengthening of the image, growth of quality tourism products, enhancement of conditions for effective marketing, synergetic effect, promotion of development of regional economies, etc. Competitive clusters are a pillar of sustainable regional development of tourism and of new recreational areas through the creation of the tourism product. TRCs are an integral part of the market economy. They are formed based on the market laws. The state, together with other interested entities, may act as one of the initiators of TRCs' formation, but it does not play the major role in their organization and functioning. In many countries, practice of creation of TRCs at national and local levels has been already established, as well as practice of development of thematic clusters (sports, adventure, culture, education, wine, etc.). At present, Russia is in the process of forming a number of regional and local clusters with the support of the Federal target program.

In our understanding, a TRC is a group of geographically adjacent and interconnected companies, non governmental organizations, and related government bodies, forming and serving the tourist flows and using the recreational potential of the territory.

The evolution of scientific ideas about TRCs indicates the necessity of rethinking the theoretical foundations of recreational geography. With growing human-components of recreational activities, TRCs should be viewed in terms of their geo-socio-economic system organization. TRCs represent a set of interacting elements functioning as separate organizations and enterprises of various ownerships that influence the development of the tourism-recreational industry and related industries in the region. They serve as a progressive form of territorial organization of the productive forces of the region and they are characterized by a set of technologically and economically interconnected enterprises concentrated within territorial boundaries that use this territory's resources and its common infrastructure. Therefore, a TRC includes a set of tourism and recreational businesses operating based on such infrastructure-forming structural components as the production, technology, resource, and infrastructure subsystems that interact through shared processes of tourism and recreation sector and provide the public with quality tourism and recreational services.

TRCs are based on the key tourism and recreational resources of the region. TRCs' participants, in addition to businesses and organizations that provide production and sales of tourism products and services, may also include administrative authorities, research institutes, educational institutions, professional associations, public representatives, etc. A TRC can be configured on a local (municipal) level as well as on regional and interregional levels.

Development of TRCs within a territory must go through several stages: starting from the initiative of business representatives, and

local residents through the formation of the management company, identification of the strategic development of the territory, the implementation of ongoing management, and monitoring and further development using principles of self-organization. The management company should operate as a separate legal entity using organizational principles of public-private partnership, i.e., the management company should include representatives from administrative bodies, business sector, and public organizations.

In general, successful implementation of TRC projects is only possible in the presence of coordinated and legislatively founded development strategy. It is ineffective to develop TRCs apart from the general concept of regional development, i.e., strategies of development of individual clusters and the regional development strategies should agree. Experience gained to date around the world shows that the cluster approach involves the development of various forms of public-private partnerships and implementation of program-target methods and requires efficiency of regional governance. In this case, the functioning of a cluster is ensured not only by individual areas with high tourism and recreational potential, but also by engaging the entire region in the cluster. This approach will provide for creation of multilevel system of regional clusters and for regional development of domestic and inbound tourism.

The federal target program “Development of Domestic Tourism and Inbound Tourism in the Russian Federation (2011–2016)” has been developed and adopted based on the cluster ideology. This opens up promising prospects for the tourism industry in our country. In the next five years, this sector will attract more than 300 billion rubles primarily through domestic and foreign investors and with the help of the federal and regional budgets. In Russia, there are unique situation and opportunity to create a unified TRS that would consist of TRCs of different levels and complexity and functioning on the principles of public-private partnership. This will allow addressing a wide range of important social and economic problems, including expanded

reproduction of labor resources, growth of employment and prosperity, improvement of quality of life of society, and insurance of social and cultural development.

Availability of highly-qualified human resources plays a key role in addition to scientific support in the development of the tourism industry. This implies creation, based on existing resources, of training and academic institutions, educational tourism industry enterprises, and scientific and industrial complexes designed to provide comprehensive training for professionals at all levels on a “turnkey” basis. The needs of the tourism market related to human resources include:

- the need for educational, scientific, and industrial complexes, linking educational process and sectoral science and practice, that would allow, in the course of the learning process, to develop work skills immediately at the workplace, to implement innovative technologies in education, and to improve instructor training;
- improvement of continuous professional education on the basis of short training courses, internships, workshops, and modular system for building training programs, as well as increase the number of programs for advanced training of human resources with primary and secondary professional education;
- close interaction of Russian and foreign educational institutions and training centers in sharing experiences and techniques of modern training technologies;
- creation of educational clusters encompassing all levels of education, the system of continuous education, and employers.

This is far from being a complete list of priority actions aimed at quality scientific and human resources support for a thriving tourism industry in Russia. Leading national and regional universities and academies that have skilled scientific and pedagogical resources should play a coordinating role in this process.

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ISSN 2071-9388

SOCIALLY SCIENTIFIC MAGAZINE "GEOGRAPHY, ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY"

No. 01(v. 04) 2011

FOUNDERS OF THE MAGAZINE: Faculty of Geography, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University and Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences

The magazine is published with financial support of the Russian Geographical Society.

The magazine is registered in Federal service on supervision of observance of the legislation in sphere of mass communications and protection of a cultural heritage. The certificate of registration: ПИ МФС77-29285, 2007, August 30.

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It is sent into print 17.03.2011
Order N gi111

Format 32 × 46 cm/2
55 p. sh.
Digital print
Circulation 300 ex.