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A SPOTLIGHT ON RUSSIAN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The presence of competitive, highly qualified personnel in the hospitality sector determines the success of the tourism industry. The quality of interaction between the tourist and the service staff, attention to the individual needs of a client, friendliness, and general atmosphere of hospitality forms the tourist's attitudes to a return visit, the development of the tourist attractiveness of the territory. The empirical base is represented by the questionnaires survey results of local authority heads of the Russian Federation. The study results showed that the lack of qualified personnel significantly limits the development of domestic tourism in Russia. The improvement of the industry staffing includes several areas: personnel training for service and tourism enterprises, as well as improving the skills of municipal employees on the development of tourist attractiveness for some territory. Training in tourism and hospitality should include such aspects as the research methods of expectations, interests and customer satisfaction by services; the development of strategic projects and programs that take into account the differentiated needs of both high-income and low-budget social groups; the specifics of cooperation, organizational interaction with key partners in order to meet customer need comprehensively; quality management of tourism services; hospitality innovation; promotion of tourism products and services; information technologies in hospitality.

Disciplinary: Tourism Management.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry plays one of the key roles in the economy of most states. Tourism provides revenue to local and regional budgets, the development of financial stability, the emergence of new jobs, and the development of related industries. The social functions of tourism are no less significant: socialization of an individual, familiarization with the cultural and historical heritage, leisure quality improvement, education and cultural experience expansion (Secondi, 2011).

A success of tourism business is determined by a number of parameters including the cultural and historical potential of a territory, the presence of tourist attraction objects, the quality of tourism infrastructure, and the effectiveness of marketing strategies (Frolova et al., 2017). However, among these parameters, the staffing of the industry is among the most significant. According to experts, the success of the Russian tourism industry is determined by the presence of competitive, professionally mobile, highly qualified experts trained at international standards (Brel et al., 2015). In the scientific literature, special attention is paid to the so-called “cumulative effect of hospitality”, which is interpreted as the quality of the interaction between tourists and the host (Pearce & Wu, 2015). Their interdependent, trusting relationships forms the space of “commercialized hospitality” focused on the client needs and interests.

The results of mass studies show that the satisfaction of a tourist, his orientation to a return visit is largely determined by the tourism program staffing: the host's attention, the guide's work, and after-sales service (Chan et al., 2015, Abili, 2019). Clarifying this position, Harrington et al. (2011) emphasizes that, in addition to the content of a tourism product, the drivers of positive experience were the level and speed of service, the friendliness of staff, and the general atmosphere of hospitality. It is interesting that the quality of service is directly dependent on the level of customer loyalty, directly forming his trust in the organization as a whole. Thus, the training of employees often becomes a key factor of tourism organization success. After-sales service of a quality tourist products, impeccable service and qualified employees develop the necessary reputation of tourism enterprises and services, and help to attract customers (Stadnichenko, 2011).

The modern model of professional personnel training in tourism should be based on the following principles: practical training, taking into account the requirements of world standards and the most successful international practices; implementation of a competency-based approach; focus on the needs of employers; provision of educational program variability, the possibility of path selection for the development of professional competencies; continuity and multi-level training programs (Mikhailova, 2011).

2. METHOD

In the process of working on the article, they used such data sources as information and analytical materials of federal, regional and local authorities, the results of statistical studies of the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation. The analysis of tourism and hospitality sector staffing problems is also based on the analytical conclusions presented in the Concept of the federal target program "The development of domestic and inbound tourism in the Russian Federation (2019 - 2025)."

The empirical base of the study is presented by the results of local authority head survey of the Russian Federation. This survey is conducted by the All-Russian Council of Local Self-Government by sending out questionnaires via e-mail with the participation of the authors. The questionnaire includes pools of questions characterizing the organizational, personnel, financial resources of Russian municipalities, problems and prospects for socio-economic development, also in the field of tourism and hospitality.

In addition, they used the results of the All-Russian Center survey for the Study of Public Opinion. These surveys cover 1600 respondents, the sample includes 45 regions, and 146 settlements. The study covers all federal districts. The signs of representation: settlement type, gender, age,

education. Home personal interviews were used as the method of interviewing.

3. RESULT

Tourism development in Russia is far behind the real possibilities of the country tourism potential. According to the results of the survey, the prestige of domestic tourist trips is significantly lower than their foreign counterparts, especially among highly profitable social groups. Among the respondents whose income exceeds \$250 per family member per month, the share of people who prefer overseas vacations is much higher (39%, which is 13 percentage points higher than average). Similarly, the respondents with a higher level of education (higher, incomplete higher) chose the option of foreign vacations more often (37%, which is 11 percentage points higher than the average). As for trips with the purpose of cultural and educational tourism in the Russian Federation, the demand here is much lower than that of the options for "beach holidays". Thus, in modern conditions, there is a certain contradiction between the high tourism potential of the Russian territories and the lack of Russian tourist offer demand among the population, the low level of competitiveness and prestige of tourism products, primarily among social groups with a high level of income and education. Figure 1 shows tourism word clouds.



Figure 1: Tourism word clouds.

The most important factor of tourism development in the Russian Federation is the effective functioning of the tourist infrastructure. The quality of hospitality services is determined both by the material and technical base, and by the characteristics of human capital. As for infrastructure resources, the analysis of statistical data shows a high level of quantitative indicator increment. So, the number of hotels and similar accommodation facilities has doubled (6774 in 2008 and 9855 in 2013) (Frolova, 2016). At that, the number of tourist infrastructure facilities that provides specialized offers of tourist services to various social groups is being reduced. In particular, the negative dynamics is characteristic of the number of sanatoriums and boarding houses with treatment; the number of health facilities for children has been decreased also. These trends illustrate the strengthening of a standardized, averaged approach to the consumer of tourism products, and the reduction of differentiated offers of tourism services.

3.1 SURVEY RESULT

The results of a population survey illustrate the problems of tourist infrastructure development. For example, when they answered the question “What are attractive factors for you to rest in Russia as compared to vacation abroad?” none of the respondents chose the answer “the quality of tourist services and comfort”, which indirectly indicates the main disadvantage of domestic tourism. The respondents from all regions ranked the quality of tourist services and the comfort of rest (20–56%) as the main factors for the attractiveness of vacation abroad. Modern tourists who are focused on gaining new experience and positive impressions from a trip are quite critical about the problems of service, and lack of attention to individual needs.

In addition, the hotel industry of the Russian Federation is characterized by a number of problems: the inadequacy of mid-range hotels, the moral and physical deterioration of hotel facilities, the low service level, and, most importantly, the shortage of qualified personnel (Frolova et al., 2016).

3.2 THE FEDERAL TARGET PROGRAM

The Concept of the federal target program “The development of domestic and inbound tourism in the Russian Federation (2019-2025)” emphasizes the insufficient quality of service in all sectors of the tourism industry that is associated with a lack of professional staff. This problem solution requires the improvement of methodological and software base of the industry-wide system for training and advanced training of tourism industry experts, and forming the asset of tutor support for the personnel of tourism infrastructure facilities (The concept of the federal target program).

3.3 NEEDING PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

The development of professional and effective staff is one of the most significant factors in the development of tourism. In recent years, acute personnel problems have accumulated in Russia, primarily due to the insufficient level of manager competence in the field of hospitality (Frolova, Kabanova, 2017), the lack of professional knowledge and skills among the managers operating in situations of high competition, risks and uncertainty.

The studies show that the outflow of qualified personnel is one of the most significant social constraints on hospitality service quality improvement. The outflow of personnel is associated with such circumstances as the seasonal nature of work (Matev & Assenova, 2012), and low wages, Figure 2. This problem is also relevant for Russia, where the remuneration of workers in the hospitality sector is much lower than in other industries.

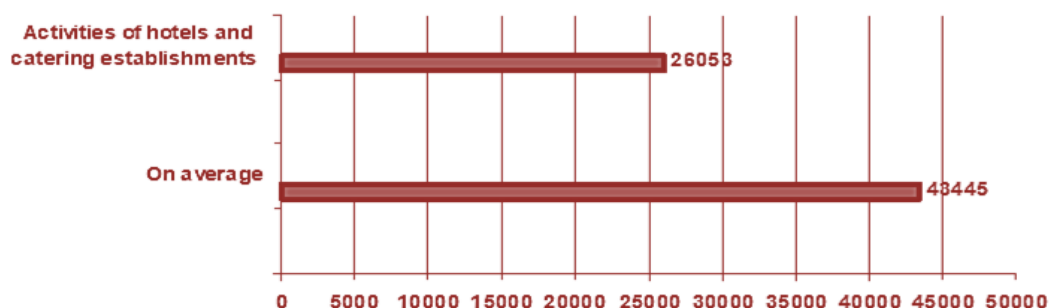


Figure 2: Comparison on average nominal accrued monthly wage among employees in hotel industries and the average from other sectors.

(Source: Russia in numbers - 2019, Federal State Statistics Service: http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b19_11/Main.htm (retrieved date: 20.07.19)).

This problem is aggravated by the exaggerated expectations of university graduates in the field of

tourism, who aspire to rapid promotion on the career ladder, and a high level of remuneration without experience. As the result of the emerging contradictions between the expectations of young professionals and the real situation on the labor market, tourism enterprises are constantly faced with the problem of staff turnover and the shortage of personnel with special education in the field of tourism and hospitality. About 70% of tourism industry employees do not have basic vocational education (Kushchev, 2012).

3.4 RUSSIAN TOURISM CONSTRAINS

According to the survey of local government heads in the Russian Federation, the lack of qualified personnel significantly limits the development of domestic tourism. The heads of municipalities note the poor quality of excursion services, the lack of qualified personnel capable of providing high-quality differentiated tourist services. According to experts, the tourist product of many Russian cities does not currently allow tourists to be held for more than one day. Excursion programs include the visits to cultural and historical sites for a fairly short period of time, after which tourists leave the city without staying overnight. These trends significantly reduce the profitability of tourism enterprises. Under these conditions, the municipalities of small cities bear only additional financial burden from the arrival of tourists, providing landscaping, garbage collection, etc. The low volume of sold tourism products, the reduction of the tourism market capacity on the territory does not allow to replenish the local budget due to additional tax revenues from service and tourism organizations. One of the problem solution mechanisms is to expand the range of tourist services, their differentiation, the increase of attractiveness for the mass tourist. The achievement of such complex tasks is not possible without the active participation of highly qualified personnel in the hospitality industry. The industry staffing improvement is necessary both at the organizational level (training of management companies in the service and tourism sectors) and at the administrative level (advanced training of municipal employees on tourism development issues). The overwhelming majority of the interrogated heads of municipalities (76.3%) noted that the holding of continuing education courses for municipal employees on the development of tourist attractiveness of the municipality is especially demanded in modern conditions (see Figure 3).

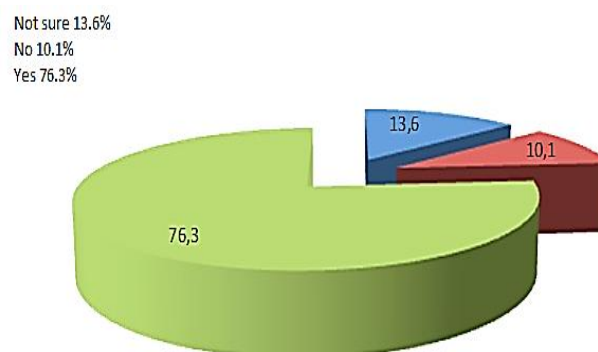


Figure 3: Distribution of answers to the following question: “Does it important to do continuing education courses for municipal employees on the development of tourist attractiveness in a municipality?”

4. DISCUSSION

In modern conditions of a high level of risk and uncertainty, a dynamic change in customer needs, the most popular are not universal management theories, but practice-oriented training based

on the analysis and exchange of experience, in-depth knowledge and research of specific problems (Kabanova, Vetrova, 2018). Practice-oriented training is one of the most important factors in staff professionalization. The main goal of this training is vocational training / retraining aimed at both theoretical and practical knowledge and skill improvement in accordance with modern market requirements. The content of practice-oriented programs in the field of hospitality should be developed taking into account the resources, specifics and possibilities of the corresponding service provision.

4.1 TOURISM EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT & RESEARCH

The factors for the effective development of professional competencies among future tourism professionals are the labor market monitoring, the research and accounting quality improvement and the integration of its results into the educational process, and the development of interactive forms of student learning.

The main areas of study may include

1. research methodology for expectations and level of customer satisfaction evaluation;
2. the development of strategic projects and programs that take into account the differentiated needs of both high-income and low-budget social groups;
3. The specifics of cooperation, organizational interaction with key partners in order to meet the needs of customers comprehensively (accommodation facilities - food industry - travel companies - the objects of tourist attraction - the objects of cultural and entertainment sphere);
4. the quality standards for the provision of tourist services in the low-cost class segment;
5. personnel management;
6. the management of tourism service quality;
7. financial management;
8. the promotion of tourism products and services;
9. hospitality innovations;
10. information technology in the field of hospitality and others.

4.2 KEY FUNCTIONS OF TOURISM MANAGERIAL PERSONNEL

In modern conditions, the manager's functional in the hospitality industry is not limited to traditional areas of activity, including staff selection, motivation and organization of activities. In conditions of a high level of competition, the key functions of managerial personnel in the tourism and hospitality sector should include:

- Analytical - the organization of research in order to analyze and evaluate the needs of customers and the degree of their expectation satisfaction.
- Marketing - image development, the development of advertising strategies.
- Organizational - the development and implementation of projects, strategies and programs for the development of the hospitality facility; maintaining the standards of service quality for both high-income and low-budget social groups.
- Regulatory - the regulation of business processes, selection and attraction of competitive employees, interaction with the Board of Directors, shareholders, etc.
- Coordination - the interaction with key partners in the field of tourism (accommodation facilities - food industry - travel companies - the objects of tourist attraction - the objects of cultural and entertainment sphere).

4.3 A BIG STEP FORWARD FOR HOSPITALITY SECTOR

The leaders of modern municipalities consider the development of the hospitality sector, the attraction of tourists as the main mechanisms to increase the financial security of local budgets, create new jobs, develop and modernize cultural, leisure and social infrastructure. Creation of a competitive tourism product is possible in the context of coordination of efforts of all interested entities, the attraction of highly qualified personnel, able to integrate research, marketing, and technological areas of work in their activities. Tourism networking is important (Klimova et al., 2019).

5. CONCLUSION

Russia has great potential for the development of domestic and inbound tourism. The tourist attractiveness of the Russian Federation provides an opportunity to develop almost any type of tourism. However, the high tourist and recreational potential and the rich cultural and historical heritage of Russia do not provide an appropriate level of development of domestic and inbound tourism. The main constraining factors restricting the influx of tourists are the lack of qualified personnel employed in the hospitality sector, the inadequacy of mid-range hotels, the moral and physical deterioration of tourist infrastructure, and the poor quality of service. The insufficient level of the Russian tourist product competitiveness actualizes the search of new trends for its improvement, modernization of training practices for the hospitality industry personnel corps.

The training of highly professional, competitive personnel in the field of hospitality, timely responding to new socio-economic and political challenges, focused on innovation in the field of tourism, taking into account the interests and needs of potential consumers is a key factor in the development of Russian tourism.

6. DATA AND MATERIALS AVAILABILITY

Information relevant to this study is available by contacting the corresponding author.

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