

Development of Tourism and Recreation Activities in Cross-Border Regions of Northwest Russia: General Trends and Features

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Abstract

This article considers the development of tourism and recreation activities in the cross-border regions of Northwest Russia and reveals general trends and features. Tourism is considered to be the current and future direction of social and economic development of the regions because of its attractive cross-border destinations. A number of measures are suggested to stimulate the development of tourism and recreation activities in the cross-border regions of the Northwest of Russia.

Keywords: Cross-Border Region, Neighboring State, Northwest Russia, Tourism and Recreation Activities, Tourism Infrastructure, Tourist Flow

1. Introduction

At the turn of the XX-XXI centuries, the nature of cooperation between Russia and its neighboring countries changed due to the transformation of the social and economic space of the state in terms of globalisation and integration processes in the world community. During this period in the Baltic Sea region, the processes on the restoration of the historical interaction between states, the construction and development of new economic dialogue and intercultural contacts, and the development of cross-border cooperation, including tourism and recreation, became more intense. The development of tourism and recreation activities is perceived and recognised as a long-term (and top-priority) direction for regional development at the level of the government, businesses, and society. The geographic location, and unique tourist and recreational potential of the border regions of Northwest Russia reveals opportunities for developing different types of tourism. This defines the comparative advantage of these areas in the development of tourist businesses, taking into account the best practices of foreign cross-border destinations. This paper aims to identify common trends

and patterns of development of tourism and recreation activities of border regions of Northwest Russia, which is one of the most promising and prioritised directions for the development of this region.

2. Materials and Methods

This study used the analysis of the conceptual and terminological system, an analog approach and a group of statistical techniques, including a method of regression analysis and the method of analysis of time series 1-17.

3. Results and Discussion

In this paper, the general trends and features of development of tourism and recreation activities are considered based on five cross-border regions of Northwest Russia that have access to the land border. Russia's longest border in the Northwest is the Finnish-Russian border. This border is 1325.8 km in length, has 10 road- and 5 railway-checkpoints and borders directly with the Republic of Karelia, Murmansk, and Leningrad

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regions. The Republic of Karelia has the longest border with the European Union (more than 700 km, Finland). The Leningrad and Pskov regions border with Estonia and is more than 460 km in length with 3 car-, 2 railway-, and 1 pedestrian- crossing points). On the border with Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, there are 4 road- and 2 railway- crossing points in operation. The shortest border is the Russian-Norwegian border (219.1 km, Murmansk region) 11.

Research of tourist business development in the border regions of the Northwest Russia shows a trend of rising tourism and recreation for the period 2009-2013 shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The dynamics of individual indicators of tourism and recreation activity in the cross-border regions of Northwest Russia in 2009-2013

№	Cross-border region	Hotels and similar accommodation facilities	Fee-based service, mln of rubles	
			Tourist services	Services of hotels and similar accommodation facilities
1	Murmansk region	increase of 6%	1,7 times increase	increase of 9%
2	Republic of Karelia	increase of 16%	1,3 times increase	1,4 times increase
3	Leningrad region	1,2 times increase	2 times increase	2,1 times increase
4	Pskov region	same	4,3 times increase	1,35 times increase
5	Kalinin-grad region	1,25 times increase	2 times increase	1,22 times increase

Well-developed tourism infrastructure that meets international standards is the basis for ensuring the provision of a wide range of competitive tourist services and attraction of tourist flows in terms of inter-regional and cross-country competition for investments, resources and tourists 14. The current level of development and the effective functioning of the regional tourism infrastructure largely determines the possibility of utilising the tourism potential of the area without harming the environment and, ultimately, the effectiveness of the development of regional tourism businesses7, 9, 12.

According to a survey, the level of tourism infrastructure of Northwest border regions (per 1 thousand people) is slightly above the Russian average

suggesting that there is potential for the development of tourism and recreation activities shown in Figure 1. The Kaliningrad region is an exception, where the level of the foodservice infrastructure development is below the average (8%).

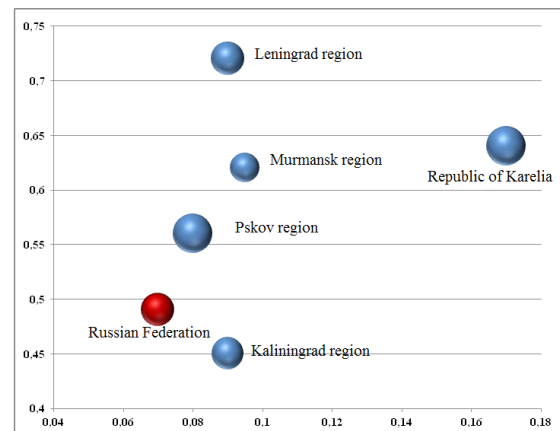


Figure 1. Distribution of the level of tourism infrastructure of Northwest Russia border regions, 2013: X [hotels and similar accommodation facilities per 1 thousand people]; Y [restaurants, cafes, bars per 1 thousand people]; Z [size of the ball, museums the Ministry of Culture of Russia per 1 thousand people].

However, it should be noted that their territorial differences of regional tourism infrastructure development, which is characterised by the high concentration of tourist infrastructure in the major centres, with the periphery regions decreasing in the number of facilities (e.g. accommodation, foodservice, entertainment and leisure). In many respects, this may fail to correspond to the tourist and recreational potential of the territories and, consequently, to the existing capacity and orientation of tourist flows. Therefore, it reduces the performance indicators of the tourism business and the regional economy as a whole.

The occupancy ratio of rooms in hotels and similar accommodation facilities on the border regions of Northwest Russia was an average of 0.33 during the period 2000-2013. This is due to the distinct seasonality of the regional tourism business. The main activity of the tourism enterprises of the Republic of Karelia is carried out during the summer season (May-September), with a small peak of activity during the New Year and Christmas holidays.

Considering the dynamics of tourist mobility, it

should be noted that inbound tourist traffic from the territory of neighbouring states is of certain importance for the development of international tourism in the border regions. If the volume of tourist traffic from neighbouring countries into the territory of Russia can be considered as insignificant in the total flow of incoming tourists in the country, it may be considerable for the cross-border regions (which often takes a large share). Also, the financial costs of travellers and social and economic effect resulting from the development of this area should be taken into account of economic activity (due to the multiplier effect, the diversification of the regional economy).

Research of international tourism development in the border regions of the Northwest Russia shows that there is a high dependence on the preferences of tourists from neighbouring countries and assumes some vulnerability of the tourism economic sector on market conditions, and opening opportunities for diversification of the tourist product offer at the same time shown in Table 2.

Figure 2. The combined share of border regions in the reception of tourists in the Northwestern Federal District and the Russian Federation on the whole in 2013, %

№	Neighboring Country	Northwestern Federal District	Russian Federation
1	Finland	80%	76%
2	Norway	56%	24%
3	Baltic States	25%	22%
4	Poland	20%	16%

The Republic of Karelia hosts the largest share of tourists from Finland (75% of the flow in the Northwestern Federal District, 2013), the Murmansk region hosts 56% of its tourists from Norway, the Kaliningrad region accepts 22% of its tourists from the Baltic States, and the Pskov region hosts 18% of its guests from Poland. These figures show that cross-bordering Northwest regions have the advantage over other destinations as it receives a high percentage of tourists from neighbouring countries. The regions with the highest dependency of tourism from neighbouring states are the Republic of Karelia and the Leningrad region, where all inbound flow of organised tourists is formed by Finnish tourists (99% for Karelia for the period 2008-2013 and 100% for Leningrad region, 2010-2013). More than 70% of tourists in the Kaliningrad region are tourists from Germany (2008-2013), which is explained by the specifics of the region's development in historical retrospective.

At the same time, outbound flow of Russian tourists to the neighbouring states sometimes exceed the inbound flow of foreign tourists to Russia. This reveals Russian destinations may be insufficient compared to other foreign destinations 4. For example, in the Russian-Norwegian direction in 2013, outbound flow was 10 times higher than inbound flow, outbound flow to Finland and the Baltic countries is higher in 7 times higher, and outbound flow to Poland was 2.6 times higher. The observed steady growth of outbound flow in 2005-2013 and actively pursued foreign states policy to attract Russian tourists in the coming years may be able to strengthen the tendency (for example, the experience of Poland and Finland).

Shopping tourism, which has much in common in different parts of the world, includes visits to make purchases abroad, and is marked as one of the areas of cross-border tourism 5,6,8. Shopping tourism is a general trend of tourism development for the border regions of Northwest Russia: the Kaliningrad region and Poland, the Leningrad region and the Republic of Karelia and Finland, and the Murmansk region and Norway. It should be emphasised that shopping tourism is primarily outbound with respect to Russian borders. The reasons for the negative balance of streams of shopping tourists, besides geographical proximity, are pricing, convenience of store operations, similarity of languages (Polish and Russian are similar to facilitate easy communication) or service in Russian (in the border towns in Finland, Norway), information and tourist literature and tourist sites in Russian, "tax free" systems in neighbouring regions, and so on¹. It is of particular importance to stimulate the development of this direction of tourism in the Agreement to allow local border movement between the Kaliningrad region in Russia and the northern provinces (voivodships) of Poland of 14.12.2011 (earlier agreement on visa-free regime, from the beginning of 90s to 2003) 10, 15.

Researchers specify that "nostalgic" tourism is one of the types or stages of cross-border tourism development 2. The peculiarity of the formation and development of tourism as an area of economic activity (in contrast to the understanding of tourism as recreational activities without significant economic benefit of the Soviet period) is the development of "nostalgic" tourism in the Republic of Karelia and the Kaliningrad region. The opening of the borders, visa facilitation, and the beginning of the international border crossing points operation has played

a positive role in the generation of tourist flows from abroad. The provision of services to “nostalgic” tourists laid the foundation of the modern tourist business in the region (i.e. Republic of Karelia - tourists from Finland, Kaliningrad region - tourists from Germany).

4. Conclusion

Based on the general trends of development of tourism and recreation activities in the border regions of the Northwest Russia and taking into account current and future economic development of this area, we can suggest a number of measures in order to facilitate the strengthening of the role of tourism in social and economic development. The spatial development of tourism, and the reduction of territorial differentiation of the tourist infrastructure is possible through an integrated approach that takes into account the interests of the government, businesses, and society, formation of competitive tourism and recreational clusters 3, 16 in the border regions. The focus of businesses only on shopping tourism poses risks of various changes, such as potential difficulties of crossing the state border. However, the focus on domestic demand and the needs of shopping tourists may be one of the most advantageous areas of commerce for the border region. Implementation of measures and programs aimed at the development of business and event tourism could prolong the tourist season by attracting flows in the off-season. The competitive advantage of border regions in the reception of tourists from neighbouring countries can be further enhanced through tourist product differentiation, and enhanced promotion of the region on the international market of tourist services. In addition, it is possible to combine the border regions of two or more neighbouring countries to build and offer “multi” tours. Inter-regional cooperation between Russian regions during the formation of the tourism product can be included in the multi-day tours to visit several areas may be of particular importance for the development of tourism in border regions.

Thus, certain general tendencies and features of tourism and recreation activities in the border regions of Northwest Russia show the prospect of this area for economic development. The proposed measures will ensure the increase of entrepreneurial activity in the tourism sector, increase the use of tourist and recreational

potential of the territories, and ensure a stimulating effect on the social and economic development of the regions.

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