Analysis of the potential for the development of tourism clusters in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation

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Arctic tourism research has become increasingly relevant in recent years due to the ever-increasing flow of tourists visiting the Arctic regions. This trend, in turn, generates a number of problems associated with the preservation of environmental sustainability of the natural environment, the interaction of tourists with indigenous peoples of the Arctic, with the creation of the necessary tourist infrastructure. These issues have become the object of study of scientists from different countries, first, as part of the consideration of the concept of sustainable tourism development. In this context, there are calls for more responsible and sustainable tourism development, which also benefits the local environment and its inhabitants within the economic and social sphere of sustainable development [1]. Models of sustainable tourism development have been widely discussed by researchers of sustainability principles. The most famous models have been investigated in the articles by S. Schubert, G. Schamel, T. Tyrrell, R. Johnston [1; 2]. These articles identified the most effective formats of sustainable tourism development, allowing to minimize environmental and ethnosocial damage to the Arctic regions.

In this study the authors considered another way to solve the problems of sustainable development of Arctic tourism - the formation of tourism clusters, which can become the most effective format for organizing Arctic tours.

The cluster approach to the organization of tourism has become an object of attention of many researchers in recent years. Thus, Gardiner S. and Scott N. argued that a tourism cluster is geographically concentrated enterprises with common interests, which allows them to combine their efforts to achieve advantages[3]. Lee Y.-J.A., Kim J. and Jang S. among the benefits that the participants of cluster association receive named, strengthening of innovation potential and emergence of various opportunities due to joint development of infrastructure and technologies, accumulation of knowledge, increase in demand and development of other "interconnections"[4]. Researchers of Arctic tourism development under the leadership of M.Y. Kalashnikova argued that clustering processes provide a basis for effective interaction between different actors producing tourist products - government, business, media, public organizations and local communities, which helps develop the tourist potential of the Arctic zone[5]. According to Loguntseva I. V, a separate strategy for tourism development in the Arctic zone of Russia is needed, with an important role played by the marketing component, aimed at the professional promotion of this region in domestic and international markets under a single brand[6].

However, in most studies devoted to the prospects of tourism development in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, the possibility of organizing tourism through the use of the cluster approach has not been considered in detail or has not been considered at all. This paper considers the main prerequisites for the application of cluster policy tools for the development of Arctic tourism in the Russian Federation. These prerequisites include extremely low population density, remoteness of tourist attractions from each other, high cost of tourist infrastructure creation, the complexity of tourist logistics, the need to create centers of attraction for different types of tourism (ecological, ethnographic, cognitive, etc.). The paper substantiates the possibility and necessity of creating integrated tourism products on the basis of tourism clusters that would attract visitors with different needs, maintain a year-round flow of tourists, solve the problem of logistics accessibility of tourist facilities and, thus, ensure profitable activities of cluster residents.

The methodology of the study is the analysis of websites of tourist firms and mystery shopper methodology to identify tourist attractions within the tourist routes, cartographic analysis of existing and potential tourist clusters in the Arctic, as well as the frequency of identification of tourist sites within the collected information.

In order to assess the density of the location of natural, cultural and other tourist attractions, the Arctic territories of nine regions of the Russian Federation were analyzed by a mapping
research method. By the method of secret client and analysis of tourist firms’ websites, a database
of tourist objects was formed, which were subsequently mapped using online mapping services
with the highlighting of the typology of tourist attractions. By means of the created maps in a
graphic way the potential territories for the formation of recommendations for the creation of new
tourist clusters were determined. Based on the proposals of tourist operators, a map of the
frequency of mention of tourist attractions in tourist routes was formed, which allows analyzing
the feasibility of creating a touristic cluster based on the criteria of cluster formation.

This methodology was approved in the development of the project to analyze the
development potential of tourism clusters in the Murmansk region and the Arctic territory of the
Republic of Karelia, carried out by order of the project office for the development of the Arctic.
The formed system of criteria that included territorial-spatial, organizational-structural and
administrative criteria allowed the authors to identify more than 15 potential clusters in the
territory of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation. The study collected information on more
than 500 tourist attractions located in the area and studied the existing programs for the
development of Arctic tourism in nine regions of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.

It is important to note that so far none of the territories of the Arctic zone of the Russian
Federation is included in the program for the development of special economic zones of tourist
and recreational type. The need for state support of the tourism industry in the regions of the Arctic
zone is due to the high threshold for entry of investors, low number of tourists and high cost of
tours. Investment attractiveness in such a situation is very insignificant for the sustainable
development of the industry. Therefore, it is the cluster approach that can increase the investment
attractiveness of the tourism industry in the Arctic zone, improve the socio-economic situation of
the regions and ensure the development of sustainable tourism.

Thus, the recommendations formed in this study are based on the systematization of tourist
attractions offered as part of tourist products, as the basis for the formation of existing and potential
tourist clusters.

The research results in the substantiation of further steps to form tourism clusters in the
study area for more comprehensive and effective use of natural, historical and cultural resources
available in these territories. The work also results in the substantiation of the need for various
formats of state support for cluster residents, which will accelerate the development of tourism in
the Arctic regions. It is advisable to consider the results obtained in the decision-making process
on the development of tourism in the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.

References