

TOURISM IN THE BLACK SEA REGION (PRICHERNOMORIE) THROUGH THE EYES OF TOURISTS AND LOCALS

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Abstract. The article provides the results of a sociological survey devoted to the regional characteristics of tourism development in the Black Sea Region. The study involving tourists, local residents, and workers engaged in the tourism sector was conducted in 2017.

Key words: Black Sea Region, sociological survey, tourists, locals, tourism infrastructure

In the framework of an annual remote fieldwork which was held on the Black Sea coast of the Krasnodar Territory, the students of the Department of Geography and International Tourism of St. Petersburg State University conducted several sociological surveys in order to determine characteristics of the organization of tourism in the region, assess its recreational potential and attractiveness, identify the factors affecting the development of tourism with the assistance of tourists and locals themselves [1].

Currently, great attention is being paid to the development of students' communicative and research competencies. Therefore, a crucial approach to conducting such surveys, from an academic point of view, was to develop and practice students' communication skills of talking with strangers, enhance their ability to establish contacts, converse, win the interlocutor over, obtain and analyze social information necessary for making adequate managerial decisions, i.e. to acquire a number of competencies required by the efficient tourism manager of today.

A survey was carried out in two settlements: the city of Tuapse and the village of Olginka. An age analysis showed that 30 percent of the respondents were people aged 55 and over, with the average age of the respondents being 40. A gender analysis of the respondents demonstrated a more active participation of women, who accounted for 77 percent of the respondents.

Almost all the survey participants came to the given region from various cities of Russia: Penza, Rostov-on-Don, Lipetsk, Moscow, Kostroma, Stavropol and others. Among the respondents there were occasional visitors from abroad. The sample size was 250 people.

Approximately 62% of the respondents estimate the level of tourism development in the region at above 4 points on a five-point scale; 38.5% of them assign a score of 3 points or lower to this indicator. Despite the data received, the majority of tourists (76.9%) are interested in the further development of tourism in the region, and 92.3% believe that at present, the tourism potential has not been fully implemented yet.

The main problems hampering the development of tourism infrastructure of the region are badly equipped beaches as there are not enough locker rooms, toilets, showers, smoking areas; poor transport communication between the destinations, generating long lines and many hours of traffic jams; seasonality of tourist flows. According to the respondents, in view of further development of tourism in the Krasnodar region, the government should firstly, equip the beaches properly, reduce prices in grocery stores, improve transport links between the cities, allocate the available loans and provide tax incentives to small businesses engaged in the tourism sector, as well as to attract more well-known tour operators and travel agencies to the region, making favorable arrangements for them.

As for the length of stay, it turned out that a significant part (85%) of the respondents came to the region for a period of 1 to 3 weeks, 15% - for less than a week. More than a half of the respondents use their own cars as they arrive from nearby regions and cities of Russia, such as Rostov Region, Rostov-on-Don, Lipetsk, Moscow, Stavropol, Moscow region, etc. According to the survey, 23% of the respondents come by train, 8% - by bus.



The main motivations stated by the respondents for choosing the region for a vacation trip are its proximity to their homes, affordable prices and no need for getting visas and international passports. Typically, the respondents do not actively use the provided excursion opportunities.

Responses to the survey questions regarding accommodation and food showed that about 62% of the respondents choose a private house or an apartment for temporary residence, 23% occupy recreation homes, and 6% stay in hotels. The above types of housing were assessed, as a rule, at 4 to 5 points on a five-point scale. Approximately 85% of the respondents have meals in down-market eateries with the average score of 4.4 points on a five-point scale, 8% of them can afford to dine in up-market eateries, the same number prefers cooking food themselves. The development of chain food stores makes life easier for both local residents and tourists who are accustomed to purchasing produce in similar stores in their own regions.

More than 60 percent of the surveyed tourists usually holiday in Russia, leaving their region for some other destination; 39 percent prefer to stay in their own regions. Of the surveyed holiday-makers, 54 percent come to the region once a year to stay the summer there; 23 percent of the respondents claim to visit this region for the first time. It is typical that the overwhelming majority of the respondents express their desire to spend their next vacation in the Krasnodar Territory.

A random sample of 250 respondents involved local people. The average age of the respondents was 25 to 30, 52% of the respondents were males. The majority of the surveyed had a permanent job: 19% of them worked as teachers in schools, 37% had jobs in tourism. 19% of the respondents did guiding, taking holiday-makers on tours around museums, along ecological paths, etc. 52% of the respondents had graduated from a college, 38% obtained a university degree.

When asked about their attitude to religion, more than a half of the respondents (67%) stated their belonging to the Christian faith. 19% of the respondents practice Islam, 14% claim to be non-believers.

62% of the respondents were born in the Krasnodar Territory, 25% came from the Volga region, others arrived from the Chelyabinsk, Novgorod, Kaliningrad regions, the Stavropol and Altai Territories.

The absolute majority of the respondents are interested in the development of tourism in the region. 48% of them stated their involvement in the tourism sector. 70% of the surveyed residents provide different services only in summer. 40% of the respondents are actively engaged in guiding activities, 30% of them labor in the field of produce making, provide accommodation for the guests of the region, sell souvenirs and transport passengers.

Most often, housing is rented by married couples with children (90%); less often, it is done by tourists traveling alone (10%).

About 40% of the surveyed locals provide various services in the field of ecological tourism. However, 100% of the respondents strongly believe that this type of tourism still has a significant development potential in the region. Predominantly, in the opinion of 55% of the respondents, this potential is associated with the availability of rich natural resources such as the sea, picturesque mountains, ragged cliffs, waterfalls, national parks. Another part of the population believes that visitors will eagerly go out into the countryside to admire great outdoors where the environment is cleaner and safer than in the city.

Over 90% of the respondents consider that currently tourism potential is not realized to the full. According to the respondents, the main problems hampering the development of tourism in the region are an improper state of tourism facilities due to inadequate state budget financing and high taxes. A group of the interviewed locals involved in the survey suggest improving road maintenance (30%) and customer service (30%). They strongly believe that price-lowering for housing, produce and souvenirs, as well as further development of the regional infrastructure will, by all means, attract more tourists to the resorts of the Krasnodar Territory.

About 50% of the respondents spend their holidays without leaving the Krasnodar Territory. In their region, they choose beach holidays (13%), eco-tourism such as hiking in the mountains (62%), sports tourism (8%), cultural tourism (17%), respectively. About 33% of the respondents travel outside the region and across Russia.

The Black Sea Region of Russia has a lot of competitive advantages, which are an amazing beauty of nature, warm sea, mineral water springs, healing mud, a wide range of sanatoria and health and wellness centers. With sufficient investment, proper development of infrastructure, competent, thoughtful state policy, support of local initiatives and small and medium-sized businesses, this area of the Black Sea region is bound to become competitive in the international tourism market [2]. In addition, there is every reason to assume that following successful implementation of the challenging projects, Russian tourists will again turn their minds to holidaying at Russian resorts.

References

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