

Innovative Activity of Russian Tourism Enterprises

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Abstract

The analysis of innovation activity and its elements in the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of tourism enterprises belonging to small and medium-sized businesses has been presented. The changes taking place in the world in the tourism market, including under the influence of COVID, as well as the peculiarities of tourism as part of the service sector and industry, determine the search for new non-traditional destinations with innovative elements. The purpose of this article is to present the innovation activity in quantitative and qualitative characteristics, which allows informatively characterizing the Russian practice in general and in small and medium-sized businesses on the example of the tourism sector. The research methods used were content analysis, comparative analysis, the method of expert assessments, and statistical methods. The results of the research of innovation activity based on monitoring, taking into account the industry characteristics, characterize a low share of small enterprises interested in innovation, an insignificant connection with higher educational institutions, a low share of environmental and managerial innovations. The results of the monographic observation of tourism enterprises allow assessing innovation activity positively for most enterprises, however, there is a lack of state support for regional administration, financial capabilities, and strategic planning at enterprises. Conducting research and obtaining new information will be necessary for the development of innovative projects and strategic development of tourism in Russia in the future, in innovative activities, especially in terms of marketing. As a priority area – the interaction of small and medium-sized businesses with scientific departments of universities to integrate their joint activities.

Key-words: Innovative Activity, Specifics of Innovations, Innovative Activity, Method of Expert Assessments.

1. Introduction

Issues related to innovation are of particular importance since the leadership of the Russian state has declared a course for innovative development of the country's economy "...based on the

economy of leadership and innovation" (Erokhina, 2017). The peculiarity of the innovation economy is that the main income should come not from the use of natural resources, but the creation and introduction of new, including intellectual technologies, innovations in the economic, social, and legal spheres. The state of affairs in the innovation sphere in Russia can be described as unsatisfactory. The latest course of economic policy on import substitution has turned the balance of the structure of the economy to domestic products, goods, and services.

The implementation of innovation activities is most hindered by an unfavorable external environment, namely: unfair competition in the market, the lack of a "culture of innovation" within the company, as well as problems in determining the cost of innovative products and ways to commercialize them. Recent events in the world and Russia related to the pandemic have shown that small and medium-sized businesses suffer primarily during crises. Meanwhile, their results of activity (goods, services) are of particular importance for the population, as well as for the socio-economic development of the Russian regions.

The tourism sector refers to the service sector, which is characterized by active development both in the world and in Russia, but is characterized by features, including service activities:

- the transition from the supply economy to the demand economy leads to an increase in the role and importance of infrastructure in this area;
- the tendency of an individual approach to meeting the needs of an individual client, while the systematizing factors are the interaction between the consumer and the manufacturer;
- there is high competition in the service market, especially among small firms that belong to small and medium-sized businesses.

There is still quite a lot of competition in the tourist market, especially among small firms, such as travel agencies, tour operators, small hotels, motels, and accommodation facilities in the travel industry.

Despite the impact of the global economic, financial, and social crises and other external factors, tourism shows a high ability to adapt to current events, including those related to the pandemic, limited foreign travel, and the reorientation of recreation and tourist trips within Russia. Among them, most travel companies and hotels belong to small and medium-sized businesses. Such enterprises are characterized by flexibility, mobility in responding to changes in the economy, the person's needs, opportunities, and preferences. Therefore, they are highly innovative, including in the creation and dissemination of innovations. (Federal State Statistics Service [Electronic resource]. - URL: <http://www.gks.ru>; Efimova, 2017)

In this regard, through the active use of integrated marketing and marketing activities: obtaining new information, as well as new knowledge which contributes to the creation of new services of higher value for the customer and increases the competitive advantage. (Drobyshev et al., 2017; Drobyshev et al., 2017)

2. Methods

The purpose of the study was to present innovation activity and its components in quantitative and qualitative terms, which allows informatively characterizing them in Russian practice in general and in small and medium-sized businesses on the example of the tourism sector.

To do this, it was necessary to consider the main theoretical provisions, the features of innovations in the field of tourism, to form quantitative and qualitative characteristics of innovation activities, to conduct monitoring in Russia to study the example of tourism enterprises.

Research methods: a content analysis of publications of domestic authors, statistical methods (based on official statistics), and the sociological method (the method of expert assessments).

As an object of research, enterprises, and organizations of the tourism industry, which have their specifics and features, have been accepted. The subject of the study was the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of innovation activity.

In the service sector, innovation is understood as the process of creating a new product, new technology, or service based on the results of scientific research to gain competitive advantages in the implementation of manufactured products, works, and services in the markets (I.S. Kulakovskaya, 2016).

Designate quantitative and qualitative indicators characterizing innovation activity.

The concept of innovation activity is interpreted as the ability to innovate, innovative activity, which are evaluated according to different criteria and indicators. These are the characteristics of the structures of large and small businesses, state-owned enterprises, scientific personnel potential, etc.

The indicator "innovation activity" characterizes the number of organizations engaged in innovation activities. Small businesses stand out among them: small businesses, research laboratories, venture capital firms, etc. Such small businesses conduct research, protect intellectual property, and commercialize innovations on the market.

Quantitative indicators are characteristics of the structures of large and small businesses, state enterprises, scientific personnel potential, etc. As a rule, these are data from official statistics at the level of the country (region), enterprises.

The qualitative indicator "innovation progress" characterizes commercial success and includes the following components: technical capability, the presence of scientific discovery, the need of society for innovation, the innovator as a person, overcoming the resistance of society to the perception of innovation, participants in the business chain of innovation promotion, etc. (Erokhina, 2017).

For enterprises, innovation activity is evaluated through the concepts of "scientific potential of the firm", "innovation activity", "innovation potential", which are a set of indicators. In general, this is an integral indicator, which is influenced by factors of the external and internal environment that determine the company's ability to introduce innovations. For example, such characteristics include the presence of an innovative division in the structure of the company, the share of innovatively active employees, the presence of a system of employee incentives, the project form of work, the use of information technologies (the concept of long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020).

3. Results

The types of innovations are diverse, and there are many different classification features in the literature. For example, the following services are distinguished in the service: development of innovations, using innovations, forming new markets. According to the scope of application, innovations are technological, organizational, economic, marketing, social, environmental, and informational. According to the degree of novelty, innovations are divided into genuine (the company conducts research and development and imitation work (copies the most successful innovations of competitors)). Therewith, it is considered that if this innovation was implemented by more than half of the competitors, then the company is not following an innovative, but catching up the path (Barmina, 2017; Lhuillery, 2014; Negassi, 2014).

In Russia, the law on innovation activity has not been adopted, although the draft law has been developed, not approved. The Federal Law "On Science and State Scientific and Technical Policy" is in force, according to which innovative activities include scientific, technological, organizational, financial, and commercial activities aimed at implementing innovative projects (Kiry and Kovyneva, 2016).

An innovative infrastructure is important, which includes a set of regional research centers, enterprises, organizations, and institutions (technoparks, technopolises, business incubators, etc.). Enterprises ensure the consistent creation of innovations, starting from the development and ending

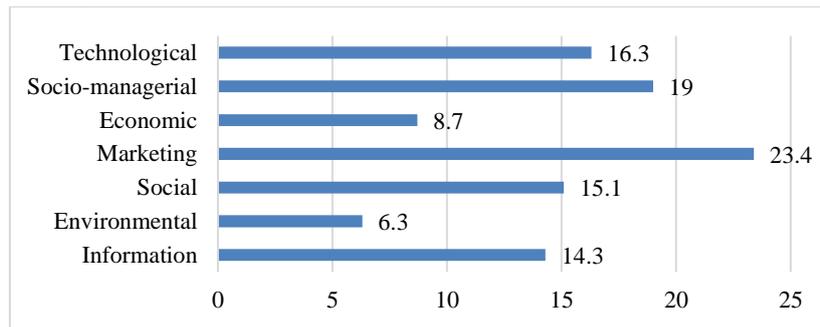
with the promotion of an innovative product in the field of engineering, technology, labor organization, and management (Arkhipova, 2013).

Tourism enterprises (hotels and health resorts) are the initiators of innovative activities, in particular in service and management activities. For example, the features of innovative activities for sanatory and health-related organizations, which have a high share of medical and health-related services associated with the use of various natural factors and technologies. In this case, innovations show a new development of natural factors, their use in health-improving methods and technologies, as well as in-service activities. The latest experience has shown that innovations such as the latest information and communication technologies, electronic marketing, and the development of information and reservation systems play a special role. Also, innovations in the process of customer service, modernization of the material and technical base, as well as in management and organizational activities. (Kryukova and Khetagurova, 2020; Khetagurova et al., 2018; Mosalev et al., 2018; Kryukova et al., 2018; 26. Vinogradova et al., 2014; Yudina et al., 2018; Kryukova, et al., 2019; Dyachenko, et al., 2015; lina et al., 2016; Dusenko et al., 2016; Kryukova et al., 2018)

A statistical observation was conducted (a survey in the form of a structured interview) for a more in-depth study of the problems of innovation in small and medium-sized businesses, namely, this category of enterprises is characteristic of the tourism industry and the service sector as a whole. Entrepreneurs acted as experts (240 people) from different types of activities: sightseeing, sports, hotel, tourism, sanatory and health-related, travel agency and tour operator, etc. Their work experience was: more than three years (65%), one – three years (22%).

According to the results of the study, we present the main conclusions: entrepreneurs rated the success of the organization on a 5-point scale (1 – very unsuccessful; 5 – very successful) as the average success rate (3.1). Most of them (70%) were engaged in innovation activities. They developed marketing, organizational and managerial, technological, social, and information innovations to a greater extent, and environmental and economic innovations to a lesser extent (see Figure 1). Respondents consider these types of innovations preferable, as they ensure the success of the business, namely, they are used in new schemes for promoting and selling tourist products and attracting new customers.

Figure 1. Priority types of innovations in the activities of enterprises



Due to the use of new technologies, the renewal of equipment, its modernization, the efficiency of its use increases, and consequently, the competitiveness as a whole. The majority of entrepreneurs (74%) plan to implement such innovations shortly, while the rest indicated that they "do not plan" or "lack financial opportunities".

The main advantages of such innovations (as the experts stressed) are commercial, namely: the introduction of new types of products/services, improving the quality and increasing the volume of products /services produced, or reducing the cost of producing a unit of production, i.e. anything that will directly affect profit growth.

As for the possibilities of attracting sources of financing, it is important to assess the conditions of the infrastructure (the "accessibility" criterion has been introduced). Entrepreneurs are more likely to apply to micro-credit organizations, investment, and innovation funds, and less often or not at all to leasing companies, technopolises, technology parks, consulting, and venture capital firms. (Donskova and Chubarova, 2017; Donskova, 2018)

The criterion "level of importance" (most important – important – less important) was introduced to assess the measures of support from the state. The results of the calculations indicate that the following measures are required on the part of the authorities:

- the most important is financial support and assistance in obtaining loans and credits, leasing state and municipal premises on preferential terms, assistance in promoting products to regional and other markets, state and municipal orders;
- important – organization of exhibitions and fairs, creation of business incubators and technology parks,
- less important – information and consulting support for small businesses and training of the population in the basics of entrepreneurship.

- If we consider the measures of state regulation of innovation activities and ways to stimulate small and medium-sized businesses (enterprises of socio-cultural services and tourism) by priority, then the most important assistance is expressed in monetary terms.

In the future, to improve the effective development of small and medium-sized businesses, it is necessary to provide them with resources, including financial support from the state: access to loans and other financial instruments, as well as provide legislative and regulatory frameworks for innovation for entrepreneurs and create equal opportunities for competition, reduce the number of inspection bodies.

According to the degree of influence of innovations on the results of the enterprise, the experts in their opinions were divided approximately equally: 46 % / 47% consider the impact both significant and insignificant, and only 7% of all respondents believe that innovations do not affect the results.

For a more in-depth study of the problems of innovation activity, a statistical observation was conducted based on the method of expert assessments on the example of small and medium-sized businesses – the following study was conducted (the second one). A questionnaire was developed in the form of a structured interview, including questions about the field of activity, work experience, business success assessment, the tax system used, sources of financing, types of innovations, the development of infrastructure to support small businesses, etc. The experts were entrepreneurs (40 people), who represented the main areas of activity: production of metal structures, transport, and transportation, sports, hotels, and restaurants. Their work experience in this field was: more than three years (90%), 1 – 3 years (30%).

Here are the main conclusions of this study: entrepreneurs rated the success of the organization on a 5-point scale (1 – very unsuccessful; 5 – very successful) as the average success rate (3.1). In their activities, almost all use a simplified tax system (90%), while office, production, and warehouse premises are used on lease terms, and only six managers own them.

During the study year, 70% of the respondents were engaged in innovative activities (development of new products/services), and developed mainly technological, marketing, and social innovations. These types of innovations, in their opinion, are preferable, as they ensure the demand for manufactured products, which reduces production costs, improves the efficiency of using equipment, increases competitiveness, and attracts new customers with modern services and equipment. Shortly, entrepreneurs (70%) plan technological modernization, the purpose of which will be, as they emphasize, to reduce costs, improve the quality of products/services, and increase the

volume of products produced. As for the infrastructure conditions, they mostly use the services of leasing companies and organizations for micro-loans.

The "important/unimportant" criterion has been introduced to evaluate measures to support small businesses. As a result of calculations, in the opinion of the respondents, financial support and assistance in obtaining loans and credits (60%), state and municipal orders (40%), leasing of state and municipal premises on favorable terms (60%) are the most important on the part of authorities. Such support measures as teaching the population the basics of entrepreneurship, organizing business incubators and technology parks, helping to promote products to regional and other markets, organizing exhibitions and fairs, according to their estimates, are not so important.

For the effective development of small and medium-sized businesses in the future, according to respondents, it is necessary to strengthen such measures as the fight against corruption (bribery, extortion), ensuring financial support from the state (access to loans and other financial instruments – 44.4%), ensuring legislative and regulatory activities of entrepreneurs and creating equal opportunities for competition (29.6%), as well as reducing the number of inspection bodies (18.6%).

The experts rated the availability of resources necessary for business as average (3.04 points on a 5-point scale). Therewith, the level of accessibility is higher in terms of personnel, production, and financial resources, while natural and material resources are less accessible. The following are used as sources of financing at the enterprises: internal – contributions of founders, proprietary, external – credit resources. The impact of innovations on the results of the company's activities was estimated by experts only slightly (60%), but they noted that there is not enough market for new products, increasing advantages among competitors.

Thus, in small and medium-sized businesses, there is a positive situation in relation to innovation, while most entrepreneurs plan to innovate soon, the rest pointed to a lack of finance due to inflation and higher prices for imported products.

If we proceed from the results of the study of the problems of innovation in small and medium-sized businesses, we can emphasize diverse trends. On the one hand, entrepreneurs do not see the need for innovation and technological modernization, since they have their customer base, and the company is sufficiently developed, has modern equipment. On the other hand, entrepreneurs claim that they would introduce innovations to develop their business, but do not have the financial capacity, including due to problems in the system of micro-loans, leasing to support small businesses.

In this regard, the majority of respondents believe that the authorities need to pay more attention to financial support, to assist in obtaining loans and credits; to lease state and municipal

premises on preferential terms, as well as to participate in the organization of technology parks and innovation funds. The lack of highly qualified personnel, the high cost of innovation, and the long payback period hinder the activation of innovation activities. In general, we support the experts that given the current situation in Russia, the high level of inflation, and the current state of the economy, the problems of innovation in small and medium-sized businesses remain relevant.

4. Discussion

The above analysis of the development of innovations in tourism enterprises is characterized not only by its great importance but also by its specifics, due to changes and patterns in the tourism sector. For example, innovations by the nature of the needs met characterize such innovations that create new needs or develop existing ones. The increasing role of the development of innovative strategies is ambiguous since the complexity of their development and implementation is associated with the problems of planning and forecasting of tourism activities. The role and importance of offers of unique (exclusive) developments designed for the individual consumer are increasing in the tourist market. The company positions itself in the market as a carrier of advanced technologies, which helps to attract new customers and increase its competitiveness. It is necessary to emphasize the role and importance of a person in the innovative activity of an enterprise. How the manager treats innovations, how well the staff is selected, whether there are creative innovators among them, and what is the incentive system that motivates the entire team to innovate.

Based on the results of the study of the problems of innovation activity in enterprises, we will emphasize diverse trends. In the field of tourism, most entrepreneurs are already working in this direction or are planning innovations shortly, i.e. there is a positive situation concerning innovation activities. However, there are still problems such as a lack of finance due to inflation and rising prices for imported products, a lack of highly qualified personnel, the high cost of innovation, and a long payback period.

5. Conclusion

The results of research on innovation activity on legal, financial, and personnel issues, despite its specificity, allow characterizing the links of regional business with innovation activity as weak and identifying insignificant innovation activity of most organizations. The reasons include the lack of regional funding, unequal access to grant support for business, lack of interest in cooperation between business and educational institutions, and the lack of specialists who can submit creative, non-standard proposals. The research results allow making adjustments to the innovation activities of enterprises, primarily in terms of

key indicators: support from top management, determination of the purpose of innovation, motivation systems (material and moral) for staff, availability of resources (financial, material, information), regular training of managers, innovators, staff, etc. This will increase the competitiveness of goods/services and the enterprise as a whole.

It is possible to improve the existing situation in the innovation sphere at the regional level through the development and implementation of a balanced regional policy, the strategic goal of developing the innovation environment, infrastructure, ensuring public-private partnership, developing the infrastructure of innovation activities, proposals for creating conditions for the integration of joint activities: on the conceptual directions of the development of regional economic and social structures, providing information for building long-term plans for innovative development of enterprises, as well as encouraging the participation of small and medium-sized businesses in interregional and international innovation projects. Despite the diverse trends in the development of innovation, innovation is the future of Russia, the development of its economy and society, which can be considered as a factor in improving the level and quality of life of each person and society as a whole.

In conclusion, we emphasize that the position of the business community plays an important role in the innovative development of enterprises, especially in conditions of variability and instability of the environment. In this case, it is important to focus on the motivation of the business, as well as the creation of such conditions in which the business will operate. Use the current situation to reset the tourist activity, in terms of both service and business activities. Primarily, it concerns innovations in information technologies, as well as the transition to these technologies.

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