

Information Analysis Support of Travel Companies Management in the Global Financial Crisis

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Abstract: Object of this paper is to study the information and analytical support of travel company management and to define the role of information and information technologies in the tourism industry in crisis. Through analyzing and summarizing the research results of many national and foreign scholars, the essence of tourism and especially its development in the global financial crisis has been considered. The directions of using the information and tourism resources and statistical data have been determined in order to improve the quality of tourist services provided by business entities engaged in tourism activities in crisis. As a result of the study, the main directions of using the information technologies and Internet capabilities have been determined, as well as new forms of organizing the information analysis support of tourism management have been suggested, such as virtual tourist information centers, virtual libraries, virtual business incubators, virtual tourist inquiry offices etc. New directions of using the virtual database information in the process of management of travel companies have been considered. Grounds have been given for the efficiency of using the proposed virtual forms of information analytical support in the process of management of travel companies, as well as the support of the tourism industry development as a whole. The main prospects for further researches in this direction are to identify the main areas of activities of virtual tourist information centers, to specify information data they will provide and features of their use in practice. Further development of using modern information technologies in tourism will allow increasing the level of efficiency of the tourism industry in Ukraine amid the global crisis.

Key words: Tourism • Travel companies • Information analytical support • Tourism activities • Information technologies • Management

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose: There is a growth in the role of information analytical support of the management of socio-economic systems in terms of economic transformation and development of globalization and integration processes. Given the characteristics of tourism activities, its effective development has a significant impact on the socio-economic, cultural, cognitive and ecological component of the national economy of the state, causing the need to improve information analytical component of tourism management system.

Information component of the tourism industry of the country is one of the main elements of a complete, timely and reliable notification, distribution of necessary data on the country, tourist facilities and resources, level of development and analysis of tourism activities

etc. In addition, an information provision of the tourism industry allows determining the role and place of the state in the global tourism information space, provides the possibility of developing and implementing modern mechanisms of state regulation of information analytical support of tourism activities [1].

Information analytical support of management can be defined as a complex system of organizational, technical, technological, regulatory, legal, scientific and research measures, which provide information and communication relations between all the components of the tourism industry.

However, there is a need to find new forms of organization and practical implementation amid the crisis, when considering the information analytical support as an effective means of improving the management of tourist activities.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Modern transformational changes in the processes of economic development determine the need to improve the management of tourist activities, which, in turn, foregrounds the issue of seeking new forms of organization of information analytical support of travel companies. Analysis of scientific publications allows us to conclude that information analytical support of tourist activities management remains poorly known.

In the modern context, an interest of scholars in the information component of travel business is growing continuously. Works by S.P. Kulytski [2], N.A. Kuznetsov [3] deal with identification of information as a factor of the process of managing the modern economic relationships and organizing the information activities in the management sphere. Organizational features of information analytical support of public administration on the basis of information and communication technologies were considered in works by O.O. Nesterenko [4], O.G. Dodonov [5]. The papers by O.O. Morozov [6] draw attention to the development of a network of scientific and technical information as part of a national information resource.

Some aspects of the application of modern information technologies in tourism were considered in works by S.V. Melnichenko [7] M.M. Skopen' [8] and others.

A significant contribution to the development of information support of tourist activities management was made by many of well-known native and foreign scientists, in particular, O.V. Vinogradov, N.V. Barabanov, O. Toffler, N. Wiener, N.M. Polotnikova, M. Robson, A.A. Orlov, M. Heidegger, S.P. Arimov, V.V. Shamgina, V.A. Gulyaev and others.

Previously unresolved parts of the general problem. Despite the large number of scientific and practical developments aimed at the management and development of tourist activities, issue on information analytical support of travel company management, which is especially important in times of crisis and will provide effective anti-crisis mechanisms, the solution of which is addressed in this paper, remains insufficiently studied.

Statement of Problem: Object of this paper is to study the essence of modern forms of organizing the information analytical support of travel company management amid the crisis.

Main Part: The tourism industry is one of the branches of the national economy, which has high prospects and dynamics of the development both in most countries of the world and in Ukraine, since it is able to make a profit in the long term due to a short payback period and considering its features as interbranch complex, it is also able to ensure productive development of nearly 40 other industries. Growth in popularity of tourism as a sector of the national economy is caused by higher incomes to the budget, since tourism is the main source of income in many countries and regions [9] and accounts for more than 10% of the world's GDP and according to outlooks, it is going to grow by 4.4% per year up to 2023 and will be about \$10.507 billion [10].

It should be noted that in our days a tourism should be regarded as one of the key factors of improving the state of the country on the world stage, which affects international relations and promotes cooperation and integration processes in the world economic space. Therefore, given the impact of the tourist industry on the country's economy, an attraction of additional financial incomes and increase in employment require the implementation of continuous monitoring and evaluation of financial and economic performance of the industry, determine the need for effective collection, processing and provision of free access to statistical data, the innovative development of information and communication technologies, information resources required for analyzing the status and dynamics of changes in the development of tourism, which in turn updates the issue of improving the information analytical support of travel companies management. In fact, the global financial crisis drives to bankruptcy both industrial, trade sectors and travel companies.

The tourist industry is an interdisciplinary complex, consisting of multiple tourist business entities, which ensure the production and sale of tourist product to national and international tourism. The complex of tourist industry structure includes producers of tourist services, tour operators and agents, places of accommodation, public catering, transport enterprises, culture and leisure centers, sales areas, tourist sites, etc. [11, 12].

Despite the benefits of tourism and positive outlook of its development, given its characteristics as an interbranch complex, which includes international activities, we should also consider the negative impact of the global financial crisis [13] on the dynamics of tourism activities, which consists in the following:

reduction of purchasing power of the population, which results in reducing a demand for tourist services and a profit of travel companies;

increase in the cost of foreign tours due to fluctuations in the national currency against foreign one (euro, dollar), which increases the costs of a tourist trip;

reduction in the number of employees in the tourism industry by reducing the demand for travel services;

reduction in capital investment in tourism infrastructure blocks significantly the development of tourism in general, etc.

Therefore, the impact of the global financial crisis makes travel companies adapt to modern conditions and search for new ways to improve the management process, to develop effective anti-crisis measures and new methods for improving the efficiency of economic activity amid the current crisis. Considering the increase in development and the influence of international integration processes in the world, the growth of informatization of socio-economic life of society, the lack of the necessary information on tourism opportunities of the regions and statistical data required to analyze economic activity of tourist entities and trends of the tourism market development, the question of forming a quality unified information tourism space arises.

We should agree with the opinion that the deterrent of development of tourism industry of Ukraine is the lack of use of modern innovative information technologies in the tourism sector, which is proved by the low level of information and communication infrastructure

development; the lack of databases of tourist profile in certain regions of the country; limited information on and advertising of tourist product on interregional, national and international markets; imperfection of mechanism of information exchange between the economic entities in the field of tourism and the external environment via the Internet; underdevelopment of virtual travel companies and centers; the lack of state electronic information system which could provide the tourist entities with current information on supply, demand, pricing, tariffs, etc. [14] and N. Plotnikov [7].

Given the above stated negative factors and a complexity of the branch, which covers the activities of a large number of entities having both direct and indirect impact on the development of tourism, we propose to intensify the introduction of information technologies and the opportunities of the Internet to create new forms of information analytical support of travel companies management, such as virtual tourist information centers, virtual libraries, virtual business incubators, virtual tourist inquiry offices etc. (Fig. 1). Use of opportunities of the Internet and virtual tourism will ensure the development of both international (inbound) and domestic tourism in Ukraine.

Information analytical support should be a process of creating conditions to meet the needs of consumers in the information required and the effective implementation of the management process by creating, collecting and using information resources required via modern Internet-technologies.

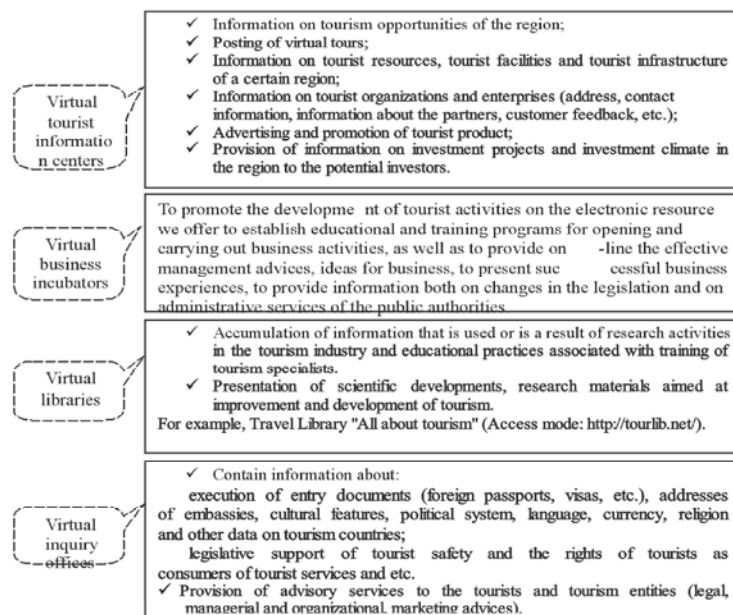


Fig. 1: The proposed modern forms of organizing the information analytical support of travel company management in Ukraine.

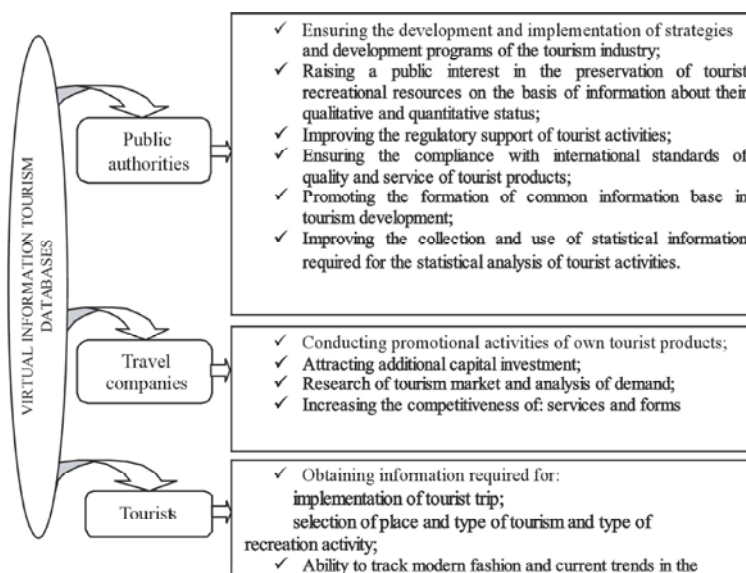


Fig. 2: New directions of using the virtual database information in the process of management of Ukrainian travel companies have been suggested.

Creation of network of virtual information databases will ensure the electrode, virtual and interactive relationship between power, tourism entities, tourist product consumers (tourists) and other interested parties (investors, partners, governments etc.), as well as provide users with the necessary information and statistical data (Fig. 2). For example, information analytical data will allow the owners of travel companies to predict the level of return on capital, the investors to identify potential investment object, public authorities to assess the development of the tourism industry in the economic system of the region, the state and to define the main directions of its development and tourists to assess a tourist attraction when choosing a place of tourist tour [15].

The above figure let us emphasize the role of information, expressed in advertising, statistical data and information data, in both the development of individual tourism entities and tourist regions. It should be noted that the key issue in current crisis is to develop effective programs, strategies and activities of tourism development at the level of state, region and company, which will be based both on information analytical support of the management and on directing the information flows to form a contingent of tourist product consumers.

In addition, it stands to mention that a good perspective for tourism is the promotion of new forms of tourist services via the Internet, such as creating the programs of virtual tours of museums of Ukraine and the

World, for example, Taras Shevchenko National Museum and Kiev Pechersk Lavra in Kyiv, the Louvre in Paris, the Hermitage in St.-Petersburg, the Metropolitan Museum in New York (www.panotours.ru, <http://rzd.ru/steams>, <http://tours.kremlin.ru>, www.armchair-travel.com, www.virtualtravel.cz, www.sphericalimages.com, www.googleartproject.com, www.everyscape.com etc.; development of virtual tours, which could show the outstanding monuments of culture, history and nature (e.g., Google and "Russian railways" offer to travel from Moscow to Vladivostok, which runs through the two parts of the world, 12 regions and 87 cities) etc.;

Hotel Finder Service by Google, which allows user to search a hotel by entering search parameters, such as place of location, price, number of stars, feedback and availability of accommodation discounts [16, 17].

In addition, there is an implementation of Tacis-Twining project "Creation of the tourism industry database through the formation of a network of tourist information centers" nowadays in Ukraine within the framework of the development of international tourism cooperation with EU countries. The purpose of this project is to create a system of distributing the information and promotion materials through maintenance of a network of tourist information centers in the regions of Ukraine. In addition, there is a development of contractual legal framework for bilateral cooperation with the EU countries, a harmonization of legislation of Ukraine in the field of tourism with the directives and other acts of the EU and the development of bi-and multilateral

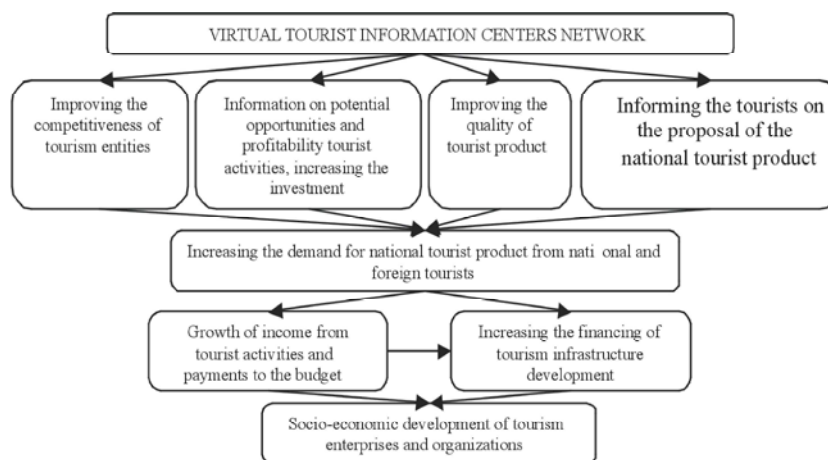


Fig. 3. Validation of the development of virtual tourist information centers in Ukraine

cooperation with European countries and with their leading institutional structures and economic associations opens Ukraine for international tourism cooperation [18].

It is arguable that use of modern organization forms of information analytical support of travel companies management will both improve the efficiency of data collection, the use of statistical data on tourist activities and unite the efforts of all tourism entities (travel and tour companies, hotels, caterers, resort institutions, transport companies etc.) of information products, which allow consumers to get acquainted virtually with tourist products and the tourist market entities will be able to form a competitive positions, implement marketing, advertising and investment activities, as well as provide the effective anti-crisis measures.

Construction of virtual network of information centers will both help creating a unified information network to ensure effective management of tourism and improving the economic efficiency of tourism by increasing the financial incomes from sales of the national tourist product (Fig. 3). It should be noted that a common database should be formed both in Ukraine and in the world.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. Introduction of modern forms of information analytical support of travel companies management will help both improving the information and promotion activities in the field of tourism, which will ensure the promotion of the tourist product in the international and national market and make aware the benefits of the tourist regions of Ukraine, an obtaining the necessary statistical information supplemented with additional indicators, which will analyze the tourist activities and establish effective measures to reduce the number of bankruptcies in the

tourism industry in Ukraine, depending on the needs required, socio-economic situation or the specific features of the development of the tourism industry, region, company. And these actions are particularly topical amid the global financial crisis.

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