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Modern Tourist Practices of the Northern and Arctic Territories

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Abstract. The ideas of northern and Arctic tourism are relevant in the modern world. Currently, northern tourism is becoming more and more popular among people with medium and high incomes in different countries, including Russia, and the trend of its development is positive. The purpose of this study is to show the relevance of tourism development in the northern and Arctic territories, to identify current trends and the need of people for the development of such tourism. The Arctic is becoming an increasingly popular tourist destination. The increased interest in tourism in the Arctic has led to the creation of appropriate infrastructure and has had an impact on the region and the people who inhabit it. It has also impacted the cultural identity and traditional livelihoods of the region. In particular, the recent rapid growth of tourism and related activities will have a permanent impact on the environment and cultures of the Arctic. The article presents an analysis of modern research on this topic. The author's research of ethnocultural tourism in the northern territories of the Karelian borderland is shown. Conclusions about the necessity of tourism development on the northern border territories and in the Arctic zones are made.

Keywords: *tourism, Arctic, ethno-futurism, regional economy, northern regions*

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Theoretical approaches: Russian and foreign experience

Since the 1980s, due to the rapid development of the global economy, people's demands for quality of life and spiritual needs have been constantly increasing; this has led to the development of ecotourism and cultural tourism in the northern territories. Arctic regions attract the attention of tourists from all over the world with their spectacular ice and snow landscapes, as well as the cultural characteristics of various indigenous peoples. In addition to indigenous cultures, the history of the exploration of these territories by other peoples is attractive.

Some authors have noted the comparative lack of research on the opinions of representatives of Arctic communities that are directly affected in this context, especially with regard to sustainable development issues [1, Boluk K.A., Cavaliere C.T., Higgins-Desbiolles F.]. In this regard, the authors A.A. Grenier and D.K. Müller argue that states with Arctic territories seek to support and legitimize claims to sovereignty in the region through tourism, arguing that "a functioning tourism

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industry satisfies certain legal requirements for international recognition”, namely, it proves that “human habitation” is possible in the relevant place, demonstrates “state functions/responsibilities” [2].

For example, Canada has used Arctic tourism as a means of strengthening its claims to sovereignty, referring to the presence of indigenous peoples: “Indigenous peoples of the North play a decisive role in the development of tourism in the Arctic territories, [...] emphasizing local tourism” [3, Mahoney I., Collins V.E.].

Russian authors, for example T.N. Menshikova, believe that “northern” tourism can be developed through the creation of tourist clusters [4]. D.Z. Mesabliashvili considers a promising and more convenient route for Arctic tourism through the development of air links: the movement of tourists via Helsinki (Finland), then Oslo (Norway), and then to the Spitsbergen Islands, Iceland or Greenland (3 Arctic islands) [5]. S.A. Agarkov considered the route for tourists that would attract the attention of foreigners: the main attractions are the walrus rookery on Apollon Island, the wooden house of Eira, built in 1881 on Bell Island, Tikhaya Bay, the capital of the archipelago in Soviet times, the bird paradise on Rubini Rock and the garden of stone spheres on Champion Island [6]. Volcanoes and interesting landscapes can also be seen on the territory of Chukotka.

Current tourism-based narratives of state influence in the Arctic include non-Arctic or “near-Arctic” entities. Perhaps the most striking example of this is the debate around Chinese investment in Arctic tourism. L. James, L. Smed Olsen and A. Karlsdóttir [7] examined the potential of countries located within or near the Arctic Circle, including Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Canada. According to the authors, they have become “prime” destinations for observing the mystical aurora borealis and benefiting from the growth of the industry due to this phenomenon. In 2020, the global polar travel market was valued at \$ 830.5 million USD and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 10.28% between 2023 and 2031, reaching \$ 2,003.6 million USD [7, James L., Olsen L.S., Karlsdóttir A.].

The unique tourist and recreational potential of the territories, along with preserved original traditions, local culture and hospitality of the local population, attracts increasing flows of Russian and foreign tourists (except for the period of restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic) [8, Kondratyeva S.V.].

Modern tourist practices in the Arctic

Today, expedition cruises in the Arctic are becoming increasingly popular in the regions, for example, in Russia, Canada and Scandinavia. They offer a unique experience, combining natural beauty, cultural heritage and excursions to historical sites [9, Kruzhalin V.I., Shabalina N.V. et al.]. If we consider tourism from a cultural point of view, then tourists have the opportunity to immerse in the amazing world of indigenous peoples, culture and traditions. Travelers can visit ancient settlements, get acquainted with local customs, try national cuisine, participate in traditional events and get acquainted with the history and myths of these unique cultures.

Cruises and polar “safaris” allow tourists to see the beauty of the northern territory, see the polar lights and look at the animals that inhabit the northern territories from a safe distance. As for expeditions, the emphasis is on more remote northern territories. Such trips include hiking, kayaking, cycling, etc. One of the promising areas is ice trekking. This includes walks on glaciers and snow covers of the polar regions with the opportunity to visit deep ice caves and other unique places. Winter recreation is popular everywhere today and include skiing, snowboarding, snow-mobiles, dog sledding, ski jumps, etc.

Among many types of cultural tourism, one of the most democratic and interesting is gastronomic tourism. It involves not only tasting national dishes, but also full acquaintance with the technology of cooking. Some professional participants of the gastronomic market consider the purchase of a gastronomic tour as an opportunity to improve their skills and undergo professional training. Within the framework of such tours, various kinds of master classes, excursion practice, and so on are gaining great relevance. A gastronomic tour should be considered as an option for a unique vacation, where the emphasis is on tasting drinks and dishes, learning how to cook them. At the same time, it allows getting closer and understanding the culture and mentality of local people. Complex programs and gastronomic tours solve several tasks at once. Firstly, tasting of drinks and dishes is organized to understand the cultural characteristics of the region through food. Secondly, special knowledge on technologies of preparation of specific dishes of national and regional cuisine is obtained, which allows adopting experience and foreign cultural values.

Gastronomic tourism can be part of a complex tour or have some features of other types of tourism, by which it is possible to classify:

- rural (“green”) gastronomic tourism;
- business (urban) gastronomic tourism;
- event (festival) gastronomic tourism;
- cultural-educational and gastronomic tourism [10, Nekhaeva N.E., Terekhova Yu.S.].

Visiting the Arctic and adjacent regions is possible mainly in the summer period. In the rest of the year, these destinations are less attractive, since this is a risky project from an investment point of view. The development of gastronomic tourism in Russia is hampered by the lack of close ties between the travel companies themselves and the producers of the products. The creation of the necessary infrastructure for the development of gastronomic tourism requires large investments from the companies themselves. The enterprises in the field of food and beverage production are still closed to prying eyes. The influence of gastronomic tourism can diversify the economy of the regions with complex agricultural elements, thereby preventing stagnation.

In some regions, one of the reasons for the development of gastronomic tourism is the situation with the lack of a single theme for organizing tours. At the moment, there are many different festivals with an ethnic focus in Russia. Within the framework of these festivals, there is a practice of organizing fairs of small or large farms. However, in order for tourists to be interested

in getting to know the region, and therefore the country as a whole, the organizers of such festivals need to develop the topic of gastronomic tourism as a separate block.

It is important that guest house owners, tour operators, event managers, businessmen and other persons involved in tourism activities in the Arctic should base their innovations on real historical and cultural elements of the region, not on fictitious products, despite the fact that tourists are also interested in the new: from the point of view of protecting the unique cultures of the Russian North, this is a careless act [11, Morozov A.A.].

According to a recent report from the United Nations Environment Programme, Arctic marine tourism has increased by almost 500% in the last 15 years, while land-based tourism activity has grown by almost 800% over the past decade¹. According to a recent study, the Arctic expedition cruise industry makes a significant contribution to the local economy, accounting for two-thirds of the total investment, while traditional cruises contribute only one-third. Despite safety and environmental concerns, there is significant potential for future economic and social changes that favor the development of a polar cruise industry in the Arctic².

Tourism in Svalbard could be part of the diversification of Russia's presence in the Arctic. In addition to Russia, Norway is also concerned about this: by 2027, it is planned to close a Norwegian coal mine and switch to renewable energy sources³. At present, the domestic polar tourism market accounts for an increasing share of the world market every year, and foreign monopolies should be gradually reduced. Once China's polar tourism enterprises can carry out polar tourism projects relatively independently, they will be able to formulate rules and use resources. In terms of greater autonomy, it can better protect the rights and interests of domestic tourists; by reducing agent costs, lowering operating costs and reflecting higher price competitiveness, the consumer market will expand.

Current challenges to the tourism business and local community

However, despite the natural and cultural diversity of the Arctic, typical activities in northern Finland, for example, are also common to other Arctic destinations such as Longyearbyen (Norway), Sisimiut (Greenland), Tromsø (Norway), Whitehorse (Canada) or Fairbanks (USA) [3, Mahoney, Collins]. Furthermore, the tourist regions of northern Europe are experiencing an increase in tourism due to the increasing relativization⁴ of tourism and increasing simplification of space, which we suggest can be understood as a process associated with "arctification" [12, Var-najot A., Saarinen J.]. Like regional brands, tourist seasons are increasingly shaped by marketing

¹ United Nations Environment Programme. URL: <http://www.unep.org/> (accessed 15 February 2024).

² Ren C., Chimirri D. Arctic Tourism — More than an Industry? The Arctic Institute. April, 2018. URL: <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/arctic-tourism-industry> (accessed 15 February 2024).

³ Lakstygala I., Mishutin G. Why Russia wants to develop tourism on Spitsbergen. Vedomosti. URL: https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2024/02/14/1020136-zachem-rossiya-hochet-razvivat-turizm-na-shpitsbergene?from=read_also=3 (accessed 15 February 2024).

⁴ Refusal to give something absolute meaning; correlating something with some point of reference, with some standard, reference point, measure, etc.

and global ideals of leisure. Russian Arctic tourism, for example, is associated with “new” seasons and products, including summer and autumn tourism with excursions, mountain biking, gastro-tourism, ethno-cultural tourism and viewing the northern lights.

The process of “arctification” can also have negative consequences for local tourism industries and communities. Firstly, stereotypical images of the North and the Arctic can lead to an emphasis on the winter season in tourism and, consequently, ignoring the seasonal dynamics of the North and the associated environmental changes.

At worst, the result of formulaic promotion is a loss of the uniqueness of the destination and region due to the replication of successful place branding strategies from other sources. Secondly, “arctification” may change the labor force structure in tourism and therefore challenge the extent to which the tourism experience reflects the values and contributions of local residents, attracting increasing numbers of seasonal workers from other areas, regions, countries [13]. Consequently, the tourism sector remains vulnerable to cycles of “ups and downs” and economic instability, resulting in sudden declines in demand and revenues.

Finally, the “arctification” process raises concerns about climate change, particularly its impact on the cryosphere. [13] As a result, some authors argue that tour operators have become overly dependent on climate elements desired by visitors that they cannot control. This situation becomes critical when the Arctic weather does not match the tourists’ expectations.

Regional practices of tourism development in the Arctic

Speaking about regional features of Arctic tourism, it is necessary to consider them in each region separately, since each of them can have both common features inherent to Arctic tourism in general, and individual ones. Among the individual features that distinguish northern and Arctic tourism from others is the presence of various indigenous cultures of the peoples of Russia and the natural and geographical features of the territories.

Next, let us consider some features of the Arctic regions of Russia, what information they offer in the public domain.

For example, tourism in the Murmansk Oblast is based on sports tourism, gastronomic and ethno-cultural tourism. There are many tourist routes in the region: from visiting the urban environment to staying and learning about indigenous culture and reindeer herding. The presence of mountains and hills allows for the development of sports tourism: skiing, skateboarding, hiking.

The Arkhangelsk Oblast offers various types of sports tourism, for example, snowmobile and ski tours, various rafting trips; cultural and educational tourism — visiting museums, fortresses, various festivals.

The Komi Republic offers to touch the past and study the history of the Old Believers of this territory.

The Nenets Autonomous Okrug (NAO) is one of the youngest Russian regions, while administratively it is part of the Arkhangelsk Oblast. This is the most sparsely populated subject of the

Russian Federation, but it is also important in the general system of development of the Arctic territories. The peculiarity of this region is the presence of indigenous peoples, whose culture can be learnt by visiting this territory. The region has various museums, including a museum-reserve and an ethnographic museum, as well as various nature reserves. Important elements are archaeological monuments, as well as different waterways — rivers and lakes. Tours for fishermen and hunters are carried out on the territory. Various festivals are held in the region — reindeer sled races, snowmobiles, smelt festival and others.

The Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug offers such types of tourism as skiing, ethno-cultural, photographic, water, event, ecological, mountain (hiking). On the territory of the YaNAO, there is a natural and ethnographic open-air park-museum “Zhivun”, where various events are held. There are tours for fishermen and hunters.

In the districts of Krasnoyarsk Krai there are many tours related to the typical Arctic tourism themes.

The features of Arctic tourism in the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug (ChAO) are determined by its natural features and the presence of indigenous cultures. There are many recreational opportunities in the Chukotka AO: fishing, hunting, conditions for ecological, ethnographic, scientific and adventure tours. In addition, an important element is the availability of scientific tourism.

Since 2020, the development of domestic tourism has increased significantly, especially in the European part of the Russian Federation, and one of the most popular types of tourism in the Arctic and the Northern territories is ethno-cultural and educational tourism [14, Belaya R.V., Morozova T.V., Kozyreva G.B. et al.]. Next, we will consider the potential of such tourism using the example of a sociological survey of tourists in the territories of the Republic of Karelia and in Northern Karelia in Finland. The research was conducted in 2019, and as a result of it the database “Ethno-cultural potential in the tourism industry of border territories — a survey of tourists in the Republic of Karelia (Russia) and Northern Karelia (Finland) in 2019” was registered, Certificate of Database Registration No. 2021620812, 22.04.2021⁵.

The respondents were citizens arriving in the above-mentioned territories and positioning themselves as consumers of tourist services, staying for rest and accommodation in organized places of stay (hotels, inns, cottages, recreation centers, etc.). The study analyzed the popularity of tourism products with elements of traditional and modern culture among tourists. The information base of the study was data obtained in the framework of a sociological survey of tourists in the territory of the studied destination, including border regions: the Republic of Karelia (Russia) and Northern Karelia (Finland). The sample consisted of 805 respondents. Of these, 424 respondents travelled in the Republic of Karelia (Russia) and 381 respondents — in Northern Karelia (Finland).

⁵ “Ethno-cultural potential in the tourism industry of border territories — a survey of tourists in the Republic of Karelia (Russia) and Northern Karelia (Finland) in 2019”. Morozova T.V., Belaya R.V., Kozyreva G.B., Morozov A.A. Database Registration Certificate No. 2021620812, 22 April 2021. Application No. 2021620705 dated 15 April 2021.

The analysis of tourists' responses on the ratio of traditional and modern cultural elements in a tourist product showed the following (Table 1): 95.1% of respondents from the sample answered the question "Which types of ethno-cultural tourist products from those offered below are of the greatest interest to you?". The demand for traditional cultural tourist products without strong interference of modern cultural elements dominates on the tourist market in Karelia (more than 50%). More than one third of tourists prefer to use elements of traditional culture in combination with elements of modern culture in music, design, clothing, etc. About 10% of tourists prefer only tourist products of modern culture.

Table 1

Respondents' attitudes to types of ethno-cultural tourist products, %⁶

Indicators	Region of tourist residence				Total of sample
	Moscow	Saint Petersburg	Karelia	Other regions of Russia	
Tour products of traditional culture, without strong interference of modern elements	63.6	48.4	48.1	61.6	55.5
Tour products of modern culture with inclusion of elements of traditional culture	27.3	43.8	38.5	32.0	35.3
Tour products of modern culture with little or no connection to local cultural heritage	9.1	7.8	13.5	6.4	9.2
Number of respondents answering, %	90.2	94.1	97.2	96.2	95.1

In the regional context, tourists from Moscow and other regions of Russia prefer tourist products with traditional cultural elements only (more than 60%). Tourists from St. Petersburg and Karelia support such tourist products to a lesser extent (about 50%) and also prefer a combination of traditional and modern cultural elements. Increased demand for tourist products without the intervention of cultural heritage elements is observed among tourists — residents of Karelia (more than 10%).

The potential demand of tourists for the purchase tourist products with ethno-cultural content is revealed not only through indicators related to tourists' interest in cultural heritage elements, but also, perhaps to a greater extent, through indicators of tourists' readiness to purchase tourist products with ethno-cultural content. According to the survey, 97% of tourists from Karelia are ready to engage in the purchase of tourist products with ethno-cultural content. In terms of tourist product elements, traditional craft skills are the most popular (about half of the tourists would like to purchase such a tourist product). The following are highly popular (40%) with a slight difference: historical and cultural heritage of the region; traditional cuisine; new information about the cultural traditions of the territory: holidays, songs, dances, folk crafts, etc.

⁶ Source: compiled by the author.

In the regional context, there are differences and peculiarities in the preferences of tourists (Table 2). Tourists from Moscow are less inclined to choose the historical and literary heritage of the region, cultural traditions (songs, festivals, etc.) and traditional cuisine (less than 30%) when forming a tourist product. Tourists from St. Petersburg, in comparison with other regions, are distinguished by a high interest in the historical and literary heritage of the region and traditional craft skills (more than 50%), traditional cuisine (about 60%) and discovering the traditional culture of the region through modern ethno-futuristic forms (about 50%). A distinctive feature of tourists from Karelia is their high interest in new information about the cultural traditions of the territory: holidays, songs, dances, folk crafts, etc. (more than 45%). Tourists from other regions, like tourists from St. Petersburg, are characterized by a high readiness to get acquainted with the historical and literary heritage of the region: folklore, legends, chronicles, tales, stories, etc. (more than 50%) and, to a lesser extent, compared to others, prefer traditional craft skills and acquaintance with traditional culture through modern ethno-futuristic forms.

Table 2

*Respondents' answers to questions about the attractiveness of various elements of cultural heritage*⁷

Indicators	Region of tourist residence (share of tourists from the region, %)				Total of sample
	Moscow	Saint Petersburg	Karelia	Other regions of Russia	
Historical and literary heritage of the region: folklore, legends, chronicles, tales, etc.	24.6	52.9	34.6	52.3	42.6
New information on cultural traditions of the territory: holidays, songs, dances, folk crafts, etc.	24.6	44.1	46.7	39.2	39.9
Traditional craft skills: weaving, embroidery, wooden architecture, working with metal, clay, wood, sewing, etc.	42.6	55.9	47.7	39.2	45.4
Learning about traditional culture through modern ethno-futuristic forms: in music (e.g. folk style), design of modern housing, clothes, everyday life with elements of traditional culture, etc.	32.8	48.5	37.4	26.9	35.0
Discovering traditional cuisine	29.5	58.8	39.3	37.7	40.7
Other	1.6	1.5	1.9	0.8	1.4
Number of respondents, %	91.8	97.1	100.0	96.9	97.0

⁷ Source: compiled by the author.

The research data revealed the interest of tourists in tourist products of traditional culture (90.8%) of the territory of the Republic of Karelia destination and the readiness of tourists to purchase tourist products of ethno-cultural content (97%). The coincidence of interest and readiness indicates the presence of potential demand for ethno-cultural tourism in the tourism market in the Republic of Karelia, including in the Arctic regions of the Republic.

In 2023, the author conducted a pilot study with a similar topic. Based on the results of the study, the database “Measuring the dynamics of factors of tourist attractiveness of a region based on survey methods” was registered⁸. It can be concluded that tourists started travelling more often both to Karelia and its Arctic areas and to the regions of North-West Russia as a whole. People have become more attracted to this national and cultural diversity. In gastronomic establishments, people more often want to see local dishes, menus are often bilingual or in the local language. People have become slightly more interested in various modern types of cultural expressions with ethnic elements. All this is already, in reality, having a positive effect on the economic situation in the region. Compared to the results of the 2019 study, in 2023 people became more interested in the traditional component of northern cultures than in the ethno-futuristic one. But despite this, tourists’ interest in all cultural elements offered by actors is growing. Of course, 2020 and 2021 made their own adjustments to the sphere of domestic tourism. However, in the Republic of Karelia and the Murmansk Oblast, even in 2020, the growth in tourist flow was positive, and after the removal of COVID restrictions, it increased and continues to grow [15, Morozov A.A.].

Conclusion

Tourism in the northern and Arctic regions of Russia is currently experiencing some difficulties due to the uncertain political situation and sanctions pressure. In this regard, in March 2022, Western countries announced the suspension of participation in any events in protest against the events in Eastern Europe. However, despite this, the tourism industry in the Russian Arctic is on the rise and is becoming an integral part of its culture and economy. Nowadays, special attention should be paid to the impact of tourism on remote Arctic communities, the natural environment and its resources. The development of new technologies means that larger ships will be able to navigate the northern hemisphere, bringing natural economic benefits to local industry and tourism.

Over the decades of development, the international Arctic tourism industry has become more mature and streamlined, appropriate management organizations and legal systems have been created. The polar tourism industry in our country was formed late, but in recent years it has developed rapidly.

The growth of tourism in the northern and Arctic territories has been increasing over the last five years, therefore, government authorities, businesses and local communities of these terri-

⁸ Morozov A.A. Measuring the dynamics of factors of tourist attractiveness of a region based on survey methods. Database registration certificate No. 2023621429, 10 May 2023.

tories should pay special attention to project activities and initiatives of the local population, as not only nature but also people make this territory unique. Attention should be paid to the development of indigenous languages and cultures in the northern and Arctic territories. It makes special sense to support initiatives to develop the ancestry of local people. This will only increase patriotism in local societies, which can significantly influence the attention of residents to their own territories. Support for socially oriented projects remains an important criterion.

Russia should resolve external uncertainties as soon as possible, improve existing laws and regulations and accelerate integration with the international polar tourism industry; take advantage of the country's opportunity to actively develop tourism, create its own polar tourism brand and open the domestic market to improve the professional level of practitioners; conduct preliminary data collection and field visits to fully understand the type, distribution and characteristics of polar tourism resources, and create an appropriate assessment system. In addition, attention should also be paid to indigenous cultures. The number of indigenous and small peoples in the Arctic territories is rapidly declining.

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