

Estimation of Crimean Tour Operating Innovation Level: Results of the Research

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Abstract— A set of parameters for assessing the level of innovation of tour operators in the region is proposed. There are four groups of parameters: the parameters of innovative potential of the company, the update parameters of the tourist product, competitiveness parameters and the parameters of innovative activities efficiency. The main indicators characterizing each parameter are defined. On the basis of expert assessments the typology of tour operators of Crimea on the intensity of development and the implementation of product, technological and organizational and management innovations was developed. The main types of basic innovation strategy were revealed: the strategy of cardinal development, the strategy of preserving the achieved level, the strategy of selective development and the strategy of adapted development. The causes of changes in the level of innovative activity of the Crimean tour operating under the influence of geopolitical factors and socio-economic priorities of regional development have been studied. The ways of increasing the level of innovation of the Crimean tour operating are proposed.

Keywords— *tour operating, innovation level, tourism innovation, product, technological, organizational and management innovations.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Innovative activity in the market was considered by J. Schumpeter as "a creative destruction", that is, as a constant introduction of innovations by market agents, allowing them not to disappear, to maintain or strengthen their market positions [1]. Innovations are created (improved), distributed and used products, technologies, services and solutions that are characterized by scientific and technical novelty and meet new social needs [2]. The specific features of innovations in the service sector, including tourism, are considered to be a greater emphasis on the organizational aspects of innovation (new service concepts, new client interface and new delivery systems), as well as the key role of human resources in the generating and implementing innovations [3,4,5]. Assessing the results of innovations, a lot of authors agree that innovations contribute to the potential increase of the tourism industry, minimizing the negative consequences of crises and increasing the competitiveness of tourist enterprises and destinations as well as opening up new opportunities in the oversaturated tourist markets [6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16].

The innovation activity evaluation of tourism companies and its results is one of the urgent but the least studied sections of the theory and practice of tourism innovations. There are no

unified methodological approaches and criteria for assessing the level of innovation, no parameters for measuring the effect of innovations by enterprises. Thus, the work of C. Camison and V. M. Monfort-Mir is devoted to the analysis of problems in measurement of innovation in tourism industry-level companies [17]. The international incompatibility, the availability of inappropriate indicators in the methods, lack of specific estimative requirements was marked. To the conclusion on the lack of validity of standard methodologies in the evaluation of the tourism innovation came A.J. Nordi. In her opinion, Norwegian methodology Community Innovation Survey (CIS) does not allow to identify many of the important innovations of tourism firms [18].

Among recent works on this issue, the article by R.Genç and E. A. Genç can be mentioned. They propose to measure the role of innovation on the basis of changes in the overall quality of tourists' and service providers' life, as well as incomes received by participants in innovation strategies. At the same time, the authors recommend to assess the quality of life taking into account such economic and social indicators as gross domestic product, poverty, unemployment rate, school attendance, life expectancy and literacy rate, etc. [3]. A. Sawinska used the Community Innovation Survey (CIS) method, popular in social Sciences, for the analysis of the innovation activity of Polish travel agencies in developing proposals for the elderly [19].

The problem of developing a methodology for assessing the level of innovation becomes extremely important for tour operators of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, that face the important task of winning a stable competitive position in the domestic and international tourism markets. The purpose of this study is to substantiate the algorithm and parameters of the procedure for assessing the level of innovation of firms-tour operators of Crimea.

2. METHODOLOGY

The experience of participation of I. M. Yakovenko in the study of the innovation process in the field of international tourism (2013) was taken into account in substantiation of the research methodology of innovative activity of tour operators in Crimea[20]. We have proposed to assess the level of innovation of tour operators in the region on the basis of four groups of parameters and representative indicators: a) parameters of the innovative potential of the company

(including the share of profits aimed at innovation,%; the proportion of employees involved in innovation, of all number of employees in the company, %); b) parameters of tourism product renewal (coefficient of renewal; share of radical innovations in the total volume of service, %); c) parameters of competitiveness (market share,%; level of diversification of services (number of services types); b) parameters of innovative activity efficiency (the increase in the number of tourists; the reduction of expenditures on production services and the profit growth).

The search for primary information was carried out by online questioning of firms-tour operators of Crimea, including the members of the public organization "Tourist Alliance of the Crimea". Questionnaires were sent to 85 tour operators, listed on the Register of tour operators of the Russian Federation in April 2018. 9 tour operators (10.6% of the total) sent answers to the questionnaire.

The integral index of innovation of tour operators was calculated on the basis of the obtained information as a result of processing the questionnaires:

$$I_s = \frac{1}{m} \sum_{j=1}^m P_{ij}, \quad (1)$$

$$P_{ij} = k_j \frac{l_{ij}}{l_{\max j}}, \quad (2)$$

P_{ij} – a particular innovation indexes on groups of parameters;

m – number of evaluated features.

l_{ij} – value of the j -th innovation feature for the i -th enterprise;

$\max j$ – maximum value of the j -th feature for all enterprises;

k_j – the weight coefficient of the j -th feature (determined by the expert way).

3. ASSESSMENT OF INNOVATIVE LEVEL OF TOUR OPERATORS IN CRIMEA

The study of the results of questionnaires processing allowed identifying certain trends in the innovation activities of tour operators in the Crimea.

1. There is a dependence between the enterprise working hours in the tourism market and its innovation activity. For example, the enterprises functioning for less than 5 years have spent no more than 10% of their annual profit on innovation over the last 4 years, while firms working in the market for more than 15 years have spent 20-30% on these purposes, and in some years – up to 50% (for example, “Veles Group”). Such differences are explained by the need for radical renewal of the tourist product of the old market players, and the availability of own financial resources compared to young firms.

2. The level of innovation of the tourist enterprise is largely determined by its size (i.e. the number of tourists served or market share). For example, Sevastopol firm "Tour Ethno", one of the three biggest tour operators on the peninsula and serving annually 35-40 thousand tourists a year, can afford the introduction of the latest the high costs of innovation, including the information technology. At the same time, small start-up companies can successfully promote innovations in the form of product or service startups. This is especially true of niche tourism, where the level of competition is lower than in the segment of mass tourism.

3. The structure of the most popular innovations in tour operating in Crimea was studied in comparison with the results obtained during the sociological survey of tourist companies in 2011 [20]. From table. 1 it can be seen that with the overall growth of the share of travel agencies that introduce innovations. The share of firms that implement product innovations, including new tourist routes and types of animation, as well as technological innovations (new types of booking and sales) and marketing innovations (new types of tourist advertising) has increased more

Table 1. Innovations introduced in the activities of tour operators of the Crimea in 2011 and 2018

| Types of innovation | Share of firms that have implemented innovations, % of the total number of respondents | |
|--|--|------|
| | 2011 | 2018 |
| new tourist and excursion routes | 29.4 | 77.8 |
| new tourist and excursion objects | 17.5 | 11.1 |
| new types of accommodation | 29.4 | 11,1 |
| new types of tourist transportation | 5.9 | 0.0 |
| new types of recreation and tourism | 23.5 | 33.3 |
| new types of hotel and restaurant services | 23.5 | 33.3 |
| new types of animations | 11.8 | 88.9 |
| new types of tourist advertising | 17.8 | 44.4 |
| new services | 35.3 | 44.4 |
| new types of booking and sale | 52,9 | 77.8 |
| new types of personnel management | 23.5 | 88.9 |

significantly. It should be noted that we are talking about relatively new innovative projects for the region.

4. Analysis of the frequency of changes in the activities of tour operators showed that about 33.3% of enterprises are constantly innovating. When asked whether innovation activity has changed since 2014, 100% of the firms surveyed responded in the affirmative. This fact is explained by the new challenges associated with the entry of the Crimean tour

operators in the highly competitive market of domestic tourism in Russia and their willingness to use innovation as an argument in competition.

5. 2/3 of innovative enterprises use their own funds as financial resources for development and implementation of innovations. In terms of sanctions against the Crimea, foreign investors' funds are not used in practice. The effectiveness of innovation activity can be estimated only approximately, as special measures of financial, social, environmental or other effects of innovation in enterprises are not carried out. The respondents' answers to the question about the increase in the number of tourists after the implementation of innovative programs were as follows: a significant increase in tourists was noted by 33.3% of tour operators, a moderate – 66.7%. 100% of respondents rated the impact of innovation on the cost reduction of tourism services and profit growth as weak.

On the basis of calculation of particular indexes on 4 groups of parameters of innovative activity the integral index of level of innovative activity of tour operators in Crimea was defined. Its values were distributed in the intervals from 0.0 to 18.8 (low); from 8.19 to 16.37 (intermediate level) and from 16.38 to 25.0 (high level). The high assessment was assigned to the tour operator "Laspi-Tour" and "Tour Ethno", the average to the tour operators "Veles Group", "SNP – Crimea" and "Travel Backpack", the other 3 firms received low assessment.

The study of innovative strategies of tour operators of the Crimea allowed to work out their typology. The strategy of radical development is typical for companies that spend significant funds for purchasing and implementing advanced technologies and creating new products based on permanent modernization of production capacity. Among the companies participating in the online survey, such tour operators were not identified; among the firms working in the Crimean market, the largest Crimean tour operator "Kandahar" and the recently entered the Crimea, the famous Russian tour operator "Biblio Globus" can be included in this type. Tour operators "Laspi-Tour", "Tour-Ethno", "Veles Group" and "Travel Backpack" demonstrate the strategy of maintaining the achieved level of innovation; the innovative strategy of the tour operator "SNP-Crimea" belongs to the particular type.

Among the key problems hindering the renewal of the tourism product of Crimea, tour operators noted "inefficient legislation", "lack of investment" and "human factor: unwillingness to develop".

4. CONCLUSION

The main incentives for innovation in the field of tourism are the growth of competition in the international and domestic tourism markets and new customer needs. Innovations contribute to the renewal and diversification of tourism products, increase market share, ensuring modern standards of quality of tourism products, reduce material costs, reducing expenditures and achieving social and environmental effects.

The online survey of tour operators in Crimea revealed a low level of their innovation activity, mainly associated with the complex socio-economic conditions of region development under the influence of sanctions. Nevertheless, the entry of Crimea into the domestic highly competitive tourist market of the Russian Federation stimulates the development of product, technological and managerial innovations. The urgent objectives of tour operations in the field of innovation are: development of complex programs, considering the world innovative experience and the structure of the resource potential of the region; infrastructure, information, personnel support of innovative activity in the sphere of tourism; implementation of the state innovation policy aimed at systematic use of the results of research and development of new tourism products and technologies and coordination of actions of all participants of the innovation process.

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