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UDC 33

Portrait of a Russian Tourist. Myths and Realities¹ Dmitry S. Ageenko² George S. Papazyan³ Andrey V. Apukhtin

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ABSTRACT. Over the past few years holidays abroad are becoming more accessible for more and more Russian tourists. This increases the flow of tourists from Russia who for the first time visit the European resorts without knowing how to behave. So it raises a lot of different stereotypes about Russian tourists. And the main question of this topic to observe whether bad image really belongs to the Russian holidaymakers or not and to examine trends in this sphere and the positive factors influencing the elimination of such negative stereotypes.

Keywords: Russian tourist; stereotypes; social factors; myths and realities.

INTRODUCTION. Over the past few years holidays abroad are becoming more accessible for more and more Russian tourists. This is partly due to the economic recovery in the country, increase in the average wage and the general social improvement. At the same time, tour operators annually reduce the minimum level of prices for top holiday destinations. Five years ago, the rest for \$ 500 in three or four hotels was highly profitable, now the average price of the tour can be 300–400 dollars with more variety of hotel booking. This increases the flow of tourists from Russia who for the first time visit the European resorts without knowing how to behave.

Based on the German travel website HolidayCheck.de specialists analyzed the 590,000 evaluations of hotels operation in the last season and created a list of 10 things that most often cause the dissatisfaction of tourists from Germany.

Among the series of complaints, Germans noted the lack of cleanliness in the room, tasteless food, bad service, rude staff, lack of attention, noise and mismatch between prices and quality. However, the most interesting claim was "Russians". They found themselves in eighth place in the list. This example raises the question, whether that bad image really belongs to the Russian holidaymakers.

The law designed on the basis of tourist activities requires tourists to observe customs and traditions of the destination country. This law also obliges travel agents, which sold the ticket, to inform tourists about these norms. However, in practice it is often operators themselves know little about the country, customs and rules of conduct.

According to the statistics of online media, there are much more negative topics and comments about Russian tourists than positive and neutral together. Even travel agencies, whose task to help customers organize their rest, consider Russian tourists as dominant, arrogant, demanding, suspicious, unresponsive and unfriendly travelers. Professionals state that

approximately 40 % of Europeans having vacation in Turkey and Egypt, are unhappy to have neighborhood with Russian tourists in hotels. Most often, Europeans complain about drunken antics of Russians. Therefore "Non-Russian tours" in the tourist industry are gaining popularity. Tour operators offer such services in Western Europe for those who decided to relax on the coast of Antalya or Hurghada.

Table 1. Statistics of outbound tourism in Russia (2010–2011):

Country	2010	2011	Increase / decrease (+ - %)
Greece	386 700	612 464	58
Egypt	2 198 320	1 452 813	-34
Spain	411 138	645 303	57
Turkey	2 367 560	2 681 662	13
Finland	709 009	912 105	29
China	1 440 364	1 502 344	4
Germany	470 730	702 346	49
Total	12 605 053	14 495 894	15

As for Russian tourists, they do not worry about it and such opinions do not stop them. The statistics of the Federal Agency for Tourism shows that in 2011 outbound tourism still increased. In 2011, about 14.5 million Russians were able to rest in foreign resorts, which is 15 % more than in 2010. Only the unstable political situation in Egypt have a significant impact on tourist flows. Only 1.5 million Russians have chosen holiday in this country, which is 34 % less than the same period of the previous year (2.2 million people). Thus, these statistics helps dispel one of the stereotypes that Russians do not worry about security and are not afraid of the military situation in the country, with the reduction of the price for the tour. (Table 1)

Another popular stereotype about Russians' behavior on holidays abroad as "savages and hooligans" appeared after the time of the restructure of Soviet Union. This stereotype has since been replicated many times in print and Internet publications. Other popular stereotypes note drunkenness, scandalous and uncivilized behavior, and often these statements do not apply to citizens of the Russian Federation, but also tourists from the countries of the former Soviet Union, where foreign travelers are also identified with the "russoturisto." Another problem that irritate foreigners is way of dressing of Russians on vacation. According to the opinion poll conducted by «Skyscanner flight search» among more than 12,000 Europeans, Russian tourists found dressed worst. The British, Dutch and Spanish expressed this point of view more often. Most of Europeans note the manner of Russian women to walk through the streets in a bikini, covering only easy beach pareos and men – wear socks with the summer sandals. Another popular statements about the Russian traveler, "this man – a big fan of «all-included» and duty free", "Russians do not know measures in gaining food at the buffet", "all Russian steal small things in hotels." As for the latter "sin", many Russians justified that they take away slippers, shampoo and towels like "in memory".

In general, according to the numerous stereotypes a typical tourist from Russia can be described as "uncouth, drunken thief who takes his towels and carpets from the hotel rooms, burning fires in the swimming pool and, worst of all, teach children to take sandwiches out of the restaurant". Such stereotypes have been developed a long time ago largely due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the legacy of the post-socialist era. But how stereotypes can be applied to present Russian tourists is the question.

However, despite the numerous stereotypes and complaints about Russian travelers, they were and still are most desired guests on all resorts. Russians are among the most profitable tourists because they spend 3 times more money than people from other countries do. They always enjoy additional services: book tour, visit the expensive spa, take a rental car, leave large sums in bars, doing a lot of shopping in the resort shops. No other foreigners spent so much on vacation. Although Russian citizens were able to easily travel not so long ago, but according to the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center on April 2010 for the last 10 years, almost every fourth Russian has visited other countries for holidays. As the Italian, German, Lithuanian, and other

publications, due to the "ability to spend money in a big way," Russian tourists are desired guests in many countries.

The World Tourism Organization has published a report, which stated that the cost of Russians holidays abroad rose by 15% during the first six months of 2012. The fact that the Russians have more to spend on holidays largely depends on the mentality. If a Russian goes to rest, then it will be rest without limits. For example, you can ask the staff of any restaurant in Tunisia or in Greece and they will tell you that the Russians do not save money. The growth of expenses doesn't depend directly on the increase in Russian earnings. The reason is the distribution of credit cards and deferred payments.

In addition, experts say about the positive factors influencing the elimination of negative stereotypes. There is trend of increasing educated middle class in the number of Russian travelers. This is reflected in the results of surveys among foreign tourists. More and more tourists positively respond to Russian neighbors.

CONCLUSION

Thus, there are some results of the overall analysis:

1. There are many negative stereotypes about Russian tourists, and some facts are justified. Among the reasons for such behavior of Russian travelers, experts distinguish the Russian mentality and post-soviet legacy.

2. Despite all the negative attitudes of the media to "russoturisto", travelers from Russia are most lucrative guests for all resorts, because they like to relax in a big way.

3. There are positive trends in the behavior of Russian tourists in foreign resorts. This is largely due to the increase of educated middle class in Russia who travel overseas.

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УДК 33

Портрет российского туриста: Мифы и реальность

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Аннотация. Данная статья посвящена изучению мифов о русских туристах, путешествующих за рубежом. Основная идея данной статьи исследовать на самом ли деле данный негативный имидж оправдан применительно к российским туристам или нет, а так же рассмотреть основные тренды в этой сфере.

Ключевые слова: российские туристы; стереотипы; социальные факторы; мифы и реальность.