# **Interregional Interaction as a Strategic Basis for Tourism Recovery in the Far East**

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Abstract—The consequences of the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) for tourism are briefly outlined, and government actions to revive this economic sector are considered. It is shown that the current crisis is the worst in the entire history of the industry. At the same time, crises open up additional opportunities; innovative solutions are used to meet customer requirements. The main trends of postcrisis measures in our country are highlighted. In Russia, the strategic basis for improving the recreation sector is strengthening domestic tourism; in this regard, regional strategies for development are of particular importance. This direction is declared in the industry program and in the Program for Development of the Far East until 2035, supported by measures and targets for the creation of a tourism cluster in each region of the Far East. It is shown that the socioeconomic program includes the regional Tourism subprogram for the first time. The prerequisites for its implementation are outlined, and the centers of tourist activity revitalization are presented. Taking into consideration the geographical position and size of the Far East, the formation of a cluster policy emphasizes the importance of developing interregional relations, which are currently poorly represented. Even the conditions of territories with advanced development that have preferential treatment for business are not used in establishing relations. A model of the federal tourism interregional scheme of territorial and spatial planning, with a focus on the creation of a comprehensive tourism plan of development, is proposed. The prerequisites, structure, content, and conditions of model formation are pointed out. The implementation of the tasks outlined in the scheme focuses on the integration of the common efforts of all market players in order to form a tourist region as an integral competitive unit.

**Keywords:** crisis, development prospects, tourism cluster, tourist activity revitalization centers, model of an interregional tourism scheme

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The tourism industry was one of the first to face the coronavirus crisis, and it suffered from the pandemic most severely. Before the pandemic, international tourist trips around the world numbered 1.5 billion [1]. The total contribution of this industry to the global GDP reached 10.3% in 2019 (with respect to indirect effects; the direct contribution without regard to such effects was 3.2%). This sphere employed about 330 million people, or 10.4% of all employees [2].

According to the estimates of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) [1], global tourism was thrown back 30 years, to the level of 1990, with arrivals decreasing by 1 billion and a loss of ~\$1.3 trillion. As was estimated by the Federal Tourism Agency, the losses for tourism in Russia are estimated at 1.5 trillion rubles [3].

Experts predict that tourism might return to pre-Covid levels in 2.5 years at best and in 4 years at worst [4]. The 19th century was considered the century of tourism, although it has rightly been recognized as a phenomenon of the 20th century; the tourism industry, which has been steadily growing in recent decades, suffered the severest decline in its history [5]. This decline is incomparable with the crises of 2007–2008 and 2014. It is of a larger scale and more profound; meanwhile, it will end sooner or later, and the tourism industry will start to recover. Many countries have been developing their own mechanisms of strategic regulation in the market of tourism services. In Russia, in contrast to the previous strategies of crisis recovery, great hopes are put on domestic tourism. It is recognized as a unique driver for recovery in this economic sector. Taking into account the spatial parameters of the country, the features of the regional development, and the specific character of the resource potential in the recreation sphere, regional variants of situational improvement will take place, expanding the theory and practice of the formation of the market of tourism services, and they are worthy of attention.

The Russian Far East, like other regions, has been challenged to form its own strategy. In this case, it is necessary to acknowledge the condition that is important for the development of domestic tourism: here, interregional tourism relations are much weaker than in European Russia. The urgency of the problem is to seek variants of establishing relations in order to use them more actively, including to be used by the local population, as well as to find opportunities for varied and comfortable recreation.

#### **OBJECTS AND METHODS**

The information for our research came from materials from the official websites of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO [1], Russian Union of Travel Industry (RUTI) [3], and Federal Tourism Agency [4]), which are publicly available. The methodological framework of the research was the theoretical and scientific-practical concepts of recreational geography, in particular, ideas about territorial recreation systems and their hierarchical properties, recreational features of the environment, principles of cluster policy in tourism, etc. The basic method in use was system analysis, which allowed us to develop a hierarchical structure of the study objects and relations between them. The advantage of this is the possibility of creating a visual formalized model aimed at solving a particular practical problem. We also used the methods of expert assessments and abstraction, statistical and bibliometric analysis, generalization, and systematization.

The object of the study is to look for ways to improve and effectively develop the tourism industry, while the subject is interregional interaction in tourism. The analysis was conducted using the example of the Far Eastern Federal District with respect to its geographical position, size, details of development, and natural resource potential for the development of tourism. The geographical prerequisites of the region determine the unique development of both tactical industry-related and strategic measures that fit into the common plans of territorial development.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The huge and deferred demand that has accumulated is triggering activity in the tourism market, which has also been observed in previous crises. Today the domestic market is a priority, and this is exactly where we should expect the most significant and breakthrough solutions for crisis recovery. "As global experience shows, crises are not only inevitable, but also necessary in a certain way, since they are related not only to negative phenomena and processes; crises almost always provide additional opportunities for further growth and development" [5, p. 52]. An analysis of the consequences of previous crises (2008–2009, 2014) indicates that innovative solutions in the tourism

sector appear faster than in other economic sectors to meet the changing expectations and the behavior of customers [5-12]. An assessment of the consequences of the modern crisis for tourism and a systematization of the problems encountered and the resources to overcome them are described in detail by I.V. Loguntsova in [5]. She considered new opportunities and challenges of this serious trial for the entire tourism market. Special attention was drawn to measures such as the accelerated digitalization of tourism services, a more active implementation of state-of-the art technologies (e.g., big data, artificial intelligence, mixed and augmented reality, etc.), the use of experienceeconomy ideas, and updating individual approaches to customers. She did not leave out ecological aspects of tourism, the expansion of geography for routes, travel safety (including the sanitary and epidemiological situation of accomodations), etc. She also examined particular measures of governmental support provided to travel businesses in our country.

Each crisis, including the current one, adds corrections to the prospects for developing the tourism industry. In Russia, there are two trends.

First, the consequences of today's crisis are being closely monitored by the government, which is taking measures to mitigate the situation in the country and regions. In view of the important role of tourism for the sociocultural development of the country, as well as the previous experience of economic recovery, the development of internal tourism is accepted as a top priority, and the focus on its strengthening increased the importance of this course for the entire industry in general. Compared to previous crises, it is the determining strategic difference for recovery and is based on real data. According to research by the National Research University Higher School of Economics, the market volume of domestic tourism after the pandemic may amount to 1-1.5 trillion rubles; 41.6 million people are interested in traveling around the country in the coming years [13]. Meanwhile, in 2021, the number of residents traveling inside Russia reached as many as 56 million people [14]. These numbers evidence that the predicted estimates (27.5 million people in 2021) turned out to be underestimated, and the internal tourist flow in our country recovered by 90% with respect to the precrisis year of 2019 [13, 14]. The tendency toward the growing number of the customers in the domestic tourism market will undoubtedly affect the competition in the recreation sphere for each customer. As a result, postcrisis strategies can be adjusted for the subjects of the tourism market.

The second, but no less important, difference in the strategic plans is to refine the tasks in earlier adopted developmental programs for the Russian tourism industry for the period up to 2035 [15] with a focus on domestic tourism. In this context, the Russian Far East (RFE) is among the top priorities of the Tourism and Hospitality Industry National project.

Name of tourist project [from 15]	FEFD entity	Planning year of service onset
On the Tea Road tourism cluster	Republic of Buryatia	2022
Mamay multifunctional year-round resort in Kabansk district	Republic of Buryatia	2030
Goryachinsk resort in Pribaykalsky district	Republic of Buryatia	2025
Tourism product on Lake Gusinoe in Selenginsky district	Republic of Buryatia	2026
Tourism product in the village of Upper Berezovka	Republic of Buryatia	2026
Ski resort in the urban locality of Selenginsk	Republic of Buryatia	2024
Ski resort in Tunkinsky district	Republic of Buryatia	2025
Lena tourism cluster, Lena Pillars National Park	Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	2024
Cold Pole tourism cluster, rural locality of Oimyakon	Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	2026
Darasun medical-tourist resort	Zabaykalsky Krai	2025
Vostochnyi tourism cluster (Transgranichnyi sublcuster)	Amur oblast	2024
Talaya health resort	Magadan oblast	2021
Tourist complex on the Zav'yalov Island	Magadan oblast	2024
Development of Gornyi Vozdukh sports and tourist complex	Sakhalin oblast	2022

Table 1. Major tourist projects planned under the program of Far East development until 2035

The current situation in crisis recovery for the recreational sphere in the region. For RFE regions, strengthening tourism is envisaged not only by industry-specific measures, but it also fits harmoniously into the general plans of territorial development. The Tourism subprogram has been included for the first time in the National Program of Far East Development until 2035 for this territory as approved by the Government [16]. According to the developmental strategy of national tourism, it provides for solving a wide range of tasks aimed at the development of the industry. This has objective prerequisites that have not been properly used earlier:

- 1. The possibility of doing business in territories of advanced development with preferential treatment for business.
- 2. Increasing the use of large tourism markets in countries of Northeast Asia after restrictions are removed. In this context, emphasis is placed on the construction and infrastructure development of sea, rail, automobile, and air border crossing points, depending on the geographical position of the region. Their zones are stipulated to allocate sites for the creation of tourist objects: unique regional recreational landmarks.
- 3. Positioning undeveloped areas with preserved natural complexes. Polarization in territorial development is why developed areas within different subjects amount to from 10 to 40%. In terms of tourism, the preservation of natural complexes in large areas offers great opportunities for developing naturally oriented types of recreation activity. Demand had been rising every year before the pandemic, and now it is in especially high demand after the isolation regime.

The reverse side of this factor is described by consumers of tourism services: "It takes a long time to get to destinations; traveling is tiring and expensive. There is no infrastructure: you ride on an unpaved road for

five hours, then walk for two more hours to get to your destination, look around for one hour, and leave. Tourism clusters are necessary so that long travel times result in not just one attraction, but multiple sightseeing opportunities, as well as a chance to rest" [17].

4. The possibility of using various resource potentials in different segments of tourist activity. The main competitive advantage of the RFE is its unique recreational resources that allow attractive tourism products for Russian and international tourists [18]. This fact is also mentioned by the program developers [16]. The resource—recreation potential of the territory is a basis for the formation of its cluster [19]. The geographic prerequisites of the region determine the unique character of this formation. "The eponymous cluster in one region will look different from the cluster in another region" [20, p. 204]. Therefore, the cluster has a competitive advantage that cannot be copied.

All 11 Far Eastern Federal District (FEFD) regions should create their own tourism cluster [16]. This task, stated in the program for tourism development, can be fulfilled due to certain measures. Special consideration is given to the points of growth in the recreational sector of economic development (Table 1).

In addition to the projects indicated in Table 1, starting from 2022, the construction (reconstruction) of the supporting infrastructure facilities included in the investment projects for the creation of tourism clusters, such as Amur–Khabarovsk, Primorye, and Komsomolskii, will be cofunded. The clusters in the Program should be centers for strengthening tourist development in the other territories.

We recall that the purpose of creating a tourism cluster is to increase the competitive ability of the territory in the tourism market due to a synergetic effect, including increasing the performance efficiency of businesses and organizations in the cluster, encouraging innovations, and developing new spheres. In fact,

the creation of a tourism cluster determines the positioning of the territory and has an impact on the formation of a regional image [19, 20].

Cluster policy in tourism is an area that is well-studied theoretically and weakly implemented in practice. Tourism products representing the basis of the formed and forming clusters are created in most FEFD entities. However, this is just a small quantity of available possibilities. Even in territories of advanced development with preferential treatment for business, the share of established and ongoing recreation businesses amounts to only 2 out of the 12% indicated in long-range plans [21].

Unfortunately, the region does not stand out in terms of the varieties of types of tourism clusters either. Acknowledging the leadership of Kamchatka krai (45%), Sakhalin oblast (28), Primorskii krai (14), and Khabarovsk krai (10%) in successfully implementing recreation projects, we note that winter recreation activities are top priority. The share of recreation activity in other entities is insignificant, despite the potential for it everywhere [21].

Federal tourism interregional scheme for territorial-spatial planning. Taking into account the geographical position of the FEFD, its size (41% of the total area of the Russian Federation) and resource potential for the tourism development, and existing objective and subjective problems of the industry [18], the strategic basis for its recovery can be domestic not so much local, but interregional-tourism. At present, it is considered a local, spontaneous, and seasonal phenomenon (as a rule, there is uncontrolled recreation in the Sea of Japan). Residents of the Far East are not mass consumers of tourism services even in neighboring regions; they prefer going abroad or to European Russia for vacations if they can afford it. The situation can be changed only by improving the interregional transport system and forming new tourism clusters oriented specifically to customers from the neighboring regions. In this context, the government is basing its hope on the Federal Tourism Interregional Scheme (FTIS) of territorial-spatial planning in federal tourist centers in order to produce a comprehensive tourism plan for regional development in the FEFD [16].

Such a project is under development and will be implemented for the FEFD for the first time. What should it be like? What can be expected in using it?

The scheme will be a system-forming structure (Fig. 1). It should include nuclei or important centers of tourist attraction. They are represented by clusters that can be both independent projects and the composing elements of the integrating tourism project (e.g., Eastern Ring of Russia or mega plot clusters, such as Ethnographic Patterns of Eastern Russia. An obligatory condition for the formation and operation of such clusters is organizing transport and infrastructure that should be especially stable and available

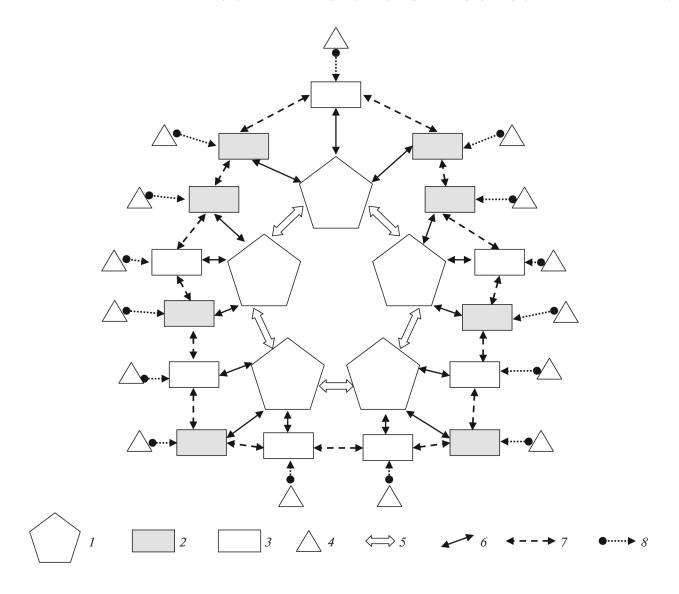
because of transport. Currently, the costs for transportation of the interregional product are 40-70%.

In terms of operation, the scheme reflecting the development strategy of tourism in FEFD in general provides for the connection of the regional and federal projects; the integration of new projects into the existing ones; the connection and coordination of ongoing projects; the possibility of prompt replacement of elements of the regional and national project in the case of force-majeure circumstances (Fig. 1). One example is the formation of Amur national cluster. It will split into three regional clusters, Amur-Khabarovsk, oriented to cruise, yacht, and cross-border tourism across the river; Komsomolskii, realized according to the plan of long-term development of Komsomolskon-Amur: and Northern Sikhote-Alin highway cluster. All projects exist both independently of each other with variations of diverse filling of a tourism product (local rank clusters) and may be the links in a product of regional and interregional levels.

The relationship between ongoing and new projects can be expressed through identity (e.g., the presence of a story plot or an event) and the contrast of tourism products (e.g., near-border shopping tourism together with sports and adventure activities). The orientation of the relationship will make it possible to use the variants of any project to achieve it goals. A special focus in this aspect should be on the products oriented to getaways and weekend tours, which are poorly presented in the regional market of tourism services. Stable and accessible transport infrastructure may be a condition for the effective interaction of the projects and the implementation of the stated task. The real mechanisms for achieving the goals of interregional contacts are the development of interregional air service and the reconstruction of 40 airports.

At the territorial and industrial level, FTIS will serve as an impetus for new tourist-recreation clusters in regions that are not conventional tourist centers. Yakutia, Amur oblast, and the Republic of Buryatia are most active in this respect [17]. The systemic basis of this scheme will make a single product of separate existing and new clusters.

To meet the requirements for the category of "planned impressions," the projects included in the FTIS should be interesting not only for customers from neighboring countries and other Russian regions that want to experience the exotic Far East, but also for residents of the RFE. The latter can be motivated by a story plot, originality, and accessibility of the project, which requires innovative and creative solutions. The impressions become a fluid product, and the market is sensitive to any innovations from developers. Successful experience has already shown results. For example, in Primorye, after the flow of international guests decreased, priorities changed to attract young tourists from neighboring Far East regions, where the facilities for summer holidays are worse. One more project that



**Fig. 1.** Hierarchical structure of the federal tourism interregional scheme: (1) federal centers of tourism: national and interregional clusters, (2) regional clusters, (3) potential regional tourism clusters, (4) tourism resources supporting the operation of clusters, (5) interaction between national tourism clusters based on stable transport—infrastructure links, (6) interaction between national and regional tourism clusters based on stable transport—infrastructure links, (7) interaction of regional tourism clusters based on stable transport—infrastructure links, and (8) availability of resources in the clusters.

can be interesting for young people was called Sea of Love, and its goal is to position Vladivostok as a romantic getaway [17].

In terms of organizational and management solutions, emphasis is placed on innovations and digitalization, being important conditions for efficient territorial—industrial tourism planning based on a new form of interactions between users and providers. According to research, digitalization has been penetrating all stages of business, from technological to marketing processes, and takes into consideration the experience of foreign countries [22]. Its main task is to get simple access to services, shorten the time to find products by parameters of interest, obtain/provide

consultation services without customer presence in a service company, and minimize service fees.

It was established that most European tourists and about a half of tourists around the world prefer planning their leisure time digitally [23]. Global practice shows that digital technologies boost the generation of new travel routes, and many conventional tourist destinations see a revival [24].

In terms of industry-related interactions, with a healthy competition between enterprises, FTIS is oriented to integrating the efforts of all market players to form a tourist region as an integral competitive unit by using tourism products arranged in one system.

Hence, if there is a clear understanding of the conditions and tendencies of development of the industry, a comprehensive tourism plan created based on the FTIS will offer a choice and substantiation of a well-thought-out area for the performance of the tourism industry in the FEFD. The fulfillment of the tasks under this plan will serve as a basis for recovering from the crisis and certainly have a positive effect for both regional and national tourism.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In crisis situations, tourism is quite a vulnerable economic activity. It reacts immediately to ongoing changes and recovers just as quickly. The experience of previous recoveries indicates that deferred demand for leisure services triggers active dynamics in this segment of the economy. The recovery period depends on the measures taken by all participants in the tourism market. Today these measures are the basis for a transformation of the industry after pandemic restrictions are removed.

We note that the current situation completely changed the tourism market, especially the international one. International tourism was unprepared for such a situation. Being aware of the situation, many countries are developing strategic plans and ways to support, giving priority to particular tourism products based on domestic demand and realizing the potential of national customers. For example, China has been taking measures to promote sporting, nature, wellness, virtual, educational, and rural tourism for nationals [25]. In many countries of Southeast Asia, religious tourism is becoming a priority recreation [26, 27]. Urban tourism in all countries of the world has been given a powerful impetus for development [28]. In general, analysts are discussing the prospects for tourism development based on structural transformations in the market of tourism services, the reorientation of tourist flows, and demand from the national population.

In Russia, expectations are related to domestic tourism; the infrastructure that is built will also serve as a basis for incoming tourism in the future. For FEFD regions that are weakly developed and distinguished by spaciousness and various resources, the tourism clusters created under the program for the development of this territory should also be oriented to interregional relations. Their effectiveness in the development of tourist activity will be largely determined by the fulfillment of the tasks specified in FTIS.

The creation of regional strategies for domestic tourism will surely add to the theoretical and practical experience of developing recreational activity and increase the importance of regional markets of tourism services. Their participants should focus exactly on domestic reserves: explore the directions and potential demand and develop new products. We note that, for a certain period of time, the recreation sphere

will bear the imprint of the conditions inherited from previous periods and the current postviral tendencies.

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