

IDENTIFICATION AND APPLICATION POSSIBILITIES OF TOURISM SYSTEM MODELS IN REGIONS

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Abstract. Systemic view on tourism as an economic activity is the best way how to characterise an economic nature of this industry. The paper presents the methodology which integrates the system approach and other research methods of social sciences; this methodology forms the basis for identification of social agents and models of tourism system. The methodology is approbated in the survey of providers of rural tourism services in Zemgale planning region. The research results are useful in future application of models for development of tourism whereas the models are useful for other purposes: they can provide additional information necessary for evaluation of tourism influence on economy. They form a basis for detecting participants in tourism clusters in regions and for evaluation of cooperation between social agents of public, nongovernmental and private sectors, and as an instrument in tourism marketing strategies

Key words: tourism, system, social network, cooperation models.

Introduction

Since the role of the tertiary sector in the economy of industrial states is growing, interest about tourism is also increasing. Development of tourism in any particular state is based on natural and manmade resources which form a tourism offer and infrastructure. Development of tourism in Latvia is one of the potentialities of globalization of the economy that should be used more extensively. This can extend potentialities of economic growth of the state as well as promote harmonious regional development. Tourists are mainly interested in the regions where initial offer is improved with additionally developed offer, which in turn can become an attractive and specific tourism product of a particular region if creation of this product is based on cooperation. Possibilities to promote cooperation are better visible when treatment of tourism industry is based on a systemic approach.

Tourism definitions embrace all the possible forms of tourism phenomenon and their analysis allows concluding that tourism is a complex phenomenon having many dimensions and social agents such as organizations and individuals, which cooperate in realization of all tourism forms.

The object of the paper is to show how to identify cooperation models in tourism by integrating tourism theories and methodological approaches of social sciences and what are application possibilities of tourism system models for development of tourism in regions.

Materials and Methods

The methodology for identification of the models of tourism systems is based on scientific research principles: system, determinism, and unity between theory and practice in the research. Unity of theory and practice becomes apparent as an opportunity to apply theoretical system conditions in investigation of a particular situation. For identifying the tourism system models, a system approach towards tourism industry, social network analysis and standardised interviews as a method of data obtaining was integrated successfully.

System approach in tourism industry. The concept of the system and systemic treatment of different issues is used in all contemporary sciences including natural, technical, arts and social sciences. Also economic theory elaborates logical systems that embrace schemes comprising explanations of economic reality. Instead of giving ready-made opinion, economics provides methods and techniques that allow interpretation of data and developing correct conclusions. A system is a unified entity of interrelated interacting elements having characteristics, which are inherent for any element separately (Līdumnieks, 1994; Тихомиров, 1996). Plurality of systems that are widespread in a society is based on characteristics of material environment as well as expression of conscious human activities (Пудич, 2006). Different notions about systems form an understanding about structural elements of a system which are parts, elements, components. In social sciences for characterizing cooperation and other processes in a system the concept of element is frequently replaced by the concept of *social agent*. Wasserman and Faust define social agents as separate individuals, corporative and collective social units (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Accordingly to Inverno and Luck, organizations and enterprises are also social agents having relationships that may lead to the particular result in case of successful management and development (Luck, 1995).

System functioning is based on cooperation. Theoretical aspects of cooperation are analysed by Fyall and Garrod. These authors have elaborated their theory by integrating ideas of Himmelman, Crott, Haywood and Murphy, which focus on an expression of cooperation. Cooperation means information exchange that leads towards mutual benefits, common stakeholder activities that are directed towards allocation of resources and meeting common aims (Fyall and Garrod, 2005).

In order to show diversity of tourism, many authors in their works consider tourism a heterogeneous activity (Halloway, 1994) viewing it as a system; however, the notion of system is developed by different approaches. One of the approaches emphasizes aspect

of geographical environment of tourism or regional aspect in description of tourism system. The concept of tourism region to characterize tourism system is used by Gunn, Leiper, Miller, Kabushkin. Tourism regions are viewed similarly like geographic space where cooperation takes place between hospitality enterprises, infrastructure, industry, producers and organizations. The authors use different approaches to characterize social agents. Leiper believes that tourism system consists of five elements: tourists, three geographic regions (tourist generating regions, tourist routes, and tourist destination regions), and producing elements which form tourism industry. Gunn believes that tourism spatially involves three elements: (1) tourist generating regions, which are basis for tourism market, (2) tourist destination regions as a place for entrepreneurship in tourism industry, and (3) transit routes that are emphasized as places which are organized in a way that attracts tourist attention and therefore is a very important element in geographical tourism system (Leiper, 2005).

The second approach in tourism theories is mainly related to general characteristics of tourism industry and tourism multiplicative impact on other economic activities. This approach is acknowledged, for example, in writings of Pompl, Halloway, Kabushkin, Kvartalnov, Birzakov. Kvartalnov's main point of view about tourism industry forms a detailed system where cooperation takes place between social agents involved in tourism and representing tourism firms, possible services; interaction between tourism and other economic activities is regulated by demand and offer (Figure 1.).

Kvartalnov also defines tourism economy as a system. Tourism economy represents a system of

relationships that have been formed within processes of production, allocation, exchange, consuming in tourism industry (Квартальнов, 2003). Birzakov defines tourism industry as a system that mutually relates enterprises and entrepreneurs providing tourists with all tourism services and goods necessary for tourism processes (Биржаков, 2003). Pompl defines tourism as the system that consists of two subsystems (nuclear systems and a subsystem (Pompl, 1996), which involve different social agents, and external environment of the system:

- 1) nuclear system - enterprises of rural tourism, tourism agencies, tourists,
- 2) subsystem – providers of services, suppliers, attractiveness, institutions,
- 3) external environment of the system – society, economy, politics, and nature.

Accordingly to Kabushkin, the tourism system is formed by two subsystems: the tourism subject and the tourism object. The tourism subject is a traveller or in other words, a participant of tourism process, which seeks opportunities to satisfy his or her needs by purchasing tourism services. The tourism object includes all tourism services that can become a destination for the tourism subject during a trip. Kabushkin also distinguishes external environment of tourism region: economy, nature, politics, and society (Кабушкин, 2001).

Detailed mechanism of how tourism system develops can be explained on the basis of theoretical conceptions of tourism product. Durovich emphasizes the main traits of contemporary tourism as a system with specific tourism marketing and looks at tourism and tourism product, services and organization of production. The system of tourism industry involves

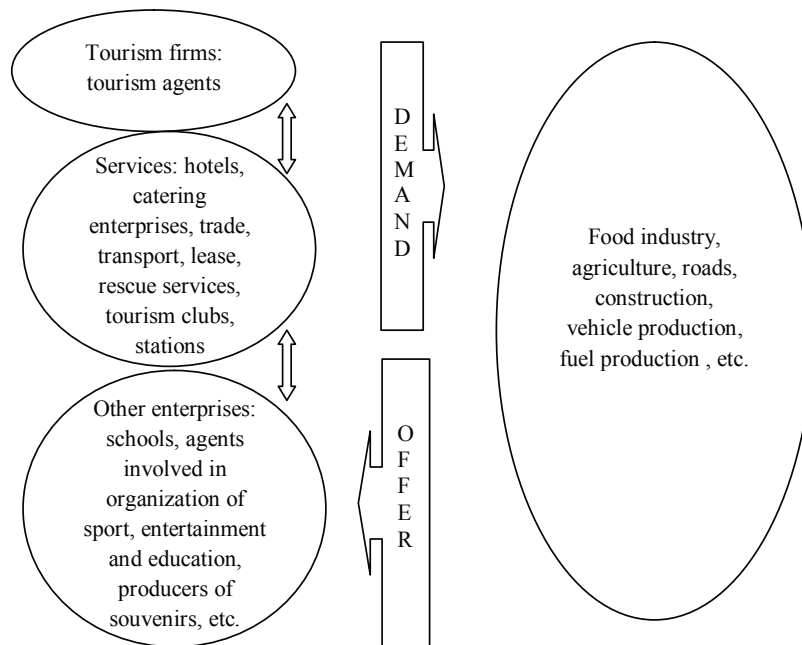


Figure 1. Tourism system.

Source: Developed by the author and based on Квартальнов, 2003

specialized enterprises, organizations and institutions (Дурович, 2008). Also Birzakov shows, which social agents are involved in creation of tourism product. In his writings the author combines both a very traditional way which is related mainly to preparation of special undertakings and objects for tourism purposes, and other tradition that emphasizes the role of social agents, which are related to knowledge, organizational and legal environment, and personnel training system (Биржаков, 2003).

Systemic view on the economic essence of tourism product as well as previously overviewed theoretical models of tourism system allows making a following statement: the process of creation of tourism product is a central activity of the tourism system, which has impact on involvement of other social agents in creation of tourism product. Tourism systems are not created; they develop when tourism product is created during the cooperation between social agents directly or indirectly involved in the industry.

In the narrow sense of the term, creation of tourism product can be viewed in relation with a presence of tourism resources. Interests of travellers and travelling motives are basis for development of systems of tourism regions. When various tourism resources are allocated in a particular territory, this is an opportunity to develop appropriate kinds of tourism with specific tourism products, for example, culture tourism, rural tourism, etc.

Social network method. Social network analysis is distinctive perspective in researches of social and behavioural sciences, because it emphasizes relationships of interacting social agents. This approach investigates social relationships between individuals, organizations or other social agents, which are connected with social ties (Wasserman and Faust, 1996). Social networks are relationship networks within community or outside it between individuals and organizations. Dyadic social relationships (between two actors), triads (three actors and their relationships) and larger social groups (subgroups of wider social network) are investigated most frequently. There are two types of network analysis: ego network analysis and complete network analysis. Both types differ in ways of obtaining data. In complete network analysis the researcher tries to obtain all the relationships among a set of respondents while ego network analysis focuses on interaction network of a single agent. In a case of ego network respondents are chosen randomly from population and the analysis concentrates on quality of individual network (size, diversity, etc.). Social network researchers ground on the assumption that all network structures have an impact on activities of network members (Flap, 2002). Organizations and service providers in tourism industry that are involved in cooperation form particular relationship type – obligations that may involve also various intermediate social agents. Cooperation ensures better information exchange between all social agents involved in mutual relationships, thus promoting especially successful

and close cooperation in the tourism industry (Luck, 1995).

Standardized interviews. In order to obtain initial data, sociological research methods are most appropriate. Systemic approach allows using standardized interviews. Survey method is useful for obtaining information on real models of tourism system which are formed in cooperation networks. Sociological research relates theory and reality that has been investigated. Theoretical models of tourism system can be used in elaboration of the questionnaire; they are useful in drawing network maps as well as in development of conceptual cooperation models in particular territory in any kind of tourism or in a context of particular tourism product.

The methodology of tourism system models' identification was approbated in 2007, when pilot research was conducted in Jelgava district (Kaufmane et al., 2008), and in 2008 during the survey which involved service providers of rural tourism in Zemgale planning region. (Kaufmane et al., 2008) Since rural tourism is defined as a kind of tourism which provides accommodation in rural houses (guest houses, B&B, farms, etc.), 110 units providing these facilities were identified both offering accommodation facilities and farm visits. The survey did not focus on museums, palaces, manor houses, catering enterprises, and managers of natural resources unless they provided accommodation facilities. Also the survey excluded providers of tourism services in centres of districts and towns. In total, 75 rural entrepreneurs were involved in the survey. A sample was made of entrepreneurs representing all districts of the region.

Results and Discussion

Data were obtained about 75 providers of rural tourism services in Zemgale planning region; this was realized by integrating system approach, social network analysis and method of sociological research. Ego networks of providers of rural tourism services identify those social agents that play different role in creation of tourism products. In total, 30 social agents were identified in all ego networks. Each ego network represented different number of agents. Two social agent groups were formed of individuals and 28 of social agents embracing organizations, institutions and entrepreneurs. Regularity of cooperation from network to network and interaction occur only if necessary. Social agents are viewed as accumulated resources.

Municipalities, neighbouring rural tourism entrepreneurs, tourism information centres or local offices, banks, mass media, tourism associations, customer services more frequently were mentioned as the fruitful cooperation partners. Infrequent cooperation is realized with catering enterprises, educational and cultural establishments, organizers of undertakings, farms, Rural Support Service, LAD, rural consultation bureau, NGOs, museums and collectors, developers of additional offer, security

companies, advertising agencies, publishers, hotels, sport organizations, craftsmen and producers of souvenirs (Figure 2.).

Systemic view on tourism industry allows identifying the most significant social agents in Latvia's regions, detailed evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of the industry, and it allows to develop conceptual basis for resolution of practical tourism problems in the future. Similar theoretical and empirical studies that would consider context and conditions of Latvia's regions have not been conducted in Latvia and accordingly to the renewed tourism policy of the EU, but they might be useful in promoting understanding about the role of tourism industry.

Structure of really functioning tourism system models comprises wide range of social agents having specific influence on development of tourism products and ensuring an operation of providers of rural tourism services. The research results allow developing conceptual cooperation model of rural tourism, which involves interaction with other sectors offering possibilities to analyse and develop methodologies for investigation of demand of tourism goods and services. Cooperation models of service providers in such kinds of tourism as culture tourism or conference tourism can provide an additional information for evaluation of influence of tourism industry on national economy.

The methodology of identification of tourism system models allows identifying various cooperation aspects (amount of cooperation (Figure 2.), results and cooperation motives) that serve as a basis for detecting of clusters in rural tourism in regions, because cooperation models of rural tourism service providers are one of the forms of economic interaction between incidental transactions where partners are independent *de jure* and geographically concentrated

in one region. Diversity of activities and status was found in cooperation; competition, cooperation, and specialization between partners were recognized. In Europe, issues related to clusters have recently attracted considerable attention. Competitive capacity of the state should be directed by bottom-up processes that express as cooperation models of independent kinds of economic activities. Development of clusters would promote competitive capacity and innovations in regions.

Regional cluster is a geographical agglomeration of firms and organizations, which operates in one or more related kinds of economic activities (Enright, 1992). The smallest structural unit of a cluster is a company, a firm, an organization or an institution. In order to identify members of a cluster, it is important to integrate all chain of production, which must also include regional public organizations, associations and local authorities (Boroņenko, 2007). Networks of social agents of rural tourism service providers meet these requirements. Amount of cooperation that is shown in cooperation networks differs; however, all rural tourism service providers in their ego networks evaluate organizations and enterprises very well, as they increase profit, identification, knowledge, new offer and new contacts that are important in creation of tourism products.

The research shows that rural tourism service providers cooperate with enterprises from public, private and nongovernmental sectors. In Latvia, optimization of cooperation between these three sectors is emphasized as one of topicalities in national tourism policy documents of recent years. Previously mentioned methodological approach can be useful in order to clarify the most significant social agents from all sectors in particular regions as well as in particular tourism ways.

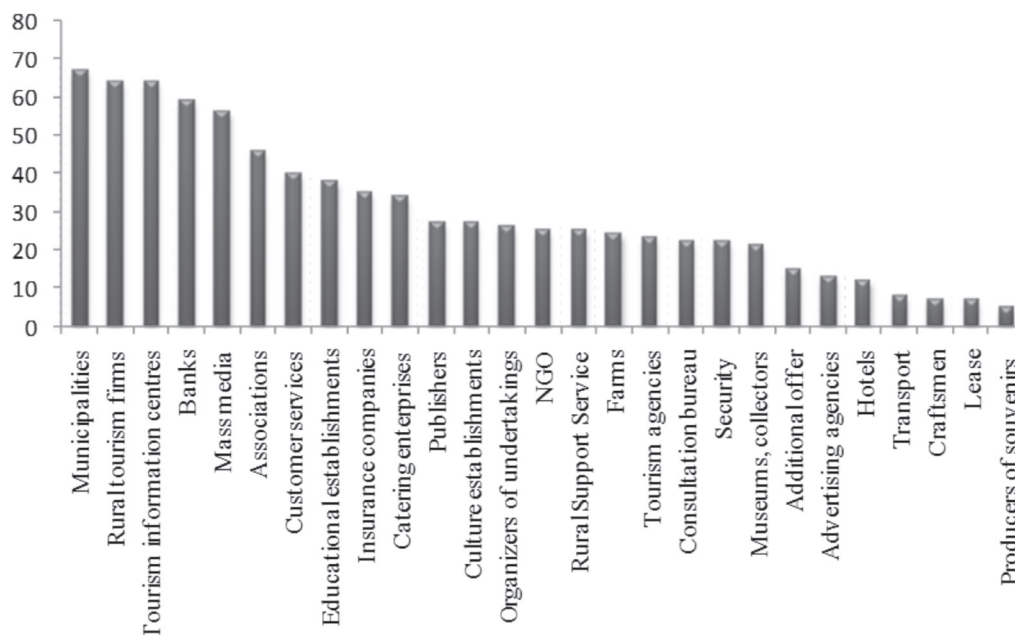


Figure 2. Amount of cooperation with social agents in rural tourism.

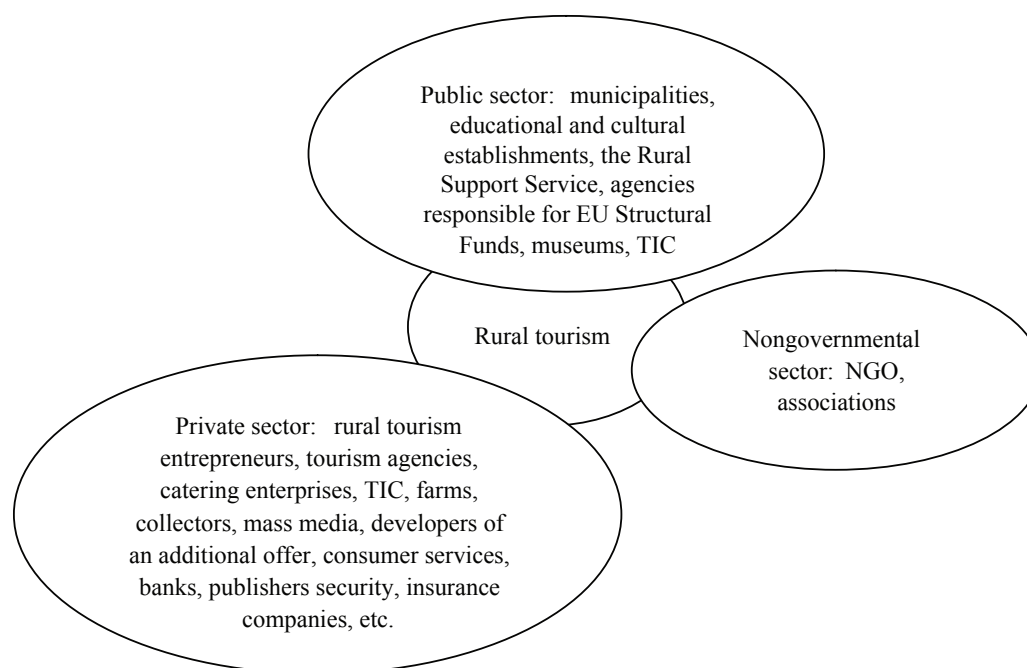


Figure 3. Social agents of public, private and nongovernmental sectors in rural tourism.

The providers of rural tourism services as cooperation partners present mainly agents of private sector; however, cooperation with the public sector (the state institutions) emphasizing local municipal territories as a space for entrepreneurship was presented in 64 cooperation networks (Figure 3).

Nongovernmental sector is mainly represented by organizations related to professional interests of rural tourism service providers. The model where particular social agents are identified can improve mutual cooperation (regular information exchange, coordination of activities, realization and financing of common undertakings with economic activities that are related to tourism (transport, culture, environment, rural development etc.)).

Nongovernmental sector comprises significant and growing part in economy in Latvia and worldwide. That is approved also by the research results: all ego networks of tourism firms involved various nongovernmental organizations. Zemgale Tourism Association, Latvian Country Tourism Association "Lauku ceļotājs" and organizations, which are involved in development of tourism products, were mentioned most frequently. The tourism associations were evaluated as significant social agents for information exchange and for attracting of new clients. Thus, they are treated as agents, which ensure tourism firms with additional profit.

One of the options of applying tourism system models is systematization of marketing strategies

within a framework of both tourism firms and industry. Cooperation models of rural tourism service providers help in identifying the main addressee of communication (Figure 4.). They also can help for the system of activities which aims to ensure particular interaction between tourism entrepreneurs and addressees of communication. Theoretically, the state institutions are the main addressee of communication. For maintenance of interaction they can apply lobby, participation in national programmes, exhibitions, etc. Municipalities and the state institutions responsible for rural development have been mentioned as significant cooperation agents in their cooperation networks by the rural tourism service providers. Also there are opportunities for interaction, for example, participation in resolution of problems relevant to the particular territory, common activities. It is possible to elaborate a similar system of interactive activities also for other groups of communication addressee.

The objective of the paper was to show conceptual possibilities of application of tourism models as a perspective for activities in future. Explicit contribution of tourism to regional development does not give identification of tourism system models due to absence of statistics explicitly reflecting all cooperative activities. Possibilities of application of tourism models can be expanded by conducting more detailed quantitative and qualitative researches about distinct social agents and their role in a particular tourism system that is under investigation.

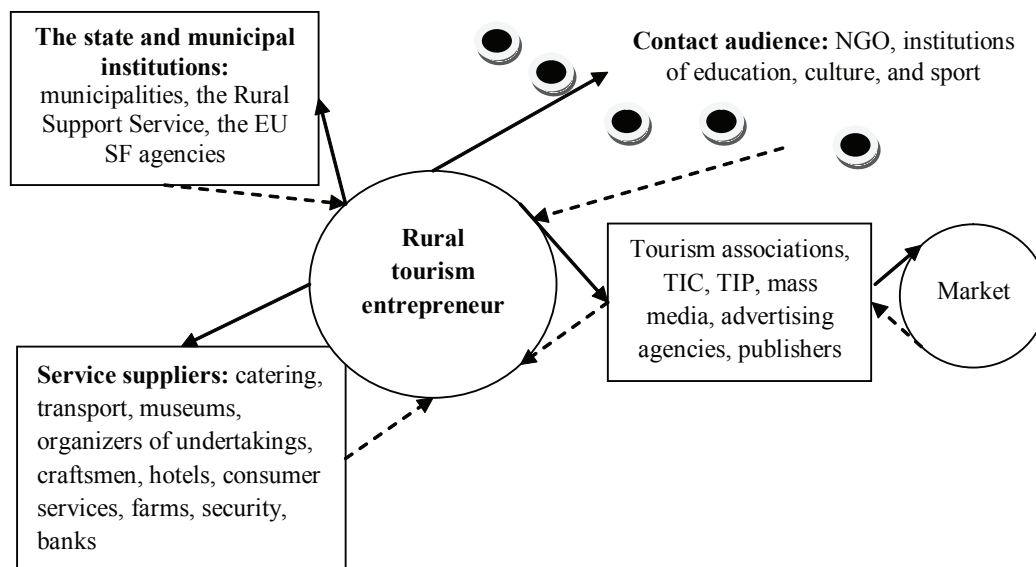


Figure 4. The main addressee of marketing communication of rural tourism enterprises.

Conclusions

Entrepreneurial activities of tourism service providers are closely tied with entrepreneurs of other sectors. Methodology of identification of tourism system models that was approbated in Zemgale planning region opens up new opportunities for investigation of tourism industry at various levels both in relation to particular tourism product and region. This is a way, how to broaden evaluation of economic situation within industry by conducting more comprehensive qualitative researches and specific data, which in turn would promote understanding of society on multiplicative effect of tourism.

Cooperation models embracing particular social agents are useful for identification of tourism clusters, evaluation of marketing communication, and for activation of cooperation between the state

and municipalities, nongovernmental and private sectors. Common experience and skills as well as long-term projects are the main aspects of activities directed towards cooperation and optimization. That kind of cooperation is most effective at regional and local levels where interests of the state and private sectors meet directly. Cooperation between the state and private sector is necessary also for development of new tourism products and services that in turn are related to improvement of competitive capacity of the industry and regional sustainability.

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