

Public-private partnership as a factor in the formation of the tourist potential of Russian territories



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ABSTRACT

Public-private partnership is one of the most significant factors in the development of tourist attractiveness of Russian territories, a mechanism for improving the quality and differentiation of tourist services. The authors aim to determine the possibilities and limitations of using the mechanism of public-private partnership in the process of forming the tourist potential of Russian territories. The study used a set of general theoretical research methods: classification, systematization, etc. The key research methods are the analysis of documents on the research problem, as well as a focus group study, where the heads of Russian municipalities acted like experts. Barriers to the development of public-private partnership practices in tourism are the following: gaps in the legal framework, the complexity of project approval procedures, the lack of effective support for these practices in the media, problems of the investment climate, the orientation of PPP projects to large businesses with an insufficient number of successful commercial players in the tourism market. The results of the study show that the favorable investment climate of the municipality is the dominant factor in the development of public-private partnerships in the field of tourism. A comprehensive approach to the development of public-private partnership projects include the following measures: the formation of institutional conditions, information and consulting support for entrepreneurs, the removal of organizational barriers, the introduction of various types of benefits and preferences for business representatives.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the most significant factors in improving the level and quality of life of the population. In modern conditions, tourism performs economic and social functions. Social functions include the following: effective organization of leisure, familiarization with the cultural and historical heritage of society, preservation, and promotion of national traditions (Frolova et al., 2016). As for the economy, it is difficult to overestimate the role of the tourism industry. The development of tourist attractiveness of territories

contributes to the creation of new jobs, increasing the financial security of local and regional budgets. An additional advantage is the modernization of other sectors of the economy, such as transport, trade, construction, communications, and others (Frolova et al., 2017; Mikhoparov, 2019).

However, today the tourism industry is experiencing negative consequences of both the financial and epidemiological crises. The COVID-19 pandemic is significantly transforming the consumption patterns of tourists, as well as the socio-economic context of the global tourism industry as a whole. The global crisis has triggered the cessation of tourist travel in many parts of the world, a reduction in the number of cultural and entertainment events and business activities, and a decline in the profitability of enterprises in the hotel and restaurant sector (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). These negative trends require the development of new approaches to support the tourism industry, as well as the modernization of those management

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practices that have shown their effectiveness for the development of tourist attractiveness of territories.

In the context of the transformation of the tourist services market, the competition of countries and individual regions for attracting tourists after the end of the pandemic is increasing. The key tools for increasing the tourist attractiveness of territories are the following: improving the quality and diversity of tourist services, their accessibility to low-income segments of the population, developing commercialized hospitality practices, securing sustainable positive impressions of tourists (Gordon, 2014), their emotional involvement (Pearce and Wu, 2015), and forming attitudes to repeat visits.

In these conditions, local and regional authorities should focus primarily on attracting the business community to solve new problems related to attracting potential tourists (Nguyen et al., 2020). Consolidation of efforts of the government, business, and population is the most significant factor in the development of tourist attractiveness of territories.

Public-private partnership projects are important for the development of the tourism industry. According to experts, achieving the goals of sustainable tourism requires innovation, development of cooperation practices between the public and private sectors (González-Morales and Talavera, 2019). Public-private partnership projects contribute to improving the quality of services, efficiency, and implementation of initiatives to strengthen the national economy (Top and Sungur, 2019). Attracting private investments allow us to improve the mechanisms of state tourism policy in conditions of limited financial resources. Thus, the public-private partnership provides such economic advantages as intensive infrastructure development, improving the quality of construction and operation of tourist industry facilities, increasing the competitiveness of the national tourist product, wider access to private capital markets, reducing the budget burden, and releasing additional resources (Magomedova, 2016). Currently, the main goals of public-private partnership in the tourism industry are to attract investment in the development of business, sports, cultural and educational types of tourism. Research results show that public-private partnership projects can be used to stimulate entrepreneurship (Marcouiller and Westeren, 2019). The involvement of the private sector in the management of tourist infrastructure facilities can help to increase their economic efficiency, achieve high performance in the organization of public recreation, security, and financial return (Ly and Zhang, 2019).

Consider the factors that ensure the effectiveness of public-private partnership projects. First, the problem is the search for private partners with the necessary financial resources, a high level of social responsibility, and professionalism in solving large-scale strategic tasks of modernizing the tourism industry.

The attractiveness of large projects for business representatives is measured by the size of financial

benefits. The key task of state and regional authorities in these conditions is to encourage and motivate private companies to participate in infrastructure projects of social significance. The main mechanisms for motivating private partners are ensuring the commercial attractiveness of investments, forming long-term payback guarantees, and legal and financial transparency of implemented projects. The effectiveness of public-private partnerships is largely determined by the level of coherence between the interests of government and business, the degree of compliance of available resources and goals, and the level of their relevance to real socio-economic conditions (Amo and De Stefano, 2019). Similar results were obtained in Russian studies of regional practices of public-private partnerships. These studies consider such factors of efficiency of public-private partnership as the legal status of equal cooperation between government and business, the consolidation of resources, the distribution of financial risks and costs in achieving the project goals.

Shortcomings in the development of commercial contracts for partnerships lead to significant dysfunctions and violations of agreements, which can trigger negative consequences for both the government and business. In this case, it is important to maintain a balance of interests in such areas as commercial success, environmental safety, and compliance with project deadlines (Frost and Laing, 2018). Interagency trust, financial support, and sustainable communication links are factors in the effectiveness of public-private partnership projects (Cahyanto et al., 2020). The stability of communication links is achieved due to the effectiveness of negotiation strategies (Vinichenko et al., 2019). The organization of negotiations, as well as the behavior of participants, must comply with the principle of good faith, openness (mutual provision of complete and reliable information about the circumstances that are important for making a decision on the development of the project), responsibility.

2. Methods and methodology

The authors aim to determine the possibilities and limitations of using the mechanism of public-private partnership in the process of forming the tourist potential of Russian territories. Within the framework of this goal, a list of research tasks has been defined, including:

1. Interpret the essence of public-private partnership in tourism.
2. Identify promising forms of public-private partnership for the formation of tourist attractiveness of the territory.
3. Identify barriers that limit public-private partnership practices in tourism.
4. Determine the possibility of using the public-private partnership mechanism in Russian municipalities.

In their work, the authors use the concept of "public-private partnership," which they propose to understand as a set of forms of long-term interaction between the state and business to solve socially significant tasks on mutually beneficial terms.

The authors test the hypothesis that the investment climate of the municipality is the dominant factor in the development of public-private partnerships in the field of tourism.

The study used a set of general theoretical research methods: classification, systematization, etc. The key research methods are the analysis of documents on the research problem (scientific publications containing the results of empirical research, regulatory sources of the Russian Federation), as well as a focus group study, where the heads of Russian municipalities (N=12 people) acted like experts. The sample is simple probabilistic. The experts were sent personal invitations to participate in the focus group with the support of the National Association of Territorial Public Self-Government. After the initial response to the invitations was sent out, 32 responses were collected. After specifying the time and place of the focus group study, 14 participants remained in the sample. Only 12 experts attended the focus group. Focus groups were held in a full-time format. When conducting focus groups, all the methodological principles of organizing this kind of research were taken into account, including voluntary nature, goodwill of the moderator, etc. The gender and age composition of the respondents is represented by men aged 43 to 51 years, with at least 5 years of experience in a managerial position. The results of the focus groups were transcribed manually.

The choice of these methods is determined by the specifics of the research problem. In particular, the opinion of the heads of municipalities, as the key subjects of building partnerships, is of interest. In addition, the government structures a priori determine the vector and tools for developing the tourist attractiveness of Russian territories, which determined the choice of the focus group method.

The limitations of the study are related to the scope of the problem under consideration: A number of statistical data are not freely available and cannot be used in the analysis. The second limitation of the study is the focus of the authors' attention on the position of the heads of municipalities of the Russian Federation. At the same time, a public-private partnership requires studying the opinions of representatives of large business structures, which can be considered as a promising direction for further research on this topic.

3. Research results

3.1. The essence of public-private partnership in tourism

The heads of municipalities were asked to answer the question of whether they link the socio-economic well-being of their territories with the

development of tourism. More than half of the experts answered yes to this question, considering that the tourism industry contributes to improving the investment climate, modernizing the infrastructure profile of the municipality, and preserving the historical and cultural heritage. This conclusion correlates with the results of most Russian and foreign researchers who consider tourism as a driver of the socio-economic development of territories. The mechanism of public-private partnership is considered by the experts as a desirable, but not a priority tool for building the tourist potential of Russian territories. This circumstance is usually associated with the secondary role of the development of the tourism industry in the field (due to the severity of traditionally acute socio-economic problems of the development of Russian municipalities), as well as with the institutional limitations of these practices. During the focus groups, the experts admit that the formation of the tourist attractiveness of the municipality is desirable but difficult to implement a model for the development of the territory. This is due to the workload of the authorities with obligations in solving acute issues of the social sphere. In particular, the experts expressed the opinion about "the lack of trust between potential partners," "passivity of business structures," "the lack of qualified municipal personnel in the field of PPP in municipalities far from major regional centers." In general, the experts rate the institutional environment for the use of public-private partnerships in tourism quite low. The results of the focus group show that the formation of the tourist attractiveness of the territory is presented by the authorities as a complex, multi-level process, which should include the popularization of the natural potential of the territory, ensuring the integration of recreational resources into a competitive tourist offer.

Table 1 shows forms of public-private partnership in the formation of the tourist potential of Russian territories.

However, in the course of the study, the heads of municipalities rather highly evaluated the potential of using this mechanism in the field of tourism. This is due to the fact that the creation of a successful organizational alliance between the government and the business community will allow us to implement Russia's national strategic interests at a qualitatively new level. Summarizing the statements of experts about the essence of the partnership between government and business in the field of tourism, we can identify the most popular forms of it, namely:

1. Long-term strategic cooperation in solving specific problems of developing the tourism potential of the territory, which do not affect the property relations of partners (for example, "a service contract," "an agreement on the promotion of a tourist product").
2. Participation of the business community in the implementation of programs that involve their

financial support of state initiatives in the field of tourism, programs with public, private, or mixed

ownership (for example, “lease of municipal property for tourism purposes”) (Table 1).

Table 1: Forms of public-private partnership in the formation of the tourist potential of Russian territories, N=12 (multiple choice)

Form	Number of mentions
service contract	8
participation of the business community in the financing of state initiatives in the field of tourism	6
rental of municipal property for tourist purposes	7
agreement on the promotion of a tourist product	9
initiative budgeting	3
other	6

The results of the focus groups illustrate the pessimistic assessments of experts on the availability of resources to form the tourist attractiveness of municipalities. The situation with infrastructure resources in tourism is particularly difficult. Experts noted that when holding large events of event tourism, the infrastructure profile of small cities is “not ready” for the influx of tourists.

According to experts, most major projects related to the creation of tourist clusters, modernization of tourist infrastructure, and/or roads as a “tourist artery” are impossible without building partnerships between the state and business. As a rule, each such alliance is temporary, since it is created for a certain period in order to implement a specific project and ceases to exist after its implementation. According to experts, the economic efficiency of PPP projects in the tourism sector is achieved through the following provisions:

1. Optimizing costs and reducing the financial burden on the Federal and regional budgets;
2. Focus on results and, as a result, reduce the share of unrealized and/or partially implemented projects;
3. Improving the quality of management in PPP projects by attracting qualified personnel (commercially successful entrepreneurs);
4. Increasing competition and, as a result, reducing the level of corruption and budget outflow, as well as improving the quality of PPP projects.

Thus, we can conclude that the mechanism of public-private partnership is quite popular today for the development of the tourist potential of Russian territories. However, the dysfunctions of the institutional environment of the municipalities of the Russian Federation do not allow us to consider it as a priority among all the measures that are being taken to develop the tourism industry in Russia. One would assume that the promotion practices of the use of this mechanism both at the Federal and at the regional level, will result from the implementation of the Strategy of tourism development in the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020 (where one of the provisions aimed at implementing measures to develop the public-private partnership in the tourism sector). But according to most experts, today the essence of public-private partnership in the tourism sector is not quite clear to municipalities,

which results in some “fragmentary,” “limited,” “opaque” use of PPPs in Russian municipalities.

Analysis of the distribution of projects in the tourism sector based on PPP allows us to note that their largest number is in the Central Federal district–9, and the smallest in the Ural–2 and North-West–1 Federal districts. The main objects of PPP, as a rule, are:

- Hotel clusters (accommodation facilities, related facilities of the hospitality industry).
- Sanatorium and resort complexes located on land plots in specially protected natural territories.
- Objects of the cultural and historical heritage of Russia.
- Objects of educational (children’s) tourism.

According to the National PPP Center in 2019, the total share of PPP projects in the tourism sector does not exceed 23% of all concession agreements concluded in the social sphere. The total amount of financing for such projects is 43 million rubles, which is no more than 22% of the total investment. Experts believe that it is necessary to increase these indicators since the tourism industry has a multiplier effect. Investment in the tourism potential of municipalities will contribute to the creation of new jobs, the development of the commercial sector and entrepreneurship in local communities, and will create prerequisites for improving the quality of life of the local population.

3.2. Promising forms of public-private partnership for the formation of tourist attractiveness of the territory

The study showed that according to the heads of municipalities, one of the most promising forms of PPP in the field of tourism is the conclusion of an agreement between the municipality and the entrepreneur on the implementation of the last repair and reconstruction works on the object of tourist display. The municipality owns such an object, while the entrepreneur allocates financial resources. In turn, the municipality grants the second party the right to own and use the object of tourist potential for a certain period established by this agreement. The demand for this form of PPP for the formation of tourist attractiveness of Russian territories is supported by statistical data: More than 60 % of the objects of the cultural heritage of the

Russian Federation are in a pre-accident or emergency condition, which requires restoration and repair work; the development of the natural and historical and cultural potential of Russian municipalities does not exceed 20% due to the absence of modern tourist display facilities, marked tourist trails, etc. created on their basis.

The most important element of tourist infrastructure is the hotel industry. Accommodation is central to the range of services provided to tourists during their travels and is an integral part of every tour. Currently, in Russian conditions, it is becoming urgent to create a new and comfortable hotel fund, equipped in accordance with modern requirements. The hotel market of municipalities consists of 80% of accommodation facilities of the old Soviet construction. The Russian hotel industry lags behind world standards and is experiencing serious problems: Insufficient hotels of the average price category, moral and physical deterioration of hotel facilities, low service level, shortage of qualified personnel, and settlement in hotel complexes.

The financial and budgetary limitations of municipalities do not allow municipalities to solve these problems independently, so experts believe that only attracting private investment will allow the authorities to provide conditions for the development of the tourism potential of municipalities. Positive results of attracting investment for municipalities will be:

- Saving the municipalities' own financial resources by attracting private funds.
- Construction of new tourist infrastructure facilities and tourist potential of the municipality in whole or in part at the expense of private investment, if it is possible to preserve them in municipal ownership, after a certain period of operation.
- Reconstruction and overhaul of tourist infrastructure and cultural and historical heritage sites.
- Improving the quality of services for tourists provided during the operation of a private partner of a tourist attraction.
- Increasing the level of satisfaction among tourists with the level of development of tourist attractions by expanding the range and quality of services offered.
- Increasing the number of tourist attractions on the territory of the municipality.

3.3. Barriers that limit public-private partnership practices in tourism

The results of the study showed that shortcomings in the development of commercial contracts for partnerships lead to significant dysfunctions and violations of agreements, which can trigger negative consequences for both the government and business. Separately, we can note that it is difficult to maintain a balance of interests in such areas as commercial success, environmental

safety, and compliance with project implementation deadlines. According to the experts, excessive bureaucracy inherent in the authorities reduces the information openness of power structures in partnership relations. Most experts note the lack of interest among business structures in participating in PPP projects and the weak activity of representatives of the business community.

The overall rating of barriers that limit the practice of public-private partnership in tourism can be presented as follows: Gaps in the legal framework, the complexity of procedures for approving PPP projects, the lack of effective support for these practices in the media, low investment climate and lack of successful commercial players in the tourism market.

Since public-private partnership as a mechanism for developing the tourist attractiveness of territories is not fully used in modern Russian conditions, experts consider sponsorship practices as promising forms of interaction between business and government. The respondents expressed the conclusion that the investment of financial resources by sponsors and patrons on a free basis in tourist potential objects will improve the investment climate of the territories (Fig. 1).

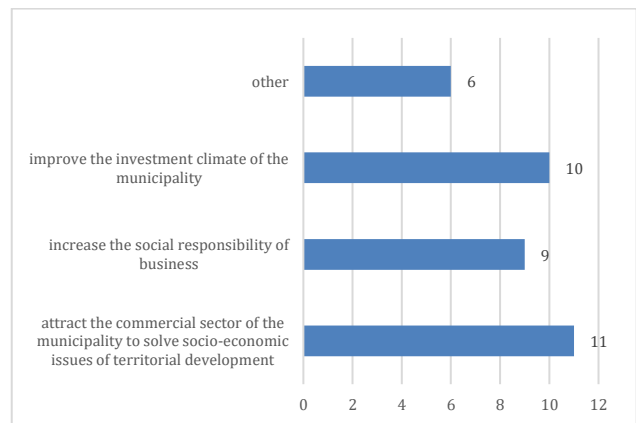


Fig. 1: Tools for improving the investment climate as a factor in the development of the tourist potential of the territories

From the legal point of view, charity is not a form of partnership, since it has a unilateral implementation procedure. However, experts assign a special role to patronage in the development of tourist potential objects.

3.4. Opportunities for using the mechanism of public-private partnership in Russian municipalities

Despite the existence of a fairly large range of problems and barriers to the use of the public-private partnership mechanism in Russian municipalities, the experts' opinions on the possibilities of its use are quite optimistic. In particular, the respondents noted the gradual transition of government structures to the principles of project management. This circumstance creates an

impetus for the development of PPP in the tourism sector through the introduction of modern project technologies, including calculating the effectiveness of PPP projects, planning the content and risks of project activities, budgeting, and controlling the cost of the project, managing project deadlines, etc.

According to the heads of municipalities, the development of a regulatory and methodological framework for PPP also has positive dynamics. The current “gaps in the right field should be taken into account and eliminated at the regional level.” According to the experts, “the development of PPP institutions through the creation of a register of industry developers and operators not only at the Federal but also at the regional level” deserves special attention. In Russia, according to the heads of municipalities, in general, there are prerequisites for the development of PPPs in the tourism sector. This includes reorientation of tourist flows from external to internal tourism, creation of new special economic tourist and recreational zones and territorial clusters, support for small and medium-sized businesses involved in the development of tourist infrastructure, etc.

It is interesting that the respondents see a direct relationship between the level of development of the investment climate of the municipality and the number of PPP projects (Fig. 2). In particular, the experts say that the favorable investment climate is the result of the removal of a number of organizational barriers from the authorities, the introduction of various types of benefits and preferences for business representatives, information and consulting support for entrepreneurs. It is possible to inform potential investors about the tourist investment attractiveness of the territory by using marketing tools that are available to municipalities. Such marketing tools, according to the experts, should include:

1. Creating and maintaining a tourist investment portal that will clearly reflect the investment opportunities of municipalities.
2. Creating an investment map and/or passport of the territory where tourism is planned to be developed.
3. Advertising in mass media about tourist investment attractiveness.
4. Conducting and participating in investment forums, conferences, seminars, exhibitions.
5. Development and dissemination of information and analytical materials that clearly demonstrate investment proposals.
6. Personal mailing of up-to-date information about investment platforms to potential investors.

This comprehensive approach increases the interest of potential investors, reduces their risks and uncertainty as a partner of a PPP project. In addition, Vice versa, the opposite situation provokes the outflow of investors and the passivity of business structures. This confirms the hypothesis of the study that the investment climate of the municipality is the

dominant factor in the development of public-private partnerships in the field of tourism.

Recently, the commercial success of tourism clusters has been a catalyst for the development of PPPs in the tourism sector. According to the experts, tourism clusters ensure the creation of a unique tourist space that allows you to meet the need of tourists to get new experiences. The opportunity to offer the traveler a tourist product that has authentic features of local culture and traditions supports the tourist brand of the territory, ensures the formation of sustainable tourist demand.

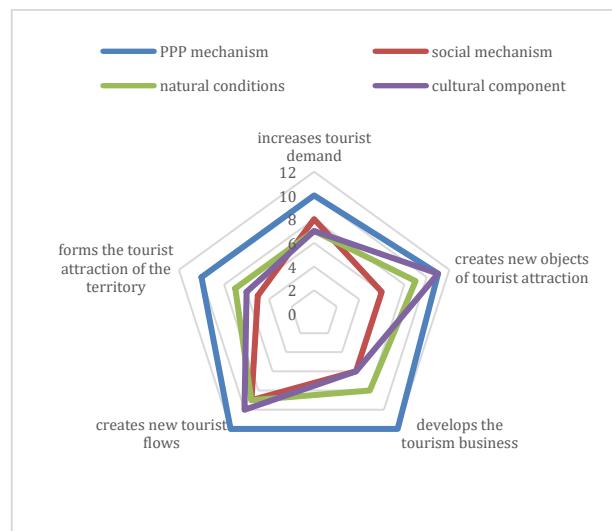


Fig. 2: Factors of influence on the formation of the tourist potential of the territories

The main prerequisites for the possibility of creating tourism clusters using the PPP mechanism are tourism innovations (for example, changing the format of tourist displays in the direction of promoting interactive and virtual technologies), cooperation between small and medium-sized businesses, including in the context of creating a single line of tourist services/products, mutual advertising, etc. Due to the synergetic effect, the efficiency of all organizations in the cluster increases. The result of creating tourist clusters is to increase the competitiveness of the municipality in the tourist market. However, the organization of a tourism cluster requires a high degree of trust among participants in relation to each other, long-term horizontal planning of the economic process, a wide range of intersectoral relations, a combination of technologies of cooperation and competition.

4. Discussion

Currently, the tourism industry is one of the most dynamic and promising areas of socio-economic development. The development of domestic and inbound tourism in Russia is currently at the stage of popularization and increasing mass popularity. Russia has a huge potential, including unique natural and recreational resources, rich cultural and historical heritage (26 UNESCO world heritage sites), which opens up potential opportunities for tourism

growth. However, in the context of the global financial crisis and current economic uncertainty, including the market of tourist services, the search for resources and new opportunities for the development of the tourism industry is becoming urgent. Thus, the development of tourism based on PPP mechanisms can be a means of enhancing the tourist attractiveness of the territory.

One of the most significant elements of the tourist potential of Russian territories is its cultural and historical heritage. At present, the state of cultural and historical heritage objects does not meet the modern requirements imposed by the consumer of tourist services. The need for restoration and repair, outdated and worn-out material and technical base, insufficient funding, undeveloped information and communication infrastructure, poor technical equipment are among the most significant restrictions on the tourist flow to the objects of tourist attraction. In the tourist infrastructure, it is necessary to solve the problem of quantitative sufficiency and improve the quality of service through its large-scale modernization.

To this end, it is necessary to create conditions for effective investment in tourism infrastructure in order to reduce costs and improve the quality of work, while ensuring the availability of tourist services to consumers and the minimum necessary burden on the budget system. Interdepartmental trust, financial support, and sustainable communication links are crucial factors in the effectiveness of public-private partnership projects.

In the course of the study, the heads of municipalities rather highly evaluated the potential of using this mechanism in modern conditions. These opinions are due to the lack of financial and budgetary resources of municipalities. In addition, the creation of a successful organizational alliance between the government and the business community will allow us to implement Russia's national strategic interests at a qualitatively new level. Most major projects related to the creation of tourist clusters, modernization of tourist infrastructure and/or roads are impossible without building partnerships between the state and business. The positive consequences of using PPPs are cost optimization and reduction of the financial burden on the Federal and regional budgets, focus on results, and, as a result, a decrease in the share of unrealized and/or partially implemented projects, increased competition, and improved quality of PPP projects.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, we made the following conclusions. The heads of municipalities as a desirable but not a priority area of territorial development consider the tourism sector. The consequence of this provision is the lack of attention of experts to the possibilities of using the PPP mechanism in the tourism sector.

The prospects for using PPP as a factor of building the tourism potential of Russian territories are determined by the following factors:

- Saving of own financial resources of municipalities at the expense of attracted private funds.
- Renovation of tourist infrastructure (construction of new facilities, repair, and reconstruction of cultural and historical heritage sites).
- Improving the quality of services for tourists provided during the operation of a private partner of a tourist attraction.
- Increasing the level of satisfaction among tourists with the level of development of tourist attractions, by expanding the range and quality of services offered.

The barriers that limit the practice of public-private partnership in tourism are presented in the following list: gaps in the legal framework, the complexity of procedures for approving PPP projects, the lack of effective support for these practices in the media, the low investment climate, and the lack of successful commercial players in the tourism market, the orientation of PPP projects only to large businesses. Separately, it is worth noting that it is difficult to maintain a balance of interests in such areas as commercial success, environmental safety, and compliance with project implementation deadlines.

Despite the presence of a fairly large range of barriers in Russian municipalities, the experts' opinions on the possibilities of using PPPs in the tourism sector are quite optimistic. In particular, there is a gradual transition of the government structures to the principles of project management, the activation of the cluster approach, and the elimination of legal gaps in PPP at the regional level.

The study confirms the hypothesis that the investment climate of the municipality is the dominant factor in the development of public-private partnerships in the field of tourism. A comprehensive approach (providing tax incentives and other preferences, raising awareness of potential investors using marketing tools, etc.), increase the interest of potential investors and reduces risks and uncertainty upon signing PPP projects.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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