Use of innovative methods in the management of tourist transport infrastructure

Gvantsa Arjevanidze, Nargiza Karkashadze, Tinatin Gugeshashvili, Izolda Dangadze,
Akaki Tsereteli State University, Kutaisi, Georgia
Gvantsa.arjevanidze@atsu.edu.ge, Nargiza.karkashadze@atsu.edu.ge, Tinatin.gugeshashvili@atsu.edu.ge, Izolda.dangadze@atsu.edu.ge

Abstract: In many countries in the world, including Georgia, tourism has become one of the leading sectors of the country's economy and a source of raising public finance. Tourism is recognized as one of the priority areas for the development of the Georgian economy and contributes to the socio-economic development of the country. In particular, it is important to explore the existing tourism transport infrastructure and introduce innovative technologies in its management. The paper describes some innovative methods whose use will contribute to the development of tourism in Georgia and will significantly increase the attraction of visitors.

Keywords: TOURISM INDUSTRY, TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT, TOURIST ATTRACTIONS, TOURIST CLUSTER.

1. Introduction

Georgia, with its geopolitical location and existing natural, historical or cultural resources, has tremendous opportunities for tourism development. A comparison of the growth rates of the world and Georgia in the tourism sector shows that in the last five years the number of travelers in Georgia has been growing at a much faster pace than in the world, with the exception of the pandemic period. The international tourism market is one of the key components of Georgia’s economic growth. The share of transport services in the overall structure of tourism services is more than 40%. Today, when tourism is recognized as one of the priority areas of economic development of Georgia, it contributes to the country’s socio-economic development, it is especially important to study the existing tourism transport infrastructure and introduce innovative technologies in its management.

2. Preconditions and means for resolving the problem

Market signals at the current stage of tourism development are characterized by several groups of parameters as follows:

1. Economico:
   o Economic growth and integration;
   o Raising the level of economic development of the regions;
   o Increased investment in the tourism industry;
   o Raising the level of infrastructure development of the country;
   o Hypercompetition.

2. Political:
   o Development of state and regional tourism policy;
   o Simplification of tourist formalities;
   o The impact of political events on tourism demand.

3. Sociocultural:
   o Changing lifestyles;
   o Increased demand for tourism services;
   o Raising the tourists’ demands;
   o Increasing travel accessibility and raising population mobility;
   o Development of information and communication technology.

4. Industry group:
   o Development of consolidation and integration processes;
   o Development of new tourist destinations;
   o Development of a range of tourism services;
   o Changing the forms of customer relationship;
   o Increasing the impact of the sector on the economy.

These parameters influence the management methods used in the current practice of tourism management in Georgia. Today, strategic, conceptual and program-targeted approaches are most often used in management. The results of applying these approaches are the targeted programs, strategies and concepts for the development of regions and cities, as well as sectoral visions and strategies. The target-oriented approach is relatively new. Among these there are programs of scientific and technical, economic, social, regional, and environmental orientation. The target-oriented method of management is widely used today, however, it has a number of significant drawbacks, namely:

1. Methodological incompleteness (researchers have no a common point of view on the basic concepts of target-oriented planning and management, the ratio of the plan and target complex program; this method is used in most cases to improve the existing management systems);
2. Low cohesion of control systems with the problems for which they are created;
3. Lack of methods for calculating the economic efficiency of programs;
4. Low efficiency in solving the problems set by the program;
5. Lack of responsibility for the results of the programs.

These shortcomings fully applicable to programs built using the target-oriented approach; in addition, the lack of an integration approach in them can be distinguished. For example, “Development of domestic tourism in Georgia and “Development of domestic and inbound tourism in Georgia” indicate the dependence of tourism on the development of transport and engineering networks, the development of certain types of transport and the effectiveness of their management. However, the programs for the development of certain types of transport, transport strategies, the visions for the development of certain areas of the transport industry do not take into account either the needs of the tourism industry or tourists, despite the ever-increasing influence of tourism on transport. Particular attention is paid to the development of tourism infrastructure. The program considers 3 possible scenarios for the development of domestic and inbound tourism:

1) Development of tourism infrastructure in all subjects, regardless of their economic development, infrastructure development and the level of tourism potential;
2) Development of tourism infrastructure for a limited number of subjects of Georgia, the most promising in terms of the development of domestic and inbound tourism;
3) Development of the most promising tourism infrastructure in terms of the development of domestic and inbound tourism using the cluster approach, as well as the implementation of projects directed at the accelerated development of interregional tourism opportunities and improving the quality of services.

The program selects the third scenario. As result of the implementation of the program activities, it is planned to create a network of modern resort and tourist facilities within the relevant
tourist, recreational and auto-tourist clusters that meet international standards and can significantly increase the competitiveness of the country’s tourism services market. Why the auto-tourist clusters were chosen, and what they are? These clusters will become enlarged investment projects that provide for the creation and construction of new tourist facilities in limited areas provided with appropriate state support. The tourism cluster is a set of tourist and recreational special economic zones created by the decision of the Government of Georgia and located in one or more areas of the territory of Georgia and municipalities defined by the government. Special economic zones of tourist-recreational type represent another direction of tourism development management in Georgia. The creation of such zones has 2 goals:

1. To develop the existing resort areas
2. To attract investment to the region.

The mechanism for establishing special economic zone for tourism development is widely used in many countries.

Modern researchers of the transport industry name 5 main areas that can be attributed to the management of the development of tourism transport infrastructure services, namely: the development of transport infrastructure, the improvement of transport infrastructure management, the introduction of innovations in the field of transport infrastructure management, changing the role of government in the management of transport infrastructure and the work of non-governmental organizations and associations. Let us consider these areas in more detail.

1. Development of transport infrastructure through: - improving the road network; - traffic calming; - promotion of "smart driving"; - improvement of the regulatory and legal support of the transport industry;
2. Improvement of transport infrastructure management through:
   - management of traffic flows; - management of public transport; - use of a client-oriented approach; - organization of parking sites and lots;
   - use of automated control systems (monitoring, video surveillance, automatic control systems, electronic payments).
3. Introduction of innovations in the field of transport infrastructure management through: - use of intelligent transport systems; - navigation and information services.
4. A change in the role of the state in the process of managing the development of transport infrastructure network is seen by theoreticians in the form of the development of various mechanisms of public-private partnership, which, unfortunately, do not work in Georgia to the full extent.
5. The work of non-governmental organizations and associations. Some researchers propose in their works the creation of a non-profit organization - an association of representatives of the tourism and transport sector, however, instead of integration, transport and tourism companies more often choose competition, penetrating into each other's business environment, creating subsidiary companies or departments engaged in transportation.

We have polled a staff employed in the field of tourism throughout Georgia, with the aim of identifying problems related to the transport services of tourists, which prevent tourism development. A total of 50 specialists in the field of tourism - aviation, rail, road transport (as the main form of transport in tourism) were interviewed. In the survey, which included an assessment of the level of development of tourism transport infrastructure in Georgia, the lowest score was 3 points (out of a maximum of 10 points) for bus stations and road infrastructure, followed by road infrastructure with 4 points, rail transport, road transport, railway stations and the level of service in transport (equal points (5 points each), the level of staff training in transport is slightly behind the level of training of specialists in tourism (difference is 1 point), the same and higher rates (7 points each) were obtained by airports and air transport. The service satisfaction level indicator in tourism rated 8 points. Overall, the specialists emphasized the low level of development of transport infrastructure in tourism in Georgia and the urgent need to undertake a number of state measures to radically change the inter-regional tourism opportunities and the quality of services.

A special role in the development and management of transport infrastructure in foreign countries is played by the state, which was originally the owner of major transport resources and remains the main investor in transport tourism infrastructure and is responsible for the strategic development of transport. In order to realize and effectively manage the country’s transport potential, states use the following mechanisms:

1) Privatization or partial privatization of transport complex enterprises on the basis of concessions, lease agreements or other forms of public-private partnership in order to attract public investments;
2) Comprehensive state regulation and financing of the transport complex;
3) Attracting private companies to manage state property without the right of ownership being transferred to them.
4) A combination of several options.

The popularity of urban passenger transport among the population varies from country to country: in the US it accounts for 15-20% of total travel, in Japan and France - 20-30%, in the UK and Germany - 30-40%, in Russia – more than 75% [Stephen J. 2009. 447], but tourists very often use urban passenger transport while staying in another country. However, every country and not every city can offer tourists convenient travel schemes, comfortable and safe transportation, interesting routes. The awareness of tourists about the local transport system and effective management plays an important role in this. In developed countries, this sector is actively developing deregulation, privatization and reduction of state subsidies, in order to gradually move to covering the operating costs of urban passenger transport, not from the state budget, but from the local budget. In countries that are leaders in terms of tourism competitiveness and tourist infrastructure development, government subsidies to cover the operating costs of transport reduced to zero. At the same time, the government maintains the relevant legislative regulation of transport activities of administrative, control and supervisory nature. The main trends in the management of tourism transport infrastructure in developed countries are as follows:

- Demonopolization and privatization of transport enterprises;
- Modernization of the existing transport networks, increasing their capacity;
- Reducing the share of transport costs in the value of products and services;
- Development of the new modes of transport;
- Reducing the number of vehicles in large cities;
- The priority development of urban transport.

In developing countries, the main focus is on increasing transport capacity, rapid development of roads and railways, construction of airports, and development of local airlines. The main role of transport infrastructure has always been to ensure access to tourist destinations. At the same time, at this stage, the foreign experts in the planning and development programs of tourist areas are reassessing the transport infrastructure. The reassessment of the role of transport in tourism began in the late 1980s. It has been realized that the growing flows of tourists who have the opportunity to travel to almost any part of the world could cause irreparable damage to some areas and lead to the degradation of tourism resources [World Economic Forum. 2013].

There are three main strategies in the field of tourism transport management in developed foreign countries:
1. Measures to tighten the use of tourism resources, their fencing, traffic restriction and redistribution, promotion of the use of alternative means of transport.

2. Regulation of the use of territories by restricting/prohibiting entry from the territory zone, introduction of entrance fees (the most controversial option), use of special traffic schemes for visitors, management of public and private transport networks, speed limit, size of groups of visitors, characteristics of vehicles used, and marketing.

3. Establishing oversight of the location, scale, activities and type of tourism activities that affect traffic flows.

Strategies share similar objectives, but none of them are universal. There are several interstate partnerships dealing with the transportation of tourists, including: NETS, based on the Association for Sustainable Mobility, G.A.S.T. - Association of Car Free Tourist Destinations and IACF - Association of Car Free Tourist & Spa Destinations in Bavaria, MOST and others.

The foreign tourist centers address the problems of tourism transport infrastructure development in different ways. First of all, attention is paid to air transport, airlines, airports, because in many countries most of the visitors arrive to the country by air. In large countries and island states, regional and local aviation play an important role in transportation of travelers. Tourist buses, taxis, public transport are the main means of transporting them to the host country. Buses, trains, ferries, sea and river boats are used by tourists both for traveling between countries and for excursions. The tourism business of each country or region has a priority to develop a specific type of transport.

The United States and Canada have the most developed aviation and road (private and rental) transportation. The most developed network of rail and bus routes is also popular in Central European countries (Austria, Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland), as well as travel by car. In the Scandinavian countries and states that have islands, sea transport is in high demand. An example of an ideal tourist transport system is the Swiss transport system, which has created and is successfully operating the Swiss Travel System. A special advantage of the Swiss Travel System is the variety of travel documents. The Zurich Card is a ticket for all types of urban and suburban transport. At the same time a discount card, Swiss Pass, Swiss Youth Pass, Family Card and others are designed for different categories of travelers, combining the desire to see as much as possible and save money when ordering excursions. The permit is valid for the entire transport network. There is a huge tourist demand for the panoramic railway routes, of which Switzerland has the most: Glacier Express, Mont Blanc Express, Swiss Chocolate Train and others. A unique tourism product has been created based on the country’s tourism transport infrastructure.

Tourists can find out more about travel system opportunities on the Internet and at tourist ticket offices at major stations and airports, as well as in travel companies around the world [Pender L. 2005; 322]. The foreign tourist centers have the opportunity to provide travelers with quality tourist transport services for the following reasons:

- All types of transport are well developed and coordinated, regardless of ownership form;
- Transport infrastructure facilities meet modern requirements for comfort and safety;
- A bilingual information environment is available to most visitors;
- Strategic planning of tourism and transport has been developed;
- Modern level of management of tourism and transport enterprises is provided;
- Marketing support for tourism and transport;
- Flexible price offers for different categories of tourists;
- Public transport priority is ensured;
- A stringent system of rules and fines in transport and parking areas;
- Methods are used to reduce congestion in historic centers, specially protected areas, highways and city streets (prohibition/restriction of entry).

In addition to the above conditions, new programs are constantly being developed to improve the tourism transport infrastructure:

- Special bike trails have been arranged to improve the conditions for cycling;
- Great attention is paid to the promotion of ecological forms of transport.

The above approaches to tourism transport infrastructure management are mostly related to developed countries where transport and tourism infrastructure is well developed and provided with a high level of management.

The process of managing tourism transport infrastructure in developing countries has a slightly different vector of development, the aim of which is primarily to create transport infrastructure, and in the absence of it, to develop new tourist destinations and attract the flow of tourists. In the Arab countries (United Arab Emirates, Qatar), the economy began to recover by shifting from the manufacturing sector to the service sector, with the creation of airlines and airports, the development of the country’s transit capacity, and the promotion of the country as a tourist destination. China’s economy defines tourism as a growth point for further economic growth, and transport infrastructure - as a means of its development.

3. Conclusion

When tourism is recognized as one of the priority areas for the development of the Georgian economy and contributes to the socio-economic development of the country, it is especially important:

1. To study the existing tourist transport infrastructure and to introduce innovative technologies in its management;
2. To work out the main directions for the development of tourism transport infrastructure in Georgia;
3. To identify the general problems of the regions in the development of tourism transport infrastructure.

4. References