

International Volunteer Tourism in Kazan, “Kazan Free Tours”, Motivations for Volunteering

H. Bautista, V.A. Rubtso and N.M. Biktimirov
Kazan Federal University, 420008 Kazan, Russian Federation

Abstract: This study deals with the organization of free excursions in Kazan. The excursion includes seeing the main attractions along the specified route. This type of excursions is quite popular around the world but in Russia it is still rarely used. Students of tourism and linguistic specialties as well as all persons interested, will be involved in conducting excursions. It will help them improve their professional skills. The researchers believe that the free excursions will provide a powerful stimulus to the development of domestic tourism in Kazan and Republic of Tatarstan as a whole. The proposed project “Kazan Free Tours” is the embodiment of travelling, cultural activities and disinterested assistance to tourists.

Key words: Travelling, culture and leisure, disinterested assistance, tourism, attractions, history, volunteers

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, technological progress and easy access to the new information have given rise to interest in new forms of tourism and have become a powerful stimulus for the development of various tourism products (Sin, 2009).

One of these tourism products is a voluntary tourism, absolutely new and unique tourist product free tours with specially trained volunteers (Singh, 2002). The tour, in this case is observed as an altruistic contribution to society and the desire to improve the hospitality of the region, to assist guests and introduce them to the cultural and historical environment of the city (Barbieri *et al.*, 2012). Free tour is an effective way to learn another culture, to see the life of another people (Coghlan, 2007). Volunteers are already widely involved in major events such as the Olympic games, world championships, world exhibitions (Stoddart and Rogerson, 2004). However, volunteers work on smaller-scale events as well. Volunteer tourism or free tours attracted attention recently (Tomazos and Butler, 2010). Volunteer tourism is a new area of research in tourism.

The route is always interesting, if it is conducted by a simple local resident. Such guide will be able to tell about the area more than a professional tour guide. While organizing such free tours it is important to find an employee-guides, who will be hospitable enough to offer their energy, beauty and magic of the city with visitors. Tourists on a limited budget, foreign and local students need more entertainment and alternative leisure. Therefore, such tourism product will be popular not only

with tourists but also with locals. It will be a great contribution to the development of society (Butcher and Smith, 2010).

There are already many organizations in the world (Voluntary Service Overseas, UN-United Nations), that focused their attention on this issue as an alternative to chargeable excursions. They offer such services as free entrance to some museums in a certain period of time or free tours mentioned above (Guttentag, 2009). Such project must take place in such a big tourist city as Kazan. This city attracts more and more tourists but most visitors are students with limited paying capacity. Free tours will be a pleasant discovery for them. I would like to emphasize that we do not want this publication to cause debates or encourage the reader to altruism. Our project is a tourist product which is aimed at the disclosure of professional potential and abilities of students of the department of tourism and hotel services as well as society as a whole.

Free tours history is just beginning (Gray and Campbell, 2007). The main area of origin of such tours is considered to be Europe. European countries are opening windows into totally different worlds and therefore not similar to each other cities attract many tourists (Lepp, 2009). But with the economic crisis and development of the student travel industry free tours have been born. The agency Sandeman can be an excellent example of an international company providing free tours. Company offers free tours to 14 cities in Europe as well as very unusual chargeable tours. <http://www.neweuropetours.eu/>. The basic idea of the organizers is to involve people who are in love with their city and are ready to share their

knowledge with guests. Each of the guides shows the city from a different perspective, so, there are no similar excursions. If you like an excursion, you can leave a tip for a guide. According to the information on the site, the organizers try to provide tourists with a professional tour, paying no attention to their budget. In addition to the free tour, you can have unusual chargeable thematic tours.

So, 14 European cities that already have the employees of Sandeman: Munich, Amsterdam, Berlin, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Edinburgh, Hamburg, London, Madrid, Paris, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Prague. There are 4 more cities making up a team: Barcelona, Liverpool, Lisbon, New York. In each city, a free tour introduces you to the history and the main attractions. One of the examples of companies providing free tours in Russia is the agency called Moscow Free Tour (MFT). According to the largest international travel portal TripAdvisor.com., since 2011, until now, "Moscow free tours" has been providing with the best quality of tourist and excursion services among all companies in this industry in Moscow. The agency "Moscow Free Tour" is going to become "Starbucks" in the world of tourism. Their guides already work in 17 cities around the world and conduct tours free of charge only for the tip, the size of which the tourist determines himself.

The concept of free travel is not to show Moscow to everybody for free but to offer the visitors to give the work of the guide a proper appreciation. Such way of working turned out to be a very effective way to attract customers to chargeable tours. The company has the package of chargeable tours which have a definite schedule; they do not need to be booked. Every day (except Thursday) at 14:00 guides show the sights of the Kremlin and at 16:00, the Moscow underground. All tours are conducted in English. Abroad, the company develops its business under the name New Generation Tours. In 2011, along with Moscow, the company opened a branch in St. Petersburg and later in Venice and last year in Milan. Now MFT operates in 17 cities of the world. Before the New Year 20 new branches are going to be opened and 30 more in the Summer.

Kazan is one of the oldest cities in Russia which is famous for its culture, diversity of attractions, as well as its sport life. Thousands of tourists and sportsmen have already visited Kazan during the Universiade and World Championships in Aquatics in 2013 and 2015 (Bunakov *et al.*, 2015). In 2018 Kazan the capital of Tatarstan is ready to greet more travelers and sports fans at the World Cup. There will be a lot of guests in the capital and most of them will find time to visit the most popular places in Kazan but not all travelers have the

opportunity to hire a professional guide or buy a ticket for a tour. In this regard, we have developed a project for a walking tour around Kazan which will be available to everyone.

Tatarstan and Kazan in particular is a tourist brand of Russia. The region attracts more and more people and not only tourists among them. Many come to work each year, the amount of students both Russian citizens and foreigners increases as well as settlers and refugees come due to the political situation. Foreign countries knew Kazan, thanks to the World University Games 2013. However, Kazan is not just the sports capital of Russia, there are various festivals and concerts, contests. Any tourist can find in Kazan an interesting topic for him. Our hiking trails are dedicated not only to the history of the city but can be directed to science, art, sports, etc. Now the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan has become a recognizable and attractive for tourists. According to Sergei Ivanov, the Chairman of the State Tourism Committee of the Republic of Tatarstan, in 2005 Tatarstan was visited by 400 thousand people but in 2014 the figure changed to 2.5 million. Total 1.8 million people came to Kazan, 250 thousand of whom were foreign tourists. Such impressive figures allow tourism to develop. Many hotels, tour routes and different kinds of excursions appear.

Kazan is a major educational center where large and branded universities are concentrated. A lot of foreign and Russian students are willing to study in these universities. The students are an important unit of society in our city. Much is being done to attract, develop young people. But the students themselves are investing a lot in the development of science, society and tourism of the city and even the country. Students are the contingent that is trying to minimize the waste of their money but to get more entertainment. Our free tours give them such an opportunity to learn a lot of interesting information for minimum costs (McGehee and Andreck, 2009).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim is the introduction of free walking tours in three languages in Kazan: English, Spanish and Russian. We believe that free tours will be effective as they represent an innovative form of tourism market of Kazan which will be interesting for the guests and citizens of Kazan. The motto of Kazan Free Tours: "It can not be cheaper than free." To implement our ideas we need to perform the following tasks. First, to create a group of tour guides for conducting walking tours, speaking different languages (English, Spanish and Russian). Second, to develop a number of hiking tours suitable to be

conducted during all seasons. Thirdly, to create a program of motivation and opportunities for students to earn additional income. Fourth, to attract universities as sources of qualified staff. Fifth, to create an informational platform and develop the brand. Sixth, to attract sponsors to the project. In connection with the minimization of costs social networks, used by 99% of students and 80% of the population can become our informational platform (Eidelman *et al.*, 2014). We will need our own website for more success. To create it, we can attract students from the Institute of Computer Science or put an order in Freelance where it can be taken by experienced professionals. Except the Internet, we'll use our volunteers in the distribution of leaflets. Speaking about employees, we have identified those that we will need for the project. We will need about 10 people.

One project manager whose duties include: to monitor the implementation of the project, to report, as well as to attract sponsors to the project, to provide project leaflets travel brochures, pens with the logo of the project, T-shirts for the tour guides. One booking assistant this position will be required at the peak of the project when its popularity will grow so that the tourists will be able to book a free tour in advance. The booking assistant will receive and process applications for the tour by phone and e-mail. In accordance with reservation he will make up the working hours of guides, keep records of staff time. Several multilingual guides. They will be required to conduct high quality excursions for tourists, answer their questions and help with orientation in the city. We would like to see students and young teachers of tourism, linguists, historians, as well as any interested person with knowledge of foreign languages as guides.

The project will not be only good practice for students but they will gain useful skills: skills of organizational activities, personnel management skills, understanding of service and quality of customer service, the development of entrepreneurship among young Tourists guides (McIntosh and Zahra, 2007). In high season, every day groups of tourists will be formed regarding the linguistic features, the approximate time of excursions 17:00. During low season, tours will be held at the weekends at the same time. At the initial stage we are planning to conduct 1 excursion a day, if the popularity of the project increases, the number of conducted tours can be increased to 2-3. We have compiled three routes of sightseeing tours: "Secrets of suburban life", "Noble Nest", "Kazan through time and age". Routes are formed according to the main places that are attractive to tourists. There is a list of >30 attractions that our tourists will see while exploring the city.

List of attractions:

- Tukay Literature Museum
- Apanaev Mosque
- Al-Mardjani Mosque
- Nurulla Mosque
- Kamal Tatar State Academic Theatre
- Kazan Federal University
- Tukay Square
- Millennium Park
- Roman Catholic Church
- Basket Hall Arena
- Tugan Avylym
- Puppet theatre
- Ring tower
- Epiphany Church
- National Bank
- Synagogue
- Kazan Federal University
- National Library (Ushkovhouse)
- Opera and Ballet theatre
- Citytownhall
- Liberty Square
- S. Saydashev Grand Concert Hall
- State Council of Tatarstan
- National Culture Center "Kazan"
- Evangelical-Lutheran Church
- 1st men's gymnasium
- Erection of the cross Cathedral's
- Palace of farmers
- Kazan Kremlin
- City municipality
- National Museum of Tatarstan
- Peter and Paul Cathedral
- Aleksandrov Passage
- Hotel "Kazan"
- Kachalov Great Drama Theatre
- Kazan Scat

The following is necessary for the organization of high-quality work and attraction of tourists (Fig. 1).

- Branded uniform, T-shirts with the logo, 8 pieces
- Branded pens, pens with the logo, 100 pieces
- Proprietary booklets, a booklet with the route, 500 pieces
- Corporate site, Kazan Free Tours
- Branded raincoats, raincoats, 100 pieces

Such self-promotion will interest not only tourists but also locals. It should not be forgotten about the organization of advertising on travel sites, maps. As a

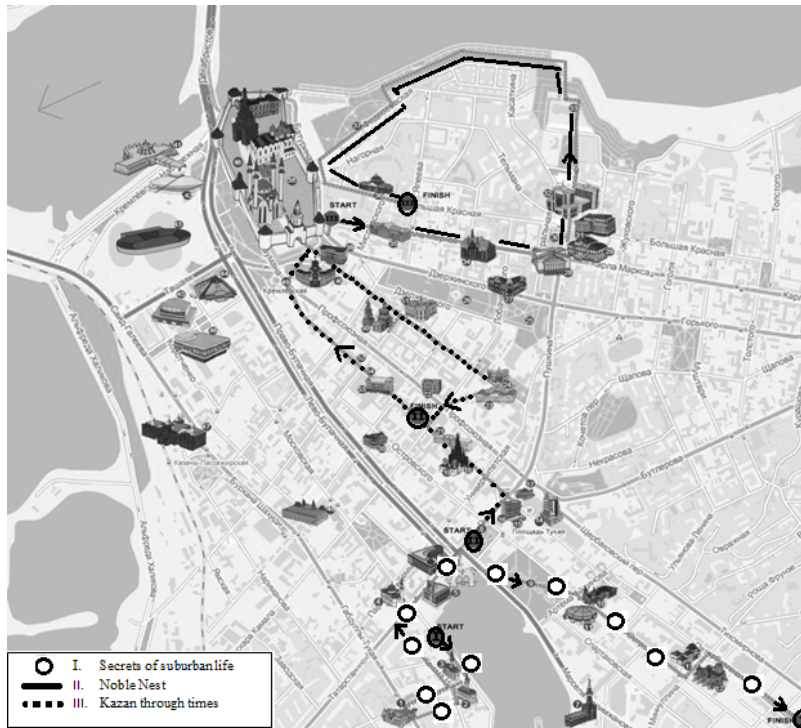


Fig. 1: Map of the city with three routes of the “Kazan Free Tours”

platform for advertising, the sites devoted to events in the city can be used but we will need “friendly” companies or sponsors for that purpose (Palacios, 2010). As the main sponsor the State Tourism Committee of the Republic of Tatarstan can be considered because they are interested in the development of domestic tourism in the region. The Kazan Federal University can be another important sponsor because the students of this university, we are planning to engage in the work on the project. Only the students of such university will be able to welcome tourists and authentically tell about their beloved city. We can attract souvenir shops and cafes as sponsor where we will be able to bring our tour groups according to the agreement. In addition to “allies” of our project there are competitors, long operating companies promoting their tourist routes in the market of the city. The first among them is the TIC Tourist Information Centre, a center which you can find in every city in every country, all independent tourists come there in search of tours, brochures, information about city events and opening hours of shops and restaurants. The cost of the day trip with a visit to the Kazan Kremlin is 750 rub. and the cost of the evening program 650 rub. For a family of 4 the cost of the tour will be 3000 rub. for many people such amount is not acceptable, so, our free tours will draw their attention. Another bonus of our tours is that they are

walking. From the buses guests always see the city well only from one side. Among the bus competitors franchise city sightseeing started working the last year in Kazan. The tour takes place on the bus, at the entrance each tourist is given headphones to the audio system in 9 languages transmitting the story of the city and its attractions. But the pricing policy of the company pushes off, 800 rub. for adults 16-59 years and for students, children ages 5-15 and seniors from 60 years 700 rub.

Having studied competitors well, we can judge our own advantages and disadvantages. A list of shortcomings which we have identified. On the tourist market there are many travel agencies that offer services at affordable prices and in favorable conditions, bus tours. Also, the city has an international company “City Sight seeing” which offers a bus tour without a guide. The cost of the attracting of tourists. Income from investors is not sufficient to pay the staff. Difficulties in working with physically challenged people because not the entire city is suitable for their movement.

We believe our main advantages are: Price, Keing environmentally friendly, walking is beneficial to health, cognition, work with the students of the leading university of the country and proximity of communication of tourists and guides.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SWOT analysis (strengths):

- Minimal competition of the tour
- Support and assistance of the Department of Services and Tourism CFI
- Absence of another similar product
- Consumer demand and interest in the tour
- Availability of attractions
- The possibility of such a project in other regions of Russia, the creation of brand

Weaknesses (weak points):

- Financing
- High season
- No regular demand for such services
- Fear of change
- Training/equipment for staff
- Lack of professional experience

Opportunities (opportunities):

- The promotion of Kazan in the international tourism market
- The development of domestic tourism
- The development of the first international service at the department of services and tourism KFU
- Practice for students of KFU
- Governmental support

Threats (threats):

- Distrust of the new product
- Competition
- Product quality
- Staff overload, responsibility

PEST analysis

Political (policy):

- The priority of the government in the education and training of students
- The promotion of the city on the international scene
- Public policy in support of tourism development
- Updating the state budget (due to the money spent by tourists in the city)

Social (social):

- The development of cultural interaction
- The development of tourism for the needy people
- Development of linguistic and professional skills Economic (Economics)
- Economic incentives for students
- Tourist marketing of Kazan
- Replenishment of local firms, the development of small businesses (hotels, cafes, museums, etc.)

- Technological (IT)
- Advertising and promotion in social networks (Vk.com, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Dissemination of information about the project on the sites of partners, sponsors, then create own website

According to the PEST and SWOT analysis, we obtained the following results: Kazan Free Tours potentially improved or developed tourism in Kazan. It gave travelling companies in Kazan fair competition through the use of new strategies and also attracted young and active professionals of tourist service(s) or agents. We conducted a market research with a view to developing free tours in the Republic of Tatarstan and other regions.

CONCLUSION

Researchers would like to note that this project was created primarily to promote national culture, customs, attract tourists and boost the regional brands of Tatarstan. Implementation of this project will allow the republic to join international standards and once again confirm the title "The third capital of Russia". Furthermore, this will offer students in the field of tourism, an opportunity to gain professional experience and excellent language practice. Similar projects have been successfully developed around the world, bringing together people of different nationalities and cultures, helping to establish international relationships and increase the tourist attractiveness of the region (Barbieri *et al.*, 2012). We hope that this project will serve as a powerful incentive to attract tourists to the Republic of Tatarstan not only from the cities of Russia but also from abroad.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The publication was prepared with financial support of the Russian Foundation for Humanities and the Government of the Republic of Tatarstan. Project No. 15-11-16010.

REFERENCES

- Barbieri, C., C.A. Santos and Y. Katsube, 2012. Volunteer tourism: On the-ground observations from Rwanda. *Tourism Manage.*, 33: 509-516.
- Bunakov, O.A., N.A. Zaitseva, A.A. Larionova, A.D. Chudnovskiy and M.A. Zhukova *et al.*, 2015. Research on the evolution of management concepts of sustainable tourism and hospitality development in the regions. *J. Sustainable Dev.*, 8: 39-44.

- Butcher, J. and P. Smith, 2010. Making a difference: Volunteer tourism and development. *Tourism Recreation Res.*, 35: 27-36.
- Coghlan, A., 2007. Towards an integrated image-based typology of volunteer tourism organisations. *J. Sustainable Tourism*, 15: 267-287.
- Eidelman, B.M., L.R. Fakhrutdinova, A.R. Nurtdinov, S. Shagitovich and L.I.A. Galimov, 2014. Applying modern advertising technology in the activity of organizations operating within the sphere of social-cultural services and tourism. *Life Sci. J.*, 11: 448-450.
- Gray, N.J. and L.M. Campbell, 2007. A decommodified experience? Exploring aesthetic, economic and ethical values for volunteer ecotourism in Costa Rica. *J. Sust. Tourism*, 15: 463-482.
- Guttentag, D.A., 2009. The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism. *Int. J. Tour. Res.*, 11: 537-551.
- Kevin, D.L. and S. Wearing, 2008. *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*. CABI Publishing, Oxfordshire, ISBN: 978-1-845-380-7, Pages: 211.
- Lepp, A., 2009. Leisure and obligation: An investigation of volunteer tourists' experience at Kenya's Taita Discovery Center. *J. Leisure Res.*, 41: 253-260.
- McGehee, N.G. and K. Andereck, 2009. Volunteer tourism and the voluntoured: The case of Tijuana, Mexico. *J. Sustainable Tourism*, 17: 39-51.
- McIntosh, A.J. and A. Zahra, 2007. A cultural encounter through volunteer tourism: Towards the ideals of sustainable tourism. *J. Sustain. Tourism*, 15: 541-556.
- Palacios, C.M., 2010. Volunteer tourism, development and education in a postcolonial world: Conceiving global connections beyond aid. *J. Sustain. Tourism*, 18: 861-878.
- Sin, H.L., 2009. Volunteer tourism: Involve me and I will learn?. *Ann. Tourism Res.*, 36: 480-501.
- Singh, T.V., 2002. Altruistic tourism: Another shade of sustainable tourism. *Case Kanda Commun. Tourism*, 50: 361-370.
- Stoddart, H. and C.M. Rogerson, 2004. Volunteer tourism: The case of habitat for humanity South Africa. *GeoJournal*, 60: 311-318.
- Tomazos, K. and R. Butler, 2010. The volunteer tourist as hero. *Curr. Issues Tourism*, 13: 363-380.