

Educational Tourism as an Outlook Component of the Marketing and Operational Strategy of a Modern Educational Organization



Tatyana Klimova

Abstract The chapter is devoted to the problems of educational tourism. The attempt to combine the two concepts of “education” and “tourism” and to determine the degree of significance of each, the goals and motivation of the participants, the expediency or in expediency of defining time limits, and the formality of the approach to the educational process itself led to a vigorous debate in the scientific field of academic research related to this topic. In the context of the study the author considers educational tourism as an educational experience organized and managed by educational institutions, carried out outside the home geographical environment from 24 hours to 12 months. In this context, foreign students are considered a niche segment that can be regarded as educational or academic tourists since their overall experience of staying in a destination includes a tourist component. The author notes that, regardless of the time-of-stay of foreign students in the host country, the tourism component should always be taken into account by educational institutions. Moreover, it can be concluded that universities, as regional educational hubs, can increase the potential of educational tourism destinations. The author notes the indisputable need for further academic research on educational tourism, including the assessment of determinants and the construction of models of the demand for educational tourism, as well as the search for new forms and opportunities for Russian students.

Keywords Educational tourism · Foreign students · Universities · Educational programs

T. Klimova (✉)
Belgorod State University, Belgorod, Russia
e-mail: tklimova@bsu.edu.ru

1 Introduction

Educational tourism emerged because of the integration of two seemingly different spheres of activity – education and tourism. Educational tourism appeared many years ago. However, educational tourism has not been legislated in any of the regulatory documents, but this did not prevent it from active development, and the prestige of studying abroad has become a trend of a new generation. The desire to study in another country determined the demand for educational tours, while the variety of offers marked the spatial landscape of traveling for educational purposes.

While the tourism industry was satisfying the needs of this segment, scientists and researchers continued to study this phenomenon, defining its vision. Undoubtedly, learning and the process of cognition occur during any trip. However, if the purpose of the trip is training and education, this could include educational tourism.

2 Materials and Methods of Research

The research is based on the study of academic materials on the problems of educational tourism using the platforms of national and foreign bibliographic and referencing databases of scientific citation. The conceptual documents of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia, the World Tourism Organization, and thematic and expert studies were considered.

A descriptive and analytical approach, based on official statistics data, retrospective assessments of the number of foreign students studying at all levels in higher educational institutions of the Russian Federation, and indicators of their share by country, was used as a methodological basis of the study.

This study is based on a logical model and general scientific and theoretical research methods, structuring information and highlighting individual aspects of the problems of educational tourism.

3 The Results of the Study and the Discussion

The interpretation of educational tourism by modern authors is very ambiguous (Table 1).

The diversity of approaches suggests an attempt to combine the concepts of “education” and “tourism,” to determine the degree of significance of each and their share of their presence.

Traditionally, educational tourism was associated with language programs, which were the most popular format around the world and brought substantial income to their organizers. Due to their simple organization, language programs

Table 1 Approaches to the definition of educational tourism

Author	Definition of educational tourism
Ritchie B.W., Carr N., Cooper, C.P.	The tourist's acquisition of cultural and historical knowledge from other places or countries
Maga A., Nicolau Pete	Learning activities undertaken outside of home geographical environment within a duration limit of between 24 hours and 12 consecutive months [1]
Ai Chin Thoo, Matthew Boon Pin Lim, Hon Tat Huam, Zuraidah Sulaiman	Any travel-related activity where people travel to certain places to gain knowledge and skills in this unique environment, while education may be the primary or secondary purpose of their journey [2]
Pitman T., Broomhall S., Majoche E.	A form of niche tourism where learning experience is the core product delivery component
Tomasi S., Paviotti G., Cavicchi A.	Learning experience organized and managed by educational institutions [3]
Hussein, S.H., Kusairi S., Ismail F.	A new subsector of tourism, involving the movement of foreign students for higher education [4]
Yurieva G. P., Pogorelova M. A.	The phenomenon of integration of education and tourism through the organization of tourist and educational activities to achieve the goals and objectives defined by educational programs and aimed at the formation and development of personal qualities manifested in the formation of universal, professional, and specialized competencies [5]
Gorlova I.I.	A product that directly includes a tourist component and an educational component and takes various forms [6]
Lunin E.A.	Of travel for a period of 24 hours to 6 months for the purpose of obtaining education (general, special, additional), for advanced training – in the form of courses, internships, without engaging in activities related to income from sources in the country (place) temporary stay
Lebedev A.R.4	A system of relations that reflects the processes associated with the production, distribution, and consumption of educational tourist products
Solomin V.P., Pogodina V.L.	Educational tours made for the purpose of performing tasks defined by the curricula of educational institutions [7]
Zhitenev S.Yu.	A trip to places of temporary residence in order to obtain additional knowledge, education, and qualifications, the duration of which is 2 to 3 months [8]

have generated serious competition among agencies in this segment. The high demand for language programs allowed large educational tour operators to organize group tours for fixed arrival dates like it happens when organizing other types of tourism.

Subsequently, UNESCO introduced the concept of an international mobile student. According to UNESCO, an international mobile student is a person who “physically crossed the international border between two countries to participate in educational activities in the destination country, where the destination country is different from his or her country of origin [9].”

In 2021 the T.I.M.E. Association studied the data provided by UNESCO on students’ mobility. The main task was to identify the countries with the largest number of students traveling outside their country for educational purposes. The study noted that out of 5.6 million foreign students studying around the world, most of them were nationals of China, India, Germany, Vietnam, South Korea, France and the United States. As can be seen from the pie chart, 993,367 students left China for educational purposes, 375,055 students studied abroad from India, and the number of students from Germany was estimated at 122,538 people (Fig. 1).

The boundaries of the concept of “tourism” are determined by the duration of the trip. According to the new edition of the Federal Law of Russia “On the Basics of tourist Activity”, a tourist is a person visiting the country for 24 hours to 6 months. UNWTO refers to tourists as persons traveling outside their usual environment for up to 1 year, which allows considering a larger number of tourists in the statistics of educational tourism.

However, many researchers do not see the expediency of allocating a time factor or do not focus on it, believing that any time restriction only emphasizes the urgency of achieving an educational goal, which in fact does not matter for educational tourism.

There are also ongoing debates in the discussion field concerning the motivation of the student/traveler and the relationship between formal and informal learning.

Characterizing educational tourism through a transformative process and considering the motivation of tourists, Mcgladderi K.A. and Lubbe B.A. argue that it is not always possible to determine whether the desire to study while traveling is the main or secondary motivation [11]. The issues of motivation are also related to the studies conducted by Ritchie B.U., Peskova O.S., Rodionova I.A. and other researchers [12, 13, 14].

Many authors, defining educational tourism as an organized tourist trip, emphasize the informality of the situation. In their opinion, educational tourism is

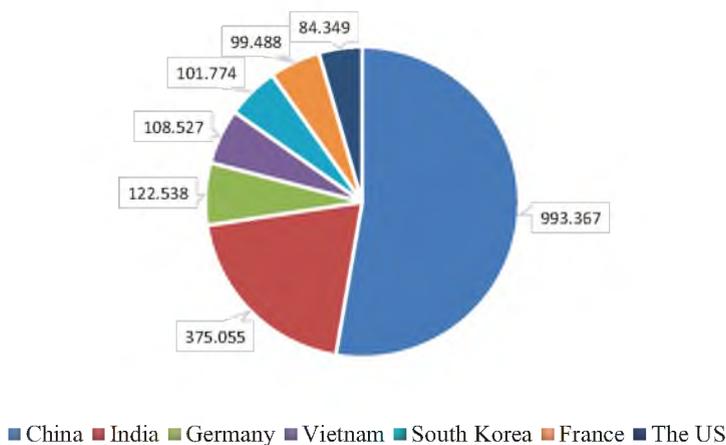


Fig. 1 The countries from which most students go to study abroad [10]

associated with informal learning and is a form of independent learning while traveling [15].

At the same time, other scientists consider it mandatory to have an educational institution that manages the learning process. Thus, Pitman T., characterizing educational tourism, distinguishes its deliberate pedagogical structure, the presence of a teacher or a mentor, and getting experience on the spot, which causes an emotional sensory reaction in the student [16]. The author notes that an activity in which the moment of learning is structured and supported by an expert and educational materials can transform the student and, therefore, can become transformative learning.

Juan R. argues that if we consider not only the academic but also the entire experience of foreign students staying at the destination, then it is wrong to define them only as students. Traveling is essential in their choice. Thus, international students can be considered as tourists with special interests or niche tourists: “The entire experience of foreign students in foreign countries perfectly corresponds to the argument “tourism as embodied practice” [17].

The study of the conceptual foundations of educational tourism shows the absence of clear boundaries between this concept and the concepts of scientific, research, and academic tourism. In tourism research in recent years, the concepts have been used interchangeably (Fig. 2).

In the triad “scientific – research – educational/academic tourism,” the role of each component will be determined by the segment of tourist mobility and the priority of the purpose of travel. In our opinion, the relationship between scientific and research tourism is more stable than between research and educational tourism. Although these types can be successfully combined, in the first case, the interest in traveling is driven by the need for scientific research. In the second case, the educational component is predominant.

The categories “academic tourism” and “educational tourism” are closer constructs. Speaking about educational tourism associated with university students participating in academic educational programs, including academic mobility programs, the terms may well be used as equivalent.

Therefore, in this context, educational tourism is considered an educational experience organized and managed by educational institutions, carried out outside

Fig. 2 Triad “scientific – research – educational/academic tourism”



the home geographical environment in the period from 24 hours to 12 months. In our opinion, foreign students can be regarded as educational or academic tourists, since their overall experience of staying in the destination includes a tourist component. At the same time, regardless of the time of stay of foreign students in the host country, the tourism component should always be taken into account by educational institutions to use all opportunities to achieve learning goals.

Noteworthy is the experience of educational tourism described by Ritchie B.U. He also identified three main aspects of educational tourism management [13]:

- Direction marketing
- Regional development
- Educational tourism

The author argued that every institution organizing or managing educational programs should take into account the tourism component in order to maximize the prospects of learning.

It can be concluded that universities as regional educational hubs can increase the potential of educational tourism destinations. To this end, they should work to optimize and expand their educational exchange programs and increase their attractiveness to students.

The development of new forms of joint educational programs, including programs in English, educational tourist routes, and summer training programs for foreigners, is actively popularized within the Federal Project “Export of Education” framework. The main task is not just to attract a foreign student but to maintain a continuous cycle of interaction with him, which corresponds to the marketing strategies of modern universities.

International students behave like tourists in the context of consumers of higher education, who also bear a certain amount of expenses during the period spent on further education in the chosen country. The selected country is the host country. The expenses incurred by foreign students during their studies are a source of income that will have an additional effect on the host country’s economy. Thus, foreign students form a significant tourist market, contributing to the development of the economy of the host countries. Host countries benefit from the expenses of foreign students for accommodation, meals, entertainment and leisure, visits to cultural attractions, tuition fees, etc., which has a positive effect on the economy. By bringing income to educational institutions, foreign students encourage universities to implement an entrepreneurial strategy in the market.

On the other hand, students benefit not only from studying but also from communication with residents and other students and from experience that contributes to personal and professional growth. It is assumed that the perception of residents by foreign students can play a decisive role in their overall travel experience, their positive assessment of the destination and their behavior in the future. In a study conducted among international students in South Korea [18], it was noted that three perceived attributes are critically important in the marketing of a destination: the attractiveness of the territory, positive emotions, and the willingness to help the local population.

Therefore, educational organizations should effectively use the advantages of educational tourism. Firstly, students can benefit from opportunities to interact with the local environment, which includes many relationships, such as the recreational resources of the territory, its cultural and historical sites, and national culture. Secondly, foreign students are tourists who take the opportunity to visit local attractions while acting as an attractive factor motivating friends and relatives from their country to visit the country where they study. In addition, tourism researchers emphasize that foreign students are likely to revisit the host country after completing their studies. Consequently, experiential learning is part of studying abroad, and tourism is part of the entire experience of their stay in the host country. This transformative combination of learning and personal growth creates a full-fledged social experience.

Experts discuss educational tourism as a new subsector with high potential. However, it is not easy to attract students from different countries, given that foreign students are consumers of higher education products and services exported abroad. There is cross-border competition between different countries as to whether they have sufficient opportunities and quality of education to attract foreign students. It is obvious that countries that can create a sustainable environment for educational tourism, including various international training programs, are more competitive.

In many exporting countries, the policy of attracting foreign students to study is supported by the national strategy and complemented by university strategies [14].

International students currently account for 2.4% of all university students worldwide. The leading exporting countries are the USA, Great Britain and Australia. In 2021 the Russian Federation occupied the fifth place by the number of international students. Within the framework of the Export of Education project, it is planned to spend 107.5 billion rubles on attracting foreign students [19]. This should double their flow.

Given that universities are developing active strategies to attract foreign students to universities in the Russian Federation, the increase in the flow of students from abroad is quite understandable (Fig. 3).

It should be noted that the number of foreign students studying is one of the main indicators in the system of academic mobility metrics both in the Russian Federation and in world practice [21].

In recent years, the number of students from abroad has increased exponentially. The total number of foreign students in Russia amounted to 315.1 thousand people, which is twice as high as at the beginning of the 2010/2011 academic year. Experts note that young people are satisfied with Russian education's price-quality ratio (Fig. 4).

Most of the foreign students in Russia are citizens of the CIS countries, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. Thus, the combined share of students from the CIS, Baltic States and Georgia amounted to 69.55% of the total number of foreign students, followed by China with a share of 7.96%, Africa – 6.81% of students over 10 years.

Data analysis for the 2020/2021 academic year by country showed that Kazakhstan is the leader in the number of foreign students studying in our country.

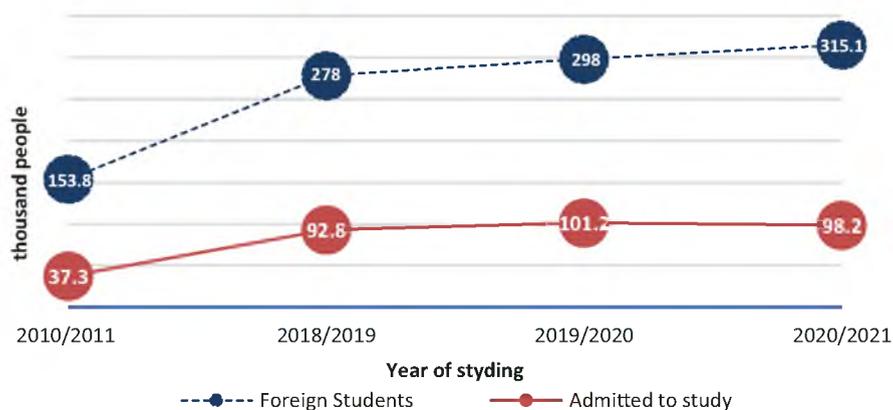


Fig. 3 Foreign students studying in Russian higher education institutions and scientific organizations (beginning of academic year) [20]

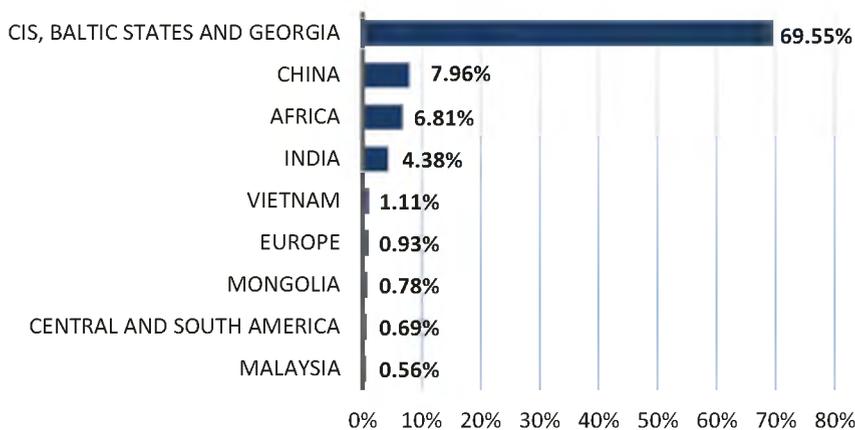


Fig. 4 Share of foreign students enrolled in programs at higher educational institutions of Russia in the period 2010–2021 by country of origin

The share of students studying at various programs in Russian universities from Kazakhstan was 20.29% (61 thousand students) [21]. Uzbekistan ranks second in terms of the number of foreign students studying in Russia – 16.28% (48.7 thousand students)) [22] of the total number of foreign students, followed by China – 10.73% (32.6 thousand) studying at higher education programs in universities of the Russian Federation.

As for the outbound flow of Russian students, the difference between “export” and “import” is significant. There are fewer Russians studying abroad, and the events after February 24 brought back some of the students studying from European countries, further increasing this gap.

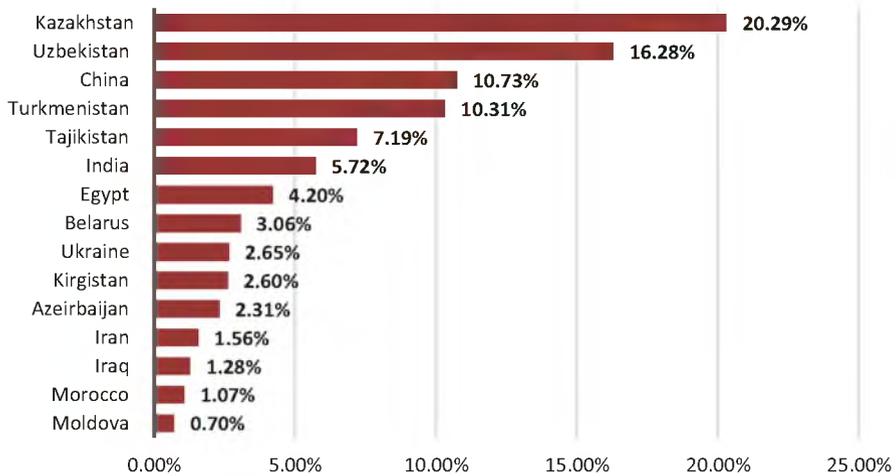


Fig. 5 Share of international students enrolled in higher education institutions in Russia in school year 2020–2021, by country of origin

Now the main task is to preserve the institution of academic mobility, but it will have to be developed in a new way so that Russian students can move within the country between leading regional and metropolitan universities and also have the opportunity to visit educational institutions in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the EAEU countries (Fig. 5).

4 Conclusion

The higher education market has been working for a long time in attracting foreign students, and students, being a niche segment, travel to get an education and a new tourist experience.

Considering that the speed of universities' response to changes in the educational services market can determine their fate as exporters of education, universities need to consider educational tourism as a perspective tool of their marketing and operational strategies, increase the potential of educational tourism directions, help foreign students develop through new professional and personal experience, which they cannot find in their country of origin, use all forms of educational tourism to attract foreign students both for short-term mobility programs and for education in the country (place) of destination.

While some researchers determine the essence of educational tourism, its goals, study the links between formal and informal education, and the expediency or in expediency of allocating a temporary factor, others model how competition and the quality of higher education determine the demand for educational tourism from the point of view of countries, explore consumer segments, the image of destinations,

motives and factors affecting the loyalty of foreign students to revisit the destination and recommend it as a place to get an education.

Although the number of issues related to educational tourism has increased in recent years, academic literature on this subject is just emerging and many important topics remain unexplored, including the assessment of determinants and the construction of models of demand for educational tourism, as well as the search for its new forms and opportunities for Russian students.

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