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**HEALTH AND WELLNESS TOURISM: INDUSTRY DETERMINANTS OF
GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS OF A REGION**

Speciality: 5.2.5 - World economy

Abstract
of the dissertation for the degree of
Candidate in Economics

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The relevance of the research is accounted for by a number of problems inherent in the current stage of Russia's economic development. Overcoming them will contribute not only to the formation of internal resources for economic progress but also to the creation of globally competitive socio-economic systems of the country's regions. The main problems include:

Firstly, the issues that retain the strategic importance of diversification of Russia's national economy, with the integral conditions such as the creation of regional production and distribution complexes adequate to the provided resources and due infrastructural support, human resource potential of the region, needs of the national and foreign markets, and the global conjuncture trends. The intensity of diversification of Russia's economy in the structure of world trade and its repositioning in the system of the international division of labour is undeniable; however, the domestic potential including the one connected with the export of technological and high-quality services is used inefficiently;

Secondly, the existing imbalance between the infrastructural development of Russian regions and the possibilities of their integration into worldwide commodity/monetary flows, which disbalance transforms global business processes and limits the prospects of external competitiveness and investment attractiveness;

Thirdly, the existence of developed tourism/recreation potential, including innovative, high-tech resources related to the development and implementation of health and wellness services (hereinafter – HWS). It is possible to form globally competitive clusters of health and wellness tourism (hereinafter – HWT) in Russia – both export-oriented unique services and those providing consistent growth in the life quality of the local population. Their structural and functional multiplicity and diversified supply, including synergetic effects of tourism, transport, finance and innovations, can change Russia's role in the structure of the international division of labour;

Fourthly, of importance is the reformatting of the national tourist flows as a result of unprecedented sanctions pressure from unfriendly countries since 2022, which has already stimulated the extension of tourism and health/wellness services in Russia, requiring through the modernisation of the existing system of formation and spread of HWS among Russian and foreign consumers (with regard for the prospects of foreign sale markets in the current realities);

Finally, health is an important economic category characterising not only the level of material well-being of the country's population and its innovation potential but also the quality of labour resources as well as the scale and structure of regional and global demand. This all together determines the level of national competitiveness, the country's attractiveness for investment, people's place of residence and (or) labour, and forms the strategic guidelines for its development in the dynamics of global socio-economic processes.

The priorities of modernisation of the HWT complex aimed at meeting the needs of the local population for high-quality modern-level health services, as outlined in the Federal project "Development of Export of Medical Services"¹, represent strategic issues of the national socio-economic policy.

Thus, the above argumentation confirms the choice of the topic of the dissertation.

The aim of the research is to develop a set of recommendations towards improving the competitiveness of Russian regions in the global market of health and wellness services, with regard for their localisation peculiarities, the global cluster development experience as well as the trends in the development of international health and wellness tourism relevant for the period of post-pandemic recovery and sanctions pressure.

To achieve the purpose of the thesis, the following **objectives** were realised:

¹Passport of the Federal project "Development of export of medical services". [Electronic resource] – URL: https://static-0.minzdrav.gov.ru/system/attachments/attachs/000/044/789/original/Pasport_FP_export.pdf?1558614408

- 1) to specify the concept of health and wellness tourism and the main factors of its development;
- 2) to consider the global socio-economic trends from the position of their determinant impact on the functioning and development of HWT;
- 3) to study the health of the nation as one of the factors of global competitiveness of regions in the world market of health and wellness services;
- 4) to analyse the current state of the global HWT industry and the options for its recovery after the 2019-2021 coronavirus pandemic;
- 5) to assess the significance of the region's recreational potential based on the relationship between the models of health and wellness tourism and the scenarios of its post-pandemic recovery in the context of state stimulation of the industry;
- 6) to use clustering as a methodology for the formation of the globally competitive HWT industry, which will expand the potential of Russia's efficient integration into global economic processes;
- 7) to propose a set of cluster initiatives capable of compensating the consequences of interregional HWT differentiation, which will secure Russian regions' positioning as globally competitive centres of international HWT.

The object of the research is economic relations arising in the process of international formation, spread and realisation of health and wellness services, as well as operation of sectoral markets and clusters specialising in health and wellness tourism.

The subject of the research is the modernisation factors of the national model of health and wellness tourism with regard for the global trends in the consumption of health and wellness services, the requirements for efficient overcoming the negative consequences of the coronavirus pandemic in the industry, as well as the priorities of increasing the global competitiveness of Russia in the dynamics of the international division of labour.

Compliance of the research with the passport of scientific speciality. The dissertation research corresponds to the passport of scientific speciality 5.2.5 – World Economy.

The theoretical basis of the research is represented by fundamental scholarly works of national and foreign researchers in the field of world economy, peculiarities of public health systems, health resort treatment and tourism in Russia and overseas, scientific and practical developments presented by various research institutes, statistical and analytical reports prepared by international organisations.

Methodological basis of the research. The following general scientific methods were used in the course of the scientific research:

- historical/genetic method (in consideration of historical and modern experience of forming the models of health and wellness tourism);
- system analysis (in substantiating the role of health and wellness tourism in the development of the world economy);
- comparative analysis (in identifying the peculiarities of the development of HWS formation and dissemination systems);
- statistical methods (in assessing foreign cluster-structure practices and the potential for industry cluster formation, including in Russian regions);
- structural and functional analysis (in identifying the inter-sectoral engagement within the boundaries of regional HWT clusters).

The features of the authorly methodology are herein contoured following the historical/genetic analysis combined with the analysis of evolutionary forms of health and wellness tourism and the conceptualisation of the applied statistical methods and literature review, which made it possible to assess the market of health and wellness services taking into account the synthesised impact of public health and tourism in the economic context, subsequently reflecting the above in the description of different cluster initiatives. This enabled the author to outline the prospects of conjoined interaction of medical organisations with tourism industry

entities, which is necessary for the formation and promotion of modern complex health and wellness tourism products on the world market.

The information base of the research is represented by the data published by state statistics bodies, organisations in the sphere of public health and those functioning in health and wellness tourism; statutory acts; industry regulations; analytical reports; national and foreign scientists' research materials and other publications in academic and business press media (including in the mass media and the Internet), as well as the author's calculations generated through MS Excel and Python economic and statistical tools.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the development of a set of recommendations for the improvement of the global competitiveness of Russian regions in terms of HWT world market dynamics with regard for geographical and sectoral localisation; in these terms, the research took into account the current state of the domestic natural recreation potential and the infrastructure of health and wellness tourism, as well as the global trends including those related to overcoming the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic and the sanctions pressure from Western countries.

The scientific results deduced personally by the author are as follows:

- 1) health and wellness tourism is defined as a derivative of the integration of tourism and healthcare industries involving the efficient exploitation of the natural potential and the territorial medical infrastructure for the subsequent commercialisation of competitive medical and health services. This made it possible to outline the characteristic features of the conjoined interaction of medical organisations and tourism industry entities as necessary for the formation and promotion of a modern set of health and wellness tourism products on the world market.

- 2) the paper specified the impact of consumer preferences digitalisation/transformation, as well as the dissynchronisation of HWT development dynamics worldwide as determinants of repositioning of the latter in

the system of international formation and spread of health and wellness services. This made it possible to substantiate the efficiency of clustering in strategising the international competitiveness of national and regional HWT industries;

3) health is defined as a key factor characterising the state of human capital integrated into international flows of labour resources, technologies and innovations, and as a component of national competitiveness in the global economic system. The lack of correlation between public health costs and the indexed global competitiveness values made it possible to propose due ways for improving the methods of assessing the latter with regard for the key criteria of the nation's health.

4) the national HWT organisation models were classified on the basis of organisational and functional specifics of interaction between consumers, business representatives and authorities involved in the process of formation and spread of health and wellness services. This made it possible to determine the principles of integrating the national HWT into the structure of the global economy and to forecast the industry recovery scenarios in different countries in the post-pandemic period;

5) the state is deemed to be the main initiator of HWT strategic development programmes, being capable of levelling the resourcing problems and restoring consumer confidence through timely and targeted measures of sectoral support. This made it possible to assess the efficiency of the governmental sectoral stimulation instruments and highlight the areas of their modernisation;

6) several types of HWT clusters were identified based on the principle of inter-sectoral integration and effective exploitation of advantages of the regional infrastructure and the touristic/recreational potential. The diversity of the structural/functional features and strategic guidelines of the above is supposed to expand the possibilities of efficient integration of Russian regions into global economic processes;

7) a set of cluster initiatives is proposed to level the consequences of interregional differentiation of HWT in Russia, which will make it possible to concentrate regional competitive advantages as flexibly as possible, to respond to market dynamics properly, and consequently, due to the synergetic effect, to ensure regions' positioning as globally competitive centres of international HWT.

The theoretical significance of the research lies in enhancing the scientific knowledge about the economic aspects of health and wellness tourism, key features of the supranational nature of health-related problems, the specifics of models and scenarios of post-pandemic recovery of health and wellness tourism, as well as in defining the nature of the tourism cluster with a health/wellness component as well as cluster initiatives. This will make it possible to efficiently integrate health and wellness tourism into regional economies in order to improve Russia's competitiveness in the global market of health services in the conditions of the sanctions pressure.

Practical significance of the research. The research results related to the analysis of foreign experience and prospects of clustering in the sphere of health and wellness tourism in different regions of Russia can be used by representatives of business structures, health resorts, public health and regional authorities to improve strategies for the industry development in the conditions of post-pandemic recovery as well as geopolitical and epidemiological instability. The research materials can also be used in the structure of educational courses addressing the problems of development of the market of health and tourism services in the structure of the world economy, in particular, in the course "International Tourism" taught within the educational programme 38.03.01 – Economics, profile "World Economy", at the South Russian Institute of Management – RANEPA branch.

Publication of the research results. The main provisions of the research are expounded in the articles published in the sources included in the list of peer-reviewed scientific editions formed by the State Commission for Academic Degrees and Titles at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian

Federation. The total volume of the author's publications on the subject of the thesis is 4.0 printer's sheets.

The structure of the dissertation is determined by the set aim and the objectives of the research. The dissertation comprises an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and a reference list.

The introduction substantiates the relevance of the research, formulates its aim and objectives, defines the object, subject; theoretical, methodological and informational framework thereof; outlines the scientific novelty as well as the theoretical and practical significance of the work.

The first chapter "Health and wellness tourism in the dynamics of globalisation and innovatisation of the service industry" specifies the theoretical and methodological foundations of research into health and wellness tourism, discusses the extent of influence of world trends on its development at the present stage, and proves that health is one of the most important factors of national competitiveness stimulating the development of HWT.

The second chapter "Health and wellness tourism in the post-Covid world economy: support measures and potential growth drivers" explores the status of HWT in the post-pandemic reality, analyses the foreign experience of support of this industry and the extent of its effectiveness, and analyses the national strategic priorities as well as the potential for recovery of international health and wellness tourism.

The third chapter "Clustering as a method of Russia's repositioning in the structure of global creation and spread of health and wellness tourism products" evaluates the possibilities of using the world experience of clustering in health and wellness tourism; mathematically proves that the health and wellness tourism cluster is a key component ensuring global competitiveness of Russian regions; outlines the main principles of development and integration of Russian cluster-based HWT structures in the world tourism flows.

The conclusion presents the main findings of the research.