

Extreme mountain race as a tourist event

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Abstract. *The purpose of the article is to show the real result of attracting tourists to one of the most remote municipalities in the Chelyabinsk region. For several years, the regional authorities of the Chelyabinsk region have been addressing the problem of tourism development. This problem was most actively discussed in 2014 with the advent of a new governor. Various development strategies and types of regional tourism were considered, the experience of other regions of Russia was adopted. The paper gives an example of attracting tourists by activists of the village of Tyulyuk with the most convenient route to the Iremel mountain range. The annual Extreme Running Race "Healthy as an Elk" has become a tradition, attracting participants from other regions and cities of Russia. The last few races were supported by the local authorities, although private sponsors were responsible for financial support. The age range of participants is expanding. If in the first races there was one age category, then over time there were more nominations, and the oldest participant was 78 years old. The experience of introducing nominations for children turned out to be successful, which made it possible to attract not only athletes and their support groups, but also families. The growing number of the participants and the expansion of geography showed an excellent result and made a significant contribution to increasing the tourist flow to the village of Tyulyuk and visiting the mountain routes of the Iremel and Zikalga ridge.*

Keywords - *tourism development, tourism potential of the South Ural, extreme running race, Iremel mountain range, nature park, Zikalga ridge, eco-tourism, skyrunning.*

I. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Federal target programs for the development of domestic and inbound tourism (the first program was developed for 2011-2018, and the second program was adopted for the period 2019-2025) cultural and educational tourism takes the first place in terms of the development of national tourism in Russia. The second place belongs to eco-tourism [1, 2, 5]. This means that a completely new aspect of development is acquired by the natural territories of Russia, and first of all, by the specially protected natural territories, i.e. national parks and reserves. Moreover, based on the law on specially protected natural areas (SPNA), these territories, as objects of tourism, have different abilities and powers. Natural reserves are less mobile, and national parks have a greater degree of freedom in terms of economic activity. In this regard, various initiatives and projects for clustering tourist regions began to appear, including various protected areas in the clusters. However, in none of the accepted clusters do the protected areas act as independent tourism entities focused on such a type of commercial activity as organized tourism [3, 4, 6, 7]. The most developed for the

Chelyabinsk region is still a strategy for creating a tourist cluster "Sinigorye". This tourist cluster covers several municipalities and includes several national parks. The main sights are the national parks "Taganay" and "Zyuratkul" [1]. There are also inter-regional protected areas, in particular, the South Ural State Nature Reserve, in which the highest peak of the South Urals, Mount Yamantau, is located. However, in the regional tourism development programs there are practically no tools for inter-regional interaction, which is an additional potential for attracting tourists and further developing inbound (cultural, educational, ecological, sports) tourism. Indeed, any natural landscapes, in this case, the Southern Urals, do not have administrative borders. The South Ural Mountains are located in the Chelyabinsk Region and the Republic of Bashkortostan. It should be noted that in 2010, just on the border with the Chelyabinsk region, the Iremel Natural Park was created.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out using the statistics of the extreme running race "Healthy as an Elk", held annually in the village of Tyulyuk, Chelyabinsk Region, on the first Saturday of June.

The village of Tyulyuk has long attracted tourism lovers with the beauty of its nature. These are mainly the mountain ranges of Zikalga, Bakty, Nurgush, Avalyak, the Iremel mountain range. The Iremel mountain range is of particular interest to tourists. It is geographically located in the neighboring republic of Bashkortostan, but has the easiest route from the village of Tyulyuk. Iremel always attracted people (lit. "Sacred Mountain") because it looks like a great building - a monument of beauty, constructed by nature itself. Everything is unusually: from the composition of forests to the shape of the peak. Alpine plateau is surrounded by the most beautiful Ural forests, which cover the "sacred mountain" with three rings. Behind the third ring, there are beautiful peaks of the Iremel Mountains. The main peak - Bolshoy Iremel has a height of 1582 meters. The top of Bolshoy Iremel looks like a gigantic trapeze, crowned with a platform of 1000 meters around the perimeter.

Probably the best view of the mountains of the South Ural opens from the top of Bolshoy Iremel. On the one hand, it is the highest peak of the South Ural called Yamantau (1640 m.) and the Zikalga ridge, on the other hand, the Nurgush ridge and the Avalyak ridge. Now Bolshoy Iremel mountain is inextricably associated with the extreme mountain race "Healthy as an Elk".

This race was first organized and held in 2005. As shown in Table 1, the number of participants was minimal (35). The geography of the participants was also not rich - only four cities of the Chelyabinsk region. However, over time, both the number of participants and their geography grows. Since 2017, the extreme running race “Healthy as an Elk” has been recognized as an All-Russian event. In 2018, the race grew to a new level. It consisted of 4 stages in unique natural areas of Russia. The traditional race comprised new stages: the Kurgan region - the unique salt lake Medvezhye; Tatarstan - the Sviyazhskie hills; the Kaliningrad region – the Baltic stage.

In 2005, the participants of the first extreme race, regardless of gender and age, had a control load of 10 kg. Figure 1 shows a fragment of the map with the race route from the village of Tyulyuk to the foot of Bolshoy Iremel and back. The route is 23 km long. The route runs through rough terrain, through the Ural taiga with centuries-old trees, streams, stone rivers, with access to a high plateau in front of the peak. At the top of the route, participants can enjoy a stunning panorama of the Ural Mountains. Food stops are located at 6km, 12km, 18km. Starting camp is the main camp on the river. Tyulyuk. The middle camp is on the border of the forest. The upper camp is on a plateau in front of the peak of Bolshoy Iremel. Finishing camp is the main camp on the river Tyulyuk. All persons who have reached the age of 14 years old, who agree with the terms and conditions of the race, and whose sports qualifications corresponds to the level of competition, are allowed to participate in the race.

Boys and girls aged from 14 to 18 years are allowed to participate in competitions only accompanied by a responsible person who assumes all risks associated with damage to health and injuries of any severity. The legal representative (parent) is obliged to provide the Main Jury with a Permit for the child to participate in the event in accordance with the established procedures. Prizes are distributed in the following categories:

1. “Healthy elk” (Absolute category - men from 18 years old)
2. "Mature elk" (Men from 50 years old)
3. "Gray-haired elk " (Men from 60 years)
4. "Fallow deer" (Women)

For children under 14 years, an entertaining race of several hundred meters is held.

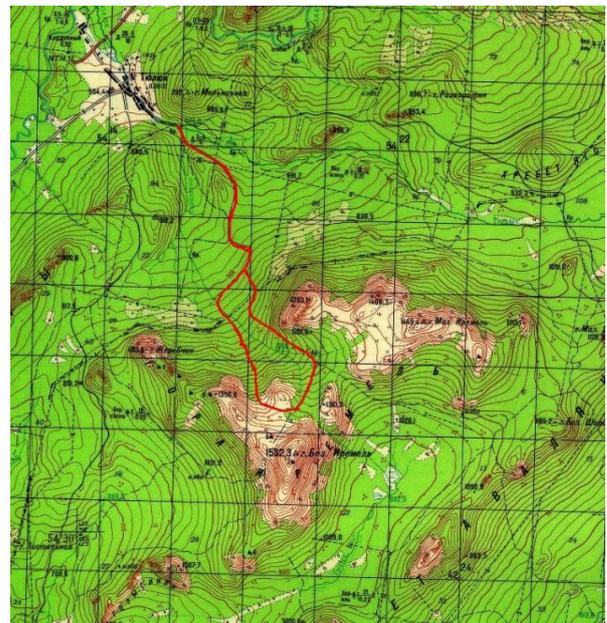


Fig. 1. A fragment of the map with the race route

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the main data on the annual races of the extreme running race “Healthy as an Elk”.

TABLE I. DATA ON THE ANNUAL RACES

Year	Number of participants	Best result	Age
2005	35	2 h 13 min	18-65
2006	42	2 h 08 min	18-70
2007	53	1 h 58 min	18-67
2008	41	2 h 03 min	18-70
2009	103	1 h 44 min	18-70
2010	110	1 h 50 min	18-69
2011	127	1 h 44 min	18-70
2012	154	1 h 48 min	18-70
2013	197	1 h 36 min	12-71
2014	336	1 h 33 min	11-64
2015	460	1 h 37 min	12-70
2016	535	1 h 31 min	12-71
2017	320	1 h 35 min	18-70
2018	323	1 h 19 min	18-70
2019	387	1 h 33 min	7-70

The number of participants in the race is growing every year. Of course, the geography of not only the participants, but also the guests of the race is expanding. In 2011 there were participants from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Ufa, Perm and other cities.

A comparative analysis of the flow of tourists to Bolshoy Iremel over several years was conducted. Reliable data on visiting the mountain appeared only in 2011, when the Iremel Natural Park was created. The Iremel Natural Park is located on the territory of the Beloretsky and Uchalinsky districts of Bashkiria, near the border of the Chelyabinsk region. It is

surrounded by three checkpoints – near the town of Uchaly, near the village of Nikolaevka, Beloretsky district, and near the village of Tyuluk, Chelyabinsk region. The Iremel Natural Park was created by a Decree of the Government of the Republic of Bashkortostan (RB) dd. December 31, 2010. The area of the park is 49,338 ha.

The park was created with the following purposes: conservation of mountain-tundra, taiga forest and bog ecosystems, as well as populations of rare species of plants and animals; ensuring a stable hydrological regime for the sources of the largest rivers of the South Ural; creation of conditions for the development of regulated tourism and recreation.

The park is completely covered by forest; almost all types of hunting and fishing animals live on its territory. 553 species of higher plants grow here, i.e. 1/4 of the entire flora of Bashkortostan, including 57 species from the Red Book of the Republic of Bashkortostan, of which 15 are endemic and 33 are relict species. About 40 species of rare and endangered animals are also found here (flying squirrel, river otter, red deer, black stork, white and gray partridge, grass frog, taimen, European grayling, swallowtail, etc.). The territory is divided into five zones: a nature reserve (tourists are not allowed to enter), a regulated recreation zone (the territory with tourist routes “Bolshoy Iremel”, “Maly Iremel”, “Tyulyuk swamp”, “Tygynskoye swamp”, tourists are offered walking, cycling and horse riding routes), a buffer zone of the economic activity of the natural park for hotels, cafes, ski slopes, a migration corridor of animals between Iremel and the South Ural State Nature Reserve. Rest conditions in the Iremel nature park are suitable for extreme and sports tourism, weekend tours. Excursion routes in the Iremel Natural Park go from the village of Tyulyuk, the villages of Novokhusainovo, Baysakalovo, Nikolaevka to the foot of the Bolshoy Iremel mountain. There are winter and summer options for routes of different lengths and time. Each route is equally beautiful: the foot of the Iremel Mountains is the Mecca of the South Ural, where all kinds of outdoor activities are possible. Horseback riding, hiking, skiing, rafting, skiing, etc. All excursion routes are marked with special symbols and arrows, equipped with gazebos, toilets, fireplace and containers for garbage collection. The development of the infrastructure of the natural park continues, as the flow of tourists has a positive trend. Table 2 shows data on visits to the Iremel nature park since its opening. These are only those tourists who, when visiting the park, are registered at checkpoints. As practice shows, there is also a stream of unregistered tourists who bypass control posts or lay routes besides marked trails.

TABLE II. REGISTERED VISITORS TO THE IREMEL NATURE PARK

Year	Number of tourists, thousand people	Compared to the previous year, %
2011	5.5	-
2012	10	+ 81.8
2013	12.5	+ 25
2014	17	+ 36
2015	14.7	- 13
2016	15	+ 2
2017	22	+ 46.6
2018	24	+ 9

The correlations between the participants of the Healthy as an Elk race and the number of tourists who visited the park were established. Figure 2 shows a graph of the number of participants in the race depending on the year. As can be seen from the graph, the number of participants annually only increases. In this case, the dependence turned out to be nonlinear with a curve order of more than 1. In a first approximation, in the initial period, the dependence can be described as parabolic.

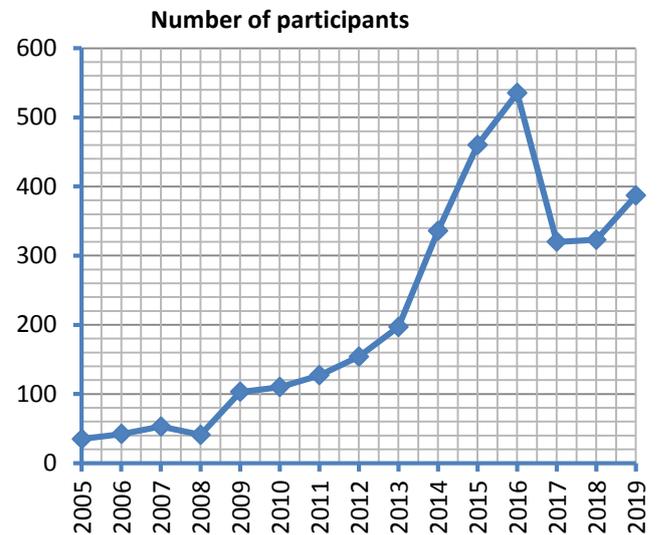


Fig. 2. Number of participants in the race depending on the year

The sharp decline in the number of participants over the past three years may be due to some amendments to the rules of the race, according to which each participant must provide a medical certificate and pay registration fees. Nevertheless, in this period the dependence is also nonlinear, with the order of the curve also greater than 1. However, the period from 2014 to 2016 has a tendency to decrease the angle of inclination, which indicates a gradual decrease in the inclination. If we neglect the rule changes and extrapolate the curve to the future, we can expect the exponential nature of the curve with a time constant of 1-2 years. In this case, we can expect the saturation of the curve in 4-7 years at the level of 700 - 800 people. However, such a hypothesis assumes initial conditions without the influence of various disturbing factors. Amendments to the rules of the race have already made adjustments to the dynamics. Other factors can positively change the dynamics such as advertising at the federal level, access to the international level, a sharp increase in funding, assistance of municipal or regional authorities, etc.

It is necessary to note the advertising campaign of the organizers of the race, which included the creation of the logo (brand) of the race. Figure 3 shows the 2019 race medal. Such a medal is given to a participant who overcame half the distance and ran a checkpoint (registration camp) at the foot of the Bolshoy Iremel peak. The camp is located at an altitude of more than 1300 m, so the participants should climb more than 800 m. This high-altitude camp also provides snacks for the participants of the race (hot tea, water). The organizers of the race change the size and shape of the medal every year, but the image of the elk remains unchanged.



Fig. 3. 2019 race medal

Figure 4 shows a graph of the number of tourists in the park depending on the year. There are no data until 2011, as there was no natural park, and the number of tourists was not controlled by anyone. An analysis of this curve shows that it is also non-linear, but the slope coefficient gradually decreases, which indicates a decrease in the dynamics of visits and the tendency of the curve to saturation. 2015 and 2016 fall out of the general pattern. Presumably, the decline in park attendance is associated with the tragic events of the spring of 2015, investigative actions, etc. This is partially confirmed by the fact that during the investigation the advertisement of the park was practically reduced to zero. Perhaps there were other factors that had a negative effect on the dynamics of visiting the park. Nevertheless, if we extrapolate the curve in Figure 4 to the future, then we can also assume the exponential nature of the curve.



Fig. 4. Number of tourists in the park depending on the year

The time constant of such a hypothetical exponent is approximately 2–3 years. This means that in 8–12 years, one can expect stabilization of the number of tourists visiting the Iremel Natural Park at the level of 30–40 thousand people if different (positive and negative) disturbing factors do not influence the park. There are many such factors.

For instance, infrastructure factors directly affect the development of the Iremel Natural Park, which means the

dynamics of tourists. First of all, this is road infrastructure, which so far leaves much to be desired. The most convenient and popular among tourists is the route to Iremel from the village of Tyulyuk (Chelyabinsk region, Katav-Ivanovo municipal district). One can get to Tyulyuk from both Ufa and Chelyabinsk via the M5 federal highway, but the section of the regional highway from Meseda to Tyulyuk does not have asphalt concrete pavement. Moreover, over the past 20 years, asphalt roads are not being built in the Katav-Ivanovo municipal district. This is a serious negative factor in the development of tourism. Secondly, in Tyulyuk there are only private hotels that do not have a centralized infrastructure. In Tyulyuk there is no centralized hot water supply, drainage, heating, gas supply. Cold water supply is also unstable, the quality of power supply also leaves much to be desired (interruptions, power surges). All this does not allow the hotel infrastructure to be developed at the necessary pace and, moreover, to bring it to a higher level. The quality of mobile communications and data transfer rates via the Internet are also low. There is only one mobile operator in the village. Thirdly, this is insufficient attention of local (municipal) and regional authorities to the problem of tourism development. There is no single site for tourism services, there is no necessary relationship with the Directorate of the Iremel Natural Park, which is located in the Republic of Bashkortostan. But this is already a problem of interregional scale [8, 9].

Nevertheless, there are positive prerequisites for the development of the tourism potential of not only the Iremel Natural Park. This includes the further development at the regional level of the Sinigorye tourist cluster, and the creation of the Zigalga National Park. Thus, an interregional nature conservation cluster is already being created in the South Ural [10, 11]. Specially protected areas here will have common borders: South Ural State Nature Reserve, Zyuratkul and Taganai National Parks, Iremel Nature Park and the newly created Zigalga National Park. Perhaps the future “megacluster” will absorb the Serpievsky cave reserve and other protected areas.

IV. CONCLUSION

An analysis of the data showed that the annual extreme running race “Healthy as an Elk” undoubtedly had a positive impact on attracting tourists to the Iremel Nature Park. It can be assumed that the creation of the natural park itself was the result of positive dynamics in the number of participants, and most importantly fans of the race, whose geography continues to grow every year.

The influence of various disturbing factors on the growth dynamics of both the participants of the competition and the visitors of the natural park is shown.

The creation of the Healthy as an Elk brand will further increase the advertising effect and the number of visitors to the natural park.

There are still unresolved problems with the development (construction) of road and other infrastructure.

Undoubtedly, the potential for attracting tourists to the Iremel nature park by such events as the annual race Healthy as an Elk has not yet been exhausted. The jubilee twentieth race, will certainly bring together several hundred athletes and participants from Russia and neighboring countries.

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