

Tourism and Its Influence on the Environment and Living Standards of the Local Population

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Abstract- The studies on tourism activities aim to assess the scale and nature of human impact on the environment of Russian regions taking into account the experience of Russian and foreign researchers. It was identified that changes in using natural resources, including recreational environmental management, are an important factor influencing regional and global environmental changes and is one of the primary anthropogenic impacts on natural landscapes and living standards of the population.

Keywords-: *tourism, recreational nature management, ecological state, living standards, environment, landscape.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the study is due to acceleration of natural-resource potential development in various regions, transformation of the environment, uncertainty of structural and spatial changes in environmental management. These facts cause instability of public preferences at the local level which reduces effectiveness of regional policies aiming to improve living standards of the population. Existing unreasonable ideas about environmental management of the region being put into practice face underevaluation of own knowledge about the region and overvaluation of "inexhaustibility" of its natural resources.

Tourism as an important economic sector can stir discord in the stable environmental management system causing significant changes in environment and national economy development. The studies on tourism activities aim to assess the scale and nature of human impact on environmental management in Russian regions taking into account the experience of foreign researchers. The studies were carried out in various regions of Russia (Altai Krai, the Altai Republic, the Republic of Khakassia, Smolensk and Moscow regions), and the Republic of Belarus. We identified that environmental changes in recreational environmental management is an important factor influencing regional and global

environmental changes and is one of the primary anthropogenic impact on natural landscapes and living standards of the population. Tourism can have positive and negative impacts on natural-economic systems.

The positive impact is manifested through the system of protected natural territories, some of which, for example, national parks or UNESCO World Heritage were created for establishing an optimal ratio of the categories "use" and "protection" within these objects. It helped solve problems of preserving natural potential of landscapes actively used by humans for recreational purposes. The category "use" implies violation and destruction of natural landscapes, but controlled use minimizes the negative component of the use of the territory for recreational purposes.

Environmental and geographical researches carried out in various regions of the Russian Federation (Siberia, Central Russia) in the 1990s and 2000s as well as the experience of Belarusian and German researchers in various international programs and grants (INTAS, USAD "Local Entrepreneurship and Economic Development" implemented by UNDP in the Republic of Belarus in 2012-2015) helped develop coordinated approaches to economic and environmental issues based on rational environmental management, preserving biodiversity and environmental protection [26,27].

The research aims to develop and coordinate areas of recreational use of the regions of Russia and CIS countries (using the example of the Republic of Belarus) in the context of development of new social economic and environmental relations.

For this purpose, the following tasks were solved:

1. To choose model territories to justify their recreational development
2. To assess recreational potential of model territories.

3. To suggest specific activities for tourism development in the regions.
4. To justify creation of tourist and recreational systems taking into account social, economic and environmental factors.
5. To use foreign experience, involve experts from developed European countries at all stages.

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

Researches [1–9, 12, 14, 16, 20,21, 24, 25] were the theoretical and methodological basis of the study. When choosing and justifying research methods, several approaches, including regional and systemic ones, were used. The regional approach used for studying interaction of the environment and society aims to explain differences in spatial organization of human activities, create the spatial structure of these activities which reflects the resource potential of the territory and eternal social values .

The system approach assumes that the object under study is examined at various spatial levels which allows for identification of causes and effects of various object states, directions of state changes, expansion of possibilities for controlling system-forming processes.

Implementation of these approaches to solve tourism and recreation problems in territorial environmental management systems makes it necessary to consider the environment and society of the region as well as territorial recreational systems and clusters as separate subsystems.

The environment is characterized by the landscape structure which transforms under the influence of various types of environmental management, including recreational environmental management. Therefore, the modern landscape structure of the territory is a combination of natural and natural anthropogenic landscapes. Various correlations between the landscapes of these two groups within the region create "local environments" which, on the one hand, reflect the nature of experience in exploiting the resource potential of the local society; on the other hand, they reveal problems caused by interaction of traditional and new methods of economic activities.

Thus, compulsory methods for studying the environment are as follows: mapping using GIS technology, historical, factor analysis, modeling, zoning. Studies on the landscape structure of the region as an aspect of the environment contribute to preservation of biodiversity at all levels. A relevant and effective way of practical implementation of these studies is identification of landscape foci of biodiversity and justification of a special nature management regime. This is one of the key methodological aspects of the study.

The studies on the "society" involves various methods developed within social geography and other social sciences. The population of the regions under study is a peculiar conglomerate of Slavic and Turkic (Altai) peoples which have

their own cultural traditions: nature and type of settlement, appearance of the local environment, and peculiarities of nature management. Long coexistence of these peoples within one region enriched their cultural traditions and formed original cultural landscapes.

At the same time, inherited national features of the spatial dynamics of local population groups are preserved. To identify territorial interest development trends, it is necessary to compare results of the previous studies on social economic transformation of the countryside of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus and new data. This monitoring will contribute to sustainable social economic development of the region. To compare the old and new data, various sociological methods, including questioning, and mathematical methods for processing statistical data were used.

Most of the methodological ideas of our project are consistent with the European Landscape Convention (2000) which continues to preserve the natural and cultural heritage initiated by other European agreements. These are the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Habitats (1979), the Convention on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (1985), the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1992), the European Convention on Transboundary Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities (1980) and its additional Protocols, European Charter of Local Self-Government (1985), the Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio, 1992), The Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), The Convention on Accessibility and information and public participation in decision-making, as well as legal participation in environmental issues (1998).

We believe that the quality and diversity of landscapes is a common recreational resource. Therefore, cooperation in management and tourism and recreation planning in the post-Soviet space and adjacent territories is crucial.

III. RESULTS

At the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, we carried out special ecological and geographical researches in the Altai-Sayan mountain region. The researches aimed to develop a network of specially protected natural territories with regard to recreation and tourism development potential [18]. National parks, including Katunsk national park which were designed in the late 1990s, were at the heart of this network [17, 18]. The basic principles of park planning organization resulted from comprehensive studies on recreational development potential, economic development potential, prospects for development of transport and energy sectors with regard to required environmental structures and activities included in the program of the national park. This planning organization should have been implemented as a functional zoning scheme [18, 28].

Unfortunately, Katunsky National Park has not been created. Instead of the national park, Katunsky Reserve was opened. It performs two functions, including environmental protection. This significantly hinders tourism development, but solves environmental problems of the region. Within the reserve there are the most important tourist sites of Altai: Multinsky lakes, the western edge of the Katunsky ridge with the Upper Katun basin, paths to Belukha Mountain (4506 m above the sea level), etc.

Inclusion of Altai in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites (1998) was crucial for attracting tourists. The object is a cluster which includes: 1) Katunsky Biosphere Reserve, 2) Belukha Natural Park 3) Altai State Reserve, 4) Lake Teletskoye, 5) Ukok Quiet Zone [10].

In 1999, the Tigirek State Reserve was established in Altai. The reserve has been facing a lot of problems due to tourism. Traditional land uses (forest and agricultural land uses) are prohibited.

The recreational potential of the Sayan is much smaller. There is no mountaineering as far as possibilities of mountain tourism are limited. There is no sanatorium-resort system. Despite this, the potential recreational resources are large. They are characterized by the following features:

1) relatively favorable economic and geographical location of recreationally significant parts of the region (floating rivers, the highest ridge parts occupied by various meadow and tundra communities, nival-glacial landforms);

2) a large area of poorly developed recreational territories whose recreational resources can solve both regional and federal tasks;

3) comfortable climate which was determined using integral bioclimatic indicators;

4) floating rivers (Ona, Bolshoi and Maly Abakan, Kantegir, etc.) and balneological objects;

5) aesthetic features of natural systems (landscape diversity and uniqueness of the Sayan) [11].

Optimal combination of these characteristics forms a basis for development of recreational activities. An important condition for developing recreational activities is the system of specially protected areas [13], especially those which allow tourism (national and natural parks).

One more region under study is Smolensk oblast. It is known for its cultural and historical monuments located in the regional center as well as the national park "Smolensk Poozerye" [19]. The park management has been developing tourism since the first days of the park. The National Park is located in the west of the Central Russian Upland, north of Smolensk.

There are more than 100 villages with a population of about 5 thousand people in the park territory. The total area of the national park is 146,2 thousand hectares. In the park

territory, there are several enterprises, mainly agricultural ones.

Main transport routes are highways: Demidov - Przhevalsky (through Kholm) and Demidov - Przhevalsky (through Baklanovo). The distance from Smolensk to the western border of the park is about 100 km.

Smolensk National Park is a federal protected natural area. The park has the largest occupied by forest ecosystems compared to other protected natural areas of Central Russia.

Due to rich flora and fauna, in 1998, the national park was included in the list of international territories of the program "Key ornithological territories of Russia" (No SM-003 RU069). In 1998, the park became a member of the Federation of Natural and National Parks of Europe. In 2002, the national park was included in the network of biosphere reserves of the international program "Man and Nature".

The most significant Russian recreational territory is Moscow region with the city of Moscow. By the number of tourists visiting Moscow region, it is a leading region of Russia. Authorities, environmental organizations and economic sectors are integrating their efforts to develop regional economy, including the following tourism areas:

1) tourism planning and regulation with regard to tourism effects on the environment and conservation of natural resources. Currently, environmental impacts of each type of tourism are being assessed. Companies should perform environmental audit obligations. Environmental audit is considered as an essential tool for implementing regional development strategies and creating favorable environmental conditions. It is also necessary to integrate a municipality into the system of regional economy and environmental safety as well as to strengthen requirements to environmental laws.

2) developing measures aiming to assess impacts of tourism on the social sphere in general. However, the negative impact of tourism on local cultures can be avoided. Local residents should participate in decision-making, correct and change tourism development projects, block decisions which seem to be less favorable to their lifestyle or environment. Municipalities should make decisions and participate in the tourism industry for gaining economic benefits at the regional level.

3) supporting the tourism industry as an economic sector when making decisions about the use of regional natural resources. Currently, industries that extract resources (timber, metallurgy, petrochemical, construction ones) have priority. Involvement of the tourism industry in preservation of natural and cultural heritage is often ignored by the authorities and is not sufficiently defended by the industry itself. Proper management can make tourism an effective tool of budget replenishment and environment protection.

1. Development of the most promising tourism sectors (e.g., rafting and hiking, visiting cultural monuments,

sanatorium and rest houses). Agro-tourism, scientific, ethnic, rural, folklore, event, adventure and some other types of tourism seem to be promising. It is important to prevent environmental degradation, locate tourism facilities in proper places from socio-economic and environmental perspectives. Other ideas concern tourism effects on biodiversity, ecosystems, water supply, air quality or soil stability of regions. In addition, such impacts can be indirect, for example, through changes in the structure of environmental management.

2. Changes in environmental management traditions are always painful for local people. It is difficult to involve the population into the tourism industry in a short time. Local people are hostile to aliens who develop tourism facilities in their settlements.

3. In Moscow oblast, much attention is paid to eco-and agro-tourism. The largest agricultural companies began to provide recreational services. Most of them focus on excursions which are low-cost, short and informative forms of leisure and insight into the the life of a company. One of the market leaders - Agrokombinat Moskovsky - is one of the examples. The company developed a comprehensive service program for people of all ages: child visits, salad production and flower growing quests (optional), outdoor activities in schools, excursions for adults and thematic holidays (Maslenitsa, Easter, etc.). In addition to executions, people can attend master classes (bouquet design, card production) which take place in greenhouses. Among other things, tasting is provided. It is one of the brightest and most important moments of any event. Tourists can purchase traditional products at manufacturer's prices. There is a system of "gifts" included in the price (a basket of green for each guest). A large producer of berries "Lenin State Farm" is also using tourist resources. It developed a comprehensive program of excursion services "Contact Village" designed for year-round visits. Each season has its own events. Guests are involved in various rural activities (water transfer using a yoke, planting preceded by entertaining search for required tools). Tourists may feed animals (food is included in the price), ride in horse carriages around the company territory or drive mini-tractors. Visitors can take part in numerous workshops and quizzes. There are group and family visits. A lack of catering service is a significant disadvantage of the program. It might be due to the reluctance of the agricultural producer to take on additional responsibility and bear additional expenses.

The described approaches to tourist and excursion activities deal with crop production. In the animal breeding sector of Moscow region, the situation is somewhat different. Large farms do not organize excursions, except for breeding farms. However small producers - subsidiary and peasant farms - are willing to do this. Breeding of exotic animals for Moscow region is of special interest.

Recreational products are bright events. For example, in the ostrich farm "Strausland" in Dmitrovsky district, in addition to inspecting living conditions of these birds (and

other farm animals), you can ride a donkey or in a cart drawn by them as well as you can ride an ostrich (extreme entertainment). The reindeer farm near Antsiferovo in Orekhovo-Zuyevo district (PFC "Reindeer") offers guide stories about the North peoples and their culture, riding in a reindeer sleigh in winter, feeding reindeer, traditional Scandinavian folk fairs. Moreover, local food has a northern flavor. Both farms are favorably distinguished by availability of souvenir trade and organized food. Therefore, they can serve as examples for using rural resources for recreation and entertainment.

In the Republic of Belarus, development of the tourism industry coincides with formation of post-industrial civilization principles based on the concept of sustainable development. Tourism performs a number of important socio-economic functions contributing to sustainable development [15, 22, 23].

Firstly, tourism contributes to preservation and better understanding of the national culture, religion, traditions and rituals due to interaction of tourists and locals. Secondly, it increases national competitiveness in the tourist market by increasing the use of national recreational resources, creating multifunctional tourist centers saturated with additional elements of tourist attractiveness. Third, tourism ensures balanced development of the national economic system optimizing territorial organization of the economy through intensive development of peripheral areas. Finally, tourism activates migration processes which intensify positive effects of tourism on the national economy and payment balance.

One of the main tourism development areas is formation of eco-and agro-tourism. It is based on the spatial basis for expanding the network of protected natural territories which contributes to active involvement of natural resources in economic activities. In the country, there are favorable opportunities for eco-tourism development. Forests occupy 7372 thousand hectares or 35,5% of the territory. According to this index, Belarus is ahead of many countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE): Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, etc. However, the share of protected natural areas, including forest parks, resort forests, forests of recreational zones of national parks, is insignificant. It amounts to 4,2%, which is almost 2 times lower in comparison with the CEE index. Belarus has a large reserve of territories which can be used for ecotourism development.

Ecotourism optimized the territorial organization of tourism in Belarus and increased the demand for a regional tourist product in the domestic market. For a long time, point and focal types of the territorial structure have dominated in the tourist space of the Republic of Belarus (large cities, resort centers). Rather high efficiency of ecological tourism in Belarus is due to its development based on three principles dealing with balanced interaction in the system "economy - social sphere - nature management". The principles of sustainable development are enshrined in the legal documents regulating ecological tourism in the Republic of Belarus.

The spatial basis of ecological tourism is protected natural territories (PNT): national parks, reserves, natural monuments. They are unevenly located throughout the country. Most of the protected areas are located in Brest and Vitebsk regions.

As of January 1, 2017, the PNT system of Belarus included 1302 objects: one reserve (Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve), 4 national parks (Belovezhskaya Pushcha, Braslav Lakes, Narochansky and Pripyatsky), 85 national reserves, 332 local reserves, 306 national natural monuments and 574 local natural monuments.

In 2017 compared to 2010, the total area of protected zones changed slightly and amounted to 1 591,9 thousand hectares or 7,7% of the national area, which is a low index compared to many CEE countries. Therefore, one of the main development directions is expansion of protected areas. In accordance with the National Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity of the Republic of Belarus, it is planned to increase the number of protected areas, including reserves - up to 2, national parks - up to 9, national reserves - up to 152 [23].

Many protected areas have both *natural and cultural and historical value*. Historical and cultural monuments are important objects for executions. For example, Belovezhskaya Pushcha is the largest ancient forest in Europe with a lot of species of flora and fauna. It was included in the List of World Natural and Cultural Heritage Sites of Mankind. Belovezhskaya Pushcha is a unique cultural and historical region with a specific set of archaeological monuments, memorable historical sites. Another example is National Park Pripyatsky where Turov - a capital of the ancient principality - is located. In Turov, there is a complex of archaeological monuments of the 9th-13th centuries, a historical museum, a memorial monument to K. Turovsky - a famous educator of the 12th century who left rich spiritual heritage to Belarus.

According to modern concepts of ecotourism, it involves tourist and excursion events and various forms of insight into traditional culture of villages and small cities located within the preserved natural landscapes [15, 22]. This is one more factor that ensures a competitive advantage of Belarusian national parks over many foreign analogues. The *folklore-ethnographic potential* of Belarus allows for combining environmental and cultural and educational tours and animation programs. In Belarus, there are six folk-ethnographic regions distinguished by peculiarities of material and spiritual culture. The National Parks of Belarus represent the heritage of the most attractive regions: Belarusian Lakeland ("Braslav Lakes"), Ponemanya ("Narochansky"), East and Western Polesye ("Pripyatsky", "Belovezhskaya Pushcha"). Tourists visiting the national parks have the opportunity to visit museums (historical ethnographic, local history, folk architecture and life, folk art), crafts houses and schools of folk art, factories, art monuments, folk architecture, fairs and festivals of folk art. They can familiarize themselves with local folklore represented by numerous folklore groups [21].

IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, the rich natural, historical and cultural heritage of various regions of Russia and Belarus helps create a competitive national tourist product. However, the experience of many countries, including Central and Eastern Europe, shows that one of the ways to improve competitiveness of the national tourist product is formation of new efficient forms of territorial management of tourist and recreational activities - tourist clusters. A cluster as a technologically holistic formation of interrelated enterprises, organizations and their institutional environment (scientific, financial, marketing, information companies and agencies) creates a special innovative environment in a certain area [5, 8]. In the tourism industry, their main purpose is to create a competitive regional tourist product based on deep cooperation and competitive relations between all actors of the technological cycle (service providers, manufacturers, intermediaries) and public-private partnership. Tourist clusters in the Republic of Belarus are innovative products of nation development management [21].

To conclude, the current stage of tourism development is characterized by an increasing role of investment factors, innovative technology and ecological, geographical, natural and cultural resources. Rational combination of traditional areas and innovation activities can ensure successful development of this economic sector in any country, including Russia and Belarus.

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