Analysis of the prospects for sustainable development of rural and ecological tourism in Russia on basis of global experience

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Abstract. The goal of research was the carrying-out of analysis of the rural and ecological tourism in Russia and the determination of the prospects for the transition to sustainable tourism development based on the experience of foreign countries and areas of the world. Based on the author's own data, as well as expert assessments, an analysis of the prospects and opportunities for the development of rural tourism in Russia was carried out. In the course of the research performance, the necessity of the diversification of Russia rural economy was substantiated, which will contribute to the creation of conditions for alternative employment of the population in non-agricultural sectors, in particular, in rural tourism. As the result, recommendations were elaborated for the transition to sustainable tourism development in rural areas of Russia.

1 Introduction

Tourism predicated on the principles of sustainable development, in addition to economic effect, can contribute to the development of rural areas, promote social integration and more efficient operation of the natural area of preferential protection. Tourism can also raise awareness of the cultural and environmental values of territories, serve as a powerful educational tool and actively foster the values of a sustainable approach not only to travel, but in general for a more harmonious manner of living (slow life).

However, such tasks are practically not achievable in the case of “classical” mass tourism, that's exactly why many countries actively support and develop such areas of tourism as rural and ecological, which meets the demands of modern tourists. Regardless of the fact that the mass tourism share still prevails, current trends and the ecological situation in the world force us to seek new approaches and more sustainable forms of tourism.

Rural tourism is one of the most dynamically developing destinations in the tourism industry. There is no unified approach to the definition of rural tourism at present. A wide variety of interpretations of this concept in real practice can be found. In an extended sense, the concept of “rural tourism” is a synthesis of different definitions adopted in foreign and domestic scientific literature.

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The general definition of rural tourism is as follows: “rural tourism is a recreational activity and organization of leisure time for tourists in rural areas or in small towns with the provision of hospitality services in the private sector with the possibility of labor participation, focused on the use of natural and recreational, cultural-historical, social, ethnographic and other resources, traditional for this locality” [1].

Often, rural tourism is viewed only from the perspective of acquaintance with rural life – as recreation in a rural farmstead, working on the land and communicating with animals on farms. But the actual practice relates the above mentioned interpretation to only one of the areas of rural tourism – agritourism.

Thus, rural tourism represents a recreational activity and organization of leisure time for tourists in rural areas or in small towns with the provision of hospitality services, focused on the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and the use of natural, cultural-historical and other resources characteristic of this locality, taking into account its specifics. At the same time, agrarian tourism is a variety of tourism involving temporary departures (trips) to a domestic agricultural goods producer engaged in rural tourism.

The development of rural tourism is inalienable linked to the development of ecological tourism. Attraction of tourists from metropolitan cities, providing them with ecologically clean agricultural commodities from homestead properties and providing tourists with a set of events for active recreation and acquaintance with local cultural traditions are designed to lead to a rise in the living standard in rural areas [2]. Ecological tourism is aimed at protecting natural and cultural environment of the territories visited by tourists. It contemplates that the participants in these journeys are people with high ecological consciousness.

2 Materials and Methods

When conducting the research and determining the prospects for sustainable development of tourism in rural areas, methods such as monographic, economics and statistical analysis, SWOT analysis were used.

International practice shows that the development of tourism is one of the important socio-economic tendency of rural economic development. Also, for all its advantages and uniqueness, rural tourism is a socially oriented type of recreation, since financially it is available to the wider population.

In international practice, the agrarian tourism market was formed, first of all, as a means of selling agricultural products to tourists during the looming crisis of over-production. Due to the redivision of the agrarian market, the national agricultural goods producers in many European countries found themselves in totally new competitive conditions. It has been linked to the introduction of a quota system bounding the volumes of national agricultural production in the European Union. The necessity to stabilize prices for agricultural production, avoid the crisis of over-production and save farmers from bankruptcy appeared [3]. At the same time, it was necessary to find ways to maintain employment of the rural population and avoid human migration from rural areas with negative social consequences. Rural tourism has become the way to solve these tasks.

The present day, the demand for tourist services has changed the very concept of rural tourism in Europe, which is no longer a secondary activity for many entrepreneurs and becomes the main one. The World Tourism Organization defines rural tourism as one of the upcoming sectors of the tourism industry, which not only allows vacationers to spend time in the picturesque and ecologically clean corners of the countryside, but also provides villagers with a realistic alternative for development.

European countries are actively developing rural tourism, which allows expanding tourist geography within countries and serves as a tool for sustainable development of rural areas.

Alternative routes, thematic tours based on the cultural, historical and natural landscape features of specific territories, promote the emergence of new unique tourism products.

Tourism (ecological) in natural areas of preferential protection is one of the priority guidelines that many countries are actively developing. At the present time, in the CIS region, natural areas of preferential protection are beginning to play the role of the main cultural center in the remote areas, and also promote their socio-economic development. In the first turn, this is happening due to the creation of conditions for the development of tourism and eco-business [4].

Most countries are conscious of the need for a transition to sustainable tourism, the following measures are being taken for these:

- increasing awareness about sustainability in the tourism industry;
- popularization of sustainable ecological tourism;
- supporting companies implementing new work approaches, with a particular focus on sustainability and environmental friendliness;
- developing domestic tourism and promoting near distance travel;
- use of financial instruments to support “green energetics” and the careful use of natural resources.

According to the UN World Commission on Development and Environment, sustainable development is development that covers the requirements of the current generation without harming future generations.

In 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, the “Action Plan for the XXI Century upon Reaching Sustainable Development” was adopted, which identified specific measures and time frames for their implementation [5]. In 2015, a new set of sustainable development goals was approved by world leaders at the UN Sustainable Development Summit.

Over the last few years, in an emerging market economy, there has been an increase of interest in a management concept that is oriented not only on financial gain and economic aspects, but also on social and environmental aspects. This approach, called sustainable development, is becoming an imperative in the modern world [6].

Sustainable development is a global movement that determines the development of all sectors of the economy, in particular, tourism. At the same time, sustainability is understood in a broad sense – it is the sustainable use of available resources, especially natural resources, as well as the sustainable development of territories [7]. It is important at all levels to encourage the development of persistent forms of tourism, especially those that involve an efficient and careful attitude to natural and cultural resources.

The following principles of sustainable development can be formulated for rural areas:

1. Socio-demographic development and production growth

It includes the growth of the standard of living of the population, a decrease in the outflow of the able-bodied population from the countryside, etc.

2. Economic control over the territory

Providing order, protecting natural resources and objects, etc.

3. Cultural and spiritual growth

Preservation of the spiritual values and cultural heritage of the territory by the local population.

4. Conservancy of nature

Environmental conservation, ensuring an ecological balance, preservation of the natural and cultural landscape of the territory.

5. Structural transformations

Creation of administrative arrangements, diversification of the economy.

Destinations and specific forms of implementing the principles of sustainable development depend on many specific factors, which include the specificity of the tourism

product of a given territory, the potential and sustainability of the natural, historical and cultural environment, the level of development of the territory, national and cultural characteristics, and others [8].

3 Results and Discussion

Rural tourism is one of the most prospective lines for the development of domestic tourism in Russia. In 2019, about 4.5 thousand rural facilities for tourist accommodation functioned in Russia. Other facilities of rural tourism (craft workshops, rural museums of traditional everyday life, rural travel itineraries, interactive programs) – about 10 thousand, the number of rural newsworthy events held in the country – more than 7 thousand [9].

It is known that the growth of the tourist flow is good for the economy (increase of receipts from tourism, opportunities for business development, the new job formation, the forming of a positive tourist image of the territories). But if you do not take into account and do not regulate the possible detrimental effects of tourism development, then its positive effect will significantly decrease.

Therefore, in order to minimize the negative consequences of tourism development, the following is necessary:

- to assess tourist attractions, develop recommendations for their promotion and the creation of tourist brands;
- to evaluate the economic efficiency of the use of the territories specificities having tourism importance and its sustainable development;
- to assess the level of the staff training employed in the tourism industry, and ways of enhancing their skills.

For the purposes of creating an overarching strategy for the development of rural tourism in Russia, it is necessary to determine the state and prospects of its development. In order to do that a SWOT analysis matrix of rural tourism in Russia was designed (Table 1).

Table 1. SWOT-analysis of rural tourism in Russia.

Advantages (strong points)	Disadvantages (weaknesses)
High potential for the rural tourism development	Underdevelopment of tourism infrastructure in rural areas
The presence of cultural and historical monuments of federal and global significance	Lack of information, advertising, promotion of travel services
The presence of social organizations that can promote the development of tourism in rural areas	Deficiency of trained personnel for the rural tourism segment
Providing tourists with ecologically clean food of local production	Weak government support for rural tourism, underfunding
Opportunities	Threats
Creation of additional jobs in the field of rural tourism	Absence of legislative consolidation of the “rural tourism” concept
Attraction of tourists to the rural area	Competition with other types of tourism
Rise of population incomes in rural areas and tax revenues for the treasury	Drop in tourist flow due to low level of service and high prices for rural tourism services
Development of entrepreneurial activity in the rural tourism industry	Decrease in payable demand of the population due to an income level decrease

The conducted SWOT analysis showed that Russia has a high potential for the development of tourism in rural areas [10]. At the same time, there are struggles, which

include a low level of tourism infrastructure development in rural areas, an insufficient level of staff training for the rural tourism segment, as well as a low level of government support for rural tourism.

In response to these problems, an integrated approach is necessary that allow to improve the competitiveness of rural areas, satisfy the growing demand for quality tourism services and provide the conditions for sustainable tourism development in rural areas.

4 Conclusions

In the last few years, the problems of socio-economic development of rural areas have acquired special significance for Russia. First of all, this is a reduction in the quality of life of the population in rural areas, a high unemployment, and a degradation of the demographic situation. Therefore, one of the priority growth areas of the agricultural based economy in Russia is diversification, which involves the addition of senile agricultural industries with new kinds of activities, which can include rural tourism. In this regard, it becomes urgent to create conditions for alternative employment of the population in non-agricultural activities: using the existing advantages and features of natural landscapes, organizing traditional industries, gastronomic travel itineraries, newsworthy events specifically for this locality.

If trace the development path of the tourism industry in Europe and in Russia, than a significant number of similar stages, in particular, for rural tourism can be seen. Being falling behind many Western European countries, Russia is following a similar development path. In addition, it is impossible to remain aloof and not take into consideration the worldwide development trends under current conditions, since in the future they will have to be taken into account in strategies and practical steps. Therefore, it is important to study the experience of European countries and follow the worldwide trends in tourism development.

From the European experience in the development of rural tourism, the following conclusions can be made:

1. Legal authorization of rural tourism and the introduction of tax concessions stipulate progress in the development of rural tourism.
2. Regulation of rural tourism should be conducted at the national level.
3. Rural tourism should focus mainly on the domestic tourism market.

Up to date, sustainable tourism in the rural areas of Russia is going through the stage of its formation. It is known from the experience of other countries that the legal framework, instruments and the entire system of rural tourism do not begin to develop as an independent industry until the necessity has matured from below, at the local level. The development of rural tourism will lead to the creation of new jobs, additional opportunities for earning income in rural areas, and reduce the outflow of the economically active population to the cities. At the same time, it is important to understand the threats of tourism development in a timely manner, at the planning stage, which can be helped by studying the experience of some countries and territories of the world, and to take steps to reduce its negative consequences.

In general, Russia has substantial potential for the development of rural and ecological tourism, basing on world's experience. The developed segment of rural tourism will be able to have a positive influence on the competitiveness and sustainable development of rural areas.

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