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Krupskyi O. P., Krasnikova N. A., Redko V. Y.

5.3 Rural Tourism as an Element of Sustainable Diversification of Economic Opportunities of the Region

Currently, many researchers see tourism as one of the most dynamically developing and extremely promising areas of social and economic activity. In many countries, the developed ones, the share of the economically active population in tourism is yet significantly higher than similar shares in many traditional sectors of the economy, for example, in mechanical engineering or the mining industry. At the same time, tourism as a type of integrated economic activity is inextricably linked with a significant number of other major sectors of the national economy – transport, hotel industry, social and cultural activities, etc. Tourism has a significant impact on the development of the food and processing industry, as well as agriculture. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism is one of the leading sectors of the modern world economy, which in 2017 provided 10.4% (\$8272.3 million) of its contribution to the world gross domestic product. By 2028, the growth of the tourism share in the global gross domestic product is expected to reach 11.7% (\$ 12,450 million) [14]. International tourism growth has overtaken the growth of products sales throughout a decade.

For the developing countries, tourism becomes 40% of the export of services (average indicator is 30%) [1]. This aspect reveals an entire layer of new opportunities for employment and the social and economic development of a number of regions of Ukraine. Our country, which has promising natural and recreational resources, should pay attention to the

ever-growing demand for the greening of the recreation process, and here such a trend as green tourism [10].

The Law of Ukraine «On Tourism» No. 324/95-BP dated September 15, 1995, treats the concept of «tourism» as «temporary departure of a person at his/her place of residence for health, educational, professional business or other purposes without performing paid activity in the place where a person leaves for» [7]. Based on this law, tourism as a phenomenon is not a public relationship but is only a unilateral action of an individual to self-satisfy own needs.

The broader concept of the «tourism» is provided by the Swiss economist K. Caspar, who views it as two internal systems: the subject of tourism (the tourist him/herself is a consumer of tourist services, with all the variety of tourist needs and motives) and a tourist object (tourist region, tourist enterprises and tourist organizations) [12]. Thus, the concept of «tourism» is supplemented by the production component, including the activities of tourist organizations. However, according to A. Haiduk, the object of tourism is represented here by an insufficient number of elements; namely, such an important element as tourism resources is missing [2]. Therefore, the concept of «tourism» is to develop a complex of tourist services to meet the consumers' needs with reasonable use of tourist resources of the territories and simultaneous economic and social benefits for society [5]. Thus, the «tourism» should be viewed as a function of three components, namely: the subject of tourism (according to K. Caspar), a tourism object (according to K. Caspar) and a tourist resource (a territory that possesses cultural, natural, historical, etc. values from the point of view of a tourist).

N. Novichkov [6] identified seven global tourist trends. However, we are interested in two of them, namely «Ecological tourism and recreation» and «Growth of the weekend tourism segment». We believe that these two trends are most fully responsible for the ever-growing interest in «green tourism». Under this green tourism, we understand any kind of tourism associated with the harmonious interaction of the tourist with nature. And we shall consider rural tourism as a kind of green tourism. A special feature of green tourism is that impressions, as the main product of tourism activities, are in this case a function of the territory, climate, and culture, which are characteristic of this place [13]. For a tourist, individual coexistence with nature is of individual value (for instance, rural life, cultural characteristics, a way of life) on a specific territory and the natural attractiveness of this territory (a complex of geological and natural features characteristic of this territory). If the first one can be considered as a landmark, which can be created or developed, then the second is a

landmark, which must be «strengthened». In other words, the natural attractiveness of a certain geographical territory (in terms of the tourist product) is an artificially created fashion for spending time (recreation) in a given territory, supported by the created amenities (infrastructure). Green tourism is the engine of diversification of economic opportunities in rural areas. Moreover, by diversifying the economic opportunities of rural areas we mean a targeted and systematic search for new sources of income that will improve the quality of life of inhabitants living in this rural area.

Attention, being the main driving resource of tourist activity, is attracted only by a volitional effort that must be directed to the desired object. Fifty years ago, stores selling «environmentally friendly products» were rare and were considered exotic. In our time, a sufficiently large number of people are anxious about their health, focusing on environmentally friendly products and create the necessary need to increase the number of such stores [11]. Consumer attention to «green tourism» is on the one hand based on the fashion on environmental friendliness, on the other, on the exotic similar recreation, and the third «emotional fatigue» from the resorts of Egypt, Turkey, Greece, the peak of fashion in the third half of the twentieth century.

The territorial and administrative structure, location, remoteness from megalopolises, clean impoundments, forests, and fields make the village an alternative resting place for large cities' residents. It is geographical features that create the primary uniqueness and attractiveness of the village as a place of ecological both short-term and long-term recreation for tourists.

The consumer makes a choice in favor of rural tourism in a particular area, based on the destination attractiveness in general and the compliance of the infrastructure with individual preferences and expectations. Such decisions are often associated with the experience of tourists visiting the countryside, who shared their impressions and are an example (idol, authority) for others. In addition, outstanding personalities of the local population of the village, such as molfars, shamans, witches, etc., create additional attractiveness and increase the tourists' flow. The introduction to their experience becomes the goal of a tourist trip to the countryside.

Unique objects located on the village's territory often become the main attraction and a way to attract tourists to the countryside. Such an object can be a material, inanimate witness – a mansion, an apartment, a park or a plant, etc. Separately, it is worth noting the so-called «collection of artifacts» of the village, which creates additional advantages in the formation of a tourist image and expands the system of tourist objectives. Properly used artifacts allow not only to stay on the market for a long time, but also to increase the competitive advantages of a destination by including

these objects in various duration, contingent, and price levels of tour programs.

The historical and cultural value of architectural objects located in villages is still underestimated. And therefore, such objects can be either in an abandoned state or used for other purposes. As world practice shows, the re-equipment of architectural objects in museums, hotels, the expansion of infrastructure around them becomes a powerful incentive to visit them. Considering the fashion trend in the tourism business, aimed at gaining experience, new knowledge, and skills, the object of tourist interest are the features of rural life, folk art, folklore. For example, the National Museum-Reserve of Ukrainian pottery at Oposhnya [5], the Center for Folk Art «Petrikovka» [8], the Museum of National Architecture and Life in Pirogovo [4]). The holding of thematic fairs and festivals in this area serves as an additional motive for tourists visiting the village, and for the local population as an instrument of promotion to the target market and a way of additional earnings.

The spread of religion and the increase in the number of its adherents created the conditions for the development of pilgrim tourism. It is worth noting that a large number of sacral places and objects are located precisely in rural areas and operate on the principles of «green» development, which is another way to attract tourists from big cities. Therefore, all rural churches can be safely attributed to the category of rural tourism.

Preserving the authenticity of the village, folk traditions, and rituals, ecological environmental technologies for food products production and consumer goods compounded the competitive advantages of rural tourism, which was manifested in the allocation of agricultural tourism or farmer tourism into its separate types. This type of tourism requires the formation of not only the tourist infrastructure but also production, as well as the involvement of professional staff, whose composition goes beyond the family ties. Specialization in certain types of organic production, the use of authentic recipes for preparing dishes and drinks, the national presentation of dishes with elements of rituals and folklore created the conditions for the development of gastronomic tourism. In our opinion, this type of tourism can also be attributed to rural tourism, subject to the administrative and territorial basis of the services' provision. Sometimes, in the absence of attractive tourist facilities in the village, it is the gastronomic possibilities that become at the center of the idea of developing tourism.

Analysis of the village attractiveness allowed identifying the main objects that may cause interest and are associated with «rural tourism» (Fig. 1).

Tourism in rural areas has its own distinctive features, which are based on the consumers' needs of such tourist product.

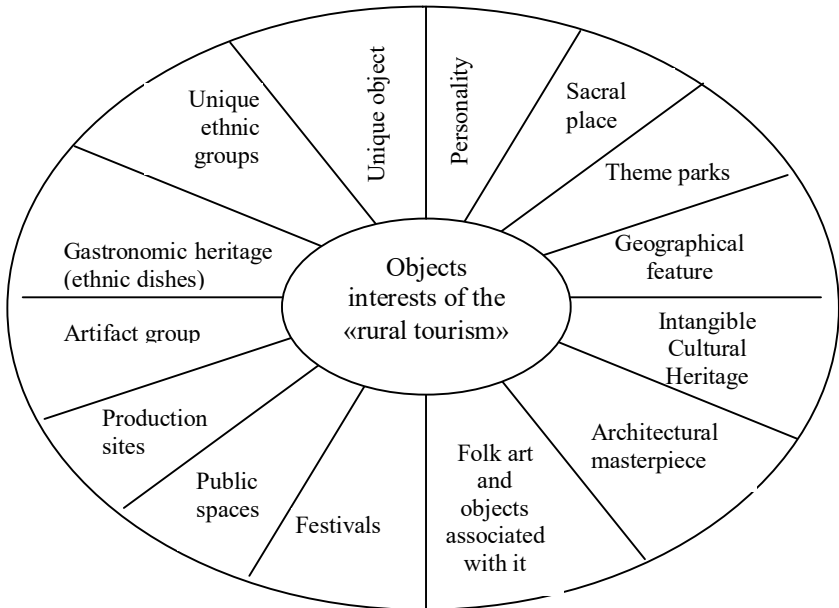


Figure 1. The main objects interests of the «rural tourism»

The first feature is that a consumer of a tourist product feels the need to visit objects located precisely in rural areas and to use these, not usual for a city dweller, objects and leisure methods to get new impressions. A tourist may be interested in:

- objects that are associated with agriculture (farm) and agricultural and industrial complex (farms, mills, agricultural complexes, land, etc.);
- objects that are associated with the current way of life in the village (dwellings, public spaces in the settlements); participation in industrial or leisure activities and, in addition, living in rural conditions, introduction to rural life, participation in cooking, making household items, seasonal work, etc.;
- objects that are associated with rural traditions and cultural heritage, including folk art and folk crafts; participation in ceremonies, rituals, cultural and historical holidays, including gastronomic festivals and fairs, holidays of the national calendar, etc.

The second feature is the purposeful visit of tourist facilities, which for one reason or another are located in rural areas, but do not have a direct

relationship to rural life, both domestic and industrial. These objects include:

- historical sites, which are currently located in the village or adjacent territory (ancient settlements, estates of landowners, religious monuments, etc.);

- landscape attractions – objects of park culture and other natural objects located in a given rural or adjacent territory;

- ecological tourism – destinations with an attractive level of ecological characteristics, located in this rural area.

It is obvious that the attractiveness of the rural area in the consumer eyes of the tourist service is provided, besides the basic and accompanying segments of the tourist market, also fashion for a certain type of pastime on vacation and/or recreation in a certain territory. The multi-directionality of the tourist offerings of the rural territory ensures the diversification of economic opportunities/offers of the region and the attraction of tourists belonging to different target audiences to the consumers of the tourist product to the territory in question.

Consider the connection of the marked global social and economic trends in tourism («Ecological tourism and recreation» and «Growth of the weekend tourism segment.») with new opportunities for tourism development of rural tourism:

- The fashion for ecologization of tourism and recreation «successfully» coincided with the economic crisis in Ukraine, when the fall in the purchasing power of the hryvnia coincided with the growth of national identity and led to an increase in consumer interest in tourism services to the domestic product. Identification of oneself as a European led to the formation of a need for a healthy lifestyle, one of the components of which is an ecological way of life. These three requirements in the domestic market are most fully met by rural tourism, which provides the satisfaction of the need for the price of a service, the study of national roots and environmental friendliness.

- The growth of the weekend tourism segment was the result of an increase in the «pace of life» when people have the opportunity to «go for an outing» for two or three days, but they experience significant difficulties if they are forced to leave the workplace for more than seven days. In addition, despite the possibility of visiting Europe, the financial possibilities of the overwhelming number of Ukrainians are constantly decreasing. And in this case, the possibility of leaving for 2-4 days in a rural area, for «getting itchy feet» and «relaxing from the bustle of the city» became an opportunity that was enjoyed by the country inhabitants. Weekend tourism is particularly relevant for residents of large Ukrainian regions (Kiev,

Zaporozhye, Nikolaev, Dnipropetrovsk) wherein the level of the monthly average wage is higher than in other areas of the country [3]. Two of these areas have access to the sea (Zaporizhia and Mykolaiv) and rural tourism for these areas residents is less relevant because of the habit of spending holidays on the coast, but residents of Kiev and Dnipropetrovsk regions have the opportunity (due to the relative distance of the sea coast) to stop their choice on various proposals from the «rural tourism» segment.

The number of «impulse» tourists is also constantly growing, those people who decided to «go for an outing» on Thursday and realized this intention after work on Friday. For these consumers, proposals for recreation in rural areas are optimal, since they do not require advance booking and are relatively close to the main place of work and residence of the service consumer.

Environmental friendliness and educational and recreational opportunities of rural tourism directly affect the attractiveness of Ukrainian villages. Since most of the villages are located in ecologically clean areas and stopped in their development in the 70s of the last centuries. That is, it provides an opportunity to relax in ecologically clean areas, and get acquainted with the life of the Ukrainian village during the decline of Socialism.

Thus, the strength of «rural tourism» in Ukraine can be considered as the presence of ecologically clean places, authenticity, the friendliness of the people, the diversity of offers, both in price and in terms of time.

The weak sides are: insufficient branding, lack of integration into the global tourism industry, poor infrastructure development, a small number of multidimensional tourism products, and low knowledge of foreign languages directly by residents of rural areas

The steps that must be done to establish Ukrainian rural tourism can be the following:

- the need for the branding of the Ukrainian regions and their tourist destinations with the identification of unique features of the respective territories, stressing ecological and cultural and ethnic component.

- the formation of fashion for travel within the country and leisure activities in the «Ukrainian village».

- development of infrastructure, provision of transport accessibility, places of temporary residence and orientation to a high level of service for potential tourists.

- the formation of inter-regional tourist clusters with the opportunity of visiting several attractive destinations, overcoming the fragmentation of the tourist product in the market for «rural tourism»;

- the realization of cultural events in order to maintain a given frequency and quality of service, it can be both musical, in particular, rock and folk festivals, and fairs, and master classes of ethnic and craft direction.
- creation of conditions for booking tours, sadyb, guest houses, as well as tickets (transfer) via the Internet.
- identification and promotion of the unique features of the Ukrainian territories that are attractive for foreign (separately – European, separately – Asian) tourists, etc., including for attracting foreign investments.
- creation of maps of «greenness»/environmental friendliness of the countryside of the region and Ukraine
- holding holidays/fairs at the weekend (according to the European principle) with notification (creation of tourist «green» web pages of the region) of the population about possible events. This will add an event element to tourist visits to the countryside and will lead to an increase in repeat visits (for the next year, for other events).

For the development of sustainable tourism on the basis of rural areas, there is a need to identify areas of social and economic support for tourism activities. The basic directions are economic, personnel, information, legal, infrastructural and ecological.

The economic direction of providing tourism activities is aimed at increasing this activity efficiency by lifting the income level. It should be highlighted: forecasting needs in new tourist destinations; identification of the region's capacity to meet consumer needs; the formation of networks for the sale of the tourist product and the creation of conditions for its rapid distribution among buyers.

The personnel direction of providing tourism activities creates conditions for effective use of labor resources, perhaps not previously used in rural areas, and also ensures their quantitative, professional, qualification and intellectual growth. Personnel direction is perhaps the most important one since it creates opportunities to diversify the activities of rural residents in the context of their income. At one time, the development of Italian «agricultural tourism» effectively stimulated self-employment and contributed to accelerating the economic growth of the agricultural regions of Italy.

The main processes of the information direction of providing tourism activities can be the formation, placement, compilation, and use of information data of various nature and directions; direct provision of information and facilitation of access to information to potential consumers of tourism services and so on. In today's globalized world, information about services should be ahead of the activity itself.

The direction of legal support of tourism activities is embodied on the basis of rules and regulations, fixed in legal acts, announced by a predetermined procedure and stated in official documents. Legal support is the basis for ensuring the quality of tourist activities, should not be determined precisely on the basis of the criteria set by legislation. This will increase consumer confidence in specific rural tourism.

The infrastructure direction of providing tourist activities is to provide transport infrastructure at various levels, which will give an opportunity to attract both national and foreign consumers of tourist services. The lack of high-quality and modern infrastructure hinders the development of tourist regions and reduces the overall impression of tourist services. Since sustainable rural tourism has certain specificity, it does not require a modern communal infrastructure related to the consumption of water, gas and space heating. On the contrary, the absence of such infrastructure in close proximity to nature can form additional competitive advantages of rural tourism. But the transport network connecting the airport/train station and the place of residence in the village must meet all international standards.

The ecological direction is a backbone in the provision of tourism activities in rural areas. One satisfaction of the ecological «clean» needs of consumers send it to rural regions with the aim of consuming «green» products, «green» energy carriers, and «green» entertainment.

Rural tourism can become the main direction of diversification of farm activities, which in turn will create a qualitatively new instrument of financial support for farms involved in the tourism business. The situation, which is typical for the Ukrainian village covers: total unemployment and increasing requirements for the quality of agricultural products and, as a result, reducing the possibility of realizing the latter, not wanting young people to stay in the village and many others do not help to overcome existing economic problems. The provision of «green» (environmentally oriented) tourism services can in some way change the income structure of a rural resident. Moreover, it is necessary to consider that the demand for tours to rural areas does not depend on the season of the year, i.e. it allows year-round income from services that are in demand and, for example in Western Europe, already has its apologists, who are not perceived by any other type of tourism as «right one». The value of recreation in rural areas, these people see in living in authentic places, environmental friendliness of nature, local cuisine, etc. But in order to get it all, one needs at least find out about the offer (that place X provides Y services) and get to place X. That is, besides the offer of a «green» holiday in the countryside, the destination infrastructure also influences the growth of attendance, where there are agricultural tourism farms. The territory image largely depends on the

quality of elements of rural tourism infrastructure, which is impossible without close cooperation among all levels of government, public organizations, rural communities, and local leaders-associates. And if an empirical farmer can still create the conditions necessary and sufficient for attracting and accepting a tourist, the infrastructure at the state level is not subject to him/her and here the authorities' task is to create conditions for the most comfortable tourist movement from the border of our state (airport, station, port) to the recreation place in the «green» zone of our country.

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