Local community’s role in tourism development

E L Andreyanova
Irkutsk scientific centre, SB RAS, Irkutsk, 664033 Russia
E-mail: elena_andreyanova@mail.ru

Abstract. The transformation of rural economy is most acute at the local level among the native population. The goal of the article is to define possibilities for participation of local community in development of rural tourism. When applying the participatory approach, the following conclusions can be drawn: 1) when local communities are not actively involved in the development of rural areas and tourism within the local borders, it is almost impossible to speak of any promotion; 2) rural tourism is attractive to the local community, but its ability actively participate in its development is limited by objective and subjective reasons; 3) emphasis on the benefits of rural tourism for the consumers and producers can lead to increased employment and profits for the local community. The assessment of the local community's capacity to develop rural tourism is a crucial point in its promotion. This in turn leads to further research into the experience of integrating rural tourism into local communities. The results of the article may help in the development of concept papers on rural tourism development and may be useful in some tourism projects.

1. Introduction

The world practice of rural tourism development proves economic feasibility of domestic tourism development in rural areas. According to “EUROGITES” (The European Federation of Rural Tourism), rural tourism ranks second in popularity after beach tourism [1]. According to expert evaluations, the average indicator of rural tourism development potential in the Russian Federation is 55.8% which is higher than in foreign countries. For example, for the Republic of Turkey this indicator is 38.4%, for Greece – 35%, for Italy – 49%, for France, Spain, and Germany – more than 50% [2]. According to the United World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), Russia ranks fifth in the world in natural and cultural tourism potential. But in terms of competitiveness it is at the end of the list.

The Federal Law No. 318-FZ of 02 July 2021 «On Introducing Amendments to the Federal Law No. 132-FZ 'Concerning the Fundamental Principles of Tourist Activities in the Russian Federation', and Article 7 of the Federal Law No. 264-FZ 'On the Development of Agriculture'» will come into force on 01 January 2022. This law for the first time in modern Russia will define the concept of “rural tourism”, and its importance for development of rural areas. Together with the national project “Tourism and Hospitality Industry till 2030” the law provides a legal basis for the development of economic mechanisms to support and manage rural tourism.

Scientists first began to address the issue of organization and development of rural tourism in the middle of 1970s. This is when the foundations for the territorial organisation of society were laid. The positions of the recreational subsystem in the sphere of human activity were developed. The works of A V Trukhachev were devoted to substantial development of rural areas by means of tourism.
Trukhachev also highlighted the conceptual foundations of rural tourism in Russia [3]. V A Semiglazova [2] and N V Krasovskaya [4] presented the project approach to regional development of rural tourism. L A Kalinina, O V Vlasenko, I A Zelenskaya [5] dedicated their works to agrotourism in rural community. However, the aspects of applying tourism practices on the local level within municipal organizations remain unexplored. This is due to the fact that most Russian researchers either cite private experience of tourist product development in rural areas or make a list of all regional practices.

Current changes in regulatory practices as well as financial support to the industry determines the importance of implementing a rural tourism project among local communities. Research on local communities and their role in rural tourism development has received much attention worldwide [6]. For instance, G Eshun, T M Tichaawa, argue that the employment of local people in tourism has brought them additional profit. Moreover, with the introduction of ecotourism, some aspects of the culture of the locals have aroused the interest of tourists who have become more attentive to local traditions. G Eshun, T M Tichaawa, C M Yasu, M R Baños & C M Hazael write: “Ecotourism became even more important small rural and remote organisations and communities that often lack the attention and assistance of government» [7].

Roziqin, A and Syarafina, Z took Flory village in Indonesia, as an example and cited studies by their colleagues, explaining that any new models of tourism activity or any tourism innovation will never be sustainable without the support of local communities [8]. The mentioned above authors cite Harrill and note that “local communities support is one of the main factors of success in tourism” [8]. O A Gica, M M Coros, O I Moisescu (Romanian authors) conclude that “stable development of rural tourism can, for the most part, lead to the development of rural destinations and make a significant contribution to the sustainable development of Rumanian tourist industry in general, and rural economy in particular” [9].

Thus, science has at least two perspectives on the role of local communities in rural tourism: 1) rural tourism is seen as an effective way to develop rural areas. This way should lead to improvement of the quality and standard of living of the local population. The downside of this approach is that employment and salary of local residents become the ultimate goal while they are the results of rural tourism benefits.

In our opinion, it would be methodologically correct to emphasise the benefits and profits that rural tourism could provide to the local communities; 2) the second approach focuses on local communities. These communities apply transformational mechanisms of rural economy and assess their efficiency. In our opinion, this approach poorly explores the role of other institutions contributing to rural tourism development.

The article suggests a hypothesis that one of the ways to diversify local economy can be the development of rural tourism. Under the state control, local authorities, entrepreneurs, public organisations and population actively participated in this process. The aim of this paper is to define the opportunities for the local community within the municipality to develop rural tourism.

The novelty of the work is in defining the role of local communities in shaping the conceptual vision of rural tourism development at the municipal level. The significance of the study lies in the representation of the local community in planning the conceptual development of tourism in rural areas. If the local community takes an active part in taking advantage of rural tourism, it will serve as a basis for increasing employment and profits of the local population.

2. Material and Methods
When conducting the research, the author used the materials of state and public organisations such as Rosturizm, the Federal State Statistics Service for the Irkutsk region, the Tourism Agency for the Irkutsk region, the Association of Cultural Managers, and the Association of Rural Tourism. We applied a participatory approach that allows to move away from a purely industrial vision and present a set of problems and characteristics of the area and community.
We used the following methods: social research, system analysis, synthesis, comparison and generalization. As part of the field research, we conducted a survey of the population ($n = 58$) and experts (13 people) of Ust-Ordynsky on the streets and in various organisations in February 2021. The experts were the heads of public organisations, representatives of municipal authorities, teachers, local entrepreneurs. The division of respondents into such groups allowed us to see the problem from different angles of the local community and define the tasks for introducing various practices of rural tourism.

The settlement of Ust-Ordynsky (Ust-Orda Buryat Okrug, Irkutsk Region, Russia) is located on the R418 highway, with favourable transport links leading to popular tourist destinations of Irkutsk and Baikal. This local area can serve as a model for many territories and regions of Russia. Different ethnic groups live here: the Russian population makes up 50%, the indigenous ethnic group Buryats – a little over 40%, the rest of the population is represented by Tatars, Belorussians, Ukrainians, etc. This area has an agricultural character. There are also budget sectors and activities (education, public administration, social security, health care); people working in agriculture account for 5.6%. The official unemployment rate according to Rosstat is 1.6%.

3. Results and Discussion

Rural tourism, according to experts, is now represented to a greater or lesser extent in 64 constituent entities of Russia. All of them operate on the same legal basis, but there are regional differences that are due to natural, historical, cultural, ethnic, financial resources, the level of local municipalities and some other features. The analysed territory in the Ust-Ordynsky Buryat District has basic facilities that preserve and transmit the ethno-cultural experience of the local population. These are the museum, some regional sites, folk craft centres, community and amateur ensembles and the library. The proximity to major cities makes the area attractive for rural tourism development. The survey has shown that the mentioned experts unambiguously consider the development of rural tourism in the territory of Ust-Ordynsky Buryat District as very promising (92.3% of respondents). However, the majority of the local population in this territory, despite the support of this viewpoint, have very different answers (Figure 1).

Hospitality practices in households can provide tourists with the benefits of the area and a sense of local colour. This possibility of organising rural tourism with the help of guest houses for tourists is considered acceptable by about 60% of the surveyed population (‘yes’ and ‘rather yes’ answers) (Figure 2).

The rural world is often in a rather closed and unchanging state. The local population adapts to external challenges, being more relaxed about, for example, pandemic and structural changes in the rural economy. Respondents’ responses to the question, “How do you assess the possibility of rural tourism development due to increased demand for out-of-town accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic?” had a pronounced decreasing trend in relevance from larger to smaller administrative entities, i.e. most felt that this rural tourism development opportunity was more likely for the country, then the region and then the county.
The population, not knowing the successful practices of rural tourism and not receiving market signals about its potential, shows an even attitude to its development. Due to the lack of experience and knowledge of rural tourism technologies, this attitude gives the government the prerogative to actively address this issue. At the same time, the population sees the directions for the content of rural tourism, but almost no real attempts to organize tourism projects have been made. Such behaviour is also explained by objective conditions of rural tourism infrastructure development in the local areas. Respondents note that the obstacles to the development of rural tourism are: lack of accommodation facilities, decent catering facilities, quality roads.

The results of the work confirm that the establishment and development of rural tourism at the level of local economy is a complex problem. It is not dominated by external factors. A greater role in rural areas plays an internal dynamics, which depends on the translation of experience in the social interaction of the local community. In accordance with it, the tasks of effective organization of rural tourism within the municipality arise: first, the increase in programs to support socio-cultural and civic initiatives aimed at the involvement of local residents and community development; second, the development of educational programs that enhance the level of project company at the local, regional and federal level, as well as the provision of advisory services to local communities on legal and economic counseling; third, the financial stim.

4. Conclusion
Sustainable development of rural tourism as a transformational strategy for the local economy without the active involvement of the local community will not contribute to the long-term viability of rural areas. Trying to implement tourism projects, the local community does not take real action due to insufficient resources and lack of maturity. This process can be regulated by the relevant institutions with the help of state support measures in order to revitalize the local economy, increase employment and income of the population, as well as increase social and ethno-cultural capital.

The adaptation of the local community to the structure of the local economy and the ways of economic management are manifested in a high assessment of the potential of rural tourism development. This suggests that the population is experiencing the transformation of the local economy from agricultural to non-agricultural. This transition is the result not only of external influence, but also of internal dynamics of rural space, in which the attitudes and relations of the local community play a great role. When organising and implementing rural tourism it is necessary focus on the benefits that can be obtained by the consumers of this service. This in turn will provide opportunities for increased employment and income for the local population.
References
[1] European Federation for Farm and Village Tourism “EUROGITES” https://eurogites.org (accessed 16 April 2021)
[2] Semiglazova V A 2018 Geographical bulletin 3(46) 106–14
[3] Trukhachev A V 2017 Bulletin AIC 4(28) 154-8
[4] Krasovskaya N V 2016 Proc. of the St. Petersburg State Agrarian University 44 210-7
[5] Kalinina L A, Vlasenko O V and Zelenskaya I A 2020 Methodological approach to evaluating the prospects of agrotourism development ICEST 2020 Int. Conf. on Economic and Social Trends for Sust. of Modern Society (Krasnoyarsk) https://conf.domnit.ru/en/materials/icest-2020-materials-eng (accessed 10 May 2021)
[6] World Tourism Organization 2020 UNWTO Recommendations on Tourism and Rural Development – A Guide to Making Tourism an Effective Tool for Rural Development https://www.e-unwto.org (accessed 11 May 2021)
[7] Eshun G and Tichaawa T M 2020 Contributions of the local communities Tourism 68(3) 261-77
[8] Roziqin A and Syarafina Z 2021 Masyarakat, Kebudayaan dan Politik 34(2) 173-83
[9] Gica O A, Coros M M, Moisescu O I and Yallop A C 2021 Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes 13(1) 124-38
[10] National Association of Organizations for the Development of Rural and Ecotourism, https://selturacademia.ru (accessed 12 Apr 2021)