Ecotourism as a factor of the development of off-season tourism in southern Russia

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Abstract. This paper, provided by the authors, focuses on the prospects for the development of ecotourism in the southern Russia. In recent years, ecotourism is becoming increasingly common in the modern world. According to experts, in the past decade, ecotourism has developed three times faster than the tourism industry as a whole. The southern regions of Russia, for a number of objective and subjective reasons, have all the conditions for the development of tourism. They own vast environmental resources, the use of which, along with the dynamically growing demand for tourism services, will naturally lead to intensification of the development of infrastructure and the territorial organization of ecotourism.

1. Introduction

At the present stage of globalization of the economy and the development of the world economic system, the tourism sector is one of the most promising, highly profitable and dynamic in its development. Tourism accounts for approximately 30% of the global trade in services and 10% of the global gross product, which makes this sector one of the leading sectors of the global economy. At the same time, Russia, having a huge tourist potential, occupies a very low place in the tourist world market. Russia accounts for only 1 percent of the global tourism business [1, 2].

Due to the significant environmental pollution by human activities, including tourism, the development of ecological tourism (ecotourism) is of particular interest today. There are several definitions of ecotourism. One of them, in our opinion, is the most successful: ecological tourism is a form of sustainable tourism, focused on tourists visiting natural areas untouched by anthropogenic impact.

In recent years, ecotourism is becoming increasingly common in the modern world. According to experts, in the past decade, ecotourism has developed three times faster than the tourism industry as a whole. Every year, the number of travellers, who prefer ecotourism is increasing by 20%. It is estimated that ecotourism accounts for 10–20% of the total world tourism market and is the most dynamically developing tourism industry. Such a dynamic development of ecological tourism in the world over the past decade is explained not only by the deterioration of the ecological state of the environment, but also by the increasing occupancy of popular recreation regions - mountain resorts, sea coasts, as well as their ongoing industrialization. The recognition and dissemination of ideas for environmental conservation is...
one of the most important factors determining the demand for ecotourism in many Western countries. The idea of nature conservation allows people who make their personal contribution to the conservation of wildlife to feel satisfied that their journey will help to protect the unique natural landscape.

According to research results from Cornell University, about 90% of the surveyed hotel guests are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products and services using environmentally friendly technologies. Representatives of the tourism and hotel industry note that travellers themselves have become more responsible in environmental issues. According to the results of a study by the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), every third vacationer believes that hotels, in addition to the traditional number of stars, must have a mandatory environmental rating. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) formulates ecotourism development trends. According to its findings, ecotourism is one of the five main strategic directions for the development of tourism for the period until 2020.

There are two main areas of ecological tourism. The first of them, which arose in the USA, determines that the main objects of ecotourism are territories that are little changed by human production activities. The second direction of the development of ecotourism, which has gained distribution primarily in Europe, is aimed at visiting the natural territories that are little changed by human activity, as well as objects of traditional local culture [3, 4].

2. Trends in the development of ecotourism in the tourism market of the southern Russia

In Russia in recent years there has also been a significant increase in ecotourism. Russian hotels that adhere to environmental principles in their work are in demand not only among tourists who are concerned about environmental protection. Many Russian eco-hotels are located on the territory of ecologically attractive and picturesque landscapes, and that is why they are in high demand among residents of megalopolises.

Today in Russia there are 103 nature reserves, of which 31 are biosphere reserves; 41 national parks, 69 federal reserves and 50 regional natural parks. The total area of all Russian reserves is more than 340 thousand square meters. km

![Figure 1. Dynamics of tourist visits (thousand people) of Russian national parks in 2008 – 2018.](image)

Statistics say that in 2018, more than 3.5 million people visited the national parks and reserves of Russia, of which more than 80% of the flow came from national parks. However, it should be noted that in Russia, in contrast to a number of foreign countries, where there are more accurate methods for calculating the tourist flow, it is very difficult to assess the real flow of visitors to national parks, due to
the lack of unambiguous methods for recording visitors. Consequently, the true flow of tourists should be several times greater than the data published in the statistical reports, which means that the anthropogenic load on the natural territories also exceeds the presented indicators.

It should be noted, that more accurate data can be obtained mainly about organized group visits to national parks and reserves, due to the fact that they are strictly recorded.

Based on the data presented about the attendance of nature reserves, we can state its significant growth over ten years, more than six times. Despite the fact that the information provided does not allow us to draw a final conclusion about a certain trend, nevertheless, we can note a sharp increase in visits to nature reserves since 2008 and a stable, albeit insignificant increase in subsequent years.

The attendance of national parks is growing due to domestic tourists (figure 1), while the number of foreign tourists is almost in a static position.

National parks are the main resources for the development of ecological tourism. In addition, tourists give preference to one or another park based on the level of their amenities, infrastructure, as well as unique facilities and the services provided.

Despite a significant increase in the number of tourists in nature reserves and national parks, Russia still cannot compete with other countries and is inferior to them in organizing ecological tourism. The attendance structure of domestic national parks and parks of other countries of the world can be observed in figure 2.

![Figure 2](image)

**Figure 2.** The attendance structure of domestic national parks and parks of other countries of the world.

The essence of the problem of such a low attendance by tourists of Russian national parks lies in the poorly developed ecotourism infrastructure in these territories, low financing, poor marketing and image of objects. Russia, having a huge reserve of natural resources, is able not only to increase its position among the visited countries of ecotourism, but also in the future to take a leading place in this area.

Unfortunately, for a long time the development of ecological tourism in Russia was purely amateurish in nature. Only in recent years there has been a tendency to the formation of this type of tourism at the federal level. In many territories, ecotourism can become an industry of specialization, representing a competitive alternative to economic activity that destroys nature.

The most important components of ecotourism:

- education of tourists, i.e. the creation of certain educational tourism products with a nature orientation, aimed at expanding the knowledge and skills of tourists;
• conservation of ecosystems, which involves the careful use of resources on the route, the participation of tourists and tour operators in campaigns to protect wildlife;
• respect for the customs and traditions of local communities, which leads to opportunities for intercultural exchange.

The southern regions of Russia, for a number of objective and subjective reasons, have all the conditions for the development of tourism. First of all, it should be borne in mind that the tourism complex of the Kuban, Crimea is a budget-forming industry that supports a number of other industries: transport, trade, communications, construction, agriculture, the production of consumer goods, and is one of the most promising areas of the economy of this region. That is why the tourism industry is a priority in the socio-economic development of these territories.

Due to the landscape and natural features in the Crimea, you can develop all types of recreation: walking, horseback riding, sports, cycling, diving, rural, ethno-tourism and many others. Tourism has a positive impact on many sectors of the national economy of Crimea, stimulates the economic development of territories, increases employment, and even helps in resolving issues of developing tolerance between peoples.

Ecotourism in this series is called upon to take its rightful place. Important factors in the development of ecological tourism in the Crimea is the natural-recreational and historical-cultural potential. Suffice it to say, for example, that the Crimean Nature Reserve Fund covers a vast territory covering more than 135 thousand hectares, which makes up more than 5% of the total area of the peninsula. The status of the conservation zone has unique sections of the plain-steppe, mountain-forest and sub-Mediterranean natural environment of Crimea. The basis of the reserve fund of the Crimean Peninsula is made up of six state nature reserves: the Crimean State Reserve (created in 1923 and the oldest on the peninsula), the Yalta Mountain Forest Reserve and the Cape Martyan Nature Reserve (created in 1973), the Karadag Nature Reserve (established in 1979), Kazantip and Opuk natural reserves (created in 1998). Also on the territory of the Crimean Peninsula there are 33 state nature reserves. In addition, Crimea has a developed infrastructure of health resorts, inherited from the time of the Soviet period.

Crimea owns enormous environmental resources, the use of which, along with the dynamically growing demand for tourism services, will naturally lead to intensification of the development of infrastructure and the territorial organization of ecotourism. However, the Crimean region, in spite of such enormous opportunities, occupies a very modest place in the global hotel and tourism services market, while continuing to stay away from global trends in the development of the tourism business. It is estimated that less than half a percent of the total volume of such services falls on the peninsula.

There are organizational and economic reasons that hinder the development of ecotourism in Crimea. Organizational reasons include:

• the limited and poor development of tourist destinations in the areas of ecological tourism;
• lack of specialized tourism organizations in the field of ecotourism;
• bureaucratic prohibitions and restrictions on visits by tourists to naturally attractive places;
• a modest set of recreational services for tourists;
• limited number of qualified specialists in the field of ecotourism;
• lack of the necessary legal framework for ecotourism.

Among the economic reasons include:

• the lack of the necessary initial capital to finance the creation of eco-centers;
• insignificant investments in ecotourism infrastructure, which affect the state of hotel, transport services for tourists;
• lack of funds for an advertising campaign to attract potential tourists.
Unlike summer types of recreation, ecotourism is a year-round phenomenon. Today, most countries of the world are striving to develop ecological tourism, attracting lovers of natural nature and, accordingly, impressive cash. Crimea is a rapidly developing region for the Russian Federation, which has good prospects in the tourism sector. The dynamic development of the tourism business in the Crimean region in recent years clearly demonstrates that the Crimea, which is now of enormous tourist interest, is capable of large-scale development.

3. Modeling the development of ecotourism in the southern regions of the country
Let us consider one of the options for constructing a model of ecotourism development processes in the resort region on the basis of Simulink. This study is a continuation of the authors' research in the field of modeling tourism activities [5-8].

Figure 3 shows a block diagram of the model of the development of ecotourism in the southern regions of Russia in the SimuLink environment.

![Figure 3](image-url)

Figure 3. A block diagram of the model of the development of ecotourism in the southern regions of Russia in the SimuLink environment.

4. Conclusion
In this paper, it was illustrated the possibilities of the development of ecotourism in the tourism market of the southern regions of the Russian Federation. The development of ecotourism in the southern regions of the country is hampered by a number of problems, many of which have been inherited from earlier times, which must be resolved: outdated infrastructure, insufficient number of qualified hotel and tourist service specialists, unresolved issues of legal regulation, financing problems hotel and transport services for tourists, insufficient implementation of “green technologies” and the concept of “green routes”, poor technological I and organizational innovation, insufficient advertising and awareness of potential domestic and foreign tourists about the possibilities of the region.

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