
Ecotourism Programs in the Context of the Perception of Natural and Cultural Landscapes (on the Example of the Kizhi Museum Reserve)

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the peculiarities of the perception of the natural and cultural landscape by tourists and sightseers in the process of passing tourist routes along special ecological paths on the territory of the UNESCO World Heritage Site – the Kizhi Museum Reserve. In the focus of this research is the study of spatial behavior on the route and the feedback of tourists, taken from popular and specialized information sources. As a method of studying tourist behavior, the method of observing and recording the real behavior of tourists was used, taking into account the trajectory of their moving through the reserve with the determination of the most popular points of overview and areas of visitation, which allowed us to identify the most visited objects. To identify the attitude of tourists to the objects of display on the route, a method of content analysis of electronic resources containing feedback from tourists about the objects visited in the Kizhi Museum Reserve was applied. Preferences identified in the course of studying the behavior of tourists can become an objective basis for the formation of a balanced route line that allows to combine the interests of tourists and the optimal anthropogenic load on a specially protected natural area.

Keywords: ecotourism, tourist destination, natural and cultural landscape, the Kizhi Museum Reserve

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INTRODUCTION

Currently, nature-oriented types of tourism are widespread, and conceptual diversity has become a definite consequence of the popularity of this important segment of tourism. In particular, nature-oriented tourism is called: soft, natural, green and ecological (eco-tourism) (Alexandrova 2016). All of the above definitions have the right to exist, but nevertheless, the term “ecological tourism” is most firmly entrenched in the tourist public, since it more fully reflects the basic meaning of tourist travel – communication with nature with a minimum load on ecological systems (Dzhandzhugazova 2013). Herewith ecotourism is focused on the implementation of the programs of environmental education and awareness and is carried out on the basis of the principles of environmental sustainability (Dzhandzhugazova 2017).

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), which defines “ecotourism” as a tourist activity in nature, profitable for the preservation of this natural environment, and also contributing to the improvement

of the living standards of the local population, provides considerable attention and support to ecological tourism. In the UN Resolution “Promoting the development of ecotourism in the interests of poverty eradication and environmental protection” of December 21, 2012 directions for the development of ecotourism were formulated and measures to strengthen its positive impact on income generation, job creation and education were proposed. The document emphasized that ecotourism offers great opportunities for the conservation, protection and sustainable use of biodiversity and natural areas, encouraging both local and indigenous communities in host countries as well as tourists to preserve and respect natural and cultural heritage (UNWTO 2012).

It should be emphasized that the global tourist community proposes to consider ecotourism as a complicated and complex phenomenon, which allows, besides solving environmental problems, to solve economic and socio-cultural problems (Lankford and Howard 1994).

In world science, this approach took shape in the second half of the 20th century. Thus in European countries, Great Britain and the USA tourism and recreation are viewed in a general humanitarian aspect, including as a phenomenon of the modern world, integrating various types of sciences and activities: history, geography, art, philosophy, religious and cultural traditions of the population, and others (Jafari 2003).

An important milestone in the system of research in the field of tourism was the selection of the definition of “destination” (1970–2010). Justification of the destination as a most important element of the tourist system, representing the territory equipped with the necessary amenities for recreation and tourism, has allowed to look at the organization of tourism activity in a new way, as well as geographically identify the most attractive place for tourists and create in the future its attractive image, which further becomes a basis for the formation of territorial tourist brands, activating the development of the entire tourist system (Leiper 1973, Tribe 1995).

All this allows us to consider ecological tourism as a complex form of tourist activity, which includes active outdoor activities, environmental education and cultural development (Ilina and Latkin 2014).

Ecotourism in its complex understanding is inextricably linked with specially protected natural areas, the most valuable resource of which is the natural and cultural landscape, which is both an “object” and an “environment”, that is, an object of display and a background allowing to perceive the monuments of nature, history and culture more deeply. Particularly strongly this trait appears in especially valuable territories: reserve museums, national and natural parks (Kolbovsky 2011).

Landscape as an independent element of the environment is usually viewed through the prism of a number of parameters: ecological, aesthetic, and functional infrastructural, as well as the parameter of authenticity. In turn, it is the authenticity of the landscape, revealing its originality and compliance with the “atmosphere” of the place, becomes one of the main criteria of its value (Kolbovsky et al. 2012).

At the same time, the key characteristics of the landscape are understood differently by different experts.

Geographers, ecologists, historians, art historians and tourism organizers, as a rule, have different points of view on the formation of tourist routes within specially protected and conservation areas (Yakunin 2016). At the same time, it becomes necessary to form a generalized perception of natural and cultural landscapes, which requires long-term and effective communications between specialists of different profiles, carried out on the basis of an interdisciplinary approach. Such an approach is implemented not only in identifying some “landmark” signs of the landscape, but also by studying the peculiarities of perception of the landscape by various target groups of tourists. The study of the peculiarities of perception of the landscapes during the implementation of excursion programs within specially protected areas allows to form a careful attitude to nature not only on the basis of specially established rules of behavior and existing restrictions, but also on the basis of tourists’ lively interest to the objects of display.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The focus of this research is the study of the perception of landscapes of the Kizhi Museum Reserve by tourists and sightseers, as well as the study of feedback from tourists with the involvement of specialized information sources.

In the first case, by the observation method the peculiarities of the “geography of behavior” of tourists were singled out, taking into account the trajectories of their movement through the reserve, the definition of the most popular points of overview and areas of visitation around attractive objects. This approach makes it possible to determine the most visited and interesting sites for tourists, as well as to identify the main tourist and recreational load on certain areas of the reserve (Dzhandzhugazova 2010).

In the second case, a content analysis of electronic resources, which posted reviews of tourists and sightseers about the object under study (the Kizhi Museum Reserve), was carried out. First of all, these include: official websites, tourist information portals, social media, blogs, etc.

The main goal of this research is the study of tourist attractiveness of the objects of display based on the analysis of the “geography of behavior” and communication channels that accumulate a set of reviews and tourist ratings. Preferences identified in the course of studying the behavior of tourists on the route are an objective basis for the formation of a balanced

route line, allowing to combine the interests of tourists and the optimal anthropogenic load on a specially protected natural area.

As mentioned above, the Kizhi Museum Reserve was chosen as the object of study. It is a monument of wooden architecture that was included in 1990 on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The Kizhi Pogost ("The Kizhi") is an architectural ensemble in composition of the State Historical and Architectural Museum "The Kizhi", which is the conceptual core of the entire exposition, located on the Kizhi Island in northern part of Lake Onega on the territory of the Kizhi zoological reserve. The area of the reserve (500 sq. km) includes islands of the Kizhi archipelago of Lake Onega with coastal zones, where habitats of rare animal and plant species are taken under state protection, also within the reserve there is the Kizhi Museum Reserve and regional geological monuments of nature – the island Yuzhnyj Oleniy, swamps near the village of Boyarshchina, the Petrikova Bay and the Zamoshye Bay.

In fact, the Kizhi Museum Reserve is a complex tourist and recreational object, inextricably linked with proportional wooden buildings for domestic and household purposes, which are ideally combined not only with the main object, the Kizhi Pogost, but also with the surrounding natural landscape. In total, the collection of wooden monuments of architecture collected on the island consists of 87 buildings, which are compositionally combined into three exhibition sectors: Russian Zaonezhye, Russian Pudozh and Pryazhinskoye Karelia. The main component in the Kizhi museum is the Russian Zaonezhye sector, which is located on the island of Kizhi itself and is the basis for most tourist routes.

Due to a competent landscape planning, the Kizhi looks like a picturesque green island with a scattering of magnificent wooden buildings, from churches to peasant estates with a mill, bathhouse, barns and vegetable gardens. Moreover, the space of the museum island due to the efforts of the museum staff, dressed in traditional peasant clothes, looks lively and interesting, and most importantly, a special atmosphere of the unhurried peasant life of the Russian North of the 18th and 19th centuries has been created.

The Kizhi Pogost overgrown with legends is undoubtedly a center of attraction for tourists, but it should be noted that the variety of authentic wooden buildings around which the native centers of activity have been created make the museum island alive and

therefore the most interesting. In the expositions of each peasant house, girls sit in bright sarafans, demonstrating traditional women's crafts, over the churchyard there is a bell ringing, recreating the traditional sound landscape, vegetable harvest ripen in vegetable gardens, and in open-air workrooms carpenters show their ability to work with simple tools.

All this movement is created by the museum staff themselves, forming a handiwork mental landscape. Usually tourists are moving through the Russian Zaonezhye sector from object to object along specially equipped ecological paths, lingering longer in ordinary household outbuildings. There they show their keen interest in the household goods, traditional peasant devices and tools, which our ancestors used. All this suggests that the Kizhi is not just a museum of ancient Russian wooden architecture, but also a storage of people's memory and models of craftsmanship of three peoples: Russians, Karelians and Veps.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the study, it was noted that the spatial behavior of tourists on the route is formed on the base of the time spent at various objects, including the tourist's free time limit, which is approximately 40-60 minutes (about 1/3 of the total time spent on the territory of the museum-reserve). Consider the peculiarities of the behavior of tourists and sightseers on the example of the Russian Zaonezhye sector, which reveal the peculiarities of interest shown in museum sites (**Table 1**).

The results of observing the behavior of tourists during the passing of the route, given in the **Table 1**, show that the interests of tourists influence their behavior and allow us to conclude that they spend more free time around various wooden buildings, including near workrooms where skills and crafts are demonstrated.

This fact indicates that the active and contemplative behavior of people, taking into account the time factor, is in the ratio (3:1), which undoubtedly requires competent management of the behavior of tourists at the Kizhi World Heritage Site. Despite the special requirements for the preservation and operation of such an object, it is necessary to create all the required conditions for the stay of tourists: developed transport and service infrastructure, effective information and communication systems, safe excursion routes, and also to prepare qualified personnel (Dzhandzhugazova and Adashova 2012).

Table 1. Features of the behavior of tourists on the example of the Russian Zaonezhie sector

Type of Object of Display	Characteristic
Monuments of wooden architecture: Church of the Transfiguration – 1714; Church of the Intercession of the Virgin – 1764; The Bell Tower of the Kizhi Pogost – 1862-1874; Fence of the Kizhi Pogost.	Tourists/sightseers contemplate, attentively listen to the story of the guide, make picturesque photos
Church of the Resurrection of Lazarus, the Chapel of the Archangel Michael from the village of Lelikozero. South courtyard (manor Oshevnev), Barn Sud'ina from the village Lipovitsa (manor Oshevnev), Bathhouse from the village Mizhostrov (manor Oshevnev).	Tourists/sightseers review details, listen, take an interest in details, exchange impressions, ask questions, make subject photos and videos
House Elizarova from the village Sereodka, Bath from the village Ust-Yandoma (at the Elizarov house), windmill from the village Volkostrov, watermill from the village Berezovaya Selga, threshing barn from the village Berezovaya Selga. Workrooms, forge, souvenir shops.	Tourists/sightseers get acquainted, review, compare, ask questions, buy souvenirs, ride horses, make photos and videos

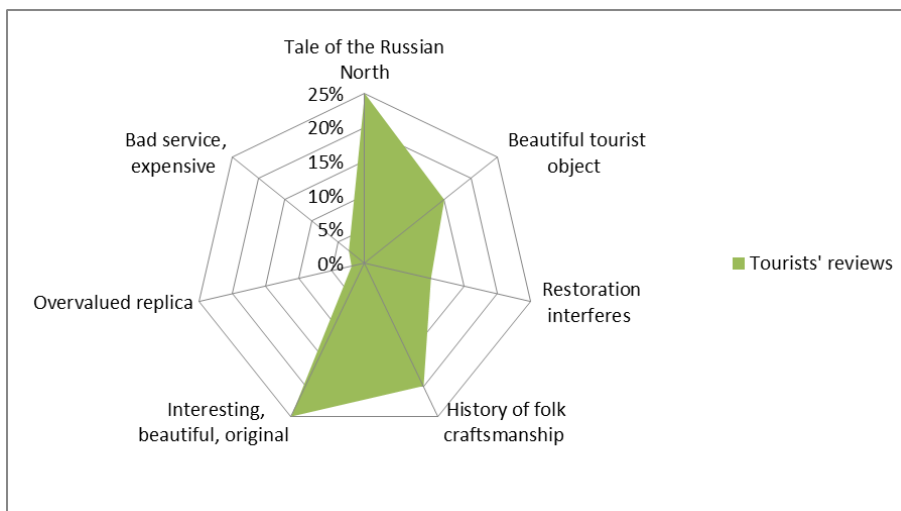


Fig. 1. The results of the analysis of tourists' reviews about visiting the Kizhi Museum on the electronic resource "TripAdvisor"

All these measures are necessary to create an effective tourist destination on the basis of the UNESCO World Heritage Site brand, since, despite its strength and attractiveness, making the Kizhi Museum Reserve attractive for modern tourists without a diversified tourist product will be quite difficult. It is confirmed by the content analysis of the reviews of tourists and sightseers who visited Kizhi in the last two years.

In general, the statistics of visits to the Kizhi Museum Reserve is quite positive. Thus in 2017, 180 thousand tourists visited it, which is 7% more than in 2016. The increase is due to the intensification of cruise ship entries. Cruise ship entry to the Kizhi is available in almost all voyages that follow the waterways of the North-West.

Currently, tourists in the reserve are offered two excursion programs: a sightseeing walking tour through the State Historical and Architectural Museum "Masterpieces of the Kizhi Island", and also "Villages of the Kizhi Island". It should be noted that the share of foreigners in the total flow of visitors for the year increased from 30% to 44% (CruiseInform 2018).

Among foreign visitors, German-, English- and French-speaking visitors prevailed, at the same time the flow of tourists from China and Japan is increasing, as evidenced by the data from the popular tourist information portal TripAdvisor (Tripadvisor 2018).

In the course of the study, more than 400 reviews were analyzed, the results of the analysis of tourists' feedback are shown in **Fig.1**.

The figure shows that the overwhelming majority of reviews (totaling 85%) are positive, however, some visitors note the inconvenience associated with the restoration process and poor service, herewith only 2% of tourists did not appreciate the idea of the museum and found it not enough spectacular. In this regard, it should be noted that such reviews usually are given by unprepared sightseers or people who do not have the basics of environmental and aesthetic education. In this case, it is necessary to pay more attention to environmental education programs and to the patriotic education of the young generation, including the development of various educational tourist routes.

CONCLUSIONS

It is obvious that studying the behavior of tourists in the course of environmental, educational, cultural and sightseeing routes laid within the complex tourist destinations, which include a museum-reserve on the Kizhi Island, provides an opportunity to get information about the perception of different objects of display by tourists, which will serve as the basis for the improvement of existing and the formation of new routes (Tarasenko and Ilina 2014). In addition, the information obtained will allow analyzing and critically rethinking the logistics of the laid ecological paths, as well as the fullness and quality of the existing tourist navigation. With that, such excursion routes are the effective courses of environmental education, revealing the basics of the harmonious relationships between man and nature (Valedinskaya and Astafeva 2018).

Summing up this research, it should be noted that the Kizhi Museum Reserve is perceived by tourists and sightseers as a complex and harmoniously formed tourist destination, concentrated around the Kizhi Pogost UNESCO site.

Herewith, not only the main sites that are included in the World Heritage List, but also other peripheral sites that help tourists reconstruct the picture of the folk life of the Russian North, are in the focus of perception of tourists, which underlines the importance of a well-thought-out tourist policy and research work, the proper combination of which creates the basis for the successful design of an effective tourist product.

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