

REGIONAL ASPECTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL TOURISM IN THE CARPATHIAN REGION OF UKRAINE (THE EXAMPLE OF LVIV PROVINCE)

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism in the Carpathian Region of Ukraine is developing very unevenly and spontaneously without clearly defined strategic plans. Over 90% of rural households providing tourist services operate in three provinces: Lviv, Zakarpattia and Ivano-Frankivsk. However, their activity does not result from the smooth functioning of the institutional environment, which consists in the effective co-operation of business, local governments and public organizations. Owners of rural tourism accommodation establishments are increasingly encountering problems related to the legality of their activities, lack of knowledge, gaining new experiences of guest services, tourist products that don't meet customer requirements, scope of additional services, using of marketing tools, improving the quality of tourist offer, participation in national and international programs supporting local initiatives, environmental protection as well as historical and cultural heritage protection, understanding the importance and the role of rural tourism in local development.

Introduction

The Carpathian Region (CR) has the necessary premises for the development of modern tourism, including rural tourism (RT) (Lypczuk, Kotliński, Dydiv, 2015). The positive impact of RT on the local economy is largely dependent on the concentration of the tourism flows. Tourist attractiveness and good transport accessibility are important for the development of local infrastructure (Kozak, 2009). The wider the offer and the attractiveness of the tourist facilities of individual areas, the greater the influence and importance of tourism for the local economy

(Krzyżanowska, 2005). According to Kornak, Rapacz (2001), efficient functioning of tourism entities in rural area may be achieved by: stimulation of the local agriculture and the agro-food industry development, development of sectors strictly related to tourism, development of technical and social infrastructure, and the protection of natural environment. Once the above criteria have been met in a specific area, the impact of tourism on the socio-economic development of the countryside and the economic effect can be expected (Krzyżanowska, 2005).

Rural Tourism in the Carpathian Region

RT and recreation in the CR has a long history, but its future has not yet been determined. It would be highly probable that in the absence of state policy in this sector, rural tourism will continue to be semi-legal, without a clear organizational structure, without the appropriate level of information and marketing activities but as a separate complement to other types of tourism. On the other hand, according to optimistic forecasts, RT in the CR, should create a powerful service market and control 35–45% of all tourist flows in this region (Kudla, Hamkalo, 2011). According to the official statistics the number of tourists visiting the Ukrainian Carpathians amounts about 1.4 mill people a year, including over 100 thous. of foreigners. Lviv province (LP) has all the necessary conditions for the development of RT, but at present this development occurs occasionally and unevenly, without clearly defined development plans and strategies. Under such conditions, there is a continuing need for research of RT market in the CR and its regional peculiarities and territorial structures, as well as the main problems and possible solutions. LP is regarded as one of the five most attractive tourist and recreational regions of Ukraine. The only official source of information on RT activities in Ukraine is the State Statistical Service, which in 2012 introduced for the first time a special model of statistical reporting with the purpose of keeping records of rural tourist services. Nevertheless, even a preliminary analysis of the numbers of rural holdings providing tourist services does not reflect the actual state of affairs (Lypczuk et al., 2015). The analysis of information from various web sources suggests that official statistics are significantly underestimated. According to the official statistics in LP there were 23 RT establishments (about 10% of the total number from all over Ukraine) with an average of 13.9 beds (Tourist accommodation in Ukraine in 2014). The occupancy rate of the beds in RT was about 23%.

Materials and method

The objective of the study was to analyze conditions and problems of RT development in the CR on the example of LP in the context of the concept of tourism development and evolution of RT product. Data used in the paper originated from own survey conducted in LP. For the analysis of the current state of RT in LP, administrative territorial units of the mountain areas were selected (Figure 1).

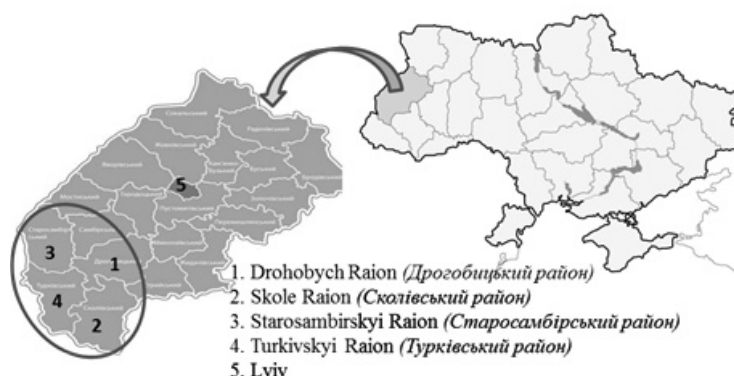


Figure 1. Location and structure of Lviv Province*

* Lviv province (i.e. Lviv Oblast, Львівська область) is administratively subdivided into 20 districts (raions), and 9 cities which are directly subordinate to the province government

Source: Wikipedia.

The materials of websites were studied, because they are the most suitable to the real situation of RT in LP (Table 1).

Table 1. Rural Tourism accommodation establishments in the surveyed area of Lviv Province

Districts	Number of establishments according to the following websites:				Est. number of beds
	Regional administration	Karpaty Info	Rest in Ukraine	Union for Promotion of Rural Green Tourism in Ukraine	
Drohobych	12	52	24	–	312
Skole	28	242	105	–	2,420
Starosambirskyi	7	8	–	1	80
Turkivskyi	30	5	4	1	256
Total	77	307	133	2	3,068
Lviv Province	82	355	138	3	3,359
The area covered by the survey (%)	94.0	86.4	96.4	66.6	91.3

Source: own elaboration.

Results

The author's own survey allowed to identify about 375 RT facilities in 67 rural localities, and their overall capacity was around 3,4 thousand beds. They are located mostly in localities of high tourist attractiveness. The main centers of development of this type of tourism in LP are concentrated in the mountain areas.

Skole district is the leader in this area (248 RT enterprises), then there are: Drohobych and Turkivskyi districts and no RT establishments in 9 districts of LP. Development of RT in the area of surveyed province seems to be extremely uneven. All districts of LP can be divided into 3 main groups according to the level of RT development (Table 2).

Table 2. Classification of the districts of Lviv Province according to the level of Rural Tourism development

Rural Tourism establishments	Level of development	Districts
≤5	Very low	Busk, Brody, Horodok, Zhydachivskiyi, Zolochivskiyi, Kamianka-Buzka, Mykolaiv, Mostyska, Peremyshliany, Pustomyty, Radekhiv, Sambir, Sokal, Stryiskiyi, Yavorivskiyi
6–10	Low	Starosambirskiyi, Zhovkivskiyi, the surroundings of Lviv
11–50	Average	Drohobych, Turkivskiyi
50 ≤	High	Skole

Source: Own elaboration.

In Skole district there are 28 establishments providing RT services. The number of RT establishments per 1,000 rural inhabitants is 7.34. The main centers for the development of RT in Skole district are settlements of urban type, including Slavska (184 establishments), Skole, Volosianka, Oriawczyk, Plavie and Tucholka. There are several factors influencing the number of RT establishments, e.g. winter sports facilities, tourist and cycling paths, preserved natural values and good transport accessibility. Most of the mentioned centers of RT are also known as ski resorts, so in winter, private RT establishments specialize in providing ski services. The National Park “Skole Beskidy” is of great importance in the development of RT in this district. In the approach to the management of the National Park, a new paradigm of the importance of protected areas has recently been justified. Protected areas have not only to fulfill the function of preserving the diversity of natural ecosystems and ensuring their continued development, but also preserving the ethnographic, historical and cultural heritage of Boykos (the ethnographic group located in the Carpathian Mountains of Ukraine and Poland. They differ from their neighbors in dialect, dress, folk architecture, and customs).

Drohobych district is characterized by an average level of development of RT. Out of 77 localities, RT services were recorded in 12. The main centers are Schodnica and Truskavets, known for their balneological spas and then the village of New Kropyvnyk. Development of RT services in the district is closely linked to the presence of mineral waters, providing an alternative accommodation facilities to the hotels and sanatoria. Most of the RT establishments offer not only accommodation facilities, but also full board, and some extra services, e.g. mineral waters, herbal teas, massages, doctor's or dietician consultation, and in individual cases – special medical therapies. Some RT establishments offer alternative therapeutic services, including api-therapy or yoga classes.

Turkivskiyi district is characterized by an average level of development of RT with great potential. There are 42 RT establishments located in 12 out of 67 localities. The establishments are scattered more or less evenly throughout the area of the district (e.g. Borynia, Rozlucz, Verchnie Husne and Verchnie Vysockie). The prerequisites for the development of RT in the area is a picturesque mountain landscape, a large number of monuments of wooden sacred architecture, preserved traditions of Boykos, mineral waters and several ski lifts.

Rural Tourism products of Lviv Province

The tourist product in RT is a set of accommodation and catering services, trip organization, leisure services and other services provided by owners of RT establishments. The package of RT services consists of basic services, including accommodation and catering, and various additional services. According to the results of the research all the accommodation options in LP can be divided into 3 main groups:

- Rural house or farmhouse – accommodation in separate rooms in the host house or the whole floor in the host house, sometimes with separate entrance;
- Guest house – a separate building in a farmyard, often built especially for year-round accommodation services;
- Cottage – wooden building in the mountain style, which is designed for one family with the possibility of self-catering.

The last two types of rural accommodation are the most widespread in the surveyed region. They are particularly characteristic for areas with developed tourist infrastructure and considerable tourist flows, for example in the spa areas, ski resorts and in the localities of special value of natural environment. The first type (rural house/farmhouse) is quite rare, usually in villages that are located outside of the popular resorts (e.g. in the following districts: Starosambirskyi, Zhovkivskyi, Brody, Zolochivskyi, and partly Turkivskyi). This type of accommodation seems to be the most appropriate for RT, as it provides the possibility of direct contact with the host family. Number of beds of the studied accommodation establishments usually varied 4–30 (Figure 2). The most of accommodation establishments have 9–12 beds, where several families can be comfortably accommodated. There are also quite many small rural houses with 5 to 8 beds and much less cottages for families up to 5 people and for groups of more than 30 people (Figure 2).

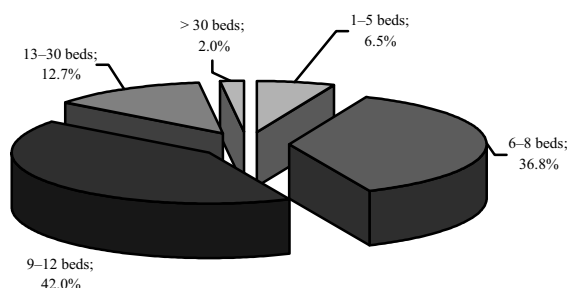


Figure 2. Structure of Rural Tourism accommodation establishments in Lviv Province by the number of beds

Source: Own elaboration.

The quality of accommodation and rooms offered in RT in LP are diversified. There are economy class rooms, standard quality accommodation, semi-lux facilities, studios, luxury accommodation, and suites (two-room, double-floor). A tourist can quite often rent a cottage with a common living room and kitchen, 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms (comfortable accommodation of 1–2 families). Prices for accommodation vary widely and depend on two main factors: category and season. The minimum price per night per person in 2016 was 50–90 UAH in summer and 150–350 UAH in winter (in Dec., 2016, 1 USD \approx 26.7 UAH). In ski resorts in Skole district winter prices were about 1.5–2 times higher than summer, and in the peak season of Christmas and New Year's Eve prices could grow up to 2–4 times. In the other regions, winter and summer accommodation prices are more or less the same, and lower prices are noticeable between seasons. When renting the entire cottage, depending on its capacity and level of

comfort, the price can range 600–1,000 UAH per night in summer and 3,500–4,000 UAH per night at the peak of the season in winter.

Catering for tourists in RT establishments of the surveyed region is organized according to one of the following models:

- 1) full board, i.e. 1–3 meals per day, including traditional Ukrainian dishes prepared by family members of the hosts;
- 2) meals ordered by tourists in the accommodation establishment, paid separately;
- 3) self-catering facilities with access to the kitchen, kitchen utensils and tableware etc.;
- 4) meals at restaurants not far from the accommodation establishments.

In Drohobych district, some areas of Skole district as well as in Turkivskiy district the most of the RT establishments operate according to the model 1 or 2. Tourists can buy traditional Ukrainian dishes and in individual cases dishes of Boykos. In some agritourism farms dishes are prepared from local farm products. Catering services are offered in 32% of RT establishments. The prices of full board for 1 person vary 75–150 UAH. As a rule, breakfast and dinner are included in the price of accommodation during winter, and in summer catering is a more optional service. Model 3 or 4 is more often offered in accommodation establishments oriented for tourists who come to ski. However, the possibility of self-catering is often practiced.

Additional services are the other group of services provided both internally and externally. Internal services are provided directly in accommodation establishments and comprise organization of sports and cultural events, children's games as well as the participation of tourists in activities of the farm or participation in the daily life of the farmer's family. External services are connected with the use of natural, cultural and historical attractiveness of rural areas. RT establishments offer a wide variety of services, however the hosts of most of the establishments are not very original about the choice of leisure arrangements and they usually offer standard set of services, including: ski rental, mountain trips, mushroom picking, horse riding, winter sleigh rides. Only individual farms offer specific hiking trails, e.g. to the top of the mountains, e.g. Mt. Parashka, Mt. Lopata, etc., through the Watershed-Vierchovinsk Carpathians and the Ruski Trail Pass. There are several attractions of the region e.g. Dowbysz rocks, Tustan fort, Swiatoslav tomb, Kamianka waterfall, Chashevske lake, mineral water of Skole district and zoo in Medenycze. There are also trips to Transcarpathia. Coach trips are the most often ordered by local travel agencies. Rental of ski equipment is offered by every third RT enterprises, which are located near the ski lifts. Instructors are often provided, and a transfer to the lifts is organized. Among the other types of active leisure, cycling and bike rentals, quads, snowmobiles and jeep safaris are frequent. A large number of RT enterprises offer horse riding, but only one farm in Slavske has its own stables with Hucul horses and offers qualified instructors. Sauna is the most popular health service (offered in 43.1% of RT establishments). Healing vats with mineral water, herbal teas etc. are becoming more and more popular. Some households with their own apiaries offer api-therapy services, namely sleep on the hives. Some of the RT establishments offer consultations with the doctors and in particular cases - even specialist treatments under the control of a specialist. In some establishments fishing services are offered, as well as participation in the folk crafts workshops (pottery, Easter eggs' painting) and traditional folk festivities are held (Boykos' evening parties). The assortment of additional services in RT enterprises in LP is quite standard and limited, often based on the resources outside the farm and the countryside. Active leisure, recreation and health resort services are quite popular among tourists, but ethnic, cultural, entertainment and agritourism services, which play an important role in RT, are undeveloped.

Conclusions

In modern conditions, the development of RT in LP faces a number of problems, both general and regional. The general problems typical for Ukraine include: lack of law regulation in RT, insufficient co-operation between state authorities and RT hosts, high level of shade RT business, imperfect tax and licensing policies, terminological problem, and lack of information system. There are also some specific regional problems in LP, including: chaotic development of RT market, unequal distribution of RT establishments in the province, lack of own brands, orientation of majority of RT establishments to external resources and insufficient use of own resources and insufficient information about RT outside the popular tourist centers. Development of RT in the CR seems to be inevitable, because of unpolluted natural environment, nature, hospitality of the rural population, traditions, crafts, tasty food, rural architecture. CR attract and will continue to attract tourists despite the poorly developed social and technical infrastructure (Lypczuk at al., 2015). The rural population needs support from local authorities and other institutions, both financial as well as institutional and advisory as well as business support (Kudla, 2006). Mastery of the region's recreational and tourism potential will inevitably lead to positive changes in other areas, enabling favorable conditions for settling social problems and increasing the standard of living of the rural population. Improving the level of tourist and recreational services can be achieved by: increasing development of leisure and tourism and employment in tourism, implementation of market mechanisms, increasing economic efficiency of tourism to the level of the most effective branches of the national economy, increasing quality of services, attracting foreign investment in the CR, faster development of tourist business and development of modern infrastructure, activating nature conservation activities to create civilized living standards for local population and visitors and improving ecological safety of the region, large-scale undertakings in the field of restoration and maintenance of cultural monuments, restoration of traditions and customs.

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