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SPATIAL DIFFERENTIATION OF TOURIST TRAFFIC IN THE REGIONS OF UKRAINE

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Abstract

The article examines the theoretical and methodological foundations of spatial differentiation in the tourism activities of the regions of Ukraine. It was found that the problem of domestic and foreign tourism in the regions of Ukraine should stimulate economic and social growth in depressed, unfavorable for industrial and agricultural production regions, reduce the migration of the population of these regions to large cities and industrial centers. The analysis of basic research of conceptual bases of essence of categories “spatial differentiation” is carried out and its generalized author’s definition is given. The analysis of tourist traffic both in Ukraine and by individual regions is given and it is revealed that the problem of uneven spatial distribution of tourist resources in the regions of Ukraine is significant. The mechanism of effective management of tourist activity as a tool for overcoming spatial differentiation on uneven distribution of tourist resources of regions of Ukraine is developed.

Keywords: *mechanism, spatial differentiation, tourist services, tourist market, tourist movement*

Problem Statement in General Terms

At the current stage of Ukraine’s development, the issue of creating an efficient tourism structure and strengthening both national and local tourist flows is becoming particularly relevant. Ukraine, as a tourism-oriented state of global significance, requires consistent coordination of activities across various sectors of the national economy, all of which influence the quality and timeliness of tourist services, transportation, publishing and advertising activities, souvenir production, etc. Today, tourism and the effective utilization of tourism potential are important

components of Ukraine’s economy and one of the priority areas of its development.

Thus, the problem of developing domestic and inbound tourism in Ukraine should stimulate economic and social growth in depressed regions that are unfavorable for industrial and agricultural production, reduce the migration of the population from these regions to large cities and industrial centers, and support balanced regional development. Therefore, the issue of spatial differentiation of tourist flows across the regions of Ukraine is highly relevant for academic research and has considerable practical significance both

for individual regions and for the country as a whole.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications

The problem of spatial differentiation of tourist traffic has been studied by many Ukrainian scholars, including Rega M. V., Pluhin Yu. L., Zorin V. A., Shkromada V. I., Soroka I. V., Tarasenko A. I., Zinovieva A. A., Krugman P. R., and others.

However, it should be noted that despite the wide range of studies devoted to tourist and recreational potential and tourism infrastructure, the regional aspect remains insufficiently explored. In particular, the spatial issues of regional tourism development require deeper investigation. This enhances the relevance of addressing the identified problem using modern methodological approaches and innovative tools widely applied in the study of tourism services.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the article is to substantiate the mechanisms for overcoming spatial differentiation of tourist traffic under contemporary conditions and to explore the patterns of development of tourist services in the regions of Ukraine.

Presentation of the Main Research Material

Under current conditions, when the need to transform the economic structure of Ukraine has become particularly urgent, the tourism sector is gaining increasing significance as an instrument of stable financial and economic growth of the national economy through both direct and indirect stimulation aimed at expanding service provision and creating additional value.

Active tourist flows act as a catalyst for the sustainable development of the entire tourism industry and are directly linked to the effectiveness and scale of the tourism services market, which in its development passes through four stages (initial, accumulative, consolidation, and modernization). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the impact of tourist flows on the development of the tourism market in Ukraine.

It should be noted that the management of the tourism services market at each stage is determined by the interaction of general national and local market influences, which must be taken into account given the constant emergence of trends whose realization lies largely outside the competence of the market actors themselves. The duration of each stage is not defined and depends largely on the type of tourism in the region, external and internal factors, the intensity of tourist flows over a certain period, and the possibilities and risks that constantly arise due to tourist movement in the tourism services market.

Tourist Flow at Various Stages of the Tourism Services Market Development

Stage of Tourism Services Market Formation

Initial Stage

A low-intensity tourist flow, dominated by domestic and outbound tourism.

Accumulative Stage

Significant growth of inbound tourism; domestic tourism begins to dominate over outbound tourism.

Consolidation Stage

Active development of mass international tourism; inbound tourism exceeds both outbound and domestic tourism.

Modernization Stage

Decrease in outbound tourism; reorientation of domestic tourism toward inbound tourism.

The stages of development of the tourism services market, both for individual regions and for Ukraine as a whole, are defined by general factors that significantly influence tourist flows. In this context, the tourism, economic, and social development of every region of Ukraine deserves particular attention, as it constitutes an objective condition for the sustainable development of the tourism market.

Uneven tourism distribution among regions is caused by the following factors:

- significant differences in the quantity and accessibility of natural resources;
- climatic characteristics;
- cultural and historical heritage;

- **uneven distribution of infrastructure**, including transportation, communications, and recreational facilities;
- **asymmetry in the distribution of recreational resources** across regions.

In connection with the issues raised regarding the development of tourist mobility with consideration of differentiation aspects, the spatial aspects of tourism development are becoming increasingly relevant. Therefore, it is necessary to define the scientific and theoretical meaning of the concept of *spatial differentiation* and to provide a general definition for more effective practical research.

The development of tourist flows under conditions of spatial differentiation is often characterized by the presence of the following interdependent trends:

- the significant influence of resource-related factors specific to individual market participants;
- the distribution of the active influence of factors and resources according to their functional location.

It should be noted that, in a broader sense, *spatial-differentiation factors* influencing tourist flows should be understood as a combination of external environmental factors inherent to a particular setting – territorial, informational, resource-based, and institutional.

It is important to emphasize that for successful practical research it is necessary to generalize and systematize individual categories of *spatial differentiation* as general economic as well as tourism-specific concepts.

Parfinenko Yu.I. argues that spatial differentiation reflects **economic development disparities** arising from uneven redistribution of economic resources, income, and expenditures, manifested through different levels of socio-economic and ecological development.

Eykova V.A. also notes that spatial differentiation may reflect a state in which a certain set of resources of the natural-economic and socio-economic system is concentrated within a given territory at a specific moment in time.

From another perspective, Shkromada V.I. emphasizes that spatial differentiation primarily represents a set of character-

istics of regional development influenced by basic factors, as well as dynamic trends shaped by current conditions that determine structural changes in production-economic, financial-economic, and socio-economic directions.

Equally noteworthy is the category of *spatial differentiation*, as defined by Soroko I. V., who considers it a manifestation of the uneven distribution of knowledge and innovation activities, originating from the non-linear process of self-organization of innovation relations within complex systems. In this context, innovation becomes both a product and a process integrated into the formation of innovation activity and the rise of innovation levels.

Tarassenko A. I. views the concept of *spatial differentiation* in the global tourism industry as an objective manifestation of the formation of tourism development centers and zones through uneven distribution of tourist demand, capital, and innovation in the tourism complex. Zinenko A. A., in her works, also concludes that spatial differentiation is a proportional dependence between economic benefits derived from tourist flows and the levels of tourist mobility.

Of particular value are the studies of Krugman P., who identified two types of territorial organization of economic space: a more developed center (core) and closely Thus, it can be concluded that spatial differentiation in the tourism sector is driven by significant disparities in the development of the market for tourism services, which stem from pronounced differences in the distribution of natural resources, climatic characteristics, cultural and historical conditions of cities and regions, uneven placement of transport, communication, and recreational infrastructure, as well as the asymmetric distribution of recreational resources among regions.

Ukraine's tourism potential, if effectively implemented and utilized, can ensure the fulfillment of economic, social, humanitarian, and other essential functions of the state. It may raise the standard of living, increase the share of tourism revenues in state and local budgets, expand employment opportunities within the tourism industry and related sectors, and stimulate the development of domestic tourism resources.

Dynamics of Domestic and International Tourism in Ukraine, 2000–2019

Table 1 shows that during 2018–2019, Ukraine experienced a notable increase in the overall tourism performance compared to previous years in the statistical sample. It should also be noted that until 2009 the largest share (50–60%) of tourist flows in Ukraine consisted of domestic tourism. This trend was largely the result of limited household budgets and the growing desire of Ukrainian citizens to explore tourism and recreational sites within their own country. These years also recorded the highest share of inbound international tourism, i.e., foreign visitors traveling to Ukraine for tourism purposes.

Since 2010, however, there has been a steady decline in outbound tourism and a significant reduction in other types of tourism flows. The reasons for these trends include:

- **temporary restrictions on tourism** in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Sevastopol, and the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts;
- **insufficient development** of tourism and recreational zones in many regions of Ukraine and the lack of services that meet European standards;
- **growing interest** among Ukrainians in discovering new tourism routes;
- **increase in savings** and financial resources among households that can be allocated to vacations abroad.

To conduct a more detailed study and analyze the preconditions and distribution of spatial differentiation in tourism flows across Ukraine, it is essential first to review statistical data on regional tourism performance for 2019 (see Table 2).

Improving the Efficiency of Regional Tourism Markets

Enhancing the efficiency of tourism market actors in Ukrainian regions will allow identification of the processes driving spatial differentiation. To achieve this, it is necessary to develop a universal and effective mechanism that considers the specific features of each region and strengthens the tourism infrastructure of border regions. These areas possess a rich historical and cultural legacy

capable of increasing tourist flows from peripheral territories while preserving the indicators characteristic of the “Center”.

The organization of tourism activities must be guided by the need to consider the spatial structure of regional differentiation in Ukraine, which influences the functioning of tourism entities at both the regional and national levels. Proper understanding of these structures creates the basis for strategic tourism development. The regulatory and legal framework governing the tourism market in Ukraine plays a key role in shaping mechanisms for tourism service provision, enhancing quality standards, ensuring safety, and improving certification practices.

Achieving the objectives of the mechanism is ensured through the implementation of target priorities and development management tasks, namely:

1. **Rational and efficient use of natural heritage, territories, and resorts** will make it possible to introduce advanced experience in sustainable tourism sector development, ensure financial and technological support, enable the development of innovative projects and best practices for tourism market growth in the regions, as well as preserve ecosystems and cultural heritage.
2. **Improving legal and institutional support** for market formation will ensure the rule-of-law framework and effective mechanisms of state policy for stimulating and supporting tourism enterprises across the regions of Ukraine.
3. **Building a high-quality tourism and related infrastructure**, taking into account spatial imbalance in development and differentiation of economic space.
4. **Increasing employment through the tourism sector**, which carries important socio-economic value for the state as a whole, and becomes particularly significant for depressed regions of Ukraine.
5. **Integrating tourism services into the global tourism market** through alignment with contemporary trends of international tourism (transnationalization, globalization, clustering, etc.).
6. **Achieving national interests through integration into the global tourism market**, ensured through

effective state regulatory mechanisms that promote tourism entrepreneurship in the regions of Ukraine.

Functioning of an effective regional tourism activity mechanism in Ukraine is based on the following principles:

- 1. Systematic approach** – tourism activities represent a multi-component, holistic, open, dynamic system with interdependent elements interacting across micro-economic and macroeconomic levels;
- 2. Competitiveness** – ensuring that tourism services meet relevant basic quality indicators and maintain competitiveness in domestic and international markets;
- 3. Adaptability** – the ability to adjust the developed mechanism to appropriate conditions, where tourism companies must remain highly flexible in responding to internal and external changes;
- 4. Dynamism** – continuous development of tourism and recreational activities in the regions to successfully overcome existing spatial differentiation challenges;
- 5. Sustainability** – implies consistent enhancement of tourism potential in the regions to increase competitiveness in the long term;
- 6. Goal orientation** – directing tourism activities in the regions toward achieving overarching objectives and smoothing spatial disparities;
- 7. Optimality** – ensuring that decisions in planning, development, and implementation of tourism products best align with selected strategic priorities and development directions;
- 8. Scientific justification** – increasing tourist flows in the regions is impossible without integrating innovations and modern technologies based on scientific research and development;
- 9. Informational support** – ensuring complete and multi-criteria information about tourism activities in the regions.

Vectors of implementing the tourism market development mechanism are closely related to the key functions of state regulation and aim to achieve the following:

- 1. Institutional and legal vector** – establishing a universal institutional and legislative foundation for market development that aligns with global and European standards to ensure its effective functioning.
- 2. Socio-economic vector** – fulfilling the state's social function by increasing employment in tourism and related services, which raises income levels and tax revenues across different regions.
- 3. Integration vector** – strengthening international cooperation in tourism to enhance interaction and the quality of life across various spheres.

The most important aspect of the developed mechanism for effective management of tourism activities in the regions of Ukraine is the selection of strategic priorities and directions aimed at smoothing spatial differentiation in the field of tourism services in the regions of Ukraine, namely:

- 1. Implementation of authentic market development management**, based on consideration of specific tourism opportunities of regional markets. Such management is possible through incorporating the infrastructural asymmetry of regional tourism markets and spatial differentiation of the distribution of forming market factors. Effective authentic management will increase the pace of financial and socio-economic growth and reduce inequality and poverty among the population of the regions of Ukraine through the use of regional tourism competitive advantages.
- 2. Formation and development of innovative sectors in the tourism services market**, including the introduction of modern types of tourism (rural, green, industrial); restoration of neglected tourism heritage (castles, fortresses, palaces); implementation of national programs to increase public interest in the culture and history of Ukraine, as well as the history and modernity of individual regions; improving tourism image at both the national and international levels.
- 3. Adaptation of traditional tourism sectors under conditions of deeper European integration**, which requires the gradual harmonization of domestic

and international tourism services markets with European service standards.

It should also be emphasized that an important component of the developed mechanism is the system of monitoring and control over the stages of implementing strategic directions under conditions of sustainable development of regional tourism markets in Ukraine, which establishes two-way communication with other subsystems of the mechanism and ensures the practical performance of all its theoretical and methodological principles.

Conclusions and prospects for further research

Based on the conducted study of the problems of spatial differentiation of the tourism services market in Ukraine, the following theoretical and practical results were obtained:

- 1. The relevance and theoretical substantiation of tourism flows at different stages of tourism market development have been determined.**
- 2. The definition and systematization of the category “spatial differentiation” as it relates to tourism**, meaning the uneven development of the tourism market of services, which is caused by significant differences in the distribution of natural resources, climatic features of

regions, cultural-historical preconditions of settlement across territories, uneven distribution of transport, communication, and recreational infrastructure.

- 3. An analysis of tourism flows in Ukraine was conducted for the period 2000–2019**, both in general and by individual regions. It was found that the problem of uneven distribution of tourism resources in the regions of Ukraine is significant. The “Centers” of tourism in Ukraine account for only 20% of the total number of existing regions. The remaining 80% constitute the periphery.

- 4. Based on the analysis of significant spatial differentiation in the regions of Ukraine**, a mechanism for effective management of tourism activities was developed, which, if successfully implemented in practice, will help smooth the unevenness of tourism development and improve quantitative and qualitative tourism indicators of the regions of Ukraine.

The practical significance of the obtained results lies in the fact that they can be used as a theoretical and methodological basis for further research on issues of reducing spatial differentiation of the tourism services market in Ukraine.

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