

DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTIVE POTENTIAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMY

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND TOUR OPERATOR ACTIVITY: SYNERGY OF RECREATION TOURISM AND LOCAL EXPERIENCE ROUTES

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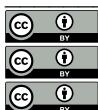
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Introduction. In today's conditions of global environmental, social and economic transformations, the concept of sustainable development is becoming a key reference point for the tourism industry. Tour operator activity, which plays a leading role in the formation and promotion of tourist products, is increasingly directed towards the implementation of environmentally responsible approaches, the preservation of cultural heritage and the rational use of recreational resources. The development of recreational tourism and local history routes, which are fundamentally based on the principles of sustainability, respect for traditions, the natural environment and local communities, is gaining special relevance. The synergy of recreational tourism and local history routes opens up new opportunities for the diversification of the tourism product, increasing its competitiveness and the formation of environmentally conscious behavior among tourists. Tour operators, integrating these directions into their activities, not only create quality tourist products, but also contribute to the development of local territories, support of small businesses, popularization of cultural heritage and protection of natural landscapes.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Today, domestic scientists and practitioners are actively researching these processes, therefore, according to N. Mamontova, sustainable development “is managed development, which is a product of the implementation of global and national decisions [1].

Domestic specialist S. P. Kuzyk defined recreational tourism as a trip for rest, recovery or treatment, which is carried out with the direct use of natural properties of the climate, mineral waters, mud, attractive landscape and other resources [2].

Sustainable development of tourism is a long-term development of tourism, in which, based on the rational use of resources, progressive changes are taking place, aimed not only at quantitative growth, but also at qualitative development, taking into account the interests of today's and future generations [3].

Objectives of the article. Special attention will be paid to the study of the relationship between sustainable development and tour operator activities, as well as the analysis of the mechanisms of combining recreational and local history programs is an important step towards the formation of a modern, responsible and competitive tourism industry. The article is aimed at revealing the potential of this synergy and determining its role in the further evolution of the tourist market.

The main material of the study. Sustainable development involves the process of survival and reproduction of the nation's gene pool, the activation of the role of each individual person in society, the provision of rights and freedoms, the preservation of the environment, the formation of conditions for the restoration of the biosphere and its local ecosystems, the focus on reducing the level of anthropogenic influence on the natural environment and the harmonization of development.

Recreational tourism is a type of tourism, the main purpose of which is the restoration of physical and mental strength of a person, rest and recovery in conditions conducive to relaxation and harmony with nature.

Tourist and recreational resources are a significant prerequisite for the development of tourism and recreation, which determines the nature of tourist activity and development prospects for the region, the ability to focus on both internal and external consumers [4].

Modern world tourism is an important factor in the development of civilization. According to the conclusion of the World Council on Tourism and Travel, tourism is characterized as the largest industry in the world [5]. In turn, recreation is a concept that encompasses all types of recreation, including sanatorium-resort treatment and tourism.

The essence of recreational tourism is a temporary change of the usual environment in order to relieve fatigue, improve well-being, restore work capacity and emotional balance.

Table 1
The main forms of recreational tourism

Form	Characteristic
Beach-climate rest	rest on the sea coast, lakes, rivers
Mountain recreation	sanatoriums, ski resorts
Rural (agritourism)	recreation in a natural environment, combined with local traditions;
Health tourism that uses natural healing resources	mineral waters, mud, climate

Objects of recreational tourism – resort areas, sanatoriums, holiday homes, beaches, natural parks, tourist bases, etc.

So, recreational tourism is aimed not so much at knowledge, but at the full recovery of a person's life potential through rest in favorable natural and social conditions.

A tourist route is a program of a tourist's stay on a trip, which includes visiting certain points and tourist facilities, as well as participation in various tourist-excursion, cultural-mass and physical culture-rehabilitation events. [6]

In the modern conditions of tourism development, educational trips are gaining more and more popularity, which contribute to a deeper understanding of the history, culture and traditions of the native land. One of the most effective means of implementing such trips are local history routes that combine educational, cultural and educational functions. Their role is growing in the context of the revival of national identity and the formation of the spiritual values of society.

A local history route is an organized trip through the territory of a certain region, aimed at getting to know its historical, cultural, natural and ethnographic sights. In contrast to ordinary excursions, local history tours involve a deeper immersion in local culture, traditions, the way of life of the population and the peculiarities of the region's development.

Such routes are an important component of cognitive tourism, because they contribute not only to broadening the horizons of tourists, but also to foster patriotism, love for the native land, and increase interest in the history of Ukraine.

Local history routes stimulate the development of domestic tourism, support local communities and crafts, and contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage. They also have an educational value – they help form the historical consciousness of young people, develop environmental culture and interest in scientific research.

The object of tourism and local history activity is a set of geographical, historical objects and phenomena of social life and their interrelationships in a certain territory. The object of tourism and local history activity

is a social-territorial complex, which confirms the geographical nature of local history knowledge, but does not exhaust it.

At the current stage, the digitization of local history tours is gaining special relevance – the creation of interactive routes, mobile applications, virtual trips, which makes them accessible to a wide audience. There are different types of tourist and local history routes, which are substantiated in the works of scientists who classify tourist routes according to the following criteria (territorial: divides routes into long-distance (international, national, regional), short, local; by means of transportation: pedestrian, bicycle, ski, water, horse, combined; by duration: short-term, multi-day; by purpose of travel: educational, cognitive (excursion, local history, ecological), health (recreational), sports, extreme, etc.) [7].

Tourist and local history routes pass through places that show tour participants the hidden treasures of the visited region, which best reveal its authenticity.

Table 2

The main components for the formation of tourist and local history routes

Main components	Characteristic
The potential of recreational tourism in Poltava Oblast	Poltava Oblast has significant recreational and touristic potential: natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources. Areas that stand out in particular: rural green tourism (homesteads, rural houses, agro-houses) – development of agrotourism, green recreation. active recreation: cycling routes, water activities, equestrian tourism. health tourism: availability of resort areas, health facilities.
Features of recreational services and resources	Natural resources: rivers, landscapes, countryside – for rest and active recreation. Infrastructure: estates, recreation areas, route systems. Combining recreation with a cultural and cognitive component (rural traditions, crafts, nature).
Challenges and limitations	Insufficient integrated tourism product: the Tourism Development Program of the Poltava Region states that the region “lacks a comprehensive and competitive tourism product” [8]. The need for infrastructure development (homesteads, sanitary conditions, transport accessibility). Post-war and war conditions are an additional factor that changes tourist needs and approaches.
Development prospects	Strengthening green rural tourism as one of the priorities. Development of active recreation: cycling and water routes, equestrian tourism. Focus on health services and recreation – taking into account natural factors, recreational areas. Creation of new tourist products that combine nature + recreation + activity. Improving the quality of service, infrastructure and service to increase competitiveness.

It should be noted that there are more than 74 estates of rural “green” tourism in the region. Bicycle and water routes are being developed in various regions of the region.

In 2025, tourism in the EU continues to move towards sustainability, digitalization and inclusiveness. Stricter rules under the European Green Deal require airlines and cruise operators to report emissions, while housing has stricter environmental certification standards. A harmonized short-term rental system increases transparency by obliging platforms to share data with authorities and ensure fair competition.

Regulatory updates simplify taxation, strengthen data protection and improve consumer rights, ensuring clearer pricing and sustainability transparency. Carbon offsets remain imperative, AI-based travel solutions are expanding, and accessibility standards continue to improve.

Looking ahead, the EU is implementing the European Travel Information and Authorization System and the Entry/Exit System to strengthen border security. Further rules on artificial intelligence and climate action are set to reshape the sector, strengthening Europe's leadership in responsible and competitive tourism.

At the end of 2024, the European Union has made significant progress in shaping tourism through the prism of sustainability, digital transformation and inclusiveness. The European Green Deal remained central

to policy change, setting the tone for tourism-related regulations and initiatives. This evolution was based on three key priorities:

The Green Transition is a strong push to reduce the environmental impact of tourism through strong measures to reduce transport emissions and increase the energy efficiency of residences.

Digitization – technology is central to the transformation of the tourism industry, improving the experience of travelers as well as increasing business efficiency.

Inclusivity – The sector has continued to evolve to become more accessible, ensuring that disabled travelers and tourism workers alike benefit from these transformations.

These pillars formed the basis of the EU's strategic approach to solving both current and future challenges in tourism.

Major legislative changes introduced in 2024. Last year brought a wave of regulatory updates that changed the shape of tourism in Europe. One of the most significant changes was the updated European Green Deal, which introduced stricter sustainability requirements for tourism and hospitality companies. Airlines and cruise operators are required to provide detailed emissions reports, and accommodations are encouraged to adopt green practices. These steps were not only about reducing carbon emissions – they strengthened Europe's role as a world leader in sustainable tourism. Another important development was the new EU short-term rental (STR) system. With an emphasis on transparency and fair competition, the regulation focused on data sharing obligations, requiring platforms to provide accurate statistics to local authorities. This has allowed cities to make informed decisions about managing tourist flows, to impose restrictions where necessary and to ensure that NGO licensing is balanced and justified. In essence, this regulation gave local authorities the tools they needed to effectively manage the sector while preventing the spread of illegal rentals.

In April 2024, the EU officially established a harmonized approach to the observation of incident operations in member states. A key component of this legislation was requiring online platforms to implement a simplified registration system for hosts, ensuring that properties meet national and local requirements before they can be listed. In addition, platforms were required to provide government authorities with critical data, including host IDs and rental locations, to improve monitoring and compliance.

To further curb unregulated rentals, the regulation required platforms to verify the legitimacy of listings and remove unregistered properties. The move was intended to protect consumers from scammers while giving municipalities a clearer picture of the short-term rental landscape. In addition, the framework included provisions aimed at protecting fair competition in the sector by ensuring that STR operators are held to the same regulatory standards as traditional accommodation providers.

By increasing transparency and streamlining enforcement, the EU's new approach to SPOs laid the foundation for a more responsible and stable rental market. This initiative has not only helped local governments effectively regulate the sector, but has also contributed to a fairer and more competitive tourism ecosystem.

VAT rules have also been amended to simplify taxation for tourism businesses operating abroad. The aim was to reduce red tape and promote fairer tax practices, especially to the benefit of SMEs. Likewise, updates to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) have set higher standards for handling customer data on travel platforms, ensuring that privacy remains a top priority.

Meanwhile, the revised EU Consumer Rights Directive has strengthened the protection of travellers. Companies had to provide clearer and more transparent information about prices, cancellation policies and environmental credentials. This has empowered tourists to make informed choices, building trust in the sector while promoting more ethical travel practices.

To support these legislative changes, EU funding remained the mainstay of the transition. Significant grants went to projects that promoted sustainability, and additional incentives helped companies integrate artificial intelligence and digital tools to improve their operations and customer service.

Conclusions. Sustainable development in the field of tourism is gradually becoming a key reference point for tour operator activity, which combines economic interests with a responsible attitude to natural and cultural heritage. The synergy of recreational tourism and local history routes opens up new opportunities for the formation of a high-quality tourist product, which not only contributes to the relaxation and health of tourists, but also strengthens the cognitive, cultural and educational functions of travel.

The article proves that it is the combination of recreational resources with local lore elements that makes it possible to create complex itineraries that provide deeper immersion of tourists in the historical and cultural context of the region and form a sustainable interest in local territories. This approach has a positive effect on

the balanced development of communities, stimulates the preservation of natural landscapes, supports the local economy and contributes to the formation of environmentally conscious behavior of travelers.

For tour operators, the integration of the principles of sustainable development into their activities is not only a requirement of time, but also a competitive advantage. Using the potential of local history routes allows you to expand tourist products, increase their uniqueness and provide a high level of customer experience. At the same time, recreational tourism, based on caring for nature, strengthens the environmental responsibility of both business and tourists.

Therefore, the synergy of recreational tourism and local history routes is a promising direction of tour operator activity, capable of ensuring the sustainable development of territories, strengthening local tourism potential and creating conditions for a harmonious balance between economic, social and ecological aspects of tourism.

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The article is devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the principles of sustainable development in tour operator activities with an emphasis on the combination of recreational tourism and local history routes. The work substantiates that the modern tourism industry is at the stage of transformation, where environmental responsibility, social awareness and economic balance become key conditions for the competitiveness of tourism enterprises. Special attention is paid to the role of tour operators as the main shapers of the tourist product, able to influence the consumption patterns of tourist services and contribute to the preservation of the recreational and cultural potential of the regions. The article examines the theoretical foundations of sustainable development and practical mechanisms of their integration into tourism activities. It is shown that recreational tourism in combination with local history routes forms a unique tourist product that contributes to the restoration of the physical and emotional

state of tourists, while ensuring the preservation of natural landscapes, objects of cultural heritage and historical memory of the territories. The article emphasizes that the synergy of recreational tourism and local history routes is a promising direction for the formation of responsible tourism that meets modern global challenges and contributes to the harmonious development of territories.

Keywords: recreation, tourist industry, tour operators, local history routes, region, tourist product.

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Бакало Надія Віталіївна, кандидат економічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри міжнародних економічних відносин та туризму, Національний університет «Полтавська політехніка імені Юрія Кондратюка». **Маховка Вікторія Михайлівна**, кандидат економічних наук, доцент кафедри міжнародних економічних відносин та туризму, Національний університет «Полтавська політехніка імені Юрія Кондратюка». **Левченко Ірина Василівна**, доктор філософії, доцент кафедри міжнародних економічних відносин та туризму, Національний університет «Полтавська політехніка імені Юрія Кондратюка». **Сталий розвиток і туроператорська діяльність: синергія рекреаційного туризму та краєзнавчих маршрутів.**

Стаття присвячена комплексному аналізу впровадження принципів сталого розвитку в туроператорську діяльність з акцентом на поєднанні рекреаційного туризму та краєзнавчих маршрутів. У роботі обґрунтовано, що сучасна туристична індустрія перебуває на етапі трансформації, де екологічна відповідальність, соціальна свідомість та економічна збалансованість стають ключовими умовами конкурентоспроможності туристичних підприємств. Акцент зроблено на теоретичних засадах сталого розвитку та практичному механізмі їх інтеграції в туристичну діяльність. Показано, що рекреаційний туризм у поєднанні з краєзнавчими маршрутами формує унікальний туристичний продукт, який сприяє відновленню фізичного й емоційного стану туристів, водночас забезпечуючи збереження природних ландшафтів, об'єктів культурної спадщини та історичної пам'яті територій. Особливу увагу приділено ролі туроператорів як основних формувачів туристичного продукту, здатних впливати на моделі споживання туристичних послуг та сприяти збереженню рекреаційного і культурного потенціалу регіонів. Також розглянуто різні види туристично-краєзнавчих маршрутів, які обґрунтовані в роботах науковців, що класифікують туристичні маршрути за різними критеріями. Доведено, що краєзнавчі маршрути виконують важливу освітню та ідентифікаційну функції, стимулюють локальну економіку, змінюють зв'язки між туристичною сферою та місцевими громадами. Сформульовані в статті рекомендації можуть бути використані туроператорами, органами місцевого самоврядування, представниками рекреаційних установ та освітніх закладів для розроблення сталих туристичних маршрутів та програм. Стаття підкреслює, що синергія рекреаційного туризму та краєзнавчих маршрутів є перспективним напрямом формування відповідального туризму, що відповідає сучасним глобальним викликам та сприяє гармонійному розвитку територій.

Ключові слова: рекреація, туристична індустрія, туроператори, краєзнавчі маршрути, регіон, туристичний продукт.