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**PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNOCULTURAL
TOURISM IN THE NORTHEAST CAUCASIAN REGIONS**

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Abstract

The article explores possible interpretations of the concept of “ethnocultural potential” and related terms used in the Russian scientific literature. The main theoretical and methodological approaches in the works of foreign researchers are analyzed. The necessity for the further study of the essence, content, features of the genesis, and development of ethnocultural tourism is substantiated. Ethnocultural tourism plays a significant role in the preservation of cultural heritage and the socio-economic development of the regions. Intra-ethnic relations were formed under the conditions of long-term development of environmental management systems. The Northeast Caucasian regions have a rich history and ancient culture, a variety of objects, and monuments of cultural and natural heritage, which can act as a resource base for the development of ethnocultural tourism. For its large-scale development, it is necessary to solve the following tasks: Improve the quality of the infrastructure of the tourism industry, strengthen the promotion of new tourism destinations among the local population, and develop new tourist tours.

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1. Introduction

Over the past decades, the problem of preserving ethnocultural heritage, identity, and multinational culture has begun to acquire a global character. There is a significant increase in the role of the ethnic factor in the development of economic, political, and cultural processes. Ethno-cultural motivation is increasingly driving people in travel planning. The growth of ethnic self-awareness increases attention to the problems of preserving identity, cultural diversity, and ethnocultural heritage. Tourism is interpreted as a key factor in the conservation of the tangible and intangible elements of the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples, including languages, stories, songs, arts, dances, hunting methods, rituals, and customs (Ruhanen & Whitford, 2019). In the context of globalization, the knowledge and promotion of cultural heritage and the preservation of cultural memory are becoming substantial means of protecting ethnic cultures and developing cultural diversity.

2. Problem Statement

Ethnocultural tourism is a type of tourism associated with trips to places of residence of a historically established community of people. This community is distinguished by its structure and stereotype of behavior, unique spiritual and material culture, and natural and cultural heritage (Butuzov, 2009). Ethnocultural tourism is based on people's interest in the authentic life of peoples, in their traditions, customs, crafts, folklore, and other types of creativity..

3. Research Questions

The modern world is characterized by the unification and standardization of most phenomena and processes and the people's aspirations for self-identification. There is a growing interest in finding and studying one's ethnic roots. This makes it possible to feel special, involved in the people with a deep history and their cultural traditions. Acquaintance with other cultures and ethnic characteristics allows a person to form a complete picture of the world. It is represented by the diversity of the peoples and nationalities inhabiting it, characterized by their own identity and the uniqueness of the original cultural heritage.

4. Purpose of the Study

Ethnocultural tourism aims to preserve and develop the cultural diversity and traditional way of life of small indigenous minorities. It contributes to stronger ties and contacts between representatives of different ethnic groups. Due to the disclosure and knowledge of the many facets of the very culture of various peoples, ethnocultural tourism contributes to the inclusion of these cultures in the world's cultural heritage.

5. Research Methods

A set of approaches and methods was used: systemic, spatial-network, comparative-geographical, and historical. The data of regional ministries and departments of culture were involved.

6. Findings

One of the most authoritative Russian researchers of the phenomenon of ethnocultural tourism, Butuzov (2009), among the most important advantages of ethnocultural tourism, highlighted the interest in local, regional, and national aspects of culture, history, and nature management, both existing and disappeared ethnic, ethnoterritorial and ethnosocial groups population. Among the subspecies of cultural tourism, he noted the following: cultural-ethnographic, cultural-anthropological, cultural-ethnic, and cultural-ecological. Another approach to the differentiation of ethnotourism as a synonym for ethnocultural tourism involves the allocation of aboriginal, anthropological, and jailoo tourism (Kedrova, 2020).

Ethnocultural tourism as an independent direction of tourism has been formed relatively recently. According to the study of Khomenko and Filatova (2019), it is at the stage of initial formation as a separate type of tourism industry. Some researchers draw parallels between ethnocultural and ecological (scientific and educational) tourism. The first type of tourism requires travellers to have a specific cultural behaviour, and respect for local customs and traditions (Milinchuk, 2021).

There is also no single approach to defining the structure and content of this concept. Often it is replaced by similar in meaning, but not synonymous terms “ethnographic tourism”, “ethnographic tourism”, etc. (Kedrova, 2020). This indicates the need for further research into the essence, content, features of the genesis, and development of ethnocultural tourism.

In foreign literature, the English term “cultural tourism” is used as a synonym for the concept under discussion (Cros & McKercher, 2020). It implies knowledge of the history and culture of the country, acquaintance with the peculiarities of architecture, painting, music, folk crafts, and the way of life of people. The most significant advantages of cultural tourism include the absence of a seasonal nature (Vergori & Arima, 2020). The study (Richards, 2018) revealed some trends in the interpretation of this concept in the scientific literature. Thus, the early discussions were mainly aimed at the segment of cultural tourism, with the division of tourists into ordinary and specific ones. In subsequent studies, a more extended and in-depth interpretation of the content of this concept can be traced. The standard economic approach to the cultural tourism phenomenon is also somewhat specific, due to which values can be expressed in monetary terms, and cultural values are recognized as determinants of economic value (Noonan & Rizzo, 2017).

In recent years, there has been competition between states to attract tourists due to the growth of new tourist destinations (Kumar & Dhir, 2020). The global cultural tourism market is considerably evolving and changing (McKercher, 2020). In the modern world, the need for dialogue is growing both between ethnic groups living in different states and on the territory of one country. Over the centuries, the majority of peoples have developed in the territory of Russia as unique ethnic communities that have played a historical and cultural role in the formation of Russian statehood (Khomenko & Filatova, 2019).

Russia has a great resource potential for ethnocultural tourism development, which is listed among the promising areas of this industry, attracting a significant number of people (Milinchuk, 2021). Among the prerequisites for the development of ethnocultural tourism in Russia are the following:

- i. a high degree of the ethnic diversity of the population at the national, regional, and municipal levels;
- ii. a unique combination of various ethnocultural complexes as a result of long-term inter-ethnic integration, acculturation, and assimilation;
- iii. the need for active propaganda of the ideas of inter-ethnic tolerance;
- iv. traditionally relatively low (in the Volga region, in the Urals) and sharply reduced in recent decades due to mass migrations (in the North Caucasus) level of territorial consolidation of ethnic groups in some national republics;
- v. the destructive impact of urbanization processes on the traditional cultural complex of almost all ethnic communities in the country;
- vi. the need for more effective promotion in the domestic and foreign tourist markets of Russian regions (Butuzov, 2009).

Tourism as a socio-economic phenomenon has an impact not only on the region in which it develops but also on the material and spiritual spheres of human activity and society. The development of ethnocultural tourism contributes to the development of tourism infrastructure in the regions. The expected economic effect is to increase the growth of the gross domestic product.

The Caucasus is a mountainous region, which, being between Europe and Asia, was of interest to many countries and peoples at various periods of its historical development. Ethnic groups of many genetic types, language families, and religions settled here. Of the 130 Russian ethnic groups, 60 are only autochthonous in the North Caucasus (Gamzatov, 2009). Since the beginning of the 20th century, the Chechens (in different years from 17 to 20 %) and Avars (from 13 to 15 %) have remained the largest indigenous ethnic group in the North Caucasus. The Caucasus differs from other mountainous geoecosystems (Crimea, Altai, Urals) by the utmost population and development, polyethnic and multilinguistic composition.

The Northeast Caucasus is a cultural phenomenon. The regions of the North-Eastern Caucasus have a rich history and ancient culture, a variety of objects, and monuments of cultural and natural heritage, which can act as a powerful resource base for the development of ethnocultural tourism. Representatives of various ethnic groups have lived together here from olden times.

Intra-ethnic ties in the northeast of the Caucasus were formed under the conditions of long-term development of systems of nature management. However, judging by the regional ethnogenetic classification at the municipal level as a whole, Chechnya and Ingushetia are monoethnic regions, and Dagestan is polyethnic (Zaburaeva & Krasnov, 2014). The regional ethnogenetic classification is implied the unification of certain groups of the population based on the predominance of certain tendencies in them toward the joint or separate residence in one territory. To single out such groups, the most general term “ethnos” was used, covering all socio-ethnic communities depending on the rank. There is no single point of view on its content in science, and linguistic, economic, cultural, or political significance prevails among different researchers.

Russians, Nogais, Azerbaijanis, Kumyks, Dargins, Tatars, Turks live in other national minorities. At least 30 nationalities live together in Dagestan, so there are no problems with “titular ethnos” or “titular language”, which determine in many other regions of their names. The proportion of relatively large ethnic groups in Dagestan varies from 10 to 29%. They include Avars, Dargins, Kumyks, and Lezgins. Small in number (from 1 to 5 %) groups are formed by Russians, Laks, Tabasarans, Azerbaijanis, Chechens, Nogais, Rutuls, Aguls. The smallest in Dagestan are Turks, Ingush, Ossetians, Georgians, Kabardians, and Ukrainians.

Peoples of various origins from ancient times, starting from the Paleolithic, freely settled in parts of the territory of the North-Eastern Caucasus. In addition to their original culture, traditions, and other entities, many were united by ethnogenetic and natural factors. The landscape basis made it possible, by imposing an ethnotypological network on it, to reveal the binding of various ethnic groups to a particular landscape zone. It turned out, for example, that the Nogais live compactly in the region of semi-deserts and deserts, their area of settlement also extends into the territory of Chechnya (Shelkovskaya, Naursky districts) and the Stavropol Territory. Kumyks mainly settled in the steppes and forest-steppes, Rutuls and Lezgins among mountain meadows, and Dargins in mountain forests, alpine meadows, and even in the steppe zone.

In Chechnya, the ethnic group of the same name prevails in all regions and, accordingly, has mastered all natural zones, from semi-deserts to mountain meadows, for economic and other activities. The only exception is the high-mountainous Sharoysky District bordering Dagestan, which is predominantly inhabited by Chechens (45%) and Avars (55%).

On the plains, the population prefers large settlements with straight streets, and in the mountains, auls, in which one house often hangs over another, and the roof of the lower house is utilized as a yard or floor of a higher building. The choice of places for settlements among the mountain peoples was not accidental, every piece of land suitable for crops is valuable here. In contrast to the mountainous regions, the most densely populated lowland areas of the Northeast Caucasus are characterized by a mixed ethnic composition of the population. In the central (foothill) and northern (semi-desert) regions of Chechnya, along with Chechens, live Russians, Kumyks, Nogais, Turks, and others. The foothill regions of Ingushetia are inhabited by Chechens, Russians, and Turks.

In terms of economic activity, the regions of the North-Eastern Caucasus are agro-oriented. The historically established way of life of the mountain peoples predetermined the development of animal husbandry here. Livestock breeding is most active in Dagestan, which is due to rich summer pastures in the mountainous part and extensive winter pastures on the plains. Until the 1990s, sheep breeding was intensively developed in the northern part of Chechnya. Mountain Nakhs preferred vegetable growing and gardening on the terraced slopes. The delta of the Terek River is the main region of agriculture and poultry farming in the flat part of the region. In the structure of sown areas, a significant share falls on grain crops. The population of the northern regions of Chechnya and Dagestan has been engaged in melon growing, viticulture, and winemaking since the middle of the 18th century.

The factor that unites the numerous ethnic groups of the North-Eastern Caucasus is the Russian language. In all three regions, it has the status of a state one and promotes the consolidation of inter-ethnic relations. The absence of a language barrier allows, for example, the peoples of Dagestan to

exchange experience in economic activity, cultural, moral, and spiritual development, but above all, this is important for the sphere of secondary and higher education.

In their ancient culture and traditions of nature management, the peoples of the North-Eastern Caucasus are unique. In Dagestan, the population from ancient times to the present is engaged in various crafts: the manufacture of household utensils, tools, cloaks, rugs, carpets, pottery and jewelry, cold steel, and firearms. Most Caucasian cultures are among the hard-to-modify ones. They are characterized by the desire to preserve the usual way of life. To the present day, the traditions of pre-Islamic mountain laws, morality, norms of behavior, and lifestyle, including hospitality, justice, equality, and brotherhood, are strong here. The ethnic groups of the North-Eastern Caucasus, having common features of historical development in the past, are connected by cooperation in the economy of nature management, trade, and the cultural sphere, which continues at the present stage of nature management.

The historical and cultural heritage of the Northeast Caucasus is widely represented by architectural, historical, and archaeological monuments. Their assessment was carried out according to the number of historical and cultural monuments included in the registers of objects of cultural and historical heritage. Of the 7.5 thousand monuments of history and culture, 6474 objects were found in Dagestan, 750 in Chechnya, and 437 in Ingushetia. The Dzheyrakh-Assy State Historical-Architectural and Natural Museum-Reserve (Ingushetia) and the Argun State Historical-Architectural and Natural Museum-Reserve (Chechnya) are the main objects that determine the tourist and recreational potential of these republics. In the area of Lake Kezenoy-Am, there is an ancient princely castle "Aldan-Gezi", near which there are 87 karst caves.

In the foothills of Buynaksk and Derbent regions of Dagestan, there is a high concentration of historical and architectural monuments. The Derbent Historical, Architectural, and Art Museum-Reserve with the fortress "Naryn-Kala", recognized by UNESCO as a monument of world significance, is exceptionally valuable among them. The Derbent region stands out among the rest with a high provision of hotel stock and prerequisites for the development of the tourism industry, including ethnocultural tourism.

The objects of historical and cultural heritage in the lowlands and on the plains are mainly represented by monuments to the soldiers of the Great Patriotic War, houses of famous people (scientists, poets, artists), obelisks, groups of ancient mounds, and the mountainous part, watchtowers, defensive, signal towers preserved from past periods, bas-reliefs, above-ground crypts, and sanctuaries.

Museums of various profiles function in the regions of the North-Eastern Caucasus, which can serve as a basis for the development of ethnocultural tourism. The National Museum has been established in the capital of the Chechen Republic. In the high-mountainous Itum-Kalinsky district, there is a local history museum named after Kh. Isaev, in which household items, ancient weapons, jewelry, tools, and other exhibits are presented. Among the similar objects that are popular among the local population are the cultural and ethnographic complex "Shira Bena-Yurt", and the museum "Dondi-Yurt".

More than two dozen local history museums and cultural and historical complexes function in Dagestan. The most popular among them are the National Museum of the Republic of Dagestan named after Alibek Takho-Godi (Makhachkala), the Museum of Carpet and Decorative and Applied Arts (Derbent), the Historical and Architectural Museum (Gunib), the Kizlyar Museum of Local Lore named

after P.I. Bagration (Kizlyar), Khasavyurt Museum of Local History (Khasavyurt), Akhtyn Museum of Local Lore (Akhty), Museum of the History of World Cultures and Religions (Derbent), Center of Ethnic Culture (Makhachkala).

Ethnocultural tourism, despite the significant resource potential, has not yet received proper development in Russia. According to Butuzov (2009), the deterrent in this was the ideology of urbanization in the Soviet period. The elite did not understand the need to preserve cultural continuity between people from the rural environment and their descendants. The spread of ethnocultural tourism in the regions of the North-Eastern Caucasus is largely negatively affected by the fact that the majority of tourists arrive as part of excursion groups with cultural and educational excursions, and tour operators, as a rule, offer identical tours that do not provide in-depth acquaintance with ethnocultural aspects of travel and the possibilities of the studied regions.

7. Conclusion

Ethnocultural tourism in the future may become one of the leading tourism destinations in the regions of the North-Eastern Caucasus. Its large-scale development will require significant investments in the construction of hotels, roads, and communications. However, to begin with, it is necessary to arouse the interest of the population in promising new forms of activity for them. The development of new tourism products with an emphasis on acquaintance with the sights and national characteristics and traditions of indigenous ethnic groups through participation in various activities that allow one to immerse themselves in the ethnic atmosphere is quite relevant in the regions under study. For example, unpretentious crafts, folk dances, hiking and horseback riding in historical places. A particular role should be given to national cuisine as an expression of ethnic identity. Indeed, among the six most important factors that determine the tourist image of a country (or region), culinary attractiveness, and quality of service are recognized (Seyfi et al., 2019). Intelligent technologies will improve the service and create a pleasant experience for tourists (Azis et al., 2020).

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