

The Role of Protected Areas in the Development of Ecotourism and Marketing Strategies (on the Example of the Kolkheti National Park)

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Abstract

In the article is presented the role of protected areas in the development of ecotourism and marketing strategies (on the example of the Kolkheti National Park).

The following issues are discussed by the authors: 1. Development trends and marketing strategies of Kolkheti National Park. 2. Ecological condition of Kolkheti National Park;

According to the authors, development of tourism and recreation in Kolkheti National Park implies the continuous intensive activity for attracting tourists and recreants' flows and creation of such sustainable conditions and system of regulated tourism and recreation, which excludes damage to natural ecosystems of national park, flora and fauna. All this requires the development of tourism marketing plan and visitor programs.

The main trends of tourism development of Kolkheti National Park are: Walking through various types of boats on the navigable route, observe on birds and ecoeducational tours.

Keywords: Kolkheti, National Park, Marketing, Tourism, Ecotourism.

Protected areas, with competent management and marketing calculations, have the greatest potential for the development of ecotourism, the main purpose of which, while maintaining the ecosystem, is the formation of ecological consciousness in humans.

The peculiarity of tourism marketing is that the demand for services is constantly growing, but somewhat depends on changes of the economic conjuncture. The great importance aspires the correctness of development of the ecological tourism product and true information about customer. Seasonal factor is influencing significantly, that causes the diversification of tourism services in the non-season period, the need for carry out the active marketing activities.

The goal of the research is to demonstrate the role of protected areas in the development of ecotourism - in one of the important directions of tourism in the example of Kolkheti National Park.

The main objectives of the research are: 1. Identification of development trends of Kolkheti National Park and establishing the marketing strategies. 2. Review of the ecological condition of the Kolkheti National Park.

Main part. Kolkheti's wetlands forests since 2007 have been included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage candidates as the last remnant of the extensive subtropical areas in the geologic past. This territory is unique because of its biodiversity, wetlands areals and forest ecosystems. It is noteworthy that a more or less similar ecosystem in the whole Earth is found only in China, Manjuriya and Japan. In the 90s of the last century Georgia joined so called The Ramsar Convention which relates to the wetland areas, especially suitable area for waterfowl habitat and implies to protect them, sustain use and providing the international co-operation. These criteria in our country satisfy only the wetlands of Kolkheti. It is noteworthy that the signatory parties of the Convention undertake to maintain the ecological nature of these territories. [1]

Natural wetland landscapes preserved within the Kolkheti lowland are unique with its peculiarity and beauty, which causes the feel of the visitors a beautiful oasis, full of life. The significance of these landscapes is beyond the scope of Georgia, the proof of which is that interest what reveal a number of international organizations, including the World Wide Fund for Nature, Global Environment Fund, the World Bank and etc. These organizations are interested in rescuing of naturally preserved bogs and wetlands ecosystems in Kolkheti and help Georgia in the implementation of this activity. With the help of them, in 1999 has been created the Kolkheti National Park.

Kolkheti National Park has enough good prospects for ecotourism. During the massive migration, it is possible to observe many rare birds here. This form of tourism known as "Birdwatching" is becoming increasingly popular in Western countries. Georgia and, more so, the ornithologically wealthy Kolkheti can offer a lot of interesting meetings for birdwatching lovers. There are arranged birdwatching towers for tourists in the park area.

The National Park Administration offers some unforgettable navigable routes to the visitors. Along the coastal dunes and Imnati peatland are also developed walking routes, but motor boats is the best way to view wetlands territories. If you sit in a boat at the estuary of river Churia to Black Sea, near Anaklia and pass through up the river or enter the river-bed of Pichori via Imnati-Paliastomi, you will get a strong impression, every turn of the river going in the reliqtic forests offers new surprises and meeting with rare species of birds.

Today, ecotourism is an alternative for such fields that harm the nature (hunting, extract minerals, forest produce, etc.). That is why it is not surprising that the number of interested people, with this direction, in the world is increasing. Taking into consideration this, it is necessary to provide a high quality ecotourism product for visitors through rational use of the potential existing in Georgia, as this last one is one of the most important preconditions for winning in the international competition on the ecotourism market.

The most important component elements of high quality ecological tour are: diverse information that should be provided to tourists by various means, presence of professional staff, ecological education, before-sales and after-sales service. It is necessary that while planning and implementation of ecotourism strategies to be taken into account the principle, according to which each element of ecological tour, starting from placement, finishing sights, conforms to high quality standards, which will be the overall quality of the tour. It is especially important to protect this principle regarding the means of placement. The benefits available during the ecological tour planning should not negatively affect on the quality of the tour. Art of human communication is another component of high quality ecological tours. High quality of ecological tours is ensured by both internationally and normative acts adopted by State that define the ecological component standards of tourism companies activities. [5]

The number of travelers and their motivation is important for ecotourism, but these factors are not crucial. The outcome of the ecotourism marketing should become for visitors not only accept new information and enjoy the beauty of the environment, but also change the attitude of nature, overpass from usage to care for it, beside this it should mean improving environmental protection. [4]

The uniqueness of ecotourism is that it stimulates and satisfies the desire of relation to nature, eliminates the negative impact on nature and culture, in tour operators and tourists arising the desire to support the protection of nature and socio-economic development.

Kolkheti bog and swampy lands since ancient times were affected the negative impact of agricultural activity of human, which has reached great magnitude in the XX century. For the purpose of obtaining arable, pastures and mowing lands, in the extensive territory of the lowland they dried the marsh, cut down the boggy and moisture forests of Kolkheti. As a result of the implementation of these measures, in the central and eastern part of the lowland the natural ecosystems of Kolkheti

moist forests are almost entirely destroyed. The protection of modified, as a result of human intervention, Lake Paliastomi is a matter of national importance. Solving this problem depends on the self-consciousness of every citizen of Georgia and the sensible cognition of ecological problem. Each of us must make maximum effort to save the natural heritage. [1]

Conclusion. Thus, the wetland ecosystems of Kolkheti National Park are an interesting and attractive object for visitors of various categories. In order to become it more popular and demandable, it is necessary to perform the following recommendations:

- Implementation of the differentiated mode of security, appropriate its zoning, in the territory of the National Park.
- Protection of monuments of history and culture located within the National Park; creation of appropriate conditions for sustainable development of regulated tourism and organized recreations, attraction of tourists and ensuring their service to the territory of the National Park.
- Ecological-educational and ecological-informational activities.
- Maintenance of building-constructions located within the National Park.
- Regulation the issues regarding to acquisition and exploitation of vehicles, technical equipment, inventory and others.
- Providing the unique ecotourism value to visitors in such way that to insure the activity saturated with social and environmental responsibilities, which satisfies the current needs of consumers and travel companies and at the same time maintaining or improving the environment for future generations.

Referemces

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