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Attitude of Residents of an Arctic Single-Industry Town to Tourism Development (Based on Survey in the Murmansk Oblast)

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Abstract. The article raises the question of the tourism development possibilities in the conditions of Arctic single-industry towns from the viewpoint of local residents. On the one hand, the tourism sector is a very dynamic and flexible system of various activities, which has a powerful multiplicative effect on the well-being and quality of life of specific territories. On the other hand, single-industry towns as a special type of settlement are generally characterized by a number of features that limit the development of tourism: lack of social infrastructure, dependence on the position of the city-forming enterprise, and low involvement of the local population in the service sector, which has a special local identity. In the conditions of the Arctic territories, additional restrictions arise due to natural and climatic factors and negative demographic trends. At the same time, the so-called “human factor” is of particular importance, reflecting the willingness of local residents to participate in the tourism industry. In order to identify attitudes towards tourism, including ideas about the problems and prospects of its development in the Arctic single-industry towns of Russia, the authors conducted a sociological survey among residents of the Pechenga municipal district in the Murmansk Oblast (n = 456 people) in 2021. The results of the survey revealed the attitude to living in this territory, perceptions of the prospects and barriers to tourism development, readiness to integrate into the tourism industry. Despite the general positive assessment of the tourism development prospects in single-industry towns and interest in the tourism as a whole, the population demonstrates a rather inert life strategy, including low readiness to receive tourism education.

Keywords: tourism, single-industry town, Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, quality of life

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Introduction

In modern society, tourism is one of the most important sectors of the economy, which has a powerful multiplicative effect on the development of specific territories, including improving the quality of life of the population. Thus, in the Strategy for spatial development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025¹, tourism is included in the list of promising economic specializa-

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¹ Strategy for spatial development of the Russian Federation for the period until 2025. Approved by the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 207-r of 13 February 2019. URL: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_318094/006fb940f95ef67a1a3fa7973b5a39f78dac5681/ (accessed 29 January 2024).

tions of most subjects of the Russian Federation (in 72 out of 84 regions, 84%), including the Murmansk Oblast. The most general trend is the priority of domestic tourism development, which was formed during the coronavirus pandemic and was intensified in the current geopolitical situation.

In fact, the tourism industry is characterized by high dynamism and uneven development: there is an increase in domestic tourism indicators in the regions of the Russian Federation, with the greatest values in the capital cities (Moscow and St. Petersburg)². Limitations are associated primarily with the lack and quality of appropriate infrastructure in peripheral areas, as well as the seasonality of demand for tourist products in certain regions. In particular, in the subjects of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation, due to natural and climatic conditions and specifics of economic activity, there is a significant tourism potential, but at the same time, there are phenomena and processes that act as limiting factors for the development of tourism [1, Huber M., Yakovleva O.A., Zhigunova G.V., pp. 99–102].

The Murmansk Oblast as a subject fully included in the AZRF also has a number of features that predetermine the development of the tourism industry. Location beyond the Arctic Circle, prevalence of single-industry economic activity based mainly on the extractive industry, low diversification of economic sectors, steady population decline, dispersed nature of settlement with a predominance of small settlements, etc. — all this determines the profile of the region as a zone of increased discomfort [2, Sharova E.N., Maleus D.V., p. 225].

The Murmansk Oblast is characterized by an abundance of small settlements (92% of the total), including those remote from the regional center, as well as a concentration of single-industry municipalities. Thus, in total, there are 323 municipalities in Russia with the status of a single-industry town (out of 63 subjects of the Russian Federation); there are 16 single-industry towns in the AZRF subjects, and 7 of them are located in the Murmansk Oblast³.

Foreign science has accumulated a considerable amount of research on towns with a single-industry economy, and a wide variety of names for single-industry towns can be found there (“single-industry towns”, “company towns”, “mill towns”, “mining towns”) [3, Glebova A.N., Zelenskiy V.N., Lazareva A.S., p. 88; 4, Ashmead Ch.P.; 5, Bird D., Taylor A.; 6, Green, H.; 7, Marais L., McKenzie F.H., Deacon L.]. In Russian science, a single-industry town is considered at the conceptual level [8, Malashenko E.A., Mekush G.E., Bartosh A.A.; 9, Kulai S.V.; 10, Bartosh A.A., Malyshev E.A.].

Specific problems of single-industry towns are revealed in the context of regional and spatial development of the country as a whole [11, Artemova O.V., Uzhegov A.O.; 12, Lebedenko O.S.;

² Strategy for the development of tourism in the Russian Federation for the period until 2035, approved by the Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 2129-r of September 20, 2019. P. 22. URL: <http://government.ru/docs/37906/> (accessed 29 January 2024).

³ List of single-industry municipalities of the Russian Federation (single-industry towns). Approved by Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1398-r of July 29, 2014 (as amended on January 21, 2020). URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/420210942?marker=6560IO> (accessed 29 January 2024).

13, Pyatsheva E.N.; 14, Ivanova M.V.]. Great importance is attached to issues of state regulation and controlled impact on the development of single-industry towns [15, Vazhdaev A.N., Mitsel A.A.; 16, Knyazeva G.A.; 17, Gladysheva I.V.; 18, Plisetsky E.E., Malitskaya E.A.], problems of economic diversification [19, Belchik T.A., Yakushina T.A.; 20, Sheresheva M.Yu.; 21, Yuryeva T.V.], as well as social well-being and quality of life of the population [22, Volkov A.D., Simakova A.V.; 23, Zhigunova G.V., Sharova E.N.; 24, Zaitsev D.V.; 25, Kashkina L.V.; 26, Nedoseka E.V., Karbainov N.I.].

A number of works are also devoted to the specifics of Arctic single-industry towns, considering the development of Arctic towns through the influence of resource-extracting enterprises on them [17, Gladysheva I.V.; 18, Plisetskiy E.E., Malitskaya E.A.; 27, Korchak E.A.; 28, Shumilova E.B., Avdeeva E.O. Mkhitaryan S.A.].

Among the factors that have a negative impact on the socio-economic development and prospects of single-industry towns in the Russian Arctic, the most general and systemic in nature, according to the authors, is the predominantly resource-based (raw materials) model of economic activity of town-forming enterprises, which, in turn, sets restrictions on the diversification of the economy and the development of entrepreneurship [27, Korchak E.A.]. In addition, the factors of socio-economic distress of Arctic single-industry towns include natural and migration-related population decline, problems with housing and communal services, and poorly developed social infrastructure [23, Zhigunova G.V., Sharova E.N.; 24, Zaitsev D.V.; 29, Zhigunova G.V.].

This circumstance predetermines the nature of local identity, which often merges with corporate identity [30, Nedoseka E.V., Zhigunova G.V., p. 123], industrial mentality [31, Davydov D.A., p. 79], and also determines the choice of specific life strategies of the population, among which various migration practices dominate (including pendulum migration, shift work) [32, Simakova A.V.], participation in the informal sector of the economy (including gathering, fishing) [26, Nedoseka E.V., Karbainov N.I., p. 176], creating the basis for maintaining life in the single-industry towns of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation.

Modern researches pay attention to the study of problems and prospects of tourism development at the level of individual territories, including in the subjects of the AZRF [33, Boldyreva S.B.; 34, Zhigunova G.V., Sharova E.N.; 35, Zotkin D.V., Akayev D.V.; 36, Karkhu Ya., Osipov A.Yu.; 37, Lukin Yu.F.], role of tourism in the process of diversifying the economy of single-industry towns [38, Oborin M.S., Frolova N.V., Maltseva M.A.]. The main problems of tourism development in single-industry towns are systematized, among which mainly infrastructure issues and investment risks are identified [39, Plisetskiy E.E., Leonard K.S., Ilyina I.N., p. 131].

Of particular importance are the living standards and opinions of the local population about their region as factors in the development of the tourism industry and the formation of a relevant image of the territory. In this regard, at the empirical level, researchers have recorded the relationship between indicators of regional identity and the assessment of the tourist attractiveness of the region, and substantiated the importance of identifying the assessment of various liv-

ing conditions in the region by the local population [40, Tsvetkova I.V.]. A fundamentally important issue is also related to the position of the residents of a territory with regard to the development of tourism, including their willingness to participate in this sphere.

Materials and methods

In order to identify the attitude of residents of single-industry towns located in the AZRF subjects to the development of tourism, in 2021, the authors conducted a study in the Murmansk Oblast. The focus was on a specific municipality of the region — the Pechenga municipal district, which includes two settlements with the status of a single-industry town (the town of Zapolyarny and the urban-type settlement of Nikel). These settlements were assigned the second category due to the risks of deterioration of the socio-economic situation ⁴. In particular, in Nikel, one of the workshops of the town-forming enterprise was closed, which necessitated the diversification of the economy, primarily through the development of the tourism industry. This solution was further elaborated in detail within the framework of the municipal program for the socio-economic development of the district ⁵.

The main research question concerned the readiness of residents of a single-industry town to the ongoing changes, namely, to participation in the development of the tourism industry at the local level.

The sociological study was conducted using the questionnaire method among the population of the Pechenga municipal district (quota sampling with proportions by gender and age in the amount of 456 people).

Research results

Attitude of the population to living in the Pechenga municipal district

The respondents were asked a set of questions regarding their attitude to living in the settlement, including general satisfaction with living conditions, rating of pressing problems of the territory, migration attitudes. This block of questions made it possible to identify the general context of barriers and opportunities for tourism development in the district.

It was revealed that more than a half of the respondents (60%) are partially satisfied with the living conditions in their settlement; in general, every fourth or fifth person (22%) is satisfied, and 14% are dissatisfied. Analysis of the responses showed that residents of Nikel are less satisfied with the conditions than residents of Zapolyarny: while 18% of respondents of the second settlement are generally satisfied, in the first one, there are almost twice as many of the latter (34%) ⁶.

⁴ List of single-industry municipalities of the Russian Federation (single-industry towns). Approved by Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1398-r of July 29, 2014 (as amended on January 21, 2020). URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/420210942?marker=6560IO> (accessed 16 February 2024).

⁵ The program of socio-economic development of the Pechenga municipal district of the Murmansk Oblast for 2021-2025 (approved on 16.04.2021, as amended on 28.10.2022). URL: <https://pechengamr.gov-murman.ru/activities/ProgramSocrazv/> (accessed 16 February 2024).

⁶ Hereinafter, the relationship between the characteristics was checked using the chi-square statistical criterion (the significance level of the relationship is not lower than 0.05).

The respondents noted difficulties in obtaining medical services (75%), employment problems (51%), poor quality of public utilities (45%), and insufficient leisure facilities (42%) as the most significant problems of the territory of their residence.

Migration intentions of almost half of the respondents (48%) are characterized by the desire to move from the Far North to other regions, of which 17% are ready to leave in the near future, and 31% have such an intention for the future. Every fourth person (27%) does not deny the idea of moving in the distant future, but does not have specific plans. 22% of respondents plan to stay in the Pechenga district. As reasons for moving, 24% noted natural and climatic factors, 20% — lack of work, 11% — retirement; 10% each — low standard and quality of life, low salaries, degradation of the settlement, lack of territorial development and any prospects in general.

Tourism development prospects in the Pechenga district as assessed by the population

According to respondents, tourists come to the Pechenga district mainly for fishing, hunting, gathering mushrooms and berries (62%); secondarily, for winter recreation (41%). Almost a third of visitors (30%) are interested in exploring historical and cultural sites; 23% are interested in summer outdoor activities (hiking, rafting); 18% come to the region for professional and business purposes. In addition, 14% have not seen tourists in their village, and 12% found it difficult to answer the question.

The most attractive tourist locations in the Pechenga district, according to 66% of respondents, are the Rybachiy and Sredniy Peninsulas, according to 54% — the Pasvik Nature Reserve; 53% of respondents include the Nikel Local History Museum, 49% — the Trifonov Pechenga Monastery, 47% — places of military glory. Other places were also mentioned, but much less frequently, which made it possible not to consider them as promising in the current period.

The attitude to the development of tourism in a single-industry town from the point of view of its residents raises a special question. According to respondents, in the space of an industrial settlement, tourism will primarily contribute to an increase in jobs (58%) and the creation of recreational facilities for rest and leisure (49%). This is followed by investment in regional development (45%), improvement of transport and social infrastructure (39% each). A third of respondents noted an improvement in the reputation and recognition of the territory (34%), and every fourth (25%) — the opportunity to expand social contacts. 10% found it difficult to answer this question, and the same number do not see anything positive in the development of tourism in Pechenga (see Table 1).

Table 1

Positive aspects of tourism development in the Pechenga district, according to respondents

	Frequency	%
new jobs	266	58
improvement of recreational and leisure facilities	225	49
investments in the economy	204	45
improvement of transport infrastructure	180	39
improvement of social infrastructure	177	39
improvement of the reputation and recognition of the region	155	34

	Frequency	%
expansion of social contacts	115	25
nothing positive	47	10
find it difficult to answer	47	10
other	7	2
Total	1 422	312

Among the negative consequences of tourism development in the region, respondents primarily noted the rise in prices for goods and services (54%) and environmental degradation (39%). 17% do not see any negative aspects, 13% of respondents found it difficult to answer (see Table 2).

Table 2

Negative aspects of tourism development in the Pechenga district, according to respondents

	Frequency	%
rising prices for goods and services	247	54
poor ecology	178	39
increased competition for resources	78	17
conflicts between local residents and tourists	74	16
changes in the usual way of life of residents	72	16
increasing crime rate	59	13
nothing negative	77	17
find it difficult to answer	59	13
other	9	2
Total	852	187

Despite the presence of negative views on tourism development in the Pechenga district, their share is only slightly more than half of the positive assessments, which generally gives grounds for making a forecast about the optimistic attitude of local residents.

In response to a direct question about the attitude to tourism development in the Pechenga district, the majority of respondents (58%) noted a positive attitude. At the same time, every fifth respondent has an equal positive and negative attitude, and every tenth respondent has a negative attitude. A correlation was found between attitudes towards tourism and age (the older a person is, the more he or she is inclined to give negative assessments); education (people with higher education have a more positive attitude than people with other levels of education); financial situation (the lower the income, the more negative assessments are given).

Assessing the prospects for tourism development in the Pechenga district, more than half of the respondents (61%) gave a positive assessment, while almost every fifth (19%) is pessimistic about the prospects for tourism in Pechenga, and the same number found it difficult to answer.

Promising areas for tourism development in the Pechenga district coincide with the existing types of tourism in this area, previously named by respondents: winter tourism (69%), safari (fishing, hunting, gathering) (66%), summer types of northern recreation (56%), military-historical tourism (46%). In addition, every third or fourth respondent mentioned industrial, sports, and business tourism.

For their development, according to respondents, it is necessary to remove a number of barriers, which include the lack or absence of the necessary tourist infrastructure (58%), striking attractions (44%), transport infrastructure (43%), and professional personnel in the tourism sector

(42%). Almost every third person also noted the lack of information about the locations and features of the territory (32%) and military facilities located throughout the Pechenga district (28%), which hinder the free movement of tourists around the area and access to facilities (see Table 3).

Table 3

Barriers to tourism development in the Pechenga district, according to respondents

	Frequency	%
lack / underdevelopment of tourist infrastructure	263	58
lack of striking attractions	202	44
poor transport infrastructure	198	43
lack of professional personnel in the tourism sector	194	42
lack of information	145	32
military facilities	127	28
corruption	85	19
competition with other locations in the Murmansk Oblast	76	17
unreadiness of the local population for the flow of tourists	73	16
find it difficult to answer	38	8
other	10	2
no barriers	6	1
Total	1 416	310

Attitude of residents of the Pechenga district to employment and training in the tourism sector

The attitude of the local population to employment and training in the tourism sector was revealed through the characteristics of existing experience and the assessment of the attractiveness of this activity.

It was revealed that the majority of respondents (86%) lacked experience in the tourism industry, while 2% of respondents work with tourists, and 14% had such experience before, but currently do not work in this field.

Of those who had experience in the studied field of activity, approximately every third or fourth (29%) indicated various difficulties that they had to face or are facing. These are, first of all, difficulties in communications, including insufficient communication skills in foreign languages (English, Norwegian, Chinese) (28%), underdeveloped infrastructure / low quality of service / unsatisfactory condition and/or insufficient number of objects of interest (28%), transport inaccessibility, bureaucratic delays, lengthy preliminary preparation due to registration of passes for access to locations (28%), as well as lack of promotion of the territory, small number and unpreparedness of the tourists themselves (2%).

The attractiveness of work in the tourism industry for residents of the Pechenga district was assessed on a five-point scale, where 1 is not at all attractive, 5 is very attractive. Thus, the average score was 2.84, i.e. slightly below average (3 points is the middle of the scale).

The overwhelming majority of respondents do not exclude the prospect of employment in the tourism industry — their share was 71%, along with those who found it difficult to answer (their share was 31%). At the same time, every fourth person considers this employment as additional (26%), almost the same number of respondents is ready to run their own business (23%), including 17% with official registration. 13% see themselves as employees. Slightly less than a third

of respondents noted that they are not attracted to work in the tourism industry (29%).

The barriers that determined the personal readiness of the surveyed residents of the Pechenga district to implement labor activities in the tourism industry were: lack of training (39%), job guarantees (33%), unwillingness to work in the service sector (15%), lack of “flexible” skills for working with tourists (12%) (see Table 4).

Table 4

Barriers to personal readiness to work in tourism, according to respondents

	Frequency	%
lack of specific training	179	39
insecure employment	150	33
unwillingness to work in the service sector	70	15
lack of “flexible” skills for working with tourists	53	12
low wages in the industry	30	7
no barriers	28	6
other	19	4
find it difficult to answer	81	18
Total	609	133

At the same time, the respondents are rather unattracted by the possibility of getting profile education in the tourism industry (43% — the sum of the answers “no” and “rather no”). Slightly more than a third of respondents showed loyalty to training in the field of tourism — 37% (the sum of the answers “yes” and “rather yes”), which generally characterizes the demand for this education at an average level. A fifth of respondents (20%) found it difficult to answer. It is worth noting that 20% of respondents took specific steps towards educational training. In particular, they expressed a definite interest and left their contacts for enrollment in training courses.

As a result of analyzing the empirical study, it was recorded that the attractiveness of tourism education depends on the attitude towards tourism in general, perceptions about the prospects of its development, as well as on the availability of relevant work experience and interest in such work.

Discussion and conclusion

According to the results of the study, it can be concluded that the population of the Pechenga district positively assesses the possibilities for tourism development in their localities, sees the directions promising in terms of attracting tourists, as well as the benefits for local communities. The barriers noted were mainly objective environmental limitations: lack of infrastructure facilities, striking attractions, low transport accessibility. At the same time, special attention should be paid to the fact that the population of the studied single-industry towns, the overwhelming majority of whom do not have experience in the tourism industry, generally do not exclude the prospect of employment and even opening their own business in the tourism industry. The need to obtain special competencies as an important component of professional activity is recognized, but at the same time, not everyone is willing to receive the appropriate education, which can be a limiting factor. At the same time, it is necessary to understand that the involvement of the local population in the tourism sector is possible only if a set of measures to support

this industry in cooperation with representatives of various authorities (from solving infrastructure issues to the content of tourism products and their promotion) is implemented.

Particular attention should be paid to the formation of an internal attractive image of the territory, which would be manifested in the retention and consolidation of the population on the basis of increased satisfaction with living conditions and improvement in the quality of life in general.

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