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Original article

FORMATION OF POPULAR RURAL TOURISM PRODUCTS FOR STUDENT GROUPS

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Abstract

This study examines the prospects for developing rural tourism with a specific focus on student groups

Purpose. The goal of the study is to identify potential directions for the development of this type of tourism in regions with sufficient specialized resources based on an analysis of the specifics of the formation of popular rural tourism products for student groups.

Materials and methods. The research is based on research by Russian and international authors in the field of rural tourism and its infrastructure, particularly from a regional perspective. The authors utilized comparative, resource-based, and descriptive analysis methods.

Results. The research provides a comprehensive assessment of the tourism and recreational potential of the region's western districts, identifying key attractions that integrate cultural-historical heritage, natural landmarks, and elements of ethnographic tourism. Particular emphasis is placed on the potential for aligning tourism initiatives with higher education curricula. The authors have designed and substantiated three thematic routes tailored to the unique demands of student tourism while accounting for the geographical distribution of key sites. A collaborative framework is proposed, involving educational institutions, tour operators, and local communities to ensure the effective implementation of rural tourism projects

Conclusion. The findings highlight that advancing this sector not only enhances educational opportunities for students but also stimulates economic growth in rural areas. The results hold practical significance for shaping regional tourism development strategies and can be adapted to other regions of the Russian Federation with similar potential.

Keywords: rural tourism; student groups; route planning; national interests; development prospects

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Научная статья

ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ПОПУЛЯРНЫХ ПРОДУКТОВ СЕЛЬСКОГО ТУРИЗМА ДЛЯ СТУДЕНЧЕСКИХ ГРУПП

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Аннотация

В настоящем исследовании рассматриваются перспективы развития сельского туризма с особым акцентом на студенческие группы.

Цель. Цель исследования – на основе анализа специфики формирования популярных продуктов сельского туризма для студенческих групп определить потенциальные направления развития данного вида туризма в регионах, обладающих достаточным объемом профильных ресурсов.

Материалы и методы. В качестве опорных используются материалов исследований российских и зарубежных авторов в области сельского туризма, его инфраструктуры, особенно с позиций региональной специфики. Авторами использовались методы сравнительного анализа, ресурсный, описательный, перспективный

Результаты. В исследовании дана комплексная оценка туристско-рекреационного потенциала западных районов региона, выявлены ключевые достопримечательности, сочетающие в себе культурно-историческое наследие, природные памятники и элементы этнографического туризма. Особое внимание уделяется возможности согласования туристических инициатив с учебными программами высших учебных заведений.

Авторы разработали и обосновали три тематических маршрута, адаптированных к уникальным потребностям студенческого туризма с учетом географического распределения ключевых объектов. Предлагается схема сотрудничества с участием образовательных учреждений, туроператоров и местных сообществ для обеспечения эффективной реализации проектов в области сельского туризма.

Заключение. Результаты исследования показывают, что развитие этого сектора не только расширяет образовательные возможности студентов, но и стимулирует экономический рост в сельской местности и имеют практическое значение для формирования региональных стратегий развития туризма и могут быть адаптированы к другим регионам Российской Федерации с аналогичным потенциалом.

Ключевые слова: сельский туризм; студенческие группы; планирование маршрутов; национальные интересы; перспективы развития

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Introduction

Contemporary tourism trends reveal growing interest in niche forms of travel, with rural tourism emerging as a particularly noteworthy sector. This tourism modality not only fosters cultural preservation and supports local economies but also creates novel opportunities for educational and recreational travel, aligning with the objectives of Russia's Tourism Development Strategy through 2035. Many regions, endowed with substantial natural and cultural-historical assets, present particularly favourable conditions for developing student-oriented rural tourism programs.

The study's relevance stems from the need to examine specialized approaches to tourism organization catering to specific demographic segments. Student travelers constitute a distinct category with unique demands for programs blending cognitive, recreational, and pedagogical elements. Consequently, tailored rural itineraries may serve as an effective mechanism for engaging younger generations in regional tourism.

It's important to consider the specific characteristics of each region, not only in terms of its tourism resources, but also its associated infrastructure, transportation links, hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, tourist information centres, and more. All of these elements, when combined together, represent a systemic combination conducive to the development of rural tourism.

A critical consideration involves integrating rural tourism products into university curricula. Modern educational standards emphasizing practice-oriented learning create favourable conditions for incorporating travel components into academic programs. Specialized student itineraries could enhance professional competencies while broadening knowledge in regional history, geography, and economic studies.

This investigation of rural route development for student groups represents a timely research-practical challenge requiring interdisciplinary methodology combining: territorial tourism potential assessment, target audience needs analysis, and methodological route organization guidelines. Successful implementation promises significant contributions to both regional tourism and educational sectors.

The study's primary objectives include:

- Systematic review of existing research on regional rural tourism development;
- Evaluation of territory for student-focused rural route development;
- Identification of promising rural tourism zones with implementation recommendations.

The research employs comparative analysis of Rostov's districts, statistical evaluation of tourism resource distribution, and prospective methods for route development assessment. Findings aim to inform policy decisions and practical implementations in this emerging tourism sector.

Purpose. The goal of the study is to identify potential directions for the development of this type of tourism in regions with sufficient specialized resources based on an analysis of the specifics of the formation of popular rural tourism products for student groups.

In accordance with the stated goal, the following tasks were accomplished:

- analysis of sources on the research topic;
- study of the specifics of rural tourism product development;
- identification of route features for student groups;
- determination of promising areas for the development of rural tourism for students.

Materials and methods

The tourism sector currently demonstrates sustained growth in rural tourism, which has emerged as a significant driver of economic and social development for regional territories. This form of tourism uniquely combines recreational opportunities with the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, particularly valuable for regions possessing rich traditions and distinctive landscapes.

Modern scientific thought increasingly turns to the study of rural tourism as an important element of sustainable development of territories. As Evgrafova [1] emphasizes, this type of tourism organically combines economic efficiency with the preservation of natural and cultural heritage. Research by Back [2] and Farsani [3] indicates a steady growth in global interest in this area, which opens up new prospects for many regions.

The economic potential of rural tourism is manifested in its ability to stimulate the development of rural areas. As Barbieri [4] and Sotomayor [5] note, this sector creates a multiplier effect for the local economy. At the same time, according to research by Sueb [6], Choo [7] and Li [8], the successful development of this area requires careful consideration of infrastructure issues, including the creation of specialized accommodation facilities.

An important feature of scientific research in this area is the consideration of regional specifics. Karampela [12], Li [13] and Dewanti [14] emphasize the need to develop adapted assessment methods. Of particular scientific interest are the works of Lanfranchi [16] and Sidali [17], devoted to the study of factors of tourist satisfaction.

Marketing aspects of rural tourism development are considered in their works by Liang [18] and Vikhoreva [19]. At the same time, as Ispas [20] and Kazmina [21] note, the environmental component remains the key principle of organizing tourism activities in rural areas.

As for the development of tourism specifically in the territory of the Don region, the works of Sukhov R. I., Kazmina, L., Makarenko, V., Provotorina, V., & Shevchenko, E., 2021 [22-24] were studied for its analysis. The presented studies analysed the key aspects influencing the development of rural tourism and assessed its tourism and recreational opportunities,

Methodological Framework.

The study employs a multifaceted methodological approach:

- Comparative analysis of rural tourism development across distinct districts of Rostov Region;
- Statistical evaluation of tourism resource distribution patterns;
- Descriptive analysis of contemporary trends in rural wine tourism;
- Prospective analysis of student-oriented rural tourism route development in Rostov Region.

This comprehensive methodology enables thorough examination of both current conditions and future potential for rural tourism development in the region, with particular emphasis on creating specialized offerings for student groups. The approach integrates quantitative and qualitative dimensions to provide robust insights into this emerging sector.

Results

Based on the research findings, a number of specific features in the formation of rural tours in the contemporary period can be identified, taking into account current trends. This evolution is characterized by a fundamental shift from standardized va-

cation packages to the creation of deeply personalized and immersive experiences. The modern rural tour is no longer merely an offering of accommodation in a countryside setting; it has transformed into a curated narrative that connects the urban dweller with a perceived authenticity and a slower, more meaningful pace of life.

A central feature of this transformation is the move towards hyper-localization and thematic specialization. Itineraries are increasingly built around a specific, compelling story unique to a particular locality. This transcends generic rural themes, focusing instead on distinct cultural codes, ancestral crafts, or specific agricultural products. For instance, a tour may be constructed not simply around a region, but around the journey of a local cheese variety, from the pasture to the table, interwoven with the stories of the shepherds and affineurs. This approach fosters a deeper emotional engagement and allows destinations to differentiate themselves in a competitive market.

Furthermore, the integration of the digital and the authentic has become a defining characteristic. Modern travellers, while seeking to disconnect from their urban routines, demand seamless digital accessibility for booking and information, and, crucially, they desire to document and share their experiences. Consequently, successful tour formation now inherently includes the provision of “shareable moments” – photogenic landscapes, hands-on workshops with local artisans, and aesthetically presented meals- that are optimized for social media.

Student group engagement should focus not only on existing rural tourism resources—farms and specialized areas - but also on activities such as master classes, tastings, participation in rural life, and interactive programs. Products focused on such activities can become a growth point not only for rural tourism but also for student travel, possibly with an educational focus.

Moreover, the most promising regions appear to be those with a combination of rural destinations and educational institutions, preferably agricultural ones, allowing for the integration of rural activities with educational programs. Among Russian regions, such a combination, thanks to its natural conditions, has developed in the south of Russia.

The analysis conducted revealed key patterns in the development of rural tourist products in the Rostov region, specifically designed for student groups. Emphasis was placed on evaluating the existing tourism and recreational potential of the area, including its natural, historical, cultural, and infrastructural aspects. The findings indicate substantial resources for advancing this sector, though their effective utilization demands a structured approach.

The study identified the most promising zones for creating specialized routes tailored to student tourism. Research demonstrated that the successful implementa-

tion of such projects relies on coordinated efforts between educational institutions, tour operators, and local communities. Of particular importance is the design of programs that integrate educational, hands-on, and recreational components.

Rural areas offer opportunities to incorporate museums, farms, archaeological sites, and other attractions. By contributing to local economic growth, these routes could serve as regional development catalysts.

The study focused on western districts of the region, including Kamensky, Belokalitvinsky, Tarasovsky, Millerovsky, Chertkovsky, Verkhnedonsky, and Sholokhovsky. These areas were selected partly due to their proximity to the federal highway M-4 “Don,” facilitating tourist accessibility.

Examining potential resources for student-oriented rural tourism in these districts reveals diverse opportunities.

In Chertkovsky District, attractions are primarily cultural and educational, such as the Chertkovsky Local History Museum, showcasing regional traditions, and the Museum of History and Daily Life in the village of Mankovo-Berezovskoye. Archaeological sites, including burial mounds, add historical value, while natural landmarks like the Chertkovskiye Peski Nature Reserve and Ploskaya Balka tract enhance ecological appeal.

Kamensky District also emphasizes heritage tourism, featuring the Kamensky Museum of Cossack Culture and the Folk History Museum in Gundorovskaya Stanitsa, which highlights local history and WWII events. The area is further enriched by archaeological remains and natural landmarks.

Belokalitvinsky District boasts notable cultural and natural sites, including the M.A. Sholokhov Historical Museum, an art gallery in Belaya Kalitva, and geological formations like the White Cliff and numerous caves.

Tarasovsky District offers the Tarasovsky History Museum, focusing on WWII and Cossack traditions, and the Museum of Military Glory honoring local hero V.A. Khalzunov. Ancient burial mounds serve as additional points of interest.

Millerovsky District features the Millerovo Museum of Local Lore, dedicated to WWII and agriculture, and the memorial house-museum of war hero A.M. Likholeto. The region also includes Cossack heritage sites, burial mounds, and natural attractions like the Kalitva River and Lake Lebyazhye.

Sholokhovsky District is distinguished by its cultural heritage, anchored by the M.A. Sholokhov Museum-Reserve and the reconstructed Cossack homestead in Kruzhilinsky.

Verkhnedonsky District presents the Museum of Upper Don History and Culture, archaeological sites, and the unique “Ostrovnoy Les” nature reserve – a forested island in the Don River.

These findings underscore the region's potential for developing immersive, educationally valuable tourism experiences for students.

Table 1.

Potential Rural Tourism Sites for Student Groups in the Studied Districts of Rostov Region

№	District	Attractions
1	Sholokhovsky	1. M.A. Sholokhov State Museum-Reserve (Veshenskaya Stanitsa). 2. Memorial-Historical Complex «Kruzhilinsky»: A recreated Cossack homestead. 3. Stud Farm housing Don breed horses (Veshenskaya Stanitsa).
2	Verkhnedonskoy	1. Museum of History and Culture of Verkhnedonskoy District (Kazanskaya Stanitsa). 2. Branches of the M.A. Sholokhov State Museum-Reserve. 3. Archaeological sites: Ancient burial mounds. 4. Natural landmark «Ostrovnoy Les» (near Kazanskaya Stanitsa): A unique forested island in the Don River.
3	Chertkovsky	1. Chertkovsky District Local History Museum (Chertkovo). 2. Museum of History and Daily Life in the village of Mankovo-Berezovskoye. 3. Nature Reserve «Chertkovskiye Peski»: A unique sandy steppe landscape. 4. Archaeological sites: Ancient burial mounds.
4	Millerovsky	1. Millerovsky District Local History Museum (Millerovo). 2. Museum of Cossack History (Malchevskaya Stanitsa). 3. Archaeological sites: Ancient burial mounds.
5	Tarasovsky	1. Tarasovsky Historical and Local Lore Museum (Tarasovsky settlement). 2. Archaeological sites: Ancient burial mounds.
6	Belokalitvinsky	1. M.A. Sholokhov Historical and Local Lore Museum (Belaya Kalitva). 2. White Cliff (near Belaya Kalitva): A limestone rock formation on the Kalitva River. 3. Caves (near Belaya Kalitva): A cave complex, including the «Skelya» Cave.
7	Kamensky	1. Kamensky Local History Museum (Kamensk-Shakhtinsky, administratively part of the city). 2. Folk Historical and Local Lore Museum in Gundorovskaya Stanitsa. 3. Archaeological sites: Burial mounds and ancient settlements.

The study of tourism sites across Rostov Region reveals distinct patterns in their recreational and cultural potential. The Sholokhovsky District stands out for its high density of historical and cultural landmarks, particularly those tied to the life and works of M.A. Sholokhov, alongside authentic Cossack ethnographic sites. A notable feature is the integration of museum-reserves with functional stud farms, offering a foundation for multifaceted tourism programs.

Natural and recreational assets are most prominent in the Verkhnedonskoy and Chertkovsky Districts. Unique landscapes such as the “Island Forest” and “Chertkovskiye Peski” sand steppe hold significant appeal for eco-tourism. The widespread presence of archaeological sites across the region further enhances opportunities for educational tourism, enriched by historical reenactments.

Spatial analysis highlights uneven distribution of attractions, necessitating tailored approaches to route development. Districts combining cultural-historical sites with natural wonders and ethnographic elements show the greatest promise for integrated tourism products. This synergy supports the creation of inter-district itineraries that blend diverse activities, from heritage exploration to outdoor recreation.

The research underscores Rostov Region’s untapped potential for student-focused rural tourism. Findings reveal a wealth of cultural, historical, and natural resources suitable for designing immersive educational programs. Areas that merge museum complexes with living traditions and distinctive landscapes are particularly valuable, enabling thematic route diversification.

Implementing such initiatives demands a systematic framework attuned to student needs and the integration of tourism with academic objectives. Expanding rural tourism in the region could not only diversify offerings but also safeguard cultural heritage and stimulate local economies. Success hinges on collaboration between universities, tour operators, and communities to ensure sustainable development.

Discussion

For further development of tourism in rural areas for student groups, it seems rational to form rural products in the areas under study in areas largely provided with the appropriate tourist infrastructure. It is also possible to consider it optimal to lay one route through the territory of several neighbouring areas to increase the concentration of potential scientific objects in their content.

In Russia’s regions, specialized clusters combining tourist destinations, infrastructure, and educational institutions should be targeted. Museums, which combine exhibition, research, and educational facilities, could serve as such.

These experiences could potentially be replicated across most of Russia's regions and serve as a catalyst for the development of a system of rural tourist products for student groups.

As a result, the authors proposed the following potential rural routes:

1. "Kamensky Meridian: From History to Nature" (Kamensky District):
 - Kamensky Local History Museum (Kamensk-Shakhtinsky);
 - Folk History Museum in Gundorovskaya Stanitsa;
 - Archaeological sites: Burial mounds and ancient settlements;
 - Museum of Decorative Arts and Folk Crafts;
 - Natural landmarks: Picturesque banks of the Seversky Donets River and steppe landscapes.
2. "Belokalitvinskoe Heritage: Museums, Cliffs and Underground Worlds" (Belokalitvinsky District):
 - M.A. Sholokhov Historical Museum (Belaya Kalitva);
 - White Cliff limestone formation (Kalitva River banks);
 - Cave complex including "Skelya" Cave;
 - Seversky Donets River ecosystem;
 - Local Art Gallery showcasing regional artists.
3. "Don Crossroads: Millerovo, Chertkovo, Verkhnedonye - A Journey Through Time" (Multi-District):
 - Millerovo Regional Museum;
 - Cossack History Museum (Malchevskaya Stanitsa);
 - Chertkovsky Local History Museum;
 - "Chertkovskiye Peski" Sand Steppe Reserve;
 - Verkhnedonskoy District Museum of History and Culture;
 - M.A. Sholokhov Museum branches;
 - Archaeological sites in Verkhnedonskoy;
 - "Island Forest" nature reserve (Don River island).

The newly created rural itineraries for student groups highlight Rostov Region's substantial capacity for educational tourism. These routes stand out for their holistic design, seamlessly blending cultural heritage sites, natural wonders, and living ethnographic exhibits - offering students multidimensional learning opportunities about the region. A particularly valuable aspect is the integration of museum collections with functioning elements of traditional lifestyles, enabling hands-on educational experiences.

Beyond enriching student learning, these tourism circuits promise to boost economic activity in rural communities. Their successful implementation will depend on establishing productive partnerships between academic institutions,

travel providers, and local residents, supported by well-designed educational materials. The routes' flexible structure allows customization for diverse academic disciplines and research initiatives, substantially enhancing their pedagogical value.

Conclusion

The conducted research allows us to draw a number of conclusions.

The developed rural products demonstrate the possibility of integrating educational and tourist components, which corresponds to modern trends in practice-oriented learning. Of particular value is the combination of museum complexes with existing elements of the traditional way of life, which allows creating comprehensive educational programs.

The successful implementation of rural tourist products requires the creation of an effective model of interaction between educational institutions, tour operators and local communities. The key factors for success are the development of appropriate infrastructure, methodological support and adaptation of routes to various educational programs.

Rostov Region has significant potential for the development of rural tourism aimed at student groups, due to the unique combination of cultural and historical sites, natural attractions and elements of ethnographic heritage. This potential is especially pronounced in the western areas of the region, located along the federal highway M-4 "Don".

The development of rural tourism for student groups can become a catalyst for economic growth in rural areas of the region, while simultaneously solving the problems of preserving cultural heritage and natural landscapes. This direction corresponds to the strategic goals of tourism development in the Russian Federation and can be scaled up to other regions with similar potential.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors contributed equally to this article.

ВКЛАД АВТОРОВ

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