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*THE PERCEPTION OF THE MAIN DETERMINANTS OF TOURIST ATTRACTIVENESS OF HUTSULSHCHYNA IN THE OPINION OF ITS INHABITANTS*

*В статті розглядається проблема сприйняття туристичного простору Гуцульщини і його туристичної інфраструктури з точки зору розвитку туризму в досліджуваному регіоні, зокрема розвитку етнотуризму. В статті представлені результати соціологічного дослідження, які були проведені серед мешканців 15 населених пунктів Гуцульщини.*

*В статье рассматривается проблема восприятия туристического пространства Гуцульщины и его туристической инфраструктуры с точки зрения развития туризма в исследуемом регионе, в частности развития этнотуризма. В статье представлены результаты социологического исследования, проведенные среди жителей 15 населенных пунктов Гуцульщины.*

*This article deals with the issue of the perception of the tourist space of Hutsulshchyna and its tourist infrastructure in the aspect of tourism development opportunities on the examined territory taking into consideration ethnotourism. The results of the survey which was carried out over a group of people - inhabitants of 15 places of Hutsulshchyna were used as a research material.*

A very important component of the tourist potential of Ukraine is also a huge variety of different ethnic groups inhabiting Ukraine. Diverse areas on a world scale in cultural terms are mountain areas. Their tourist attractiveness results from natural landscape variations, characterized as a rule by a great diversity of geomorphological and geobotanical forms. It is also the result of cultural identity of the population living in mountain areas, which is often characterized by rich history, some differences in language, dress, folklore, which is all that makes up its cultural heritage.

Ukraine has many regions which, because of differences in landscape and inhabitants, are particularly interesting in cultural respects. One such area is Hutsulshchyna (or area of Hutsuls).

In this article was taken an issue of how tourism space and opportunities for ethnotourism development in Hutsulshchyna are perceived by the dwellers of chosen places of the region. The study involved a total of 322 people – inhabitants of 15 places of Hutsulshchyna. Most respondents came from two most popular holiday resorts of Hutsulshchyna – Yaremche (58 persons) and Kosmach (53 persons). The research focused on how a chosen group of Hutsuli residents assessed opportunities for ethnotourism development in Hutsulshchyna as well as on their perception of major elements of tourism attractiveness of

Hutsulshchyna. Most of the surveyed inhabitants of Hutsulshchyna described their region as touristically attractive (294 people, which accounted for 91, 3% of all respondents, tab.1).

*Table. 1 Origins of the surveyed dwellers of Hutsulshchyna – participants of the ongoing research*

<i>№</i>	<i>Teritorial origin of respondents</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage of all respondents</i>
1.	Yaremcha	58	18,6 %
2.	Kosmach	53	17 %
3.	Akreshory	7	2,25 %
4.	Sheshory	9	2,9 %
5.	Vierhovyna	31	10 %
6.	Vorohta	22	7 %
7.	Tatariv	15	4,8 %
8.	Javoriv	3	0,96 %
9.	Putyla	17	5,4 %
10.	Pidzaharychi	10	3,2 %
11.	Tiudiv	8	2,57 %
12.	Rachiv	20	6,4 %
13.	Kvasy	5	1,6 %
14.	Jasinia	10	3,2 %
15.	Lazeshchyna	43	13,8 %

Source: own study based on the questionnaire survey

Apart from the assets of nature and landscape, cultural traditions, folklore and also local handicraft products are one of the main attributes of tourism attractiveness (fig.1). This is supported by the fact that approximately 67% of the survey respondents indicated their active connection with the cultivation of tradition and handicraft characteristic for Hutsulshchyna. Among them, most people were actively associated with embroidery (23%), playing musical instruments (17%), weaving (13%). The other people declared their skills in singing and egg painting. Strong relationships with the regional traditions, culture and handicrafts of Hutsulshchyna population can be an important element of its tourism potential and become an important part of the ethnotourist product of Hutsulshchyna.

Hutsulshchyna residents, when asked about the main elements of tourism potential of Hutsulshchyna, most frequently indicated natural values combined with the picturesque landscape of the region and clean air free from pollution (fig.2).

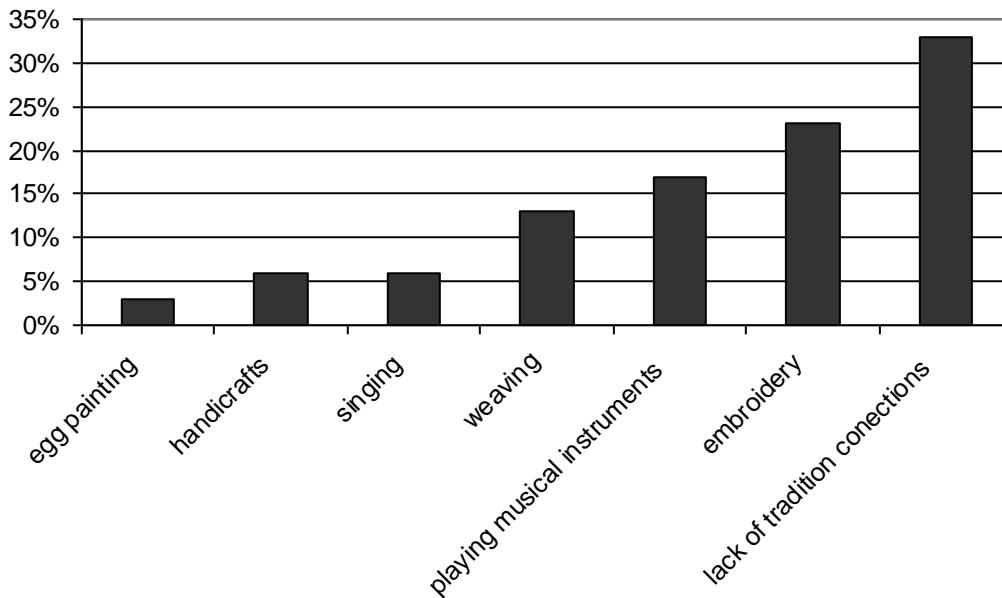


Fig. 1 Connections of the surveyed group of respondents with elements of tradition, culture and handicraft characteristic of Hutsulshchyna.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire survey

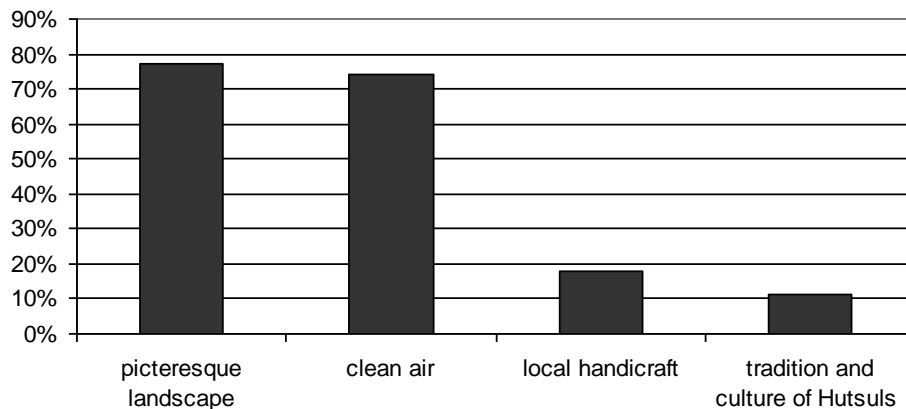


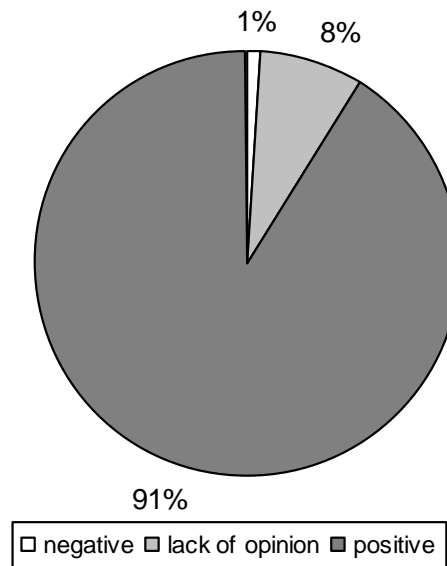
Fig.2 Main elements of tourism attractiveness of Hutsulshchyna in the opinion of its inhabitants

Source: own study based on the questionnaire survey

These elements were selected respectively by 77 and 74% of the respondents. In the opinion of the surveyed group (18% of the respondents), local handicraft products could be a significant element of the attractiveness of the area. It can be curious that the values of tradition and culture of Hutsuls in the context of tourism development were indicated by only 11% of the respondents. It may be partly a result of lack of sufficient knowledge of one's own culture and traditions, or their so far poor use as a tourist asset of Hutsulshchyna.

At the same time the vast majority of respondents strongly indicate the need for tourism development (fig. 3). Approximately 1% of the respondents

were classified as the opponents of tourism development. About 8% of the respondents were unable to answer this question.



*Fig. 3 The attitude of the surveyed group of inhabitants of Hutsulshchyna to tourism development in the area*

Source: own study based on the questionnaire survey

In tourism the inhabitants of Hutsulshchyna see one of the alternative paths to socio-economic development of the region.

Hutsulshchyna residents participating in the ongoing study were asked about the main tourist attractions of Hutsulshchyna which they believe could become for visitors the main attractions of the region (fig.4).

The vast majority (over 60% of the respondents) indicated natural and scenic merits of the area. Other symbols of attractiveness of Hutsulshchyna appeared much less frequently. Among them, the respondents chose more general categories – cultural values, folklore, regional cuisine – as well as specific places – the Rock of Dovbush, waterfalls, the possibility for organizing mushroom picking. Over 80% of the responses, however, concerned the cultural and natural values of a given place – thus it can be concluded that these elements combined together are, according to the respondents, the most important determinants of the tourist attractiveness of the area.

Taking into consideration the significance the respondents attached to the cultural merits of Hutsulshchyna in the context of opportunities for tourism development, they were asked about the «fitness» of the local culture and Hutsul traditions. According to the vast majority (over 60%), cultural traditions of Hutsuls are being maintained and developed, but this happens mostly through the intergenerational transmission. Currently, tourism development in the area of Hutsulshchyna is, in the opinion of the respondents, not a too important factor for cultivation and development of local culture. This can be explained by the still relatively low tourist turnout in the area of Hutsulshchyna.

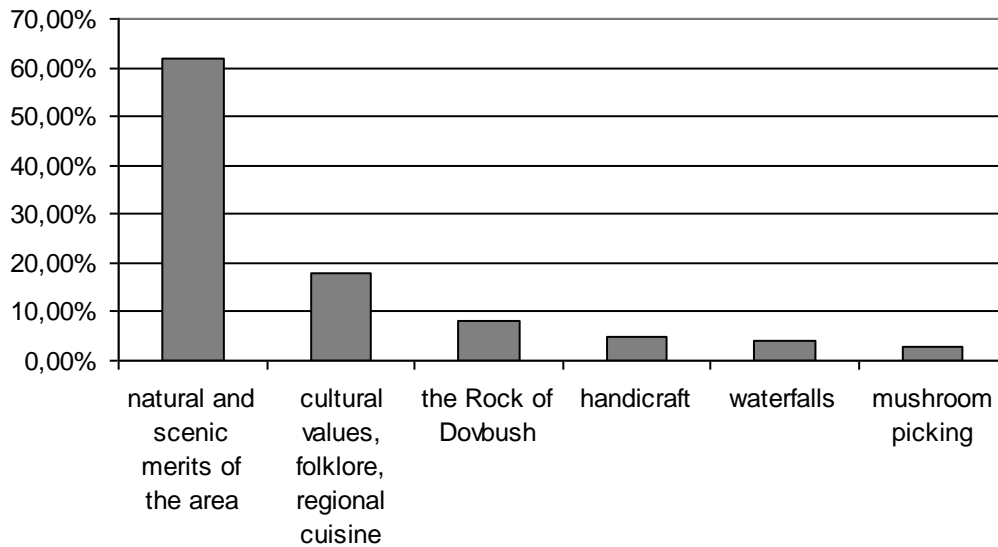


Fig. 4 Elements of tourist attractiveness most inviting to tourists in the opinion of a selected group of Hutsulshchyna inhabitants

Source: own study based on the questionnaire survey

A worrying phenomenon is the fact that as many as 20% of the respondents felt that local cultural traditions of Hutsuls are disappearing (20%), while nearly 15% were unable to determine their views on this subject.

In order to obtain a full picture of evaluation of the potential of tourism development in the area of Hutsulshchyna from the point of view of a selected group of its residents, the respondents were asked which changes should occur in order to increase the number of tourist arrivals to the region (fig.5).

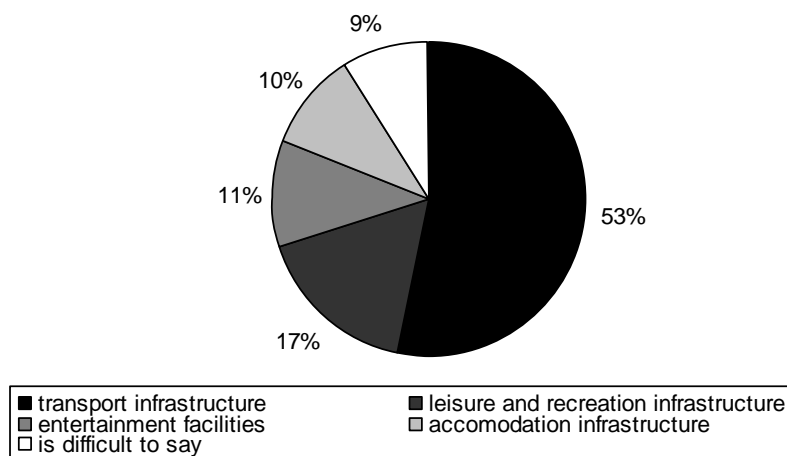


Fig. 5 Elements of tourism development which need to be improved in order to develop tourism in the area of Hutsulshchyna

Source: own study based on the questionnaire survey

The transport infrastructure was ranked in the survey by 53% of the respondents as the main barrier and, at the same time, the most important element in need of improvement. Subsequently, the respondents indicated the need for extension of the recreation and leisure infrastructure, especially of this

designed for the arrivals of families with children, and the necessity to extend the offer of entertainment facilities as well as sports and recreation facilities for tourists.

It may seem difficult to explain that only 9% of all the respondents indicated the need for development of accommodation infrastructure in spite of its extremely modest resources in the area of Hutsulshchyna. Perhaps this is the result of equating the issue of accommodation with the offer of already existing private houses and agritourist farms.

Nowadays tourism is an important factor in development of places and regions with no other alternative for socio-economic development.

Hutsulshchyna region is one of the less affluent areas of Ukraine, located on the outskirts of the major areas of economic development. Due to its outstanding landscape and wildlife values associated with East Carpathian arc, it has a great potential for tourism development. Very significant elements of tourism potential of the area are also anthropogenic merits connected with traditions, culture, folklore, and handicraft made by Hutsuls.

Natural merits combined with rich anthropogenic ones perfectly underlie development of a number of forms of tourism from the most traditional ones – cognitive and recreational – as well as different forms of qualified tourism. Because of the location of the area, which is perfect in relation to the major areas of tourism migration, as well as due to strong concentration of cultural values, Hutsulshchyna has ideal conditions for development of different alternative forms of tourism – agritourism, ecotourism and, especially, ethnotourism [5, s. 157].

Very rich potential of the still not commonly known area, however, requires a lot of investments especially in tourism and transport infrastructure to improve access to the region. Moreover, an important element is the appropriate training of the personnel for tourist services and suitable promotion of tourist attractions of Hutsulshchyna both in Ukraine and outside its borders. The abundance of all the amenities, as well as the need for adequate investments aimed at tourism development of the area is perceived both by tourists and the inhabitants of Hutsulshchyna.

In the era of mass development of tourism and seeking niche forms of tourism and areas, Hutsulshchyna may constitute an excellent alternative to mass tourism and streams of cognitive and leisure tourism.

#### *Summary*

The article deals with the issue of perception of tourism space of Hutsulshchyna and development opportunities of tourism in the region.

The main sources of research were the results of the questionnaire study that was conducted among residents of Hutsulshchyna - inhabitants of 15 places of Hutsulshchyna region during the summer months of 2008.

The study aimed at determining the main attributes of tourism attractiveness of Hutsulshchyna in the view of the local people, assessment of the elements of tourism development of the area, as well as the prospects for tourism development in the area of Hutsulshchyna.

Overall, the respondents of the study were: 322 residents from most towns in the region of Hutsulshchyna during the summer months of 2008.

Residents of Ukraine, mostly those coming from Hutsulshchyna, see the abundance of the assets of Hutsulshchyna, primarily natural and landscape assets, as well as cultural potential of cultural values associated with local folklore, customs, handicrafts, and other elements – symbols of Hutsulshchyna. These values are a strong basis for development of various forms of tourism - cognitive, leisure, qualified and primarily various forms of qualified tourism – in particular ethnotourism – taking into consideration the cultural heritage of Hutsuls. According to this group opinion, this potential should be much more used than ever before.

At the same time residents of towns and villages of Hutsulshchyna and other Ukrainian localities indicate a burning need for investing in improvement of the transport accessibility of the region's infrastructure, its accommodation and accompanying facilities and also for promotion, in its broader sense, of the region in the whole area of Ukraine as well as beyond its borders.

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