

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOURISM MARKET IN UKRAINE: SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSION

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Liudmyla Batchenko^{1a}, Yaroslav Yasnyskyi^{2b}

^{1a}Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Kyiv, Ukraine

^{2b}Kyiv University of Culture, Kyiv, Ukraine

Forming an Optimal Regional Tourism Structure in Ukraine: Socio-Cultural Dimension

Abstract: *Introduction.* In modern transformation processes, the importance of the territorial aspects of national economic development is growing. The tourism industry in Ukraine is not only a tool for positioning the ‘Ukraine’ brand far beyond its borders, but also one of the factors in achieving optimality in the formation of regional economic structures to overcome economic imbalances and ensure the sustainable development of regions and the economy of the state as a whole. Tourism plays a vital role in developing regional socio-cultural spaces, contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage, the revitalisation of local communities and the improvement of the population’s quality of life. Identifying the socio-cultural factors that drive regional tourism development and forming optimal regional structures that consider the socio-cultural dimension is a strategic task. *Purpose and methods.* The article aims to identify the socio-cultural factors influencing regional tourism development and develop theoretical and practical approaches to forming an optimal regional tourism structure. The research process involved the use of methods of analysis and synthesis, systematisation and generalisation, which made it possible to analyse the development of tourism in Ukraine and identify specific cultural characteristics of the Podillia region, as well as to reveal their impact on the development of the tourism industry in Ukraine. The structural-functional method was used in cultural modelling. *Research results.* Modern approaches to the formation of state regional policy in the field of

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tourism have been systematised. It has been established that rural tourism in the context of decentralisation is taking on new significance, contributing to the self-financing of territorial communities and strengthening social capital. A model for forming an optimal regional tourism structure has been proposed, considering the cultural codes of territories, local identities and social demands. *Conclusions.* The scientific novelty of the study lies in the formation and justification of an optimisation model of the regional tourism structure of Ukraine, taking into account the concept of regional socio-cultural factors that determine the region's investment attractiveness, which will contribute to ensuring competitiveness, investment and innovation development. The study's conclusions focus on considering the socio-cultural dimension of regions when forming regional policies in the field of tourism.

Keywords: sustainable development of territories, regional tourism structure, socio-cultural dimension, cluster model, camping network, investment attractiveness, socio-cultural environment.

1. Introduction

The problem formulation. The problem lies in the fact that in the current conditions of transformation of the tourism market, caused by both global challenges (the environmental crisis, the consequences of the pandemic, war) and internal socio-cultural changes in Ukraine, there is an urgent need to rethink models of regional tourism development. Traditionally oriented towards mass, urbanised tourism, the structure of the tourism sector in many regions of Ukraine does not consider the potential of small communities, authentic culture, intangible heritage and the natural environment as strategic resources. In the current context of searching for new models of sustainable territorial development, tourism is increasingly seen as one of the most effective tools for stimulating economic, social and cultural dynamics at the regional level. Of particular relevance are those forms of tourism that combine minimal intervention in the natural environment, cultural authenticity and high involvement of local communities.

One such form is camping tourism, which is rapidly developing in European countries and gaining popularity in Ukraine. The modern development of camping tourism requires a systematic approach to forming recreational infrastructure (Beidyk, 1998, 2002).

Thanks to its advantageous geographical location, unique natural landscapes, a significant number of historical and cultural sites, and traditions of hospitality, the Podillia tourist region has significant potential for developing camping infrastructure that complies with the principles of sustainable tourism and European standards.

State study of the problem (analysis of the latest, most significant publications). The issue of integrating sociocultural factors into regional development strategies through the prism of tourism has been addressed in the works of Ukrainian and foreign researchers. Educational, cultural, and leisure programmes play an important role in promoting active recreation (Malska et al., 2008).

In particular, the studies by K. Kilinska et al. (2023), I. Posokhov and A. Sahaidachna (2019) highlight the economic and managerial aspects of the development of tourism clusters. V. Shushniak et al. (2020) pays special attention to the sociocultural mechanisms of forming the tourism environment, analysing tourism practices as a form of social construction of territory. The work of M. Malska et al. (2020) is also of great importance, as she focuses on the formation of the tourist image of a region through the prism of local cultural narratives.

In the international context, it is worth noting the contribution of D. Meyer and N. Meyer (2015), C. Williams (2021), I. Yonov (2024), who considers creative tourism as a means of preserving cultural heritage and forming the cultural capital of a territory, as well as the work of Z. Ahmed and T. Nihei (2024), which describes the phenomenon of the tourist gaze and its impact on the socio-cultural transformations of regions.

In the context of Ukrainian realities, especially in the conditions of decentralisation, the issue of forming regional tourism structures based on local initiatives and cultural resources is becoming particularly relevant. Tourism is seen as an important factor in the socio-economic growth of regions.

At the same time, analysis of practice shows that campsites, as a specific form of tourist infrastructure, are almost absent from the strategic documents of local communities, despite the apparent relevance of this form of recreation for domestic tourism, especially in the post-war period. Studying the environmental impact of camping allows for forming effective nature conservation policies (Hassell et al., 2015; Lee, 2020; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020).

This indicates the need for a more in-depth study of the possibilities for developing camping tourism from a cultural analysis perspective, considering local values, traditional forms of life, and attitudes towards space and nature.

Environmental protection policy standards should limit tourism activities to minimise damage. The development of camping infrastructure should be accompanied by environmental monitoring (Lanfranchi et al., 2014; Mancini et al., 2022).

Unresolved issues (unresolved issues in the specified problem). The following issues remain unresolved: the formation of an optimal, well-founded model of camping infrastructure within the Podillia tourist region; the creation

of conditions for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage by involving tourists in local experiences; the development of mechanisms for cooperation between local authorities, communities and the tourism business in the field of camping services. Another relevant issue is integrating European experience into forming a network of campsites based on the territory's cultural heritage.

All this necessitates a comprehensive study of the socio-cultural determinants of the development of camping tourism at the regional level, particularly within the Podillia tourist region, as a promising direction for domestic tourism.

The Podillia region, which has a high concentration of cultural and natural resources, remains insufficiently integrated into the national tourism space. There is an imbalance between the wealth of the region's socio-cultural potential and the underdevelopment of its tourism infrastructure, particularly its eco-friendly infrastructure. The lack of a systematic camping network, integrated routes and appropriate services prevents the region from fully exploiting its advantages in the context of sustainable tourism.

The problem is also complicated by the limited experience of practical application of interdisciplinary approaches to planning tourism structures that combine cultural analysis, spatial modelling, economic assessment and community participation. In the context of decentralisation and the growing role of local communities, it is precisely local socio-cultural factors that should form the basis for the creation of a new, decentralised tourism model that will contribute to the preservation of identity, the development of microbusinesses and the improvement of the quality of life in the regions.

Thus, there is a need for a comprehensive study of the possibilities for forming a regional tourism structure in Podillia based on a camping model that considers socio-cultural characteristics, traditions, local resources and European experience in sustainable tourism.

2. Purpose and methods

Purpose and methods. The purpose of the study is to identify the key socio-cultural factors in the formation of a regional tourism structure in the form of camping routes in the Podillia tourist region, as well as to develop a conceptual model of a camping network based on the principles of sustainable development, cultural authenticity and local identity.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks were completed:

- analysis of the state of tourism development in the Podillia region of Ukraine;

- identification of socio-cultural factors that can ensure the successful implementation of campsites in the local tourist landscape;
- study of European experience in organising camping routes;
- justification for the development of a regional camping network model.

Methodology and methods. The methodological basis of the study is an interdisciplinary cultural approach that combines methods of cultural code analysis, qualitative content analysis of strategic documents of local communities, case studies (studying examples of European camping routes), comparative analysis and cultural mapping. Expert surveys and field observations in several communities in the region were also used.

A distinctive feature of this study is the integration of established European practices, taking into account Ukrainian realities after 2022. In the context of post-crisis reconstruction of territories, mobile, environmentally friendly and culturally sensitive forms of tourism are becoming particularly relevant, including camping routes, which act as a tool for spatial and social rejuvenation of regions.

The study also considers the influence of new social trends – the desire for authentic experiences, the growing popularity of slow travel, micro-travel and cultural integration through local practices.

The qualitative research also used:

- narrative analysis method – to work with oral histories of the region's residents;
- cartographic modelling – to visualise the potential structure of the camping network based on natural, historical and sociocultural resources;
- SWOT analysis of the tourism potential of the territorial communities of Podillia.

Religious and pilgrimage tourism was studied separately as part of the regional narrative (Medzhybizh, Zarvanytsia, Lyadova), which can be organically included in the camping structure by creating infrastructure for pilgrimage sites.

Information base. The information base for the study consisted of:

- tourism development strategies in communities in the Podillia region (Horodok, Kamianets-Podilskyi, Sataniv, Medzhybizh OTG);
- statistical and analytical reports of the State Agency for Tourism Development of Ukraine (2020–2024);
- materials from international organisations (UNWTO, Eurocamping, OECD) on camping tourism practices;
- field research on routes in the Khmelnytskyi and Vinnytsia regions;

- own interviews with representatives of local communities, owners of rural green tourism estates and representatives of local self-government bodies;
- scientific works on cultural studies, sociology of tourism and regional development.

3. Results and discussion

The study focuses on the Dniester River, a powerful natural and recreational resource in Podillia.

The Dniester Canyon, which stretches across the region, is a unique natural landscape that attracts tourists with its picturesque scenery, ecological purity and potential for organising water routes, rafting and camping on the banks of the river. This resource fits perfectly with sustainable tourism: unlike mass hotel holidays, camping allows the natural environment to be preserved without requiring intensive development.

The fortification heritage of Podillia is another important factor in cultural tourism. The Kamianets-Podilskyi Fortress, Medzhybizh Castle, Starokostiantyniv Castle, and Chervonohorod Castle are not only national monuments but also key points in a potential camping network. They make it possible to create themed routes that combine history, nature, and active recreation.

Another important component is Podillia's authentic products and traditional crafts. These include pottery, weaving, embroidery, cheese making, home canning, local fruit liqueurs and mead recipes. Camping routes can be integrated into the social structure of communities by supporting such crafts.

Camping as a way of travelling allows tourists to enjoy nature and involves interaction with residents, participation in master classes, gastronomic tours, festivals, etc.

Thus, the study considers not only natural, historical and infrastructural factors but also important cultural components: traditions, customs, holidays, language, and local history. All this allows us to discuss camping as a tool for supporting local identity and decentralised tourism development.

The development of a camping network in the region can stimulate the economy of small communities, create new jobs, reduce the outflow of young people, and support micro-businesses in the food, crafts, and excursion industries.

The proposed concept envisages the phased introduction of camping routes, starting with pilot locations along the Dniester River, near major cultural centres and natural attractions. These routes may branch out, forming a developed

tourist network allowing tourists to travel around the region and interact deeply with its cultural landscape.

3.1. The concept of regional tourism structure

The concept of regional tourism structure is one of the key concepts in studies of the spatial organisation of tourism, regional development and cultural geography. In contemporary scientific discourse, it is considered not only as a set of infrastructure elements, but as an integrated system that shapes the tourism environment of a particular territory, taking into account its natural, historical, cultural, social and economic characteristics.

A regional tourism structure is a set of interrelated elements of tourism infrastructure, resources, services, routes, and organisational and management mechanisms that operate in a specific territory and ensure the comprehensive tourism development of the region in accordance with its potential. It acts as a framework on which tourism activities in the region are based, ensuring effective interaction between tourists, the local population, businesses and government structures.

The main structural components of the regional tourism structure include:

1. Tourism resources (natural sites, cultural and historical heritage, traditions and events);
2. Infrastructure (accommodation, catering, transport, communications);
3. Tourist routes and products that shape the spatial logic of tourist movement within the region;
4. Organisational and management institutions (local self-government bodies, regional tourism offices, public associations, local initiatives);
5. Service infrastructure (tour operators, guides, information points, navigation);
6. Human capital (residents involved in the tourism sector, level of service culture);
7. The region's marketing strategy, which ensures its tourist recognition and attractiveness.

Forming a regional tourism structure is a complex process that involves strategic planning, attracting investment, considering local communities' interests, and integrating tourism practices into the socio-cultural fabric of the region. Its development is particularly relevant in decentralisation, when communities are given the tools to shape tourism policy and create their own identity independently.

In the context of current European trends, tourism structures are increasingly seen as inclusive socio-cultural spaces, where tourism becomes a tool

for economic growth and a means of preserving local heritage, strengthening social capital and developing new forms of employment. This is particularly relevant for regions such as Podillia, which combine unique natural landscapes, a multi-layered historical heritage and a vibrant traditional culture.

Thus, a regional tourism structure is not just a collection of objects and services, but a dynamic socio-cultural system that develops at the intersection of the interests of the community, business, tourists and state policy. Its effectiveness depends on integrating authentic local resources into modern travel formats, such as ecotourism (Poplavskyi et al., 2005; Posokhov & Sahaidachna, 2019), camping (Williams, 2022), cultural routes, event tourism, etc.

3.2. Theories and approaches to the formation of tourism clusters and networks

The formation of tourism clusters and networks results from the evolution of approaches to the spatial organisation of tourism in the context of globalisation, regionalisation and increased interregional competition. Tourism clusters and networks are seen as tools for integrating tourism resources, businesses, authorities and communities into a common ecosystem that enhances the competitiveness of regional tourism.

The cluster approach in tourism is based on M. Porter's concept of clusters, which is a geographical concentration of interrelated companies, specialised suppliers, service providers, infrastructure, and organisations that compete but also cooperate. In the context of tourism, this means coordinating the activities of the hotel sector, transport, catering establishments, tourist attractions, artisans, cultural institutions and local authorities. This model allows for creating a synergistic effect, where the total value of the product exceeds the sum of its parts.

The main advantages of the cluster approach:

1. Improving the quality of tourism products through standardisation and cooperation;
2. Increasing innovative potential through knowledge sharing and joint initiatives;
3. Reducing transaction costs;
4. Improved marketing of the region as a whole destination;
5. Increased trust between market participants.

The network model of tourism development is based on the interdisciplinary theory of social networks, which focuses on the relationships between actors, both formal and informal. In the context of tourism, this means creating flexible horizontal links between different entities (local authorities, local

initiatives, NGOs, micro-businesses, tourists), which allows for the formation of bottom-up development strategies. Unlike the cluster model, the network approach does not require territorial concentration – instead, the emphasis is on communication, trust, partnership and resource sharing.

The main advantages of the network approach:

1. ability to quickly adapt to changes in the environment;
2. involvement of a wide range of participants, including the non-profit sector and communities;
3. support for social capital and cultural exchange;
4. development of creative forms of tourism (ethno-tourism, eco- and camping tourism, gastronomic routes).

In European practice, cluster and network models are increasingly synthesised, especially in rural, mountainous or culturally rich regions, where tourist micro-networks are formed – local initiatives with close inter-institutional cooperation, joint branding and promotion. An example of such a model is a network of campsites that brings together small businesses, farms, artisans, cultural locations and nature trails.

From a cultural studies perspective, tourist networks are also seen as agents of social construction of space through the creation of narratives, legends, local symbols, festivals and traditions that enhance the tourist appeal of a region. In this context, the tourist network performs not only an economic function but also an identitarian one, contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage and local identity.

Thus, modern scientific thought leans towards an integrated approach, where tourist clusters act as institutionalised forms of interaction, and networks are more flexible and socio-culturally oriented structures. In the Podillia region's case, combining both approaches allows for forming a sustainable camping network based on local resources, horizontal connections, and deep cultural integration.

3.3. The role of socio-cultural factors in the development of tourism

Socio-cultural factors are decisive in forming a sustainable and distinctive tourism product, especially at the regional level. In modern scientific approaches, tourism is seen not only as an economic or recreational phenomenon, but as a complex form of socio-cultural interaction, where cultural codes, traditions, local memory, language, symbols, customs and the lifestyle of the local population play a key role.

The socio-cultural factor covers a wide range of phenomena: from historical and cultural heritage (architectural monuments, museums, rituals, religious practices) to intangible culture (traditional crafts, cuisine, dialects, folklore).

These elements shape the region's tourist appeal, ensuring the uniqueness and authenticity of the tourist experience.

In the context of the development of camping routes, which involve closer contact between tourists and the local area and community, the role of socio-cultural factors is growing. Camping as a form of travel often involves:

1. Staying within local landscapes (natural or cultural).
2. Participating in local events or workshops.
3. Consuming local products (gastronomic, eco- or agritourism).
4. Getting acquainted with the traditional way of life.

Thus, the socio-cultural characteristics of the territory do not simply accompany tourist activity, but shape its value content, transforming tourism into a means of intercultural dialogue, support for local identity and preservation of intangible heritage.

In European practice, there is a tendency towards culturally oriented tourism policy planning, where communities independently identify cultural markers of the region and integrate them into their tourism strategy. This manifests in the branding of territories based on authentic symbols (embroidery, songs, cuisine), the organisation of festivals, and the creation of 'living museums' or craft routes.

For regions such as Podillia, which are distinguished by their multi-ethnicity, deep history and natural beauty, the socio-cultural factor is a strategic resource. Local traditions (e.g. pottery, embroidery, cheese making), monuments (fortresses, castles, shrines), folklore and gastronomy can become the core of a tourism product, especially when combined with forms of soft, non-invasive tourism such as camping (Williams, 2022), rural tourism and pilgrimage routes.

At the same time, it is important to consider the reverse impact of tourism on the socio-cultural environment. When appropriately managed, tourism can contribute to the preservation of local cultures, the renewal of traditions, the enhancement of the prestige of crafts, and the return of young people to the regions. Otherwise, it can lead to the commercialisation of culture, loss of authenticity, and cultural erosion.

Thus, the role of socio-cultural factors in developing tourism lies in forming an identical tourist product and ensuring sustainability, inclusiveness and deep value interaction between the tourist and the territory. This is especially important in the post-industrial era, when the demand for authentic, 'live' tourism is constant.

Socio-cultural factors play a systemic role in shaping Ukraine's regional tourism structure, determining the specifics of the tourism product and how it is presented, perceived and interacts with local communities. For a comprehen-

sive analysis, a conditional structuring of socio-cultural factors across several levels and categories is proposed (Table 1).

Table 1. Conditional structuring of sociocultural factors by levels and categories (Podillia tourist region)

No.	Level (factor)	Categories
1.	Cultural and historical	1. Architectural monuments (castles, churches, ancient cities, fortresses); 2. Archaeological sites and museums; 3. Oral history, legends, myths; 4. Cultural landscapes of historical significance; 5. Religious heritage (monasteries, shrines, pilgrimage sites).
2.	Ethnocultural	1. Traditions, customs, folklore; 2. Ethnographic groups (Hutsuls, Boikos, Lemkos, Podolians, etc.); 3. Local language, dialects; 4. Local rituals, holidays and seasonal cycles; 5. Cultural identity of territories.
3.	Artistic and craftsmanship	1. Traditional crafts (pottery, weaving, embroidery, carving); 2. Decorative and applied arts; 3. Authentic products and souvenirs; 4. Local creative industries (galleries, art residences, workshops).
4.	Gastronomic	1. Traditional dishes and drinks; 2. Culinary heritage (recipes, techniques); 3. Local farm products; 4. Gastronomic festivals, tasting tours.
5.	Social integration and interaction	1. Involvement of the local population in tourism (as guides, hosts, artisans); 2. Social capital of the community (trust, cooperation, identity); 3. Openness to intercultural dialogue; 4. Educational programmes that shape tourism awareness.
6.	Symbolic and narrative	1. Branding the region (logos, slogans, ideas); 2. Creating a cultural narrative (legends, stories, 'spirit of place'); 3. Local symbols and markers (clothing, flags, music); 4. Participating in shaping the national image of Ukraine as a tourist destination.

7.	Resource and cultural	1. Availability of cultural infrastructure (theatres, concert halls, cultural centres); 2. Integration of cultural events into tourist routes; 3. Readiness of infrastructure to receive tourists (museums, local excursions, information centres).
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Source: authors' scientific research

This structure of socio-cultural factors allows us to view the development of Ukraine's tourism structure not only as an economic or spatial process, but as a deeply cultural phenomenon that requires a systematic approach to preserving, transmitting and understanding local heritage. Including these factors in tourism policy planning contributes to creating a sustainable, authentic and competitive tourism ecosystem, where the community acts not as an object but as a subject.

Analysing the Podillia region's socio-cultural environment through the SWOT methodology prism allows us to identify internal factors that contribute to or hinder tourism development and external opportunities and threats that may affect the prospects for forming a sustainable tourism structure.

Below is a visualised SWOT analysis of the socio-cultural potential of the Podillia region. The matrix reflects the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the development of cultural tourism in the region (Table 2).

Table 2. SWOT analysis of the socio-cultural potential
of the Khmelnytskyi region

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Rich cultural and historical heritage – Ethnic diversity – Well-developed network of museums and cultural sites – Traditions of folk crafts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Insufficient funding for culture – Outdated infrastructure in some areas – Outflow of young people from the region – Low level of marketing of cultural resources
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Development of cultural tourism – Attracting investment in the reconstruction of facilities – Promotion of folk traditions – Cooperation with international cultural institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Emigration and ageing population – Economic instability – Loss of cultural sites due to decline – Competition from other regions

Source: authors' scientific conclusions

The region's strengths include a significant concentration of historical and cultural monuments, including the Kamianets-Podilskyi Fortress, Medzhybizh and Starokostiantyniv Castles, sacred heritage, and objects of tangible and intangible culture. Preserved traditions are a powerful resource: crafts, folklore, and authentic cuisine form the basis for developing creative and gastronomic tourism. Another significant advantage is the activity of local communities, which are increasingly initiating cultural events, festivals, and workshops. The multiculturalism of Podillia (Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish, Armenian heritage) creates a rich context for creating a unique tourist product. The presence of pilgrimage routes and shrines also opens up thematic (religious or pilgrimage) tourism opportunities.

The weaknesses are primarily related to the lack of infrastructure support for tourism, particularly the lack of campsites, service areas, tourist information centres and logistics solutions. The limited integration of cultural resources into modern formats (digital maps, creative routes, branding) prevents the full realisation of potential. There is also insufficient interregional cooperation between communities and a lack of a unified vision for the Podillia tourist area. There is often a shortage of specialists in the field of cultural management and tourism at the local level.

One of the development opportunities is the growing interest in sustainable, 'slow' tourism, which is based on authentic experiences and local expertise. This opens prospects for creating a network of camping routes with socio-cultural content: master classes, gastronomic tours, folklore evenings. It is also possible to integrate cultural resources into cluster and network tourism models, optimising interaction between communities, businesses and tourists. An external supporting factor is the active position of international organisations that finance sustainable tourism development and the preservation of intangible heritage.

The threats lie in the risk of commercialisation of local culture and a decline in authenticity due to the simplification of traditions under the influence of tourist expectations. Uncontrolled tourist flows can lead to the overloading of specific locations and the displacement of the local population from the cultural process. There is also a threat of fragmentation of efforts due to the lack of a unified regional tourism policy, which may limit the long-term sustainability of initiatives.

Thus, the Podillia region has significant socio-cultural potential that could become the basis for sustainable tourism development. Its realisation requires coordinated work by local communities, administrative structures, and cultural actors to form a regional tourism structure emphasising authenticity, interaction, and inclusiveness.

Effective use of Podillia's socio-cultural potential requires preserving and promoting cultural heritage and active integration into the region's modern tourism system.

Strategies should combine the principles of sustainable development, cultural sensitivity and local community participation:

1. Culturally oriented branding of territories

It is necessary to form a recognisable cultural image of Podillia as a region with deep historical memory, craft traditions, gastronomic uniqueness and multicultural heritage. The branding strategy should include developing a regional tourism logo, slogan and visual style based on local symbols (embroidery, castles, the Dniester River, traditional dishes, etc.).

2. Development of a network of cultural and camping routes

The priority is to build a network of camping routes that pass through key cultural sites, natural locations, and communities with active traditional cultures. Campsites can become points of cultural interaction, hosting master classes, tastings, folklore evenings, and spiritual retreats, which have gained popularity in recent years.

3. Support for local initiatives and micro-entrepreneurship

Creating conditions for involving residents in tourism activities is necessary by supporting rural tourism estates, craft workshops, and farms. Developing microbusinesses in the cultural sphere (ethno-festivals, gastronomic tours, excursion services) will contribute to the socio-economic strengthening of communities.

4. Creation of cultural tourism clusters

Forming territorial associations (tourism clusters) that will include communities, cultural institutions, entrepreneurs, tour guides, and artists is advisable. Such associations will allow for the coordination of activities, the creation of joint itineraries, access to tourist platforms, and the implementation of inter-community projects.

5. Education and professional development in cultural tourism

It is important to implement educational programmes for guides, tourism managers, and cultural workers focused on heritage interpretation, communication with tourists, cultural sensitivity, and service. It is also necessary to involve young people in preserving and promoting local culture through projects, volunteering, and internships.

6. Digitalisation of cultural tourism

Integrating socio-cultural resources into digital platforms – creating interactive maps, mobile guides, virtual tours, and digital archives of intangible her-

itage – will make cultural products more accessible to tourists, especially young people and foreign visitors.

7. Cross-sectoral cooperation

Tourism development based on socio-cultural potential should partner with local authorities, cultural institutions, public organisations, educational institutions, and businesses. Only a coordinated policy will achieve long-term effects and maintain a balance between cultural authenticity and economic efficiency.

The Podillia tourist region is one of Ukraine's most distinctive tourist areas, where centuries-old cultural heritage, rich natural landscapes, multi-ethnic history and preserved authenticity of everyday culture are organically combined. Its territory covers mainly the southern regions of Khmelnytskyi and Vinnytsia Oblasts, partly Ternopil and Chernivtsi Oblasts. It is a key part of Podillia's large historical and cultural region.

Podillia's natural and geographical conditions create favourable conditions for active, ecological and camping tourism development. A mild temperate continental climate, rich water resources, karst and canyon-like reliefs, and a dense network of rivers and forests characterise the region.

One of the dominant features is the Dniester River, one of the most picturesque rivers in Eastern Europe, which forms the unique Dniester Canyon in the Podillia region. This geological phenomenon stretches for over 250 km, has a depth of up to 150 metres and is distinguished by its biodiversity, picturesque landscapes and a high concentration of rare species of flora and fauna. The canyon is ideal for water tourism, rafting, camping, fishing, bird watching, and photo tours.

The tourist potential of Podillia is inextricably linked to the activity of local communities. Many villages and towns have preserved traditions of hospitality, folk festivals, fairs, and craft centres. The region has significant human potential for developing rural, cultural, and camping tourism, as communities are open to interaction with tourists and interested in developing microbusinesses, creative industries, and local branding.

Despite its rich natural and cultural potential, the region's tourism infrastructure must be systematised and modernised.

The lack of modern camping infrastructure, a poorly developed branding system and fragmented local initiatives hinder the full realisation of tourism opportunities. At the same time, the post-COVID and post-war reality is creating new demands for safe, meaningful and authentic recreation, giving Podillia a unique chance to become a leader in sustainable tourism development.

The Podillia tourist region is not just a geographical area, but a cultural and natural system with deep and multifaceted content. Its natural beauty, deep-rooted culture, hospitable communities and unique historical landscape create ideal conditions for developing modern tourism models – especially those based on sustainability, authenticity and interaction. Important conditions are strategic planning, institutional support, and a focus on local resources as the basis for the region's tourism identity.

The Podillia tourist region is characterised by its rich natural landscapes, historical and cultural heritage, traditional cuisine and authentic crafts. The Podillia region has great potential for tourism development thanks to its unique natural resources (Williams, 2022).

However, an analysis of strategic development documents for these territories reveals a fragmented vision of tourism infrastructure development, with an emphasis on hotels, restaurants, and festivals, while camping tourism remains overlooked by local authorities.

The existing natural conditions (the Dniester and Southern Bug rivers, forests, the Podilski Tovtry National Nature Park, canyons) create an ideal environment for organising tent camps, campsites, glamping sites and car parks for tourists.

In addition, the remoteness of many locations from large cities makes it possible to develop 'quiet' tourism, which corresponds to the concept of slow travel. According to the UNWTO analytical report, in 2022, camping has become one of the most popular forms of travel after the COVID-19 pandemic due to its mobility, safety and accessibility.

One of the most promising areas for camping infrastructure is the coast of the Dniester River. It is not only a picturesque place but also an important historical and cultural area that combines numerous locations with rich history, traditional architecture and natural beauty. Within the Khmelnytskyi region, the areas along the Dniester have developed tourist appeal thanks to the unique canyon, which forms one of the deepest river canyons in Europe. Such geographical features create unique conditions for ecotourism, camping with panoramic views, kayaking, fishing and hiking routes.

In addition to its natural advantages, Podillia is distinguished by various historical monuments that are powerful magnets for tourists.

In particular, the Kamianets-Podilskyi Fortress, one of the most famous in Ukraine and included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, attracts tens of thousands of visitors annually.

Other important cultural landscape elements include Medzhybizh Castle, Sataniv Fortress, the ruins of churches and synagogues in Sharhorod, and wooden churches in villages along the Dniester River. The location of campsites near these sites will provide tourists with affordable accommodation, encouraging longer stays in the region and the development of local businesses.

An additional factor supporting the development of camping infrastructure is the region's unique cuisine. Podillia cuisine can become part of an integrated tourist offering with its local dishes such as *syryniki*, *uzvar*, roasted meat dishes, sourdough baked goods, local wines, and mead.

Master classes on preparing traditional dishes, farm breakfasts, themed tastings, and gastronomic tours blend harmoniously with the camping holiday format and contribute to preserving intangible cultural heritage.

Developing a network of campsites also opens up new opportunities for the socio-economic development of rural areas. Camping infrastructure does not require large-scale capital investments compared to hotels, making it accessible to small and medium-sized businesses and community initiatives.

Rural residents can operate mini-campsites, glamping sites or provide ancillary services:

1. Bicycle rental
2. Excursions
3. Local cuisine, etc.

This will provide them with an additional source of income and help reduce labour migration.

The study found that Podillia has several traditional crafts:

1. Pottery
2. Embroidery
3. Wickerwork
4. Wood carving and others.

Crafts can be integrated into camping tourism products. Organising workshops in open spaces near campsites will promote these crafts and add value to the holiday experience, turning it into a cultural and educational experience.

Religious pilgrimage routes are an important part of the cultural structure of the Podillia region, particularly those associated with shrines in:

1. Letychiv
2. Sharhorod
3. Husiatyn
4. Sataniv

5. Kamianets-Podilskyi and other cities.

Establishing camping areas along such routes will provide comfortable conditions for multi-day trips for believers, particularly in summer, during religious holidays and processions.

Administrative documents show that despite their tourism potential, most communities do not have specific plans to develop camping infrastructure.

In the development strategies of, for example, the Horodok or Medzhybizh communities, tourism is presented in general terms, without a separate focus on non-traditional forms such as camping. However, ecotourism and green tourism are mentioned. This indicates the need for additional work on strategic planning and promoting such formats among local authorities.

Thus, creating a full-fledged camping network in the Podillia region has all the prerequisites: natural, cultural, economic and social. However, realising this potential requires a systematic approach and synergy between local communities, private businesses, and state support. It is necessary to ensure regulatory and legal regulation, training of campsite operators, development of quality standards, and an information campaign for domestic tourists and visitors abroad.

Field research conducted in 2023–2024 in several communities in Podillia (Kamianets-Podilskyi, Horodok, Sataniv) identified several socio-cultural factors that could serve as a basis for creating a regional network of campsites.

Local identity and openness to tourists.

Village residents show interest in developing new forms of tourism, including camping formats, especially when combined with the opportunity to promote local products and traditions. Traditions of hospitality and cultural practices. Celebrations, rituals, festivals, master classes in pottery, embroidery and blacksmithing can become cultural attractions at campsites.

Gastronomic heritage. Podillia cuisine (nalivka, sausages, honey, sour-dough bread, borscht, uzvar) has tourist appeal and can be integrated into the camper's experience.

Religious and pilgrimage tourism. The presence of spiritual heritage sites (Medzhybizh Castle, holy springs, churches, synagogues) creates the basis for routes with camping stops. Within the concept of sustainable tourism development, campsites are seen as an eco-friendly form of recreation (Jackson, 2022).

Pilgrimage routes often pass through rural areas without hotels or hostels. Campsites along such routes solve the problem of logistics and accommodation while supporting local communities. The study also revealed the interest of religious communities in attracting tourists to learn about the spiritual heritage of Podillia.

Thematic events and calendar holidays. A distinctive feature of Podillia is the large number of holidays, rituals, and festivals linked to the church and agricultural calendar, for example, the Kupala holiday, harvest festival, Honey Spas, and St. Andrew's Eve. Campsites can serve as a base for participants in such events. In the future, creating a calendar of themed camps, each with its cultural focus and attracting tourists in different seasons may be possible.

Women's entrepreneurship and the role of family farms. Women-owners of agritourism farms, craftswomen, and cooks can play a special role in the development of camping tourism. Many of them are already involved in rural green tourism or craft activities. The creation of campsites will open up new opportunities for them, from renting out plots for tents to organising meals and master classes. The development of camping infrastructure can potentially strengthen women's entrepreneurship in rural communities.

Environmental awareness and sustainable development. Within the concept of sustainable tourism development, campsites are seen as eco-friendly forms of recreation (Jackson, 2022). This type of tourism involves minimal interference with nature, using environmentally friendly materials, waste sorting, composting toilets, solar panels, etc. Many residents of Podillia are already applying ecological approaches to farming, which facilitates the adaptation of the camping ideology. For example, some farms are ready to set up eco-parking lots, green areas for campers, and create spaces without plastic tableware.

Problems and challenges. Despite the positive aspects, there are also barriers. These include: a low level of knowledge about organising campsites, a lack of a regulatory framework, poor communication between communities, and a lack of a unified tourism platform. In addition, in many communities, the infrastructure is not ready to receive large numbers of tourists – poor roads, lack of electricity or sanitary conditions in potential camping sites.

Thus, camping routes can provide recreation in nature and become a platform for cultural exchange and preservation of intangible heritage. The camping format promotes economic decentralisation and the socio-cultural revitalisation of rural communities, which take on a new role as hosts and co-creators of a new generation of cultural tourism.

In European Union countries, camping tourism is an important domestic tourism segment. The experience of Poland, Slovenia, Croatia and the Baltic countries shows that the development of campsites is possible even in depressed regions, provided that communities are involved, cultural practices are adapted to tourism

products, and state support is provided. The development of ecotourism positively impacts the revitalisation of domestic tourism in Central Europe (Williams, 2022).

For example, Slovenia has campsites with elements of local culture: wooden huts, craft workshops, rural fairs, and wellness areas.

For Podillia, it is important to adapt this experience, taking into account: the landscape diversity of the territory; the predominance of the agrarian economy; the developed network of the private sector (homesteads, farms); and the limited budget of local communities. Accordingly, the camping network can be built not as autonomous campsites, but as socio-cultural hubs in rural communities, combining elements of glamping, master classes, gastronomic tastings, cycling routes, ecological trails, etc.

A conceptual model of a camping network in the Podillia region has been proposed based on the collected data and analysis of cultural, natural and socio-economic conditions.

Thematic routes: religious (Shargorod – Medzhybizh), gastronomic (Husiatyn – Sataniv – Horodok), ethnocultural (Kamianets-Podilskyi – Bakota – Studenitsa).

Camping formats: classic camping (tents, caravans, motorhomes), eco-glamping (with solar panels), camping hostel (a combination of spaces for caravans, motorhomes and tents with green tourism).

Partnership with communities: communities provide land, residents provide services, tourists provide income and promote the area.

Digital support: a mobile app with route maps, seat reservations, integration with Google Maps, reviews, and recommendations.

Implementing such a model will contribute to the economic revitalisation of communities and strengthen residents' cultural identity, promoting Podillia's intangible heritage, and forming a new image of the region as an ecologically clean area open to tourists.

Developing a camping network in the Podillia region requires a comprehensive approach that combines cultural heritage, ecological potential, and the active participation of local communities. The central idea is to create tourist routes that not only showcase the beauty of nature, but also immerse travellers in a unique environment of traditions, crafts, gastronomy and local history.

The proposed routes consider the sites' geographical location, logistical convenience and thematic content. For example, a religious route may include visits to sacred sites of various denominations: a synagogue in Sharhorod, a church in Murafa, a knight's church in Medzhybizh, holy springs and monas-

teries. Such a route will be attractive to both pilgrims and tourists interested in the history of religious tolerance.

The gastronomic route should include tasting areas, farms, and master classes on preparing local dishes. In Husiatyn, master classes on cheese production can be organised, in Sataniv – tasting of local dishes, and Horodok – an introduction to ancient baking traditions.

The ethnocultural route (Kamianets-Podilskyi – Bakota – Studenitsa) combines architectural monuments, museums of everyday life, participation in folk festivals, folklore evenings, and open workshops on pottery, embroidery, and wickerwork.

For the effective organisation of a network of campsites, it is proposed to use several formats depending on the location and capabilities of the community:

1. Classic camping – areas for tents and trailers with basic amenities (water, bathroom, recreation area). This format is ideal for locations near natural parks, rivers, or valleys.

2. Glamping – eco-friendly structures (yurts, wooden houses, dome tents) equipped with solar panels, rainwater collection systems and composting toilets. Glamping can be attractive to tourists who seek comfort without harming nature.

3. Camping hostel – an innovative format that combines elements of green tourism with the opportunity to rent a room in an adapted rural house or modular accommodation built from eco-friendly materials.

The effective functioning of the camping network is impossible without the active participation of local communities. In the proposed model, the communities act as initiators and co-owners of the projects. They can:

- provide land for the organisation of campsites;
- contribute to the formation of local content – rituals, holidays, cultural events;
- train residents in the field of tourist services;
- participate in creating information infrastructure (signs, signposts, maps).

Special attention should be paid to training programmes for the community: courses in marketing tourist services, foreign languages, cooking, and campsite management.

Digital support: integration into the tourism market. The camping network must be represented in the digital space. To do this, it is worth developing a mobile application or web platform that will provide:

- a map of camping routes and sites;
- information about events, workshops, and celebrations;

- the ability to book places;
- integration with Google Maps, TripAdvisor, Booking.com;
- reviews and ratings.

Such a tool will make it easier for tourists to plan their trips and promote transparent information exchange between guests and hosts.

The camping model can be implemented if a clear financial strategy exists. Three sources of funding are proposed:

1. Local budgets – small investments in start-up infrastructure (toilets, signs, lighting);

2. Grants and international support (primary source) – involvement of international programmes, etc.

3. Social entrepreneurship – creating public organisations or cooperatives to provide camping services and distribute profits among residents.

Patrons, local businesses, and agritourism farms interested in development may play a separate role.

The introduction of a camping network will have several important socio-cultural effects:

1. Strengthening identity. Through active involvement in the cultural process, residents better understand the uniqueness of their traditions.

2. Transfer of knowledge. Young people will have the opportunity to engage in crafts, learn the language of their ancestors, and revive forgotten rituals.

3. Increased tolerance. The tourist environment will create a dialogue between cultures, religions, and lifestyles.

4. Environmental component

A camping network based on the principles of sustainable development must comply with the following principles:

- minimal impact on the environment;
- use of environmentally friendly materials;
- waste sorting;
- cooperation with environmental activists and nature conservation organisations;

Inclusion of nature conservation sites (national parks, nature reserves, natural monuments) in itineraries.

Developing educational eco-modules for tourists will contribute to conserving natural resources and forming environmentally conscious behaviour among travellers.

To promote camping tourism in the region, modern means of communication should be used: creation of a brand for the Podillia camping network (logo, slogan, style); cooperation with travel bloggers, journalists, influencers; participation in international exhibitions and forums; integration into tourist platforms and aggregators; production of video content, virtual tours, interactive content.

Suppose the project is successfully implemented in the pilot areas (3–5 campsites). In that case, the network can be gradually expanded to other communities in the Podillia region and, subsequently, to neighbouring areas of Western Ukraine (e.g. Bukovina, part of Prykarpattia, and Nadnistrianshchyna).

The development of the camping network could become the basis for forming a sustainable tourism cluster, bringing together the hotel business, farmers, souvenir producers, transport companies, and creative agencies.

The Podillia tourist region is one of the most promising for developing domestic and inbound tourism in Ukraine. This region combines a rich historical and cultural heritage, unique natural resources, and growing interest from tourists and investors. Located within the Khmelnytskyi, Vinnytsia, and partly Ternopil regions, the region has a favourable geographical location, an extensive transport network, and great potential for developing tourism infrastructure.

4. Conclusions

The study revealed the following:

1. The Podillia region has great potential for developing camping tourism thanks to its rich natural and cultural heritage.
2. Analysis of the region's current camping routes has shown the importance of combining natural resources, historical monuments and gastronomic features to create attractive tourist offers.
3. It was determined that the development of camping tourism could become an important factor in the region's economic growth, providing employment for the local population and preserving cultural heritage.
4. It was found that the main problems are insufficient infrastructure, low level of service and the lack of comprehensive marketing strategies, which hinder the development of camping tourism.
5. The camping model is a tool for decentralised cultural tourism in modern tourism policy, which focuses on sustainable development, localisation of resources and reducing pressure on large tourist centres.
6. Camping tourism allows:

- to relieve urbanised tourist hubs by redirecting flows to rural and little-known but culturally valuable locations;
- to include new communities that were previously on the periphery of tourist maps in the tourist circuit;
- activate the local population as a subject of tourism, not only as a service provider, but also as a bearer of cultural content;
- promote intangible heritage through master classes, meetings, local stories and individual experiences of interaction;
- ensure environmental sustainability, as campsites require minimal intervention in the natural environment and can function autonomously.

The study showed that camping tourism in the Podillia region has significant potential as a tool for spatial decentralisation of tourism, revitalisation of regional socio-cultural spaces, and ensuring the sustainable development of local communities. It has been determined that rich natural and landscape resources, a significant number of cultural heritage sites, authentic gastronomic practices, and local initiatives create the basis for forming a competitive tourism product with high added value.

An analysis of the current state and prospects for the development of camping tourism in the region has identified several important factors:

Firstly, the camping model of tourism contributes not only to the diversification of tourism offerings but also to the strengthening of social cohesion by involving the local population in the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage;

Secondly, it provides an environmentally friendly form of recreation consistent with sustainable development principles and meets the challenges of post-war reconstruction in Ukraine.

At the same time, systemic constraints have been identified that hinder the full realisation of the potential of camping tourism, particularly the fragmentation of infrastructure, the lack of comprehensive planning of tourist routes and the absence of coordinated strategic approaches at the level of local communities.

Thus, the development of camping tourism in the Podillia region should be considered as part of a comprehensive regional development policy covering cultural, economic and environmental components. The proposed model can be scaled to other regions of Ukraine, considering their local characteristics, and serve as a basis for developing a new type of networked tourism infrastructure that is meaningful, accessible and sustainable.

It is recommended that regional programmes to support camping tourism be developed, focused on developing tourist infrastructure, improving service quality, promoting authentic cultural products, and involving communities in the planning and managing tourist activities. **The scientific novelty of the research** lies in a comprehensive approach to the analysis of camping tourism in Podillia and in identifying specific features of this type of tourism related to natural, cultural and gastronomic aspects. A classification of camping routes based on these factors has been developed, which allows for the systematisation of information and contributes to the further development of this type of tourism.

The significance of the study. The study is important for developing tourism in Ukraine, particularly in the Podillia region, which has great tourism potential.

The results can be used by local authorities, tourism companies, and other stakeholders to develop effective tourism and infrastructure strategies based on local resources and needs.

Prospects for further research.

Prospects for further research include an in-depth analysis of the impact of camping tourism development on the economic development of local communities, as well as an assessment of the environmental consequences of growing tourist flows.

An important area of research is the study of innovative approaches to camping areas' environmental and social sustainability.

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Information about the Authors:

Lyudmyla Batchenko, Doctor of Science (Economics), Professor, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Kyiv, Ukraine, e-mail: ludavic@meta.ua; orcid id: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6975-5813>

Yaroslav Yasnyskyi, Postgraduate student, Kyiv University of Culture, Kyiv, Ukraine; e-mail: globaltury@gmail.com; orcid id: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3159-1376>

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