

CDSSES 2020**IV International Scientific Conference "Competitiveness and the development of socio-economic systems" dedicated to the memory of Alexander Tatarkin****SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SOCIAL TOURISM**

Petr Chuvatkin (a), Alyona Gorbatova (b)*

*Corresponding author

(a) Federal Research Centre the Subtropical Scientific Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2/28, Yana Fabriciusa street, Sochi, Russia, lares@sochi.com

(b) Federal Research Centre the Subtropical Scientific Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2/28, Yana Fabriciusa street, Sochi, Russia, svetlana_asa@mail.ru

Abstract

The socio-economic significance of social tourism has repeatedly become the object of foreign and Russian researches in tourism. Despite the obvious diverse impact of social tourism on various spheres of socio-economic activity, scientific works' analysis revealed an insufficient depth of research in this area. Using a set of theoretical and empirical research methods, including a deductive-inductive approach, methods of abstraction, analysis, synthesis, and others, we have defined the feasibility of developing both social tourism in general and its areas in particular for solving socio-economic problems at the local, regional, and state levels. The article provides an analysis of the impact of social tourism development, structured around individual consumer groups, such as youth, older persons, people with disabilities, and financially disadvantaged families. Besides, the direct, indirect, and induced effects of the social tourism development across these groups are discussed in the research. The links between social tourism development and such phenomena as unemployment, social stratification, taxation, and economic recovery have been determined. The conclusion is made about the dominance of positive factors on the socio-economic development of the country. The study results serve as the basis for the subsequent factual analysis of the mutual influence of social tourism and an unstable external environment and the development of an advanced factor model of social tourism as one of the tools for forecasting sustainable socio-economic development.

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1. Introduction

The phenomenon of social tourism, which is quite conceptualized in Europe and is just at the stage of understanding and adoption in Russia, is firmly interwoven into public policy in the era of democratic slogans and appeals to eradicating inequality. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of massive investments in the social sector of tourism is a debatable issue, especially when there is no accumulated experience or a firm legislative basis in this direction. In this regard, the question of the impact, which the development of social tourism can lead to in the socio-economic sphere, seems to be important.

In the current circumstances of sustainable socio-economic development of Russia, a special place is occupied by the trend of strengthening the role of the social component in all spheres of the country's economic activity. In this context, a tourism sector is a useful tool for solving many social problems related, *inter alia*, to providing recreation and supporting each population category's health. Besides, social tourism contributes to the intensive development of tourist areas through job creation, generating the tourist flow in the off-season, expanding the tax base, and increasing demand for local enterprises' goods and services.

The economic and social performance of an entire country can be measured using the indicators of social tourism. The resources that the state considers it necessary to allocate for the development of this tourism sector indicate the level of social policy, economic well-being and financial stability of the state (McCabe & Diekmann, 2015). It is natural that in more economically stable countries with a developed legislative system and high level of social responsibility, social tourism is sufficiently developed in order to, in turn, strengthen the socio-economic sphere (Comerio & Pacicco, 2020). The return on investment in social tourism is not so obvious in those states where this kind of tourism is just developing, such as in Russia, and this fact inhibits further development without the necessary strong state impulse. Anyway, social tourism always has economic and social effects.

In a very generalized way, the economic impacts of social tourism are reflected in increasing combined economic efficiency, since it not only introduces into economic circulation unused material resources but also human resources represented as socially excluded groups and strengthens the trusting relationships between them and other sectors of society (Minnaert, 2020). Specifically, reference can be made to an increase in domestic consumption, employment growth, and a decrease in social stratification (Leonidova, 2017). The funds allocated to support social tourism are returned to municipal, regional and federal budgets through various social contributions and taxes of tourism organizations, and the construction of new specialized infrastructure adds potential to the region in the form of an increase in production capacity.

On the other hand, at the stage of development, social tourism seems to be extremely expensive and does not lead to immediate positive returns, which makes this sector unattractive for heavy investments (Kukharensko & Gizyatova, 2018). Social tourists, having a low level of income, try to avoid unnecessary spending, and the low cost of the social tours goes against the generally accepted quality standards of a tourist product. In addition, the benefits provided to social tourists are discriminatory towards other categories of the population.

The events of 2020 related to the spread of coronavirus infection have caused several acute problems in the tourism sector, demonstrating the state's socio-economic policy's inability to implement effective anti-crisis management in the current situation. Thus, the study of the socio-economic impact of social tourism will serve as the basis for the development of tools for the efficient and timely solution of problems at the regional, and state level in the short and long term.

2. Problem Statement

There are two directions in scientific research works related to the analysis of social tourism as a component of sustainable tourism. One of them is aimed at increasing the availability of tourist services for disadvantaged categories of consumers and their social integration; the second group of scientific works is aimed at studying the development of tourist destinations (including crisis areas) by stimulating the diversification of the local economy, job-creating, improving local infrastructure (including creating an accessible environment for people with disabilities), supporting local manufacturers, environmental safety (Sonuc & Oral, 2017). The methodology of foreign studies of social tourism is based on the concept, principles, functions of social tourism, initiatives, social projects, and the social and economic impact of the discussed phenomenon. The works of Minnaert et al. (2006) (features of social tourism in European countries), Ghimire (2016); Lujun et al. (2016); Mangunsong (2020); Yu et al. (2019) (meeting the health-improving and cultural-educational needs through social tourism) are of particular importance for the subject area of this research.

Despite numerous studies of the economic and social effects of tourism, very few scientific works deal with the problem of identifying the impact of the social segment of tourism. This is largely due to the lack of a clear definition of the concept of "social tourism" in international practice, as well as identifying the correlation between the social direction of tourist activity and socio-economic transformations in the state. Analysis of the current development in social tourism research illustrates the fragmentation and insufficient knowledge of the phenomenon under study, as well as the presence of huge potential for further scientific research in the social segment of tourism.

3. Research Questions

A wide range of industries interacting with the social tourism system raises the following research question: "What criteria can be used to structure the socio-economic impact of social tourism?" The next question is "What is the relationship between consumers' behavior and the impact of social tourism on the tourist destination?" due to the variety of groups of social tourists, which nature of decision-making has specific features. Particular attention in the study should be paid to the question of the extent to which each behavioral feature of social tourists affects the socio-economic processes at the local, regional and state levels.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to identify the socio-economic effects of social tourism in the context of the main consumer groups.

5. Research Methods

The research methodology is based on a systematic approach, which is necessary for the achievement of the research goal since the comprehensive and holistic consideration of the object as a system of interrelated elements fully reflects the specifics of the social tourism impact as a multifaceted multi-element phenomenon on the social and economic spheres of the state.

The archival method made it possible to get acquainted with the literature of various publication years in order to compare the information contained in it with each other and identify cause-and-effect relationships. When analyzing literary sources, it was concluded that it is necessary to divide the study of social tourism into narrower categories since the term "social tourism", due to its versatile use in many countries, has acquired many definitions, some of which differ from each other not only in the specific features of the system of providing social and tourist services in a particular area but also in the directions of tourism activities and categories of consumers.

Thus, for a more complete and in-depth analysis of the studied phenomenon, social tourism was structured by groups of key consumers - young and old people, people with disabilities, and financially disadvantaged families (Table 1).

Within the framework of this article, youth is considered as a group of people from 15 to 24 years old. It is this age that the United Nations Organization determines when conducting statistical research¹. As for the elderly people, the choice of the age group is determined by the criteria for the participation of older people in the main benefit programs carried out by the international organization IMSERSO in Europe². Persons with disabilities are defined in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities³. The criterion for inclusion in the category "Families with financial disabilities" was determined based on a review of literature on related topics, as well as on the Eurostat report for 2019-2020⁴.

Table 1. Criteria for categorizing consumers of socially oriented tourist services

Social tourism consumer category	Inclusion criteria
Youth	Persons aged 15 to 24
Retirees	Persons over the age of 50
People with disabilities	Persons with persistent physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that, when interacting with various barriers, may interfere with their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others

¹ Youth research: the essentials (2019) The Council of Europe

² Programas de Promoción del Envejecimiento Activo (2019) IMSERSO

³ The United Nations. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. ... "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities." *Treaty Series* 2515 (December): 3.

⁴ Europe 2020 indicators - poverty and social exclusion (2020) *Europe 2020 strategy* Eurostat

Financially disadvantaged families	Families with children under 18 and under-aged parents (including single-parent families) with incomes below 200 percent of the country's poverty line (Acs et al., 2006).
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In each category, the features of consumer behavior were determined when making decisions on the purchase of tourism products and services. Further, the relationship was identified between consumers' behavioral characteristics and changes in the economy at the level of tourist destinations, regions, and the state as a whole. Information about the relationship between the development of certain types of social tourism and socio-economic processes taking place in the country, obtained using analytical and synthesis chains, inductive, deductive, and comparative approaches, was presented graphically as a economic diagram effects.

At the same time, the analysis of the impact of various consumer types made it possible to systematize information on the social impact of social tourism directly on the end consumer. When determining the similarities and differences in the reactions of the presented categories of social tourists using the method of comparative analysis, the specific features of consumer behavior of each study group were identified.

After determining the relationship between the development of social tourism and economic processes occurring in the state, it became expedient to assess the degree of impact of each type of social tourism on socio-economic changes. The most suitable method for this task was the expert evaluation method. The Delphi technique based on anonymity and correspondence participation through the Internet was chosen for the study. All participants were divided into 2 groups of 10 people. The study took place in 2 stages. At the first stage, each participant was sent a form in which it was proposed to arrange the groups of consumers of social tourism in gradation from larger to smaller according to various criteria, as follows:

- The share of expenses for tourism services in the total amount of expenses,
- The purchasing power,
- The duration of the rest in one place,
- The propensity to purchase goods and services from local businesses during leisure time,
- The propensity to rest in the off-season,
- The propensity to re-visit the tourist destination,
- The need for companionship while traveling,
- The propensity to purchase new tourism products and services.

After receiving the results of the first survey, the data were grouped. The average rate was calculated for each criterion in the first and second groups. The averages of the second group were shown to the participants of the first group, and vice versa.

In the second step, the participants were asked to correct their initial responses in view of their differences from the average rating. After that, we analyzed the results of the repeated survey and calculated the average rate in each group of experts. At the end of the second stage, the range of estimates decreased and the specified stopping criterion was reached. The result was determined as the average of the marks obtained in the final round.

6. Findings

As already mentioned, it was decided to divide social tourism into 4 categories of consumers of a socially-oriented tourist product for a more complete analysis of social tourism. These are youth tourism, senior tourism, persons with disabilities, and financially disadvantaged families.

Specific social effects of a personal nature were determined for each category of consumers. Table 2 presents the results of the described analysis, including both positive and negative impacts.

Table 2. Impact of different types of social tourism on consumers

Impact	Social tourism as a whole	Youth tourism	Senior tourism	Tourism for financially disadvantaged families	Accessible tourism
Positive	Reduced stress	A sense of independence	Overcoming social exclusion (Klimova, 2018)	Improving self-esteem and self-confidence	Improving mental health for people with disabilities Coping with travel and post-travel fears (McCabe et al., 2010)
	Strengthening family ties, social inclusion (Minnaert et al., 2006)	Expanding social interaction	Fighting fears and loneliness, reducing tension between older and younger generations in the family, keeping in touch with members of the tourist group (Mangunsong, 2020)	Changing attitudes towards other family members, spending time together, changing parenting style	Providing social interaction
Negative	Generating social stigma	Tensions with friends and colleagues in the community	Uncertainty and anxiety	Fear of disclosing family income levels due to the use of social tourism services (Harrison, 2008)	Uncertainty and anxiety
					Post-travel syndrome (Harrison, 2008)

As can be seen from the data in the table, each consumer group is particularly affected by social tourism. Thus, young people are able to expand the level of social interaction at the expense of new acquaintances acquired during travel through the use of a tourist product. In addition, social tourism has a

number of educational functions for this group. By visiting new places, getting to know the culture of other countries, young tourists expand their range of interests and increase their intellectual potential (Pyke et al., 2019). In addition, social tourism is able to develop a sense of independence in a young person, thereby solving a problem that is quite acute for this category of people.

As for the elderly, this category is more susceptible to the problem of social exclusion than others. Traveling as part of a group, retirees get to know other members and keep in touch with them after the trip. If an elderly person travels with family members, then social tourism helps to smooth out the tension between the older and younger generations, to reduce friction within the family. For single pensioners, social tourism provides an opportunity for social interaction with other members of the tourist group. Older people often face fears of loneliness and death. Tourist travel can distract the older generation from negative thoughts and depressive emotions.

The impact of social tourism on people with disabilities, in addition to social interaction with other participants of the trip and residents, includes overcoming depression and travel fears (typical for people with limited mobility), improving mental health.

Speaking about financially disadvantaged families, such advantages of social tourism as an increase in the level of self-esteem, self-confidence, a change in the style of raising children, and improvement of family relations through better getting to know each other while spending time together can be highlighted (Yu et al., 2019).

The question of the social impact of tourist trips on socially vulnerable population segments becomes especially relevant during the spread of coronavirus infection. Social tourism, being one of the directions of the state's social policy, in this case, contributes to an increase in stress resistance of the population, to reduce negative sentiments in society.

However, like any socio-economic phenomenon, social tourism has some negative impact on its participants, including the generation of social stigmatization, increasing the sense of anxiety and uncertainty when planning a trip. Families experiencing financial difficulties often face the fear of disclosing their income due to the use of preferential travel services. In addition, each of the categories of consumers may experience post-holiday syndrome at the end of a tour.

Further, we turn to the study of the economic impact of social tourism, that can be conditionally divided into three groups: direct, indirect and induced⁵. The relationship between the described groups of social tourism impact is illustrated in Figure 1.

⁵ Economic impact and travel patterns of accessible tourism in Europe – Final report (2013) European Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry

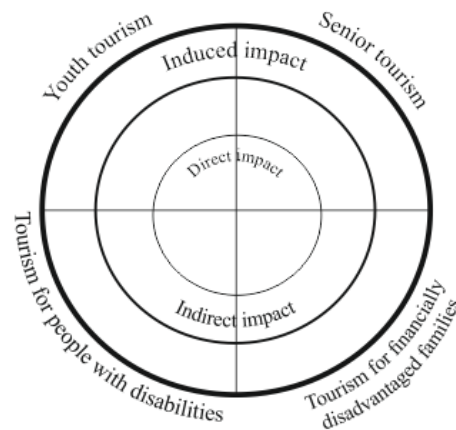


Figure 1. The relationship between the effects of social tourism

The direct effects include an increase in the volume of sales of tourism products and services at the expense of social tourists. This group should include sales of accommodation facilities (Vora-Sittha, 2016), catering, transport companies, entertainment and cultural organizations directly involved in socially oriented tourism activities. The group of indirect effects includes changes in the sales of various suppliers of tourism enterprises supplying them with food, agro-industrial goods, household chemicals, fuel, and other products necessary for tourism organizations to operate smoothly (Zhou et al., 1996). The third group of induced effects covers the changes associated with the increase in the level of household incomes caused by the direct and indirect effects of social tourism. An increase in consumption in a destination territory due to an increase in household incomes leads to wider economic impact at the regional and federal levels, including expanding tax revenues, attracting foreign investment, improving the balance of payments, and ensuring sustainable economic development (Rout et al., 2016).

For the study's purpose, it is essential to understand the social tourism system on economic changes taking place in a tourist destination. For this, we have prepared a corresponding scheme, shown in Figure 2.

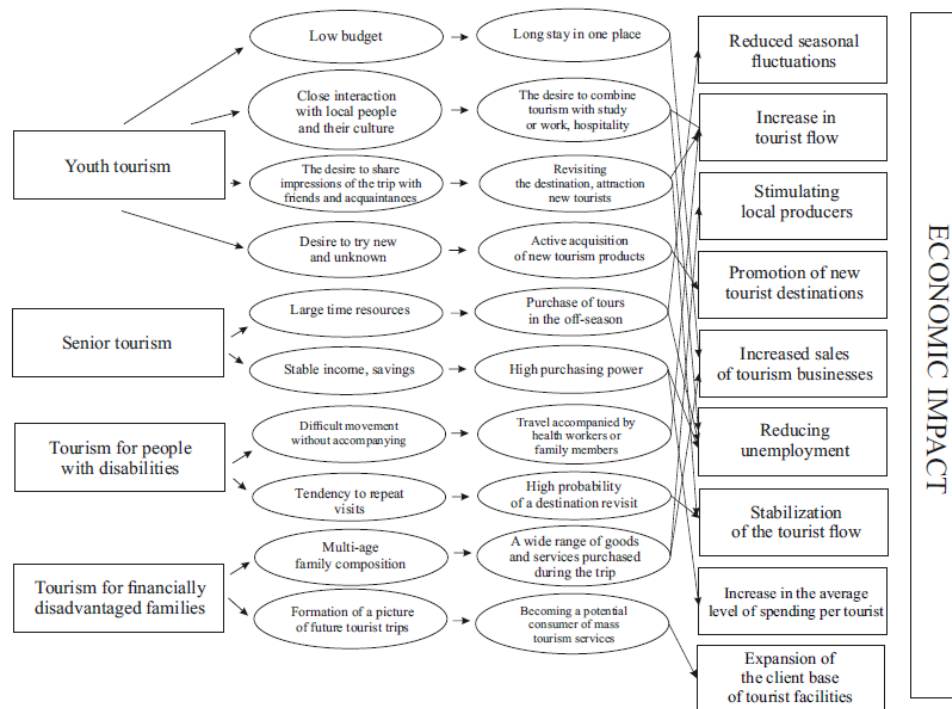


Figure 2. The relationship between consumer decisions and the economic impact of social tourism

According to the presented illustration, the features of consumer behavior in each category of social tourism lead to certain actions of social tourists, which, in turn, lead to economic changes of a direct, indirect and induced nature at the level of tourist enterprises, their suppliers, households, tourist destination, regions. and, finally, the state.

To assess the impact of consumer decisions of social tourists on socio-economic changes, it was decided to conduct a rating evaluation using the method of expert assessments, which is described in the Research Methods section. The expert group included 20 specialists in the tourism industry who hold a doctoral degree in Economics, have experience in the field of tourism in resort regions for at least 5 years. The results of the described assessment are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Assessment of the impact of various categories of social tourists on socio-economic changes

Socio-economic change (impact of consumer's behavior)	Criterion (a feature of consumer's behavior)	Category of social tourists			
		Youth	Seniors	People with disabilities	Financially disadvantaged families
Increase in sales of tourism services	Share of expenses for tourism services in the total amount of expenses	1	2	3	4
	The rate of purchasing power	2	1	3	4
	Duration of rest in one place	2	3	1	4

Stimulation of local producers	The propensity to purchase goods and services from local businesses while on holiday	1	3	2	4
Reducing seasonal fluctuations	Off-season tourism	4	1	2	3
Increase in tourist flow	The propensity to re-visit a tourist destination	3	2	1	4
	Need to be accompanied while traveling	4	2	1	3
Promotion of new tourist destinations and products	The propensity to acquire new tourism products and services	1	4	3	2

Thus, the study gives rise to draw several conclusions regarding the socio-economic impact of social tourism, which are presented in the next section.

7. Conclusion

Despite the high budgetary costs and the need for heavy investments, social tourism has a significant impact on the socio-economic sphere of the state. At first glance, social tourists who are incapable of spending large amounts of money can directly affect economic indicators such as unemployment, seasonal fluctuations, the volume of tourist flows, the volume of sales of local producers (Lujun et al., 2016), and indirectly, on the volume of tax revenues, international and domestic investment, level of social policy, economic well-being and financial stability of the country (Khan et al., 2017). When planning the development of social tourism in the state, it is necessary to clearly understand the tasks and problems of the tourism industry and the economy as a whole. The decisions taken by the state in the field of social tourism should be closely interconnected with the functioning of the tourism industry.

When the state is faced with the task of reducing seasonal fluctuations in the tourist flow in a certain territory, it is advisable to pay special attention to the development of tourism in this direction for the elderly, whose characteristic feature is the presence of a greater amount of free time for travel than other social tourists have. For the effective promotion of a newly created tourist destination, young tourists under 24 should be attracted to it, since this category of consumers is most willing to purchase new tourism products.

To increase the tourist flow and stabilize it, it will be effective to develop tourism for people with disabilities and young people. Both of these consumer groups are prone to revisit destinations and travel with family, friends, or specialized workers. People with motor impairments need the help of an accompanying person during a tourist trip, which leads to an increase in tourist traffic. Consumers under 24 years old, combining tourism with work or study, often invite their family members or friends to a tourist destination, generating an additional flow of tourists.

If the regional authorities aim to stimulate local producers and increase their sales, the destination should be adapted for young people and financially disadvantaged families. Due to their relatively low travel budget, these consumer groups tend to stay in the same destination for extended periods. So there is a high probability of purchasing goods and services from local businesses (Ghimire, 2016).

Thus, our research has shown that social tourism can be an effective tool for solving socio-economic problems arising both at the level of a tourist destination and the regional and federal levels. Structuring the effects of social tourism on direct, indirect, and induced impacts gave a clear idea of the relationship of all levels of socio-economic changes caused by developing specific categories of social tourism.

For theoretical and practical significance, this study's results can be used to further study social tourism and its impact on the external environment and serve as the basis for creating a factor model of social tourism as a tool for forecasting sustainable socio-economic development of the country.

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