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DEVELOPMENT OF POTENTIAL OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND ECOLOGICAL TOURISM IN ZERENDI DISTRICT OF AKMOLA REGION

The article considers the conditions for the development of ecological tourism on the basis of local communities in the Zerendi district of Akmola region. The basic concepts of ecological tourism and its classification are given, definitions of the concepts of «local communities» and «Community-based tourism (CBT)» are given. Using the example of Japanese researchers, a 3-level model of ecotourism development based on local communities is presented.

The study of the tourist market shows the dynamics of the development of Community-Based Ecotourism throughout Kazakhstan, starting from 2005 to 2021, the growth of CBT has grown from 5 to 25 communities. With the help of the Tourism Map of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the main competitors of the Zerendi district in the face of the Burabai National Park and other nearby resort areas of the Akmola region were investigated. The analysis of the possibility of developing ecological tourism in the Zerendi district using the questionnaire method, where the most significant objects of natural resources of the Zerendi district are identified that can attract a large flow of tourists to the recreational zone and reduce unemployment in the Zerendi district.

Analysis of the survey results shows that more than 58% of the population do not know what ecotourism is. Of the 5 natural resources of the Zerendi district included in the TOP significant objects of tourism of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 70% of respondents noted only one - Lake Zerendi. The advantages and disadvantages of attracting the flow of tourists to the Zerendi district are investigated.

Keywords: ecological tourism, development, local communities, CBT, CBET, methods, questionnaires, natural objects, tourism service, natural resources.

Кілт сөздер: экологиялық туризм, даму, жергілікті қауымдастықтар, CBT, CBET, әдістер, сауалнама, табиғи нысандар, туризм қызметі, табиғи ресурстар.

Ключевые слова: экологический туризм, развитие, местные сообщества, CBT, CBET, методы, анкетирование, природные объекты, сервис туризма, природные ресурсы.

Introduction. Ecotourism has been gaining popularity recently due to its commitment to the preservation and protection of the environment. This is also facilitated by the trend towards globalization and raising issues related to ecology, resource conservation and tourism at the global level.

The development of ecological tourism is able to compensate the population for the restriction of its habitual economic activity, provide economic incentives for sustainable nature management, and encourage local communities to environmental protection activities.

Eco-tourism based on local communities is a modern phenomenon that can become an important tool for the implementation of state policy in relation to tourism. With its proper organization, it is possible to achieve a decrease in the unemployment rate among the population, positive results in economic terms, an increase in environmental literacy and responsibility of the population in preserving natural and historical and cultural goods, and much more.

The purpose of this article is to study the main conditions and directions of the development of ecological tourism on the basis of local communities in the Zerendi district of Akmola region. Based on this goal, the following tasks were investigated:

- definition of the concept of ecotourism and its classification;
- definition of the concepts of «local communities» and «community-based tourism (CBT)»;
- identification of the concept of community-based ecotourism (CBET) and the study of its relationship with ecotourism and CBT;

- study of the Zerendi district as a tourist destination of CBET;

The object of the study is the Zerendi district of Akmola region.

The subject of the study is the use of local communities in the development of ecological tourism in the Zerendi district of Akmola region.

Research methods. The research is based on analytical, statistical and forecast materials of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

The theoretical and methodological basis of the article were the Laws, resolutions of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the development of the tourism industry. The provisions set out in the article are related to the results of the analysis of domestic and foreign literature on the issues under study. The research was carried out using such methods of scientific cognition as the method of comparison, induction and deduction, methods of actualization, system analysis, classification, abstraction and concretization, questionnaires.

Literature review. The development of tourism is one of the priorities of the world's economies. It is tourism that is the largest and most dynamic industry in modern society, whose contribution to world GDP is more than 10%, and which creates at least 260 million jobs. The share of tourism in global GDP has almost halved, from 10.4% to 5.5%, according to a report by the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC). At the same time, the overall slowdown in the global economy was 3.7%[1].

The modern tourism industry, according to a number of experts, for example, P. Björk [2], is becoming more and more «green», an increasing number of tourists pay attention to the environmental friendliness of resorts and destinations, aspects of the preservation of natural complexes, an increasing number of vacationers choose natural, relatively untouched by economic activity territories as potential destinations [2].

Research conducted in Kenya in 1970 demonstrated that the economic benefits of wildlife tourism far surpass hunting – an activity that was banned in Kenya in 1977.

For many countries, ecotourism is the main branch of the national economy. Costa Rica, Ecuador, Nepal, Kenya, Thailand, Madagascar, etc., whose experience is well described in a number of publications, can be cited as vivid examples of such countries [3, 4, 5].

One of the theoretical problems of ecotourism is the breadth and ambiguity of definitions (D. Fennell [6], D. Fennell and K. Ebert [7], D. Weaver and L. Lawton [8]. In the specialized literature, up to 100 different approaches to the definition of ecotourism can be counted, and at the same time, the methodological problem of a single definition of this type of activity still remains unresolved. This suggests that in Western scientific theory, the concept of «ecotourism», without having one unified definition, is reduced to a set of basic principles that distinguish this type of activity.

The main part. Currently, ecotourism is one of the types of tourism that is developing so rapidly every year that even research in this area still does not allow us to accurately define common concepts of ecotourism.

For example, V.V. Khrabovchenko [9], one of the well-known researchers on ecological tourism, believes that among the earliest and most successful interpretations of the concept of ecotourism, the definition given by G. S. Guzhin, M. Y. Belikov and E.V. Klimenok stands out: «Ecotourism is based on concern for the environment. The organization of trips with a limited number of participants to natural areas with possible visits to places of cultural interest in order to implement various projects for the protection and rational use of natural resources comes to the fore» [1].

Table 1 presents only some definitions of international organizations and individual scientists.

Table 1

Definitions of ecological tourism*

Authors (sources)	Definitions of ecological tourism
1	2
World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)	Tourism, which includes all forms of natural tourism, in which the main motivation of tourists is observation and familiarization with nature
Cater C., Cater E.	it is a sustainable form of nature tourism, often with cultural components
Dedov S.V., Demin S.V.	this is a trip and a visit to well-preserved natural areas represented all over the world, as a rule, by national and natural parks, reserves and other types of protected natural areas

1	2
Zadevalova S.V., Butova T.G., Zadevalov V.Y.	this is a special form of travel in which recreation in nature is combined with the knowledge of its objects and phenomena
Tourist Terminology Dictionary	this is a combination of travel with an environmentally sensitive attitude to nature, which allows you to combine the joy of exploring new landscapes, studying samples of flora and fauna with the opportunity to contribute to their protection
International Ecotourism Society	this is a responsible journey into natural areas, which is to preserve the environment and support the well-being of the local population, also including training and interpretation

* Compiled by the authors based on the source [10], [11], [12], [13], [14].

The concept of «local community» in modern scientific discourse is used to denote the subject of local self-government. This category was introduced into scientific circulation by legal scholars in the early 1990s [8]. According to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated January 23, 2003 No. 148-II «On Local Public Administration and Self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan», the concept of a local community is a set of residents (members of a local community) living on the territory of the corresponding administrative-territorial unit, within the boundaries of which local self-government is carried out, its bodies are formed and function [9].

According to the interpretation of M.D. Sharygin and V.A. Stolbov [15], a local community is a territorial community of people, the most important feature of which is cohabitation on a specific territory.

Territorial communities of people have a whole range of social connections that arise in the course of their life. Localized in socio-geographical space, they are closely united by mediated social, economic, political, cultural and spiritual relations. The unification of the population into a territorial community while grouping it into certain layers, however, does not cancel the preservation of the individuality of each person and his role in the development of the territorial community.

CBT provides a huge opportunity to create jobs and to implement various kinds of entrepreneurial ideas of local communities. In addition, CBT is identified with an extensive plan to increase rural and urban economies, livelihoods and improve the living conditions of the population.

Ecological tourism based on local communities or, as it is called by foreign researchers, Community Based Ecotourism (CBET) is a phenomenon that takes place in countries with an increased focus on the development of ecotourism and support for local residents living in areas with attractive natural resources for tourists. In turn, on the website of the Rural Poverty community, the following definition can be found: «ecotourism based on local communities is a form of ecotourism that focuses on the development of local communities and allows local residents to have significant control and participation in its development and management, while a significant part of the benefits remains within the community».

It should be noted that the concept of CBET is somewhat new for scientific research in Kazakhstan, therefore, the definition of all possible models of both CBT and ecotourism plays an important role.

The development of CBT in Kazakhstan was laid back in the 2000s through the initiatives of international organizations in partnership with Kazakhstani non-governmental organizations, tourism business entities and persons interested in this type of tourism.

The peculiarity of CBT on the territory of Kazakhstan is that this phenomenon contains elements of ecotourism to the greatest extent. An important role in this direction is played by the Kazakhstan Tourist Association (KTA), established in May 1999, which is engaged in the promotion of CBT.

In 2005, at the initiative of the KTA, the Ecotourism Information Resource Center (IRC) was established, around which a program is being implemented to promote ecotourism based on local communities in Kazakhstan. Also in the same year, with the financial support of USAID, the Eurasia Foundation, the GEF SGP, ExxonMobil Kazakhstan Inc., 11 eco-sites were opened: Kokshetau, Korgalzhyn (Northern Kazakhstan), Katon-Karagai, Ridder (Eastern Kazakhstan), Zhabagyly, Ugam (South Kazakhstan Region), Karkaraly (Central Kazakhstan), Lepsinsk, Saty, Amanbakter, Talgar (Almaty region).

According to KTA data for 2018, 11 CBT communities were created (Table 2), and currently there are 25 CBT communities in the CBT catalog on the website of the University of Kazakhstan, which indicates an increase compared to previous years. Zerendi district with an area of 7.8 thousand km², located in the north of the Akmola region of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as an ecotourist destination, acquires the status of a tourist destination.

Table 2

Dynamics of CBT development in Kazakhstan*

№	2018			2021		
	Regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan	CBT names	Quant. SVA	Regions of the Republic of Kazakhstan	CBT names	Quant. SVA
1	Almaty region	Lepsinsk, Saty, Amanbakhter, Talgar	4	Almaty region	Saty, Carabulak, Amanbacher, Talgar, Lepsinsk, Karakastek Karabastau, Nura, Korgalzhyn, Bashy	10
2	Turkestan region	Zhabagly, Ugam,	2	Turkestan region	Ugam, Zhabagly, Lenger	3
3	East Kazakhstan Region	Katon-Karagai, Ridder	3	East Kazakhstan Region	Katon-Karagai, Ridder, Black Uba	3
4	Dzhambul region			Dzhambul region	Mynkazan, Merke	2
5	Karaganda region			Karaganda region	Balkhash (Shashubay), Karkaraly, Shabanbay bi	3
6	Akmola region	Kokshetau, Korgalzhyn	2	Akmola region	Korgalzhyn, Sandyktau, Imantau, Ayyrtau, Sarybulak, Balkashino	6
7	Pavlodar region			Pavlodar region	Toraygyr	1
Total			11			25

* Compiled by the authors

For a more in-depth analysis of the prospects for the development of the Zerendi district as a tourist destination, a comparative analysis of the competitive advantages of the Zerendi district was carried out (Table 3) among the districts that are part of the Akmola region.

Table 3

Rating of competitors of the Zerendinsky district in ecotourism*

№	Name of the district	Tourist Identification Card		The number of the most attractive natural objects (specially protected natural territories), units	The number of visitors served by placements in 2019., people	Distance from Nur-Sultan (Astana), km
		Top-10	Top-50			
1.	Zerendinsky		+	10	46 949	320
2.	Burabaysky	+	+	1	177 092	240
3.	Korgalzhynsky			1	323	130
4.	Birzhan sal			5	582	230
5.	Atbasarsky			1	8 968	260
6.	Yerementausky			1	16 755	160
7.	Zharkainsky			-	5 073	450

* Compiled by the authors

According to the first indicator, Burabay and Zerendi districts are distinguished. At the same time, in the Burabay district there are objects included in the Top 10 of the republican level (Shchuchinsko-Borovskaya resort area) and in the Top 50 of the regional level (children's recreation area near Lake Katarkol). In the Zerenda district, only one object (the territory of Lake Zerenda) is in the Top 50. Other districts are not included in this rating.

According to the number of specially protected areas, the Zerendi district is in the first place (10 objects), the Birzhan Sal district is in second place (5 objects), in other districts, except Zharkain, there is one object each. Many objects in the first two districts are known in the status of national parks and reserves. In addition to them, there are also state monuments of nature. There are 8 such natural monuments in the Zerendi district, and 3 in Birzhan-Sale. In the Burabai district, the national park "Burabai", known to everyone, is a natural object.

Analyzing all of the above, it should be noted that the most obvious competitors of the Zerendi district of Akmola region in ecotourism are Burabai, developed in this regard, and Yerementau, which has all the

prospects for development. In addition, despite the remoteness of the Zerendi district from the capital in comparison with the rest, it has clear advantages in terms of natural objects, according to the Tourist Map (it is in the Top 50) and in terms of the number of visitors. In the Zerendi district, the number of visitors is 3 times more than in the Yereymentau district, but 4 times less than in the Burabay district. This means that the Zerendi district can surpass the Burabai district in terms of tourism development. But such success can be achieved only with proper organization, planning and state support of tourism in the Zerendi district.

In order to determine the main problems of the development of ecological tourism on the basis of local communities in the Zerendi district of Akmola region, a method of sociological research was used – a survey in the form of a questionnaire.

The survey was conducted using a special Google Forms web application, in which people from all walks of life had the opportunity to participate without restriction. The questionnaire was distributed by sending a link to personal contacts, mailing lists on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, V Kontakte).

According to the results of the survey, 101 people participated in it, 68.3% of them were women (69 people) and 31.7% of men (32 people). The diagram can be found in Figure 1.

According to the chart, it can be seen that young people from 19 to 40 years old and middle-aged people from 41 to 60 years old are the most active participants in the survey. One of the main problems of ecotourism development based on local communities is that most people do not know about this type of tourism, in turn, this phenomenon leads to the fact that local residents are unaware of their opportunities to increase income and general well-being. According to the survey, to the question "Do you know what "ecotourism based on local communities" is?" 41.6% answered "Yes, I know", 40.6% – "I don't know, but I've heard it somewhere", 17.8% - "No, I'm hearing it for the first time" (Figure 1). Number of unenlightened people (40,6%+17,8% = 58,4%) in total, it exceeds the number of people who are enlightened in this matter.

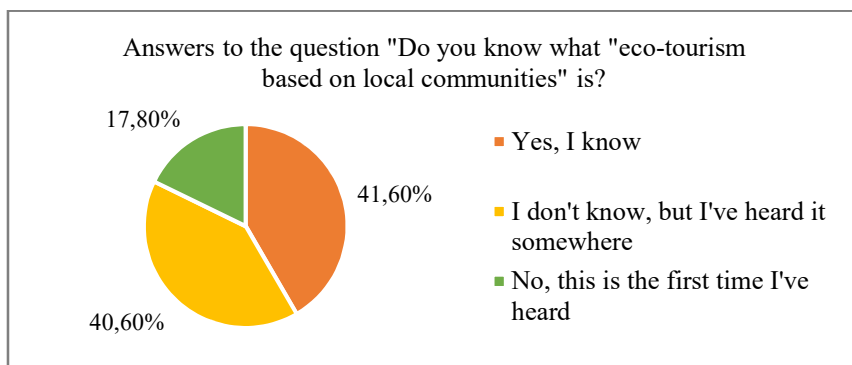


Figure 1. The ratio of respondents' responses to the question «Do you know what «ecotourism based on local communities» is?»*
* Compiled by the authors

As for the attendance of the Zerendinsky district, 51.5% of respondents have already visited this territory, 43.6% have never traveled there in their lives and 5% plan to visit. This suggests that in terms of tourism, the area is still unknown to potential tourists, because mostly people are limited to knowing only individual attractions, not associating them with a certain territory and space. The most famous sights of the district, according to the survey results, were lined up in the following order (Figure 2):

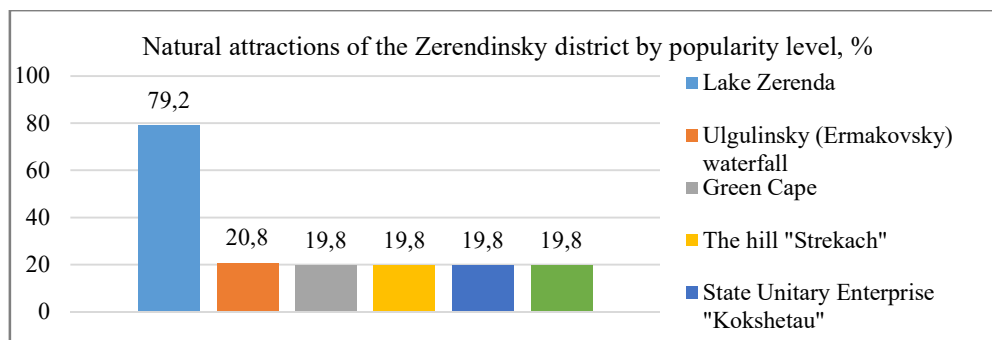


Figure 2. Popularity of natural attractions of the Zerendinsky district among respondents*
* Compiled by the authors

According to the last two drawings, it can be assumed that Lake Zerenda is the hallmark of the Zerenda district, around which no less significant objects are located. Therefore, when planning the development of ecotourism in this area, it is necessary to take into account the central position of the lake and the proximity of objects, and also not to forget about the principles of ecotourism.

In addition, the survey identified the main constraints in the development of eco-tourism based on local communities. The most acute problem is the low level of service, quality of service provision, weak promotion of the district as an attractive destination in tourism, poor quality of infrastructure, poor transport accessibility. The full information can be found in Figure 3.

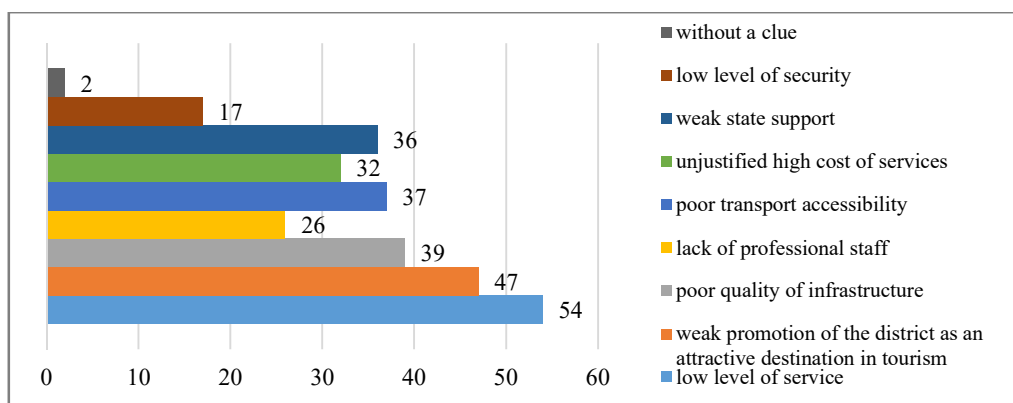


Figure 3. Restraining factors of ecotourism development in the Zerendinsky district*

* Compiled by the authors

Based on all of the above, it should be emphasized that the most acute problems of the development of ecological tourism in the Zerendinsky district are:

- environmental illiteracy of the population;
- lack of awareness of the population about ecotourism based on local communities;
- low quality of tourist services;
- poor transport accessibility;
- low quality of tourist infrastructure;
- weak promotion of the area as a tourist destination;
- weak support from the state;
- lack of professional personnel in the field of tourism.

In accordance with the above facts, the Zerendinsky district has the following prerequisites for the development of ecological tourism on its territory:

- the presence of natural objects that are interesting in terms of visiting for tourists;
- the presence of a certain flow of tourists, the 2nd place in terms of the number of visitors in the Akmola region;
- availability of objects included in the Top 50 of the Tourist Map;
- the possibility of unloading the neighboring Burabay district from tourists.

Conclusion. Zerendinsky district is certainly a promising area in which, with careful organization and management of the development of eco-tourism, it is possible to attract responsible and environmentally enlightened tourists.

In particular, as a result of this study, the following conclusions were made:

- ecological tourism is a set of phenomena and relationships that arise during a temporary visit to a well-preserved area in its natural state, not only to get acquainted with natural, cultural and historical sights, the local population, but also with the aim of further preserving the natural environment in pristine condition for both current and future generations.

- eco-tourism and community-based tourism are interrelated concepts, since both types involve the preservation of cultural and natural values. It should be added that in practice, ecotourism based on local communities is singled out separately, which contains both the principles of ecotourism and the principles of Community Based Tourism (CBT).

- community Based Eco-Tourism (CBET) can be defined as a border area located on the border of two spheres of tourism – ecological and CBT, assuming economic, social and environmental benefits in the management of territories by local residents together with other parties interested in this direction.

- the history of the development of CBT in Kazakhstan has only 14-15 years, nevertheless, this direction has prerequisites for the rise and progress of eco-tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

- assessing the possibilities of the Zerendinsky district, its natural resources included in the top 50 tourist zones of the Republic of Kazakhstan, it can be assumed that in the near future the Zerendinsky district will become one of the natural objects visited by tourists in the Akmola region.

- The Zerendinsky district is not just a region rich in nature, it is a future ecotourist destination. The research proposed in the article can contribute to the rapid economic development of the region, attract additional financial sources and solve the problem of youth unemployment.

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АҚМОЛА ОБЛЫСЫНЫҢ ЗЕРЕНДІ АУДАНЫНДА ЖЕРГІЛІКТІ ҚОҒАМДАСТЫҚТАРДЫҢ ӘЛЕУЕТІН ЖӘНЕ ЭКОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ ТУРИЗМДІ ДАМУ

Андатпа

Мақалада Ақмола облысының Зеренді ауданындағы жергілікті қоғамдастықтар базасында экологиялық туризмді дамыту шарттары қарастырылған. Экологиялық туризмнің негізгі ұғымдары және оның жіктелуі келтірілген, «жергілікті қауымдастықтар» және «қауымдастық негізіндегі туризм (ҚЭТ)» ұғымдарына анықтамалар берілген. Жапондық зерттеушілердің мысалында жергілікті қауымдастықтарға негізделген экологиялық туризмді дамытудың 3 деңгейлі моделі келтірілген.

Туристік нарықты зерттеу 2005 жылдан бастап 2021 жылға дейін бүкіл Қазақстан бойынша ҚЭТ (Community Based Ecotourism) даму серпінін көрсетеді, СВТ өсімі 5-тен 25 қауымдастыққа дейін өсті. ҚР туристификация картасының көмегімен Зеренді ауданының негізгі бәсекелестері Бурабай ұлттық паркі және Ақмола облысының басқа да жақын орналасқан курорттық аймақтарында зерттелді. Сауалнама әдісі арқылы Зеренді ауданында экологиялық туризмді дамыту мүмкіндігіне талдау жүргізілді, онда Зеренді ауданында туристердің үлкен ағынын тартуға және Зеренді ауданында жұмыссыздықты төмендетуге қабілетті табиғи ресурстардың неғұрлым маңызды объектілері айқындалды.

Сауалнама нәтижелерін талдау көрсеткендей, халықтың 58% - дан астамы экологиялық туризмнің не екенін білмейді. Зеренді ауданының 5 табиғи байлығының ішінен ҚР-ның маңызды туристік нысандарының қатарына енгізілген респонденттердің 70% - ы тек біреуін-Зеренді көлін атап өтті. Зеренді ауданына туристер ағынын тартудың артықшылықтары мен кемшіліктері зерттелді.

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РАЗВИТИЕ ПОТЕНЦИАЛА МЕСТНЫХ СООБЩЕСТВ И ЭКОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО ТУРИЗМА В ЗЕРЕНДИНСКОМ РАЙОНЕ АҚМОЛИНСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ

Аннотация

В статье рассмотрены условия развития экологического туризма на базе местных сообществ в Зерендинском районе Ақмолинской области. Приведены основные понятия экологического туризма и его классификация, даны определения понятиям «местные сообщества» и «туризм на базе сообществ (СВТ)». На

примере японских исследователей приведена 3 уровневая модель развития экологического туризма на базе местных сообществ.

Исследование туристического рынка показывает динамику развития СВТ (Community Based Ecotourism) по всему Казахстану, начиная с 2005года до 2021год, рост СВТ вырос с 5 до 25 сообществ. С помощью Карты туристификации РК, были исследованы основные конкуренты Зерендинского района в лице Бурабайского Национального парка и других близ лежащих курортных зон акмолинской области. Проведен анализ возможности развития экологического туризма в Зерендинском районе с помощью метода анкетирования, где определены наиболее значимые объекты природных ресурсов Зерендинского района способных привлечь большой поток туристов в рекреационную зону и снизить безработицу в Зерендинском районе.

Анализ результатов анкетирования показывает, что более 58% населения не знают, что такое экологический туризм. Из 5 природных богатств Зерендинского района внесенных в ТОП значимых объектов туристификации РК, 70% респондентов отметили только одну - озеро Зеренда. Исследованы преимущества и недостатки привлечения потока туристов в Зерендинский район.

