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# FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE IN RURAL AREAS UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF INNOVATIVE TRANSFORMATION OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

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**Abstract.** *The article systematizes the external and internal environmental factors that determine the development of ecotourism infrastructure in rural areas under conditions of innovative transformation of the regional economy. The significance of regulatory-legal, investment, digital, security, natural-resource, and institutional components is substantiated. The study examines the factors influencing the development of ecotourism infrastructure in rural territories amid innovative regional economic transformation. The role of ecotourism infrastructure development in diversifying the regional economy, enhancing the tourist attractiveness of rural areas, creating additional employment opportunities, and increasing local population incomes is justified. It is determined that the effectiveness of ecotourism infrastructure development is shaped by a complex of interrelated natural-resource, infrastructural, economic, investment, institutional, and innovation-technological factors. The main problems hindering the realization of the tourism potential of rural territories are identified, including insufficient transport accessibility, low levels of service and digital infrastructure, limited investment resources, and inadequate institutional support. The external environment of ecotourism development encompasses conditions formed beyond individual communities or tourism entities but substantially affecting the possibilities of utilizing their natural and recreational potential. Such factors include state and regional tourism policies, regulatory-legal framework, investment climate, tourism demand, transport accessibility, security levels, digitalization of the tourism market, international sustainable tourism trends, and climatic and military risks. It is the external environment that establishes the framework conditions under which communities can transform their resources into competitive ecotourism products. If*

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*regional policy lacks clear priorities regarding ecotourism, route development, nature conservation infrastructure, small business support, and digital promotion, even territories with high natural potential remain minimally involved in tourism circulation. Simultaneously, the external environment shapes market conditions. Growing interest in environmentally responsible recreation, local authenticity, natural routes, gastronomic and rural tourism products creates demand that stimulates communities to develop ecotourism infrastructure. Thus, external demand serves not only as an economic signal for business but also as an indicator of changing tourist consumer culture.*

**Keywords:** *ecotourism, rural territories, ecotourism infrastructure, sustainable development, regional economy, digitalization, territorial communities.*

The article presents a systematization of external and internal environmental factors determining the development of ecotourism infrastructure in rural areas under conditions of innovative transformation of the regional economy. The significance of regulatory-legal, investment, digital, security, natural-resource, and institutional components is substantiated.

It is examined that the factors influencing ecotourism infrastructure development in rural territories amid innovative regional economic transformation include a complex of interrelated natural-resource, infrastructural, economic, investment, institutional, and innovation-technological factors. The role of ecotourism infrastructure development in diversifying the regional economy, enhancing tourist attractiveness of rural areas, creating additional employment opportunities, and increasing local population incomes is justified.

It is determined that the main problems hindering the realization of rural territories' tourism potential include insufficient transport accessibility, low levels of service and digital infrastructure, limited investment resources, and inadequate institutional support. The external environment of ecotourism development encompasses conditions formed beyond individual communities or tourism entities but substantially affecting the possibilities of utilizing their natural and recreational potential.

It is established that such external factors include state and regional tourism policies, regulatory-legal framework, investment climate, tourism demand, transport accessibility, security levels, digitalization of the tourism market, international sustainable tourism trends, and climatic and military risks. It is the external environment that establishes the framework conditions under which communities can transform their resources into competitive ecotourism products.

If regional policy lacks clear priorities regarding ecotourism, route development, nature conservation infrastructure, small business support, and digital promotion, even territories with high natural potential remain minimally involved in tourism circulation.

It is shown that simultaneously, the external environment shapes market conditions. Growing interest in environmentally responsible recreation, local authenticity, natural routes, gastronomic and rural tourism products creates demand that stimulates communities to develop ecotourism infrastructure. It is concluded that external demand serves not only as an economic signal for business but also as an indicator of changing tourist consumer culture.

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