Chapter 50
Environmental protection and Tourism:
Tourism in the Protected Area in Mongolia

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ABSTRACT

Mongolia is a unique and relatively unexplored tourism and leisure travel destination. In the world tourism market, the tourism sector offers a great combination of wild natural features, a wide variety of untouched landscapes, historical heritage reserves, and nomadic life style and culture. The Protected Area Network of Mongolia cover over 14.5 percent of the country's territory and has become major destinations for rapidly growing tourism and recreational activities for its natural beauty, rare species of wildlife and historical and cultural heritage sites. Orkhon valley National Park (OVNP) is one of Mongolian main tourism destinations regarding to natural beautiful landscape and including numerous cultural and historical remains and sites. Thus, promoting sustainable tourism development to improve local livelihoods based on the nomadic lifestyle and protection of land with natural wilderness, water-sheds, important biodiversity, historical and cultural heritage and rare remains is challenging in the national park.

INTRODUCTION

The chapter aimed to define the appropriate approaches to promote sustainable tourism development in the protected area based on the assessment of ecosystem service, tourism carrying capacity.

Environment is a key component of tourism. Especially, the physical environment is often referred as the key element of tourism (Theobald, 1998, p20). Tourism has the power to enhance the environment, to provide funds for conservation, to preserve culture and history, to set sustainable usage limits,

and to protect natural attractions (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2012). Tourism assets, which are important for the sustainable growth of tourism in Mongolia, should be safeguarded from encroachment and damage by inappropriate development. These assets include special landscapes, important views, good water quality, the setting of historical resources, and biodiversity and access points to the mountains and vast steppe area.

The attractions and activities for tourists in Mongolia relate to the natural environment, historic feature and cultural heritage. Mongolia has diverse and distinctive vegetation and fauna, including some rare species such as the Argali Sheep, Przhevalsky Horse, Asiatic wild ass, wild Bacterian camels, snow leopard and ibex. The remains of dinosaurs have been found in the Gobi desert.

The historic heritage of Mongolia is mainly related to Chinggis Khaan. The traditional nomadic way of life, based on livestock raising and living in traditional gers, is of great interest to overseas tourists. As ecotourism has rapidly developed around the world, the demand for it in Mongolia has been steadily increasing due to our geographical location and ecotourism resources.

Despite the traditional cultural, historical and religious tours for which the Central region is famous for, it has a number of the most visited spots as sanatoriums and hot springs. In the western region, the eco- tours: bird and snow peak watching, animal and plant research, trophy hunting and photo safaris, cultural and historical tours are the main tourist products. Also, this mountainous region is a great attraction for foreign tourists who are interested in climbing, mountaineering, hiking, trekking, and jeep and bike riding.

Historical tourism is widespread in the Eastern region, including a monument for the Mongolian Great Khaan- Chinggis Khaan erected in his enthroned place-Khuduu Aral. The northern region has mainly developed mountain climbing, water sports and fly fishing. Rafting and kayaking are unique ways to explore the 45.000 kilometers long rivers of Mongolia and the Lake of Khuvsugul.

The Gobi desert is offering a wide variety tourist attractions including trips for search of dinosaur fossil, visit to famous monasteries and picturesque journey among the wildest animals like ibex, snow leopard, lynx, wild ass, gazelles, saiga, govi bear, fox, wolf and steppe fox.

The chapter covered the issues of tourism development in the protected area in Mongolia from environmental perspectives. Background section gives brief information of the Mongolian natural environment and tourism. The protected areas are main tourism destinations in Mongolia. A general model of ecosystem service assessment based tourism planning described in the case of the Orkhon Valley National Park. Estimating the tourism carrying capacity is a core part of the tourism development in the protected areas. As the result of the analysis, the tourism management goals and objectives were defined and the solutions and recommendations of the tourism policy were illustrated in the OVNP

Methodology of the Study

The papers, documents and guidelines related with tourism development at the protected areas were collected and revised to define the basic model of the research study. The following methods were used in the research study:

- Ecosystem services assessment
- Estimation of the Tourism carrying capacity analysis in the OVNP
- SWOT analysis.

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