

THE PLACE IMAGE AS SEEN BY RESIDENTS OF THE SMALL RUSSIAN TOWN STARITSA IN TVER' REGION

The article is devoted to the perception of a small town by its citizens. In this paper, we consider the case of Staritsa town in Tver' region. The topic has become relevant due to the broad interest in tourism development throughout Russian regions. The study is based on questionnaires, expert polls, in-depth and thematic interviews used the human ecology approach. The survey data was processed using the SPSS software package. As a result, significant cultural, religious and natural sites were categorized. These spaces and locations were mentioned by residents as personally meaningful, providing the connection between them and their town. The age-related aspects of choice were analyzed as well. We also distinguished between the residents professionally involved in tourism and those not associated with it. Cli-chés and administrative restrictions often influence the judgments of experts. This sometimes leads to the rejection of individuality of certain places or the town itself. Residents not directly involved in the tourism industry provide more variable lists of valuable sites that form the town's image and its specific features.

Keywords: *human ecology, space and place, natural and cultural environment, small town, tourism*

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