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MARKETING ISSUES OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN RUSSIAN REGIONS

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Agenda

- LMSU Research center for network economy
- Literature review
- Empirical study: preliminary results
- Conclusions and future research

Research Center for Network Economy



Центр исследований сетевой экономики ЭФ МГУ

Network forms of business organization

Social networks in development & promoting tourism products/destinations

Relationship marketing and place branding - emerging markets and cross-cultural studies

Sustainable regional economic development based on networking of small cities and district centers (supported by RSF, project 17-18-01324)

<http://www.econ.msu.ru/science/RCNE>

Tourism for small Russian cities

1100 cities, including

- **15 cities with more than a million inhabitants**
- 165 cities with more than 100 thousand inhabitants
- more than 780 small cities (with population number less than 50,000)



No	City	No of inhabitants, 2016
1	Moscow	12 330 126
2	St. Petersburg	5 225 690
3	Novosibirsk	1 584 138
4	Yekaterinburg	1 444 439
5	Nizhny Novgorod	1 266 871
6	Kazan	1 216 965
7	Chelyabinsk	1 191 994
8	Omsk	1 178 079
9	Samara	1 170 910
10	Rostov-on-Don	1 119 875
11	Ufa	1 110 976
12	Krasnoyarsk	1 066 934
13	Perm	1 041 876
14	Voronezh	1 032 382
15	Volgograd	1 016 137

RCNE research project

Sustainable regional economic development based on networking of small cities and district centers

The main goal:

- to develop a methodology for using network coordination mechanism that will help small towns and regional centers to gain sustainability and to develop successfully (that is, to find a way to facilitate combining their scarce resources and competencies, taking into account their history, specific features, and hidden competitive advantages)
- Tourism as one of the prospective decisions to boost small cities' sustainable development



Sustainable tourism: literature review

Sustainable tourism for development

- Waligo et al., 2013; Edgell, 2016; Gohar, Kondolf, 2016; Weaver, Jin, 2016; Canavan, 2018
- Sustainable tourism signifies a condition of tourism based on the principles of sustainable development, taking “full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts” (UNEP/WTO, 2005)

Tourism in emerging markets

- Fazenda et al., 2010; Legrand et al., 2012; Ghimire, 2013; Hussain et al., 2015; Maheshwari, Sharma, 2017
- Tourism is growing in importance as a strategic sector that can contribute to achieving the national development objectives

Tourism in Russia

- Morozova et al., 2014; Silaeva et al., 2014; Ignatiev, 2015; Ovcharov et al., 2015; Sheresheva, Kopiski, 2016; Aleksandrova, Vladimirov, 2016; Mingaleva et al., 2017
- Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes, 10 (4), 2018. Special Issue: Russian tourism and hospitality market becoming more diverse with new destinations

Empirical research: sample and data

- Analysis of the prospects to ensure positioning Mari EI Republic as an attractive destination for rural and ethno-tourism, taking in account the unique character of the Mari settlements in terms of their history, culture, and natural environment
- The study draws both on qualitative and quantitative methods:
 - in-depth interviews with key informants
 - survey that involved 225 residents of three rural settlements of the Mari EI
- Socio-cultural and behavioral characteristics of the local population, studied in relationship to the development of business activities in the field of rural and ethno-tourism
- Selection of settlements reflected the socio-economic regionalization Mari EI Republic. Presence of organizations engaged in rural tourism was an additional selection criterion
- The sample covered three-quarters of the adult population permanently residing in these settlements
- Observation and analysis of available secondary data used to triangulate the results

Empirical research: sample and data

- *Socio-demographic characteristics* are broadly in line with the structure of Mari El rural population.
- Nationality of the respondents:
 - 56% Mari,
 - 39% Russian,
 - 5% Tatar, Udmurt, Chuvash.
- 21.7% - people of retirement age, 19% - young people under the age of 25 years
- 61.2% of all respondents were born in the settlements where they are now living. A quarter of the respondents were born in some other settlements of the Mari El Republic. Only one in ten respondents came from other Russian regions
- 81.0 % of respondents live in their villages more than 15 years, in their own homes
- The level of religiosity: 88.9% consider themselves believers

Empirical research: sample and data



- Supporters of the Orthodox religion completely dominate (90.4%)
- 3.2% are Muslim
- 5% have traditional Mari pagan beliefs

Mari people – the last pagans in Europe

- A kind of "dual faith" is also widespread: a significant part of the Orthodox Mari observes some pagan rites



The most attractive features of Mari El

From your point of view, what are the most attractive features of our region?

Beautiful nature	184	86,4%
Kind hearted people	19	8,9%
A promising region for life	5	2,3%
There are many opportunities for entrepreneurial-minded people	1	0,5%
Other	4	1,9%

The unattractive features of Mari El

From your point of view, what are the unattractive features of our region?

Our climate is too severe	11	7,3%
Unkind people	22	14,6%
Life is stuck here	67	44,4%
Initiatives are not welcome here	20	13,2%
Other	31	20,5%

No intention to relocate

- The shares of optimistic and pessimistic responses on the questions assessing the respondents' social well-being are almost equal, with only slight predominance of negative assessments.
- Every third respondent is "happy to live here," 36% are "generally satisfied", 68.4% estimated their attitude towards the region as "positive". Moreover, 95% of respondents do not intend to relocate.
- The vast majority of the respondents (86.4%) count the beautiful nature and good ecological state as the most attractive features of the Mari El Republic as a place for living and a place to visit

Rural tourism development

- There are entrepreneurs that develop rural tourism in a number of settlements
- Typical examples are tourist complexes "Silent Dawns" in the village Maly Kugunur, "Expanse" in the village Aleshkino, "Yushut River" in the village Oshutyal



"Land of ancestors" – holiday dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the Kilemar district in Mary El



In-depth interview results

- In-depth interviews with entrepreneurs and managers of local tourism companies
- Most of them are older than the average, and have considerable experience in other areas of business
- One of the motives to start their rural tourism business was the desire "to get away from the bustle of the city" but at the same time to maintain an active lifestyle and "to be useful to people and society", "to support the revival of Russian villages", "to develop and maintain the national culture of the Mari people"
- As a result, there is mutual positive attitude of the entrepreneurs and the local community towards each other

Conclusions

- The research has shown that a number of cultural attractions and many ancient archaeological sites situated in the region could make a solid base for rural and ethno-tourism but currently there are obstacles for sustainable destination development
- There are local Mari communities still preserving ancient cultural and religious traditions (paganism) but they often demonstrate their opposition to the idea of ethnographic tourism, as they feel that this is a threat to national identity and spirit of Mari people
- At the same time, there are other nationalities, cultures and religions situated in the region
- Therefore, an original model of sustainable tourism destination development is needed that could help to gain synergy from all potential attractions of Mari El Republic, with the special attention to cultural integrity, small cities and villages local community involvement, life support systems, current and future social and environmental impacts, and the role of relationships and collaborative business networks

Questions?

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