

Traditions of the Peoples of the Middle Volga Region: Opportunities for Ethnic Tourism Development

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Abstract: A cultural potential of traditions of the peoples of the Middle Volga is shown using the example of a national costume and ceremonies for the purpose of ethnic tourism in the region development; creation of an authentic village as a keeper of a unique “world view” of the Middle Volga province is proposed; using the synergistic approach, the principle of historicism, comparative and historical, logical, retrospective, problem-chronological and synchronous methods an educational component in ethnic tourism is extracted, the objectives of which are not only to disseminate information on the traditional elements of everyday life of the Middle Volga, but to form tolerance among buyers of the tourist product; the provision that the turn to Volga people’s traditions will contribute to the prosperity of home tourism is substantiated. Data of the study may be useful for workers of travel business, as well as for professors and students of the universities, training personnel in the sphere of service and tourism.

Key words: A national costume • A ceremony • A cultural resource • An authentic village • Ethnic tourism

INTRODUCTION

At the present time value navigators of the Russian society, shaped by Occidental cultures, have a significant impact on the attitude to the historical cultural heritage, lead to deterioration of relations between generations, breakdown in traditions, customs and way of life continuity. Subsequently a problem of formation of spirituality, morality and tolerant attitude of modern Russians to other culture-bearers arises. This problem can be resolved to some extent through the development of ethnic tourism, taking into account the values of the past, promoting their popularization and fulfilling educational tasks. Ethnic tourism for the Middle Volga is an underdeveloped area, although this region in terms of the level of multinationality and fertility of historical events in this field can gain special significance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A theoretical foundation of this publication included works of home and foreign culture experts, historians, philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists and an empirical foundation included archival and field data of the authors. The formation of theoretical background of

the study was influenced by the papers dedicated to the Middle Volga studies of G.F. Miller, J.-G. George, S. Gerberstein, P.S. Pallas etc. [1]. At determining cultural potential of traditions of the Volga peoples a synergetic approach was used that allowed to find new opportunities for development of the system in crisis conditions [2]. In this case, traditional elements of everyday life in the Middle Volga region are regarded as a cultural resource, increasing the region's competitiveness in the tourism sector.

The fundamental principle of the study was the principle of historicism using which local social and cultural phenomena were studied in dynamics, concrete historical determination and individuality. In addition, the study also incorporates other methodological techniques: comparative historical, logical, retrospective, problem-chronological and synchronous methods.

RESULTS

Currently, the Middle Volga is a special ethnographic region of Eastern Europe, located at the junction of Europe and Asia. The peoples of the Middle Volga region have much in common both in economic and historical development and in origin, culture and lifestyle.

Predominant population of the region include: Russian, Mordovians, Mari, Udmurt, Chuvash, Tatars of Kazan and Volga, Bashkirs, Germans [3].

Historically many villages in the Middle Volga had mixed, multi-ethnic population, where each nation had its own characteristics of material and spiritual culture. This becomes particularly evident when the authors turned to such elements of everyday life as a national costume and ritualism.

A national costume is a display of national identity features, age-old traditions and craftsmanship, as it is the most popular type of folk art. According to the study a national costume is the artifact that actively influences the contemporary culture (for example, fashion and beauty industry), remaining a part of history nevertheless. The use of traditional costumes in ethnic tourism will provide the best way to save it as a cultural heritage.

In regard to ceremonies of the peoples of the Middle Volga, the existence of such a natural and cultural phenomenon as the Volga, promoting cultures interaction, has not resulted in loss of their national specificity: Russian rites remain Russian, Tatar - Tatar, Chuvash - Chuvash etc. It is advisable to use such feature also for development of ethnic tourism in the Middle Volga region.

Certainly, development and sale of a particular product in ethnic tourism requires creativity and support of various government agencies and public funds. But according to international practice, this touristic type of activity is profitable and enables a number of functions:

- Familiarizing (describes national peculiarities of a country or its region to tourists);
- Axiological (e.g. reenactment of certain rites demonstrates values of human relations);
- Ethic-integrating (thus carrying out of collective ceremonies helps to understand collectivity of people);
- Social (creation of jobs);
- Economic (increase of tax revenues to the budgets of different levels, increase of tourism industry incomings; increase of investment attractiveness of the region).

One of the promising directions of ethnic tourism is foundation of a folk village. It is a widespread phenomenon in world practice (e.g. Germany, Czech Republic and South Korea). Examples of folk villages in Russia are “Bogatyrskaya Sloboda” in the Zhigulevsk mountains and “Ustinovo” in the Penza region. In particular, in “Ustinovo” an image of Russian

way life in the XVIII century is reconstructed for people of big cities, weary of bustle and vanity [4]. However, a disadvantage of some Russian folk villages is their remoteness from an urban center and this fact has a direct impact on the price of such tourist product.

There are good reasons to establish such folk village in the Middle Volga region, near the urban district of Togliatti. Convenient geographical location of these villages should help to attract tourists, provided that there will be created a corresponding folk atmosphere by means of traditional ceremonies and festivals, the participants of which wear folk costumes. These events may be organized by ethnographers and culture experts, representatives of ethnic diasporas of the urban district of Togliatti. Of course, every ceremony and festival in the Middle Volga region is notable for its originality, which makes them especially valuable in multicultural modern space.

CONCLUSION

Foundation of a folk village in the Middle Volga is one of the possibilities of cultural and social capital accumulation in the Russian society [5]. Such turn to ethnic traditions is not a resurrection of the past, but a “cultural resource” for improvement of ethnic tourism in Russia and formation of tolerant relations between people.

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