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**ELECTRONIC INTERACTIVE ATLAS AS INFORMATION  
SUPPORT RESOURCE OF TOURIST AND RECREATIONAL  
ACTIVITY**

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***Abstract***

The urgency of the study is caused by the need to diversify the course of economic development for small towns and villages in Russia in general and the Samara region in particular, as well as the advantages of domestic tourism as a multiplier of economic growth. The purpose of the article is to analyze the existing information support resources in the Samara region and describe the experience of creating an electronic interactive atlas of tourist and recreational routes and sights of small towns and villages in the Samara region. The leading method of the study is the content analysis of guidebooks and atlases existing in the information space of the Samara region, Russia and abroad. This method made it possible to identify the most convenient and functional information resources for accompanying support of tourist activities in Russia and in the world. As a result of the study, the advantages and shortcomings of the existing information resources concerning tourism activities were revealed. The best features of the sites studied were preserved in the structure of the atlas of tourist routes in small towns and villages in the Samara region. These include the accessibility, visibility, scientific, practical focus, information in several languages, availability of direct links to partner sites and destination sites. The results of the study can be used to create similar resources in the future and to popularize the historical and cultural heritage of small towns and villages in the Samara region.

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**Keywords:** Domestic tourism, information resource, electronic interactive atlas, tourist route, small towns and villages in the Samara region.



## 1. Introduction

Internal tourism becomes the most important direction of the Russian economy. It is connected with need of innovative projects and service development, reducing the share of the extracting industries in the national economy. The feature of an end tourist product – emotions received by travellers during a trip making tourism is one of the needs of a modern man (Joseph, Pine, & Gilmore, 1999). The Russian researchers note that tourism in the Russian regions is a source of the development of small business (Chibir & Shirko, 2015).

The historical and cultural heritage of small towns and settlements can become a source for the development of these territories, both economically and in terms of realizing human potential. According to Throsby's theory (2001), Professor of Economy at Macquarie University (Sydney, Australia) the cultural capital accumulated in material cultural values can have a considerable impact on the economic growth and the economic stability and investments. At the same time the material and non-material cultural assets may be regarded also both as a final consumption subject and an intermediate product in the process of production of other values influencing the large-scale economic processes and indices.

Quite a lot of research examines the potential development of different types of tourism: event, gastronomic (Jakosuo, 2011), cinema (Dzhandzhugazova, Ilnaa, Latkin, & Koshelevava, 2016), however, the role of small towns with a rich history in the development of domestic tourism has been little studied.

The region is considered in the traditional interpretation proposed by Klemeshev (2004): The region is a territory in administrative borders of the Russian Federation, characterized by the following fundamental features: complexity, integrity, specialization and controllability, i.e. the presence of political and administrative authorities.

It should be noted that in addition to the objective side of the phenomenon, the region is characterized by a subjective side that reflects the perception of this place by its inhabitants. This subjective perception can be defined as a “sense of place”. Taking into account a combination of physical and social features of the region and its history, psychological ties are formed that determine the identity of the population of a particular territory. The concept of a sense of place suggests that people living in the region have experienced a certain collective experience on the basis of which common aspirations, interests, goals and values are formed. The region is analogous to a special “world” with its own mentality, way of thinking, traditions, worldview and attitude (Klemeshev, 2004).

Thus, the development of domestic tourism seems to be one of the determining factors not only for sustainable development of the territory, but also for preserving the region's identity. Popularization of local knowledge about the “small homeland” is necessary for patriotic and citizenship education in the younger generation, a sense of belonging to the history of the region. In the proposed study, one of the aspects of the development of domestic tourism is considered - informational support of the region's tourist activity in the Internet and the structure of the atlas of tourist and recreational resources of small towns and villages in the Samara region is being developed.

## 2. Problem Statement

Behind the regional identification of inhabitants is the natural need of individuals to have their own space, a certain geographical area. The commonality of the place of residence generates certain common features in people, which distinguish them from neighbours, and representations of this are the basis for a new community (Ismagilov, 2009). This feature is demonstrated by inhabitants of the Samara region, where the largest agglomeration and the richest natural and cultural-historical resources coexist.

The Samara region is located in the south-eastern part of the European territory of Russia in the middle reach of the largest Volga River in Europe and occupies an area of 53,600 sq. km, which is 0.31% of the territory of Russia. Despite the pronounced industrial character of the Samara region, the region has significant resources for the development of domestic tourism. Being a forest-steppe Krai, the Samara region in the north is covered with coniferous and broad-leaved forests, and its south and east are occupied mainly by steppe areas. The largest mountain range of the region and at the same time one of the most beautiful places in Russia are the Zhiguli Mountains, located directly in the bend of Samara Luke. In addition to the Volga, the main waterway of the region, the most significant rivers are Samara, Sok, Kinel, Big Irgiz, Kondurcha.

The Samara region is divided into 10 urban districts and 27 municipal districts. A distinctive feature of the region is its multinational composition, preservation of the cultural and historical heritage of its ancestors in municipalities of small towns and villages in the region.

In the conditions of the rapid development of electronic interactive means of communication, the Internet space is today the primary means of obtaining the necessary information by young and middle-aged people. All administrative-territorial units represent the historical information of the city or district, the information about honorary citizens, a photo gallery of events occurring in the territory on their websites. However, a systematic description of the tourist potential of the territory is found only on the sites of urban districts.

It must be said that in order to popularize tourist and recreational resources in the region, the Tourist Information Center was established. The main activity of TIC is the provision of information and reference services, provision of information to all interested parties about the objects of the tourist industry, tourist resources in the Samara region, implementation of regional (departmental) target programs, as well as advertising and marketing activities. The main purpose of the activities of TIC is to develop a unified system of information support for the tourism industry in the Samara region.

Having considered the information resources presented on the site of the Tourist Information Center of the Samara region in the section "What sights to visit", it should be noted that 33 references out of 53 attractions represent the resources of Samara and Togliatti. The remaining references do not fully reflect the diversity and uniqueness of the region's cultural, historical and natural-landscape heritage. Much more interesting information is contained in catalogues posted on the Center's website in PDF format, in particular "Sights of the Samara Region", "Calendar of Tourist Events 2016". However, the format of catalogues did not allow the authors to provide events and attractions with sufficient explanations and photographs.

In 2013, a guide to the Samara region (Samara region, a Tourist Guide) was created and posted on the network. The information about the sights of the region, translated into 6 languages, is provided with

a significant photo gallery. However, the main attention is paid to the limited amount of information presented, the emphasis on those sights and resources that have been reflected on the websites of municipalities.

Excursion and tourism activities in the major cities of the region - Samara and Togliatti, are well provided with information resources. However, this cannot be said about small towns and villages of the province. Mainly well studied resources and routes developed by travel companies are presented in the Internet environment. In addition, in existing Internet resources, the rural tourism objects that have emerged in recent years (2014-2015) are to a negligible extent. The increasing role of the latter direction is noted by the leaders of the region, in particular, at present a single electronic interactive catalogue of artisans of the Samara region is being formed.

Thus, tourist and recreational activities in small towns and villages in the Samara region need information support, a single resource that would combine the available information and would be of interest primarily to the domestic consumer. In this regard, it is necessary to create an electronic interactive atlas with free access to the network, designed for studying geography, ecology, history of small towns and villages, popularizing tourist routes and natural and cultural heritage.

### **3. Research Questions**

Given the gap in the existing resources of information support of tourism in the Samara region, these questions should be answered:

- What kind of information of natural and cultural heritage is placed at information portals of executive authorities and municipal governments of the region and what is the form of its presentation?
- What are the features of the best and most popular network travel guides in Russia and abroad?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The objectives of the study are:

- To analyse the available information of natural and cultural heritage of the small towns and villages at the information portals of executive authorities and municipal governments of the Samara region.
- To examine the best and most popular network travel guides in Russia and abroad to use their suitable features in the project of interactive atlas of tourist resources of the Samara region provinces.

### **5. Research Methods**

The authors monitored information portals of executive authorities and municipal government of the region involved in the development of tourism, sports, youth policy and culture. The resources presented in the network do not reflect all tourist routes, natural and landscape, historical and cultural attractions in the region.

To determine the content and characteristics of the planned atlas of tourist routes, it was necessary to study the best practices for creating such resources in Russia and abroad. The leading method of the

study was selected content analysis (content analysis) and analysis of the structure of existing guidebooks and atlases. This method has made it possible to identify the most convenient and functional information resources for accompanying tourist activities in Russia and in the world.

## 6. Findings

Korinevskaya (2013), who described the experience of creating a guidebook on the historical and cultural heritage of the city of Barnaul, notes the main feature of the guidebook as a reference publication - its practical orientation, brevity, reliability of information about the territory. As we have already noted, the guidebook for the Samara region already exists and is of good quality. In order to preserve these advantages and develop them in the new Internet resource, a choice was made in favor of the atlas as a form of presenting information. Unlike the guidebook, the atlas contains detailed and constantly updated geographic maps, possibly a more complete description of existing, mastered and little-known tourist and recreational routes and attractions of the region. Specific features of the modern atlas are consistency of content, uniformity of images and maps, accompanying graphic information with explanatory text containing geographic, economic or other information about the territory.

Specialized, route recreational and tourist atlases (RRTA), according to Dubrovinsky and Poshivaylo (2012), provide reference and descriptive information in a form that removes the traditional restriction of tourist destinations by administrative division of the territory, the cartographic basis is created not within the boundaries of the territory of the subject of the Russian Federation, but within the recreational and tourist territories with a detailed description of tourist routes that can pass on the territory of several regions.

Currently, servers have been created that represent services for tourists and business travelers that are part of large information portals such as Yandex, Yahoo! etc. For example, using Yahoo! Maps and Driving Directions, containing interactive geographic maps and atlases of the world, you can find out the optimal route from one destination to another with specific highways and streets (currently only within the US). And the information received by the user, including maps, can be sent by e-mail, sent by fax, received as a hard copy. In addition, it is easy to find information on the location of filling stations, restaurants, hotels and motels on the proposed route through the geographical map, to find out news affecting traffic (traffic jams, accidents, disasters, natural disasters, weather), and other useful information.

More scientific information contains interactive atlases of the portals Encarta and Nationalgeographic.com. The last portal, being an Internet version of the famous magazine, also provides up-to-date information on the latest discoveries, interesting facts, expeditions and programs in the field of geography and tourism in the United States.

Nevertheless, these portals and geo-services are poorly adapted to reflect the identity, historical and cultural heritage, features of the natural and landscape diversity of the territory. This feature was noted by the Dutch researcher J. H. Jeuring. When choosing a tourist territory or a destination, it is almost inevitable that there is a contradiction between the information representing the resource outside and inside the territory (Jeuring, 2016). The information presented in large geo-services and portals, represents the most famous tourist brands of territory resources and destinations. While for the

development of domestic tourism, representing the region at the local level, it is necessary to show the unknown about the known, those resources of the region that may be of interest and are in demand for travelers and tourists living in this region.

Thus, the advantages of electronic interactive guides and maps, which must be presented in the structure of the planned atlas, are accessibility, visibility, scientific, practical orientation, information in several languages, and the presence of direct links to partner sites and destination sites.

Taking into account the conclusions of the work of the Czech researchers Kiráľová & Pavlíček (2015), who studied the influence of social networks on the development of domestic tourism, the advantages of the guidebook are the information about it or links to this guide in social network.

As a result of identified flaws and advantages in the Russian and world practice of creating tourist guides and atlases, the electronic interactive resource with the domain name turatl.ru was created. This is a new information tourist system for searching and booking routes for both package and independent holiday on the basis of the largest Google platforms and Trip Aggregator. The system serves the purposes of comprehensive education and acquaintance of young people, residents and visitors with the natural and cultural-historical wealth of each small territory.

In connection with the interest shown by other regions of the Volga Federal District, the system was extended to other territories of the district and subjects of the Russian Federation.

The main page of the atlas begins with an interactive map of all the constituent subjects of the Russian Federation, which can be used as an independent object for training young people and for searching the route for all regions of the Volga Federal District and the country as a whole.

The menu of the site is simple and accessible: the tab about the project tells how to use the site, the rest are practical tools for constructing a route or searching for information.

### **6.1. Interactive map**

A distinctive feature of the atlas is detailed and constantly updated interactive geographic maps with the most complete description of existing and little-known or completely unknown unique ecological, cognitive, gastronomic, event, bicycle, car, foot and many other tourist routes, attractions and useful services in the Samara region, regions of the Volga Federal District, cities and rural areas, and in the future throughout the Russian Federation.

Much attention is paid to ergonomics and functionality. Integration with the portal Google maps, tourist information portals in the subjects of the Volga Federal District, integration with the national portal Russia Travel is planned.

The atlas will be posted in Russian and English.

### **6.2. Pages of the atlas**

In the portal, each district, region, city and rural area has full-value showcases of routes and attractions, photo galleries, multimedia, Google maps with detailed information about food and accommodation services (indicating the location, characteristics and the possibility of booking), the nearest attractions and events, excursion and transport services, medical and technical assistance, rental of tourist equipment and other services to get a safe and exciting trip).

### **6.3. Widget**

The showcase of tourist routes contains a bright and detailed description of routes in Russian and English languages that organizers can create independently in the design of our partner platform – Tripagregator. This is a new interactive tool for forming tour routes using a clear interface and placing them not only on the atlas portal, but also in the partner network.

### **6.4. Route search**

The main tool of the electronic interactive atlas is the service of planning your own unique tour. With the help of a filtering and searching system, a tourist can plan his combined inter-municipal and even interregional route in terms of parameters interesting to him. For someone it's walking cognitive, car event or ecological cycling routes, and for someone such exotic as flyboarding, dog sledding expeditions or underwater archeology.

Choosing a region or a city, determining the subject of the itinerary, you study all the options for independent trips or package holidays, choose the most interesting, plan dates, form your own unique route or press “reserve / buy”. This option allows you to pay for a package holiday in any way convenient for you and for the creators of the tour.

The peculiarity of the atlas is that it reflects the concept of information support. If the traveler has questions, the atlas offers the possibility of a feedback, the possibility of on-line booking.

### **6.5. Best routes**

When creating the atlas, the most important task was solved - combining independent routes, tested by many tourists (pedestrian, bicycle, automobile) and package holidays and excursions. “Suppliers” of routes and tours - tourist information centers, specially protected nature conservation areas, guides and travelers with author's routes, federal and regional tour operators, travel agencies, museums.

The portal's competitive advantage is integration with the main social networks. This is an extremely important advantage of the atlas, as modern travelers are guided primarily by those who have already visited this tour. This is directly related to the specificity of the tourist product, the final result of which is emotions and memories that make the tourist resource attractive for repeated visits and for recommendation to friends. The atlas video materials are posted on YouTube, the world's largest video hosting site.

The system of reviews and ratings will help you choose the best route.

## **7. Conclusion**

According to the All-Russian Public Opinion Center, in 2016 the foreign tours were not the main object of the Russians' dream about summer rest. Moreover, over the past five years, about 60% of Russians have rested only in their region. Nevertheless, according to all the criteria, respondents rate foreign holidays significantly higher than the domestic holiday. In particular, the opportunity to learn something new, to visit new places is also appreciated above. It seems that a partially low assessment of the cognitive potential of tourist resources in Russian regions is associated with a lack of information about natural, historical, cultural, recreational and entertainment facilities.

In order to create a new information resource - a route of the tourist atlas for the Samara region, the existing Internet resources of municipal subjects of the Samara region, guides and services for the region were studied. It was concluded that there is insufficient information support for tourist activities in small towns and villages in the Samara region.

The best practices of creating such information resources in some other regions of the Russian Federation were also analysed, and the following advantages were revealed: accessibility, visibility, scientific, practical orientation, information in several languages, direct links to partner sites and destination sites.

Based on the study, the electronic interactive atlas of tourist routes was created for small towns and villages in the Samara region. In connection with the commonness of historical destiny and the unique natural and geographical heritage of the macro-region "Volga Region", the project was extended to other regions of the Volga Federal District.

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