

INTRODUCTION

Customer: St. Petersburg state budgetary institution "City tourist information Bureau"

Contract performer: LLC "Intelmedia"

Subject: Implementing of services for marketing research to determine the target tourist markets, target groups of potential tourists and their needs to create and promotion of combined tourist product "St. Petersburg-Saimaa"

Implementing period: October 2019 – December 2020

Phases:

P.1. Development of methodological base of research

Scope of work:

- 1.1. Definition of research methods and method of data obtaining;
- 1.2. Development and approval of the necessary materials for the study, taking into account the selected research methods;
- 1.3. Coordination of study sites for tourist groups / individual tourists;
- 1.4. Identification and coordination of additional sources of information about tourists staying in St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast and Saimaa region Finland.

P.2. Drawing up a Tourist portrait of groups/individual tourists arriving in St. Petersburg/Saimaa region, Finland during the "low and high" tourist season, using the data of the analysis of the tourist (tourist) sphere of the regions for the same period 2017-I half of 2019

Scope of work:

- 1.1. Implementation of data collection on:
 - socio-demographic characteristics of tourists who made a trip to St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast and Saimaa region Finland;
 - expectations and preferences of tourists who made a trip to St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast and the Saimaa region of Finland.
- 1.2. Sending the official requests and study of open statistical data bases and data of the Federal migration service of Russia and Finland, border crossing points of Russia and Finland; Pulkovo airport (St. Petersburg), international airports of Finland; passenger ports of St. Petersburg and Finland; data of the open joint stock company «Russian Railways» and the Finnish railway company «VR»; companies of St. Petersburg and Finland, organizing bus passenger transportation, companies engaged in tourist and excursion activities on the territory of St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast and Finland.

1.3. Drawing of tourist portrait who made a trip to St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast and Saimaa region Finland on the base of information received during open statistical data collection within research period.

1.4. Analysis of the competitive destinations, preparation of a competitive map of the market with detailed justification, development of an initial competitive strategy for the creation of combined tourist product «St. Petersburg –Saimaa region».

1.5. Analysis of visa situation for tourists coming to Finland and Russia. Preparation of conclusions and recommendations.

1.6. Preparation of information and analytical report on the obtained data.

P.3. Drawing up a Tourist portrait on the base of conducting research of characteristics study of groups/individual tourists arriving in St. Petersburg/Saimaa region, Finland during the low and high tourist season, using the data of the analysis of the tourist (tourist) sphere of the regions for the period of the II half of 2019-I quarter of 2020

Scope of work:

1.1. Implementation of sociological surveys, surveys of tourists in places agreed with the Customer, giving an idea of:

- socio-demographic characteristics of tourists already coming and planning a trip to St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast and Saimaa region Finland;

- expectations and preferences of tourists coming and planning a trip to St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast and the Saimaa region of Finland.

1.2. Analysis of the results of surveys, questionnaires and other research methods of arriving tourists and planning a trip to St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast and the Saimaa region of Finland.

1.3. Conducting interviews with representatives of the expert community.

1.4. Analysis of data obtained during expert interviews.

1.5. Drawing up of tourist portrait who made a trip to St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast and Saimaa region Finland on the base of information received during open statistical data collection within research period.

P.4. Development of marketing strategy for the creation and promotion of the combined tourist product «St. Petersburg – Saimaa region»

Scope of work:

1.1. Analysis of tourism development trends. Determination of perspective directions of tourism development, reflecting the modern needs of tourists.

1.2. Analysis of the market of travel agencies and criteria for their selection by tourists, including analysis of services most popular among tourists.

1.3. Study of communication channels for obtaining information about tourist products of St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast and the Saimaa region of Finland.

1.4. Drawing up a profile of potential tourists arriving in St. Petersburg, Leningrad oblast and the Saimaa region of Finland based on the data collected.

1.5. Preparation of recommendations on the structure of the combined tourist product «St. Petersburg –Saimaa region».

1.6. Preparation of recommendations for the promotion of the combined tourist product «St. Petersburg – Saimaa region».

2.7. Preparation of information and analytical report

THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE RELEVANT FINDINGS

On the first stage the research methods and data collection methods were determined. The provision of services within the framework of the project involves the use of a set of research and data collection methods. They include:

- ✓ Monitoring of the information in the Internet;
- ✓ Submission of official inquiries and analysis of open source data, as well as statistical data of the Federal Migration Service of Russia and Finland, border crossing points of Russia and Finland; Pulkovo Airport (St. Petersburg), international airports of Finland; passenger ports of St. Petersburg and Finland; data of the Russian Railways and the Finnish railway company VR; companies providing passenger bus transportation services in St. Petersburg and Finland, companies engaged in tourist and excursion activities in St. Petersburg, the Leningrad region and Finland.
- ✓ Interviews with representatives of the professional community of the tourism sector in St. Petersburg, the Leningrad Region, the Saimaa Region of Finland - hotels, tour operators, transport companies involved in the incoming tourist flows.
- ✓ Survey of tourists (polls).

Development and harmonization of the necessary materials for the study with the Customer taking into account the selected research methods

Based on the selected research methods, the following materials must be harmonized with the Customer:

- ✓ questionnaire for a tourists survey;
- ✓ text of the official request.

The analysis of strategic documents on tourism for each of the destinations included in the project showed that in St. Petersburg, the Leningrad region and the Saimaa region, the key areas of tourism development include: further development of the tourist infrastructure; expansion of the offered range of tourist products; increasing the efficiency of promotion; creating conditions for sustainable tourism development, digitalization of tourism business, development of strategic types of tourism, etc.

The research identified the most promising types of tourism (in St. Petersburg - cultural and educational, event, business and congress and exhibition, etc., in the Leningrad region - cultural, educational, military-patriotic, ecological, rural, etc.; in the Saimaa region - natural, health-improving, cultural, educational and sustainable tourism). The promising types of tourism highlighted separately for St. Petersburg, the Leningrad region, the Saimaa region prove the availability of opportunities for creating a single combined tourism product that would combine tourist resources and infrastructure of these destinations.

The survey showed that the main motive for making trips for modern tourists is the opportunity to have fun, relax or visit attractions. The focus on rest and sightseeing as the key goals of tourist trips determines that the main priority when choosing a travel region is the presence of interesting objects in this region (along with cost and transport accessibility).

Desk research shows that nationality also influences the travel preferences of the modern tourist. It was revealed that Finland is interesting to foreign tourists for its culinary traditions, local architecture and design, active forms of recreation and entertainment in nature, winter tourism, shopping opportunities, etc. The preferences of foreigners in relation to St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region include: historical and cultural heritage, wealth nature, national flavor, "nostalgic" tourism, outdoor activities, military-patriotic tourism.

A desk study, as well as interviews with experts, showed that travel topics such as Transformative, Bleisure, Experience, Wellness and Solo are gaining popularity.

The research carried out within the framework of the project showed that the demand for tour operators and travel companies as organizers of tour trips is not too high. As for the criteria for choosing travel agencies by tourists, the following can be distinguished: location, transport accessibility, reputation, experience, friendliness and professionalism of employees, pricing policy, open and transparent procedure for payment, booking and cancellation of tours, etc.

Within the framework of the project, an analysis of Internet requests of tourists interested in St. Petersburg, the Saimaa region and the adjacent part of the Leningrad region was carried out (according to <https://trends.google.com>). There is a significant predominance in the statistics of requests for St. Petersburg.

As the research carried out within the framework of the project has shown, the key source of information about the region is the Internet (not including social networks). According to surveys, more than half of the respondents learned about the region from the Web. Moreover, the Internet is a key source of information when planning travel as such (about 70% of respondents).

Due to the fact that the Internet is the key communication channel for obtaining information about tourist products in St. Petersburg, the Leningrad Region and the Saimaa region, IntelMedia has analyzed the requests of potential tourists by toponyms of the region. Analysis of the five-year dynamics of search queries demonstrates a pronounced seasonality of public interest both in the region as a whole and in its individual components (settlements, as well as to Saima and Vuoksa): the peaks are, as a rule, in June-August, and the minimum values are in December - January. There is some tendency towards increased interest. For smaller settlements (Parikkala, Ruokolahti, Luumäki, Taipalsaari, Savitaipale, Rautjärvi and Lemi), the public interest is minimal, the leaps are within the statistical error.

An analysis of the websites of tourist centers in Russia and Finland made it possible to single out the following as key information sources: <https://www.gosaimaa.com/>, <https://e-finland.ru/>, <https://www.visitfinland.com/>, <http://www.visit-petersburg.ru...> In Finland, almost every city, regardless of its size, creates its own information resource and promotes it in social networks. On the Russian side, information is provided mainly by St. Petersburg. Small settlements (Vyborg, Zelenogorsk, Sestroretsk, etc.) either have a limited and unpopular resource, or do not have it at all.

At stage 4, an average (stage 2 and stage 3) portrait of tourists who visited the region of St. Petersburg, the Leningrad region and the Saimaa region was formed. A typical tourist is most likely a citizen of Russia, China or large European countries (France, Germany, Spain, Finland) aged 19-50, a woman, with an average / high income. Married (or in a relationship) Travel goals are mostly recreational. The main item of travel expenses is accommodation and meals. Makes 2-3 trips in the region per year (most often, in the summer, during his own vacation, without reference to official holidays), planning them in advance (1-4.5 months), and the duration of travel, in general, does not exceed a week. To book hotels, he uses booking.com or AIRBNB resources. The priorities when choosing a travel region are, first of all, the presence of interesting objects and the cost of the proposed tour, and when choosing the actual place of travel - interest in the history and culture of the place and, in general, a thirst for travel. The factors that can make you refuse to travel to a particular place are insecurity, lack of interesting attractions and high cost. The most popular entry point to the region is St. Petersburg, which is also of the greatest interest in comparison with other cities in the case of the first trip to the region (Savonlinna is in second place). The way to enter the region is by plane, and to move around it -

by bus or car. The possibility of carrying out a combined tour with simultaneous visits to two countries within one trip is of undoubted interest for a typical tourist, however, at the moment, the key obstacle to such a trip is the need for a visa. The problem is the low awareness of the region - the associative array of objects connected with the region is extremely small and stereotypical, and the level of knowledge about the Saimaa is practically zero in general (it is limited only by the idea of the mass of lakes in this part of the world).

Summarizing the results of the study, the most promising target audiences of potential tourists (TOP-5) were identified: "Collectors", "Intellectuals", "Combinators", "Naturalists", "Party People". For each group, there are countries (regions) that generate demand, characteristics and the corresponding message.

Based on the profile of a potential tourist, recommendations were developed on the structure of the combined tourist product "St. Petersburg - the region of Finland". Tourist products based on a combination of cultural, historical and natural resources, combining several types of transport, united by one conceptual basis, may be in demand. A development scenario for the selected target groups is presented, taking into account the COVID-19 pandemic.

Within the framework of the project, it was concluded that the projected combined tourist product "St. Petersburg - Saimaa region" should be:

- ✓ combined, combining cultural and historical, urban tourism and outdoor recreation;
- ✓ interregional and interethnic (at least three regions, two countries);
- ✓ quite long in distance (at least 200 km), combining a large number of attractions and stops, i.e. implying a certain number of overnight stays - from about 4 to 7;
- ✓ targeting distant markets and long-haul flights, where it is important for tourists to visit several destinations in one trip, which is usually expensive due to the distance;
- ✓ for tourists from neighboring countries and regions - to position the difference, the difference in impressions received during one trip;
- ✓ concentrated around St. Petersburg as the "star" of the route and tourist hub;
- ✓ especially attractive for long-distance tourists, for whom SPb-Saimaa can be positioned as a single, equidistant from them region: St. Petersburg / Helsinki, as the main points of entry / exit;
- ✓ focused on the 5 main target audiences described above.

In addition, projects of tourist routes were developed within the framework of the tourist product "St. Petersburg - Saimaa region", structured by the types of transport used:

- ✓ "To Finland - along the Gulf of Finland" (sea cruise St. Petersburg - Vyborg, plus by road to the Saimaa region and back);

- ✓ “EURO-VELO-PETER” (bicycle trips within the framework of the main routes EURO-VELO with a stop in the Saimaa region and further through Vyborg to St. Petersburg);
- ✓ "Along the Saimaa Canal" (river cruise from Vyborg to Lappeenranta, by road from St. Petersburg to Vyborg and across the Saimaa region. The other way around - perhaps the Allegro railway);
- ✓ Allegro route (Railway route between Helsinki and St. Petersburg, with stops in Vyborg and Vainikkala (Saimaa region). In the Saimaa and Vyborg regions - by road);
- ✓ "Auto routes St. Petersburg - Leningrad region - Saimaa region" (Automobile, bus trips of various directions and duration; autocamping and autocaravan trips).

It was concluded that the tourist product "St. Petersburg - Saimaa region" can combine a combination of various types of transport and delivery of tourists, which is a vivid competitive advantage: air, river cruise, sea cruise, yacht-boat, railway, bicycle, automobile, bus, auto-caravan.

For each of the projected routes, directions of development and application of efforts are highlighted.

In addition, it was concluded that it is expedient to promote the combined product of St. Petersburg - Saimaa in the markets for which the identity of one single region can be formed. These are practically all key Asian markets, Israel. On the contrary, on the European markets, on the market of Moscow and Russian large cities, it is necessary to promote the difference, the difference in impressions received during one trip. Accordingly, it is necessary to form routes within the project, taking into account these two circumstances.

As a result of the project, the competitive advantages of the project were highlighted in order to promote and distance from competing destinations. The strategy of promoting the combined tourism product "St. Petersburg - Saimaa region" in remote markets should emphasize the identified competitive advantages and take into account risks. In the final part, measures were highlighted:

- ✓ to attract transport companies traveling on the territory of St. Petersburg, the Leningrad Region and the Saimaa Region, Finland;
- ✓ to attract travel companies (travel agencies, agencies) working with target countries to receive and send tourists to St. Petersburg, the Leningrad Region and the Saimaa Region Finland;
- ✓ to overcome existing barriers in obtaining visas between Russia and Finland.

After the end of the pandemic and the opening of borders, the attractiveness of the considered cross-border interregional tourism product is projected to increase. However, successful development requires significant infrastructure investments and attraction of

investors, the formation and implementation of a marketing plan to influence target markets, the creation of a register of project participants and beneficiaries, their involvement in the project, etc. To further coordinate the development and promotion of a single product, it is advisable for the regions of interest to establish a structure (possibly in the form of an interdepartmental group, project office or commission) to carry out further work on the project, with a single management, funding and a team of executors.

Appendix 1. Tours to the Saimaa region with limited movements across the border due to COVID-19

Tourism on the routes St. Petersburg - Leningrad region - Saimaa region involves crossing the border.

Therefore, if there are bans on tourism activities across the border due to the COVID-19 pandemic, cross-border tours and trips are not possible.

However, as the restrictions are partially lifted, certain “windows of opportunity” are opening for some of the above target audiences (see Table 1).

Table 1

Scenarios for Different Target Groups of the COVID-19 Pandemic

No.	CA	Transparency of borders for tourism			
		Complete ban	"Greek" version ¹	Option "Pre-agreed route" ²	Post-covid panic option ³
1.	"Collectors"	No	Limited	Limited	Minimum
2.	"Intellectuals"	No	Limited	Limited	Minimum
3.	Combinators	No	Limited	Limited	Limited
4.	"Naturalists"	Limited (only for medical indications)	Limited	Minimum	maybe
5.	"Party People"	No	No	Minimum	Limited

Thus, the demand for the combined tourist product St. Petersburg - Leningrad Oblast - Saimaa Region will fluctuate by 5 CA depending on the scenario of the phased lifting of restrictions, which will be chosen

¹ Restriction on the number of tourists for a period (week, month) from a certain country, for example, no more than 500 group tourists per week

² A group trip with pre-fixed stops at certain destination points is agreed with the country's authorities

³ All restrictions have been removed, but “post-pandemic” fears of confined spaces, large crowds, long flights, big cities, etc. remain.