

THE ASYMMETRY OF TOURIST IMAGES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CROSS-BORDER THREE-MEMBERED REGION OF THE EASTERN BORDERS JUNCTION OF RUSSIA, MONGOLIA AND CHINA

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of this study is due to the existence of geographical differences at the junctions of the state borders of three countries, which are manifested by structural, legal, mental asymmetry and asymmetry of geographical images, networks in the national segments of the Internet. The geographical images are created and promoted in the global information web space, the main barrier in promoting them is a language barrier, since most of the information is produced in state languages. Neighboring countries often translate information into English, rather than in the languages of bordering countries. This fact gives rise to the asymmetry of geographical images for the joint borders of Russia, Mongolia and China.

In this regard, this article is aimed at identifying or disclosing the information asymmetry of geographical images. The leading method of researching this issue is a content analysis of the positions of geographical images (geographical symbols of their components) in the national information space and the information space of bordering countries. The implementation of this method ensures the study of abstract tourist images in the Internet. Content analysis through the interrelation of textual and non-textual phenomena allows us to assess the territory image in quantitative values.

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This method allows to consider and reveal comprehensively the shortcomings of images promotion strategy, which is called “positioning” in Marketing. In the work "positioning" refers to the method of position identifying. Under the leadership of the Russian Geographical Society, a several number of competitions were held in Russia in order to identify the hierarchy of geographical symbols that form the images of territories. The country clearly defined the list of geographical images for international (including transboundary) positioning.

The article reveals a cross-border information asymmetry at the eastern junction of the borders of Russia, Mongolia and China as a problem of weak positions for the geographical images in the language web segments of neighboring countries, which impedes the development of cross-border tourism and low investment attractiveness of cross-border regions.

Keywords: tourism, tourist brand, Chita region, Mongolia, tourist and recreational activities

INTRODUCTION

At the junction of state borders between the three countries the specific geographical structures are developed – the International cross-border three-membered regions (ICBTMRs) (Baklanov, Novikov, Ptitsyn, 2016). Integration processes in the three-membered regions are more complicated than in the two-tier regions formed on the borders of two countries. It's more difficult to agree and coordinate actions between the three parties (on the ICBTMRs scale) than between the two parties (on the two-tier region scale).

Markus Leibenath [Leibenath, 2007], while analyzing the causes, forms and consequences of cooperation between the bordering territories of Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic, notes that having a complex history, they are characterized by economic imbalances, and the lack of common identities. Robert Knippschild [Knippschild, 2011] highlights that the physical barriers to integration have been removed from the moment, when the Schengen Agreement was entered into force in 2007. However, there are still the legal, institutional and mental barriers, and they prevent the tripartite integration. Peter Jurczek has a similar point of view [Jurczek, 2002].

A. Jacob and A. Suchet [Jacob, Suchet, 2013], while considering the cross-border region of Espace Mont Blanc located at the borders' junction of Italy, France and Switzerland, raise the problem of determining the outer perimeter (outer boundaries), putting the issue of nature protection as the root cause of trilateral cross-border integration, which is followed by the coordination of agricultural nature management and eco-tourism. The authors underline the

enforceability of this cross-border territory functioning as a single space, since Switzerland is not a member of the European Union.

The ICBTMRS development and functioning takes place under the contradictory unity of symmetry and asymmetry. Asymmetry levels of the infrastructure development, asynchronous rates of the social and economic projects implementation in the sphere of tourism, differences in the technical, legal and mental rules and standards for the organization of tourist services are often a problem associated with the formation of a single cross-border territorial organization and the optimal functioning of tourist facilities located along a border.

James Wesley Scott and Kimberly Collins [Scott, Collins, 1997], while studying the issues of stimulating the cross-border German-Polish regionalism in asymmetric situations, interpret the concept of "cross-border asymmetry" very widely, putting in it not only the differences between the standards of living, but also the differences between the political traditions and cultures.

In the spatial organization of natural and economic cross-border systems there is no complete symmetry (structural similarity on both sides of the border). There are only certain features of symmetry, i.e. the cross-border symmetry (Baklanov, Novikov, Ptitsyn, 2016). On the other hand, the asymmetry can be considered as a tourism resource, when the originality and uniqueness of the territory, which are expressed in its tourist image through a variety of natural and cultural and historical tourist destinations (attractions), allow to create a single cross-border tourist space, in reality through the creation of various cross-border tourist routes, and in the information environment - through a holistic tourist image of cross-border territories.

The geographical images are created and promoted in the global information web space, the main barrier in promoting them is a language barrier, since most of the information is produced in state languages. Neighboring countries often translate information into English, rather than in the languages of bordering countries. This fact gives rise to the asymmetry of geographical images for the joint borders of Russia, Mongolia and China.

METHODS

The key method of research is positioning, as the identification of geographical images positions in a hierarchical structure. However, in marketing, the real idea behind the word "positioning" has a different meaning – it is the purposeful formation of its image in the information space, its consolidation at the legal and infrastructural level. Creating an image,

as an element of myth-making, requires a concentration of efforts by the representatives of worldview sciences (History and Geography).

In PR, advertising and marketing, "positioning" is a choice, creation and adjustment of distinctive features, advantages, and merits in the minds of consumers (target groups). At a certain stage, you can and need to pose a product, a service, a person (for example, a MP), an organization, an enterprise, and even a territory. The need for positioning arises, when the competition for resources, finances, work forces, investors, and tourists is exacerbated, i.e. when the clear and obvious differences are erased or become insignificant [Blaschenkova, 2010, p. 23].

The Transbaikal Krai, as a subject of the Russian Federation, appeared on the political-geographical map in March 1, 2008. The new name of the region reflects its geographical location, which is of great importance for the potential investors and tourists, making it easier for them to perceive the territory. Formation of a new subject with a new name can be considered as the initial phase of positioning - the wording of the region brand name. It should be noted that the area name as a region beyond Lake Baikal is an element of global positioning: distance from the Lake Baikal in the hundreds of kilometers is almost not visible on the world map. According to the historical and geographical tradition, the name "Transbaikal" (Zabaykalye) refers to the territory that unites two subjects of the Russian Federation: Transbaikal Krai (Zabaykalsky Krai) and the Republic of Buryatia. Both the residents of the Transbaikal Krai and Buryatia identify themselves as "Transbaikalians". The Transbaikal Krai is the Eastern Transbaikal, and the name "East Transbaikal region" would be more precise. But the name wording is not a matter of Geography or even politics, but of the economy and the tourism industry. In the literary sources and media, Chita has always been promoted as a capital of Transbaikal region, and Ulan-Ude - a capital of Buryatia, but in terms of patenting brands, the issue of the capital of Transbaikal region is open.

The territory positioning as the formation of its image is a purposeful work on the public consciousness, which should strengthen the old one or create a new image of the region through the mass media. In any case, this is a work aimed to change the information stereotypes in the public consciousness. Through education a person develops a certain world view as a collection of pictures of the world (geographical, physical, historical, chemical). Positioning, as the creation of a new region image in the information space and public consciousness, can rely on the already existing images formed by the education system, which undergo different transformations. In everyday life of a person, the news agencies daily form

an information picture of the day. Thus, the information patterns are formed in a modern human.

The modern era of globalization is characterized by the lives unification of modern Earth's inhabitants. Due to the increasing population mobility, the media and the Internet provides the opportunity to people of different countries to discuss the same news, and watch the same movies at the same time. The world's population observes the events of global significance: film festivals, contests, Olympiads. In this global information flow, when the planet is getting crowded, the geographical knowledge of different countries and regions of the world acquires the status of general cultural competences. However, it is complicated, and even dangerous for the psyche to possess encyclopedic knowledge in an era of increasing information flow. Human memory has a useful feature - forgetting information, thereby keeping the human psyche from overloading. Knowledge of certain countries and regions is reduced to their geographical images. The region images turn into the destinations of tourist attraction, they are used as competitive advantages in the struggle for tourist flows.

The search for geographical images is a process of regionalization, that is, the search for territorial identity, which manifests itself as a response to globalization with its unification. Many territories are beginning to actively promote their images in the public consciousness, moreover, the methods of promotion are borrowed from marketing, where they are named as positioning.

Territories positioning is a process of changing their position in the population consciousness, through the formation of stable "territory-image" geographical stereotypes. There are many examples of such stereotypes: Egypt - the Pyramids, Moscow - the Kremlin, Siberia - Lake Baikal, China - the Great Wall of China. And, as you can see, the stereotypes are formed for both cities and entire countries. Of course, each region has its own hierarchy of images, and each country forms such hierarchy and constantly reviews it by means of various national competitions.

The geographical images positioning differs from the goods positioning. When positioning the goods, the economic effect is pursued, demand is formed through advertising, and then it is satisfied. When positioning the Russian geographical images in the domestic space, the economic effect is inseparable from the social effect. In addition to attracting tourists themselves and extracting benefits from the image-symbols, the educational goal is pursued - the formation of a sense of patriotism in both social and territorial communities and their constituent social groups. Moreover, the social effect can come out on top.

Many cotemporary social sciences deal with the positioning issues: Economics, Sociology and Psychology. Social Geography, as a worldview science, traditionally develops this issue. The positioning issues are related to the problems of reflecting the objective geographical reality in the form of separate geographical images, which ultimately form a single geographical picture of the world in a man. In the Soviet period of the geographical science development, the existing ideological pressure forced the geographers to speak in a unified theoretical and methodological manner, defining a monopoly on the formation of geographical images. The positioning issues were developed within the framework of regional studies by estimating the types of geographical position: economic and geographical, political and geographical, ecological and geographical. Conceptual foundations of the theory of economic and geographical position (**EGP**) is still widely used in the process of positioning as a tool.

The concept of "positioning" does not replace the traditional for Geography concept of "economic and geographical position". A.G. Druzhinin made an attempt to carry out their theoretical and methodological separation. In his opinion, "positioning" is an adaptive process of adjustability to the external and internal environment for the territorial social and economic system functioning and simultaneously changing (if possible) this environment [Druzhinin, 2010, p. 26]. Thus, positioning is considered as an active process of a particular geostrategy implementation. We believe that a concept of "positioning" can be considered more widely: not only as "active side of a particular territorial social and economic system (**TSES**) attitude to all the other phenomena of the territorial organization of society" [Druzhinin, 2010, p. 26], but also as both a geographical expertise item and EGP assessment procedure. EGP is a phenomenon, and "positioning" is a process of its reflection. Such a reflection can have different purposes and degrees of objectivity. The adequate reflection is sought in the development of regional development programs, and in terms of marketing policy the geographical mythology is needed to form a demand (for example, a tourist resource), that is, as an element of advertising, which does not always adequately reflect the region significance and often deliberately exaggerates the positive elements, emphasizes the competitive advantages of the region. In the tourism industry, it is the assessment and change of the region tourist and geographical position, that is, a change in the attitude towards tourist destinations and tourist pilgrimage routes located outside the region, through the redistribution of these flows within its own territory or the creation of a fundamentally new tourists flow with other values than in neighboring regions regard to the tourists with other interests.

As noted by Professor V.M. Bulaev: "When assessing the geographical position, it is necessary to take into account the fact that an important role has the presence of neighboring territories, by bordering on which the region either strengthens its potentials, or loses them, *looking* (the author's italics) like a "gray shadow" against the background of more developed and prosperous territories " [Bulaev, 1998]. In this sense, the concept of "geographical position" (in the case of tourist and geographical position under consideration) includes in its meaning not only the relation to external reality, but also the internal content of the object, as well as the presence of ideas about this internal content (information stereotypes in the public consciousness). Also, we should note one more feature of definition given by V.M. Bulaev. It's about what the region looks like against the background of its neighbors (rather than what it really represents), that is, how its geographical image is positioned.

Studies of the cross-border symmetry of tourist images in the information space is based on the theoretical and methodological traditions of humangeography (Gladky, 2014), which is related to the spatial representations and mechanisms of their formation, and its sections: imagery geography, mythogeography, territory positioning, and tourist call-out, are relevant today not only as fields of geographical science, but also as real mechanisms for promoting the territory in tourism, ensuring its inclusion in the national and world tourist flows. Spatial images, their emotional coloring and attractiveness, mechanisms of formation, presentation and transmission in the era of "experiens economy", when the subjective impressions, sensations, emotions of the consumer, have the economic value and act a decisive role in the tourism development.

The tourist image of the territory is formed, first of all, at the expense of tourism destinations, their functional and emotional characteristics (Kozyreva, Novikov, 2011). Today, the main source of information about tourist destinations and attractions is the Internet. On the one hand, the information field of the global network is involved in the formation of tourist images for the countries and territories, on the other - it clearly reflects the established symbols and brands. The study of abstract tourist images on the Internet is possible by the method of content analysis. Content analysis through the interrelation of text and non-textual phenomena allows to assess the territory's image in quantitative values. The tourist images investigation for the three tiers of ICBTMRs—the Transbaikal Krai (Russia), the Eastern Aimak (Mongolia) and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (China)—predetermines the need for assessment (sampling) in the national segments of the Internet of three countries. The key unit of count was the number of links (their absolute value) with information about tourist

destinations that act as indicators for the prevailing tourist image of the territory. To analyze the concepts of Transbaikal Krai, the natural, cultural and historical objects promoted as "the miracles of Zabaykalsk" and representing the region at the national and global level. Assessment of the image of the Eastern Aimak and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region were made on the destination most often appearing in the tour-programs for these territorial units.

RESULTS

The asymmetry of tourist images for the international cross-border three-membered region of the eastern borders junction of Russia, Mongolia and China was manifested in two directions: as an asymmetry of external and internal positioning strategies and as an asymmetry in the results of these strategies implementation. The positioning of geographical images in the Russian space is more active than in the cross-border space. However, the positioning of Russian geographical images in the Russian space has its own problems.

The first problem is related to the specificity of subject matter. In modern Russia, a lot of different contests was held to choose symbols of the country, as a whole, and the individual regions particularly. This process is permanent, but the reflection, aimed at understanding and explaining the results, is delayed or non-existent at all. One can explain this introduction of purely marketing strategies, which allow us to assess only the economic effect (increasing tourists flow to the object-symbol during the competition). The rating of objects-symbols turns into a position map, where the object position either increases, moving upwards, or deteriorates, revealing a fall. The permanence of campaigns, when some competitions "overlap" with others on terms, and therewith switching the public attention, does not allow you to realize and even remember the results of previous one. This is the marketing process of updating the product lineup, switching the public attention to a new project, the constant formation of a new to new demand. In this case the buyer does not have time to feel all the advantages of the previous model, as it is said already about the new benefits of the new model (and in our case, the object-symbol).

The second problem is, from a scientific point of view, it is difficult to identify borderline studies of objects-symbols: on the edge of Marketing, Geography and Sociology, highlighting the subject areas of each of these sciences.

Marketing is characterized by a narrow view, every object-symbol forming the geographical image has its own interested bodies, which promote it and make money off it. Of course, in such conditions there is no party interested in a comprehensive study. Although, the regional

tourism management needs the analytical information of ongoing competitions to comprehensively assess the tourist attractiveness of this region.

Geographers believe that the competitions do not discover any new objects for them, although Geography, as a worldview science, must study not only the geographical reality, but the changes towards it in society.

Sociologists are not interested in these competitions, because they do not reflect the public opinion. The sociological value of information obtained in the course of voting reflects the activity of individual social and territorial communities and their groups. For Sociology, the issue of the direction of public opinion formation is more important.

The peculiarity of current stage is the simultaneous coexistence of constructive theory and practice, the voting campaigns are of dialectical nature: on the one hand, these are the sociological studies to identify the symbols of regions, and on the other hand, the work with public opinion on the formation of new symbols for the countries and regions, while forming the new one and transforming the old geographical stereotypes. In the context of present study, "positioning" is considered not as an economic process, but as a sociological process, and analytical work aimed to identify the positions of objects-symbols is considered as a method of sociological positioning. The authors divide the objects-symbols into groups, determining the correspondence between the object and its target group, voting for it. Then, the reasons for the object promotion are explained.

Today, Russia is actively working on the formation of its image in the minds of the World community. It manifests itself both in the political aspect - the activity of the President and the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs in solving world problems, and in the sports: in 2013 were held the Universiade in Kazan and the World Athletics Championships in Moscow, the Sochi 2014 Olympics, etc. The country's image is largely determined by new geographical stereotypes: "Sochi - Olympics", "Kazan - Universiade".

The tourism industry and the investment attractiveness of Russian regions depend not only on the actual situation in the economy, the level of tourism infrastructure development, but also on the geographical stereotypes that are cultivated in the public consciousness [Novikov, 2011]. Popularization implies the production of films about the nature, population and national economy in the regions geared towards the broad masses, the identification of new symbols, and the formation of new geographical stereotypes.

In 2013, a multimedia project "Russia 10" was implemented in our country, which, except the RGS, supported the leading TV channels and radio stations.

The purpose of the project is to maintain a stable interest in Russia as an object of domestic and international tourism, to tell about the unique geographical, architectural and historical sites of Russia, and to form a new wave of "geopathyotism" in the regions. One of the most important functions of the project is to promote the image of Russia as a unique country with a rich cultural and natural heritage. Popularization of the greatest architectural monuments and nature will highlight the versatility and originality of Russia. Objective of the project is to choose ten new visual symbols of Russia, forming its geographical image through a popular vote [Russia 10, 2013].

In this project, the result of voting is not so important, as the process itself, since it embodies and directs the process of public comprehension of the regional and national identity, turns it into a campaign.

The project "Russia 10" consisted of two stages and a finale. After each stage, the voices collected by the object were nullified, and the set of votes began again. Such a system made it possible to differentiate the objects into regional, district and federal ones. Each level objects corresponded to their own levels of social and territorial communities. The social and territorial communities of the territories, regions and republics mainly voted for the regional sites; communities at the Federal Districts level - for the district ones; people of the whole country voted for the national level objects.

In some cases, the regional objects came out to the district and even national level due to the very high activities of the social and territorial community in the republic or the region. In this case, the previously unknown object took its place with already recognized national brands, such as the Valley of Geysers, Lake Baikal, St. Basil's Cathedral, Peterhof, Mamayev Kurgan ("Motherland" monument), Weathering pillars, Elbrus. The above objects have already won in the contest "7 Wonders of Russia", which was held several years ago. The new previously unknown object was included to the rating due to not always clear voting technologies. It can be a real massive attack from some public organizations. In Transbaikal, the candidature of Ataman Semyonov - a person whose role in the civil war has yet to be adequately assessed, was withdrawn from one of the competitions. It is this kind of hyperactivity of the individual societies that does not allow the scientists to seriously consider the results of such projects.

We should note that in the "Russia 10" the list of wonders was expanded from seven to ten. The "three additional places" that were allotted, so to speak, were vacant not only for the three objects that remained beyond the format of seven in the last contest and occupied the eighth, ninth and tenth places, respectively, but also the new ones, which regional social and territorial communities could change the rating and drive out the recognized brands from

among the leaders, due to their hyperactivity. Thus, the social and territorial community of the republican level can influence the public consciousness of both its own country and other countries. People who turn their attention to the list of winners will remember the new object. In some social groups, this will cause a reaction of disagreement, but it is not important. It is important that even they will not be able to forget this object, because it carries an emotional coloring for them, even if it is negative. The regional leaders (governors, presidents of the republics), actively working to revitalize their social and territorial communities, thus, are doing a great deal of work on patriotic education, investment and tourism attractiveness of their region.

In some cases, the regional social and territorial communities are activated only after the tender aimed to choose the objects.

In 2007, the competition "7 Wonders of Russia" was held, similar to the idea of "Russia 10", but the objects of the Transbaikal Krai did not enter the list of Russian wonders and in 2008 a similar regional competition was held in the Transbaikal region.

Let's note another campaign on formation of regional symbols - search for a plant, which could become a regional emblem.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology of Russia in 2013 announced the launch of the All-Russian National Contest Program "Alley of Russia", which is held in Russia as part of the Year of Environmental Protection. Within the "Alley of Russia" Contest, it will be proposed to select a plant-symbol in each of the 83 constituent subjects of the Russian Federation in open public voting with the subsequent approval of the symbol by the legislative bodies as part of the official emblem of the region [Alley of Russia, 2013].

The importance of marked campaign for choosing the plants is both in raising the patriotic consciousness of citizens, and improving the public ecological culture, drawing attention to the environmental protection issues.

Let's note some features characteristic for the similar contests aimed to form the geographical stereotypes. First, - according to the voting rules, when the same person can vote several times on its computer, we can say that the contest's results reflect more the level of regional consciousness and activity of social and territorial communities at different levels, rather than the preferences of Russians. Second, - among the objects-leaders there are many objects of religious worship, both natural and architectural in nature. This fact testifies to the rise of the religious self-awareness of Russians. Objects of the cultural and natural heritage that do not fit into the sacred geography [Novikov, Gorina, 2010], often lose the objects of religious worship. This is due to the growing religious consciousness of the population.

Regarding certain territories, the contests are called upon to replace some, usually, negative stereotypes with others - positive ones, which will form a positive image of the region in the aggregate. For example, the North Caucasus, which experienced the active introduction of international terrorism at the end of the last century, is currently actively working on its image. The activity of the North Caucasus regions is much higher than that of the regions of Urals, Siberia and the Far East.

In the modern science and politics, the term "Baikal region" actively takes root in the public consciousness, which is connected with attracting international attention to the problem of protecting the unique lake of the Planet included in the top ten winners of "Russia 10". This region includes three regions of the Russian Federation: Irkutsk Region, the Republic of Buryatia and Transbaikals Krai. We should note that the last subject does not have its own part of the lake coast, but it is a part of catchment area of the lake. Moreover, this subject is younger than its neighbors and was founded in 2008 due to the unification of Chita region and the Aginsk Buryat Autonomous District. Name of the new subject consolidated its belonging to Baikal [Novikov, Novikova, 2010]. Another historically established stereotype, which affirms its belonging to Baikal, is the positioning of Chita as a capital of Transbaikals region.

The Transbaikals branch of the Russian Geographical Society (RGS) has done a great job of popularizing the geographical objects both in the region and Lake Baikal, emphasizing the region's relation to the Baikal ecological and cultural and historical territorial community.

In political terms, the consolidation of geographical stereotype for the Baikal region in the public consciousness has, under the enlargement of constituent entities of the Russian Federation, an understandable perspective. Moreover, the direction of social policy needed to date is also understandable. B.L. Radnaev and A.S. Mikheeva [Mikheeva, Radnaev, 20124] expressed it as a necessity to relate the ecological well-being of Lake Baikal with the social well-being of every inhabitant of Baikal region. Entering Baikal in the Russia's top ten most famous objects will strengthen the geographical stereotype "Baikal - Baikal region" in the public consciousness.

Let's analyze the first stage results of the "Russia 10" contest held in Baikal region.

Among the objects of the Republic of Buryatia and Irkutsk region, Baikal took the first place, it got 161773 votes, went to the second round of the contest and to the finals on the part of the Siberian Federal District.

The second place among the objects of Buryatia - The Baikal-Amur Mainline (7361); third - the Tunka Valley (3946); fourth - Ivolginsky Datsan (3138); fifth - Monument to V.I. Lenin in Ulan-Ude (1210); sixth - Barguzin Nature Reserve (1059); seventh - Barkhan-Uul

Mountain (824); eighth – Suvinsky Castle (688); ninth – Sable Lakes (536); tenth - Uder BaarayMountain (506).

Second place among the objects of Irkutsk region belongs to the Baikal-Amur Mainline (7361); third - the Circum-Baikal Railway (5863); fourth - the Source of Talai (4994); fifth - Cape Barhanka (Shamanka rock) (1214); sixth – the Kadar glaciers (1061); the seventh was shared by the Icebreaker "Angara" and the ethnographic museum "Taltsy" (1008); eighth - a narrow section of the Lena riverbed, called "Lena Cheeks" (748); ninth - Angarsk Bridge (685); tenth - the Patom crater (280).

The first stage of "Russia 10" showed that the objects of the Transbaikal Krai got the following results: the Butyn Palace - 26772 votes; Daursky Biosphere Nature Reserve – 12433; the Great Source – 9677; The Baikal-Amur Mainline – 7361; the Chara Sands – 7080; Alkhanay National Park- 3360; Holy Assumption Cathedral Churchin Kalinino village – 2703; Lake Arey – 1728; Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan – 1299; the Kadar Glaciers – 1061; the Aginsky dastan (Lamaist temple) – 1026; the Shumovsky Palace – 746.

Within the contest "7 Wonders of Transbaikal region" the residents of Transbaikal Krai determined the most worthy objects of natural and cultural heritage. The highest number of votes (3404) was received by the Holy Assumption Cathedral Church in Kalinino village, followed by the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan in Chitae (2474 votes). Then, the votes were distributed as follows: the Daursky State Nature Reserve – 2473, Alkhanay – 2 459, the Chara Sands – 2449, the Butin Palace – 2445, Lake Arey - 2399 votes [The Transbaikal region has chosen..., 2013].

Comparing the results of two campaigns, we will reveal the peculiarities of transforming the geographical stereotypes of the Transbaikal Krai in the public consciousness. First, all seven objects fell into the rating again, which indicates the stability of geographical stereotypes. The first place was occupied again by the objects of Nerchinsk District.the Holy Assumption Cathedral Church in Kalinino village, located 8 kilometers away from Nerchinsk, lost 20% of votes and moved from first to seventh place. This is the oldest stone Orthodox church in the territory from the Lake Baikal to the Pacific Ocean. During the competition there was an active campaign to raise funds for its restoration. To date, the public interest has decreased, but rather switched to the Butin Palace [Novikov, Gorlova, 2104].

Second: in the destinations ranking there have been changes in the positions of destinations. The Butin Palace came out on top, gaining ten times more votes than in the first competition, due to the 360 anniversaries of Nerchinsk heldin summer 2013, where this palace is located. The palace has many valuable historical and cultural facilities, including the famous large

sized Venetian mirrors, which were brought from Europe by a gold miner Mikhail Dmitrievich Butin. Namely that palace is a symbol of the city. Using the anniversary holiday, the city tried to draw the attention of the public and authorities to the problem of complete palace restoration, in which the Local Lore Museum is currently situated, and the palace complex reconstruction. Nerchinsk is trying to consolidate the brand of "Trans-Baikal Versailles" in public consciousness. Much work has been done in preparation for the anniversary, a lot of printed folk goods was issued. The celebration was attended by people from different regions of Russia. This event affected the geographical image of Transbaikal region in the public consciousness, strengthening the position of Nerchinsk in it.

Third, one cannot ignore the new objects appeared in the ranking, and even included in the top five. For example, "Pallas Mountain" is a mountain located on the World watershed, from the slopes of which the water flows down into two oceans and into the inland basin of Inner Asia. The sudden attention to this geographical area is caused by the struggle of civil society organizations for the status of this destination and its name. The opposing social institutions have been fighting with each other, proposing different names for the mountain: the Great Source, the Great Watershed, the Watershed Mountain, the St. Pallas Mountain, the highest point of the Trans-Siberian Railway. However, on 10 September 2012, the Government of the Russian Federation signed Resolution No. 903 on awarding the peak with an absolute altitude of 1236 and coordinates 52° 07.3 'N, 113° 01.7' E, located on the territory of the Transbaikal Krai, the name of "Pallas Mountain".

The research carried out by the authors on the cross-border positioning of known cultural and natural heritage sites, having a tourist and recreational significance [Baldandorzhiev, Gorlova, Novikov, 2013] showed that geographical stereotypes in the public consciousness of social and territorial communities of bordering countries (China and Mongolia) are either completely absent or archaic in nature.

In addition, the cultural events of international scale, which are regularly held in the Transbaikal Krai, do not form its geographical image, since they are very poorly covered in the federal media. For example, the annual International Transbaikal Film Festival and the International Festival of Arts "The Flowering Ledum". It is necessary to change attitudes towards these events, turning them from the phenomenon of cultural and humanitarian assistance to the local population in the phenomenon of event tourism, which attracts tourists from all over the Baikal region and adjacent border regions.

If you enter the phrase "in Transbaikal" into the search system, the most frequently requested combinations that the system will offer are the negative information. At selecting regional

news, the Federal TV channels cover only the negative events that could shock the public, which after that makes relevant inquiries in the web search engines. Thus, the negative geographical stereotype reproduces itself in the public consciousness.

There is one more feature of the federal channels. When releasing the weather forecast, they cover only large cities, making the huge spaces from Khabarovsk to Irkutsk uninhabited in the minds of Russians.

A positive example of a single cross-border region development in the information space is the news project "The Middle of the Earth", under which the inhabitants of the Transbaikal Krai, the Irkutsk Region, the Republic of Buryatia, as well as the inhabitants of China and Mongolia, exchange information resources that have a diverse nature [Novikov, Novikova, 2012].

Thus, there is a dialectical process, forming the geographical stereotypes of regions in the public consciousness: on the one hand, efforts to popularize the key destinations within the competitions and create the positive information stereotypes, and on the other hand, the selectivity of the central information channels in broadcasting the negative events and rupturing these stereotypes.

Nowadays, the regions "break through" the news feeds of federal channels by ordering news pieces about themselves on the rights of advertising. In this direction, the Transbaikal Krai takes insufficient efforts to promote the key geographical symbols that form its geographical stereotype in the public consciousness.

We can state the fact that due to the large-scale domestic and regional competitions aimed to identify the popularity ratings of geographical objects, their hierarchy was determined in Russia, by dividing them into global (international), regional and local according to their importance. The next stage should be the promotion of most significant destinations no longer on the domestic, but international, including cross-border, levels. It's about investing in the geographical images.

In the space of the three-membered cross-border region under study, the Transbaikal Krai is represented by only a few destinations: the Alkhanai National Park, the Aginsk Lamaist temple, Kodar Ridge – in the Chinese-speaking segment of the Internet, and the Daurisky Nature Reserve, the Alkhanai National Park and the Aginsk Lamaist temple – in the Mongolian-speaking segment. The Transbaikal Krai is perceived by neighboring states as part of the Buddhist world, encompassing the significant areas of Asian region. The location of Daurisky Biosphere Reserve is explained by its own cross-border position and strong international relations.

A network of specially protected areas is actively being formed in the border, and they acquire a biosphere and international status, expressed in the ecological external contact of the region [Novikov, Novikova, 2008; Novikova, 2014].

The most successful cross-border exchange of experience is being implemented in the specially protected cross-border regions. This is due to the unity of natural geosystems and common interests in their preservation. Therefore, in the format of these territories, the states are willingly sharing their techniques and technical means for the nature observation and methods of preserving it [Novikov, 2014].

Unfortunately, the nature protection status of this destination limits its use for tourist purposes: in this case we can only talk about the scientific and ecological tourism. The Kodar Ridge with the adjacent territories is known not only as a natural object. It is also perceived as a significant object of extreme tourism, and as an area with significant mineral reserves. Comparing the obtained data with the materials of previous studies on assessment of the features of region location at different levels (Kozyreva, 2011), one can note the obvious asymmetry of the concepts of the Transbaikalian Kraion different sides of the border. So, the Zabaykalian envisage this region as a region of Orthodox culture, as evidenced by the high rating of such objects as the Holy Assumption Cathedral Church located in Kalino village of Nerchinsk District, the Cathedral of Our Lady of Kazan located in Chita: this is an objective reflection of the architectural value of these objects, and, more likely, an attempt to fortify the region territory behind the Orthodox religion, Christian Russia. Further in the ranking there are the objects that characterize the region as a region with a unique nature - Daursky State Reserve, Chara Sands, Arey Lake. In the study conducted, the natural component of region image is also highlighted, but it is difficult to say that the neighbors know how diverse and unique the nature of the region.

The tourist image of the Eastern Aimak is different on the different sides of the border (Table 1). Objectively, the National festival "Naadam" takes the first place in the rating as a spectacular national holiday. It is important to clarify that it is being organized most in the capital city of country and it attracts the largest number of tourists.

Table 1. Rating of tourist destination in East Aimak (Mongolia) and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (China) on the Internet

Destination rating		Destination No.	Destination rating	
Mongolia	Russia		Russia	China
"Naadam" Festival	Greater Hinggan Temple	1	Manchuria	Manchuria
Khalkhyn Gol River	"Naadam" Festival	2	Dalai Nor Lake / Greater Hinggan Temple	Wudangzhao Temple
Greater Khinggan temple	Kherlen River / Wall Genghis Khan	3	Mausoleum of Genghis Khan	Shiwei Township
Dalai Nor Lake	Dalai Nor Lake	4	Shiwei Township	Greater Hinggan Temple
Buir Nor Lake	Buir Nor Lake	5	Dazhao Temple	Nanghai Park, Baotou
Kherlen River	Khalkhyn Gol River	6	JinWall	Museum of Hun Culture, Hohhot
Wall Genghis Khan	G. K. Zhukov Museum, Choibalsan	7	Zhaojun Tomb	Zhaojun Tomb
G. K. Zhukov Museum, Choibalsan		8	Nanghai Park, Baotou	Utassy Temple

Significant place in the ranking of two countries is occupied by the natural tourism destinations, but in the Russian segment the rating of natural destinations are higher. Khalkhyn Gol River and G. K. Zhukov Museum in Choibalsan are listed in the rating. At the same time, if the G.K. Zhukov Museum takes the last place, Khalkhin-Gol River takes the second rating line in the Mongolian segment.

A certain asymmetry can also be traced in the positioning of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Undoubtedly, the role of Manchuria in the development of tourism not only in the

region as an object of shopping tours, but also in the country as a checkpoint for Russian tourists determines the city's first place in the destination rating. The second place on the part of Russia is occupied by natural objects – the Greater Khingan Range and Dalai Nor Lake, while the cultural and historical destinations are very important in China. They reflect precisely the historical and cultural specifics of the region, and the natural objects, rather, mark the similarities between the natural conditions of these three administrative units.

DISCUSSION

The international three-membered cross-border region under study is located on the influence border of some tourist brands of global importance. On the territory of Mongolia, the world brand of the native land of Genghis Khan is actively positioned, and supported by numerous new tourist destinations (theme park "Mongolia. Thirteenth Century", "Statue of Genghis Khan" Complex, Chinghas Khan Hotel, etc.). In Russia, outside the Transbaikal Krai, but in close proximity to it, the Baikal lake is located, and it can rightly claim the title of world brand. In the east, the Chinese coast of Yellow Sea has a significant impact: for the Russian tourists – an alternative to such famous world brands of beach recreation as Costa Brava or the Azure Coast. As a result, the ICBTMRs of the eastern borders junction of Russia, Mongolia and China is in a kind of "dead zone", without its own tourist brands of global importance, and there are only the producing tourist flows, not realizing the economic benefits of the tourist and recreational potential.

A possible solution to the problem lies in the formation of new spatial tourist and recreational structures linking the world brands with the cross-border region. As such structures, the tourist routes can serve with the use of world brands in the neighboring territories, the image of which is supplemented by the objects on the territory of Transbaikal Krai, East Aymak, and Inner Mongolia. So, the Baikal Lake and Zabakalye as "land beyond the Baikal Lake" is an image formed in the minds of both Russians, and many foreigners, and Baikal can act as a starting point for tourist routes along the Transbaikal, and, as an addition to it, the unique natural objects of the Transbaikal Krai – Chikoy boreal forest, Pallas Mountain, Arey Lake, and other. In this case, one can avoid the competition with neighbors and reorient some of their tourist flows. However, to better realize the benefits of cross-border situation and develop the tourism, the ICBTMRs contribute the creation of cross-border tourist routes. Since the tourist image of ICBTMRs' subjects is determined by virtually every destination of tourist interest, the categories of symmetry and asymmetry of the tourist images and brands come to the forefront, reflecting the uniqueness and specificity of each ICBTMRs' member,

their place and role in the national tourist space, and determining the formation of holistic tourist image of the region and the development of cross-border tourist routes.

In the cross-border context, the Transbaikal Krai does not have a clear positioning as a tourist region. The obtained data show that it is expedient to build the development of international inbound tourism in the region based on the destinations representing the Transbaikal Krai as part of Buddhist Asia (Alkhanay National park, Aginsk Lamaist temple, etc.), linking the region with the name of Genghis Khan (Wall Genghis Khan, Chin of Genghis Khan, etc.), reflecting the unique natural features of the territory (the Kodar Ridge, Daursky Nature Reserve, Chara Sands, etc.). It can not be said that existing images have already been formed, but they have an informational link to the real destinations and are known outside Russia. These destinations can easily be included in the circular cross-border tourist routes, since the religious, natural and historical objects of this plan exist also in the territory of neighboring states. Such an organization of routes will allow to form the optimal tourist directions, and, hence, the financial flows.

The image of Transbaikal Krai as an Orthodox region is currently asymmetric, it is not cross-border and can only be used to form the inter-confessional cross-border routes, as a reflection of both the junction of government and religious boundaries in the holistic image of ICBTMRs.

Attention can be drawn to the asymmetry in the perception of events on the Khalkhin Gol River and the objects related to the name of G.K. Zhukov, concerning the Russian-Mongolian border. In our opinion, this is evidence of the fact that in Mongolia, G.K. Zhukov is most revered for his role in the battles at Khalkhin Gol, while in Russia his contribution to victory on the western fronts at the time of the Great Patriotic War is more important. With proper positioning, these destinations can serve as the basis for images that are interesting not only for the residents of the Transbaikal Krai, but also for the residents of other regions of Russia, since the events related to the Great Patriotic War have not only the historical but also spiritual, moral, patriotic importance for the Russians.

When forming the tourist image of regions located along a border, a high rating of natural objects is identified: for the Transbaikal Krai – Daursky State Reserve, Alkhanay National Park, Kodar Ridge, Arey Lake; for Chin – Dalai Nor Lake, the Greater Hinggan Temple, and other; Buir Nor Lake, Kherlen River. In general, this is due to the high value of territories with an untouched natural environment, remote from the areas with high anthropogenic load, favorable for the development of ecological and extreme tourism. Despite the low development level of these kinds of tourism, the identified image clearly corresponds to the

structure of the three-membered cross-border region, the central place of which is occupied by the specially protected natural areas (Novikov, 2015). Such identity of the area image and the geographical reality is the optimal and most promising variant for realizing the tourist and recreational potential of the region in both the cross-border context and also at the global level.

CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the results of this study, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. Strategies for positioning the Russian geographical images at the national level through various competitions are implemented successfully. However, as a result of that, an asymmetric structure was developed between the popularity of Russian geographical images within and outside the country. The hierarchy of popularity determined for the Russian geographical destinations should be implemented at the international, including cross-border, levels through promoting the most popular Russian geographical images and investing in them. The cross-border asymmetry of geographical images will be overcome.
2. The tourist image of the Transbaikal Krai, the East Aimak and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region within the boundaries of ICBTMRs is formed due to the natural, cultural and historical objects and is characterized by a contradictory unity of symmetry and asymmetry relative to the state borders of Russia, Mongolia and China.
3. The symmetry and asymmetry of tourist images on different sides of borders under the ICBTMRs research reflects the real spatial organization of natural, transportation and settlement structures, and in the sphere of tourist and recreational development of the territory can be considered as a kind of resource for creating the tourist routes of linear and circular coning.
4. The asymmetry of tourist images is connected with the religious belonging of the territory to two world religions and the ethnic and cultural peculiarities of the countries associated with it, and the symmetry reflects the specificity of ICBTMRs and is expressed in the uniqueness of natural characteristics of the territory.
5. The Transbaikal Krai, the East Aimak and the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region do not have their own tourism brands of global importance, but, due to their geographical location, the tourist brands of neighboring territories, including those of global importance, can be used.
6. Optimal implementation of the tourist and recreational potential of ICBTMRs with mutual benefit for the three members of cross-border cooperation is possible only taking into

account the prevailing tourist images of the territory that can become the information basis for the integrated tourist image of the cross-border region.

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