**Thematisation in the light of transformation of the tourist’s image**

**in Russian small historic towns**

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This paper aims to discuss the current image of a tourist visiting Russian historic towns. In the light of G. Richards and J. Wilson’s theory concerning cultural branding and the role of thematisation in this process, we will consider the transformations of tourist image in three Russian historic towns (Rostov-the-Great, Pereslavl-Zalessky and Suzdal) during the post-Soviet period.

According to Richards and Wilson, the term “thematisation” means creating a theme for the places’ narrative. The matter is that all the remarkable cultural projects and events held in aforesaid towns are organized for tourist audience and are related to the image of an old provincial city from mythical times, very different from modern cities with their up-tempo life. The examples of this thematisation could be found in such projects as Princess Frog Museum or “Old days alive” festival in Rostov, Berendey House in Pereslavl, Russian Fairy tale festival in Suzdal et cetera. These examples allow us to consider the new image of tourist and his goals in visiting such places. Guide books and tourist websites present an image of a tourist as a metropolitan citizen tired of the bustle of big city life and looking for a “fairy tale” to escape to.

This thematisation could be called a reminder of the Golden Ring brand which is very present in every town on this route. It makes these towns very similar to each other and also keeps them in a situation of lack of development. This is why these towns, on the one hand, should follow their initial strategy and continue to be the “towns of the XIX century”. On the other hand, they should develop to attract more tourists. They should invent an original strategy of branding and a specific tourist policy to take higher market position.

The paper includes results of field research (2013) and analysis of touristic sources.

**Methodology of research is based on these papers:**

Kavaratzis M. Ashworth G.J. (2005) City Branding: An Effective Assertion of Identity or a Transitory Marketing Trick? - Tijdschrift Voor Economische en Sociale Geografie.

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Проект «Сказочная карта России» в исполнении РИА «Новости». 2011. Режим доступа: <http://ria.ru/infografika/20110318/438423795.html>

Карта, созданная Ростовским музеем-заповедником: <http://map.rostmuseum.ru/>

Официальный сайт органов местного самоуправления г. Переславля-Залесского. Режим доступа: http://adm.pereslavl.ru/

Сайт администрации Ростова Великого. Режим доступа: <http://www.admrostov.ru/>

Туристический Переславль. Режим доступа: <http://www.tourismpereslavl.ru/>