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*Article*

# Regional Tourism Ecosystem as a Tool for Sustainable Development during the Economic Crisis

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**Abstract:** In order to ensure sustainable tourism development, it is currently becoming crucial to look into promotion of popular tourist destinations in Russia. This is due to a number of factors, including the acceptance of the credibility and importance of the concept of sustainable tourism, as well as the awareness of the necessity of taking into account a wide range of short- and long-term effects, external factors, and interdisciplinary aspects of the development of the Russian tourism industry. In the context of a local tourist destination during the economic crisis, the study aims to highlight some of the key economic elements of sustainable tourism. The decision to adopt a regional perspective is necessitated by the fact that many of the most crucial elements for the long-term sustainable development of the tourist complex are established at this level, including decision-making by businesses and authorities that are economically viable. The research focuses on the economic aspects to be considered while designing an overall strategy for the long-term development of regional tourist destinations in Russia. The authors define sustainable tourism from the viewpoint of economics. This understanding extends beyond the relatively limited framework of environmental and socioeconomic consequences of tourism development, affecting some less obvious economic aspects of a regional destination that directly relate to sustainable development.

**Keywords:** economy; tourism; sustainable tourism development; regional destination; sustainable tourism; economic crisis

## 1. Introduction.

Despite its high practical importance and academic productivity, sustainable tourism has been understudied in Russia. The environmental aspects of sustainable tourism and sustainable development have sufficient coverage in the mainstream of domestic science. However, there has not been enough conceptual and applied research carried out on the social and economic elements of sustainable tourism. Few publications addressing specific elements and facets of sustainable tourism, or sustainable development of the area based on the evolution of the tourist complex, have only recently been published. The national academic community has recently developed a thorough understanding of what tourist sustainability implies. The ability of a system i.e., a tourist complex, a destination, or even a tourist object, to withstand adverse loads, negative impacts, and even shocks, to return to an equilibrium, to evolve on the basis of the most productive principles, to be viable, and to avoid excessive risks and conflicts is what is meant by sustainability, which is often understood as stability, or as some sort of equilibrium.

In the context of this study, sustainable tourism and its economic components are understood broadly. The notion encompasses not only the ideal balance between the economic impact of tourism development and the level of environmental degradation within a narrow approach (for example, in accordance with the weak and strong principles of sustainable development based on the maximum flow of total income by Hicks-Lindahl). In our understanding the notion involves establishment of a substantial foundation for a balanced long-term development of the tourist

complex, taking into account not only environmental, but also a wide range of socio-economic externalities, including investment, public finance, sectoral and intersectoral organisations.

The complexity and diversity of such a statement is complemented by the fact that the measurability, evaluation and operationalisation of economic effects are not high enough. Therefore, in most cases, we merely need to discuss better options that are presumably the most appropriate from the perspective of the average long-term interests of all parties in the destination. We claim that a different, narrower approach to sustainable tourism's economic issues, with its higher degree of certainty and easier-to-understand coverage of issues (which typically include concerns with balancing the budget, attracting investment, providing employment, increasing value added and gross regional product, as well as assessing environmental damage), does not adequately reveal all of the industry's economic issues.

Sustainable development is a deliberately supported development, which is why the role of management, self-government and self-organisation is increasing. The government's regulatory functions should be activated by defining development parameters and ensuring that they are being complied with [1]. A regulated systemic change of society, the economy, and the state, which results in a transition to a higher level of development, is the primary strategy for achieving a transition to sustainable development. The Russian Federation's systemic transformation of tourism should enable the quick growth of domestic tourism based on its own natural and cultural resources, as well as official support for entrepreneurship and innovation in the tourism industry.

Experience on a national and worldwide scale demonstrates that tourist and recreational clusters help to create a unique environment for innovation and raise the investment attractiveness of the regions that are actively promoting tourism. The construction of a tourist and recreational complex is a top priority for the government since it will contribute to the sustainable development of both domestic and international travel, boost Russian tourism's competitiveness abroad, and raise the standard of tourist products. The process of developing and implementing tourism projects in the constituent entities of the Russian Federation involves addressing infrastructural issues and the development of a communication network between businesses engaged in tourism and recreation, local government, the general public, and the academic community[1].

At present, researchers describe sustainable development as the interaction and coherence of economic, social, environmental, institutional, and innovation-technological elements to maximise human well-being without interfering with future generations to satisfy their needs. The cross-cutting nature of sustainable development, which manifests itself in every area of human activity, is an important strategy for the progress of contemporary civilization.

The implementation of criteria and principles of sustainable development, which specify the requirements of harmonious relationship of all subjects of the tourism business with the environment, prioritises tourism as an integrated system covering all facets of life and a wide range of adjacent economic activities to meet the needs of tourists. Sustainable tourism should be viewed as an approach to resource management that balances meeting economic, social, and aesthetic needs while protecting cultural identity, fundamental ecological processes, biodiversity, and life support systems.

Therefore, the paper emphasises a number of crucial factors of the sustainability of the region's development from the viewpoint of tourism. Yet, however, from the viewpoint of sustainable development, the aforementioned factors are insufficient for a genuinely comprehensive coverage. In the context of sustainable tourism development, the following elements should also be considered: investment mechanisms, funding, tax incentives, import-related issues, leaks, injections, and the multiplier effect of the tourism industry, extension of the tourist season, mitigation of "bubbles" in the market of real assets, and production factors emerging as a result of successful development of the destination, risk management, staff training, and well-coordinated interaction between the industry and education.

Since it is a component of the regulatory matrix governing economic contacts, the institution, as it is known, progressively and methodologically shapes the nature of these relationships and, inevitably, has an impact on their efficacy [4]. It may also be questioned as to why sustainable tourism and its economic components are being discussed rather than an efficient institutional framework for

tourism. This is due to the fact that institutional theories are more focused on the regulation and development of standards and institutions, while the concept of sustainable development in tourism, or so called sustainable tourism entails taking into account the organisational and economic mechanisms of the sector as well as the actions of all destination stakeholders, including their unique choices, views, and strategies, in addition to the development of an ideal regulatory framework on which institutional strategy is centred.

Firstly, tourism, as is known, is an industry with a high multiplier effect. Because both positive and negative effects of tourism development are simultaneously "scaled" to the entire economy, the long-term and sustainable development of a number of Russian regions depends on the naturalness, balance, and long-term economic viability of the development of their tourist complexes. Secondly, the regional tourist complexes themselves are still in the process of establishment and new factors of their development are constantly emerging. For instance, the process of converting nature reserves into national parks is currently underway, with subsequent environmental, financial, tax, marketing, investment, and other consequences.

One of the responsibilities is bringing the need for comprehensive consideration of the economic elements of sustainable tourism to the attention of researchers as well as regional authorities. When it comes to national literature, economic programmes, some of the relatively important aspects are only sometimes and insufficiently taken into account. [5].

It could be helpful to structure the economic elements of sustainable tourism in the two broad categories suggested in the article. The first of these components includes financial, credit, and investment elements that serve as the fundamental motivators and incentives for economic players in the travel and hospitality sectors. The second component contains elements that contribute to the industry's development of a strong and synergistic structure as well as its ideal connection with related and supporting industries as well as with the outside world.

## 2. Literature review

It is important to highlight a number of Russian publications that discuss the issues related to the financial context of sustainable tourist development. For example, L. V. Larchenko and D. T. Abokhadze consider tourism as a factor of sustainable development and diversification of the economy in the Russian North, taking into account the international experience of sustainable tourism strategies. The effort of E.N. Bogdanova to conceptualise the sustainable development of tourism in the Russian regions with a partial disclosure of the economic issues is particularly noteworthy.

We assume that V. A. Uvarov and E. O. Kiriyyenko were successful in formulating the fundamental ideas for the development of regional tourism in the context of establishing a strong organisational and financial framework for the sector. But the problem is that the coverage of the problems of sustainable tourism in the economic context in Russia is scarcely presented elsewhere in other studies. This is demonstrated by a recent in-depth research of tourist destinations as a factor in the sustainable development of the regional economy conducted by O. V. Saidasheva, who formulates the problem in the economic context: "With an increase in the number of tourists the region's economic stability is expanding with investments in permanent assets, and increase in revenue from the sanatorium recreation service"[2]. The author emphasises the significance of infrastructural elements, cluster approaches, strategic territorial marketing, diversification of tourism goods, and infrastructure of industry intermediaries.

W. D. Ruckelhaus defines sustainable development as an emerging doctrine stating that economic growth and development should take place within a strict framework established by the natural needs of the environment in the broadest sense, during the interaction between men and the byproducts of their actions, the biosphere and the laws of nature governing it. According to this doctrine, environmental protection and economic development are complementary, and by no means antagonistic processes.

According to V.A. Koptiug, the idea of sustainable development involves achieving an equitable balance between human socio-economic advancement and environmental preservation, as well as a

significant reduction of the economic gap between developed and developing nations through technological advancement and consumption rationalisation. N.N. Moiseev asserts that the term "sustainable development" refers to the formulation and implementation of a society's strategy for achieving balance. The future of humanity can be guaranteed only in conditions of a more or less stable circulation of matter (stable biochemical cycles). Cycle stability is the inevitable condition for the biosphere's balance. According to A.D. Ursula, it is reasonable to think of sustainable equilibrium as the continuation of civilization and the development of the nation within the context of environment protection, particularly the biosphere. The model of public-private organisation in the tourism industry, according to M.N. Dmitriev [4], has nine key qualities. Given that the author highlights a number of significant factors, these qualities appear to be very helpful in the context of building a strategy for the development of a destination based on the principles of sustainability.

T.A. Rassokhina defined sustainable tourism development as "long-term tourism development, in which a balance is achieved in the implementation of economic, environmental, social, and cultural development goals, and the interests of all stakeholders (tourists, hosting and forwarding destinations, local population) are taken into consideration on the basis of rational management of tourist resources and comprehensive partnerships." According to an analysis of the aforementioned definitions of sustainable development, socioeconomic and environmental sustainability in the present and the future are important considerations for researchers.

### 3. Materials and methods.

The article employs a variety of specific methods to obtain the research result. Analysing expert views using the Delphi method is a common way to carry out the process of weighting indicators. This method is applied when conducting quantitative analyses of how tourism and recreational resources are implemented. In order to go from a set of initial indicators to a single one, a technique for merging them must be carried out in order to establish evaluation classes made up of a set of indicators. This single indicator usually ranges from the "bad" condition at the smallest value to the "good" condition at the greatest value. Integral estimates for various categories that are acquired in certain units allow for further procedures to be carried out thus obtaining more complicated indicators. In order to create a comprehensive indicator of the tourism and recreational potential of the regions, the aggregate evaluations of natural, cultural, and historical potentials, as well as socioeconomic situation, can be considered. It is feasible to turn to an expert survey (such as a survey of top tour operators) in situations when it is objectively difficult to gather statistical data when analysing the current state of tourism in addition to an optimised set of statistical indicators.

The evaluation of the area's tourism and recreational potential is broken down into numerous steps. Initially we defined the object of evaluation, and then we focused on the subject of evaluation. In addition, the evaluation criteria (factors and circumstances) of the object have been established, which are crucial in determining the object's value keeping in mind the purpose of evaluation. The list of criteria is often determined by expert opinion. Groups of indications that define the territory's unique potential make up the evaluation criteria. The evaluation parameters are then established, which are indicators representing the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the larger groups.

Rankings, which are a holistic evaluation of a set of indicators and criteria, are being employed to analyse geographical difference in regional tourist development. The degree of tourist development in various regions of Russia may be comprehensively evaluated by correlating the evaluation findings, which have undergone mathematical and statistical processing, with expert surveys.

Separate evaluations are then aggregated and converted into a single integral index at the final stage [9]. A set of criteria that either activate or restrict the increase in the number of tourist and leisure activities make up each block of parameter indicators. Various mathematical classification methods are used to evaluate different quantitative indicators, to get the final integral indicator, and, as a consequence, to build a ranking. The term "classification" refers to the division of the items under study into aggregates (or "classes") that differ primarily in their quantitative features and in their



qualitative features, while, generally speaking, reflecting the dynamics of the evolution of the objects or their hierarchical order.

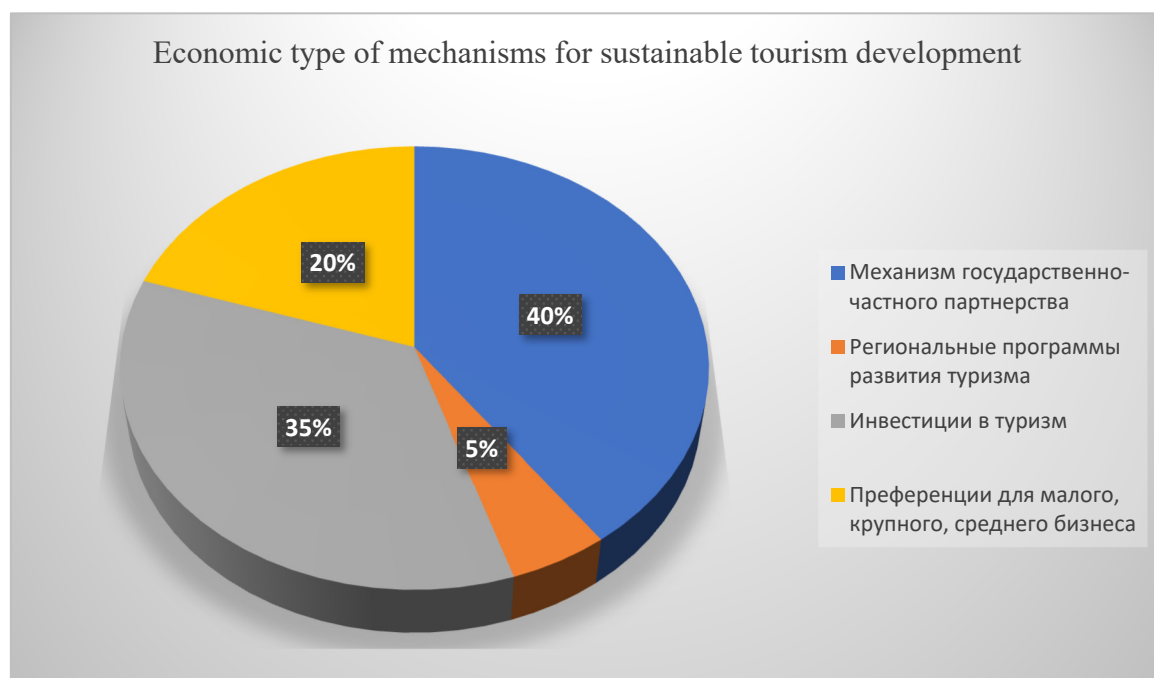
Further, static and expert-based correlations of the rankings collected are conducted. If the positions coincide, it is assumed that the statistical analysis was accurate. In case of discrepancies, the results of statistical analysis require additional consideration. By analysing the aforementioned calculation techniques, we determine which integral assessment of tourist and recreational potential for a wide range of assessed components affecting the tourism sector, using increasing coefficients for certain components designated by experts as having more weight in the study, is the most effective comprehensive, and reliable.

Studying the local ecosystems and natural resources is part of the study's initial stage. The examination of historical and cultural resources is the second stage. Studying the socioeconomic resources of the areas is the focus of the third stage. The fourth stage entails judging the skill level of local tourism offices.

The practise of regional tourism development attests to the key role that administrative authorities play in establishing the parameters for sustainable tourism development, which must be included in a thorough evaluation of the potential for tourism and recreation. The development of a methodology and a ranking system for areas based on an examination of the principles of sustainable tourism development is a crucial stage in research [13].

The method entails several successive steps:

- 1) selection of mechanisms for sustainable tourism development and determination of their weight values based on independent expert evaluations using the Delphi method;
- 2) identification of quantitative and qualitative indicators describing the selected strategies for the development of sustainable tourism in the region.
- 3) calculation of indicators characterising the mechanisms of sustainable tourism development for each region (Figure 1)



**Figure 1.** Economic type of mechanisms for sustainable tourism development.

Mechanism of public-private partnership 40%

Regional tourism development programmes 5%

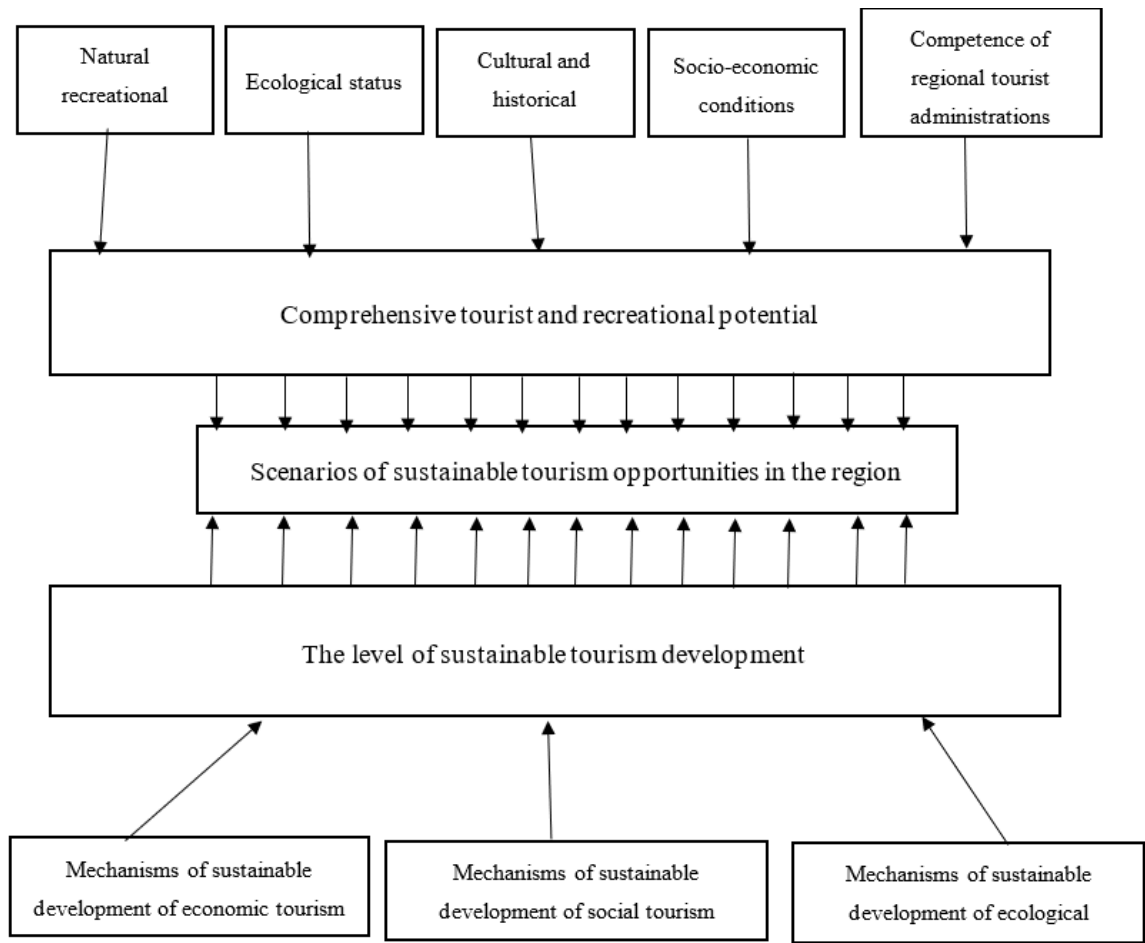
Investments in tourism 35%

Preferences for small businesses, mid-market and large enterprises 20%

4) computation of integral indicators describing the regional tourist industry's development processes. On the basis of information already acquired, the integral indicator is computed.

5) the following rule governs the ranking of regions based on the values of integral indicators: the higher the value of the integral indicator, the higher the position of the region in the rating.

For an overall evaluation of the sustainable development of tourism in the regions, it is necessary to not only conduct a thorough assessment of the tourism and recreational potential while taking into account the expertise of regional tourism agencies, but also to establish the level of sustainable tourism development based on the analysis of the identified mechanisms and presented in the form of a ranking. A matrix analysis is suggested as a basis for such an evaluation, allowing comparison of the diverse tourist and recreational potential of areas and ranking of regions according to the degree of sustainable tourism development.



**Figure 2.** The scheme of interaction of the integrated tourism and recreational. potential and the level of sustainable tourism development to determine the scenarios of opportunities for sustainable tourism development in the region.

**4. Research outcomes**

*4.1. Rationale and classification of techniques for developing sustainable tourism in various Russian regions*

Strategic sustainability is crucial for the region's diverse and harmonious development. It is important to guarantee that sustainable development processes may be used in a variety of internal and external economic, social, and geopolitical contexts. The primary economic activity types that underpin the region's diversification are those that have the greatest synergistic impact and encourage the development of a large number of related businesses.

The number of strategies that help increase the multiplier impact of sustainable tourism development include the following:

- attractive tourist image of the territory;
- effective marketing strategy;
- availability of highly attractive, affordable and environmentally friendly tourist resources;
- well-developed tourist infrastructure;
- reasonable pricing policy;
- high level of security in tourist accommodations;
- effective support of tourism on behalf of legislative and executive authorities at all levels;
- availability of highly qualified personnel, etc.

Thus, a set of actions designed to improve the socio-economic and environmental well-being of the region include the processes of sustainable tourism development.

The processes that enable the sustainable tourism development have been classified into three categories based on global experience: economic, social, and environmental. Each mechanism from one of the chosen categories is given a particular percentage. The mechanism's weights added together equal 100%. In turn, each type receives a specific weight, and the totality of all 3 types is 100% (Table 1). They are each given the following particular weights in percent, depending on how important they are to the long-term development of tourism: 40%, 5%, 20%, 25%, and 10%. These mechanisms were evaluated based on the study of various sources against a set of indicators.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of mechanisms for sustainable tourism development.

No	Type	Weight of a type of a mechanism, %	Mechanism	Weight of a mechanism
1.1	Economic	50%	Mechanism of public-private partnership	40%
1.2			Regional tourism development programs	5%
1.3			Preferences for small, medium, and large businesses	20%
1.4			Investment in tourism	25%
1.5			Marketing of tourism (event calendar, tourist and information centres, participation in national and international exhibitions)	10%
2.1	Social	30%	Mechanism of ensuring the availability of tourist services for the population of the region	20%
2.2			Staffing of the tourism industry	20%
2.3			Security mechanism	20%
2.4			Mechanism of providing tourists with accommodation facilities	20%
2.5			Mechanism of involving the public to work in the field of tourism and recreation	20%
3.1	Environmental	20%	Determination and rationing of permissible anthropogenic load	20%
3.2			Mechanism of ensuring environmental quality through the creation of a system of protected areas	20%
3.3			Environmental regulation mechanism (Environmental Index)	20%



3.4	Mechanism of industrial and environmental regulation (Industrial and Environmental Index)	20%
3.5	Mechanism of socio-ecological regulation (Socio-Ecological index)	20%

In Russia, specific federal and state development programmes are primarily used to build the country's tourism infrastructure. The amount of funding for targeted programmes has significantly decreased under the current financial and economic crisis, but the impact on the long-term growth of tourism in the regions is now evident and contributes to strengthening regional governments and the tourism sector. The economic success of projects utilising the public-private partnership (PPP) mechanism has confirmed its relevance in the context of sustainable tourism development in regions establishing special economic zones of the tourist and recreational type and tourist and recreational clusters. For example, special economic zones of the tourist and recreational type "Turquoise Katun" in Altai Territory, "Baikal Harbour" in Buryatia, and tourist and recreational clusters "Belokuri", Sheregesh, etc. This established the public-private partnership mechanism's maximum share (40%) in our analysis.

The cultural and historical centres of Russia's European part are excellent examples of regions with the resources and potential to build and grow tourism clusters. These include Moscow, St. Petersburg, the cities making up the so called "Golden Ring of Russia", tourist and recreational areas on the Black Sea coast (resorts of the Krasnodar Territory and the Republic of Crimea), Lake Baikal, and also the territory of the regions of Western Siberia (Novosibirsk, Kemerovo, and Tomsk regions, Altai Krai, Altai Republic).

As a result, the Vologda region's tourist and recreation hub "Nason-Gorod" is an outstanding example of successful public-private partnership-based development, in which the regional government and the city administration foster the growth of small businesses and mid-market enterprises while tackling a number of crucial social issues.

Similar to other business risks in the economy, risks in public-private partnership initiatives may also be evaluated and managed. These include the following: study of the variables affecting risk level, evaluation of potential losses and effects, optimisation of risk level, choice of strategies and techniques for risk mitigation, etc. Both benefits and drawbacks can be associated with the establishment of public-private partnerships, which help to create the conditions for mutually beneficial cooperation between the government and private businesses. (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Advantages and disadvantages of public-private partnership.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Competitive selection procedures for private companies	Complicated implementation procedure
Increasing business transparency	High transaction costs
Adequate distribution of risks between the parties involved	Risks of establishing a corporate governance structure
Consideration of the balance of interests of all the parties involved	Insufficient experience in managing infrastructure facilities
The use of effective and innovative approaches of the private sector in state property management	Ambiguous attitude of the public

The development of public-private partnership in the field of tourism in Russia can become an effective mechanism for establishing constructive interaction between public authorities and business representatives. The implementation of public-private partnership projects results in the creation of favourable conditions for the growth of entrepreneurship in the sphere of tourism, resort, and leisure,

as well as hotel, industries. It also enhances the existing tourism legislation and encourages the adoption of efficient regulatory legal acts aimed at the development of the country's tourist complex.

#### *4.2. Ranking of Russian regions by the level of sustainable tourism development*

A grading system was established based on the chosen methods to determine the level of sustainable tourism development in various regions of Russia. The concept is built on the primary mechanisms of sustainable tourism development, depending on their weight and importance (Section 3.1).

Several stages are involved in the ranking process:

Stage 1. Selection of management mechanisms that define the level of the region's sustainable tourism development and calculation of their weighted averages based on independent expert evaluations by top tourism experts;

Stage 2. identifying the metrics that best describe the growth of sustainable tourism.

Each of the described processes had quantitative or qualitative markers. The following criteria were used to evaluate them in the economic component: the availability of PPPs; scope, duration, and funding amounts of regional tourism development programmes in relation to regional budgets; the availability of preferential taxes and subsidies for tourism development; and the amount of investments in the service sector in comparison to total investments.

The following indicators were used in the compilation of evaluation indices for the formation and implementation of targeted environmental programmes:

Environmental index indicators:

1) Atmosphere, air – an indicator that shows how polluted the air is in the regions of the Russian Federation. Its computation is based on the ISA, i.e. the index of atmospheric pollution, which considers both the danger class of contaminants and the volume indicators of pollution. This indicator additionally takes into account urgent circumstances involving pollution emissions, as well as the modernisation of gas treatment facilities;

2) Water resources, water – an indication of the condition of the Russian Federation's natural waterways (including oceans, rivers, lakes, groundwater, etc.) and the level of drinking water quality. This indicator also depicts the development and modernisation of sewage treatment facilities, as well as the quantity and quality of wastewater treatment released into reservoirs;

3) Land resources, soil – the indicator of the ground shows the condition of the Russian Federation's land resources, as well as the processes of soil degradation and reclamation, desertification, and the application of environmentally friendly land use technologies, among other things.;

4) Specially protected natural areas - a measure of the number and size of these areas, as well as their state, any recent events involving their protection, the amount of funding available;

Indicators of the socio-environmental index:

1) Habitat represents a comprehensive indicator of the comfort of life for people, animals, and plants in a given area of the Russian Federation. This indicator takes into consideration all of the aforementioned indications collectively as well as regional characteristics;

2) Power is an indicator of the efficacy of the work carried out by state executive and legislative authorities in the field of nature protection and habitat improvement in a particular entity of the Russian Federation;

3) Civil society serves as an indicator of the level of civic engagement in a variety of activities in a particular entity of the Russian Federation, taking into account the number and degree of activity of local environmental NGOs, the presence of active citizens and associations;

4) The informational and psychological climate is an indicator which serves as a proxy of the processes of openness, freedom of speech and assembly on environmental issues, the independence of regional media, and other factors, guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation;

5) Education and culture is an indicator showing the level of environmental education in the region, taking into account the programmes of environmental education of the population. This

indicator also highlights examples of a high (or low) degree of environmental culture of the local governmental authorities and the general public.

6) Housing and communal services - This indicator is based on developments in the housing and communal services sector. A strong indication of the poor quality of services offered, for instance, would be the numerous accidents or repeated forced shutoffs of the drinking water supply in a given area.

Industrial and environmental index indicators:

1) Solid household waste is an indicator of how much waste is produced in a certain area, how much of it is processed or disposed of, how many illegal garbage dumps there are, how well solid waste management is being implemented, and any difficulties that have arisen;

2) Science and innovation is an indicator of the country's regional environmental technology development, experimental use of such technologies, and information exchange in the environmental innovations sector;

3) Industrial waste is a defining indication of the development and accumulation of industrial waste in the area, representing industrial waste management policy and practise, including trash accumulated over the span of time;

4) Environmental modernisation evaluates how well new eco-friendly technologies are being integrated into industrial processes. Technologies that adhere to strict guidelines for appropriate environmental effect, minimise the degree to which human activity has an influence on the environment;

5) Business responsibility is an indicator that shows what the business climate in a particular region of the Russian Federation is in terms of new environmental business projects being implemented voluntarily, and how environmental damage caused by business operations, charitable business projects is made up for.

Stage 3. Analysis of indicators characterizing the mechanisms of sustainable tourism development for every region.

At this point, the accessibility of chosen mechanisms for the development of sustainable tourism for each of the three mechanisms types was evaluated for each location. Additionally, a point evaluation of the state of development of each chosen mechanism was carried out. According to the assessment scale, each indication was given a score between 0 (no mechanism present) and 4 points, from which the integral regional indicator was derived.

Stage 4. Analysis of integral indicators characterizing the mechanisms of sustainable tourism development in the region. For each region, integral indicators that describe the region's level of sustainable tourist development were determined. The total of the mechanisms within each type is also 100%, as are the weight coefficients added together for all three kinds. Using the formula, the integral indicator was calculated using the information from the previous stage:

$$I = (SK1 * \sum_{n=1}^{N1} O1n * K1n + SK2 * \sum_{n=2}^{N2} O2n * K2n + SK3 * \sum_{n=3}^{N3} O3n * K3n), \text{ with:}$$

where:

I – integral indicator of sustainable tourism development in the region;

O<sub>1n</sub> – average assessment of economic mechanisms;

K<sub>1n</sub> – weighting coefficient of the economic mechanism;

SK1 – weighting coefficient of economic mechanisms

N1 – number of economic mechanisms;

O<sub>2n</sub> – average assessment of social mechanisms;

K<sub>2n</sub> – weighting coefficient of the social mechanism;

SK2 – weighting coefficient of the block of social mechanisms

N2 – number of social mechanisms;

O<sub>3n</sub> – average assessment of environmental mechanisms;

K<sub>3n</sub> – weighting coefficient of the environmental mechanism;

SK3 – weighting coefficient of environmental mechanisms

N3 – number of environmental mechanisms.

Stage 5. Ranking of regions. At this stage, the regions were ranked depending on the values of the integral indicators of the regions according to the following principle: the greater the value of the integral indicator, the higher the position of the region. In order to categorise areas according to their level of sustainable tourism development, a set of integral indicators was broken down into 4 categories.

The first group with a high level of sustainable tourism development included four regions of Russia: Krasnodar and Altai Territories, the Republic of Buryatia and the Yaroslavl region.

The second group with a relatively high level of sustainable tourism development included 39 regions: Moscow, St. Petersburg, the Republic of Tatarstan, the Kaluga region, Kamchatka Krai and other regions that are scattered over the country's territory and have effectively implemented sustainable tourist development strategies.

The third group with an average level of sustainable tourism development included 33 regions of the country: from the Pskov region in the west to the Magadan region in the east.

The fourth group of regions with a low level of sustainable tourism development included 7 regions (Krasnoyarsk Territory, Chelyabinsk, Kirov Regions, Komi Republic, Nenets and Chukotka Autonomous Districts, Jewish Autonomous District).

Not only must the tourism and recreational potential be thoroughly evaluated, but also the level of sustainable tourism development in the regions must be assessed based on the analysis of mechanisms, which is reflected in the generated rating, in order to make an accurate assessment of the sustainable development of tourism.

#### 4.3. Determining the scenario of sustainable tourism opportunities in the regions of the Russian Federation

The scenario of potential for sustainable tourism development is a projection of the region's tourism growth over a certain time period documented in the programmes for development, based on the achievement of the set indicators and parameters. In Russian regions the management mechanisms often include scenarios with prospects for sustainable tourism development. Because of the current geopolitical situation, the Russian economy is geared towards promoting domestic and inbound tourism, making better use of the available resources, as well as examining and putting into practise cutting-edge, contemporary mechanisms for sustainable development.

**Table 3.** Matrix for developing scenarios of prospective tourism development in the regions of Russia.

<b>Ranking of regions of the Russian Federation depending on the level of sustainable tourism development</b>	<b>Leading regions</b>	<b>Regions with high potential</b>	<b>Regions with average potential</b>	<b>Regions with low potential</b>
High level	1	1	2	3
Relatively high level	1	2	3	4
Average level	2	3	4	5
Low level	3	4	5	5

According to the results of the research, the Republics of Buryatia, Krasnodar, and the Altai Territories are in the first group of areas that are especially favourable to the development of tourism as well as Moscow and St.Petersburg which provide a wide variety of tourism services and are steadily attracting large numbers of visitors. Fifteen regions make up the second group that are favourable for the development of the tourist industry: the Yaroslavl region, the Republic of Tatarstan, the Kaluga Region, Altai Republic, Leningrad Oblast, Moscow Oblast, Lipetsk Oblast, Sverdlovsk Oblast, the Kaliningrad Region, Perm Krai, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District – Yugra, Rostov Oblast, Tyumen Oblast, Samara Oblast, and Irkutsk Oblast.

In the third group of regions, relatively favorable for the development of tourism, there are 27 entities, which is primarily due to the high level of administrative and legal activity of tourist and recreational management bodies.

There are 29 regions in the fourth group that are not promising for tourism development. This group includes the regions that have a sufficiently high tourist and recreational potential, but need more active involvement of the administration and representatives of the tourism industry in order to ensure more active use of the mechanisms of sustainable tourism development.

There are seven regions in the fifth group with a stagnant scenario of tourism development: the Magadan Region, the Krasnoyarsk Territory, the Komi Republic, the Jewish Autonomous Region, the Kirov Region, the Nenets and Chukotka Autonomous Districts. These regions are characterized by a fairly low level of integrated tourist and recreational potential and medium or low potential for sustainable tourism development. Figure 25 displays scenarios of potential prospects for sustainable tourism development in every region.

The Altai Territory, which was included in the first category of areas that were especially favourable for the development of tourism, may be used as a concrete example of how the system of implementing sustainable development methods can be effectively organised. The government of the Altai Territory has made the development of tourism their top priority. Public-private partnerships are being used to undertake significant investment projects in the area. For example, the "Turquoise Katun" is being developed, which has been hosting visitors since 2007. By 2023 that number has risen to more than 7 million. The only gambling zone of the Russian Federation located beyond the Urals called the "Siberian Coin" is functioning. The tourism clusters "Belokurikha" and "The Golden Gate" are developing in the framework of governmentally supported funding programmes.

More than 30 new tourist products, including the "Big Golden Ring of Altai," "Small Golden Ring of Altai," "Cossack Horseshoe of Altai," "Altai Gourmet," and "Rural Green Trail of the Altai Territory," have been developed and certified in the area between 2011 and 2022.

The Republic of Buryatia is yet another remarkable example of a regional tourism administration's efficiency. The number of tourists from the Asia-Pacific region has significantly increased, according to the statistics provided by the Republic's Tourism Administration. In this regard, it has been decided what has to be done to provide a welcoming information environment and guarantee visitor safety. Hotels in Ulan-Ude have started implementing "China Friendly" programmes to create a comfortable environment for tourists from China.

There are 10 educational institutions in the Republic of Buryatia, including 4 higher education institutions that provide training, retraining and advanced training of personnel in the field of tourism and hospitality.

Guidebooks and brochures are regularly published in the media in an effort to promote the Republic's tourism resources and attract potential investors. Participation in television programmes on tourist resources is also organised.

The Ryazan Region and the Republic of Tatarstan are included in the second category of regions that are favourable for the development of tourism. The areas stand out for having highly qualified regional tourism governments that actively employ PPP and other sustainable development approaches. The Republic of Tatarstan shows consistent positive trends in the primary indicators of the development of the tourism sector. The annual increase in the number of tourists is 14.8%.

In 2022, more than 8.5 million tourists visited Tatarstan, which is 16.3% higher than in 2021. In 2022, more over 15 billion rubles in services were generated by the tourist sector, and 24 billion rubles were generated by the tourism-related sectors.

Tatarstan pays special attention to the development of tourist destinations in the region. With the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, the government of the republic has been working to revitalise the old city of Bolgar and the island-city of Sviyazhsk and to develop new tourist routes.

Indicators of the Ryazan region, characterising the development of tourism, demonstrate a consistent increasing trend. More than 8.5 billion rubles were invested in the tourism sector between 2010 and 2022, 1,000 jobs were created, the increase in the number of tourists is estimated to be 88%,



and the number of recreation and tourism-related services increased by 60%. The Ryazan Region's involvement in the Federal Target Programme with the initiative to establish the Ryazansky tourism and recreation cluster is crucial for the achievement of these results. The cluster will invest more than 11 billion rubles overall through the end of 2023, 77% of which will come from private investors and 23% from federal and regional governments. Large infrastructure facilities, such as hotel, restaurant, and spa complexes, an all season water park, beach and park areas, outdoor recreation areas, multipurpose sports facilities, and craft studios, have been launched within the project. The Federal Target Program's financial support meant for building transport and engineering infrastructure allowed the investor to speed up the process of building the facilities and put them into practice.

The Ryazan region was one of the first to sign up for the national "Russian Manor" initiative. Several private museums have been established on cultural heritage sites, and a project of the center for folk arts and crafts has been implemented.

The market for cultural and educational tourism accounts for over 60% of total visitor demand. The main sites to see are the Ryazan Kremlin, the museum-reserve of S.A. Esenin, and the museum-estate of Academician I.P. Pavlov. The settlement of Konstantinovo, where S. A. Esenin was born, is currently being restored. The Ryazan region makes a lot of advertising efforts to promote the local tourism resources. In Ryazan, a regional tourist information office opened to the public in 2014.

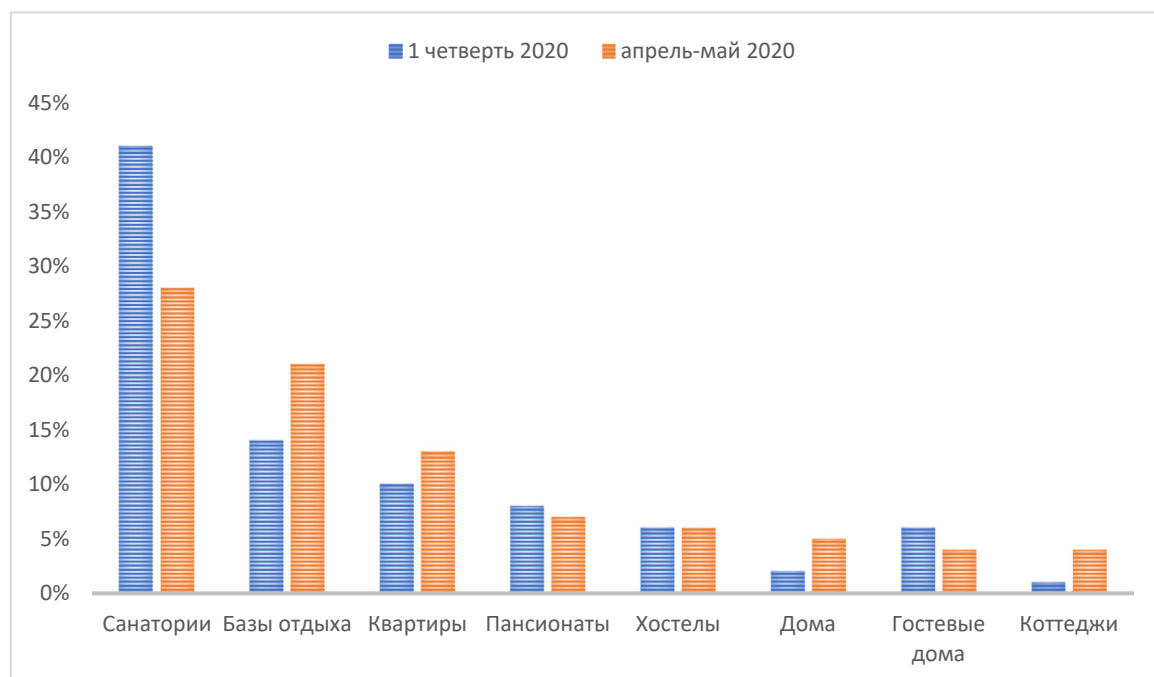
Large-scale efforts to establish a network of tourist and recreational clusters at the municipal, intermunicipal, and regional levels would enable the growth of the tourism sector in Russian regions.

#### 4.4. Conducting a sociological study aimed at identifying promising tourist destinations in Russian regions.

Let's start by taking a look at some of the findings of a survey done by the Yandex portal in June 2020 with the intention of examining Russians' demands for "Tourism and Recreation".

The first important indicator: the number of requests coming from mobile devices has increased dramatically over the past three years, from 2017 to 2020.

At the same time, Figure 3 shows the number of requests for booking individual accommodation facilities (other than hotels) has also increased.



**Figure 3.** The number of requests for booking accommodation facilities. (data from Yandex research "Tourism in 2020").

	First quarter of 2020	April-May 2020
Sanatoriums	41%	28%
Recreation centers	14%	21%
Apartments	10%	13%
Resort Houses	8%	7%
Hostels	6%	6%
Houses	2%	5%
Guest houses	6%	4%
Cottages	1%	4%

The data presented here support the assertion that individual lodging facilities were particularly in demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that demand for individual travel in general is still on the increase.

Let us now refer to the findings of the research carried out by the National Agency for Financial Research Centre in September 2020 [2]. 1,600 participants from 53 Russian regions, aged 18 or older, participated in the study. The study's findings revealed that 61% of travellers choose their destination using online services, and 78% create a list of destinations to visit while on vacation using the internet. Notably, around 60% of respondents claimed they have a pre-made itinerary of sight-seeing visits, which they prepare using the Internet and social networks (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Ways to find an interesting place to visit.

Choice of sights to visit	%
When I am on vacation, I already have a plan to visit interesting places	60
I will look for information about interesting places in electronic maps (Google, Yandex, with Masami)	18
I will ask for recommendations at the hotel reception what places to visit	14
I'll ask the locals for their advice	11
I will do an Internet search (specify where)	9
I will contact the local tour agency	8
I'll consult the tourist brochure for details.	7

The survey's findings indicate that when it comes to any tourism-related guidance, search engines Yandex and Google are the most common sources of information (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Ways of selecting the place to relax.

	Beach	Ski	Sanatoriums	Recreation houses	Hiking, fishing, hunting	Culture and education (museums, sightseeing tours)	Naturel sites (nature reserves, mountain, rivers, lakes)
I will look for options using search engines (Yandex, Google)	63	54	58	56	60	62	72
I will ask for help from relatives or friends	25	35	27	32	27	24	26

I will contact a travel agency and ask them to offer me vacation options	21	12	18	23	7	21	15
I will ask for advice in a thematic group on social networks	13	23	8	14	11	10	13

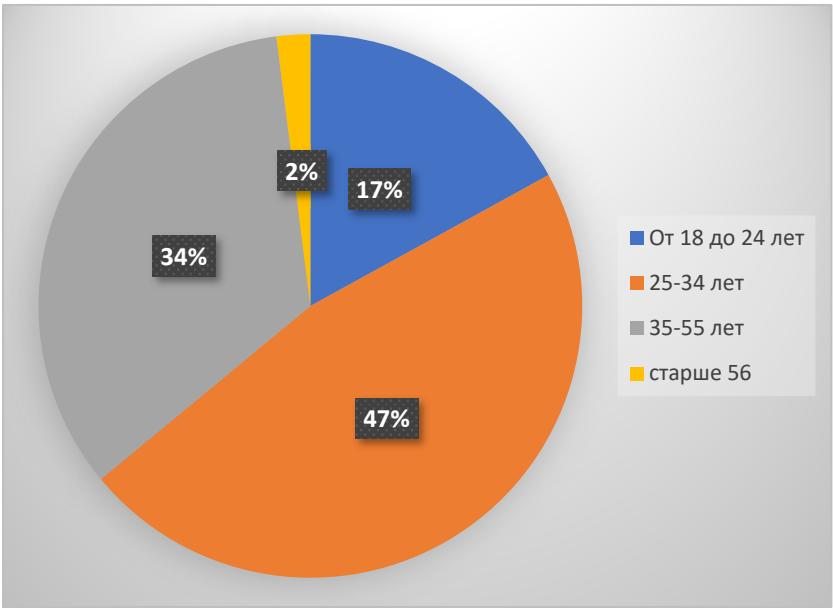
NAFI conducted a poll in the summer of 2021 to learn more about Russians' preferences for summer vacations. Ultimately, approximately two thirds of Russians chose not to take summer vacation mostly because of the constraints brought on by the pandemic. On the other hand, those who decided to spend their holidays in the summer of 2021 intended to use in the order of priority, car, plane, and train, which means that individual tourism is preferred over other types (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Preferences of the types of transport.

Type of transport	%
Car	36
Airplane	35
Train	27
Other	2

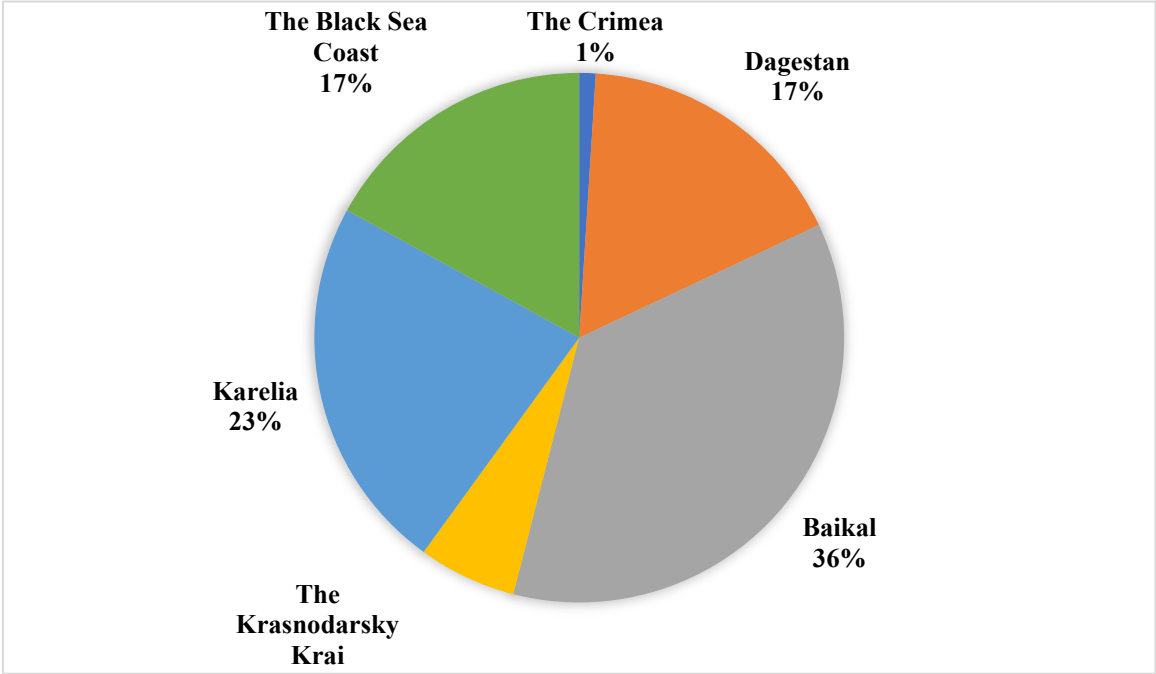
A research of the prospects of independent tourism development in the Republic of Mari El was carried out as part of the research project of the Department of Service and Tourism at Volga State University of Technology in June 2021. The poll included 102 participants. Let us examine the collected data.

The first important indicator is the age factor of those who prefer to organize their own vacation. It is clear from Figure 5 that people between the ages of 25 and 34 predominated in the poll. Along with the respondents aged between 35 and 55 years we argue that this group was mostly adapted to this kind of tourism.



**Figure 4.** Distribution of respondents by age. People aged from 18 to 24 years old, 25-34 years old, 35-55 years old, above 56 years old.

Respondents definitely favoured Altai when asked to name the most popular tourist destinations within the Russian Federation; St. Petersburg, the nation's cultural centre, came in second. Given that respondents could choose more than one option, the total number of replies exceeded 100%. It's important to note that respondents could provide their own responses to this question, and the top choices are displayed in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** Attractive tourist destinations based on the respondents’ opinions.

The Crimea and the whole Black Sea coast ranked as the most popular of the tourist destinations chosen by the respondents themselves. Ways to find accommodation while on vacation are presented in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Ways to find accommodation.

Primary accommodation options	No of people
Self-booking of a hotel through booking aggregators (Booking, etc)	44
Booking of private houses, apartments via Airbnb, Avito, etc.	37
Buying a complete tour at a travel agency	16
Based on friends' recommendations	10
Camping	2

Given the opportunity to select from a variety of options, which is a crucial criterion, given that modern technology allows us to switch between the options and select various methods of accommodation for various trips, the total number of responses to this question exceeds the total number of respondents. The majority of respondents (80% altogether) preferred to make their own accommodation arrangements by selecting either a hotel (44%) or renting privately owned property (36% of responses). The fact that 15% of respondents only apply for this service to a travel agency is noteworthy. Table 8 shows what tourists rely on when selecting destinations for their vacation.

**Table 8.** Ways to choose sites to visit when traveling to a new place.

Sources of sightseeing information	Number of people
------------------------------------	------------------

Recommendation of friends	20
Reviews and ratings on online maps (Google map, Yandex map), recommendation of friends	19
Reviews and ratings on online maps (Google map, Yandex map)	17
Thematic forum	11
Thematic forum, reviews and rating on online maps (Google map, Yandex map), recommendation of friends	8

In terms of leisure and vacation, social media and celebrities have a significant influence on the general public and their decision-making. We looked at the issue of how much a popular and personally attractive blogger's suggestion of a hotel, a destination to visit, an excursion, an attraction, etc., induces in a modern traveler a desire to visit that place (Table 9)

**Table 9.** The impact of a blogger's recommendation on the decision to purchase a tourism product.

Impact of a leader’s opinion on the general public	Number of people
Yes, I make records or save an address, a link, or a location on a map	43
I do make records of the recommendations, but I don't do anything with them.	42
I rely on my own opinion	11
I don’t use social networks	6

We will try to summarize the aforesaid research findings. The first conclusion, which is evident, may be stated as follows: independent tourism has been encouraged by the steady advancement of information systems and technology. The perception of the travel and hospitality industry is shifting, and this fact is quite significant. Travel agencies and tour operators, who produce and sell tourist goods, will progressively lose clients, which will have an impact on their sources of revenue. This aspect, in our opinion, represents a drawback in the development of the tourist sector. The second fact is that there is no intermediary in the supply and demand chains for tourist goods (a typical illustration of the joint consumption economy at work), which should undoubtedly be viewed as a positive development for the entire digital economy.

The fourth point is that planning a trip on one's own, especially when it involves travel overseas, might put one in danger from crises, unanticipated medical expenses (in the absence of medical insurance), difficulties securing a visa, etc. In this scenario, the tourist bears full responsibility for all hazards.

The development of independent tourism does not pose any significant threat to the restaurant industry or to private accommodation providers. The problem arises at the level of hotels, sanatoriums, and resorts dealing mainly with group applications. However, the problem is particularly acute for tour operators and travel agents.

On the one hand, tour operators and travel agents should do more to draw in individual travellers while, if at all possible, keeping the price of a single trip reasonable, or to increase the amount of lump-sum tour sales (standardised tours) in order to make up for their losses. In any case, both intermediary travel agencies and individual tourists should have their own niche in the tourism industry. At the same time, we emphasise that attempts to artificially reduce the price of holiday packages in order to boost sales should be avoided since doing so would result in the bankruptcy of tour operators and a decline in customer trust. According to experts' estimates, we anticipate that in 2023–2024, as global tourism recovers from the COVID–19 pandemic crisis, more people in our country will book trips through travel agents. This is primarily because, given Russia's current economic condition, only a very small number of tourists can afford individual tourism abroad.

5. Discussion



In sustainable development, the interests of all parties involved in tourism activities are taken into consideration provided there is a wise use of tourist resources and comprehensive partnership among all stakeholders aimed at restoring physical, spiritual, and intellectual health of people. A vast range of resources, including environmental, are used by the tourism industry. With the development of tourism, the amount of resources consumed and waste produced are also increasing. The areas used for the development of tourism infrastructure are expanding.

The approach to infrastructure development that attracts low-use areas and reclaims abandoned industrial or depleted agricultural land is more preferable in this regard. An approach that involves clearing forests for infrastructure construction, using meadows and arable land, and altering the shoreline is unfavourable. The growth of the tourism industry can result in environmental and socioeconomic problems with varied degrees of complexity unless effective planning, management, and control are implemented. The current stage of tourism development is characterized by significant monopolization. Services and profits are concentrated in multinational corporations. Most of the tourist infrastructure belongs to foreign capital. The primary sources of labour are the locals who frequently hold linear jobs, while the managerial positions are taken by foreign professionals with vast work experience in compliance with worldwide corporate standards. In these issues, a fair balance is needed for sustainable development. It should be noted that developing countries that receive tourists from developed countries also receive a number of problems, usually in the socio-cultural sphere.

The host countries should actively promote initiatives that take into account the local population's cultural heritage and local traditions. Tourism revenues should be directed to the preservation and maintenance of historical and cultural monuments, customs and traditions of the local population. Most tourists, when choosing a holiday destination, prioritise the environmental well-being of the territory. As a benchmark, various national environmental standards and practises are used. But in reality, they could differ depending on a particular location.

It should be noted that this practice has recently become more common. Information catalogues include vital details on the nature, environment, culture, and daily life in numerous areas of the world. Based on this information, among other things, travellers may receive a more thorough understanding of the potential possibilities for recreation destinations. The success of environmental protection projects depends largely on the initiatives of the local government, as well as on all the companies involved in the organisation and provision of tourist services. Local citizens and the local economy should profit most from tourism-related activities in the region. The available resources should be used carefully and rationally, taking into account the specific character of the area. The government of the country should play a leading role in the development of tourism, both locally and at the state and international levels, acting as a regulatory force, through laws and taxes. Comprehensive solutions should be found for the difficult situations and problems that travellers, locals, and authorities must deal with as tourism develops.

This, in turn, implies a transition to sustainable development. Tourism, being one of the leading branches of the world economy, at the same time is the industry most closely integrated into environmental resources. The quality of the environment is actually part of the tourist product. In this regard, it is important to harmonize the relationship of the tourism industry with the environment, ensuring the sustainability of resource use.

The socioeconomic well-being of the local community, as well as its culture, customs, way of life, and many others, are all directly and indirectly impacted by tourism, since it stimulates the activity of related economic sectors.

Three main components of sustainable tourism development can be identified:

- 1) recreation and basic environmental processes;
- 2) economic sustainability, ensured by the development of tourism as an effective component of the local economy, provided balanced resource management;
- 3) socio-cultural sustainability, leading to an increase in the population's employment and income, as well as the preservation of historical and cultural landmarks, and maintenance of the national identity.

## 6. Conclusions

Changes in the structure of the tourism market are significantly influenced by the socioeconomic situation in Russia today as well as by internal and external impacts. This has led to an increase in domestic and inbound and a reduction in outbound tourism, the ratio of which is beginning to reach global proportions. However, noticeable imbalances in the development of tourism have been identified at the interregional level, which implies a more effective use of tourism and recreational potential and sustainable development mechanisms.

Based on the improvement of the methodology, an evaluation of integrated tourism and the recreational potential of sustainable tourism development was carried out. It included researching the availability of natural, cultural, historical, socioeconomic, and economic resources as well as the environmental situation in the area and the expertise of local tourist agencies. This research made it possible to classify the Russian Federation's entities into four groups, ranging from the most developed areas to those with the lowest level of integrated tourist and recreational potential.

Expert comparative analysis revealed fifteen mechanisms of sustainable tourism development combined into three types: economic, social and environmental. It has been established that public-private partnership is the most effective mechanism for attracting federal, regional and municipal budget funds and private investments to develop the tourist and recreational infrastructure. This approach is used to establish tourist and recreational special economic zones, tourist and recreational clusters, and areas with advanced socioeconomic development throughout Russia.

A ranking of the regions of the Russian Federation on the degree of sustainable tourist development has been suggested based on the development of the author's methodology for evaluating the mechanisms of sustainable development. As a result, 5 types of regions with varying levels of sustainable development have been identified.

The efficient approach to the management of Russian regions requires scenarios with prospects for sustainable tourism development. The scenarios were based on a combination of spatial interaction of the integrated tourist and recreational potential and were analysed using the matrix approach. The authors categorised areas depending on the level of sustainable tourism development using the identified mechanisms. As a result five groups with various scenarios, ranging from highly favourable to stagnant have been identified.

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