

# The use of the «soft power» concept in the modern Russian tourism industry

## La aplicación de la concepción «soft power» en la industria rusa de turismo moderna

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#### ABSTRACT:

The main purpose of the study consists in evaluation of the possibility and the definition of specific areas of "soft power" concept use in the industry and tourism of the Russian Federation. To implement the research, the authors used the methods of factor and structural analysis, systematization of data, content analysis, economic - statistical analysis and modeling, expert assessments and other scientific approaches for comprehensive consideration of the problem under study. As a result of analysis of the existing research authors suggest their own definition of the concept "Soft power" as applied to the tourism industry. According to the results of the study proved, that the use of the concept of "soft power" in the tourism industry contributes a significant increase in tourist flow, both at the level of interaction of several countries and specific regions. On the basis of economic and statistical analysis of data describing the state of inbound and outbound tourism in Russia and some regions Privolzhskiy Federal District, the article determines the need to apply the concept of "soft power" in the Russian tourism industry. It also offers directions of the tourism industry development with using elements of the "soft power" concept and gives a short - term forecast for the development of

#### RESUMEN:

El objetivo principal del estudio consiste en la evaluación de la posibilidad y la definición de áreas específicas de uso del concepto de "soft power" en la industria y el turismo de la Federación de Rusia. Para implementar la investigación, los autores utilizaron los métodos de análisis factorial y estructural, sistematización de datos, análisis de contenido, análisis y modelado económico - estadístico, evaluaciones de expertos y otros enfoques científicos para la consideración integral del problema en estudio. Como resultado del análisis de la investigación existente, los autores sugieren su propia definición del concepto "soft power" tal como se aplica a la industria del turismo. De acuerdo con los resultados del estudio, el uso del concepto de "soft power" en la industria del turismo contribuye a un aumento significativo del flujo de turistas, tanto a nivel de interacción de varios países como de regiones específicas. Sobre la base del análisis económico y estadístico de los datos que describen el estado del turismo emisor y emisor en Rusia y en algunas regiones del Distrito Federal de Privolzhskiy, el artículo determina la necesidad de aplicar el concepto de "soft power" en la industria turística rusa. También ofrece direcciones del desarrollo de la industria

inbound and domestic tourism in the Russian Federation.

**Keywords:** the "soft power" concept, tourism industry, domestic and inbound tourism, event tourism, tourism safety

turística con el uso de elementos del concepto de "soft power" y ofrece un pronóstico a corto plazo para el desarrollo del turismo interno y de entrada en la Federación Rusa.

**Palabras clave:** concepto de "soft power", industria del turismo, turismo interno y receptor, turismo de eventos, seguridad turística

## 1. Introduction

At the current stage of the economic relations development, states are faced with the task of finding new instruments of influence in the international arena (Amirbek & Ydyrys, 2014). Sanctions and exacerbation of geopolitical conflicts have a negative impact on trade and economic cooperation, so in Russia it is necessary to use other approaches to promote our own values, culture, services that contribute to the formation of a positive image /

In this regard, it is necessary to highlight the phenomenon of the "soft power" concept, which today becomes a key instrument of influence on the political process for many countries. For the first time, the American political scientist, Harvard University Professor J. Nye (1990) described the term "soft power" in his book "Limits of leadership: changing the nature of American power" in 1990, by which he understood the ability of the actor-state to shape the preferences of other actors by creating an attractive image in their eyes.

In the process of creating the concept of "soft power", the convergence and intertwining of liberal studies with the main components of political realism played an important role, including attempts to combine force calculations with normative humanitarian goals. Against the background of all this, only one step was left before the creation of the concept of "soft power", which was succeeded by J. Nye (1990).

The concept of "soft power" cannot be used as a permanent method of effective conduct of international relations, since it creates only a platform for resolving political issues, and does not solve them. Under the object of the "soft power" concept is understood a region or state, which is not directed by force.

Technology implementation of the "soft power" concept can be represented by the following stages:

1. Formation of necessary stereotypes, values, attitudes.
2. Broadcast the images created by the media.
3. Transfer of formed values and images to other spheres of activity: culture, economics, and politics.

The main mission of the idea of "soft power" is to create an attractive image of the state among the population and individual political elites of foreign countries. A vivid example of the effective implementation of the "soft power" concept is the international policy of the United States of America. The created image of the attractiveness of the American way of life, American politics and American culture, for several decades, attract the population of foreign countries. In many respects, the creation of this image is promoted by the tourism industry.

According to the idea of J. Nye (2004), in the United States there are several pillars of the "soft power" concept, which provide the external appeal of the country.

The first pillar of the "soft power" concept is the attractiveness of the American way of life and culture. J. Nye (2004) points out in the book "Soft Strength. How to succeed in world politics" criteria for US leadership: the number of emigrants, the popularity of American music, the popularity of cinematography, the volume of television production broadcast abroad.

The second pillar of the "soft power" concept in the United States is the American political ideology, which evokes approval in many countries of the world. In the understanding of most experts in the field of international relations, the fundamental values of the US, to date, it is liberal democracy and a market economy, this ideological complex is trying to spread to other countries, by implementing the concept of "soft power" (Lukes, 2005).

According to the theory put forward by J. Nye (2004), the fundamental basis of the "soft power" concept is the daily painstaking work "on the ground", aimed at building strong and trusting relationships. The professor places special emphasis on the work of non-governmental organizations created to lobby the interests of the state abroad (Filimonov, 2013).

An exceptional role in Nye's concept is played by information communications. J. Nye (1999, 2004) describes the relationship between the onset of the information age and the birth of the "soft power" concept as a practical tool in world politics.

All the above-mentioned levers of the "soft power" concept, according to Professor J. Nye, should create their own attractiveness of the United States of America, based on such tenets as openness of power, personal freedom, the political culture of society, access to education. Therefore, this concept is used in politics, economics, sociology, science, education, that is, practically in any field of activity.

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## **2. Methodological Framework**

The methodological basis of this study was the works of scientists devoted to the development of the modern tourism industry, as well as the use of the "soft power" concept in the management of individual sectors of the economy.

In addition, during the preparation of this article, authors referred to desk research methods, economic and statistical analysis, as well as methods of peer review and sociological research.

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## **3. Results**

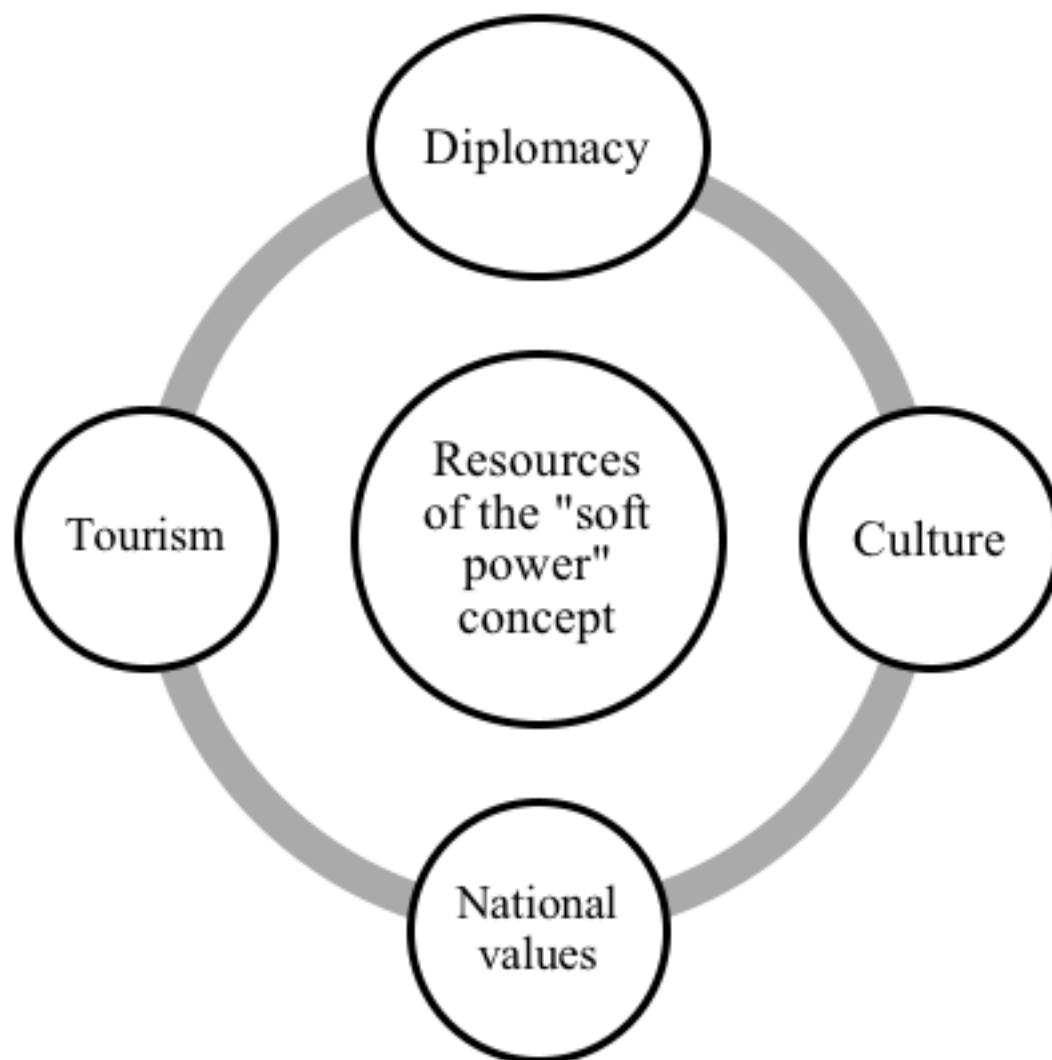
### **3.1. Prospects for Applying the "Soft Power" Concept for the Tourism Industry Development**

One of the promising areas of "soft power" concept application is tourism, as it promotes familiarization with the values, culture, way of life of the population, attractions. It brings revenues to the budget, increases employment of the population, etc.

Tourism is an unofficial platform for the realization of national and public interests in the international arena. Tourism in modern diplomacy is above all an instrument through which the state can tell the world about itself. Therefore, the main resources of the "soft power" concept for the tourism industry can be expressed by the following scheme (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

The main resources of the "soft power" concept in relation to the tourism industry



Reason for interest in the use of the concept of "soft power" in the tourism industry is obvious: the global development of the tourist market contributes not only to the development of the territories, but also to the formation of their attractive image among tourists. At the same time, it should be noted that the investment attractiveness of the region directly depends on the tourist potential.

The potential for the soft power concept application for the development of the Russian tourism industry is based on the following factors: a great culture, a huge cultural and historical heritage, the intellectual potential and identity of the peoples inhabiting the country, as well as multifaceted tourist resources.

The share of tourism in the Russian economy in 2016 was 3.4%, as stated by the Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation V. Medinsky. According to him, earlier this indicator was 1-1.5%. He explained that the new calculations were made not on an outdated scheme, but on a new model that was adopted in Western countries. This, of course, is not 10 percent, which is seen in the leading tourist countries, but it is still a huge, powerful sector of the economy that contributes to the creation of a positive image of Russia in the political arena, thereby realizing the concept of "soft power".

Revenues from tourism and hospitality, cultural exchange, growth of private entrepreneurship are only a small part of the potential benefits that a country can receive by realizing the concept of "soft power" (Klimchuk et al., 2017). In turn, the policy of intimidation and sanctions leads to the fact that the aggressor countries are deprived of a significant part of the tourist flow, the restoration of which in future will require large financial investments.

### **3.2. The Main Indicators of the Tourism Industry Development in the Russian Federation**

The sphere of tourism in the Russian Federation over the past few years has undergone major changes, related primarily to geopolitical processes. The entry of the Republic of Crimea to Russia, the ensuing economic sanctions, the fall of the national currency's impact on the tourism industry (Table 1).

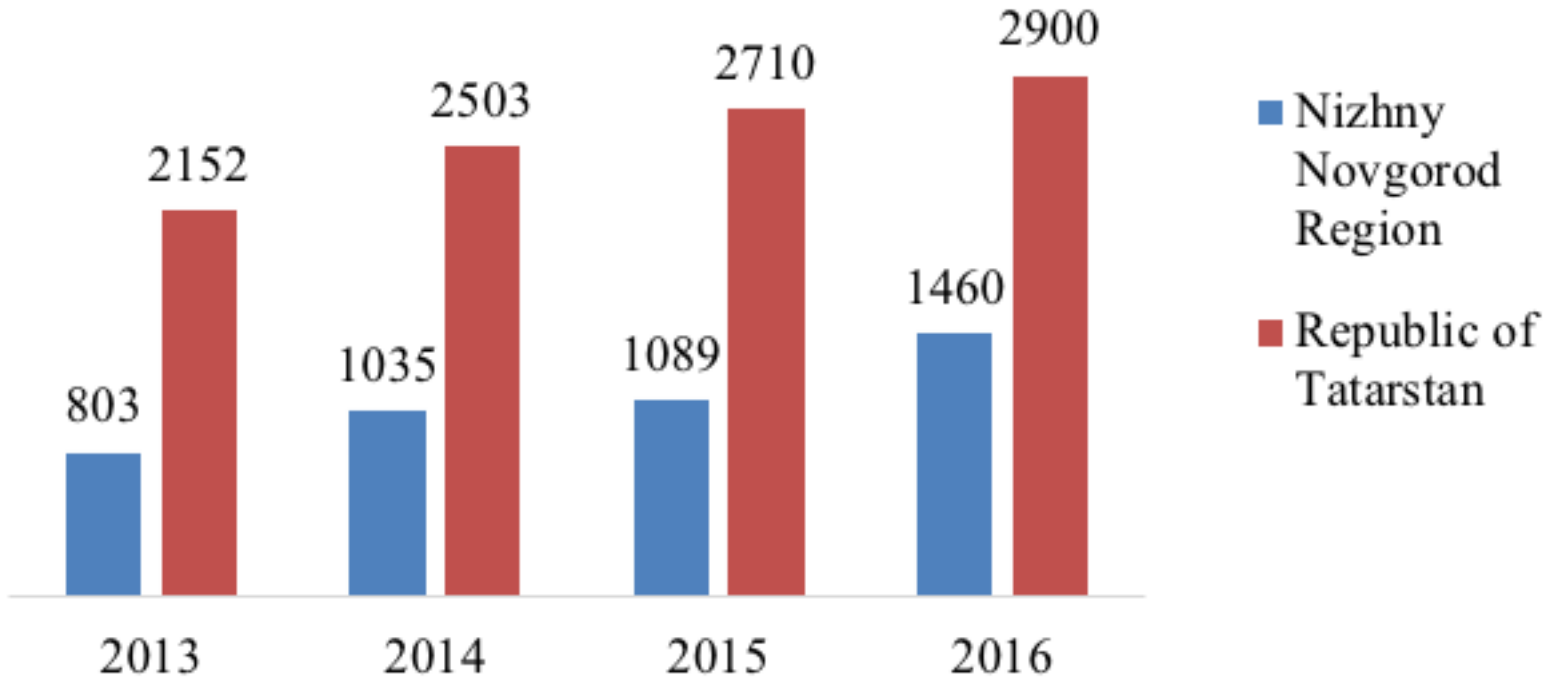
**Table 1**  
The main indicators of the tourist firms' activities in Russia 1 (Rosstat, 2017)

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	growth rate 2016 to 2013, %
<b>The number of tourist firms (at the end of the year) - total</b>	<b>11324</b>	<b>11614</b>	<b>11893</b>	<b>12395</b>	<b>109,45</b>
including engaged in:					
tour operator activity	478	445	349	549	114,85
tour operator and travel agency activity	1362	1306	1159	1479	108,59
travel agency activity,	8936	9307	9701	9300	104,07
only excursion activity.	548	556	684	1067	194,70
<b>The number of tour packages sold to the population - total, thousand</b>	<b>5384</b>	<b>4384</b>	<b>4024</b>	<b>3352</b>	<b>62,25</b>
of them to Russian citizens					
on the territory of Russia	969	992	1331	1529	157,80
for foreign countries	4240	3253	2482	1625	38,32
<b>The cost of tour packages sold to the population – total, million rub.</b>	<b>249898</b>	<b>243453</b>	<b>239554</b>	<b>192624</b>	<b>77,08</b>
out of them to Russian citizens:					
the territory of Russia	23876	25444	50517	49166	205,92
on foreign countries	222002	214308	183970	138120	62,21

Table 1 shows the growth over the last 4 years of 157% of realized tours inside the country and, as a result, the growth in the number of excursion bureaus (194% compared to the level of 2013), as well as tour operators and travel agencies offering leisure in Russia. It can be seen that for the last few years Russians have tried out trips inside the country, but gradually the growth rate is slowing down.

In the example of Tatar republic and Nizhny Novgorod Region, we can track the dynamics of growth of tourist arrivals (Fig. 2). Annual growth is an average of about 14% in each of the regions.

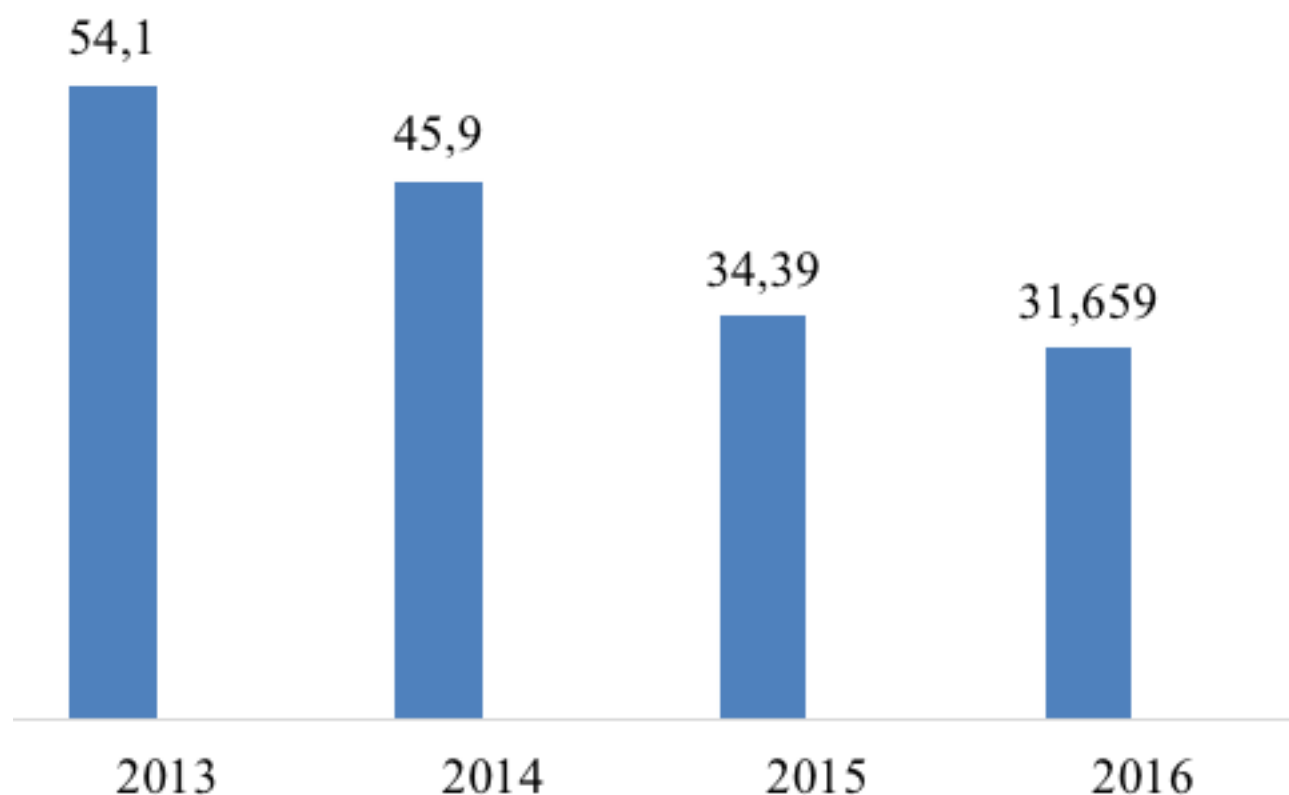
**Figure 2**  
The number of tourists who visited the Nizhny Novgorod Region  
and the Republic of Tatarstan of tourists (thousand people)



However, it should be noted that it is much more difficult to maintain growth rates when the indicator is at such a high level as the Republic of Tatarstan (currently almost 3 million tourists per year). The formation of a positive image in the eyes of compatriots and foreigners, that is, the implementation of the basic principles of the "soft power" concept, comes to the fore. The main successes of the Republic of Tatarstan are connected with the holding of major sporting events, which not only in themselves contributed to the development of event tourism, but also forced the authorities to almost completely renew the urban infrastructure. The capital of the region - the city of Kazan for a few years has been transformed to great extent. The interest of tourists to the region also prompted tour operators to expand the range of offered tours, routes and excursions. Large new hotels (around 7-10 annually), restaurants and other enterprises of the hospitality industry began to open massively. The attractiveness of the city allows Kazan today to apply for major events of a global scale, which will again create a favorable information background about the city, region and the country as a whole.

Of course, it is very important to note that the cost of vacation abroad after 2014 was less accessible for Russians, and they turned their gaze to their native regions. Figure 3 shows the dynamics of the departure abroad of Russians (The number of foreign passports issued to Russians, 2017), from which it can be seen that there is a serious decline in outreach activity. The media now constantly show the advantages of recreation in Russia and the turmoil (especially terrorist threats) in countries abroad, including in Europe.

**Figure 3**  
Dynamics of the departure abroad of Russians in 2013-2016 (mln. people) (Rosstat, 2017)



As can be seen from Fig. 3, in 2016 the outbound tourist flow declined by 42% relative to 2013, when the country observed the peak of tourist trips abroad.

Most likely, this dynamics was influenced also by the almost doubled rate of the dollar and the euro against the ruble. However, this same course made more attractive vacation in Russia for some categories of foreigners (Table 2). A particularly strong surge of interest in Russia occurred in 2015 (an increase of 38% relative to 2014).

**Table 2**

Total number of foreign visitors in the Russian Federation (mln. people) 1. (Rosstat, 2017).

	2013	2014	2015	2016	growth rate 2016 to 2013, %
Visitors in the Russian Federation	30,8	32,4	44,6	40,6	131,81

It should be noted that the number of visitors include not only the tour surfers, but also the citizens of CIS countries (Table 3), which come more often than not for the purpose of recreation and entertainment, and to find a well-paid job in Russia. However, these same visitors form a positive opinion abroad about Russia.

**Table 3**

Number of trips of citizens from countries of near abroad with the tourism purpose to the territory of the Russian Federation (Rosstat, 2017)

	Countries	2015	2016	Change in the number of trips of citizens from countries of near abroad, who entered the Russian Federation for tourism purposes in 2016 in comparison with the same indicator of 2015. (+/- %)
1	Ukraine	8 911 705	8 569 264	-4
2	Kazakhstan	4 711 082	3 564 152	-24

3	Azerbaijan	856 349	898 426	5
4	Uzbekistan	797 484	596 520	-25
5	Armenia	552 142	596 041	8
6	Abkhazia	416 673	410 566	-1
7	Tajikistan	458 021	410 013	-10
8	Moldova	491 196	409 194	-17
9	Kyrgyzstan	373 616	397 842	6
10	South Ossetia	117 707	111 370	-5
11	Georgia	47 216	65 336	38
12	Turkmenistan	12 822	7 912	-38
	Total	17 746 013	16 036 636	-10

In 2016, there is a decrease in the number of people coming from near abroad, almost all countries, with the exception of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The increase in the flow of visitors from Georgia is explained by the fact that air communication between the countries was restored and there was some warming in political relations.

Citizens of foreign countries showed a very interesting trend. Those countries with which Russia has now had good political relations indicate turbulent flow dynamics of visitors' flow growth (Table 4). At the same time, most of the countries of Western Europe show a negative dynamic, which is due to Russia's unfavorable representation in European media.

**Table 4**  
Number of trips of citizens from foreign countries with the tourism purpose to the Russian Federation territory (Rosstat, 2017)

<b>Country</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	Change in the number of trips of citizens from foreign countries, who entered the Russian Federation for tourism purposes in 2016 in comparison with the same indicator of 2015g. (+ -%)
<b>China</b>	1 121 536	1 288 720	15
<b>Germany</b>	553 493	566 434	2
<b>North Korea</b>	136 039	161 267	19
<b>India</b>	50 853	70 375	38
<b>Turkey</b>	238 541	42 658	-82
<b>Total for all countries</b>	26 851 658	24 551 444	-9

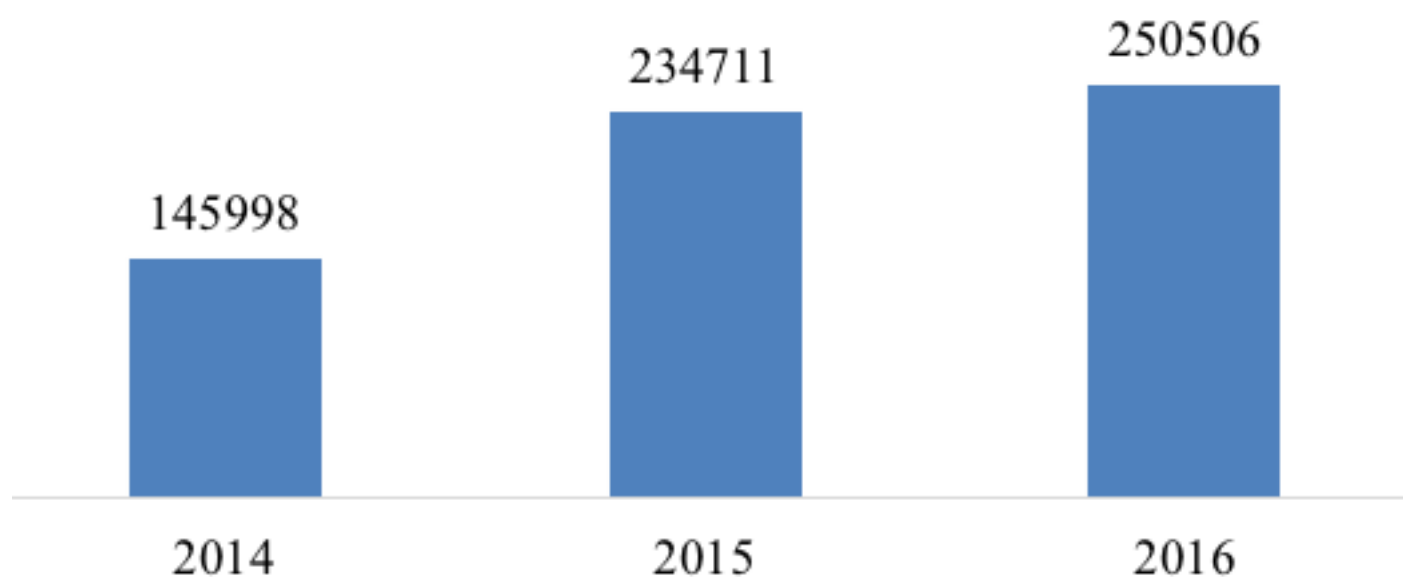


The example of Turkey is curious, the flow of visitors from which has decreased almost 6 times in just one year. Undoubtedly, this factor is connected with the incident with the downed Russian bomber and the consequent strong cooling of relations between the countries. Currently, relations have recovered and, according to the FMS, in 2017 the number of visitors from Turkey will be at the level of 2015.

Republic of Tatarstan, located far enough from the border, shows the positive dynamics of entry of foreign tourists (Fig. 4). In the period from 2014 to 2016 (that is, just during the period of sanctions and other economic and political unrest), the foreign tourist flow to the Republic of Tatarstan grew by 58%.

**Figure 4**

Number of foreign tourists who visited the Republic of Tatarstan (people)  
(The final collection of information and analytical materials on tourism in the Republic of Tatarstan, 2017)



Some countries showed a negative trend (for example, the same Turkey), but in these cases is strikingly different from the dynamics of the all-Russian parameters (Table 5).

**Table 5**

Rating of foreign countries on entry to the Republic of Tatarstan (people)  
(The final collection of information and analytical materials on tourism in the Republic of Tatarstan, 2017)

	<b>Countries</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>growth rate 2016 to 2015, %</b>
<b>1</b>	Turkey	18323	13466	73,5
<b>2</b>	China	7670	10198	133,0
<b>3</b>	German	6931	6296	90,8
<b>4</b>	North Korea	1701	2657	156,2
<b>5</b>	India	1624	2651	163,2

These positive dynamics is due to two factors:

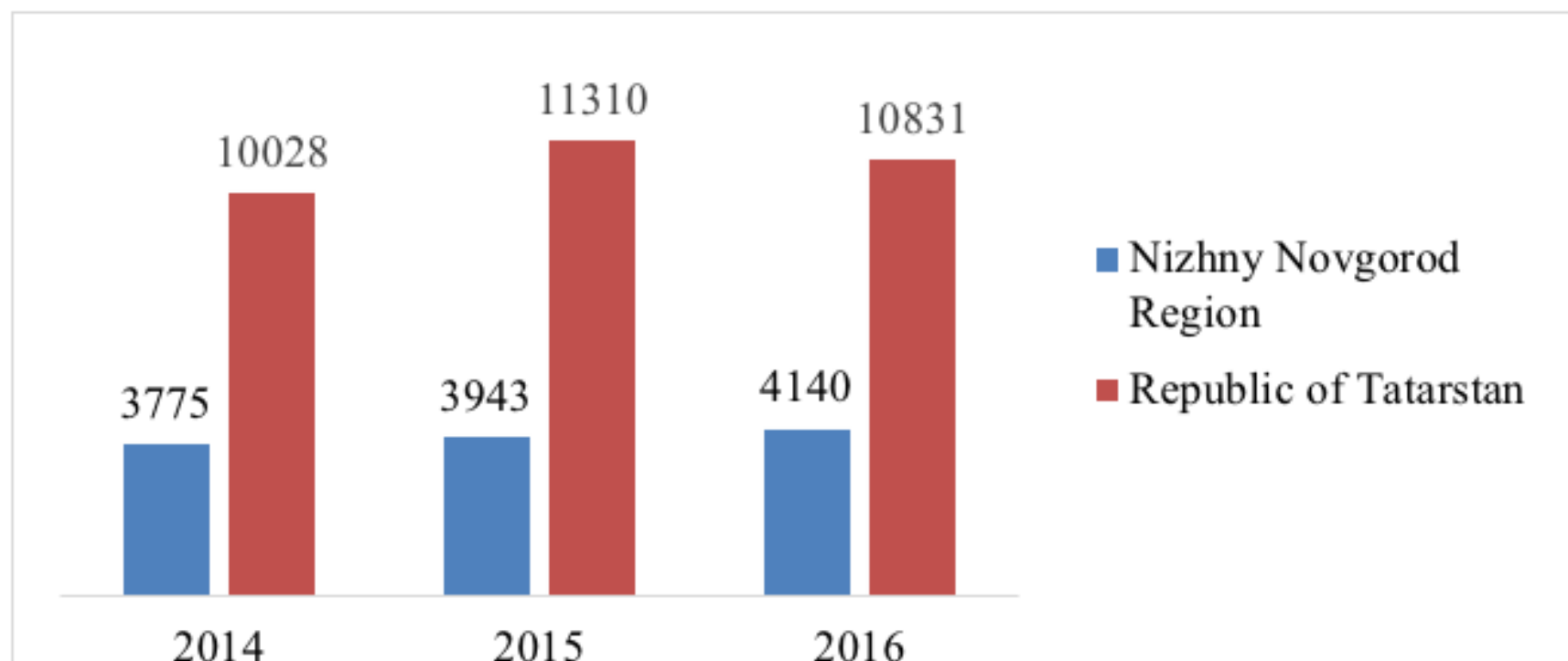
- 1) Favorable political relations between countries;
- 2) A large number of events held in the Republic of Tatarstan, which contribute to the development of event tourism in the first place.

Many foreigners who visited Kazan during the Universiade-2013 and the World Championships in Water Sports of the Dispute-2015 expressed their desire to come to the city once again and learn more about its sights.

The Nizhny Novgorod region did not hold such high level events in recent years, and despite the high tourist attractiveness for our compatriots, the growth of the foreign tourist flow was not so significant.

The dynamics of the services volume rendered in the Republic of Tatarstan and the Nizhny Novgorod Region is also of great interest (Figure 5).

**Figure 5**  
Volume dynamics of rendered tourist services in the Nizhny Novgorod Region and the Republic of Tatarstan (million rubles)



It should be noted that, despite the growth in the volume of tourist services provided in recent years in the Republic of Tatarstan, the share of tourism in the GRP is only 1.02% [9], and in the Nizhny Novgorod Region 1.7%.

### **3.3. Areas for improving the application of the "soft power" concept for the development of the tourism industry in the Russian Federation.**

Based on the analysis of the tourism industry in Russia, we can predict the following events in the tourism industry in Russia for the next 3-4 years:

- The growth of domestic tourism is likely to continue. First of all, this will be promoted by the national media, which show the attractiveness of the Russian regions and the high terrorist, infectious and other dangers in the countries of concern (Turkey, Egypt, Western Europe);
- Incoming tourist flow to Russia will also increase due to the first of all tourists from China, India and other friendly countries. Touristic flow from Europe will gradually recover, which is due to the price attractiveness of Russia for Europeans;
- The outbound tourist flow from Russia will grow slowly because citizens gradually move away from the financial shock of 2014-2015 (Oborin, 2015) However, the growth rate will be low, since to date only 30 million Russian citizens have foreign passports. In 2014-2015, the number of issued passports decreased by 65% (The number of foreign passports issued to Russians, 2017).

To develop the application of the concept of "soft power" in the tourism industry is necessary in the following areas:

1. Development with conventional tourism, an increase in the number of international events, the World Cup, Formula 1, etc.
2. Participation in professional tourism exhibitions with the presentation of not even the tourist product itself, but the territory, traditions, hospitality of local residents.

3. Constant expansion of the existing tourist product with new components.
  4. Improving the quality of service in public catering establishments and in accommodation facilities.
  5. Continuation of work in the field of ensuring the safety of tourists.
  6. Creation of a favorable image of the territory of the Russian Federation in the eyes of the public and potential tourists.
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## 4. Conclusions

The development of the tourism industry has been repeatedly investigated by the authors of the article (Bunakov et al., 2017; Bunakov et al., 2015; Vinogradova et al., 2016; Vinogradova, et al., 2015; Zaitseva & Chernikova, 2013). At the same time, the authors of the article have not yet considered the possibilities of applying the "soft power" concept and have not received wide application in the works of Russian scientists with reference to the tourism industry (Kashirin, 2016; Serova, 2016; Kabanova et al., 2016; Andrades & Dimanche, 2017).

In this article, unlike previous studies on the management and regulation of the development of the tourism industry in the Russian Federation, not only the scientific and theoretical foundations of the "soft power" concept are described, but also the directions of its application in the tourism industry, including example of the Republic of Tatarstan.

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## 5. Conclusion

Russia today should pay attention to the uneven distribution of tourist traffic. The uniqueness of each subject of our country allows us to form a tourist product that will attract tourists. Regions that are located near the borders of the state should emphasize the application of the "soft power" concept to neighboring states, and first of all to create a favorable image of border areas.

In the Republic of Tatarstan, as in one of the leading regions for the reception of tourists, one should continue the practice of holding major events (event tourism). Another factor of success among foreign tourists is the availability of UNESCO monuments in the place of potential rest. Now, there are three such monuments in Tatarstan, and this is one of the best indicators for Russia (Bunakov, 2016). At present, we can say that the region is successfully implementing the "soft power" concept in tourism, as evidenced by the constant and steady growth of both domestic and foreign tourist traffic.

In general, it can be concluded that in many ways the concept of "soft power" in tourism brings great benefits to the state by reducing the export of foreign currency by domestic tourists and the flow of capital from incoming foreign tourists. Most likely in the near future, Russia will continue to implement the concept of "soft power" through the development of event tourism in priority regions (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Sochi, Crimea, Tatarstan, etc.), and by continuing to create positive public opinion in Russian media about the rest inside the country.

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