

EVENTS AS PLATFORMS AND NETWORKS FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN MOSCOW, RUSSIA

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Abstract

Events are used as strategic tools for tourism development in Moscow nowadays. They have thematic diversity and various scales. However, there is a need for a particular event strategy for active urban development, city image improvement, and tourism growth. The study focuses on Moscow 'event portfolio' and discusses events as platforms and networks for event growth and value creation. The research based on a case-study approach examines the evolution of Moscow event tourism products and their conversion into a unique city platform appealing to both tourists and locals. Special attention is paid to *Times and Epochs*, the major historical re-enactment festival in Russia and one of the biggest in the world which started in 2011 and became very successful. The festival organizers have formed a comprehensive platform generating cultural events, media projects, and other activities to create new meaningful values based on direct communication and event involvement of the re-enactment community network, tourists and locals for further tourism development.

Keywords: Event tourism; Platforms; Networks; Re-enactment; Moscow.

EVENTOS COMO PLATAFORMAS E REDES PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO TURÍSTICO EM MOSCOW, RÚSSIA

Resumo

Os eventos são atualmente utilizados como instrumentos estratégicos para o desenvolvimento do turismo em Moscou. Eles têm diversidade temática e várias escalas. No entanto, há necessidade de uma estratégia específica de eventos para o desenvolvimento urbano ativo, melhoria da imagem da cidade e crescimento do turismo. O estudo centra-se no "portfólio de eventos" de Moscou e discute eventos como plataformas e redes para o crescimento de eventos e criação de valor. A investigação baseada numa abordagem de estudo de caso examina a evolução dos produtos turísticos de eventos de Moscou e a sua conversão numa plataforma única da cidade, atrativa tanto para turistas como para locais. É dada especial atenção a *Times and Epochs*, o maior festival de reencenação histórica na Rússia e um dos maiores do mundo que começou em 2011 e se tornou muito bem-sucedido. Os organizadores do festival formaram uma plataforma abrangente gerando eventos culturais, projetos mediáticos e outras atividades para criar novos valores significativos baseados na comunicação direta e no envolvimento de eventos da rede comunitária de reencenação, turistas e habitantes locais para o desenvolvimento turístico futuro.

Palavras-chave: Turismo de Eventos; Plataformas; Redes; Reencenações; Moscou.

LOS EVENTOS COMO PLATAFORMAS Y REDES PARA EL DESARROLLO DEL TURISMO EN MOSCÚ, RUSIA

Resumen

En la actualidad, los eventos se utilizan como herramientas estratégicas para el desarrollo del turismo en Moscú. Tienen diversidad temática y varias escalas. Sin embargo, es necesaria una estrategia particular de eventos para el desarrollo urbano activo, la mejora de la imagen de la ciudad y el crecimiento del turismo. El estudio se centra en la "cartera de eventos" de Moscú y analiza los eventos como plataformas y redes para el crecimiento y la creación de valor. La investigación, basada en un enfoque de estudio de casos, examina la evolución de los productos de turismo de eventos de Moscú y su conversión en una plataforma de ciudad única que atrae tanto a los turistas como a los lugareños. Se presta especial atención a *Times and Epochs*, el mayor festival de recreación histórica de Rusia y uno de los mayores del mundo, que comenzó en 2011 y alcanzó un gran éxito. Los organizadores del festival han creado una plataforma integral que genera eventos culturales, proyectos de medios de comunicación y otras actividades para crear nuevos valores significativos basados en la comunicación directa y la participación en eventos de la red de comunidades de recreación, turistas y lugareños para un mayor desarrollo del turismo.

Palabras clave: Turismo de Eventos; Plataformas; Redes; Recreación; Moscú.



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1 INTRODUCTION

Events are increasingly used worldwide as instruments for economic and social growth and tourism development. They have a strong emotional impact on visitors, create a sense of festivity, and facilitate tourism destinations marketing. The basic principle of event tourism is to create a feeling of joy, good mood, and bright experience linking it to the place it happens. It includes trips made to become an eyewitness, a spectator, or a participant in an event and work for the destination image enhancement.

Events bring diverse values as they have a strong economic, social and cultural impact on the destination and the society as a whole. In the modern world, the network values become particularly important as temporal and spatial values are modified by new technologies, including social media, new prospects of sharing economy, and new scales formed by rapidly growing flows of consumers and destinations diversity.

It is essential to pay special attention to the knowledge economy growth to understand the development of knowledge networks and platforms. Sharing knowledge, ideas and experiences through networks create new flows and links, form new networks, and build new communities. Events can become the drivers for the development of such networks and communities and create new types and quality of relationships within the destination and beyond.

The importance of events for modern tourism development in Russia is vital. In recent years many destinations, foremost, Moscow and other big cities started to generate special events and event series to move successively to event-tourism products. Events have become central to the processes of urban development and revitalization.

Moscow city authorities and tourism administration strongly believe that tourism and the city form a whole, and there is a need to strengthen tourism contribution to urban development. The understanding of event tourism potential and its possible impact on the city's economy and society became the essential prerequisite for event tourism development in Moscow. Eventfulness has become the key strategy for tourism development in Moscow since around 2011.

Events have great thematic diversity and various scales and work not only for expanding the competitive advantages of Moscow tourism industry but also for improving its life quality and urban environment. Moscow follows global trends in event tourism and is spreading innovations in event tourism development to other regions of Russia (Alexandrova & Aigina, 2017).

Moscow is actively promoting the city event calendar as one of its main marketing tools. Coupled with other measures for tourism development, it has a

strong positive impact on tourist flows and city budget revenues. Hosting the events has become one of the priorities for tourism development in Moscow.

Until 2013, the tourist flow to the city grew steadily, mainly due to business tourism. From that time on, city events along with investments in public spaces improvement serve as effective tools for Moscow as a tourism destination dynamic development, helping to expand domestic tourism, to overcome the decline in inbound tourism in 2014-15, and to smooth out tourism seasonality problems.

Over the past years, Moscow event series has significantly changed. During the last decade, Moscow event calendar was filled with over 1500 events. The Journey to Christmas, Easter Gift, Circle of Light, Museum Night, Moscow Maslenitsa, Spasskaya Tower Kremlin Military Tattoo were among the most successful and visited city events. The number of festivals and other events attendees in Moscow was growing very quickly. According to the Mayor of Moscow S. Sobyenin (2019) in 2018, over 65 million Muscovites and tourists took part in Moscow events cultural programs.

Year-round and diversified events have become particularly popular in Moscow among both tourists and locals. Peaks of hotel occupancy on the dates of the major events have become quite usual, providing high occupancy rates even in the traditionally 'low' winter season. The events create new venues across Moscow and generate a substantial amount of seasonal jobs.

In terms of global event market competitiveness, the main task of any destination is to create a unique offer. That is the core of many well-known events attracting millions of tourists from all over the world. Events become the most important components of the local tourism product and territorial branding.

Each destination seeks to create new, including event-driven, occasions for tourist arrivals and to emphasize its exclusivity. However, the importance of these occasions goes far beyond tourism development.

Here, the primary socio-economic function of tourism – communication – is manifested, as tourism is a means for realizing human needs in other social activities, such as learning, recreation of physical and spiritual potency, self-actualization. High event interactivity allows the hosting community not to be the passive viewers, but to become immediate participants, which is primarily in demand nowadays.

Moscow city events provide diverse tourism products and ready-made packages for attracting both domestic and inbound tourists as well as the locals. In this regard, the *Times and Epochs* re-enactment festival deserves special attention. It is an attempt to create an event that can be converted into a unique city platform. *Times and Epochs* is the largest historical

reconstruction in the world held in a megacity. This experience is of particular interest as Moscow tries to generate a new tourist product – traveling in space and time – in a completely new form of historical re-enactment. That is the way the ambitious task to create a world-class event, get to the top of world festivals, and attract tourists' attention can be solved (Shpilko, 2017).

The objective of the paper is to study the role of events as instruments for tourism destination growth, for the development of smart eventful city platform and for the construction of favorable urban environment for tourists and residents by the example of "Times and Epochs" - the largest festival of historical reenactment in Moscow.

2 THEORETICAL REVIEW

The role of events in tourism development of modern cities is actively discussed by Getz (2008, 2010), Richards and Palmer (2010), Richards and Rotariu (2015), Getz and Page (2016) and many other researchers. They point out that festivals and events help to distinguish tourism destinations and form additional reasons for tourists and residents to visit them. Many cities start to promote themselves as 'eventful' or 'festival' by adopting specific strategies for event or festival development (Knupp et al., 2021).

For large cities and metropolises, the concept of the creative city, linking the traditional cultural products, services and heritage with the creative industries such as media and entertainment, design, architecture and fashion, can offer great advantages in attracting visitors (Richards & Palmer, 2010; European Travel Commission, 2005).

Eventfulness in big cities goes rapidly, and changes in event nature and contents take place very often. Some events start to exploit a broader understanding of culture that is challenging because of its complexity. It is essential to realize the general significance of culture; not only does it enhance the attractiveness of tourist destinations, but it goes much further in that to create a comfortable urban environment.

Many emerging destinations use the event portfolio approach to event tourism strategy-making and evaluation suggested by Getz and Page (2016). In this context, hallmark events creation and development are of particular interest because they can exist within the context of social worlds and for special-interest groups as iconic tourist attractions that facilitate *communitas* and identity building (Getz, 2008).

As Getz (2010) also discusses, the core phenomenon of event studies is the event experience and meanings attached to it. Events have a variety of meanings, existing at personal, social, cultural and economic levels, that make them complex phenomena.

Modern events are mostly created and managed with multiple goals, stakeholders and meanings attached to them. It leads to events network effect and platforms arrangement.

The network approach and network-based models in tourism studies are described by Scott, Baggio and Cooper (2008), Mackellar (2006), Richards and Colombo (2017), and many others. In Russia, studies on networks in tourism appeared recently and can be presented by Sheresheva and Baggio (2014), Oborin and Sheresheva (2017) researches on socioeconomic models.

In general, a network is defined as a specific set of positions (nodes) linked by resource and information flows. Now the network nodes consist of not only individuals but also companies, organizations, groups, or cities. Network analysis is built on the idea that it is impossible to understand the behavior of stakeholders without analyzing the complex social relationships that link them or the context in which they operate (Richards & Palmer, 2010). The use of a network analysis method as a tool for understanding inter-organizational relationships goes through identifying the actors in the network, examining the links between actors, and the function of the network as a whole (Mackellar, 2006).

The growing mobility of people, globalization, modern technologies development increasingly change networks and communities. New patterns of stakeholders' relationships and connections appear. Globalization has encouraged linkages and eased the communications by diffusion of information technologies (Scott et al., 2008).

Networks of different types and scales set up different types of communities, including virtual ones. Flows of information and resources form large platforms and 'small world' structures. For some researchers and event contributors, it may be more easy, relevant, or essential to seek access to social and virtual events networks than the formalized structures of institutions and stakeholders (Jarman et al., 2014).

In many cases, events are becoming key catalysts for the development of city platforms and networks. As Richards and Colombo (2017) point out, the interdependence emerging between the events and their urban context can provide the basis for the network value exchange which is particularly important in the 'knowledge economy' or the 'network society'. The network value is defined by them as the value that can be created through the linkages provided by a network, above the value created by the links available to individual network members alone.

Historical re-enactments are of special interest from the network value point of view as they create different types of interactions and links between destinations, local communities, tourists and

professional heritage industry and make such events meaningful through understanding issues of authenticity and identity in the production and consumption of cultural heritage attractions (Carnegie & McCabe, 2008). They also help to understand the interconnection of cultural globalization and localization processes.

The choice of *Times and Epochs* festival as the case study is due to the growing popularity of re-enactment activities and the special place it now has in the Moscow event series. At the same time, it is worth mentioning that this is the first study of this kind, and it faced significant difficulties in obtaining data for understanding the real interaction of festival actors and the extent of their participation in the event's organization.

So, initially regarded as additional attractions, events have become a significant part of destination marketing and tourism development strategies. Furthermore, eventfulness and new forms of creative activities contribute not only to tourism development but also improve the quality of urban life. They form complex network patterns for tourism and urban community interactive growth and demand new technologies for integrating events in city platforms.

It is necessary to study the processes of tourism events construction and transformation from the viewpoint of their changing characteristics, understanding the logical scheme of their main results transformation and their effect on tourism industry and city life.

3 METHODOLOGY

The case-study approach focuses on new forms and models of event tourism development in Moscow. It comprises the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data concerning new trends in event tourism development accumulated through studying official reports and documents, events media coverage, websites analysis and other relevant data on events held in the city.

Fourteen semi-structured and over ten unstructured in-depth interviews with event actors and stakeholders and the results of participant observations made by the authors during the events in 2013-2019 were used to collect the primary data on types and quality of the relationships between event organizers, tourism authorities and companies, tourists and locals.

The interviews were taken mainly during the re-enactment events in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Special attention was paid to the estimations and ideas given by the President of the Russian Tourism Industry Union Sergey Shpilko and by the representatives of the re-enactment community and historical festival organizers.

Other research activities included visual inspection of the festival sites, regular participation in the festival free guided tours in Moscow and the RECON (All-Russian Festival of Martial History Movement) business program in Saint Petersburg.

The festival information system, festival venue organization, functional zoning, infrastructural amenities for the participants and viewers were also studied. Special attention was paid to the festival promotion and assessment on the Internet.

The overview of the conceptual framework and relevant publications on event tourism, platforms and networks was added by the social media, websites and other internet resources analysis as their role in marketing and shaping the event experience is increasing.

They help to understand the networks formed during the festivals and event activities by identifying the actors and the connections between them. Social networks make it possible to identify the significance of certain events or communities through their assessment by other participants and viewers. At the same time, traditional academic research methods are still relevant as well.

To sum up, key categories used for the event analysis include:

- main subject and event idea;
- event actors and organizers, their communication and interaction;
- the number and structure of event participants and attendees;
- event venue place, scope and functional zoning;
- special and supporting infrastructural amenities;
- event information system (website, mobile app, social media coverage, etc.).

Other important event characteristics as well as major tourism development trends and results should also be taken into consideration.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The launch of event tourism development in Moscow

The transformation of Russian society, together with the rapid lifestyle changes at the beginning of this century created new values and ideas for event development. The construction of a modern cultural environment has led to the emergence of events of a very different nature.

From 2002, the Moscow Government adopted a special declaration and started to organize Maslenitsa celebration (folk holiday with pagan roots celebrated during the last week before Great Lent) as a new tourist

product of the city showing Russian cultural values and national traditions. Maslenitsa was the key tourist event in Moscow for ten years.

Although it took part in the 'low season' winter period, was very popular because of traditional food and lasted for the whole week, it was impossible to make such an event unique and hallmark as Maslenitsa is celebrated everywhere in Russia.

We can speak about national traditions as the event platform, but there were no special actors involved in this product; it gave no new content and value. So, in 2012, the idea of promoting *Maslenitsa* as a key tourism event in Moscow was given up though it is still included in the city event calendar among other traditional celebrations.

Other events organized by Moscow city authorities include Horse Guard and Foot Guard Parade of the Presidential Regiment in Kremlin, Spasskaya Tower Kremlin Military Tattoo held annually starting from 2009 in the Red Square, international Night of Museums (as well as Night of Music and similar events) and the Circle of Light Moscow International Festival (since 2011).

They show that Moscow follows the global trends and modern technologies in event organization. However, modern technologies and trends correspond with the global agenda (or platform) without taking into account local specificity and authenticity; they technically repeat the successful experience of other destinations but add little meaning for the community.

The economic impact of this type of event is the most visible form of their value, mostly for the event sponsors. However, quite often the events of this kind have no particular appeal for foreign tourists (sometimes even for domestic tourists as well) and their social and cultural values for the community can be hardly measured.

Since 2013, the National Calendar of Events project is carried out in Russia as a national platform for event tourism development around the country. The project started with governmental support and is aimed at attracting regional and municipal tourism authorities, tourist information offices to events as mechanisms for domestic and inbound tourism promotion as well as the platform for introducing regional tourism opportunities to travelers.

The National Calendar of Events gradually generates innovations and share successful experience, develop event organization technologies. The community of event managers and experts started to take shape; the national award for event tourism has been established. Moscow, as the capital and the global city, has the central leading position in the calendar.

The new event tradition also started in Moscow in December 2013 when the first Christmas Fair opened.

Following the European Christmas traditions in 2013 and Christmas celebrations all over the world in 2014, these events became rather popular among both locals and tourists and set the stage for the following changes.

April 2016 marked the beginning of the Moscow Seasons – a cycle of diverse, different in scale and themes free-admission city festivals and events, succeeding each other throughout the year (<https://www.mos.ru/city/seasons/>). In three years, Moscow Seasons have become a city platform for various types of official celebrations, traditional, seasonal, cultural, gastronomic, musical and other events.

Moscow Seasons activities and achievements were highly appreciated by the International Festival and Event Association which presented Moscow in 2018 with the World Festival & Event City Award as one of the best cities in community leadership and festival and events partnership around the world (<https://www.ifea.com/>).

Indeed, the event technologies in Moscow have developed a lot in recent years. Newly emerging events have radically changed the image of the city. In general, the share of event tourism in tourist arrivals purposes in the Russian Federation is about 1%. According to the Mayor of Moscow, in 2018 more than 2 million tourists (12%) came to Moscow specially to attend the festivals and other cultural events (Sobyanin, 2019).

However, the surveys show that the majority of people who attended Moscow Seasons were mostly passing by rather than planning to participate in the festival specifically (Boston Consulting Group, 2019). So, there is a need for further event improvement and touristification.

4.2 The rise of Times and Epochs festival

The study of Moscow event tourism growth shows that the idea to create a new hallmark event with high tourist demand and high value based not only on a high number of tourists attracted but also on image enhancement, value to residents and community support is the most challenging and difficult to accomplish.

The path to success goes through the creation of new events aimed at a mass audience, a dynamically developing mass movement or subculture. From the economic point of view, the use of the existing social movement allows not only to generate demand for the event but also to share the costs of its implementation with the participants. The high interactivity of such events turns the participants into their main actors.

The study of the world event market experience led to the establishment in 2011 on the initiative of Moscow Committee on Tourism and Hotel Industry and

Ratobortsy historical projects agency of the historical re-enactment festival *Times and Epochs* (Shpilko, 2014).

Ratobortsy agency originated from Ratobor re-enactment club founded in 1998. It brought together people who were interested in the Russian history of the IX-XI centuries. Today, the club continues to work behind closed doors with no new members affiliated. In 2004 Ratobor club joined the Gardarika Association of Early Medieval Historical Clubs – a union of historical re-enactment clubs interested in the early Middle Ages better known as the 'Viking Age' (<http://ratobor.ru/>). It has active contacts with similar clubs and associations abroad.

The idea of historical re-enactment festivals is not original. Many events of this type take part in Russia (Kulikovo Battlefield, Borodino) and around the world (Austerlitz, Waterloo, etc.). However, most of the events take part in the corresponding battlefields or small historical towns.

Also, historical events are reconstructed annually in the same form. In general, the re-enactment clubs are well-organized networks with a small number of participants and clearly defined subjects connected by particular flows of information and resources.

Times and Epochs festival was the first re-enactment event held in the megacity, which dramatically expanded the number of its participants as well as its accessibility to a broad audience of both locals and tourists. It was created to become a

presentation of the achievements of the world re-enactment movement, a kind of global re-enactment platform.

Secondly, there was a decision to dedicate every festival to a different historical period to increase its attractiveness. Thirdly, the festival idea comprised the reconstruction of not only historical events, but also the culture and lifestyle of the period.

The main task was to achieve the maximum historical credibility of the event. As a result, the ambitious task to create a new tourism product – a journey through time with a high degree of interactive immersion into history – came out (Shpilko, 2014).

Ratobortsy historical re-enactment agency has created its business niche and started experiments with different forms of re-enactment presentation. They produce not only historical festivals and events, but also TV projects, documentaries, projects in experimental archaeology, science, and education. The cycle of *Times and Epochs* festivals is the largest international project of Ratobortsy, which has become a hallmark of the agency (<http://ratobor.com/>).

Starting from 2011 *Times and Epochs* re-enactment festival was held in *Kolomenskoye* museum-reserve famous for the 16th century Ascension Church included in the UNESCO World Heritage list. Now it is the most prominent historical re-enactment festival in Russia and one of the biggest in the world (see table 1).

Table 1. *Times and Epochs* Festival characteristics and timeline (2011-2019)

Year	Event topic	Event venue	Event duration (days)	Number of attendees (thousand)	Number of re-enactment participants	Number of countries presented
2011	Ancient Russia	Kolomenskoye museum-reserve	3	50	1200	11
2012	Moscow Kingdom	Kolomenskoye museum-reserve	3	190	1300	13
2013	Middle Ages	Kolomenskoye museum-reserve	3	220	2067	25
2014	World War I	Kolomenskoye museum-reserve	2	250	2137	14
2015	Ancient Rome	Kolomenskoye museum-reserve	2	300	over 2000	9
2016	Thousand Swords Battle	Kolomenskoye museum-reserve and 6 venues in the center of Moscow	2	160-200	3979	23
2017	<i>Times and Epochs</i> . The Gathering	Five sites in the parks (including 2 in Kolomenskoye) and 19 sites around Moscow	12	5000	over 6000	20
2018	<i>Times and Epochs</i>	30 sites along Moscow Boulevard Ring and in the parks, including Kolomenskoye	13	5200	over 3000	20
2019	<i>Times and Epochs</i>	40 sites around Moscow Boulevard Ring and in the center, Knight Tournament in Kolomenskoye	10	5700	Over 2000	15

Source: compiled from Moscow Seasons (<https://www.mos.ru/city/seasons/>) and *Times and Epochs* (<https://historyfest.ru/>) data.

Despite its specific re-enactment content, *Times and Epochs* festival anticipated active community and tourists' involvement and co-creation. The conceptual idea to change the historical period every year and later

– to combine different times and epochs within one festival (despite the significant complication of the project) lead to expanding its network community with those who come not only to see but also to take part in

the festival activities and are interested in coming again. Moscow tourism authorities actively supported this idea as it helps to avoid one-sided business tourism specialization and to encourage the city cultural and event tourism development.

In six years, the festival has turned from a local happening into a significant international event attracting not only Moscow residents but also a large number of re-enactors and history lovers from Russian regions and abroad. Interestingly, small travel agencies started to sell tours and organize excursions during the festival. However, the share of tourists who visit specifically this event is still low.

In 2016, *Ratobortsy* agency was awarded the Mayor of Moscow Prize in tourism for the promotion of Moscow historical and cultural heritage, organization of *Times and Epochs* festival series. It was a worthy conclusion to the first *Times and Epochs* development period.

4.3 *Times and Epochs* as the Key Moscow Event

In 2017 the event character changed radically. "Times and Epochs. The Gathering" became an unprecedented convention of re-enactors representing different epochs of world history. Six thousand re-enactors (including over a thousand foreign participants) immersed Moscow residents and tourists in history for 12 days. The festival went beyond *Kolomenskoye* Museum-Reserve and had five venues in the parks (including 2 in *Kolomenskoye*) and 19 sites around Moscow in different parts of the city, mainly in the central streets.

In 2018 17 of the 30 sites of the *Times and Epochs* festival were located along ten Moscow boulevards. They formed a particular 'historical' 10 km route. The guests of the festival were suggested not only to see the re-enactment groups from different countries and epochs but also watch historical performances, try on historical costumes, participate in handicraft classes, play old games. They were also invited to free guided tours (6.8 thousand visitors attended this type of activities), various quests, fairs, demonstrative battles, and shows supplementing historical presentations.

The 2019 festival has become by far the largest in terms of the number of visitors, event venues, or selected historical periods. The unique presentation of Moscow under Ivan the Terrible along with the Ottoman Empire and the Mayan civilization sites gave additional diversity to the festival themes.

More than 33 thousand visitors took part in the guided tours added by master classes, concerts, lectures, shows, and other activities. A new mobile application available from the App Store and Google

Play provided the festival participants with detailed information, events timetable, a free festival audio guide, and also the opportunity to vote for the best presentation.

Thus, in the last three years, a completely new format of the festival has emerged. Now it is integrated with the city event calendar and the Moscow Seasons event platform, as well as in the improvement of the urban environment. It has significantly expanded both in the subject's choice and in forms of activities. This event creates high quality and friendly atmosphere, enhances the involvement of Muscovites in the life of the city and its development, improves the image of Moscow for both locals and tourists.

Being initially a small private club for re-enactment fans, *Ratobortsy* historical projects agency is now building a platform for new historical festivals and events as well as for media projects and other activities. It has already created its business niche and is particularly interested in new forms of production and cooperation through building networks for further expansion.

4.4 Elaboration of the Event Platform Structure and Actors Relationship

To understand the meaning of events as networks and platforms, it is necessary to identify their main actors and the structure of their relationship. The network core actors include the re-enactment communities of different types. Their interests focus on trustworthy historical information and the restoration of historical facts, the preservation of genuineness and historical purity.

It is a subculture with professional attention towards authentic reproduction of lifestyle and even the authentic way of thinking which is often opposite to the interests of spectators who want bright impressions and new experiences (Pozdnyakov, 2019).

At the same time, the re-enactment movement revives the history and evokes traditions – that is very important for educational needs (Dracheva, 2016), attracts new participants to the societies, increases the interest in museums and other cultural enterprises, and has a tremendous emotional impact on the audience.

It also requires contacts with similar communities in their country and abroad to form information and experience and to find solutions to many complicated questions relating, for instance, the utilization, storage and transportation of weapons and ammunition, rules for public events organization, visa requirements, the use of expensive equipment and large sites and others.

So, there is a need for intermediate actors or 'brokers', who can bring the core actors together, help in organizing events, attract public attention, and also in solving their problems. The contacts within the re-

enactment community are held mainly in person or through social media (Facebook and V Kontakte in Russia) in private mode.

Joint actions of community members united by joint long-term goal setting, mutual interests and problems are of key importance for successful network development. They become the 'driving force' of social interaction and connections between all actors. There is also a need for integration into more extensive networks of national and global levels.

The contacts between the re-enactment communities used to exist long ago but only by historical periods (many respondents emphasized this fact in personal communication); therefore, the mediating actor is so important.

Ratobortsy agency was the first but not the only one in Russia to start this integration. Starting from 2017, another event – RECON (All-Russian Festival of Martial History Movement) organized by *Doblest' Vekov* (the Courage of Ages) re-enactment club became the platform for re-enactment gatherings in Saint Petersburg (<http://doblestvekov.ru/>). Other regional associations also exist.

The All-Russian Re-enactment Movement is under construction. However, *Ratobortsy* agency has become the most important actor of this type as it managed to gain centrality in this network. They were the most active in collaborating with external actors to reach the level of the city event, to establish cooperation with Moscow city administration, to receive additional funding and effective media coverage, to join the National and Moscow event calendar.

Moscow events, including the *Times and Epochs* festival, are the results of the public-private partnership between the Moscow Government and different companies. At first, *Times and Epochs* got funding from the program supporting Moscow exhibition and fair activities, and hallmark events performance.

In 2012-2016 Moscow tourism authorities were in charge of the festival management. The festival was included in Moscow tourism development strategy aimed at tourism diversification and shifting from business tourism specialization to cultural, educational, and event-oriented tourism products.

Starting from 2017, the financial support for the festival came from the program subsidizing economic development and investment attractiveness. Moscow Department of Trade and Services became the supervisor of the budget funds. In this situation, the economic value of the festival resulting in the number of visitors, the sponsors' revenues, urban infrastructure development, and the rise of the investment attractiveness of the city, is of the highest importance.

Budget money and local authorities' support help solve many problems, but often turn re-enactment into

a show. To preserve the original idea, the organizers of the festival expand its social network, focusing on creating additional social value. So, the external actors' network is growing, putting together educational institutions, professional and amateur guides (who work for free), museums (they provide sites for presentations, use re-enactors in advertising, combine museum agenda with reconstruction), volunteers, youth centers, scientists (lectures included in the festival program) and others.

The festival has no age limit, but it is aimed at two primary audience groups. First, these are families with children, and second – young people. However, the age of the festival visitors can be different because history is attractive to everyone (Ovcharenko, 2017). Although the re-enactment institutional environment is very specific and the relationships with other clubs are very complicated, everyone recognizes the primacy of *Ratobortsy* agency because of the efforts they do to popularize historical re-enactment, which is currently crucial for attracting new members to the movement. This idea was consistently pointed out by the representatives of various clubs in personal communication.

4.5 Contributing new content and values to tourism and community development

Speaking about the cultural value of the festival, which is evident at first glance but quite challenging, it is very interesting to discuss the changes in its content and the potential development path. First, the festival organizers are not interested in its further expansion; instead, they seek how to segment it.

The festival started with the reconstruction of Russian medieval history in a place that has a straight connection with this historical period - in Kolomenskoye Museum-Reserve. As it is a specially protected natural area with the UNESCO Heritage site located close to the festival venue, it was impossible to expand the event venue there, and the city authorities decided to bring the festival to the central part of Moscow. However, expanding the venues of the festival and increasing its thematic diversity reduces the degree of historical authenticity and leads to the demarcation between the re-enactment core and festive events of historical nature.

Since Kolomenskoye is a truly exceptional place for reconstruction, starting from 2015 the St. George's Knight Tournament representing the re-enactment idea in the most accurate, detailed and popular way, takes place there. This unique competition adds to the popularization of knowledge for history lovers and also to event tourism development by creating an exclusive event of global level. As a result, the idea of a Middle

Agas theme park construction in Kolomenskoye is under discussion.

The annual competition of re-enactment projects held by the agency is another step in maintaining the reconstruction movement in its 'pure' form. Every year, it selects projects for the festival with the online application form; at the end of the festival, the best nine projects receive grants of 1 million roubles to continue their activities.

Representatives of the re-enactment communities from different countries recognize the leading positions and high quality and academism of re-enactment in Russia. Therefore, they accept invitations to participate in the festival with great interest and are ready to maintain close contacts and to share their experience.

When the festival became a city-wide event and received ample opportunities for further development, its historical themes expanded incredibly. Now, any historical period or event of any country or culture that has become the subject of reconstruction can be represented here. The projects that appeared in the last three festivals confirm this statement to a full extent. The number of network actors and links can expand significantly. It is impossible to re-enact all periods of history, but many periods provided with documents and artifacts are being reconstructed now. So, there are huge opportunities for developmental relationships and the global and local experience exchange.

The re-enactment variety is essential, and extensive communication, as well as information flows, are of particular importance. Traditionally, re-

enactment communities have been closed to external contacts. The number of members and subscribers in their social media groups is usually very small (about several thousand).

Ratobortsy agency suggests that social media should be more actively used for communication. It produces and shares a high-quality photo and video content to encourage social media participants to communicate. The festival organizers believe that over a short time, special software application products will help visitors, including foreigners, to more easily find the events they need; to connect the organizers and participants of the events and the visitors to help in the projects' assessment and communication.

At the same time, the festival venue and activities provide exceptional opportunities for personal offline communication after or instead of online social media communication not only for re-enactors but also for the visitors. The idea of *Times and Epochs* is to involve guests in the festival process as much as possible and to de-virtualize their communication and experience, for young people especially.

Innovative ideas of *Times and Epochs* festival influence the re-enactment development in other parts of Russia. Re-enactment events are now included in the National Event Calendar. *Ratobortsy* shares their experiences and best practices, taking part in the organization of some of the regional events. So, its central position in Russia's re-enactment network and the total network value is increasing (see table 2).

Table 2. Key Trends of Event Portfolio Transformation in Moscow (2002-2019)

Development stages	Time period	Event characteristics	Major results
1. Moscow event agenda introduction and expansion	2002-2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional cultural events are amplified by new high-tech global multimedia shows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New attractions for domestic and inbound tourists appear; tourism seasonality in Moscow is smoothing; events contribute to Moscow tourism promotion and growth.
2. The rise of <i>Times and Epochs</i> historical re-enactment festival	2011-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High interactivity and accessibility of the festival coupled with thematic variety and historical credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new type of event, new tourism product and image enhancement for the destination; new value to urban residents and community; part of global re-enactment platform.
3. <i>Times and Epochs</i> expansion	2017-2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event venue expansion to the city center. New types of activities and city tours appear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City hallmark event of high interest and value to urban residents and community is formed; new types of social interaction, mobile app and social media coverage; a platform for new events and media projects in the city.
4. <i>Times and Epochs</i> networking and diversification of events	post-pandemic recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiplication of re-enactment events and networks in other destinations with <i>Times and Epochs</i> used as a platform; new creative content and values to city tourism and community development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing event experience and networking; new public-private partnership projects with high economic value; creating additional social value for both re-enactment and urban communities; broad online and personified offline communications.

Source: own elaboration.

5 CONCLUSION

Up to the spring of 2020, there were quite a lot of events held in Moscow, but Times and Epochs re-enactment festival had a particular position because of its high-value creation and active community involvement. It has become an essential instrument for the development of city event platforms and networks.

As shown above, events can develop based on different platforms: traditional, technological, national, urban, thematic, and others. Event networks linking event actors of different types create high economic, cultural, and social value as well as particular network value that can contribute both to successful tourism and local community development.

Ratoborsy activities popularize the re-enactment movement in general and create large-scale and all-encompassing events. They have become a hub in a broader network of the re-enactment community, not just supporting technology or platform. Times and Epochs festival has become the focal point for the global re-enactment idea, where all actors and links of the network can meet. The value it generates within its network is more important than the values generated by the individual links of its members and visitors, so the future of the project is promising.

The work of the Times and Epochs festival organizers is highly appreciated in Russia and abroad. In 2017 the CEOs of Ratoborsy historical projects agency were awarded the Government of the Russian Federation Award in tourism. In 2019 Moscow historical festival Times and Epochs received Global Eventex Award for the festival organization.

In 2020, the Moscow Historical Festival was supposed to be held for the tenth time, representing twenty centuries of history, in the center of Moscow on June 12, Russia National Day. But the COVID-19 pandemic has made its adjustments to these plans. And yet, despite the unprecedented crisis in tourism, which has affected all destinations and activities, there is no need to despair.

Sooner or later, tourist activity will recover, albeit on different conditions and probably on a different scale. What is important, there is a ready-made platform for tourism and leisure development in Moscow, which has been preserved thanks to close interaction within networks and communities united by shared and diversified interests.

The opportunity to get into action, to experience unique and often extreme feelings and emotions, to talk to a passionate history lover, to challenge one's knowledge and skills, to push the existing boundaries are very important as they contribute to the personal growth, to 'soft skills' that are in high demand in knowledge economy now. They create new values and

encourage everyone to become a re-enactor. All that is left is the epoch to choose.

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Table 1. CRediT author statement

Term	Definition	Author 1	Author 2
Conceptualization	Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims	x	
Methodology	Development or design of methodology; creation of models	x	x
Software	Programming, software development; designing computer programs; implementation of the computer code and supporting algorithms; testing of existing code components		
Validation	Verification, whether as a part of the activity or separate, of the overall replication/ reproducibility of results/experiments and other research outputs	x	x
Formal analysis	Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal techniques to analyze or synthesize study data		x
Investigation	Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection	x	x
Resources	Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools	x	x
Data Curation	Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later reuse	x	
Writing – Original Draft	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation)	x	x
Writing - Review & Editing	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre-or post-publication stages	x	x
Visualization	Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically visualization/ data presentation	x	x
Supervision	Oversight and leadership responsibility for the research activity planning and execution, including mentorship external to the core team	x	
Project administration	Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution	x	x
Funding acquisition	Acquisition of the financial support for the project leading to this publication	x	

Source: adapted from Elsevier (2022, s/p), based upon Brand et al. (2015).

Processo Editorial / Editorial Process / Proceso Editorial

Editor Chefe / Editor-in-chief / Editor Jefe: PhD Thiago D. Pimentel (UFJF).

Recebido / Received / Recibido: 02.04.2022; Revisado / Revised / Revisado: 04.07.2022 – 31.08.2022; Aprovado / Approved /

Apobado: 26.09.2022; Publicado / Published / Publicado: 04.10.2022.

Seção revisada às cegas por pares / Double-blind peer review section / Sessão revisada por pares ciegos.