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**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM – DISRUPTED COMMUNICATIONS:
PRESENT FUTURES FOR LAKE BAIKAL’S OLKHON ISLAND**

MA Thesis in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management.

Central European University

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by

Arina Govorina

(Russia)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy,
Management.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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I, the undersigned, **Arina Govorina**, candidate for the MA degree in Cultural Heritage Studies: Academic Research, Policy, Management declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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Abstract

Over the past decades, tourism has grown as an industry due to the increasing demand for mobility, leisure, and unique experiences. Recently, tourism has become a subject of much debate, and experts from different fields see the tourism industry as a destructive phenomenon for many destinations. Tourism today is seen as one cause of climate change, biodiversity loss, excessive fossil fuel consumption, a source of disease transmission, cultural commoditization, and other negative consequences. This thesis examines Lake Baikal's Olkhon Island in Russia, the local tourism industry and its effect on the local environment, culture, and community.

The research shows that the island experiences environmental, economic, and cultural problems caused by unsustainable mass tourism. Littering, pollution, habitat destruction, poor or commercial representation of the local culture have become part of life on Olkhon. The mass tourism situation on Olkhon currently results in disrupted communication between tourism stakeholders, on the one hand, and islanders willing to preserve local nature and culture with strong support from activists and volunteers, on the other hand. There is clearly an urgent need for new concepts and initiatives in the local tourism industry that focus on environmental preservation and cultural safeguarding. The thesis puts a set of recommendations for supporting sustainable tourism development on the island, aiming to preserve the local environment, improve the local economy, and safeguard the intangible heritage of the local community.

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I would like to thank Alice Choyke, my supervisor, for her support and helpful feedback during researching and writing this thesis. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Olkhon residents who took part in the interviews and surveys. Special thanks to all volunteers and my former colleagues who try to save Olkhon Island and Lake Baikal!

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Introduction

“Now that we have learned to fly the air like birds,
swim under water like fish,
we lack one thing - to learn to live on earth as human beings.”

George Bernard Shaw

As a person born and raised in the Irkutsk region of Russia, I fell in love with Lake Baikal at an early age. I explored many of the lake's places during family trips, and later I became a volunteer tour guide on Olkhon Island, largest island on the lake. My involvement in the local tourism industry showed me another, darker side of the tourism industry: Lake Baikal and Olkhon Island suffers from over tourism, the irresponsible behavior of many people who visit there, and a poorly organized tourism industry. This thesis was born out of my endless love for the Baikal region and a strong desire to save this place, its nature and culture, for future generations.

Over the past decades, tourism has grown as an industry due to the increasing demand for mobility, leisure, and unique experiences.¹ Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourism industry included 10.6% of all jobs and 10.4% of global GDP.² Recently, tourism has become a subject of much debate and experts from different fields see the tourism industry as a destructive phenomenon for many destinations. Tourism today is seen as one cause of climate change, biodiversity loss, excessive fossil fuel consumption, a source of disease transmission, cultural commoditization, and other negative consequences.³ This issue caused international

¹ Claudio Milano, Marina Novelli, and Joseph M. Cheer, “Overtourism and Tourismphobia: A Journey Through Four Decades of Tourism Development, Planning and Local Concerns,” *Tourism Planning & Development* 16, no. 4 (July 4, 2019): 353, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2019.1599604>.

² “Travel & Tourism Economic Impact,” World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), accessed May 21, 2021, <https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact>.

³ Michelle Ritty et al., *The Global Effects and Impacts of Tourism* (Routledge Handbooks Online, 2015), 1, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203072332.ch3>.

tourism organizations to start a discussion on irresponsible types of tourism and begin searching for new, alternative forms of tourism that aim not to destroy these travel destinations but contribute to their improvement and well-being.

Today, experts and activists name and promote several types of tourism that do not cause any harmful consequences: green tourism, ethical tourism, eco-tourism, cultural tourism and, responsible tourism. This thesis deals with sustainable tourism because it serves as an umbrella term, including all the above-mentioned tourism types. In addition, the term “mass tourism” will be used in the thesis as a trend seen in opposition to the notion of sustainable tourism.

This thesis uses different terms for various types of tourism based on the following definitions:

Sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. A suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.⁴

Mass tourism here is defined as the movement of a large number of organized tourists to popular holiday destinations for recreational purposes. It is a phenomenon characterized by standardized package products and mass consumption.⁵

Cultural tourism, another relevant term for the scope of this study, is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor’s essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience, and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products at a tourism destination.⁶ In this thesis, I

⁴ “Sustainable Development,” World Tourism Organization, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>.

⁵ Nikola Naumov and David Green, “Mass Tourism,” in *Encyclopedia of Tourism*, ed. Jafar Jafari and Honggen Xiao (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 594–95, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-01384-8_378.

⁶ “Tourism and Culture,” World Tourism Organization, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-and-culture>.

will consider cultural tourism as a part or branch of sustainable tourism as its aims match one of the key objectives of sustainable tourism.

The Destination

The destination at the center of this thesis is Lake Baikal's Olkhon Island, a center for mass tourism and the third-largest lake island in the world, located in the Irkutsk region in Russia (see Figure 1, Figure 2). Lake Baikal is the world's oldest and deepest lake and a world natural heritage site. With 23615.39 km³ of fresh water and a maximum depth of 1642 meters, Lake Baikal contains 20% of the world's total unfrozen freshwater reserve. Flora and fauna of the lake are represented by more than 1000 species of plants and 2500 species. Famous for its unique features, Lake Baikal is one of Russia's most popular tourism destinations. According to the official statistics, more than 1.6 million tourists visited Lake Baikal in 2019, including around 350 000 international tourists.⁷

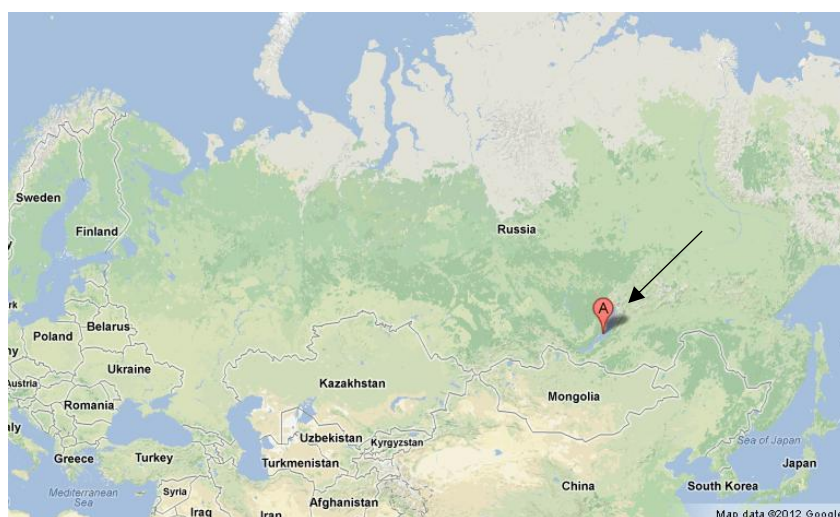


Figure 1. Lake Baikal on the world map.

Source: <http://www.worldeasyguides.com/europe/russia/lake-baikal/lake-baikal-on-russia-map/>

⁷ "Отчет Агентства По Туризму Иркутской Области За 2019 Год [Report of the Tourism Agency of the Irkutsk Region for 2019]" (Federal Agency for Tourism in the Irkutsk region, 2020).

Research aim and questions

This thesis is concerned with the tourism industry on Olkhon Island and reveals the extent to which local tourism is (un)sustainable. The final outcome of this work will be a set of recommendations for supporting sustainable tourism development on the island, aiming to preserve the local environment, improve the local economy, and safeguard the intangible heritage of the local Buryat community.

Development of sustainable tourism on Olkhon Island, as the central aim of the thesis, leads to the main research question: *how can the concept of sustainable tourism be implemented and developed on Olkhon Island to improve the local environment, economy, and culture?*

In order to answer the main research question, several sub-questions were formulated:

- What does sustainable tourism mean on an international scale? What are successful and unsuccessful examples of sustainable tourism worldwide?
- How is sustainable tourism understood and interpreted in Russia, especially on Olkhon Island?
- What environmental, economic, and cultural aspects of Olkhon island can be improved through sustainable tourism? How can sustainable tourism integrate these aspects within its concept?
- To what extent is the Olkhon tourism industry sustainable in today?
- Who are the main stakeholders in the Olkhon tourism industry? What are their roles and interests? How effective are their collaborations and communications?

Research methods and sources

The core of this study is based on document and secondary source analyses and participant observation as I spent many summers on Olkhon in my childhood and later went back there as a volunteer tour guide after getting a university degree in tourism and socio-cultural service.

Five years of voluntary tour guiding on the island allowed me to become fully acquainted with the tourism industry, its state and challenges, and main stakeholders. I have come to know many of the islanders personally after all these years. In addition, the following methods and sources were used in the framework of the thesis:

Case study

A case study approach is used in Chapter 1 to gain a detailed understanding of sustainable tourism, its implementation, and development in practice. Case studies selected for the thesis are relevant to the case of Olkhon Island due to similarities in physical geography (tourism development on islands), similar unsustainable attitudes to the local environment, and ineffective development of tourism among indigenous communities. A detailed analysis of similar case studies will contribute to determining what the effective and ineffective tools are for sustainable tourism on Olkhon Island as well as indicate how to adopt them and implement them. The three selected case studies for the thesis are tourism industries on Chumbe Island in Tanzania and Boracay Island in the Philippines, and the Maasai cultural villages in Kenya and Tanzania.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were held with two Olkhon residents (the Buryat community) involved in the tourism industry. The interviews were held online and by phone due to the Covid-19 pandemic and travel restrictions. The interviews were held in the Russian language in September – November 2020.

The interviews produced information on the Buryat culture and certain of its elements that the residents would like to safeguard as well as the residents' understanding and interpretation of sustainable tourism and current problems on Olkhon Island.

Survey

In this thesis, I will also rely on an oral survey carried out by Svetlana Yashnova, a tour guide, volunteer, and my former colleague (see Appendix 1). The survey was conducted among Olkhon residents and tourists in May – September 2020 and in February 2021 and included 96 respondents. The survey aimed to define understanding and interpretation of sustainable tourism among the Olkhon residents and tourists.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis contains an introduction, four main chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter deals with the internationally recognized concept of sustainable tourism through its emergence and development history. The chapter also provides an analysis of international tourism practices relevant to the case of Olkhon Island to seek practical tools and consider what have proved to be ineffective measures for sustainable tourism. The chapter also overviews the history of tourism development in Russia and explores various understandings and interpretations of sustainable tourism found in the country among various types of stakeholders as well as its representation at the national level.

The second chapter presents the heritages of Olkhon Island. It evaluates environmental and cultural richness as well as the need for preservation of the island's natural resources and the local intangible heritage. The first part of this chapter introduces the island's history and its natural heritage. The second part describes the intangible heritage of Olkhon - the local Buryat culture elements that residents find important to preserve as expressions of Buryat identity.

The third chapter overviews the history of tourism development on Olkhon Island, including the main trends and changes. There is a discussion about the main present-day stakeholders

involved in the tourism business, investigates their degree of collaboration, efficiency, and significant problems in the industry.

The fourth chapter offers recommendations for developing sustainable tourism on Olkhon Island, considering the findings from the previous chapters. The recommendations are formulated as an action plan for the Olkhon local community with a focus on natural and cultural preservation as well as improvements to the local economy.

Finally, the concluding chapter offers an overview of the results of this study, including a summary of all findings and recommendations.

Chapter 1 - The Concept of Sustainability in the Tourism Industry

1.1 International Interpretations of Sustainable Tourism

The tourism industry has been successfully developed for many years but, despite its long history, the idea of sustainable tourism emerged relatively recently. Today, sustainable tourism is being developed in many places, while some tourist destinations, for examples, Lake Baikal and its largest island Olkhon, are not fully familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism.

The concept of sustainable tourism originated from general ideas of sustainable development and strongly focused on economics and the environment. The first major steps taken in the fields of economics and environment before the emergence of the sustainable tourism concept included the 1972 *United Nations conference on the human environment in Sweden* and publications of *International Union for Conservation of Nature (hereafter IUCN)* such as *Ecological Principles for Economic Development* from 1973 as well as *The World Conservation Strategy* from 1980.⁹

The first internationally recognized definition of sustainable development was introduced in 1987 by the United Nations and it was defined as a process that ‘meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.¹⁰ The term ‘sustainable tourism’ was described much later after several years of debates and various interpretations. In the late 1980s to early 1990s, both academics and tourism industry

⁹ Anne Hardy, Robert J. S. Beeton, and Leonie Pearson, “Sustainable Tourism: An Overview of the Concept and Its Position in Relation to Conceptualisations of Tourism,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 10, no. 6 (n.d.): 475–96.

¹⁰ Hardy, Beeton, and Pearson, 480.

representatives agreed that sustainability in tourism generally means the opposite of mass tourism and should be always considered as something carried out on a small-scale.¹¹ A few years later, this latter idea was rejected and replaced with the concept of adjustment of mass tourism with the implementation of general sustainable principles.¹² The continuing discussion surrounding the definition of sustainable tourism and endless debates caused a range of problems. Misunderstanding of the concept and implementation of irrelevant tools as well as an absence of management plans and strategies, the focus on the environmental aspects alone omitting cultural aspects, etc. prevented the industry developing in a sustainable way.

The first globally recognized definitions of sustainable tourism were introduced in the 1990s by Richard Butler and Harry Coccossis. Butler stated that sustainable tourism is a form of tourism maintained in a place that does not lead to degradation of the environment nor obstruct the successful development of the area.¹³ Coccossis distinguished four pillars for sustainable tourism such as sustainability in economics, ecology, the long-term viability of tourism, and the community of a place.¹⁴ Later, scholars introduced other terms such as responsible tourism, green tourism, and environmentally-friendly tourism which, in some cases, were categorized as separated branches of tourism. Frequently, however, there were overlaps between the aforementioned terms and they existed as interchangeable concepts.

In this paper, I will consider sustainable tourism to be an umbrella term that includes environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects and I will apply the following definition of sustainable tourism:

¹¹ Hardy, Beeton, and Pearson, "Sustainable Tourism."

¹² Jackie Clarke, "A Framework of Approaches to Sustainable Tourism," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 5, no. 3 (November 1, 1997): 224–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669589708667287>.

¹³ Richard W. Butler, "Sustainable Tourism: A State-of-the-art Review," *Tourism Geographies* 1, no. 1 (February 1, 1999): 12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616689908721291>.

¹⁴ Butler, 10.

“Sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.”¹⁵

The development of sustainable tourism is an ongoing process at the international level (see Figure 3).

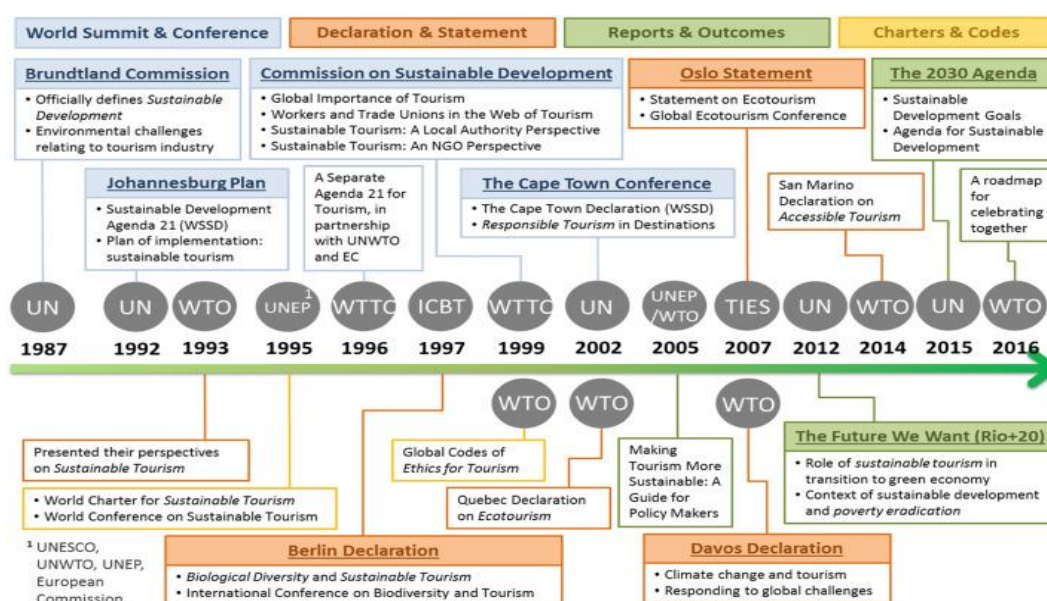


Figure 3. Roadmap for connecting tourism with sustainable development around the world: principles, declarations, conventions, statements, and codes. Source: “Advances and Challenges in Sustainable Tourism toward a Green Economy”.¹⁶

Scholars highlight a few key events that have taken place over the past decade that affected the tourism industry and led to the development of sustainability notions expanding their focus from purely ecological and economical aspects to others such as cultural and community-related ones in particular:

¹⁵ “Sustainable Development | UNWTO,” World Tourism Organization, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>.

¹⁶ Shu-Yuan Pan et al., “Advances and Challenges in Sustainable Tourism toward a Green Economy,” *Science of The Total Environment* 635 (September 1, 2018): 454, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2018.04.134>.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Brazil, 2012) known as Rio +20¹⁷

The aim of the conference was the formation of practical measures to implement sustainable development in various fields. The discussion of sustainable tourism concluded the necessity for new regulations and policies, investments in sustainable tourism, and the establishment of enterprises to engage local communities in the sustainable tourism industry.

Establishment of the Committee on Tourism and Sustainability (UNWTO, 2013)

The main responsibility of the Committee is monitoring major activities and programs in sustainable tourism as well as conducting annual meetings with industry representatives. The agenda of the 2020 meeting was:

Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection including recommendations on ways and means to promote sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, as a tool for fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development in its three dimensions - economic, social, and environmental - in a balanced and integrated manner.¹⁸

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015)

The Agenda aims to issue action plans in crucial areas for humanity and the planet over the next 15 years.¹⁹ The document considers sustainable tourism a key tool for sustainable development in the world, emphasizing the need for the promotion of sustainable tourism and

¹⁷ "United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20 ... Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform," accessed January 11, 2021, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20>.

¹⁸ "Committee on Tourism and Sustainability (CTS) | UNWTO," World Tourism Organization, accessed January 11, 2021, <https://www.unwto.org/committee-tourism-sustainability>.

¹⁹ "Tourism in the 2030 Agenda | UNWTO," World Tourism Organization, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-in-2030-agenda>.

local cultures, creation of jobs, and development of tools to monitor sustainability in the tourism industry.

International Year of Sustainable Tourism (UN, 2017)

Sustainable tourism was promoted as a key tool for economic growth, reduction of poverty, conservation of cultural values and environmental diversity, and world peace.²⁰

The Center for Responsible Travel (reports of 2018 and 2019)

The annual reports published by the center provide a holistic picture of tourism worldwide and introduce successful cases of sustainable tourism development. The 2018 report was dedicated to the problem of over-tourism at world heritage and cultural sites as well as in natural parks and protected areas. It highlights the urgent need for sustainable tourism to be implemented worldwide.²¹ The 2019 report focused on travelers' attitude to sustainability and provided statistics and surveys that demonstrate the growing interest in sustainable tourism among travelers.²²

Along with the international events mentioned before, several world organizations from different fields deal with various aspects of sustainability in tourism today.

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is a United Nations agency, a key international organization promoting sustainable tourism.

²⁰ "International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development 2017 Kicks off | UNWTO," World Tourism Organization, accessed January 11, 2021, <https://www.unwto.org/archive/global/press-release/2017-01-19/international-year-sustainable-tourism-development-2017-kicks>.

²¹ Kelsey Frenkiel and Samantha Hogenson Bray, "The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics 2018" (The Center for Responsible Travel, October 12, 2018), <https://www.gstcouncil.org/the-case-for-responsible-travel-trends-statistics-2018/>.

²² Samantha Hogenson Bray and Ellen Rugh, "The Case for Responsible Travel: Trends & Statistics 2019," November 4, 2019, <https://www.gstcouncil.org/case-responsible-travel-trends-statistics-2019/>.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) collaborates with relevant stakeholders in sustainable tourism for the appropriate development of heritage management on cultural and natural sites. UNESCO actively participates in the development of sustainable tourism policy and strategy development as well as creation of tools and guidance for sustainable tourism.

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) aims to conserve wildlife and endangered species worldwide. The organization promotes ecotourism as part of sustainability and collects successful examples of ecotourism.

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is responsible for the safeguarding of the natural world and also promotes sustainable tourism in protected areas through publications and guidelines for planning and management.

The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) is a policy-oriented research organization dealing with responsible tourism.

Sustainable tourism aims to solve a few crucial problems such as destruction of wildlife and important habitats, loss of culture, and the local identity of an area. However, there is a range of challenges in sustainable tourism these days despite developed collaboration at the international level including concentration on limited markets, seasonality, and lack of communication channels and information platforms. These issues prevent tourism from sustainable development, especially, at the regional level in places such as Lake Baikal's Olkhon Island. The latest challenge that has affected many industries, especially tourism, is the world Covid-19 pandemic. It has caused a drastic decline in tourism at all destinations and rising unemployment tourism and related industries.

The tourism industry is changing now due to many factors such as contemporary trend and tourists' preferences while the worldwide pandemic remains the main trigger. While scientists and scholars argue about the future of sustainable tourism and the role of the pandemic in it, other aspects of sustainable tourism such as environment, economy, and culture should be also be considered. The aforementioned aspects will be discussed in the next sub-chapter within the framework of best and worst practices in sustainable tourism in the context of Lake Baikal's situation.

1.2 International Experience in Sustainable Tourism: Key Aspects and Case Studies

Sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability.

Environment is one of the major priorities in sustainable tourism as unsustainability in tourism can cause a wide range of problems such as destruction of wildlife and important natural habitats, enormous amounts of refuse, and pollution. The development of tourism in sustainable ways aims to conserve the natural state of an area and prevent it from being destroyed. It is acknowledged that neglect of environmental concerns can lead to ecological catastrophe. Economic and socio-cultural aspects are also essential parts of sustainable tourism as they affect general economic development on both local and national levels as well as a way to promote tangible and intangible parts of local cultures.

In this sub-chapter, I will analyze tourism practices aimed at impacting environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of sustainable tourism around the world and its relevance to my case study of Olkhon Island. The first two case studies of Chumbe Island, Tanzania and Boracay Island in the Philippines represents the way the environmental aspects of sustainable tourism can be tackled in ways relevant to Olkhon. Both cases have similar physical geography and possible problems experienced by all islands dealing with developing tourism in their areas. The third case study of the Maasai cultural villages in Kenya and Tanzania represent both the economic and socio-cultural aspects of sustainability in tourism. The Maasai case is relevant to Olkhon Island in the efforts to protect aspects of the cultures of indigenous people as well as possible advantages and challenges of tourism in such areas.

Case study #1: Chumbe Island, Zanzibar, Tanzania

Chumbe Island, located in Zanzibar, Tanzania, is famous for its coral reefs and ecological innovation. The island and its surrounding waters were declared the Chumbe Island Coral Park in 1994 and today the area is run by a nonprofit private organization, Chumbe Island Coral Park, Ltd (CHICOP).²³ The organization aims to develop ecological and financial sustainability on the Island with the help of ecotourism promoting nature conservation, environmental education, and research. The activities of CHICOP target local communities, tourists, and people around the whole country. CHICOP started developing ecotourism on the Island in 1998 and today it is one of the most successful financially sustainable models of a

²³ "Chumbe Island Coral Park Zanzibar," Chumbe Island Coral Park, accessed January 11, 2021, <https://chumbeisland.com/>.

marine protected area's management through revenue generated from ecotourism.²⁴ The Chumbe Island, as run by CHICOP, has received many internationally recognized awards in sustainability. Today, CHICOP builds its sustainable concept with the help of ecotourism, based on environmental education and eco-friendly principles.

Environmental education is a key part of sustainability on the island. Initially, CHICOP hired former fishermen from the surrounding villages to be trained as park rangers.²⁵ These people raised awareness on marine ecology and natural sustainability among the local community. These days, CHICOP provides each member of the organization with training in ecology and the social, economic, and cultural benefits of sustainability. The organization also hosts various educational events such as field excursions, training, seminars, workshops, and radio shows for teachers, children, school students, local communities, and tourists.²⁶ The island also has an educational center with information boards and trained guides who provide detailed updated information on ecology and sustainable tourism. CHICOP believes that environmental education raises the level of eco-responsibility among various groups of people and helps to sustain the environment of the island.

CHICOP develops tourism on the Chumbe Island in an environmentally friendly way following main ecological principles. All buildings on the island are designed with solar water heating and water conservation principles and all toilets on the island are equipped with a composting system. All equipment and technologies including transportation are well maintained to avoid any kind of pollution, while usage is limited to avoid unnecessary use of fuel leading to water

²⁴ Janusz Olechnik and Katarzyna Barwicka, "Chumbe Island Coral Park (Tanzania) as a Model of an Exemplary Ecotourism Enterprise," *Journal of Ecotourism* 19, no. 4 (October 1, 2020): 373–87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14724049.2019.1700511>.

²⁵ Rachel Dodds, "Eco-Tourism for Education and Marine Conservation: The Chumbe Island Coral Park in Zanzibar," *Téoros. Revue de Recherche En Tourisme* 31, no. 31, 3 (HS) (August 3, 2012), <http://journals.openedition.org/teoros/1990>.

²⁶ "Chumbe Island Coral Park Zanzibar."

and air population. The island promotes re-useable plastic instead of single-use plastics and follows strict regulations in waste management (all supplies, and materials are purchased with minimal non-recyclable packaging and transported using reusable locally made bags).²⁷ In terms of ecotourism, CHICOP offers environmentally friendly activities for tourists on the island including snorkeling and various walks around the area with trained guides where visitors can learn more about environment and sustainability issues.

CHICOP also contributes to the socio-economic development of the area and the well-being of local communities, providing jobs and education: today, two-thirds of the staff come from of the local communities, and they receive environmental education at the organization.²⁸

The successful experience of the Chumbe Island can be considered by Olkhon Island due to their similarities in physical geography and possible problems all islands face with developing tourism (water and energy usage, waste management, crowding, seasonality of the tourism business as well as employment- and education-related issues among the local population). Indisputably, implementation of ecological principles such as solar water heating and composting systems might be unaffordable innovations for Olkhon Island at this stage. However, reforms to the tourism industry on Olkhon Island should consider the Chumbe experience in environmental education for tourism stakeholders, tourists, and local communities.

²⁷ "Chumbe Island 2017-2027: 3rd Ten Year Management Plan" (Chumbe Island Coral Park (CHICOP), n.d.).

²⁸ "Chumbe Island Coral Park Zanzibar."

Case study #2: Boracay Island, the Philippines

Boracay Island has been one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Philippines since the 1990s. It was famous for its white beaches, clean water, and picturesque landscapes. With the development of international tourism, Boracay Island gained in popularity and was named one of the best island destinations by several international magazines in the 2010s. However, the government decided to close the island for six months in April 2018 due to numerous environmental violations.²⁹

The popularity of the island among international tourists led to overcrowding caused by mass tourism. Many commercial establishments and means of accommodation were opened along the beach coast to match the constantly increasing number of tourists. The lack of a proper sewage system and poor local management of disposal systems along with numerous tourism establishments caused water pollution, accumulation of an enormous amount of rubbish and plastic waste scattered around the area.

Boracay Island was closed to visitors by the President of the Philippines who admitted that the situation on the island was unsustainable and required urgent actions to avoid ecological catastrophe³⁰. The President compared the island to a cesspool and named irresponsible actions of the local tourism industry and corrupt local officials as the main reasons for unsustainability of the area. The decision taken at the national level required the full closure of the island for six months to improve the situation and change attitudes to the local environment through effective cooperation of local businesses, and national and local authorities. The government also financially supported local communities involved in the tourism industry on the island

²⁹ Nico A. Canoy et al., "From Cesspool to Fortified Paradise: Analyzing News Media Territorial Assemblages of Rehabilitating Boracay Island, Western Philippines," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 28, no. 8 (August 2, 2020): 1138–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2020.1726934>.

³⁰ Canoy et al.

who had to stop their activities due to closure. Irresponsible businesses were forced to close permanently.

The Boracay Island was partly reopened six months later with a set of new regulations related to the environment of the area. New regulations approved by the national government were related to entry limitations, ban of activities harmful to nature, and other essential measures to preserve the local environment.³¹ The number of visitors is strictly regulated today: only 6,405 people can enter the island per day and only 19,000 tourists can stay on the island at any given time.³² Hotel capacity was reduced from 12,000 to 9,000.³³ Moreover, the government implemented rules controlling activities on the island beach to preserve the coastline: today fire dancing, parties as well as smoking, and dining are banned on the beach.³⁴ In the framework of the island's "rehabilitation", a new proper sewage system was installed on the island, a ban of single-use plastics, and a system of fines for littering were implemented on the island.

The Boracay case study is a clear example of the consequences of unsustainable tourism that negatively affect the environment. The late decision of the government managed to prevent the island from irreversible disaster, however, an initial understanding of natural values and the island's potential could have helped to avoid the forced closure. The Boracay case is relevant to Olkhon Island because it shows Olkhon's future if the tourism industry there keeps developing in an unsustainable way. Olkhon Island faces the same issues such as mass tourism, poor waste management, and ineffective sewage and disposal systems. Authorities on the

³¹ Anna Timbrook, "A Quick Guide to the 'New' Boracay – 2019 and Beyond ★ Expert World Travel," *Expert World Travel* (blog), December 17, 2018, <http://expertworldtravel.com/new-boracay-guide-itinerary/>.

³² "TASK FORCE ADOPTS GUIDELINES TO PROTECT BORACAY VS TOURIST INFLUX," Department of Environment and Natural Resources, accessed January 11, 2021, <https://www.denr.gov.ph/index.php/news-events/press-releases/711-task-force-adopts-guidelines-to-protect-boracay-vs-tourist-influx>.

³³ "TASK FORCE ADOPTS GUIDELINES TO PROTECT BORACAY VS TOURIST INFLUX."

³⁴ Venus Villanueva, "The Do's and Don'ts When in Boracay | Philippine Information Agency," accessed January 11, 2021, <https://pia.gov.ph/features/articles/1014226>.

island should consider the experience of Boracay and urgently start sustainable development of the local tourism industry to avoid Boracay's mistakes for a sustainable future.

Case study #3: Maasai cultural villages, Kenya and Tanzania

The Maasai, indigenous tribal groups living in Kenya and Tanzania, have developed cultural villages where travelers can experience local culture and observe some traditional ways of life. Various scholars consider the cultural villages of the Maasai, controversial phenomena in tourism. The villages have both positive and negative economic and socio-cultural impacts on cultural sustainability in these communities and the area.

Researchers mention a few positive effects of tourism development in the Maasai area such as socio-economic empowerment and opportunity to safeguard intangible heritage. The development of cultural villages creates new workplaces and improves the current employment situation. For example, a lot of Maasai have started working as tour guides or cultural village representatives, while some people from the community make money selling handicrafts such as traditional jewelry, artwork, and weapons.³⁵ Along with the economic benefits, the social aspects are also considered a good for indigenous tourism. Speaking about the Maasai, travelers always point out characteristics such as care, helpfulness, and hospitality, while the Maasai treat tourists warmly according to their proverb “*enyaanyuk oipotoki oloewuo openy*”, which means “he that has been invited is the same as he that came on his own”.³⁶ This may explain the large number of tourists who are interested in visiting the Maasai.

³⁵ Kokel Melubo and Anna Carr, “Developing Indigenous Tourism in the Bomas: Critiquing Issues from within the Maasai Community in Tanzania,” *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 14, no. 3 (May 4, 2019): 233, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2018.1533557>.

³⁶ Wijngaarden, *Dynamics behind Persistent Images of ‘the Other’: The Interplay between Imaginations and Interactions in Maasai Cultural Tourism*. (German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG)), 146.

Safeguarding indigenous culture as well as authenticity and identity are another advantage of tourism development. In the Maasai case, most foreign travelers are interested in the exotic and often expect a high level of authenticity when they go to the Maasai indigenous tribes. Local people, engaged in culture-based tourism, can reconnect with and reinforce their traditions, while tourists can gain new experience.³⁷ In addition, culture-based tourism is a good opportunity to learn local languages. This feature can help communities to develop, revitalize, and even safeguard indigenous languages, especially the endangered ones. Moreover, authenticity and identity issues have a big meaning not for tribes and tourists only, but for urban Maasai as well. A good example is the large number of visitors to cultural villages who still consider themselves a part of the Maasai community but have moved to big cities.³⁸ These people rarely go to rural home areas and prefer seeing their traditional performances in the Maasai cultural villages. Acknowledging personal identity and a strong desire to preserve parts of their intangible heritage play a key role in Maasai tourism development.

Development of cultural tourism also can face a few significant challenges related to moral values, commercialization of local culture, and loss of identity as well as poor organization and collaboration within the industry. In the case of the Maasai, money issues bother both tribesmen and visitors. The Maasai want to get money selling tourists handmade goods, asking money for photographs, donations or without any reason, while tourists complain about poor design and the low quality of the items they have bought.³⁹ In addition, tourists also mention a non-transparent fee system and uncomfortable feelings when they are asked for extra money.⁴⁰ In

³⁷ Lisa Ruhanen and Michelle Whitford, "Cultural Heritage and Indigenous Tourism," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 14, no. 3 (May 4, 2019): 179–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2019.1581788>.

³⁸ Ruhanen and Whitford.

³⁹ Melubo and Carr, "Developing Indigenous Tourism in the Bomas."

⁴⁰ Melubo and Carr.

terms of moral values, many researchers mention the connection between money and Maasai moral breakdown providing examples of commercial sex and drug-taking.⁴¹

Development of tourism involving indigenous people sometimes can lead to loss of identity. Many researchers are inclined to believe that globalization and modernization affect indigenous tourism negatively. Generalized stereotypes about the Maasai from the Western world formed a specific pattern of Maasai behavior and now they have to act according to global representations.⁴² Despite the many tourists coming to visit the Maasai to see their authentic lifeways, they still prefer feeling safe and comfortable, receiving a colorful show, expressing their privileged status and confirming their image of exotic African tribespeople. To satisfy expectations and the needs of tourists, the Maasai skillfully distinguish between their stereotyped tourist image and real ways of life.⁴³ Sometimes, they play the primitive to make money and attract more tourists and return to their normal, modern lives when the show is over. Some tourists argue that the real life of the Maasai is well hidden and the only aim of the cultural villages is to capture tourist money. Some of the Africans who are very familiar with the Maasai culture share this point of view and criticize the inaccuracy and inauthenticity of performances held in these cultural villages. Based on these factors, some people do not appreciate the staged authenticity and therefore begin to question everything that happens in cultural villages.

Organization and collaboration in tourism, including aspects of the culture of indigenous people, represents another challenge. In the Maasai example, the main bodies responsible for culture-based tourism are presented on the national level both in Tanzania and Kenya. However, cooperation between state institutions, tribesmen, and other stakeholders like travel

⁴¹ Melubo and Carr.

⁴² Edward M. Bruner, "The Maasai and the Lion King: Authenticity, Nationalism, and Globalization in African Tourism," *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 4 (2001): 881–908.

⁴³ Bruner.

agencies or tour operators is limited. Researchers argue that the government does not pay enough attention to the education of cultural villages' representatives and tourists mention a low level of literacy skills of local guides, who explain it by a lack of training.⁴⁴

The Maasai case study illustrates the advantages and possible drawbacks that can emerge during the development of tourism among indigenous communities. The chosen case is relevant to the Olkhon Island due to common features of both Maasai and Buryats living on the Olkhon Island such as what constitutes 'authentic' indigenous customs and traditions, and endangered languages. The Maasai case clearly shows that indigenous communities can safeguard parts of their intangible heritage and improve their socio-economic situation by developing tourism. However, various aspects should be considered to develop cultural tourism in a sustainable way to avoid negative effects: the priority should be given to the culture of indigenous community and its moral values to avoid commercialization and loss of identity, while strong organization and collaboration should be developed between all stakeholders involved in tourism to successfully sustain the industry at all levels.

These three case studies show the importance of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects for development of a well-rounded sustainable tourism. The case studies also demonstrate the strong interconnections between all three aspects: environmental sustainability can positively affect local economics and the well-being of a community, while cultural development can contribute to economic and environmental sustainability and vice versa. None of these aspects are independent of the other.

⁴⁴ Melubo and Carr, "Developing Indigenous Tourism in the Bomas."

The experiences from the case studies can be applied to Olkhon Island in two different ways. Olkhon can adopt successfully implemented ideas from case studies such as the Chumbe (Tanzania) experience in environmental education and improvement in socio-economic situation in the Maasai case. Olkhon also should consider the negative experience of the discussed case studies such as ecological problems caused by mass tourism and environmental violations from the Boracay (Philippines) case as well as the Maasai commercialization of tourism and poor organization and collaboration in the industry to predict possible challenges and avoid the same mistakes while developing tourism in the area.

Adoption of international successful practices and consideration of destructive experience unconditionally should be done taking account of a specific country, its regulations in tourism at both national and local levels as well as present situation, tourism potential, and challenges. The case of Russia and its current situation in tourism will be discussed in the next sub-chapters.

1.3 Tourism in Russia: Current State and Various Understandings of Sustainability

Russia has a significant potential for the development of tourism with its numerous sites of natural beauty including national parks, forest reserves, lakes and mountains as well as cultural attractions including numerous historic cities, museums and unique cultural character of the many non-Russian indigenous people living in the country. In this sub-chapter, I will briefly describe the main stages of tourism development in the country, define the current state of the tourism industry and its challenges. Finally, I will analyze understanding of sustainable tourism within Russian government, academia, tourism entities and among travelers themselves.

Russia acknowledged the role of tourism and its positive effect on the economy in the early twentieth century.⁴⁵ However, historical events such as the 1917 Revolution and World War I prevented the tourism industry from developing and lessened its attraction for foreign travelers. Later, the tourism industry changed with the creation of the Soviet Union and implementation of new regulations that significantly restricted outbound tourism and aimed to promote tourism within the country as a tool for ideological implementation and image formation. By the end of the 1980s, the main purposes of tourism were culture, sport, and health. The next stage in the Russian tourism industry was defined as a transition to a market economy after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 when Russia opened its borders to foreign tourists. The recent ongoing stage of tourism in Russia started in 1992. It was considered part of the transition economy with a focus on Russia as part of the global tourism market. Today, the Russian government sees the tourism industry as a significant sector of the national economy and as an effective tool for stimulating economic development and independence from the gas and oil industrial sectors.

Nowadays, domestic tourism is expanding, and statistics show a permanent growth in the number of Russian tourists who travel within the country although inbound tourism is not yet that stable. There is a constant growth in Chinese and Mongolian tourists who are interested in the Asian parts of Russia, particularly in the Baikal region and, within that, Olkhon Island. Along with an increase in Chinese and Mongolian tourists, tourist interest from Europe has drastically declined, generally lowering the numbers of foreign tourists each year.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Lidia Andrades and Frederic Dimanche, "Destination Competitiveness and Tourism Development in Russia: Issues and Challenges," *Tourism Management* 62 (October 1, 2017): 360–76, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.05.008>.

⁴⁶ Tatiana Lavrova and Vladimir Plotnikov, "The Development of Tourism: The Experience of Russia," vol. 170 (International Science Conference SPbWOSCE-2017 "Business Technologies for Sustainable Urban Development," Saint-Petersburg State University of Economics, 2018), 6, <https://doi.org/10.1051/mateconf/201817001028>.

Scholars connect the loss of European tourists with a range of problems in the Russian tourism industry. While the central government has not tried to explain this negative trend, Russian researchers pinpoint a few significant political and socio-economic issues at the national level that led to this dramatic decline in the number of tourists from Western countries. The image of Russia has been negatively impacted among European countries after the return of Crimea to Russia, move that affected European interest in Russia as a tourism destination.⁴⁷ Another essential problem existing for many years is insufficient action by the central government in tourism promotion and legislation. In 1998, Burns noted the lack of coordination between ministries, visa requirements, and tourism legislation as among the major problems plaguing the Russian tourism industry, creating obstacles to successful development.⁴⁸ Today, some academics acknowledge that the same problems, including visa regulations and poor communication between tourism stakeholders still negatively affect the tourism industry.⁴⁹

The recent problems in the industry are mainly related to tourism development at local levels, especially in small towns and villages that are located far from the capital city. The poor condition of many tourist attractions and a lack of trained and educated human resources such as tour guides are widely considered the main issues in tourism at the local level.⁵⁰ Language is another challenge that makes tourism at local levels unattractive to foreign travelers as a majority of people in Russia outside main tourist destinations such as Moscow and Saint Petersburg do not speak English.⁵¹ In many Russian regions that have good potential for

⁴⁷ Marina Sheresheva and John Kopiski, "The Main Trends, Challenges and Success Factors in the Russian Hospitality and Tourism Market" (Moscow State University, 2016).

⁴⁸ Peter Burns, "Tourism in Russia: Background and Structure," *Tourism Management* 19, no. 6 (December 1, 1998): 555–65, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(98\)00060-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(98)00060-0).

⁴⁹ Marina Y. Sheresheva, "The Russian Tourism and Hospitality Market: New Challenges and Destinations," *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes* 10, no. 4 (January 1, 2018): 400–411, <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-04-2018-0027>.

⁵⁰ Marina Y. Sheresheva, Anna N. Polukhina, and Matvey S. Oborin, "Marketing Issues of Sustainable Tourism Development in Russian Regions," *Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing* 6, no. 1 (2020): 33–38, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3603422>; Sheresheva, "The Russian Tourism and Hospitality Market."

⁵¹ Sheresheva and Kopiski, "The Main Trends, Challenges and Success Factors in the Russian Hospitality and Tourism Market."

sustainable tourism development given their cultural and natural richness, neither tourism workers nor members of the local communities speak any foreign languages. This situation clearly precludes international travelers from learning much of anything about local heritage.

Underestimation of the tourism potential of Russia's diverse and rich regions is generally a big issue in the tourism industry. The issue is widely discussed at the national level and it became the main target of many national tourism strategies and state programs. Some Russian scholars propose the creation of tourism clusters in the country and their further development under government supervision including areas with natural and cultural heritage potential.⁵² Despite the fact that such projects already exist in Russia (the open-air museum in Khanty-Mansiysk or the ethnographic park in the Moscow region), scholars note there is no recognizable brand at the national and international levels, nor are there proper marketing campaigns to promote such projects and make them attractive to both domestic and foreign tourists. Such projects, as well as theoretical recommendations for tourism development from the government, are rarely implemented in small towns and villages due to insufficient financial support, lack of trained staff, and ignorance of the concept of sustainable tourism that would contribute to the environmental, cultural, and socio-economic well-being of an area.

Today, the tourism industry in Russia develops despite the aforementioned problems. Cultural tours excursion in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and other places in the central part of the country remain the most popular destinations in the Russian tourism industry.⁵³ Adventure tourism including activities such as rafting, winter fishing, and hunting is another direction in Russia that has proven attractive for tourists.

⁵² Anna Polukhina, "A Cluster Model of Ethno-Tourism Organization in Russian Regions," *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes* 8 (June 13, 2016): 359–72, <https://doi.org/10.1108/WHATT-02-2016-0002>.

⁵³ Lavrova and Plotnikov, "The Development of Tourism."

In recent years, ecological tourism, aiming to preserve the environment of a particular area became popular in Russia, especially in areas of officially recognized environmental value such as Lake Baikal. However, in some cases, tourism entities simply call their services eco-friendly to attract more visitors without any understanding of international standards in eco-tourism. Unfortunately, such practice is widespread around Lake Baikal, particularly, on Olkhon Island. Various tourism directions including gastronomical tourism and ethnographic tourism continue to emerge in different places in the country, while sustainability in eco- and cultural tourism remains a relatively unknown concept.

Unfortunately, the concept of sustainable tourism is not widely known in Russia. The government, in collaboration with the Federal Agency for Tourism, uses the word ‘sustainable’ in recently published national programs and strategies and tries to merge natural sites and cultural features within particular parts of the country within the framework of tourism development. None of the documents, however, provide usable definitions of sustainable tourism or explain its main principles. Recent national documents only partly cover various aspects of sustainable tourism such as environmental conservation and cultural development but none of the documents merge them under a general umbrella term such as sustainable tourism. The following three documents issued at the national level show an ambitious desire to develop the tourism industry in the country, while ignorance of the concept of sustainable tourism, vague statements, and recommendations as well as lack of communication with tourism stakeholders demonstrate the inefficiency of the documents as national tools in tourism development:

1. The State Program ‘Culture and Tourism Development 2013-2020’ highlights the role of culture in the development of tourism and offers state grants to support cultural initiatives, however, the document does not refer to the concept of sustainable tourism.⁵⁴
2. The Federal Target Program ‘Development of Domestic and Incoming Tourism in the Russian Federation (2019-2025)’ aims to achieve a 70% growth in tourism’s contribution to the national GDP by 2025 through increasing the number of domestic and foreign tourists.⁵⁵ The document acknowledges the importance of tourism and its contribution to socio-economic development and briefly mentions the necessity for sustainable development in Russian regions and cultures of indigenous people without providing any tools or recommendations for initiating and maintaining such development.
3. ‘Tourism Development Strategy for the period to 2035’ is another national document that aims to develop tourism in Russia and form a high-quality and competitive tourist product in the domestic and international tourist markets.⁵⁶ The strategy does not mention sustainable tourism and speaks about the development of ecological tourism and cultural tourism as two separate branches rather than entwined concepts.

The recent news reports indicate that the government is preparing a set of changes in the main federal law related to tourism to integrate the definition of ecological tourism in the law.⁵⁷ The government does not comment on the decision or provide any details. Considering this news and the tendency to separate notions of culture and nature within the framework of tourism, it

⁵⁴ “*Razvitie Kultury i Turizma 2013-2020* [Culture and Tourism Development 2013-2020]” (The Russian Government, 2014).

⁵⁵ “*Razvitie Vnutrennego i Vezdnogo Turizma v Rossiyskoy Federacii (2019-2025)* [Development of Domestic and Incoming Tourism in the Russian Federation (2019-2025)]” (The Russian Government, 2018).

⁵⁶ “*Strategiya Razvitiya Turizma v Rossiyskoy Federacii na Peroid do 2035 goda* [Tourism Development Strategy for the Period to 2035]” (The Russian Government, 2019).

⁵⁷ “*Pravitelstvo Podgotovilo Proekt Zakona ob Ekologicheskom Turizme* [The Government Has Prepared a Draft Law on Ecological Tourism],” December 21, 2020, https://russian.rt.com/russia/news/815129-turizm-ekologiya-zakon?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop&nw=1608584605000.

seems ecological tourism will be the focus in tourism for the next few years as a separate dominant direction, while the concept of sustainable tourism will remain unrecognized at the national level.

The idea of sustainable tourism is slightly better introduced by Russian scholars in academic papers and educational literature. Many scholars still define cultural and environmental tourism as two separate branches neglecting the socio-economic part of tourism or, vice versa, they elevate the economic part without any attention to the role of culture and nature in tourism development. Many academic papers communicate and analyze the possibility of sustainable tourism in Russia without providing a definition of the term. Such examples include the articles ‘The Current State of Sustainable Tourism’ and ‘The Analysis of the Modern Situation and The Possibility for Sustainable Development of Internal and Entrance Tourism in Russia’. The first of these articles admits the role of culture in sustainable tourism, however, proposes only eco-tourism development for sustainability; while the latter does not clearly explain what sustainable tourism is.⁵⁸

The article ‘Correlation of Concepts «Ecological» and «Sustainable» Tourism: an Important Element in the Sustainable Development of the Region (on the Example of Primorsky Krai)’ analyzes definitions of eco-tourism and sustainable tourism and clearly defines that the former is a part of the latter one, using well-defined arguments.⁵⁹ A detailed explanation of sustainable tourism and its main aspects is provided in the textbook ‘*Basics of Tourism*’ used in many higher institutions for any major in tourism.⁶⁰ The book defines sustainable tourism as long-

⁵⁸ Shonchalay Kazyrypkay, “Sovremennoe Sostoyanie Ustoychivogo Turizma [The Current State of Sustainable Tourism],” *Science and Education Gazette*, no. 10/3 (2019); Oleg Bunakov, “The Analysis of Modern Situation and Possibility of a Sustainable Development of Internal and Entrance Tourism in Russia” (Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, 2015).

⁵⁹ Yana Naruta and Roman Kovalev, “Correlation Of Concepts «Ecological» And «Sustainable» Tourism: An Important Element In The Sustainable Development Of The Region (On The Example Of Primorsky Krai)” (Vladivostok state University of Economics and service, 2019).

⁶⁰ Evgeniy Pisarevskiy, *Osnovy Turizma* [Basics of Tourism] (Moscow, Russia: Federal Tourism Agency, 2014).

term development targeting economic, ecological, social, and cultural interests in an area with the help of rational use of tourism resources and comprehensive partnership.⁶¹

It, thus, comes as no surprise that the concept of sustainable tourism is often misinterpreted by tourism managers and travelers in Russia. A survey conducted in 2016 shows that Russian tourism managers from various regions frequently misunderstand the concept of sustainable tourism mainly due to their personal interpretations and ignorance of globally adopted definitions.⁶² A majority of managers who participated in the study described sustainable tourism as nature-based tourism including outdoor activities and visiting unique places. Many managers could not distinguish sustainable tourism from sport tourism that involves physical activities. While several managers concluded that sustainable tourism and eco-tourism were equivalent terms, one responder stated sustainability refers to only to nature and that sustainable tourism is not possible as any kind of tourism hurts the environment. None of the responders mentioned the importance of local community involvement or their cultural as well as socio-economic well-being as essential parts of the sustainable concept.

Personal communication and interviews conducted within the framework of this thesis confirm the inaccurate interpretation of sustainable tourism at the local level. Interviews with Olkhon tourism entities show that some local entrepreneurs have never heard of the concept of sustainable tourism while others think sustainable tourism refers to sustainable business and maintaining a stable flow of tourists.⁶³ The oral survey conducted among Olkhon tourists also shows that a majority of people are not familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism. The

⁶¹ Pisarevskiy, 128.

⁶² Sergey Kask, Tiiu Kull, and Kati Orru, "Understanding of Sustainable Tourism among Russian Tourism Managers," *European Journal of Tourism Research* 14 (January 1, 2016): 101–5.

⁶³ Online interview with Vladimir B., October 20, 2020; Online interview with an islander (anonymous), October 24, 2020.

tourists who were aware of the concept responded they had learned about this concept during trips abroad through excursions, hotel regulations, and information at tourism centers.⁶⁴

Russia is rich in cultural and natural sites and has great potential for the development of tourism. To preserve cultural and natural attractions as well as safeguard the cultures of numerous indigenous communities, the tourism industry in Russia needs to apply the concept of sustainable tourism with its focus on both environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects.

As the findings in this sub-chapter show, more attention should be paid to the development of tourism in regions outside the main tourist areas located in the central part of the country in order to improve regional tourism infrastructure and the state of local tourist attractions, launch effective marketing campaigns and educate local tourism entities.

In this sub-chapter, I also conclude that the concept of sustainable tourism is not widely known in Russia and it is frequently misunderstood. While the concept is fully presented in educational literature and includes all important aspects of sustainability such as environmental, cultural, and socio-economic well-being, Russian scholars often neglect the cultural aspects and focus on environmental sustainability only. The government also defines environment as the most important part of sustainable development in tourism while cultural and social aspects are briefly mentioned and usually discussed outside of the framework of sustainable tourism as an additional tool for enhancing the general sustainable development of an area. Local tourism entities and domestic tourists are the main groups with the greatest percentage of people who are not familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism. Considering the current state of

⁶⁴ See Appendix 1.

tourism in Russia and the wide misunderstanding of sustainability in tourism, educational campaigns should be considered to raise awareness of sustainable tourism to spread its main principles among communities and tourism entities with a strong accent on the regional level where sustainable tourism is a completely unfamiliar concept.

Chapter 2 – The Heritages of Olkhon Island

In the previous chapter I conclude that sustainable tourism is a tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. A suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee tourism's long-term sustainability. The thesis aims to analyze the tourism industry through the evaluation of (un)sustainability in the selected area and propose recommendations for more sustainable tourism, taking environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects as the main foci for improvement.

The selected case study for the thesis is Olkhon Island, the third-largest lake island in the world, located in the Irkutsk region in Russia (see Figure 4). The island sits in Lake Baikal and is separated from the mainland by the Small Sea (or *Maloye More*) and the Olkhon Gates straits (see Figure 5). Olkhon is located in the middle section the lake, close to the western coast, forming a vast shallow area with its own microclimate, with July and August as the warmest months and mild, moderately snowy winter. The eastern shore of Olkhon, in contrast, is close to the deepest (1642 m) part of Lake Baikal. Olkhon, 71.5 km long and 20.8 km in width, is the largest island on Baikal, surprisingly, repeats the lake's shape. Today, there a few small settlements on the island with approximately 1700 residents, most of whom reside in Khuzhir, the main village on the island.

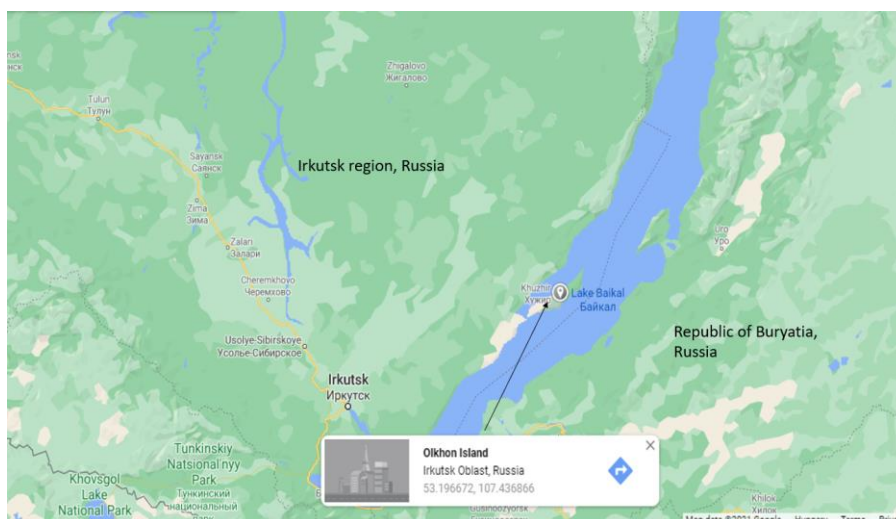


Figure 4. Olkhon Island, location. Source: <https://www.google.com/maps>



Figure 5. Olkhon Island and the straits. Source: <https://www.google.com/maps>

Olkhon ("dry" or "woody" in the Buryat language), the biggest and the only inhabited island on Lake Baikal. It is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Baikal area. Today, the island is a center of mass tourism, which negatively affects all three main dimensions of sustainable tourism: local environment, culture, and the economy. Before analyzing the tourism industry on the island and proposing recommendations for its sustainable development, the outstanding features of Olkhon Island should be presented to evaluate the environmental and cultural richness of the place and the need for preservation of the island's natural resources as well as its local intangible heritage. The first part of this chapter introduces the island's history

and its natural heritage. The second part describes the intangible heritage of Olkhon - the local Buryat culture elements. Understanding the natural and cultural values of Olkhon Island contributes to further recommendations for sustainable tourism in the area.

2.1 Olkhon Island: History and Natural Heritage

Archaeological excavations show that people have inhabited the island since the Neolithic period. Archaeologists discovered the sites of ancient people and found a jade knife and ax, ceramic sherds, flint and metal projectile points as well as various objects made from iron, bronze, gold, bone and antler. Explorers also discovered the remains of a defensive wall on the southern part of the island. Historians claim that the wall was built by the Kurykans, a tribe that inhabited the island in 7th - 8th c. AD. Historians suggest that the Kurykans later migrated north, settled there, and became the ancestors of the Yakuts, an ethnic group currently living in the Far Eastern Federal district of Russia.⁶⁵

The Russians discovered Olkhon Island only in the seventeenth century during research expeditions to explore Siberia and find Lake Baikal. In 1643, Kurbat Ivanov, a Russian Cossack, discovered Lake Baikal and reached Olkhon, where he found the Buryats, the only group then living on the island. In the nineteenth century, many Russian and foreign intellectuals visited Olkhon Island, mainly public figures, missionaries, and naturalists. In 1879, Jan Czerski, a Russian geographer and explorer, conducted the island's first geological research and discovered the so-called Kurykan wall. By the end of the nineteenth century, the population of Olkhon Island numbered 1458 people. However, a leprosy epidemic killed more than half of the islanders, and by 1909, only 650 people lived on Olkhon. During the epidemic,

⁶⁵ A.D. Kalimkhan, N.V. Bencharova, and T.P. Kalimkhan, *Ольхон: Природа и Люди : Научно-Популярный Очерк [Olkhon Nature and People: A Scientific Essay]* (Institute of Geography, Russian Academy of Science, 2017).

the inhabitants of the mainland avoided communication with the islanders, and marriages between them and Olkhon people were tacitly prohibited.⁶⁶

In the twentieth century, during Soviet times, many people from the mainland moved to the island, mainly dispossessed peasants who moved to inaccessible places, fleeing persecution and deportation to the extreme northern regions of the country. In the 1920-30s, along with the expansion of the Soviet network of forced labor camps called commonly called the GULAG, Olkhon Island became home to many families persecuted by the government and deported from Poland, Lithuania, and other regions. The local museum on Olkhon preserves photographs and documents of the families forced to live on the island. Recently, the islanders installed a wooden cross to commemorate the victims of this political repression. In 1932, a fish factory was opened on the island that provided Buryats and deported families with workplaces. However, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the factory's closure and general unemployment among the islanders.⁶⁷

Several years later, tourism emerged on Olkhon as a solution to unemployment and raising interest in the island among travelers. In 1996, Lake Baikal, including Olkhon as part of the buffer zone, was declared a World Natural Heritage site, popularizing the area. Olkhon Island gained attention among Russian and foreign travelers. Today, tourism is a major activity on the island, with a constantly growing number of visitors.

Despite the linguistic meaning, Olkhon is not a dry, woody island. Olkhon Island is famous for its natural richness as the island has diverse landscapes from steppes, dense forests, and swamps to sheer cliffs and dunes with sandy beaches (see Figure 6).

⁶⁶ Kalimkhan, Bencharova, and Kalimkhan.

⁶⁷ Kalimkhan, Bencharova, and Kalimkhan.

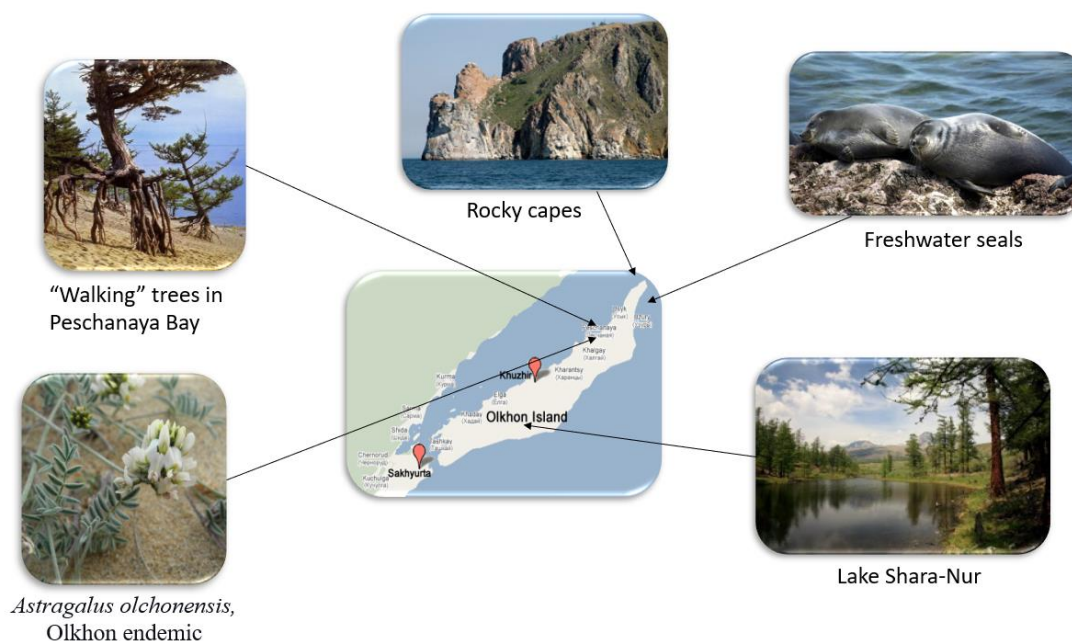


Figure 6. Natural richness of Olkhon Island. (Image designed by the author, separate images and a map taken from google.com)

The Small Sea washes the western part of Olkhon. The shores are flat, framed by rocky capes, and famous for small bays with sandy bottoms. The east of Olkhon Island is mountainous with rocky cliffs and the island's highest point – Mount Zhima (1274 m). The south and part of the north are characterized by steppe lands while the remainder of the space is dominated by pine, birch, and deciduous forests.

Olkhon Island has several small lakes in its interior. One of them, Lake Shara-Nur ("yellow lake" in the Buryat language), is the only mineral water lake on the island. Lake Shara-Nur contains therapeutic mud said to treat cardiovascular and skin diseases as well as diseases of the musculoskeletal system, particularly arthritis, osteochondrosis, and neuralgia.

The island also has several sandy beaches that attract tourists during summer. The Saraisky beach, located in the village of Khuzhir, more than one kilometer long, is the most popular place on the island for tourists. Another sandy beach can be found in Sandy Bay (or Peschanaya Bay), located in the middle part of the western shore. Sandy Bay is also famous for its "walking" trees, larch and pine trees standing on their bare roots. Environmentalists explain

this phenomenon by the constantly blowing wind in the area that creates waves in Baikal that wash the sand away from under the trees' roots.

Olkhon Island is a natural habitat for many species of animals and plants. The island is home to more than 150 species of birds including snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), black grouse (*Lyrurus tetrix*), and black-billed capercaillie (*Tetrao urogalloides*); more than twenty species of mammals such as lynx (*Lynx lynx*), polecat (*Mustela putorius*), and the Olkhon mountain vole (*Alticola olchonensis*), an endangered rodent that dwells exclusively on Olkhon Island.⁶⁸ In addition, there are about 56 species of fishes, including omul (*Coregonus migratorius*), pike (*Esox lucius*), and only one species of water mammals – the Baikal seal (*Pusa sibirica*), the only type of seals that dwells in freshwater.⁶⁹ The Olkhon flora is famous for relict vegetation – steppes and a spruce grove as well as several endemic plant species, including *Astragalus olchonensis*, a plant existing exclusively on Olkhon Island.⁷⁰

2.2 Intangible Heritage: the Olkhon Buryats

The Buryats, one of the largest indigenous groups in Russia, are a Mongolic people who historically lived around Lake Baikal and, under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism, still follow religious rituals and celebrate holidays based on Buddhism and Shamanism, both ancient spiritual practices.

Olkhon Buryats are a part of the Buryat ethnos. They mainly live in Khuzhir village on the island. In earlier times, Olkhon Buryats were involved in fishery until the Khuzhir fish factory's closure in the 1990s. Later, Olkhon Buryats started developing tourism on the island as they

⁶⁸ “Путеводитель По Острову Ольхон [Olkhon Island Guide]” (Pribaikalsky National Park, n.d.), 4–5, <https://sustainabilityrussia.ru/upload/Olhon-gid.pdf>.

⁶⁹ “Путеводитель По Острову Ольхон [Olkhon Island Guide],” 4–5.

⁷⁰ “Путеводитель По Острову Ольхон [Olkhon Island Guide],” 4–5.

saw it as the only possible source of stable income. Today, most Olkhon Buryats remain involved in the tourism industry as the island has hardly any other workplaces.

Olkhon Buryats share cultural traits with Buryats living on the mainland but also have unique cultural elements closely related to life on the island, its landscape, and history. Today, the island has few cultural institutions that aim to safeguard the community's intangible cultural heritage and promote it among the islanders, especially the younger generation. The local museum, the Khuzhir *Local Lora Museum*, contains archaeological material from more than twenty archaeological sites exhibited together with household items and religious objects connected to the Olkhon Buryats.

This chapter describes the main elements of the intangible culture of the Olkhon Buryats including shamanism, legends, special feast days and Buryat dances. The chapter also contains a brief description of the current representation of Buryat culture in the Olkhon tourism industry based on interviews conducted with the islanders.⁷¹ Finally, the chapter concludes with the potential of Olkhon Buryats' culture in sustainable tourism.

2.2.1 Shamanism

Shamanism, a global practice, does not have a single definition. Various communities practice it differently. The Cambridge dictionary defines shamanism as “a form of religion that includes a belief in the power of a shaman, a person who is thought to have special powers to influence and communicate with spirits”.⁷² The term shaman is also defined as a person 'exploring the

⁷¹ In this chapter I will refer to two interviews conducted online in October 2020. The first interviewee, who preferred to remain anonymous, is a 36-year-old man, an Olkhon Buryat living on the island, owner of a guest house and a private tour guide. The second interviewee, Vladimir B., is a 57-year-old Olkhon Buryat, also an owner of a guest house and a private tour guide.

⁷² “Shamanism,” in *Cambridge Dictionary*, n.d., <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/shamanism>.

world of ghosts and human souls through a trance, an state of altered consciousness, used to make contact with the world of ghosts for the benefit of society'.⁷³ Shamans' communication with gods, deities, and ancestor spirits is believed to protect the community, heal people and solve various problems.

Today, many communities practice shamanism from Asia, Latin America, and some Russian regions. The ways to achieve a trance state vary but include chanting, playing drums, using hallucinogens, and other methods.⁷⁴ Buryat shamanism practices, more or less, match the general definitions of the term. At the same time, some historians and Buryat shamans also, place shamanism at the heart of Buryat culture, suggesting their joint development.⁷⁵ Olkhon island plays a significant role in Buryat shamanism as Buryats consider the island a sacred place possessing an energy that connects the real world to the world of gods and spirits.

“According to the Olkhon tradition, a shaman must live with his community, know all his relatives. He is the keeper of traditions and customs, the bearer of information about genealogy and ancestral traditions.”⁷⁶

Buryats practiced shamanism for centuries in coexistence with Buddhism and Christianity, two common religions among Buryats. Shamanism, as well as other religious practices, faced many challenges in the twentieth century during the Soviet Union era when atheism was promoted. Shamanism began to experience a revival after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1993, Buryat shamans and shamans from other Asian communities officially recognized Olkhon Island as an important sacred place with pan-Mongol and Central Asian significance. In the

⁷³ Aleksandra Wierucka, “Modern Forms of Buryat Shaman Activity on the Olkhon Island,” *Anthropological Notebooks* 19 (January 1, 2013): 102.

⁷⁴ Wierucka, 102.

⁷⁵ Ewa Nowicka and Wojciech Polec, “Religious Diversity for the Sake of Ethnic Unity? Shamanism and Buddhism in Creating Buryat Ethnic Identity,” *Polish Sociological Review* 2(206) (June 19, 2019): 241

⁷⁶ Valentin Khadgaev, “Шаманский Мир Приольхонья [Shamanic World of the Olkhon Region]” (Central Asian Shamanism: Philosophical, Historical, Religious Aspects, Ulan-Ude, Russia, 1996), 134.

same year, they revived the old tradition of *tailagan*⁷⁷, a shamanic ritual with offerings to Buryat deities.⁷⁸

Today, *tailagan* is an annual event held on Olkhon island and attended by shamans from various countries. *Tailagan* includes rituals including the sacred fire when the shaman achieves a trance state and communicates with spirits and gods through ritual dances.⁷⁹ Tourists are allowed to visit the *tailagan* if they follow simple rules prohibiting alcohol, littering, and smoking at the sacred place where the event takes place.

Serge (“hitching post” in the Buryat language) poles (see Figure 7) is another element of shamanic practice on Olkhon. Initially, poles of *serge* were used to tether horses. Later, the poles obtained symbolic meaning: Buryats placed them in front of a house as a symbol of well-being, as well as after weddings or death. Buryats believed that poles of *serge* symbolized the tree of life.⁸⁰ Today, there are thirteen *serge* poles on Olkhon dedicated to local gods' thirteen sons.

⁷⁷ There are two ways of spelling it in English: *tailagan* and *tailgan*. This thesis will use the spelling “*tailagan*”.

⁷⁸ Eric Stephen, “Shamanic Rituals and Religio-Cultural Revival: An Empirical Analysis of Demographic and Cultural Differences among Attendees at Shamanic Ceremonies in Buryatia, Russia” (Wesleyan University, April 2014), 3–4, https://scholar.harvard.edu/eric_m_stephen/publications/shamanic-rituals-and-religio-cultural-revival-empirical-analysis.

⁷⁹ Justine B. Quijada, Kathryn E. Graber, and Eric Stephen, “Finding ‘Their Own’: Revitalizing Buryat Culture Through Shamanic Practices in Ulan-Ude,” *Problems of Post-Communism* 62, no. 5 (September 3, 2015): 258–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2015.1057040>; Justine Buck Quijada and Eric Stephen, “Performing ‘Culture’: Diverse Audiences at the International Shaman’s Conference and Tailgan on Ol’khon Island,” *Études Mongoles et Sibériennes, Centrasiatiques et Tibétaines*, no. 46 (September 10, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.4000/emscat.2589>.

⁸⁰ Tatiana Skrynnikova, “Современный Шаманизм у Бурят [Buryat Modern Shamanism],” *Countries and People of the East, Russian Academy of Sciences*, no. 36 (n.d.): 128.



Figure 7. The Olkhon serge poles. 2007. Photograph taken by author.

Olkhon Buryats believe in the magical power of the poles and the connection to spirits through serge. Considering *serge* a sacred place in shamanism, Buryats make an offering in the form of milk and meat, a traditional part of local cuisine, to honor the thirteen sons of local gods. Tying colorful ribbons on the poles is another shamanistic ritual. The islanders explain that different colors each have a special meaning: white is a symbol of health, and it aims to ask the spirits for help, a yellow color reflects a wish for prosperity and wealth, and blue ribbons are relevant for any kind of wish.⁸¹ Today, serge poles are accessible for both local people and tourists.

Olkhon island is also well-known as the home of a local shaman, Valentin Khagdaev, who has practiced there for several decades. Natalia Zhukovskaya, a Russian historian and anthropologist, calls Khagdaev "shamanic intelligentsia" as he successfully combines shamanic activities and secular life, including a doctoral degree and a position as the local ethnographical museum's director.⁸² Khagdaev is widely recognized as the only Olkhon shaman with a deep knowledge of shamanism and Buryat culture. Today, he collaborates with

⁸¹ Online interview with Vladimir B.

⁸² Anya Bernstein, "Remapping Sacred Landscapes: Shamanic Tourism and Cultural Production on the Olkhon Island," *Sibirica* 7 (September 1, 2008): 29–30.

many travel agencies and accepts tourists on guided tours where he explains shamanist rituals and the culture of Olkhon Buryats.

In conclusion, shamanism plays an essential role in Olkhon Buryats' culture. The Buryats have managed to safeguard shamanic customs and revive *tailagan*, an important local ritual. Today, major shamanism-related elements on the island such as *tailagan*, *serge* poles, and educational tours are open to tourists from any nation and of any religion. As a core element of the Olkhon Buryats' culture, sharing information about shamanistic practice on the island can become an important part of sustainable tourism on the island and through it exploration of many elements of the local history.

2.2.2 Legends of Olkhon Buryats

Buryats are famous for their myths and numerous legends. Most Olkhon Buryat legends are dedicated to Olkhon Island itself as they consider the island holy and a home for shamanistic practice. Olkhon Buryats' legends (see Figure 8) are mainly connected to local nature and Buryat ancestors who lived on Olkhon a long time ago. In the past, the island experienced severe storms and earthquakes, and islanders could not explain those natural phenomena, so they created legends and passed them on from generation to generation. Some of the Olkhon legends were written down by Russian writers, travelers, and Buryat ethnographers, such as Sergey Volkov, Petr Batorov, and Sergey Baldaev.⁸³ Other legends remain unwritten, are transmitted orally with the islanders themselves being the only source of information about

⁸³ Sergey Volkov, *Легенды и Предания Острова Ольхон* [*Legends and Traditions of Olkhon Island*] (Print Line, Irkutsk, 2020); Vladimir Svinin, *Петр Павлович Баторов : Сборник Статей* [*Petr Pavlovich Batorov: Collection of Articles*] (Institute of Geography, Russian Academy of Science, 2006); Sergey Baldaev, *Родословные Предания и Легенды Бурят* [*Genealogical Traditions and Legends of the Buryats*] (Ulan-Ude, Russia, 1970).

them. All the legends, I describe in this sub-chapter, were learnt from islanders during my trips to Olkhon Island.

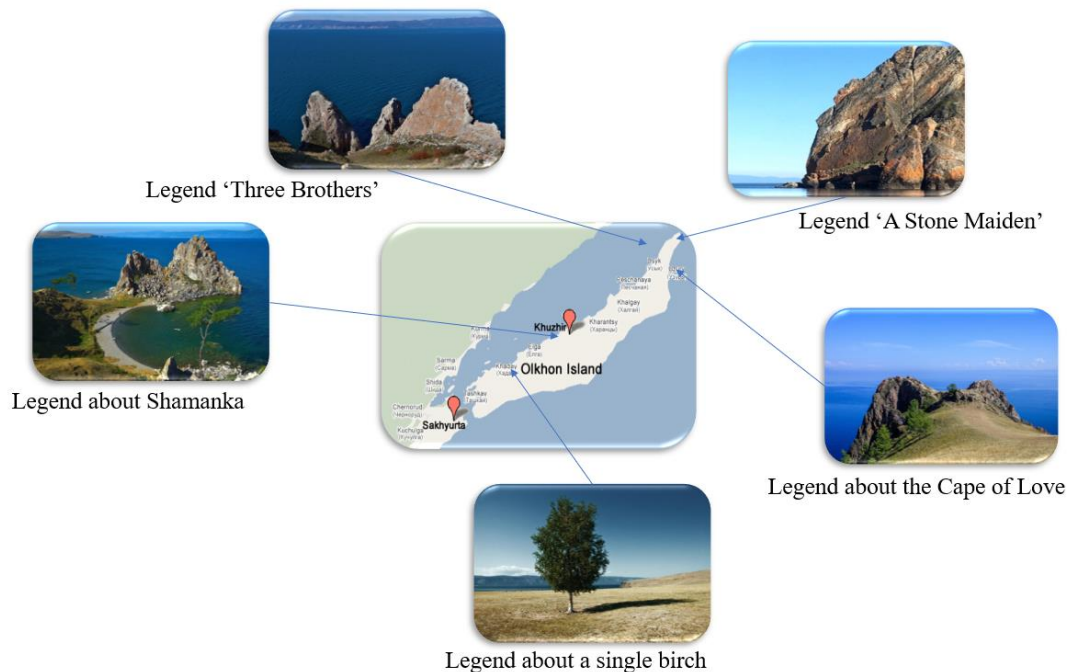


Figure 8. Locations related to the described Olkhon legends.
(Image designed by the author, separate pictures and the map taken from <https://www.google.com/>)

The island's most famous legend concerns Cape Burkhan, also known as *Shamanka* rock, a popular tourist landmark. *Shamanka* rock is a two-peaked limestone and marble rock with a cave and cliffs within the village of Khuzhir, the main village on Olkhon Island. The legend talks about a past time when the islanders thought that the cave contained a lot of silver and gold. Many people wanted to get at this treasure; however, nobody could get very close to the cave as the sun immediately stopped shining and thunderstorms with lightning commenced. Local people decided that an old, female *Shamanka*⁸⁴ lived in the cave and guarded the gold. Soon, people got tired of the thunderstorms and asked the community's strongest men to fight

⁸⁴ Shaman (or Shamanka, female shaman) in Buddhism and Shamanism is a person who is able to communicate with spirits while in a trance state and heals diseases as well as curses people and send them bad luck and problems.

Shamanka to bring peace to the island. The first three attempts to kill *Shamanka* failed, and the lady survived despite three severe injuries from the men's bow and arrows.

However, *Shamanka* disappeared in the cave, and nobody saw her for a long time. However, after a while, bad weather came back to the island, and one day an unknown Buryat hunter came from the woods and killed *Shamanka* by shooting her with an arrow through the heart. Since that time the sun rose above the island and the grass turned green. Local people buried *Shamanka* and put a large stone on her grave that today is known as *Shamanka* Rock.

One of the Olkhon legends tells the story of the emergence of the Khori Buryats, one of the Buryat sub-groups and ancestors of the modern Olkhon people. Local people romantically call this legend 'Swans'. The story tells of a hunter, Khoridoy, who lived on Olkhon Island a long time ago. Once, he saw three beautiful swans that reached the coastline, took off their wings, and turned into young women. Khoridoy stole the wings of one of them and asked her to become his wife. The lady agreed, and soon she gave birth to six girls and eleven sons, who became the first Khori Buryats. Many years later, the lady asked her husband if she could try her wings one last time. After getting his approval, she put her wings on, turned into a swan, and flew away. Since that day, Olkhon Buryats spray milk or tea when they see swans in the sky to commemorate the swan that gave birth to the first generation of Khori Buryats.

Olkhon Island retains many legends dedicated to its places that are told to be full of spiritual energy. Local people tell a story about a single birch standing in the middle of the steppe. According to the legend, there was a shaman on the island who had five daughters. One of his daughters had a talent – she could cure people. When she became very old, people started begging her not to die and stay longer to cure their diseases and solve problems. The dying lady promised to come back and assured people they would recognize her. After her death, people found a single birch standing in the middle of the island steppe land and realized what

the dying lady meant. Since that time, people have turned to the birch asking it for health and help. Modern Olkhon Buryats respect the legend and believe in the healing energy of the birch even today.

Another legend related to the spiritual energy of Olkhon places is dedicated to Shunte Cape, also known as the Cape of Love. The cape's outline is similar to an image of a woman spreading her legs to give birth. Olkhon Buryats believe that the place contains special energy and helps people to become parents. According to the legend, people wishing to have a daughter should go to the cape's right side. Couples that want to have a son should turn to the left, while people dreaming of having twins should walk straight ahead.

Some legends of Olkhon Island are dedicated to human vices and punishment. Local Buryats tell the story about Khoboy Cape, the northern tip of the island, a story about envy and greed. The legend called 'A stone maiden' recalls a Buryat woman, the wife of a man who had a gorgeous palace on the island. The woman envied her husband and asked local gods to give her the same palace. The gods disagreed as the woman lived in the palace with her husband and had a luxurious existence. They considered that her request showed envy and greed and turned the woman into a stone, claiming that she would remain a stone for as long as envy and greed exist on earth. Today, Olkhon Buryats guide tourists and guests to the island to its northern part to look at the cape, part of which has a form similar to a female standing and looking into the water.

Another legend called 'Three brothers' is about lying. The story tells about an Olkhon shaman who had three sons and a daughter. Once, his daughter fell in love, but the shaman was against her choice, and the daughter escaped with her beloved. Shaman sent his sons to find her and return her to him, the brothers found their sister, but she asked them not to tell their father the

truth. The brother agreed and told the shaman that they had not found his daughter. The shaman exposed their deception and turned the brothers into a cliff.

Olkhon Buryats try to safeguard their legends through storytelling and tourism. However, as some of the islanders note, mass tourism is not a perfect tool to safeguard the legends. Sergey B., an Olkhon resident, states that in some cases, tourists arrive on the island for a quick tour, to take a few pictures of the beautiful landscape, and they do not know there is an indigenous community there with its own culture and legends about the island. Sergey B. also mentions that orally transmitted legends are in danger as young islanders prefer to leave Olkhon. The older generation remains the only keeper of some legends without an opportunity to safeguard them for their descendants. Analysis of existing excursions on the island offered by travel agencies from the mainland shows that legends are rarely a part of tours, and only the most common stories are included. The islanders offer private tours with storytelling; however, there is a low interest due to competition with travel agencies and many foreign tourists who do not speak Russian or Buryat languages, while the islanders mostly do not speak English.

2.2.3 Buryat Festivals

Sagaalgan

Sagaalgan (“white month” in the Buryat language) is the Buryat New Year, traditionally celebrated in February according to the lunar calendar. The Buryat New Year has roots in similar Mongolian and some Turkic festivals that earlier emerged. Buryats call the holiday ‘white month’ as initially it was celebrated for a month, and people paid special attention to the color white. In the past, Buryats had many relatives living far away from each other, and in many cases, it could take almost a month to visit everyone and wish them all the best in the

new year. The significance of the white color was usually related to the expectation of White Elder⁸⁵ and reverence for white dairy products such as milk, cheese, and sour cream. Modern Buryats, as well as other Mongolic people, consider the color white to be a symbol of well-being and kindness.

The festival appeared in Buryatia when Buryats converted to Buddhism. In the eighteenth century, *Sagaalga*n was included in the Buddhist religious-cult system and considered one of the main annual festivals representing a synthesis of religious and secular principles.⁸⁶

The religious part of the festival included a prayer service dedicated to various deities and a ritual bonfire, also known as the sacred rite of cleansing, *Dugjuuba*, that symbolized the destruction of enemies. The secular part of *Sagaalga*n included visiting relatives and traditional outdoor games.

The traditional way to celebrate remained the same until the first part of the twentieth century until the anti-religion Soviet government banned *Sagaalga*n due to its religious motifs. The government also encouraged Buryats to celebrate Soviet holidays that aimed to unite all the small nations and indigenous groups of the USSR into a unified Soviet nation. The holiday became legal to celebrate only after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The revision of these worldview perspectives, led, in particular, to a religious, national, and cultural renaissance. Buryat intellectuals contributed to the revival of *Sagaalga*n, and in the 1990s, the government officially declared *Sagaalga*n a folk holiday giving Buryats the right to retain both their religious and secular traditions.⁸⁷

Today, *Sagaalga*n remains the main festival for Buryat people who managed to safeguard the holiday's old rituals. Many Buryats consider *Sagaalga*n a folk holiday rather than a religious

⁸⁵ White Elder in the Buryat culture is the main character connected to the New Year. He is also referred to as the so-called “Master of the Land”.

⁸⁶ Zorigma Budaeva, “Бурятские Народные Праздники в Контексте Теории Аккультурации [Buryat National Holydays in the Context of the Theory of Acculturation]” (Buryat State University, 2013), 150–52.

⁸⁷ The history of the development of *Sagaalga*n is described in: Budaeva, 150–52.

one. However, many people still practice the religious part of *Sagaalган* today. Ivolginskiy Datsan⁸⁸ holds services dedicated to deities, wishes for peace and well-being, and honoring the memory of the dead.⁸⁹ The place is open to everyone regardless of religion and nationality. People of different nationalities and religions come there to take part in the sacred rituals. The secular part of *Sagaalган* has remained very similar as people still visit relatives during the festival, practice mass outdoor activities, and eat much white food.⁹⁰

The holiday is annually celebrated by Buryats globally, with the main celebrations taking place in Ulan-Ude, the capital of the Buryat Republic in Russia. The Olkhon Buryats also celebrate *Sagaalган* following all main traditions. A few Olkhon Buryats still strictly follow old rituals such as ‘first exit’ from the house on the first day of the holiday, the ‘first step’ when leaving home in the morning, the ‘first word’ and the associated taboos on bad, dissonant words.⁹¹ Olkhon cultural organizations try to engage the Buryat young generation to participate in various New Year activities such as contests and games to let Buryat young people become more culturally connected to the traditional holiday.

Olkhon Buryats state that tourists are not familiar with *Sagaalган*, and outsiders consider this festival a closed event open to community members only.⁹² The interviewees refute this stereotype, explaining that *Sagaalган* as well as other Buryat holidays and festivals are events open to anyone regardless of their nationality or religion as the main values of Buryat festivals are universal, promoting peace, kindness, and well-being.⁹³

⁸⁸ The main Buddhist Temple located in Buryatia, Russia

⁸⁹ Dari Tsyrendorzhieva and Nadezhda Balzhinimaeva, “Праздник Сагаалган: Традиции и Новации [Holyday Sagaalган: Traditions and Innovations]” (Buryat State University, 2015), 174.

⁹⁰ B.B. Batueva, “Народные Праздники в Культуре Досуга Сельской Молодежи Республики Бурятия [Folk Holidays in Leisure Culture of Rural Youth in the Republic of Buryatia]” (Chelyabinsk State Academy of Culture and Arts, 2010), 61–63.

⁹¹ Budaeva, “Бурятские Народные Праздники в Контексте Теории Аккультурации [Buryat National Holydays in the Context of the Theory of Acculturation],” 151.

⁹² Online interview with Vladimir B.

⁹³ Online interview with Vladimir B.; Online interview with an islander (anonymous).

Surkharban

Buryats understand *Surkharban* in various ways: some people call it a holiday or a festival, while others claim *Surkharban* is a great Buryat sports competition comparable to the Olympic Games. Despite the slight disagreement about the character of *Surkharban*, Buryat people consider *Surkharban* an essential part of their culture and celebrate it in July after completing the main agricultural work.

The Buryat word '*surkharban*' contains two words: '*sur*' meaning a target in archery, and the word '*kharban*', a competition. *Surkharban* is also known as summer games or 'three games of men' as initially this event included three main activities such as archery, horse racing and Buryat wrestling and required only male participants.⁹⁴

Buryat anthropologists/historians claim *Surkharban* originated from ancient archery competitions Buryats had after successful hunting to honor spirits and their ancestors.⁹⁵ In the earlier period, Buryats also held competitions in archery, wrestling, and horse racing as contests before hunting or war as well as during wedding ceremonies, religious and other festivals.

Surkharban safeguarded its main traditions during Soviet times and gained popularity within the whole Buryat Republic. Today, the holiday unites sports competitions, mass games, food tasting, dancing, and performances at local art centers. Archery remains one of the crucial elements of *Surkharban* as the arrow is a symbol of fertility, happiness, and prosperous life in the Buryat culture. Buryat wrestling, *bukhe barildaan*, plays an important role in *Surkharban*

⁹⁴ Innokenty Ochirov, "Национальный Культурно-Спортивный Праздник «Сурхарбан» – Бренд Республики Бурятия и Фактор Туристической Привлекательности [National Cultural and Sports Festival 'Surharban' - Brand of the Republic of Buryatia and the Factor of Tourist Attraction]" (Buryat State University, 2018), 191.

⁹⁵ Ochirov, 192.

as a national sport. Horse racing is also an essential part of *Surkharban* to honor horses, which symbolize loyalty and help in many Asian cultures.⁹⁶

Today, *Surkharban* is a big holiday rather than a sports competition. Ulan-Ude, the capital of Buryatia, holds the main celebrations with concerts and many workshops, while other places have local celebrations on a smaller scale. *Surkharban* took place on Olkhon Island once in *Surkharban* 2018 with the help of the local administration. Representatives of different villages, schools, and organizations participated in sports competition, an exhibition of Olkhon craftsmen's products, and a fair. After a successfully organized festival, the Olkhon administration promised to hold the event annually. However, later, the administration rejected the idea due to expense.⁹⁷

Surkharban attracts both Buryats and other nationalities living in Buryatia as well as international visitors. The holiday reflects many aspects of the Buryat culture such as local cuisine, games, and local folk traditions. Thus, this festival's promotion could be used as an excellent opportunity to introduce Buryat history, culture, and traditions to tourists and visitors. The promotion of *Surkhbarhan* on Olkhon Island could significantly contribute to the development and international recognition of the Buryat culture since the island is the most popular place to visit in the Baikal region among both Russian and international tourists.

⁹⁶ Past and present traditions of archery, horse racing and Buryat wrestling are widely described in: Lubov Truneva and Yuri Puzynkov, "Праздник Сурхарбан Как Часть Национальной Культуры Бурят [Surkharban Holiday as Part of the National Culture of Buryats]," *History and Modernity*, no. 4 (December 2018): 77–86.

⁹⁷ Online interview with Vladimir B.

2.2.4 Buryat Dance *Yokhor*

Buryat people have always associated dancing with the spiritual world. Buryats have long practiced the traditional *yokhor* circle dance, in the areas they inhabit. *Yokhor* is mainly present in several parts of the Russian Federation where most of the Buryats live. In addition, *yokhor* is also performed in small Buryat communities living chiefly in China and Mongolia's north-eastern border regions.

Buryat ethnographers claim that *yokhor* dance initially reflected the solar circle and had a sacrificial meaning.⁹⁸ *Yokhor* was danced by male Buryats before a hunt to show respect to the sun. According to modern Buryat folklorists, the primary aim of *yokhor* has changed and now Buryats perform it to unite members of their community.⁹⁹ Today, Buryat people dance *yokhor* at different social celebrations such as wedding ceremonies to symbolize an individual's transfer from one social position to another and the union of the two marrying families. Buryats also perform *yokhor* at local festivals to preserve this type of circle dance, which they treat as a crucial part of the Buryat intangible heritage.

Today, *yokhor* is usually danced by many participants who have different roles in the performance. Also, Buryats claim that people of different age groups and genders should participate in *yokhor* because one of the aims of this circle dance is to connect different generations, young and old Buryat community members.¹⁰⁰ This ritual dance is a sort of syncretic event, including all the participants' movements clockwise to the song's

⁹⁸ Olga Buksikova, "Traditional Ethnic Dance of Buryatia," *Buryatia Special, Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 11, no. 3–4 (December 2007): 126.

⁹⁹ Buksikova, 126.

¹⁰⁰ Ewa Nowicka, "Siberian Circle Dances: The New and the Old Communitas," *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 194 (2016): 249–60.

accompaniment. The harmonious and similar dance movements of all participants show the integrity of the community.

Yokhor song, called *naadanay duunuud*, is a necessary element of the performance. In the earlier period, the words accompanying the dance were too plain, and they were dedicated to the hunt and sun only. However, they were traditional and known to all the performers. Repeating the same songs day by day, year by year, the dancers gave a certain ritual aspect to the performance. Today, *yokhor* lyrics are diverse and depend on the occasion when *yokhor* is performed. Both dancers and singers can sing *yokhor* songs about the love of nature, family, or happiness. However, the identity and integrity of Buryat people remain the central theme of *yokhor* lyrics.¹⁰¹

Yokhor has been transmitted from generation to generation for many years. In earlier periods, dancing skills were passed from fathers to sons, while these days there are more opportunities to transmit *yokhor* dancing skills to the next generation. A nice example is *Yokhor* Night, a Buryat festival where professional and amateur *yokhor* performers demonstrate various dancing techniques and teach younger generations the steps, hand movements, and postures at specific moments in the dance.¹⁰² In addition, Buryat schools, art centers, and some theaters arrange masterclasses with a key aim to attract young people to *yokhor* and involve them in this circle dancing performance.

Yokhor has developed and changed over the whole of its existence. It has changed its initial meanings and widened the categories of people allowed to perform the dance. The songs necessarily accompanying *yokhor* have also changed from texts about the sun and hunting to lyrics about identity, culture, and homeland. Presently, *yokhor* is widely promoted among the Buryat community, and people actively participate in events dedicated to this circle dance such

¹⁰¹ Olga Kolpetskaia, "Origins of the Professional Musical and Choreographic Art of Buryatia," *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences* 10 (August 1, 2017): 1178, <https://doi.org/10.17516/1997-1370-0126>.

¹⁰² NOWICKA, "Siberian Circle Dances," 250.

as “Global *yokhor*”, an international movement that aims to bring together Buryats from different parts of the world.¹⁰³ Thus, Buryats recognize *yokhor* as an essential part of their traditions and history and they also consider *yokhor* a crucial element of their intangible heritage.

Yokhor represents an essential cultural element for the Olkhon Buryats. The islanders perform the dance on many occasions such as weddings, national holidays, and various festivals or competitions. The interviewee remarked that integrating *yokhor* in local tourism is problematic as the dance required many participants while local entrepreneurs (guest house owners or tour guides) mainly deal with small groups of 2-4 people.¹⁰⁴ However, the interviewee admits that *yokhor* has the potential to become an element of sustainable tourism on the island as the dance aims to unite not only the Buryat community but all people in the world, promoting friendship and peace.¹⁰⁵

Chapter conclusion

Olkhon Island, located in the Irkutsk region of Russia, is rich in natural and cultural heritage. The island is famous for its diverse landscapes, from steppes, dense forests, and swamps to sheer cliffs and dunes with sandy beaches. Olkhon is also home to numerous animals and plants, including certain species native to the area. The island has a long history of development, starting from the Neolithic period. In 1996, Lake Baikal, including Olkhon as part of the buffer zone, was declared a World Natural Heritage site that popularized the area. Olkhon Island gained attention among Russian and foreign travelers. Today, tourism is a major activity on the island, with a constantly growing number of visitors.

¹⁰³ *Всемирный Флэшмоб «Глобальный Ёхор» [World Flashmob “Global Yokhor”]*, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgTuCrvh4GA&list=PLbAWN6QbGuUeaSlmh2_OPWlwAHAMaX672.

¹⁰⁴ Online interview with Vladimir B.

¹⁰⁵ Online interview with Vladimir B.

Olkhon Buryats' culture has experienced a revival and development since the 1990s and the end of the Soviet Union. Buryats managed to safeguard many cultural traditions considered the pressures on heritage of previous periods. Undoubtedly, some cultural elements disappeared due to globalization and the adoption of modern lifestyles; however, the islanders are interested in safeguarding particular aspects of their intangible heritage.

Shamanism, Olkhon legends (both written and orally transmitted), Buryat festivals, and the *yokhor* dance, discussed in this chapter, are essential cultural elements of the Buryat community on the island that lend themselves to integration into sustainable tourism programs. Shamanism and Olkhon legends contain deep knowledge about local history, while the festival and national dance aim to safeguard ancient rituals and unite people both inside and outside the community. Moreover, all the described cultural elements aim to promote peace and global well-being.

Today, Olkhon Buryats, despite their strong desire to safeguard their culture, face a range of problems such as globalization and neglect of the culture by outside travel agencies and some tourists, lack of a local budget, and the exodus of the younger generation from the island in search of a better life. The islanders admit to the existing problems; however, not much has been done to improve the situation. Some of the local entrepreneurs consider sustainable tourism a possibly effective tool to safeguard intangible cultural heritage. In the next chapter I will analyze in depth the existing representation of the cultural elements in local tourism and propose recommendations for the cultural elements' integration in sustainable tourism programs.

Chapter 3 – Tourism on Olkhon Island

Tourism on Olkhon Island evolved from individual visits to a destructive mass type of tourism through various stages of industrial development. Tourism development on Olkhon increased the tourist flow and extended the tourism stakeholder network. The chapter overviews the history of tourism development on Olkhon Island, including main trends and changes, considers the present-day stakeholders involved in the tourism business, investigates their degree of collaboration, efficiency, and major problems in the industry. The findings will contribute to recommendations for the sustainable development of Olkhon tourism.

3.1 Olkhon Island: from a Spiritual Place to a Center of Mass Tourism

The first tourists explored Olkhon Island in the 1990s. Initially, Olkhon was not a popular tourist destination as the island did not have permanent electricity or a developed tourism infrastructure. Nevertheless, most enthusiastic travelers visited Olkhon to explore its natural beauty and discover the spirituality of shamanism.¹⁰⁶ In the early 1990s, the islanders faced a financial crisis when the local fish factory shut down. They began to consider tourists a potential source of income, and many people started renting out rooms.¹⁰⁷ In 1996, UNESCO declared Lake Baikal a Natural World Heritage Site and that became a starting point for tourism development in the Baikal region, including Olkhon Island. The official starting point

¹⁰⁶ Anna Prigozhina, "Остров Ольхон [Olkhon Island]," *Geography Journal*, no. 5 (2008), https://geo.1sept.ru/view_article.php?ID=200800507.

¹⁰⁷ Prigozhina; Olennikova, "Забава Ревякина, ЛЭП и туристы: историю освоения острова Ольхон изучило ИА IrkutskMedia ["Revyakin's fun", power lines and tourists: the history of the development of the island of Olkhon]."

of the Olkhon tourism development is considered 1998 as this is when the first guesthouse was opened on the island.¹⁰⁸

In the early 2000s, specialists concluded that electrification of the island would increase tourist flow by 500%, and in 2005 the regional company installed power lines on the island.¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, some small settlements rejected electrification as it would lead to undesirable mass tourism and environmental destruction.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, Olkhon gained popularity among tourists, including foreign travelers relatively soon, and the tourism industry adjusted to an increased tourist flow:

- numerous guesthouses emerged on the island;
- big tour operators designed tours for Olkhon Island;
- the government launched two additional ferries connecting the island and mainland.

Today, the Olkhon tourism industry offers a variety of deals for Olkhon Island, ranging from two or three day-sightseeing tours to winter trips for looking at the ice formation that develop in the winter, hiking, and helicopter tours. Most tour operators offer several-day trips to the island, including visiting the most popular sites such as Shaman Rock, Cape Khoboy, and the local lake beach in Khuzhir.

Today, Olkhon tourism remains a seasonal industry with a high season in summer and a lower season in February when tourists visit the island to see special ice formations typical for Lake Baikal (see Figure 9).

¹⁰⁸ Prigozhina, "Остров Ольхон [Olkhon Island]"; Olennikova, "Забавы Ревякина, ЛЭП и туристы: историю освоения острова Ольхон изучило ИА IrkutskMedia ["Revyakin's fun", power lines and tourists: the history of the development of the island of Olkhon]."

¹⁰⁹ Olennikova, "Забавы Ревякина, ЛЭП и туристы: историю освоения острова Ольхон изучило ИА IrkutskMedia ["Revyakin's fun", power lines and tourists: the history of the development of the island of Olkhon]."

¹¹⁰ Olennikova.



Figure 9. Olkhon ice. Source: <https://www.lakebaikal.com/>

Baikal ice is famous for its turquoise color, and methane gasses rising from the lake's floor create unique circular patterns in the ice, sometimes pushing up shards of it at odd angles. Annual ice-watching season gains in popularity among both Russian and foreign people, with the Chinese travelers a dominant tourist group. In addition, the Olkhon Ice Fest was launched in 2020: several tourism agencies collaborated with the Olkhon regional administration and the Federal Agency for Tourism to create an event to combine art, culture, and sport.¹¹¹ Since 2020, the Olkhon Ice fest holds winter sports competitions, exhibitions of ice sculptures, concerts, and a local fair.

Tourism on Olkhon is rapidly developing and annually attracts many tourists. Surprisingly, the local administrations and the Federal Agency for Tourism provide different, contradictory statistics about the number of tourists visiting Olkhon: the numbers vary between 142 000 to

¹¹¹ “Праздник Льда На Ольхоне 2021 [Olkhon Ice Fest 2021],” Olkhon Ice Fest, accessed May 21, 2021, <http://olkhonice.ru>.

500 000 tourists a year.¹¹² None of the official institutions specify the methods used for calculations or types of tourists included in the statistical data.

Several years ago, the island faced environmental problems that researchers and activists immediately linked to the large number of tourists. They state that the development of mass tourism has already caused a range of environmental problems on the island such as littering and pollution, and the Olkhon tourism industry urgently requires changes leading to sustainability.¹¹³ Even though activists, researchers, and some government institutions acknowledge the problem of mass tourism and frequently propose possible solutions, the island suffers from the side effects of mass tourism such as littering, various types of pollution, habitat destruction, and poor representation of the local culture.

Olkhon Island lacks proper water, sewage, and waste systems. Before the tourism development, the islanders stored solid and liquid waste that was transferred to the mainland as needed. Mass tourism turned it into a severe problem as the amount of solid and liquid waste significantly increases during summer, a high tourism season on Olkhon. Water is often imported from the mainland, and most guesthouses are equipped with cesspools and pit latrines, discharging sewage directly into the ground, causing soil pollution. In addition, frequent usage of detergents with phosphates for tourist needs and the discharge of such liquid waste into Baikal leads to a different kind of water pollution.¹¹⁴ Environmentalists state that such actions are widespread

¹¹² Vologzhina, Sutyryna, and Akhtimankina, "Assessment of Anthropogenic Activities on the Tourism and Recreation Territory of Olkhon Island (Irkutsk Region, Russia)," 1; Olennikova, "*Забавы Ревякина, ЛЭП и туристы: историю освоения острова Ольхон изучило ИА IrkutskMedia* ["Revyakin's fun", power lines and tourists: the history of the development of the island of Olkhon]"; Mamontova, "*Туризм на Ольхоне*."

¹¹³ Vologzhina, Sutyryna, and Akhtimankina, "Assessment of Anthropogenic Activities on the Tourism and Recreation Territory of Olkhon Island (Irkutsk Region, Russia)"; R.I. Gushchin and I.V. Gushchina, "Determination of Ways to Regulate the Development of Tourism in the Zone of the Baikal National Park (on Example of Western Olkhon Region)," *Aeconomics: Economics and Agriculture*, no. 3 (2017), <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/opredelenie-putey-regulirovaniya-razvitiya-turizma-v-zone-pribaykalskogo-natsionalnogo-parka>.

¹¹⁴ Gushchin and Gushchina, "Determination of Ways to Regulate the Development of Tourism in the Zone of the Baikal National Park (on Example of Western Olkhon Region)," 3.

around the whole lake and have led to the rapid spread of spirogyra, a green filamentous algae that destroys the transparency of Baikal water and negatively affects the local aqua system (see Figure 10).¹¹⁵

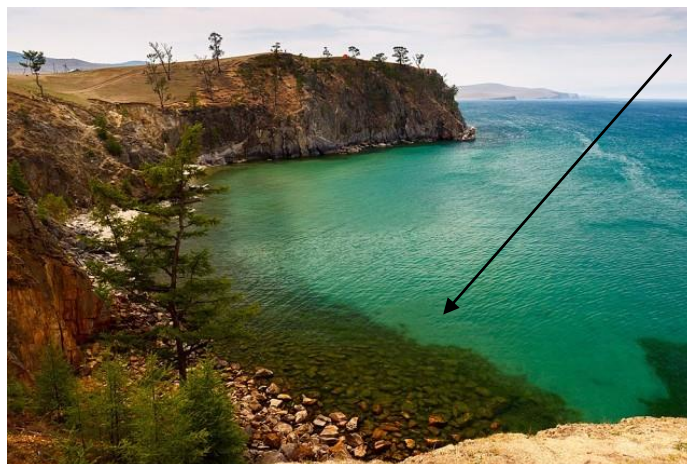


Figure 10. Spread of spirogyra around Olkhon, 2019. Source: <https://ok.ru/stop.photo/topic/69527515357406>

Mass tourism also generates a significant amount of solid waste from littering as there is no official landfill on Olkhon. Frequently, the waste ends up both on the island's shores and within the settlements that creates both chemical and biological environmental risks for the island and surrounding area.¹¹⁶ In addition, a large number of motor vehicles on the island create air and soil pollution.

The Olkhon flora and fauna also experience negative changes with the development of mass tourism. Environmentalists name mass tourism as the main reason for reducing the number and variety of animals and plants including the saker falcon and eagle-owl as well as the Olkhon

¹¹⁵ Y.A. Grukhin and I.A. Sabadash, "Возможность Наступления Экологической Катастрофы На Байкале [Possibility of an Ecological Catastrophe on Lake Baikal]" (Current concepts of development of humanities and natural sciences: economic, social, philosophical, political, legal, aspects, Novosibirsk, Russia: Limited Liability Company "Academy of Management," n.d.); Kristina Vologdina, "Эколого-Правовые Аспекты Охраны Озера Байкал [Ecological and Legal Aspects of the Protection of Lake Baikal]," *Environmental Law*, no. 6 (2017).

¹¹⁶ Alexandra Zakhvatkina, "Мусорный остров, или Сколько может проглотить Ольхон [Garbage Island, or How Much Olkhon Can Swallow]," Social Information Agency, Russia, May 28, 2019, <https://www.asi.org.ru/2019/05/28/musornyj-ostrov-ili-skolko-mozhet-proglotit-olhon/>.

lynx.¹¹⁷ Moreover, environmentalists and eco-activists mention certain species that have already disappeared from Olkhon: eastern imperial eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), white-tailed eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), eastern bustard (*Otis tarda*), and demoiselle crane (*Anthropoides virgo*).¹¹⁸

Along with the environment, mass tourism also affects the local culture. Unfortunately, this situation remains a minor issue due to the increased attention to environmental problems. Today, both tourists and islanders consider natural beauty the main tourist attraction on the island, while they barely mention the local culture: almost 85% of the Olkhon residents state that nature is the major factor attracting tourists to Olkhon, while a majority of tourists list nature and shamanism.¹¹⁹ Despite the fact that the culture of the Olkhon Buryats is not well integrated into the local tourism industry, a few spaces exist on the island aiming to promote the local cultural aspects: The Local Lora Museum and an open-air museum, the "Buryat village".

The Local Lora Museum, located in Khuzhir village, contains household items and religious objects connected to the Olkhon Buryats.¹²⁰ The open-air museum "Buryat village" is located in a small settlement four kilometers away from Khuzhir. A Buryat family, the museum owners, introduce tourists to the local culture through Buryat rituals, traditional dance and songs, and local cuisine. The museum also contains traditional Buryat household items, clothes, fishing, and hunting gear. Unfortunately, the museum is not well known to international

¹¹⁷ Vitaly Ryabtsev, "Про нынешнюю прибайкальскую «заповедность» [About the current Baikal 'reserve']," EcoGrad, December 25, 2020, <https://ekogradmoscow.ru/2012-11-25-08-44-50/2012-11-25-08-49-32/pro-nyneshnyuyu-pribajkalskuyu-zapovednost>.

¹¹⁸ Ryabtsev.

¹¹⁹ Nataliia Sidorova, "SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF THE BAIKAL REGION: ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC OPINION OF OLKHON ISLAND RESIDENTS" (Irkutsk National Research Technical University, November 2017), 3, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321083933_Socialno-ekologiceskie_problemy_Pribajkala_analiz_obsestvennogo_mnenia_zitelej_ostrova_Olhon.

¹²⁰ "Khuzhir Local Lora Museum of Revyakin," Tripadvisor, accessed May 21, 2021, https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g3392680-d8544998-Reviews-Khuzhir_Local_Lora_Museum_of_Revyakin-Khuzhir_Olkhon_Island_Olkhonsky_District_I.html.

travelers as the owners do not speak any foreign languages. Moreover, the museum receives negative reviews as tourists complain about the high cost of the tour and the poorly organized welcoming part. In addition, some tourists mention the low level of hospitality, especially during the high seasons, and highlight commercialization of culture as the residents ask for additional money for photographs.¹²¹

The main visitors of both museums are Russian tourists as the staff does not speak English. In addition, the museums lack promotional campaigns and self-representation on the Internet. Considering that most islanders, including the museum staff, do not speak foreign languages and English-speaking tour guides from the mainland neglect cultural aspects in their tours, the Olkhon Buryat culture is hardly accessible for foreign tourists. Moreover, an increased number of travelers and the seasonality of tourism encourages the islanders to commercialize their own culture, ultimately leading to the loss of cultural identity. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Olkhon Buryat culture involves several interesting elements that intersect with local nature and traditional ways of life. The islanders admit that there is a low level of interest in culture among tourists; however, the Olkhon entities still consider sustainable tourism a possibly effective tool to safeguard their intangible cultural heritage.¹²²

To conclude, Olkhon Island has developed its tourism industry and attracts many tourists every year, a situation that has already led to mass tourism. The local climate and existing tourist products make local tourism a seasonal industry with the highest season in summer. The existing tour programs designed by tour operators offer two to three-day trips that lead to fast travel, a type of tourism when a traveler cannot fully experience a place or explore the local environment or culture. Thus, mass fast seasonal type of tourism on Olkhon causes environmental and cultural problems such as littering, pollution, habitat destruction, and poor

¹²¹ "Бурятская деревня, Хужир [Buryat village, Khuzhir]," Tripadvisor, accessed May 21, 2021, https://www.tripadvisor.ru/Attraction_Review-g3392680-d4942178-Reviews-Buryatskaya_Village-Khuzhir_Olkhon_Island_Olkhonsky_District_Irkutsk_Oblast_Sibe.html.

¹²² Online interview with Vladimir B.; Online interview with an islander (anonymous).

representation of the local culture. The next sub-chapters will examine Olkhon mass tourism stakeholders, their attitude to existing problems, and collaborations within the local tourism industry.

3.2 Tourism on Olkhon Island: Stakeholder Analysis

This sub-chapter will identify the key stakeholders involved in the tourism industry on Olkhon Island and group them according to their objectives, influence, and interest(s) (see Figure 11). While some research has been carried out on separate stakeholders, no single study examines all of them and evaluates their collaboration and effectiveness. The stakeholder analysis will contribute to evaluating the industry's effectiveness, defining major problems in Olkhon tourism, and proposing recommendations for the development of sustainable tourism on Olkhon Island.

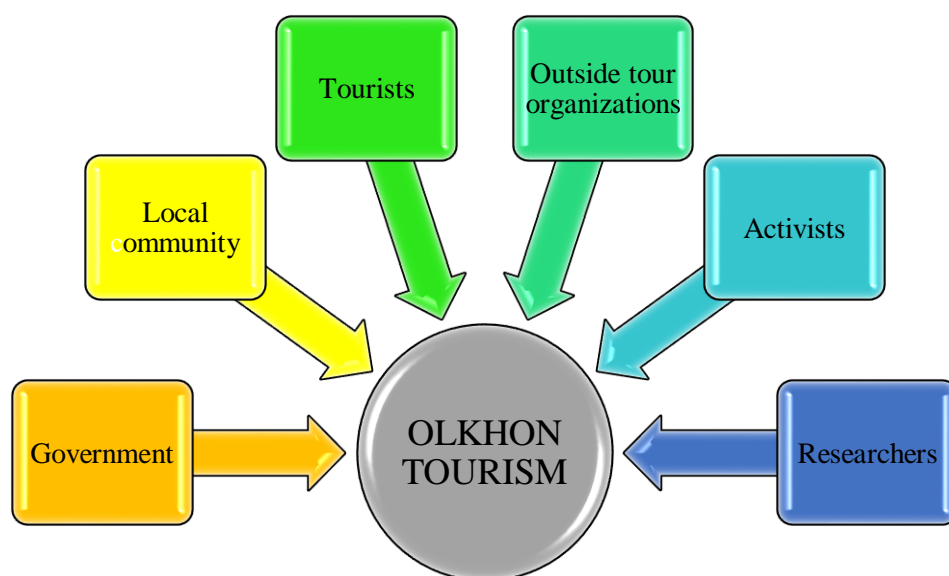


Figure 11. Stakeholders of the Olkhon tourism industry. Figure designed by author.

3.2.1 Government

The government is a key stakeholder in the Olkhon tourism industry represented by the Russian government at the national level, the Baikal Interdepartmental Environmental Public Prosecution Office, Pribaikalsky National Park, and several officials at the local level such as the Federal Agency for Tourism in the Irkutsk region as well as Irkutsk and Olkhon local administrations.

The national government is responsible for general tourism planning and policies. The major document issued by the government, the 1999 Federal Law on ‘The Protection of the Baikal Lake,’ aims to preserve Lake Baikal. It represents the legal foundation of sustainable development in the Baikal region.¹²³ Another legislation generally targets the tourism industry and includes the Federal Law ‘On the Framework of Tourism Activities in the Russian Federation.’¹²⁴

In 2017, the government established the Baikal Interregional Environmental Public Prosecution Office to promote and disseminate the federal law about Lake Baikal. Considering the 18-year gap between enacting the law and establishing the Prosecution Office, many people question the actual aim of the policy. Some researchers link the original mission of the Prosecution Office to an increased tourist flow in the Baikal region and the lack of new tax payments that had been expected to eventually flow into the regional budget.¹²⁵ In 2018, the Prosecution Office stated that more than 80% of accommodation facilities on the lake operate

¹²³ Full text is available in Russian here: <http://base.garant.ru/2157025/>

¹²⁴ Full text is available Russian here: <http://base.garant.ru/136248/>

¹²⁵ A Vasenkin, N Kaigorodova, and L G Rudykh, “The Development of the Recreational Tourism on the Territory of Olkhon Island (Lake Baikal) 2005-2018,” *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 204 (December 20, 2018): 1–2, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/204/1/012047>.

illegally and negatively affect the environment.¹²⁶ For example, an Olkhon guesthouse "Baikalov Ostrog" accommodated up to 500 tourists and had the sewage drained directly into the ground, 100 meters away from the Lake Baikal shore.¹²⁷ Today, the Prosecution Office works in the same direction and closes guesthouses that do not meet all the official requirements.

The All-Russia People's Front is another establishment supported by the government. It aimed at being a formal alliance between the ruling party and numerous Russian nongovernmental organizations. In 2018, based on rising concerns about Olkhon Island and mass tourism, the All-Russia People's Front proposed creating an electronic queue to Olkhon, which would be maintained on a website, in a mobile application, and at a registration point on the island.¹²⁸ The proposed project aimed to limit the number of tourists and lower the anthropogenic load on the local environment. Unfortunately, as of May 2021, the project remains unimplemented.

The government constantly expresses concerns about over tourism in the Baikal region, especially on Olkhon Island. However, projects aimed to preserve the environment and limit the number of tourists are not considered, while other controversial ideas are supported and implemented. In 2016, the government announced the project called 'Baikal: the great lake of the great country'. The project acknowledges the ecological concerns of the area and aims to fight the environmental problems by creating a new tourism industry that would correspond to modern international standards of sustainable tourism. The project does not mention the local

¹²⁶ Nina Pisarenko, "Вокруг Ольхона: что можно и чего нельзя делать на священном острове [Around Olkhon: what can and cannot be done on the sacred island]," *MK Baikal*, April 2019, <https://baikal.mk.ru/social/2019/04/24/vokrug-olkhona-chto-mozhno-i-chego-nelzya-delat-na-svyashhennom-ostrove.html>; "Baikal Interregional Environmental Public Prosecution Office," Baikal Interregional Environmental Public Prosecution Office, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://epp.genproc.gov.ru/web/bmtp>.

¹²⁷ Pisarenko, "Вокруг Ольхона."

¹²⁸ Pisarenko.

Buryat culture but aims to improve the standard of living and employment situation on the island.¹²⁹ Here are a few (out of many) ideas the project claims to implement:

- Reduction of the volume of unprocessed waste products at waste landfills in the Baikal area: to no less than to 37.9% in 2018 (to the level of 2012), 19.2% in 2020, 0% by 2025;
- Reduction of the area exposed to high and extremely high pollution: to no less than 54.7% in 2018 (to the level of 2012), 21.7% in 2020, 0% by 2025;
- The presence of sewage systems in the Baikal area's settlements: 20% in 2018 and 100% by- 2025;
- Use of renewable local energy sources: 5% in 2020 and 25% in- 2025.¹³⁰

Surprisingly, none of the abovementioned ideas have been effectuated to the present day either on Olkhon Island or in other parts of the Baikal area. The project neither met the proposed numbers in 2018 nor in 2020. Another questionable issue of the governmental project concerns the number of tourists in the area. The project admits that over tourism exists; however, it plans to increase the tourist flow in the region to five million by 2025.¹³¹

¹²⁹ "БАЙКАЛ: ВЕЛИКОЕ ОЗЕРО ВЕЛИКОЙ СТРАНЫ. Проектное Предложение По Приоритетному Направлению [BAIKAL: THE GREAT LAKE OF THE GREAT COUNTRY. Project Proposal in the Priority Area]" (Analytical Center for the Government of the Russian Federation, August 2016), <https://ac.gov.ru/files/content/10043/baikal-2-4-pdf.pdf>; "Программа 'Великое Озеро Великой Страны' [The Great Lake of the Great Country Program]," The Great Lake of the Great Country, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://www.2030.baikal.ru/vovs.html>.

¹³⁰ "БАЙКАЛ: ВЕЛИКОЕ ОЗЕРО ВЕЛИКОЙ СТРАНЫ. Проектное Предложение По Приоритетному Направлению [BAIKAL: THE GREAT LAKE OF THE GREAT COUNTRY. Project Proposal in the Priority Area]," 16.

¹³¹ "БАЙКАЛ: ВЕЛИКОЕ ОЗЕРО ВЕЛИКОЙ СТРАНЫ. Проектное Предложение По Приоритетному Направлению [BAIKAL: THE GREAT LAKE OF THE GREAT COUNTRY. Project Proposal in the Priority Area]," 16.

Pribaikalsky National Park

Pribaikalsky National Park (hereafter PNP) is the longest national park in Russia, running through many parts of the Baikal area, including Olkhon Island. The PNP is under the control of The Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment of the Russian Federation. The PNP aims to preserve the unique nature of the Baikal region with reference to the growing recreational load. The PNP charges tourists for visiting the northern part of the island. Recently raised fees became the subject of a huge debate; however, the park assured visitors that all the money they demand for entry would contribute to the development of the infrastructure.¹³² Following this promise, the park equipped Olkhon with a section of a wooden path, several new dining pavilions, frames for information stands, and wooden parking spaces in the popular tourist sites.¹³³ However, local guides and tourists complain that informational stands frequently remain empty. At the same time, the lack of toilets and trash bins along the northern route does not suggest any kind of effective investment in infrastructure development.

Local Officials (Irkutsk region, Olkhon region, village of Khuzhir)

The local level of the government as a stakeholder includes several official institutions such as the Federal Agency for tourism in the Irkutsk region, administrations of the Irkutsk and Olkhon regions, the administration of the village of Khuzhir.

The Federal Agency for Tourism established the rules for organizing tourism and recreation in the central ecological zone of the Baikal natural territory in 2019. The rules define eco-tourism as a prior direction for the tourism development in the Baikal area, including Olkhon

¹³² "Pribaikalsky National Park," Pribaikalsky National Park, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://baikal-1.ru/territory/pribaikalsky/>; Kirill Shipitsyn, "Страшные сказки Ольхона: остров заколоченных туалетов [Scary tales of Olkhon]," October 2019, <https://baikal.mk.ru/social/2019/10/02/strashnye-skazki-olkhona-ostrov-zakolochennykh-tualetov.html>.

¹³³ Shipitsyn, "Страшные сказки Ольхона: остров заколоченных туалетов [Scary tales of Olkhon]"; "Pribaikalsky National Park."

island.¹³⁴ The rules determine the maximum allowable load on the environment in different parts of Lake Baikal, stating that Olkhon Island had a high level of recreational load. Based on that, the document establishes the rules for tourists and promotes responsible traveling. The document bans tourists from parking outside designated areas, car washing next to the lake, littering, and leaving graffiti on the natural heritage sites. However, many tourists are not even aware of this document's existence, and none of the stakeholders promote the document among tourists, local communities, and tourism entities. Lack of promotion and dissemination makes it a purely nominal document without actual aim or enforcement.

The local administrations of the Irkutsk and Olkhon regions and the village of Khuzhir do not significantly contribute to the tourism industry. The recent statement from the Irkutsk administration spoke about the necessity of a blacklist for tourists who break the rules on Olkhon.¹³⁵ However, the idea was rejected as the administration found it hard to implement for financial reasons.

3.2.2 Local Community

Buryats and Russians mainly present the local community of Olkhon Island. The recent statistics show Olkhon Island has 1744 residents, 1350 of whom live in Khuzhir, the island's main village. The sociological research conducted in 2017 stated that 45.2% of the islanders were involved in the tourism industry: a majority provided accommodation for tourists and

¹³⁴ “Правила Организации Туризма и Отдыха в Центральной Экологической Зоне Байкальской Природной Территории [the Rules for Organizing Tourism and Recreation in the Central Ecological Zone of the Baikal Natural Territory in 2019],” The Federal Agency for tourism, September 19, 2019, <https://irkobl.ru/sites/tour/topical/rules%20CEZBNT.php>.

¹³⁵ Pisarenko, “Вокруг Ольхона.”

guided tours around Olkhon, 32.7 and 18.3 percent respectively, while the others worked in catering and souvenir production.¹³⁶

The administration of Khuzhir confirms the development of tourism on the island: in 2018, the village officially had 17 stores, 20 cafes, and one market, while there were 86 accommodations.¹³⁷ The official data from recent years has not yet been published. Considering the increasing tourist flow and existing unregistered islanders who provide tourism services, presumably, the number of tourism-related entities has expanded over the past years.

Within the framework of this thesis, it is also worth mentioning that a majority of the islanders do not receive any professional education or training in tourism, and most Olkhon people are native speakers of the Russian and Buryat languages and do not speak English. The islanders state that the young generation tends to leave Olkhon looking for a better life as the youngsters do not see career opportunities on the island except for being involved in the tourism industry. Despite the island losing the younger generation, some people from the mainland move to Olkhon: a couple from Moscow moved to the island in 2005 to escape big city life. Today, they are occupied in the tourism industry, providing tourists with accommodation.¹³⁸

3.2.3 Tourists

Various sources, including the government, mass media, and scholar accounts, provide controversial data on the number of tourists visiting Olkhon Island. Although the statistical

¹³⁶ The research conducted by the Irlutsk university included 104 respondents, the residents of Khuzhir Sidorova, "SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF THE BAIKAL REGION: ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC OPINION OF OLKHON ISLAND RESIDENTS," 5.

¹³⁷ "Паспорт Поселения [Information about the Settlement]," Administration of Khuzhir, accessed May 21, 2021, <http://xn----7sbmjkv5avr.xn--p1ai/pasport-poseleniya.html>.

¹³⁸ Sebastian Modak, "On a Remote Siberian Island Asking, Was It Just a Dream?," *The New York Times*, November 5, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/05/travel/52-places-to-go-olkhon-island-russia.html>.

data varies between 142 000 to 500 000 incoming tourists, all stakeholders acknowledge that the number of tourists visiting Olkhon has seen a rapid annual growth and exceeds the number of residents by many hundred times.¹³⁹

While general statistics from the whole lake provide annual data on the number of tourists and their nationalities, similar separate data about international tourists on Olkhon Island does not exist. However, considering mass media sources, academic articles, the conducted interviews with the islanders, and personal communication with several tour guides, it is easy to conclude that various types of tourists visit the island.

Russian tourists remain the most extensive group as people from the closest regions, Irkutsk and Buryatia, visit the island for short weekend trips or annual vacations. In addition, people from other regions visit Olkhon. Vladimir B, an Olkhon resident, mentions in his interview, several travelers from Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Novosibirsk who have become his regular customers. They visit the island every year and stay at his guesthouse.¹⁴⁰ All the returning people, Vladimir clarifies, find Olkhon a spiritual place that charges people with a special energy for the following year, and next year all of them return for a ‘new dose of reload’.

So-called ‘wild tourists’ stand separately in the classification even though they are Russian tourists, mainly residents from the Irkutsk and Buryat regions. Wild tourists do not use any existing services on the island and prefer to camp illegally, ignoring regulations. Vitaly Ryabtsev, an Irkutsk environmentalist and the chairman of the Irkutsk branch of the Russian socio-ecological union, does annual fieldwork on Olkhon Island. One of his findings is

¹³⁹ Vologzhina, Sutyryna, and Akhtimankina, “Assessment of Anthropogenic Activities on the Tourism and Recreation Territory of Olkhon Island (Irkutsk Region, Russia),” 1; Olennikova, “*Забавы Ревякина, ЛЭП и туристы: историю освоения острова Ольхон изучило ИА IrkutskMedia* [“Revyakin’s fun”, power lines and tourists: the history of the development of the island of Olkhon]”; Mamontova, “*Туризм на Ольхоне.*”

¹⁴⁰ Online interview with Vladimir B.

dedicated to the number of wild tourists: Ryabtsev notes the annual growth of wild tourists from 2011 to 2015, counting 956 tourist tents around the island over five days in August 2015.¹⁴¹ The number of wild tourists, as Ryabtsev states, declined after 2015 due to new regulations banning illegal camping. In the summer of 2020, local mass media claimed that Olkhon was having a rest from tourists due to the world covid-19 pandemic, while the National Park was supervising the area to protect the island from wild tourists. In response to that statement, Ryabtsev published a photograph taken on the beach of Khuzhir in August 2020 (see Figure 12). The photograph indisputably confirms that even in the absence of foreign travelers, the island experiences an incredibly high tourist load.



Figure 12. The beach of Khuzhir, Olkhon, 2020.

Source: <https://ekogradmoscow.ru/eko-blog/blog-v-ryabtseva/olkhonskij-turizm-letno-2020>

Foreigners, another group of tourists, also travel to Olkhon. The international interest in the island keeps growing every year. Despite the lack of official data on nationalities, Chinese tourists remain the dominant foreign group, outnumbering tourists from Mongolia, Korea, Japan, Europe, and the United States. Olkhon Island was not popular among the Chinese in the

¹⁴¹ Vitaly Ryabtsev, "Туризм По Ольхонски [Olkhon Tourism]," accessed May 21, 2021, <https://vryabtsev.livejournal.com/22150.html>.

past. The boom started relatively recently. Interestingly, several versions exist to explain why Olkhon Island experienced this Chinese boom for the past several years. While the government does not comment on the issue, some sources link this trend to politics. As the New York Times states, Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, soured relations with the West after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and pivoted toward China.¹⁴² China became Russia's new best friend, allied through trade, diplomacy, military cooperation, and tourism. As a result, the Baikal region, especially Olkhon Island, became occupied by Chinese tourists several years ago. Another, more romantic version connects the Chinese boom on Olkhon with a Chinese song about Baikal written by Li Jian, a Chinese singer, during his trip to Lake Baikal and Olkhon Island.¹⁴³ The song was released in 2011, while the Chinese boom on Olkhon emerged only in 2016-2017, which shows that the political influence, perhaps, is a more plausible explanation.¹⁴⁴

3.2.4 Outside Tourism Organizations

Outside tourism organizations affect the Olkhon tourism industry along with the other stakeholders. Today, major tour operators and small travel companies specializing only on Lake Baikal offer various tours to Olkhon Island from 2-3-day-sightseeing tours to winter trips for ice watching, hiking, and helicopter tours.

A majority of available tour programs offer various excursions and sightseeing tours, mainly targeting the Olkhon environmental heritage. An analysis of traveler reviewees was conducted

¹⁴² Neil MacFarquhar, "As Chinese Flock to Siberia's Lake Baikal, Local Russians Growl," The New York Times, May 2, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/02/world/europe/chinese-lake-baikal-tourism-russia.html>.

¹⁴³ The song is available in Chinese here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TF6hDH0tLgk>

¹⁴⁴ Irkutsk News, *Песня о Байкале Увеличила Поток Туристов Из Китая Втрое [Song about Baikal Tripled the Flow of Tourists from China]*, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjXzykyrNpo..>

for the thesis and included the reviews about tour operators and arranged trips: Altogether 196 reviews were left mainly by Chinese tourists using the Chinese tour operator while 68 reviews were collected about the company Baikal Explorer, one of the most popular tour operators for Olkhon trips.¹⁴⁵ The analysis concludes that the trips arranged by the outside tour operators exclusively focus on local nature. Based on the analysis, such programs do not mention any cultural aspects and do not require any interactions with the islanders as all services from accommodation to transportation and catering are included in the program and are provided by the outside companies.

Ordinarily, tour operators hire non-islanders for guided tours on Olkhon Island and accommodate their tourists in guest houses run by the outside managers and maintained by staff hired on the mainland for a tourist season. Along with tour operators, there are non-islanders, the owners of guesthouses on the island, with the same policy of hiring people from the mainland with work experience and professional knowledge in tourism and hospitality.

3.2.5 Activists

Environmental activists and various non-governmental organizations play an essential role in the Olkhon tourism industry and significantly contribute to improving the local environment. A non-governmental organization called 'My Baikal' was established by Nadezhda Nikolaeva, currently a citizen of Irkutsk but born and raised on Olkhon. The NGO aims to preserve and take care of Baikal nature through various ecological projects. Starting from 2016, the NGO managed to attract more than 6000 volunteers to collect more than 20 000 bags of

¹⁴⁵ "Olkhon Island - Review of Baikal Explorer, Irkutsk, Russia," Tripadvisor, accessed May 21, 2021, http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g298527-d8828452-r544745709-Baikal_Explorer-Irkutsk_Irkutsk_Oblast_Siberian_District.html; "Olkhon Island Travel Guidebook," TRIP.COM, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://www.trip.com/travel-guide/olkhonsky-district/olkhon-island-22864579/>.

trash.¹⁴⁶ Along with cleaning, the NGO holds various lectures to raise awareness about eco-responsibility among volunteers. Nadezda Nikolaeva claims that the project gains popularity and attracts more volunteers every year, including people from the mainland and the residents of Olkhon Island.¹⁴⁷

Several organizations following the same aim exist in the Baikal region and recruit volunteers for annual cleaning up around the lake and on Olkhon Island.¹⁴⁸ The activists acknowledge the problems of over tourism on the island and link this trend to the destruction of the local environment. In 2018, activists suggested significantly limiting the number of incoming tourists on Olkhon with an accent on Chinese tourists, the largest foreign tourist group.¹⁴⁹ The activists also stated that Chinese tourists are the least responsible travelers and cause various destructive situations on the island: a fight with local ferry's employees in 2017 and three fires on Olkhon occurred in the Chinese guesthouses in 2018.¹⁵⁰ More radical suggestions also emerge among activists: the public movement "All-Buryat Association for the Development of Culture" proposes to ban tourism and any construction works on Olkhon for the next 20 years.¹⁵¹

Along with NGOs and volunteers coming from the mainland, the islanders start slowly volunteering to help protect the local environment. In 2017, Semen Mayor, a local businessman, voluntarily installed recycling bins for recycling and managed to collect 15 tons

¹⁴⁶ "Иркутская Региональная Экологическая Общественная Организация 'Мой Байкал' [Irkutsk Regional Environmental Public Organization 'My Baikal'], " My Baikal, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://mbaikal.ru>.

¹⁴⁷ Svetlana Latynina, "Личная Миссия. Иркутская Экоактивистка Надеется Убрать Весь Мусор с Берегов Байкала [Personal Mission. Irkutsk Eco-Activist Hopes to Remove All Garbage from the Shores of Lake Baikal]," Russian News Agency TASS, April 9, 2021, <https://tass.ru/v-strane/11070917>.

¹⁴⁸ See more examples: "Волонтерские программы на Байкале 2021 [Volunteer programs for Baikal 2021]," Baikal Project, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://baikalproject.com/>.

¹⁴⁹ Pisarenko, "Вокруг Ольхона."

¹⁵⁰ Pisarenko.

¹⁵¹ Pisarenko.

of glass, 3 tons of plastic, and more than 100 cubic meters of other waste during summer.¹⁵² In addition, more and more islanders join annual events arranged by the outsiders to clean the area.

3.2.6 Scholars and Researchers

Academics are not directly involved in the Olkhon tourism industry; however, they research the topic, reveal current problems in the field, and occasionally propose possible solutions. Here it is worth mentioning that Russian scholars mainly target environmental aspects of the Olkhon problems, neglecting the islanders' cultural life.¹⁵³ The number of academic accounts discussing cultural aspects is extremely small. Such accounts acknowledge the neglect of Buryat culture in the Olkhon tourism industry and the dominant interest in the local environment. Although they propose recommendations on cultural development, such accounts do not target specific stakeholders and do not provide any particular tools for cultural integration in the local tourism industry. One bright example is an article written by Marina Levashova, a professor at Irkutsk State University. In her article, Levashova briefly suggests integrating local festivals and historical reconstruction of events into local tourism activities; however, she does not specify presumably relevant stakeholders and methods for implementing the proposed ideas.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Vadim Palko, “Экоостров: Как Жители Ольхона Спасают Байкал [Eco-Island: How Residents of Olkhon Save Baikal],” Irk.ru - news agency in the Irkutsk region, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://www.irk.ru/news/articles/20170915/olhon/>.

¹⁵³ E. A. Ponomarenko and T. M. Kolomina, “The Problems of Recreational Territories of Pre-Olkhon Area and Olkhon Island,” *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 315 (August 2019): 052070, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/315/5/052070>.

¹⁵⁴ Marina Levashova, “Проблемы Освоения Рекреационного Потенциала Острова Ольхон в Контексте Реализации Концепции Экологического Туризма [Problems of the Development of the Recreational Potential of Olkhon Island in the Context of the Implementation of the Concept of Ecological Tourism]” (Irkutsk State University), 65, accessed May 21, 2021, <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=27241022>.

Foreign scholar accounts dedicated to tourism on Olkhon Island also prioritize environmental aspects in many cases. However, they also include cultural issues, analyze its place and potential in the Olkhon tourism industry, and research tourist-local relationships in the context of cultural tourism.¹⁵⁵

3.3 Olkhon Tourism Stakeholders: Effective Collaboration or Disrupted Communication?

The previous sub-chapter introduced the main stakeholders of the Olkhon tourism industry, their aims, objectives, previous and present activities. Some of the stakeholders successfully collaborate to solve existing problems, for example, activists, volunteers, and islanders uniting for annual lakeshore cleaning campaigns. However, in most cases, stakeholder collaboration remains unproductive and leads to general unsustainability in the local tourism industry. This sub-chapter takes a detailed look at the present problems existing between stakeholders and analyzes the main reasons for ineffective collaborations. The sub-chapter includes three existing cases of stakeholder interactions and communication that lead to unsustainability in local tourism, and, as a side effect, local environment, and culture: government and local community, tourists and local community, government institutions and researchers.

3.3.1 Government vs. Local Community

The major problem between the government and Olkhon residents has its roots in the Pribaikalsky National Park (hereafter PNP), controlled by the state. As Olkhon Island belongs

¹⁵⁵ Wierucka, “Modern Forms of Buryat Shaman Activity on the Olkhon Island”; Bernstein, “Remapping Sacred Landscapes”; Grace Elizabeth Michaels, “Conversations on the Top Steppe: The Impact of Tourism on Traditional Siberian Culture” (Florida State University, 2020), <https://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/islandora/object/fsu%3A743518/>.

to the PNP, the law limits certain activities on the island for reasons connected to environmental protection. For example, the National Park imposed a ban in some Olkhon areas on cattle grazing and berry and mushroom picking. The National Park also banned omul fishing, a traditional activity of the Olkhon Buryats and one of the essential types of income.¹⁵⁶

Olkhon Island, as a part of the PNP, always had strict regulations for building new constructions. The islanders recall a few situations when they had to apply for permission from the PNP to build a pit latrine for a local museum.¹⁵⁷ Simultaneously, a few outside businesses managed to build several guesthouses on the island shores despite a strict ban. The issue exploded in the mass media and was promoted on the state level by activists. Fortunately, public attention led to the closure of some illegally built accommodations.¹⁵⁸

In December 2020, the President of Russia signed a new law permitting the privatization of land in national parks. The new regulations make national parks responsible for selecting appropriate candidates willing to purchase the land. Interestingly, at the same time, the number of PNP donors rapidly increased.¹⁵⁹ Vitaly Ryabtsev, local activist, environmentalist, and a former employee of the PNP, mentions one thousand donors willing to invest in PNP since the new law was published. Ryabtsev links such excessive interest to ‘buying a better piece of land

¹⁵⁶ Maria Kuklina et al., “Network Platform for Tourism Sector: Transformation and Interpretation of Multifaceted Data,” *Sustainability* 12, no. 16 (January 2020): 10, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12166314>.

¹⁵⁷ Andrey Pertsev, “Жители острова Ольхон на Байкале оказались внутри национального парка: их жизнь парализована [Residents of Olkhon Island on Baikal found themselves inside a national park: their lives are paralyzed],” *Meduza*: online newspaper, July 15, 2019, <https://meduza.io/feature/2019/07/15/my-v-kapkane-my-v-rezervatsii>.

¹⁵⁸ “Турбазу обязали снести незаконные постройки на Байкале [The tourist base was ordered to demolish illegal buildings on Lake Baikal],” *New Agency REGNUM*, Russia, November 20, 2019, <https://regnum.ru/news/society/2783393.html>; Ekaterina Dementyeva, “На Байкале начали сносить незаконные туристические базы [Illegal tourist bases began to be demolished on Baikal],” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, October 24, 2018, <https://rg.ru/2018/10/24/reg-sibfo/na-bajkale-nachali-snosit-nezakonnyye-turisticheskie-bazy.html>.

¹⁵⁹ Full text of the new regulation is available in Russian: <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001202012300031>

on Olkhon that would bring much profit.’¹⁶⁰ The islanders support Ryabtsev’s statement; however, they admit that they cannot affect the situation when the residents are banned from daily activities, while big outside businesses bribe PNP to purchase land and build up the island with new facilities and destroy the local environment and culture.

The islanders also mention constantly changing legislation obstructs effective collaboration between the Olkhon community and authorities. The islanders believe that existing laws and regulations work against the community and sustainability in general. In 2016, Alexey Bardunaev, an Olkhon resident, received a regional grant for waste management. He acquired the necessary equipment for waste processing and helped the islanders collect and process waste and send it to the mainland for recycling. However, he had to stop the activity in 2018 due to new legislation.¹⁶¹ The 2018 regulations stated that solid waste management became the responsibility of regional companies only, while individuals were banned from waste processing, recycling, or deposition on a large scale.¹⁶²

On the other hand, the government also raises concern about collaboration with the islanders. The authorities state that many islanders involved in tourism do not register their business, work illegally, and do not pay taxes.¹⁶³ The local administration urges the islanders to pay taxes and promote the idea on local websites.¹⁶⁴ However, the number of taxpayers remain low. A representative of the Olkhon tourism administration states:

“People accommodate tourists in their places all the time. You explain to them that you have to register, pay taxes, and they say they just have guests, not tourists. The tourism committee

¹⁶⁰ Vitaly Ryabtsev, “В Прибайкальском Национальном Парке Расцвело «государственно-Частное Партнерство» [“Public-Private Partnership” Blossomed in the Pribaikalsky National Park],” January 18, 2021, <https://ekogradmoscow.ru/eko-blog/blog-v-ryabtseva/v-pribajkalskom-natsionalnom-parke-rastsvelo-gosudarstvenno-chastnoe-partnerstvo>.

¹⁶¹ Zakhvatkina, “Мусорный остров, или Сколько может проглотить Ольхон [Garbage Island, or How Much Olkhon Can Swallow].”

¹⁶² Zakhvatkina.

¹⁶³ Vasenkin, Kaigorodova, and Rudykh, “The Development of the Recreational Tourism on the Territory of Olkhon Island (Lake Baikal) 2005-2018,” 2.

¹⁶⁴ “Не Платить Налоги Невыгодно [Not Paying Taxes Is Not Profitable],” Administration of Khuzhir, March 15, 2019, <http://www.xn----7sbmjkv5avr.xn--p1ai/ne-platit-nalogi-ne-vygodno.html>.

does not have the authority to bring such entrepreneurs to justice, and there are only two tax inspectors in the region.”¹⁶⁵

Another tax-related issue exists between the government and taxpayers: the Olkhon authorities explain that many Olkhon guesthouses are registered in Irkutsk, and the owners pay taxes there, while the Olkhon budget does not receive anything.¹⁶⁶

3.3.2 Local Community vs. Tourists

“We, the residents, are not always getting the benefit of more tourists here,” an islander said. “It’s something we have to try and change — to encourage tourists to experience the place through its people and leave with a respect for our home and its natural beauty.”¹⁶⁷

Problems and mutual claims between the islanders and tourists have existed since the emergence of tourism on the island. Although the islanders admit that tourism is the main activity on Olkhon, they treat tourists differently (Figure 13).

¹⁶⁵ Nikolay Bayshev and Yulia Ulybina, “Ольхон. Туризм [Olkhon. Tourism],” IRKPEDIA - portal of the Irkutsk region: knowledge and news, 2015, http://irkipedia.ru/content/olhon_turizm.

¹⁶⁶ Bayshev and Ulybina.

¹⁶⁷ Modak, “On a Remote Siberian Island Asking, Was It Just a Dream?”

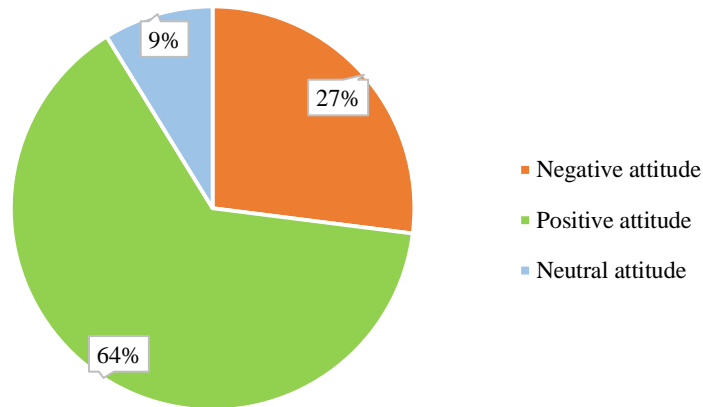


Figure 13. The islander's attitude to tourists, Khuzhir, 2017.¹⁶⁸

More than fifty percent of the Olkhon population treats tourists positively as tourism is the primary source of income for the local community. Some islanders also believe that Olkhon's popularity among tourists will push the authorities to start investing in local settlements. In addition, almost 3% of the islanders claim that tourists contribute to cleaning campaigns and help volunteers and residents collect trash. In contrast, 27% of the local people see tourists negatively as they see tourists as the leading cause of environmental destruction, water, and soil pollution.

The Olkhon community sees the Chinese tourists as a significant threat to the local economy, environment, and culture. Due to the large number of tourists coming from China, Russian-Chinese tourism stakeholders designed China-friendly tours to the island that include transportation, accommodation, and excursions provided by large tour operators. Such tours do not include any interactions with the local community and do not financially contribute to the local economy. The islanders state that Chinese tourists neglect local services and prefer to use catering services in their hotels, purchasing souvenirs and excursions from big tour

¹⁶⁸ The research conducted by the Irkutsk university included 104 respondents, the residents of Khuzhir: Sidorova, "SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF THE BAIKAL REGION: ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC OPINION OF OLKHON ISLAND RESIDENTS," 3.

operators.¹⁶⁹ Such tours, according to the islanders, are not intended to discover the local culture. Thus, Chinese tourists have no knowledge about local culture and sacred places, something that leads to unethical behavior and violations. Vera Malanova, the head of Khuzhir, described the case of vandalism that occurred on Shamanka Rock several years ago when local people found Chinese characters written on the sacred stones.¹⁷⁰

Wild tourists represent another kind of threat on the island, according to the islanders. Many people stay on Olkhon in illegal camping sites for a weekend. Islanders claim that wild, short-term tourism negatively affects the local economy and environment as wild tourists are not interested in local culture, do not purchase local goods, litter and cause water pollution. In addition, the Olkhon people find a connection between wild tourists and numerous acts of vandalism occurring on the island as well as inappropriate behavior in the places considered sacred among the local community. The islanders mention smoking and alcohol consumption during religious rituals as part of this inappropriate, unethical behavior.¹⁷¹

Along with the islanders, tourists also express concerns regarding local tourism, especially local cultural life. Many travelers blame the local community for commercializing its culture by asking for money for pictures and providing information about the island only during private pre-paid tours.¹⁷² The islanders admit the existence of commercialization; however, they highlight that it is the only opportunity to earn money to make a living.¹⁷³ In addition, foreign tourists highlight the lack of communication with the islanders due to language barriers. Most local people on Olkhon Island do not speak English, much less Chinese.

Along with commercialization, tourists question the truthfulness of some cultural elements, especially the shaman rituals performed by Valentin Khagdaev, the most well-known Olkhon

¹⁶⁹ Online interview with Vladimir B.; Online interview with an islander (anonymous).

¹⁷⁰ Palko, “Экоостров: Как Жители Ольхона Спасают Байкал [Eco-Island: How Residents of Olkhon Save Baikal].”

¹⁷¹ Online interview with an islander (anonymous); Online interview with Vladimir B.

¹⁷² Findings from the Olkhon survey, see Appendix 1.

¹⁷³ Online interview with Vladimir B.

shaman. While some people consider Valentin Khagdaev an educator who promotes local culture, others see him as a controversial person. Anya Bernstein, a professor of anthropology at Harvard University, analyzes tourist perceptions of the tours guided by Khagdaev in one of her articles.¹⁷⁴ The author states that the audience for his tours is mainly international travelers, well-educated and interested in culture with no prior knowledge of shamanism. After participation in the tour and interviews with some of the tour participants, Bernstein concludes that many tourists question rituals performed during the tour and consider it a staged show. Other scholars support this statement and call Khagdaev a cultural animator since many tourists tend to believe that Khagdaev's shamanic rituals and tours are a tourist attraction aimed to entertain tourists and collect money, while the true traditions of Olkhon shamanism are well hidden from tourists.¹⁷⁵

Opposite opinions regarding Olkhon shamanism keep emerging among researchers and tourists. Many people join Khagdaev's tours as he is the only Olkhon shaman with a deep cultural knowledge who can share the history of the island and the local indigenous community. However, the same people also question his shamanic rituals, doubt their authenticity, and believe that the shaman intentionally distorts many cultural and religious facts to make his tours more exciting and attractive. In addition, although tourists admit the necessity of paying for such tours as for any other provided service, many of them feel that paying a shaman to perform rituals destroys the original idea of any religious practice and presents the shaman as a showman whose priority is financial profit instead of safeguarding cultural and religious traditions of his community.

¹⁷⁴ Bernstein, "Remapping Sacred Landscapes."

¹⁷⁵ Aleksandra Wierucka, "Modern Forms of Buryat Shaman Activity on the Olkhon Island," *Anthropological Notebooks* 19 (January 1, 2013): 110.

3.3.3 Government Institutions vs. Researchers

No previous research has investigated the effectiveness of collaboration between government institutions and academic researchers in the Olkhon tourism industry. However, personal communication with several official institutions for the thesis demonstrates an example of disrupted communication between stakeholders directly involved or interested in the Olkhon tourism industry.

In October 2020, the Russian government declared 2021 the year of Lake Baikal. The government announced various significant changes aimed to preserve the environment and, more interestingly, contribute to safeguarding the Buryat culture. The official announcement was published in many sources with the link to the Irkutsk administration appointed as the government body responsible for the program's implementation.¹⁷⁶ Contacting the Irkutsk administration to learn more details on the upcoming program, I received the reply communicating that all the details, including the program committee members and sub-projects, would be freely available on the official website by October 15.¹⁷⁷ However, no information was published by the declared date. In their response to my second email, the Irkutsk administration stated that the program is not their responsibility and advised me to contact the Ministry of Natural Resources.¹⁷⁸ Surprisingly, the Ministry communicated that they were not responsible for the project and recommended contacting the Irkutsk administration as it had been appointed to run the program.¹⁷⁹

The Federal Agency for Tourism in the Irkutsk region was also contacted to discuss the tourism issues on Olkhon Island, statistical data, and sustainable opportunities for the future, including

¹⁷⁶ "2021 Год Игорь Кобзев Предложил Объявить Годом Байкала [Igor Kobzev Proposed to Declare 2021 the Year of Baikal]," Irk.ru - news agency in the Irkutsk region, September 6, 2020, <https://www.irk.ru/news/20200906/year/>.

¹⁷⁷ Personal email communication with the Irkutsk Administration, 1 October 2020.

¹⁷⁸ Personal email communication with the Irkutsk Administration, 7 November 2020.

¹⁷⁹ Personal email communication with the Ministry of Natural Resources, 20 November 2020.

the upcoming program ‘2021, the year of Lake Baikal’. After the official response and the Agency’s consent to an interview, a list of questions was submitted. However, later, my request was declined with the statement that the Agency is not authorized to discuss the aforementioned issues with researchers.¹⁸⁰

The Chinese consulate in Irkutsk was another official establishment contacted within the thesis framework to discuss sustainable tourism on Olkhon and the role of the Chinese tourism entities and tourists in (un)sustainability on the island. Unfortunately, the request sent in February 2021 has remained unanswered.

The government is not ready for an open discussion and effective collaboration with researchers. Despite proposed programs, set deadlines, and appointed establishments, the official institutions seem unclear and, apparently, disinterested about their actual responsibilities. The lack of transparent strategies and actions among the official institutions as well as ineffective collaboration with researchers clearly demonstrate the disrupted communications in the local tourism industry that leads to more unsustainable tourist efforts.

Chapter conclusion

Tourism emerged on Olkhon Island in the early 1990s and over the last decades has undergone many changes in terms of its infrastructure and legislation. Today, Olkhon is a center of the mass, fast, seasonal type of tourism with a constantly increasing number of tourists mainly interested in short and general sightseeing tours. The development of mass tourism infrastructure annually causes various problems on the island from littering, pollution, and habitat destruction to poor or commercial representation of the local culture and general disinterest on the part of tourists.

¹⁸⁰ Personal email communication with The Federal Agency for Tourism in the Irkutsk region, November – December 2020.

The current stakeholders of the Olkhon tourism industry include government, the local community, tourists, outside tourism organizations, activists, scholars, and researchers. The analysis of stakeholders and their collaboration presented here reflects the ineffective and disrupted channels of communication connected to reasons varying from financial and legal issues, ignorance or misunderstanding of sustainable tourism to financial priority over local sustainability, and a language barrier. The chapter defines mass tourism, stakeholders' irresponsible actions, and ineffective, disrupted communication as the main reasons for the lack of sustainability in the Olkhon tourism industry, leading to the destruction of the local environment, culture, and economy.

Chapter 4 - Recommendations for Improving Communication in the Olkhon Tourism Industry

In the previous chapter, I conclude that Olkhon tourism industry stakeholders collaborate ineffectively for a variety of reasons including financial and legal issues, ignorance or misunderstanding of what sustainable tourism, financial priority over local sustainability, and language barriers entails. The findings from the previous chapter also pinpoint mass tourism, the irresponsible behavior of stakeholders, and ineffective, disrupted communication between stakeholder groups as the main reasons for the absence of effective sustainability in the Olkhon tourism industry. However, in Chapter 2 it was shown that some scholars and Olkhon entrepreneurs consider sustainable tourism a possibly effective tool to preserve the local environment and safeguard intangible cultural heritage Olkhon Island, thus, urgently needs sustainable tourism to improve its unique local environment, economy, and culture. Implementation and development of sustainable tourism requires effective collaboration between all stakeholders involved in the industry, a clear understanding of sustainability among all stakeholders, and education for islanders in terms of tourism management, environmental preservation, and cultural management.

Considering the present-day situation on Olkhon Island, existing problems, and tourism stakeholders, there is clearly a need for a central body (preliminary name: Olkhon Center for Sustainable Tourism) to be created. The Center would promote sustainable tourism with a focus on the local environment, economy, and culture and educate the local community in methods promoting sustainable tourism management and hospitality (see Figure 14). The proposed center would also contribute to development of a new stakeholder network by attracting actors interested in sustainable tourism.

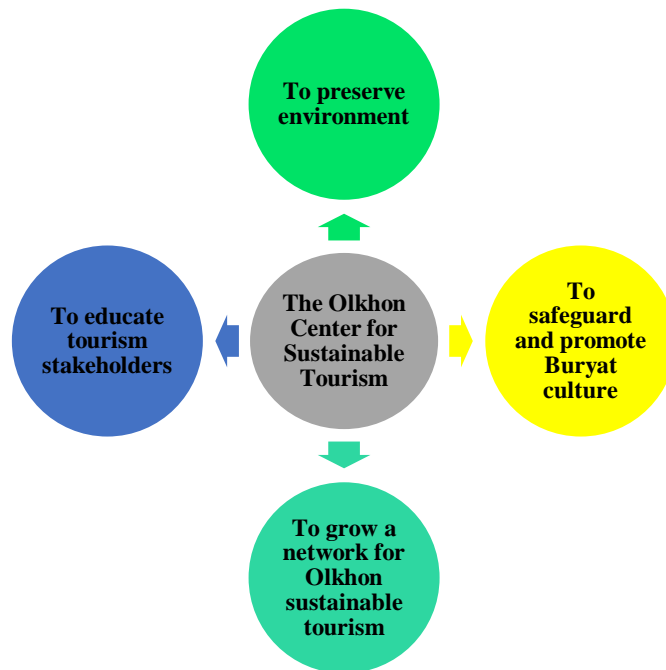


Figure 14. The Olkhon Center for Sustainable Tourism and its aims. Figure designed by author.

The establishment of the Olkhon Center for Sustainable Tourism (hereafter Center) seems a feasible idea, based on the analysis of present-day stakeholders, the islanders' desire to safeguard certain parts of their intangible heritage, and the well-developed and motivated network of NGOs and other activists willing to contribute to environmental and cultural improvements on Olkhon Island.

The following recommendations include steps necessary to establish the Center.

Step 1: Start a non-governmental organization

Aim: to establish the Center.

Proposed actions:

- Find and unite highly motivated people to start an NGO and form its committee.

- Consider creating a committee to include representatives from a few tourism stakeholder groups (e.g., one Olkhon resident not affiliated with tourism, one resident involved in tourism on the island, one outside activist or another NGO's representative, a scholar/researcher).
- Select a CEO among the committee members This individual should be an Olkhon resident, member of the Buryat community, to ensure regular physical presence of committee members at the Center and to promote fast decision-making.
- Design an action plan and any other relevant strategic documents aimed to clearly set the mission and objectives of the NGO. Consider consulting outside experts to design the documents.
- Register the NGO at a local government level. Nadezhda Nikolaeva, the CEO of NGO 'My Baikal', should be consulted to get advice on the process of registration. The guidelines offered by the local Ministry of Justice must be taken into account on how to register a non-governmental organization.
- Seek financial resources. Consider local and state grants (the Federal Agency for Tourism in the Irkutsk region, the Federal Agency for Tourism at the national level, Fund of Presidential Grants) other potential sources: crowdfunding campaigns, private donations.¹⁸¹
- Find a physical location for the Center. The village of Khuzhir would seem to be the best location as it remains the most popular destination point on the island. Consider using already existing establishments (e.g., the local library or the local museum) as a potential space for the Center to ease the procedure of registration as construction of a new building can be problematic due to the National Park's policy and restrictions.

¹⁸¹ More information on grants is available here: "*Гранты и Конкурсы в Области Туризма 2021* [Tourism Grants and Competitions 2021]" (Agency for Strategic Initiatives, Russia, 2021), https://files.asi.ru/iblock/a44/a4416c01ae78fab49d786872c553beaf/id_Grant2021_2.pdf.

Step 2: Research and content

Aim: to research sustainability and existing problems on the island in terms of the environmental and cultural heritages of Olkhon as well as the present situation in the local tourism industry. The goal is to design content and events at the Center.

Proposed actions:

- Attract professionals to research what constitutes sustainability for the Olkhon environment and culture as this impacts the tourism industry. Consider integrating local universities' programs in tourism management and environmental studies and Buryat cultural organizations from the Republic of Buryatia into the programs at the Center. Consider existing international research on the topics, including academic accounts and other credible sources such as newspapers and results of work carried out by environmental and cultural researchers. Use research findings for the content of the Center.
- Design content for an online campaign. Consider creating a website or an online group on Facebook and VKontakte.¹⁸² Consider recruiting IT professionals or experienced volunteers to assist. Fill a selected online platform with content and consider using the platform as a tool to attract new potential stakeholders for sustainable environmental and intangible heritage development on Olkhon. Use images, videos, and interviews with islanders to present the existing problems and promote the idea of sustainable tourism. Consider that the online campaign be presented in various languages (Russian, English, Chinese, Mongolian) to attract a wider audience: translate all textual data and use subtitles for video materials. Consider using volunteers among stakeholder groups for translation services.
- Design content for on-site events (see Appendix 1). Consider creating a permanent exhibition (e.g., posters) on sustainability, local environment, and culture. Include a visual representation

¹⁸² VKontakte is a Russian online social media and social networking service. In 2021, the most popular website in Russia with more than 500 million accounts.

of existing problems, statistics on mass tourism, and its side effects. Consider having all textual data be presented in Russian, English, and Chinese. Consider holding lectures, workshops, and outside tours guided by Center volunteers as relevant events aimed to promote sustainability on the island (see educational campaigns from the Tanzanian Chumbe Island as a good example – Chapter 1.2). Consider the Massai experience (Chapter 1.2) for designing cultural events to avoid some of the problems faced by indigenous tourism today. The high tourism season (June-August) should be considered the best time to hold events targeting tourists and the low season to hold events to educate the local community in hospitality, foreign languages, and sustainable tourism.

- Design and promote tips for responsible behavior on Olkhon Island (see Appendix 2). Consider all stakeholders a potential reader. Consider the tips to be published online as well as printed out (poster/brochure) and placed in the Center. Consider ensuring that these ‘tips’ are written in Russian, English, and Chinese languages to target a wider audience.

Step 3: Promotional campaign

Aim #1: to draw the attention of various communities to the existing problems on Olkhon and propose sustainable tourism as a possible solution. To attract potential visitors to the Center.

Proposed actions:

- Launch an online campaign promoting the Center and its aims. Consider launching a website or an online community page on Facebook and VKontakte.
- Promote the Center, its physical and online presence, through various channels: consider online platforms for sustainable tourism such as The Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) and Ethical Traveler, local mass media (e.g., irk.ru, a popular information website of the Irkutsk region), outside tour companies that send tourists to Olkhon, including Chinese tourism organizations.

Aim #2: to create and develop a network of stakeholders interested in sustainable tourism on Olkhon Island. Consider making new stakeholders potential contributors to the Center's research, online and on-site events and, financial support.

Proposed actions:

- Contact government institutions such as the Federal Agency for Tourism in the Irkutsk region to seek financial and administrative assistance.
- Contact educational bodies in the Irkutsk Region and the Republic of Buryatia to involve academics in the Center's activities. Consider using academics as potential guest speakers and lecturers of the Center to educate both tourists and residents.
- Contact relevant NGOs and activists mentioned in Chapter 3 to unite efforts and develop sustainability together (e.g., NGOs 'My Baikal', "Baikal Project", the public movement "All-Buryat Association for the Development of Culture")
- Consider online collaboration with international bodies (see above: CREST, "Ethical Traveler") to adopt practical tools for sustainability, exchange experience, and promote new sustainable tourism on Olkhon at the international level.
- Contact outside tourism organizations to promote the Center's mission and activities. Establish collaboration and include visiting the Center in tours designed by outside tour organizations.
- Regularly expand the network and engage new stakeholders to implement and develop sustainable tourism on Olkhon Island.

Step 4: Let the Center work!

Proposed actions:

- Launch and run the Center. Ensure involvement of the Center's CEO and the committee in all decision-making processes.

- Revise and regularly update information on upcoming online and on-site events as well as information related to the local environment, culture, and tourism.
- Develop and grow a network of **NEW** tourism on Olkhon Island with a focus on sustainability.

The establishment of the Olkhon Center for Sustainable Tourism can become the starting point in developing sustainable tourism on the island. Considering the proposed promotional campaign and online/on-site events, the Center can significantly contribute to environmental preservation, improvement of the local economy, and cultural safeguarding through educational campaigns, raising awareness for sustainable tourism and responsible behavior among all stakeholders, including the local community.

Conclusion

Today, Olkhon Island faces many problems caused by tourism in the area. Littering, pollution, habitat destruction, poor or commercial representation of the local culture have become part of life on Olkhon. Lake Baikal and Olkhon Island are already victims of unsustainable tourism. Considering the present-day unsustainability of the tourism industry in its present form and the government's plans to increase the flow of tourists into the area, Olkhon Island is in danger of losing its natural and cultural heritage and becoming a cesspool as it happened with Boracay Island in the Philippines (see Chapter 1.2). Thus, there is an urgent need on Olkhon Island for new concepts and initiatives for development of sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. This thesis shows the importance of environmental, economic, and cultural aspects for the successful development of sustainable tourism and the importance of the strong interconnections between all three aspects.

Today, sustainable tourism is a global practice, as many places employ an array of tools for the environmental, economic, and cultural sustainability of tourist destinations. Simultaneously, there are tourist destinations still practicing destructive types of tourism, causing harmful consequences for the local environment, economy, and culture. Unfortunately, such practices are widely present in Russia, especially at local levels, due to low levels of awareness or wrong interpretations of what sustainable tourism entails.

The thesis examined the tourism industry of Olkhon Island, the biggest island on Lake Baikal, in southeastern Russia. The findings show that Olkhon Island is rich in natural and cultural

heritage. The island is famous for its diverse landscapes, from steppes, dense forests, and swamps to sheer cliffs and dunes with sandy beaches. Olkhon is also home to numerous animals and plants, including certain species native to the area. The cultural life of Olkhon is presented by the Buryats, an indigenous community living on the island. The more notable elements of Buryat culture on Olkhon include shamanism, local legends, special feast days, and the Buryat music and dance.

Today, Olkhon Island remains a center for mass tourism in the Baikal area, with an annual growth in tourists, mainly interested in short and general sightseeing tours. The development of mass tourism infrastructure each year results in various problems on the island, such as littering, pollution, habitat destruction, poor or commercial representation of the local culture, disassociation between the tourists and the local Russian and Buryat populations.

The present-day Olkhon tourism industry includes government, the local community, tourists, outside tourism organizations, activists, scholars, and researchers. Results from the detailed stakeholder analysis show that the industry functions ineffectively. The various stakeholders' disrupted communication channels and irresponsible actions lead to unsustainable and negative consequences for the local environment, economy, and culture. The findings also suggest that the Olkhon tourism stakeholders are not actually thoroughly familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism:

- The local governments and scholars prioritize environmental issues, neglecting the economic and cultural problems.
- The islanders involved in tourism do not receive any professional training in tourism management.
- A majority of tourists are not motivated to explore the local culture and contribute to the local businesses preferring professional services from outside tour companies.

Fortunately, Olkhon residents are aware of the existing problems and admit that sustainable tourism is one possible solution for environmental, economic, and cultural improvements. In addition, several well-functioning NGOs in the region are willing to contribute to the island's sustainable development through volunteering programs and annual events, although at the moment these NGOs do not collaborate effectively.

The mass tourism situation on Olkhon currently results in disrupted communication between tourism stakeholders, on the one hand, and islanders willing to preserve local nature and culture with strong support from activists and volunteers, on the other hand. There is clearly an urgent need for a new concepts and initiatives in the local tourism industry that focus on environmental preservation and cultural safeguarding. The new and different face of the proposed tourism industry will require reconsideration of communication tools used among stakeholders, a search for new, motivated and responsible actors, and educational campaigns aimed at the Olkhon residents and tourists.

This thesis proposes the creation of a Center for sustainable tourism on Olkhon Island run by several activists. The proposed Center aims to develop sustainable tourism through educational events for the Olkhon residents and tourists. The Center is also intended as a hub for development of a new network of Olkhon tourism stakeholders to attract individuals and organizations interested in sustainable development. In addition, the thesis includes a preliminary action plan for the Center's establishment, a list of recommended events for the Center, and tips for responsible tourist behavior on Olkhon Island.

Sustainable development is an effective way for the Olkhon tourism industry to solve the environmental, economic, and cultural problems that currently exist and which are getting worse. Raising awareness about sustainability, educational campaigns, and building a new network of responsible stakeholders are crucial factors for the implementation and development of sustainable tourism on Olkhon Island.

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Appendix 1 - Survey on Olkhon Island

An oral survey was carried out by Svetlana Yashnova, a volunteer tour guide on Olkhon Island. The survey was conducted among Olkhon residents and tourists between May and September 2020 and again in February 2021. There were altogether 96 participants. The survey aimed to define the understanding and interpretation of sustainable tourism among Olkhon residents and tourists. The oral survey was conducted in Russian, and all participants came from Russia (due to the Covid-19 travel restrictions, international tourists did not visit the Island in 2020). The received responses were processed by Yashnova and Arina Govorina, the author of this thesis.

The overall number of participants was 96, including: islanders involved in the tourism industry – 21; islanders not involved in the tourism industry – 18; tourists – 57.

Questions asked:

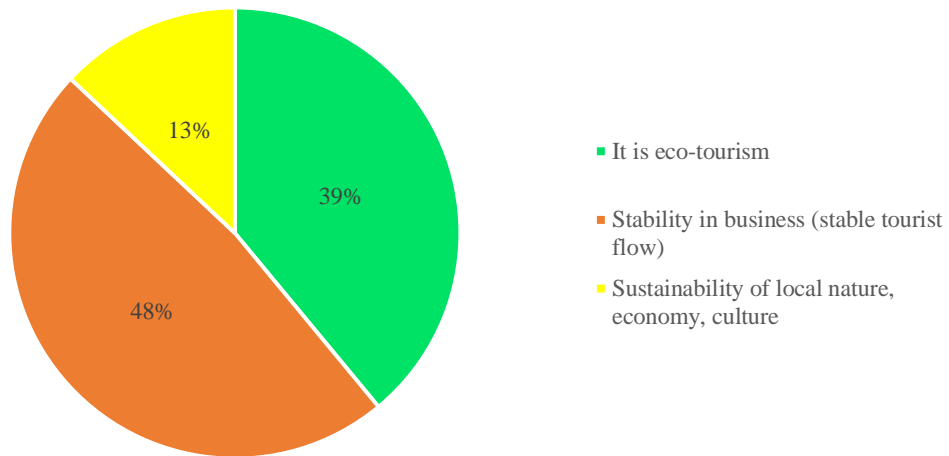
1. Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism?
2. If yes, how would you define sustainable tourism?
3. If yes, from where did you get the information about sustainable tourism?

Findings:

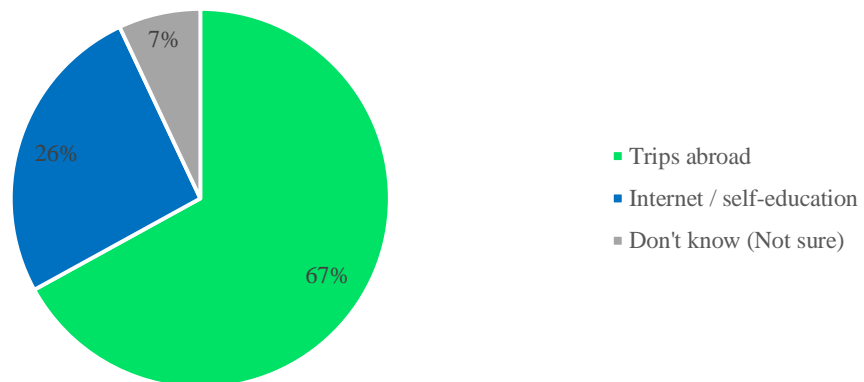
Are you familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism?

	Islanders (tourism industry)	Islanders (non-tourism)	Tourists
Yes	43%	0%	31%
No	48%	89%	67%
Not sure	9%	11%	2%

If yes, how would you define sustainable tourism?



If yes, from where did you get the information about sustainable tourism?



Although the survey did not include any specific questions about the local culture and tourists' attitude to it, 53% of tourists (30 out of 57) stated that they had experienced commercialization of the Buryat culture on Olkhon Island shown by the islanders asking to be paid for photographs with them and for providing information about the island.

Appendix 2. Recommended events for the Olkhon sustainable center (a proposed example)

On-site events

Event	Aim	Comment
Lectures with experts	To draw attention to the existing problems on Olkhon, to promote sustainable tourism and responsible behavior.	Set contacts with environmentalists, tourism experts to hold webinars. Invite both residents and tourists. Consider making high tourist season an appropriate time for lectures.
A cultural talk	To discover the Olkhon Buryat culture.	Invite islanders and tourists for talks about Olkhon culture. Consider making high tourist season an appropriate time for the event.
Yokhor days	To promote the local yokhor dance, an essential element of the Buryat culture.	Invite tourists and residents to learn about and learn to dance the yokhor. Consider having these dances during high tourist season as an appropriate time for the event.
Surkharban: history of the festival and celebration	To promote Surkharban, an important festival among the Buryats.	Gather islanders and interested tourists to celebrate Surkharban together, share local traditions with tourists, promote the Buryat culture. Consider high tourist season an appropriate time for the event (as Surkharban is celebrated in July).
Education for islanders	To educate the residents involved in tourism in sustainability and hospitality.	Invite experts in various topics: tourism management and tour guiding, hospitality, English language. Consider making low tourist season an appropriate time for such events. The educational campaign of Chumbe Island (Chapter 1.2) should be considered as a good example to adopt.

Online events

Event	Aim	Comment
Webinars with experts	To draw attention to the existing problems on Olkhon, to promote sustainable tourism and responsible behavior.	Set contacts with environmentalists, tourism experts to hold webinars.
Interviews with islanders	To discover the Olkhon Buryat culture.	Video record interviews with the Olkhon Buryat community exploring various cultural elements.
Responsible travelers: tourists about Olkhon	To promote responsible behavior among tourists on Olkhon Island.	An online forum for tourist reviews and recommendations about sustainable tourism on Olkhon.
Sustainable quiz	To educate potential tourists and other stakeholders using gamification as an educational tool.	Design quiz games to test users' knowledge of the local environment, culture, and a general understanding of sustainability.

Appendix 3. Tips for responsible behavior on Olkhon Island (a proposed example)¹⁸³

Welcome to Olkhon, an island with picturesque landscapes, home to the Buryat culture!

Before you start your exciting trip, we would like to tell you a few facts about our home:

Olkhon is home to many species of animals and plants.

The shores of Olkhon Island are washed by Lake Baikal, the world's oldest and deepest lake. Today, Baikal remains the world's cleanest lake.

Olkhon is also home to the fascinating Buryat culture. The island is full of spiritual energy and sites sacred to the Buryat people. Almost every rock here is associated with legends and stories. The local community also celebrates exciting festivals.

We, the residents, love our home, and we want to preserve it for future generations. As our guest, we urge you to act responsibly on Olkhon Island. Please, visit the Olkhon Sustainable Center (online or in-person for your first step for responsible traveling. In our Center you will:

Get information about the Olkhon environment;

Explore the Buryat Culture;

Learn more about responsible traveling and sustainable tourism;

Become engaged with local events.

We wish you a pleasant trip, and we believe that these quick tips will make your stay here more comfortable and interesting. Following these tips, you will also contribute to the island's sustainability, nature, and culture!

¹⁸³ to be also translated to Russian and Chinese, to be promoted online and on-site among all potential visitors of the island.

EXPLORE AND ENJOY YOUR CULTURAL EXPERIENCES!

- # Respect locals and their culture;
- # Eat locally;
- # Learn the local language (or as much as you can);
- # Engage and speak with locals
- # Shop locally and support family-run businesses
- # Be an ethical traveler when it comes to photography. A nude selfie in a sacred place is not a good idea. Also, if you want to take a photograph of someone, ask first.
- # Say no to vandalism.
- # Note that some places are considered sacred among Buryats. Smoking and drinking alcohol there are not the way to make friends.

RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT!

- # Do not litter! Say no to plastic and use reusable bottles. Try to recycle when possible.
- # Do not wash your belongings in the lake! Detergents negatively affect the water and destroy the local aquatic system.
- # Try to limit the use of vehicles that cause air and soil pollution. Enjoy bicycle trips around the island and walk!
- # View local animals in their natural habitats at a safe distance. Do not feed wild animals, avoid poaching, and any activities neglecting animal welfare.

Be responsible and enjoy Olkhon!

See you soon!

Olkhon Center for Sustainable Tourism

[contact information]