

## SPIRITUALITY AS A FACTOR OF SMALL TOWNS' COMPETITIVENESS

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**Key words:** competitiveness of territory, municipal entities, small town, spirituality factor, mathematical model of small towns' spirituality factor.

The paper considers spirituality as a competitiveness factor with regard to municipal entities. Analysis is offered for the category referred to as "small town" being one of the types of municipal entities. The key criteria determining the spirituality factor are assigned, their significance in the efficiency function is assessed; the spirituality factor management pattern is developed.

Modern trends in world development show that the communal and social-economic processes shall be described as having competition-driven nature. Development of the international, interregional and intermunicipal competition can turn into a factor of abrupt rise in Russia's growth rates, as strong and competitive municipal entities provide an essential condition for competitiveness of the regions, which in their turn determine competitiveness of the state.

Shaping and further development of competitive advantages and increasing the municipal entities' competitiveness act as a prerequisite of sustainable innovative development of the regional economic system oriented towards accelerated economic growth, more efficient and rational use of the territorial resource potential, of the respective social system and finally – towards improving the population's social welfare.

Analysis of the available research papers on the topics of assessing and managing the territories' competitiveness makes it possible to come up with a conclusion that the majority of the researchers single out several factors determining in aggregate the overall competitiveness of this or that territory. In the first place, for any type of territory it is common to take into consideration the economic and social indicators as well as the natural-and-geographical features.<sup>1</sup> Simultaneously, there are some competitive advantages being integral parts of the conventional factors of municipal entities' competitiveness; it is unpractical though to segregate such advantages into a separate management and assessment factor for bigger town and territories because of their insignificance as compared with other factors. At the same time, for smaller territories, e.g. small towns, recordkeeping and governance might become rather significant in view of development of that

type of municipal entities. In compliance with the Federal Law "On the General Principles of Organizing Local Self-Governance in the Russian Federation"<sup>2</sup> (№ 131-FZ, of 06.10.2003, as amended on 21.07.2007) one may single out in Samara Region Pokhvistnevo, Zhigulyovsk, Otradny and some other communities defining them as small towns.

Statistically viewed, it is appropriate to describe communities as small towns in the event of their population being between 10 and 100 thousand. Such towns (inhabiting between 10 and 100 thousand people) account for 32 mln of Russian Federation residents, while the towns with the population of 100-500 thou account for 29 mln of the country's population. Percentage-wise it is 42% of the RF population.<sup>3</sup>

The characteristic features and attributes of a small town are most clearly seen for communities with the population under 20 thou. Towns with the number of residents from 20 thou and more differ significantly from the first group. These are economically stronger and socially more well-to-do; they are also less subject to decline.

The majority of Russian towns are perceived rather as part of rural areas, than urban territories. Besides, many small towns were converted from rural poseleniyes (settlements). Their residents are closer to villagers than to townsmen in terms of their life style. By its streets, such a town often resembles a rural settlement. The houses are mainly of a type typical for villages, there are orchards and kitchen gardens nearby.<sup>4</sup>

As stated above, competitiveness of a small town as well as of a bigger town is determined by a combination of several factors of the social-economic development and state of the respective territory, some of them being irrelevant for large-scale municipal entities but being of

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critical importance for other municipal entity types. As a result of factor analysis for the Samara Region small towns, the spirituality factor was singled out as one of the relevant ones. With this going on, for the given type of territory – within the range of criteria determining this factor – there can be unique competitive advantages, significance of which is often heavily underestimated in the local self-governance realm.

The spirituality notion, as the key essential feature of personality, is rather complex and manifold and depends on the world outlook used for approaching this notion. The Lexicon by Vladimir Dahl defines “spirituality” as a state related to the God, faith, human soul and reflecting all the people’s mental, moral strengths and will<sup>5</sup>. In a non-religious society spirituality is predominantly identified with the ethical principles of the societal life and moral norms in people’s conduct. Its embodiment is seen in the ethical culture, ethical mentality, and finding of spirituality is most often achieved via intellectual cognition and aesthetic development.

In the Marxist-Leninist approach spirituality is defined as high moral qualities of an individual. K. Marx derived spirituality from material production, which was described as its basis. “Spirituality is one of the forms of societal mentality, a social institute performing the function of regulating the people’s behavior in all the spheres of social life”<sup>6</sup>. Spirituality identified with morality and ethics means that morality is supported by virtue of the established order; it obtains ideological justification in the way the person is supposed to live and to act, i.e. includes moral activity from the point of view of its content and motivation; moral relations regulating that activity; moral mentality reflecting these relations in form of relevant notions. Finally conclusion is made about its class and historical nature.

On the basis of analysis described in more detail below with regard to spirituality as a small towns’ competitiveness factor, the following set of criteria shall be singled out:

- ◆ Social responsibility level of the person
- ◆ Development level of social institutes of moral and spiritual upbringing
- ◆ Cultural heritage, following the national traditions
- ◆ Availability of values-based guidelines, striving for spirituality development
- ◆ Tolerance in society

The *social responsibility level of the person*, against the background of the spirituality factor, shall be viewed as a certain combination of emotional-and-psychological features, which implies activity motivated not only by personal material or moral advantages. In other words, the social responsibility (as a spirituality criterion) shall be understood as the degree of participation of individual initiative-driven labor – as a human resource – in the territorial activity process. It is worth while mentioning though that despite importance of this criterion, a direct managerial impact on the part of the public authorities is not able of producing a tangible result in short-term prospective. The reason for this is that the contemporary science does not provide unambiguous and clear definition of the social responsibility as a management object.

It is not possible to ensure management of the small town competitiveness factor by this criterion without purposeful influence on other criteria of the spirituality factor, because evident correlative interdependence is traced between these criteria.

It is appropriate to single out one more criterion determining the small towns’ competitiveness factor, which is the *development level of social institutes of moral and spiritual upbringing*. This criterion makes provision for availability and full-value performance of institutions involved in issues of shaping personality across the small town territory. These institutions include theological seminaries, locally situated chapels, and religious cult establishments. Evidently, activity of those sort of institutions must be in compliance with the principles of systemic organization and all-round approach in combination with full-scale financial backup.

The next criterion implies *cultural heritage and following the national traditions*. The present-day situation within the territories of the majority of small towns shows that manifestation of this criterion, despite its potential, is not big. One of the possible ways of solving the above problem is contained in *shaping of value-based guidelines* and involving young people in the spiritual development by means of active participation in organizing and conducting events of social relevance.

The criterion that determines comprehensiveness of the spirituality factor influence on the small towns’ competitiveness is *tolerance in society*, which to a major extent facilitates

preservation of sustainable development in all life spheres of the respective type of municipal entities. Tolerance can include interracial, international or religious tolerance as well as the societal tolerance with regard to the active authorities and the Constitution.

Thereby, the development level of the institutes of moral and spiritual upbringing, the cultural heritage, following the national traditions, availability of value-based guidelines, striving for spirituality development, tolerance in society – as the key criteria determining the spirituality factor – are important element of the small town’s life activity, because they are responsible for shaping the internal personality’ values system, which in its turn determines behavior of the person in society.

On the basis of revealed criteria, the pattern of assessing and managing the spirituality factor of small towns’ competitiveness was developed. With the help of this criterion the spirituality factor values in the integral pool of Samara Region small towns’ competitiveness are determined.

The performance function of the proposed pattern is directly the small towns’ spirituality factor, which is defined as the aggregate of the generating criteria (described above). Each criterion is awarded a corresponding significance coefficient characterizing its contribution to the

performance function value. The performance function values are calculated by the factor analysis method on the basis of a social survey of expert-specialist practitioners working in the field of local self-governance, being municipal servants and managers of the Samara Region municipal entities. The number of respondents is 50.

The factor analysis was performed under facilitation of the statistical packet SPSS12. As a result, related parameters were discovered and broken down into groups of factors having different significance degree.

Outcomes of the abovementioned sociological survey as well as the factor analysis conducted under participation of this paper’s author are summarized below:

From the above table one may see that this criterion is 4-rate important because this value corresponds to the biggest frequency value – 13.

From the table above one may see that this criterion is 6-rate important because this value corresponds to the biggest frequency value – 14.

From the table above one may see that this criterion is 5-rate important because this value corresponds to the biggest frequency value – 17.

From the table above one may see that this criterion is 5-rate important because this value corresponds to the biggest frequency value – 13.

From the table above one may see that this criterion is 4-rate important because this value

Table 1

**Development level of the moral and spiritual institutes**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Unimportant 1	1	2.2	2.2	2.2
	Of little importance 2	4	8.7	8.7	10.9
	Of little importance 3	3	6.5	6.5	17.4
	Important 4	13	28.3	28.3	45.7
	Important 5	4	8.7	8.7	54.3
	Very important 6	12	26.1	26.1	80.4
	Very important 7	9	19.6	19.6	100.0
	Total	46	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

**Social responsibility level of the person**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Of little importance 3	5	10.9	11.1	11.1
	Important 4	3	6.5	6.7	17.8
	Important 5	13	28.3	28.9	46.7
	Very important 6	14	30.4	31.1	77.8
	Very important 7	10	21.7	22.2	100.0
	Total	45	97.8	100.0	
Skipped	Systemic skipped	1	2.2		
Total		46	100.0		

Table 3

**Cultural heritage, following the national traditions**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Not important 1	1	2.2	2.2	2.2
	Of little importance 2	2	4.3	4.4	6.7
	Of little importance 3	6	13.0	13.3	20.0
	Important 4	12	26.1	26.7	46.7
	Important 5	17	37.0	37.8	84.4
	Very important 6	5	10.9	11.1	95.6
	Very important 7	2	4.3	4.4	100.0
	Total	45	97.8	100.0	
Skipped	Systemic skipped	1	2.2		
Total		46	100.0		

Table 4

**Availability of values-based guidelines, striving for spirituality development**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Of little importance 2	1	2.2	2.2	2.2
	Of little importance 3	6	13.0	13.3	15.6
	Important 4	12	26.1	26.7	42.2
	Important 5	13	28.3	28.9	71.1
	Very important 6	7	15.2	15.6	86.7
	Very important 7	6	13.0	13.3	100.0
	Total	45	97.8	100.0	
Skipped	Systemic skipped	1	2.2		
Total		46	100.0		

Table 5

**Tolerance in society**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid	Not important 1	3	6.5	6.7	6.7
	Of little importance 2	1	2.2	2.2	8.9
	Of little importance 3	4	8.7	8.9	17.8
	Important 4	14	30.4	31.1	48.9
	Important 5	12	26.1	26.7	75.6
	Very important 6	6	13.0	13.3	88.9
	Very important 7	5	10.9	11.1	100.0
	Total	45	97.8	100.0	
Skipped	Systemic skipped	1	2.2		
Total		46	100.0		

corresponds to the biggest frequency value – 14.

Consequently, judging by the survey results it is possible to conclude that the highest significance among the spirituality factors belongs to the social responsibility of the person criterion, its value being 6. The least significant criteria of the spirituality factor are: development level of the moral and spiritual institutes and tolerance in society because their values correspond to 4.

On the basis of statistic analysis, the factor analysis can be performed, the relevant data shown in the table below.

Extraction method: Key constituents analysis/

Factor loads are considered in the survey as correlation coefficients between the variables and factors. As a result, they distributed as shown above (see Table. 7).

As all the spirituality factor criteria determine one factor of the conducted survey, for its efficient development it is necessary to exercise managerial impact on all the criteria simultaneously.

Below we define the criteria significance coefficients in the mathematical model of the spiritual factor advancement for the frequency

Table 6

**Full explained dispersion**

Constituent	Initial eigenvalues			Totals of extraction load squares		
	Total	% of dispersion	Cumulative %	Total	% of dispersion	Cumulative %
1	2.570	51.396	51.396	2.570	51.396	51.396
2	0.938	18.757	70.153			
3	0.700	14.001	84.154			
4	0.486	9.722	93.875			
5	0.306	6.125	100.000			

Table 7

**Constituents matrix**

	Constituent
	1
Development level of social institutes of moral and spiritual upbringing	0.695
Level of social responsibility of the person	0.721
Cultural heritage, following national traditions	0.443
Availability of values-based guidelines, striving for spiritual development	0.858
Tolerance in society	0.796

Table 8

**Descriptive statistics**

	N	Average
Development level of social institutes of moral and spiritual upbringing	46	4.89
Level of social responsibility of the person	45	5.47
Cultural heritage, following national traditions	45	4.44
Availability of values-based guidelines, striving for spirituality development	45	4.82
Tolerance in society	45	4.53
N valid (in tote)	42	

analysis data by means of finding the average values ratio (see Table 8) and the significance values as per each criterion respectively (see Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

On the basis of conducted statistical and factor analysis and obtained sociological data, the mathematical model of spirituality as a factor of small towns' competitiveness was formed; the model incorporates all the singled out criteria. The model looks as follows:

$$DF = 0,98K_1 + 1,09K_2 + 0,89K_3 + 0,96K_4 + 0,91K_5$$

Where  $K_1$  – institutions development level;  $K_2$  – level of social responsibility of the person;  $K_3$  – cultural heritage;  $K_4$  – availability of values-based guidelines;  $K_5$  – tolerance in society.

Correspondingly, proceeding from the obtained significance coefficients it is possible to conclude that the most significant criterion determining the spirituality level as a small towns' competitiveness factor is the social responsibility level of the person in the face of the soci-

ety. Simultaneously, it is worth while mentioning that achieving high values by this criterion and development of the spirituality factor in general is impossible without efficient and timely management of the abovementioned criteria set, significance of which – as is shown in the paper – is high enough.

<sup>1</sup> Enactment by the Sverdlovsk Region Government (of 21.10.2004, # 1001-P) "On Assessing Potential of Competitiveness of Municipal Entities in Sverdlovsk Region" // SPS Consultant Plus.

<sup>2</sup> Federal Law (of 06.10.2003, # 131-FZ, as amended on 21.07.2007) "On the General Principles of Organizing Local Self-Governance in the Russian Federation" // SPS Consultant Plus.

<sup>3</sup> Kara-Mourza S. "Small Towns and the National Project" [Uniform Resource Locator]: access mode <http://www.noopolis.ru/articles/84.shtml> - from the screen.

<sup>4</sup> Russian Encyclopedia [Uniform Resource Locator]: access mode <http://russia.clow.ru/text/193.html> - from the screen.

<sup>5</sup> Dahl V.I. Lexicon of the Live Great Russian Language. - AST Publishers, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Philosophical Dictionary. - M., 1986, p. 292.