

Iana Vorobeva

City Conventions and Their Impact on the Sokos Hotels St. Petersburg Performance

Bachelor's Degree
International Business
Spring 2020

SOKOS  **HOTELS**
ST. PETERSBURG


**KAMK • University
of Applied Sciences**

Abstract

Author: Vorobeva Iana

Title of the Publication: City Conventions and Their Impact on the Sokos Hotels St. Petersburg Performance.

Degree Title: Bachelor of International Business

Keywords: hotel business, MICE, city conventions, marketing, hotel occupancy, sport events, marketing cooperation, sport venue

In St. Petersburg, thousands of city events are being organized annually, having a great influence on the tourist flow and hotel business. The aim of this thesis was to identify the types of MICE that Sokos Hotels Group should focus on to attract more guests in 2020-2024. The thesis raised issues concerning the Sokos Hotels marketing environment and marketing tools, as well as ways which might be used to promote this group's hotels in St. Petersburg.

The research method was a qualitative method - collecting secondary information from sources such as books, web pages, articles related to marketing, and the official website of a group of hotels. The work conducted analyses of the marketing status of Sokos Hotels Group in St. Petersburg and identifies the types of events that will be organized in 2020-2024.

The main recommendations for the Sokos Hotels Group are to focus on sports events in the city and cooperate with sports venues to improve the tourist flow in hotels using advertising and pricing. Moreover, the Sokos Hotels Group should follow the news of recent events related to the Corona virus affecting the whole tourism business in general. The result of the thesis is a vertical cooperation with Gazprom Arena, Sports Complex Yubileiny, Petrovsky Stadium and Sibur Arena to attract more guests.

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	5
1.1	Background of the Study.....	5
1.2	Research Question and Challenges.....	6
2	THE TOURIST MARKET OF ST. PETERSBURG.....	7
2.1	The State of the Tourism Market of St. Petersburg.....	7
2.2	eVisa in St. Petersburg	9
3	SOKOS HOTELS OF ST. PETERSBURG	11
3.1	Basic Hotel Information	11
3.2	Hotel Features.....	12
3.3	Hotel Meeting and Events Organization	21
4	THE MICE OF ST. PETERSBURG	23
4.1	The Impact of City Events on the Hotel.....	23
4.2	City’s MICE Categories.....	25
5	RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND ANALYSIS	29
5.1	Research Problem	29
5.2	Research Method	30
5.3	Qualitative research method of the Sokos Hotels Group St. Petersburg and MICE 31	
5.3.1	Analysis of PEST Factors Influencing the Hotel Business	31
5.3.2	Analysis of Hotels Marketing Environment.....	34
5.3.3	Analysis of the Marketing Activities of Hotels	36
5.3.4	City’s MICE During the One Year.....	37
5.3.5	Marketing Cooperation with Sport Venues	39
5.4	Data Collection	41
5.5	Limitation	43
6	Recommendation to Sokos Hotels in St. Petersburg.....	45
7	Conclusion	48
8	References.....	50
9	APPENDICES.....	1

9.1	Appendix 1	1
9.2	Appendix 2	1
9.3	Appendix 3	3

List of Symbols

MICE – meetings (M), incentives (I), conferences (C), and events (E).

eVisa - Electronic Visa.

FIFA - Federation International de Football Association.

PEST - political environment (P), economy (E), social environment (S), and the level of technology development (T).

SWOT – strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T).

USP - Unique Selling Proposition.

C2C - Consumer-to-consumer.

SMM - Social media marketing.

EURO-2020 - European Football Championship 2020

UEFA - Union of European Football Associations.

FIVB - International Volleyball Federation.

IIHF - International Ice Hockey Federation.

SPIEF - St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

UBV - Uniqueness of Brand Value.

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the research background, research questions and problems, as well as research methodology for further understanding of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the Study

According to the Russian e-journal TASS, St. Petersburg has a great potential for the development of business tourism. There are almost 200 congress and exhibition venues in the city, including 10 large complexes. According to forecasts, in 2020 the number of participants in status events will increase by another 10%. (Рост туристического потока в Петербурге в 2019 году ожидается на уровне 10%/The growth of tourist flow in St. Petersburg in 2019 is expected to reach 10%, 2019)

Over the past three to four years, St. Petersburg has been modernized and continued to develop. The city has been rewarded by The World Travel Awards as one of the leading cultural places and the best cruise destination in 2018. Moreover, St. Petersburg has been nominated the best European cultural destination in 2015-2019. (Статистика рынка туризма Администрации Санкт-Петербурга/Statistics of the tourism market of the Administration of St. Petersburg, 2020)

Each year, the Unified Calendar of Events of St. Petersburg is updated and created by the Committee on Tourism Development. All the main events of the year affecting the status and image of the city are presented in the Calendar. City activities affect the workload of hotels, which are organized regardless of the time of year. Hotels should prepare in advance for the future of meetings, incentives, conferences, and events (MICE) in order to be competitive in the business. (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020)

1.2 Research Question and Challenges

The main goal of the entire study is determining the impact of urban events on the Sokos Hotels group in St. Petersburg and analyze past and future events and their effects on hotel occupancy during these events.

In this regard, the entire study is based around the main question:

- What events are the most attractive for tourists and visitors of Sokos Hotels Group St. Petersburg?

However, in the process of writing the work, issues such as:

- What is the marketing environment of Sokos Hotels Group in St. Petersburg?
- What marketing tools and ways might be used to promote Sokos Hotels in city?

The research challenge is that there is a lack of general information about future MICE. The study will occur mainly by collecting secondary information from authoritative sources and official websites of city events. Another task is to obtain relevant and reliable information by exploring the Internet and book resources.

2 THE TOURIST MARKET OF ST. PETERSBURG

According to the rating published by the TurStat analytical agency, St. Petersburg is considered the second most visited (9.1 million tourists, 7% more than in 2018) and the most popular city in the country. In the first place is the capital of Russia - Moscow (25 million tourists, 6% more than in 2018). (TurStat, 2019)

2.1 The State of the Tourism Market of St. Petersburg

St. Petersburg was founded on May 16, 1703 by Peter the Great. The city bears the title Hero City, the Northern and Cultural Capital of Russia. St. Petersburg is one of the most popular destinations among Russian and foreign tourists.

Every year the tourist flow increases. After the 2018 Federation International de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup, the number of visitors to the city increased by 26.8%: more than 4.9 million foreigners and 5.5 million Russian tourists. According to statistics in the Russian e-journal Saint Petersburg Vedomosti, from the city committee for tourism development in 2018, there were 8.2 million visitors to the city, this increase in people is explained by the large flow of football fans. (Figure 1) (Saint Petersburg Vedomosti, 2020)

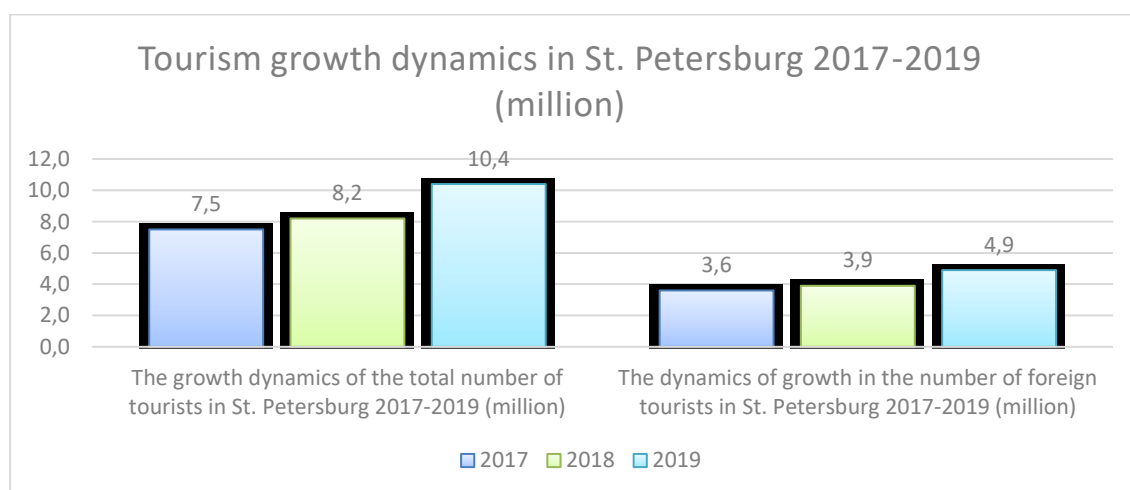


Figure 1. Tourism growth dynamics in St. Petersburg 2017-2019 (million)

According to the official statistics on the development of the tourist market from the administration of St. Petersburg, the Figure 1 was compiled by the author of the dynamics of the tourist flow for three years from 2017 to 2019. The graph shows a noticeable increase in tourist growth. Moreover, the number of foreign tourists rose after the World Cup 2018. This trend is explained by the fact that after the championship tours to Russia became more popular. Furthermore, some tourists chose to visit St. Petersburg a year after the world sporting event. Tourists do not come exclusively to world sporting events. However, they attend cultural events, exhibitions, conferences, city festivals, various forums, vacations and conventions. The city hosts a considerable quantity of important political meetings of heads of state. (Статистика рынка туризма Администрации Санкт-Петербурга/Statistics of the tourism market of the Administration of St. Petersburg, 2020)

Hotel business in the city is rapidly increasing the tourist flow. There are about 706 hotels of 3-5 stars in St. Petersburg. Five hotels are planned to open in 2020. The competition in the hotel business is high and depends on the seasonal flow of tourists. (Figure 2) (Becar, 2018)

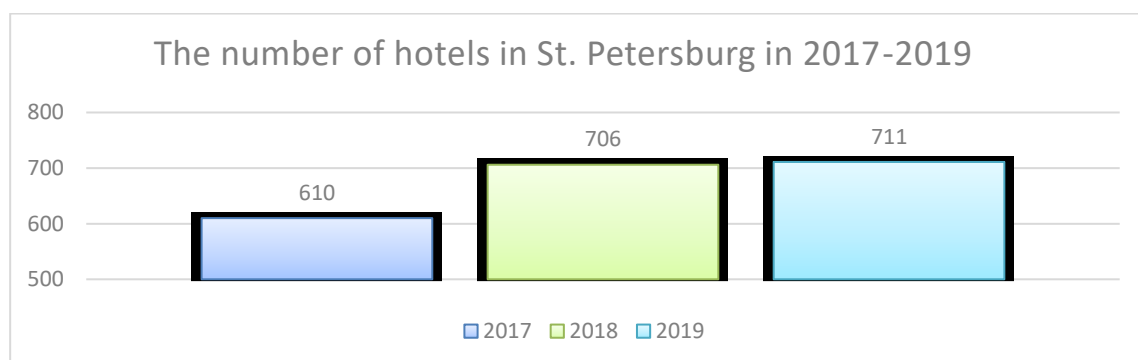


Figure 2. The number of hotels in St. Petersburg in 2017-2019

Due to the increase in tourist flow in the tourism market in the city, more hotels and other means of accommodation have become necessary. According to statistics, the demand for hotel services in the city increased by 30% in 2017 and by 34% in 2018. (TurStat, 2019) According to the official statistics on the development of the tourism market from the administration of St. Petersburg, there are Figure 2 and Figure 3 compiled by the author of the dynamics of growth in the number of hotels 3-5 stars and the number of rooms in the city for three years from 2017 to 2019. The hotel business in St. Petersburg is growing up. Therefore, the competition among of the city hotels is high and requires new ways to promote to survive the struggle for a place in the market.

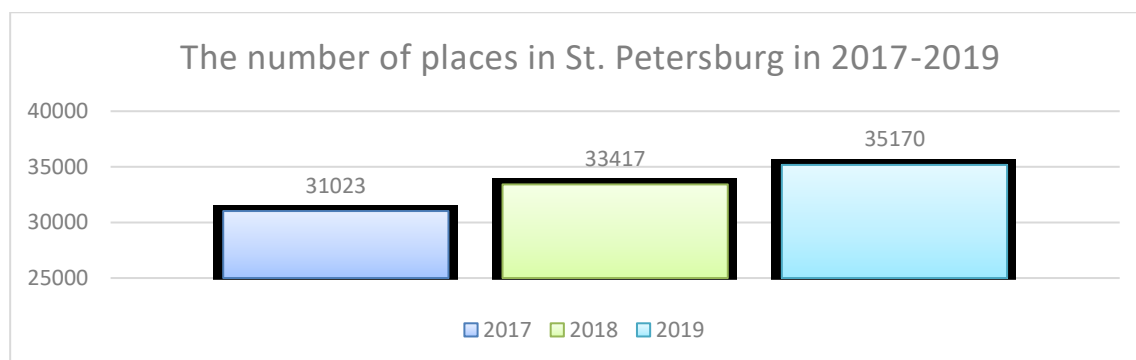


Figure 3. The number of places in St. Petersburg in 2017-2019

According to Rosstat, statistics on hotel occupancy for 2018 were presented. Three-star hotels were 76% full. Four-star hotels were 78% loaded. Five-star hotels were 75% full. Moreover, other hotel categories were loaded at 76-82%. All hotels on average were loaded at 77%, this indicates that the total number of rooms is 25 731 rooms. (Figure 3) (Статистика рынка туризма Администрации Санкт-Петербурга/Statistics of the tourism market of the Administration of St. Petersburg, 2020)

2.2 eVisa in St. Petersburg

According to the Russian e-journal TASS, since 2019, 14 new air destinations from Russia have appeared. Electronic visa (eVisa) has been introduced for foreign tourists and more than 112 thousand people have received them in 4 months in October 2019. (Рост туристического потока в Петербурге в 2019 году ожидается на уровне 10%/The growth of tourist flow in St. Petersburg in 2019 is expected to reach 10%, 2019) The average tourist stops in St. Petersburg for 3-5 days. This is one of the reasons for creating an eVisa for foreign citizens. In addition, cruise tourism has become popular in the city. Thousands of cruise liners come to St. Petersburg every year. Since 2018, the tourist flow on cruises has increased by 29% (970 thousand people). (Статистика рынка туризма Администрации Санкт-Петербурга/Statistics of the tourism market of the Administration of St. Petersburg, 2020) The eVisa allows citizens of Finland to enter St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Region for 8 days and is valid for a month from the moment it is received for tourism, business or humanitarian purposes. Foreign tourists are able to receive eVisa at the Pulkovo airport (St. Petersburg), in Ivangorod, Brusnichnoe, Svetogorsk, Torfyanovka, and in the

ports of Vysotsk, Marine Station, Passenger Port of St. Petersburg. (Russian visa for Finnish citizens, 2020)

In order to receive eVisa, a Finnish citizen must have a Finnish passport valid for at least 6 months and have at least one blank page: valid debit or credit card, passport size digital color photo, and current email address for eVisa approval. Citizens of Finland have the opportunity to apply for electronic visas to Russia online from anywhere in the world. Foreigner tourists have to fill out the eVisa application in all its parts as accurately as possible, download copies of the required documents, and pay the registration fee by credit or debit card. The term for consideration of the application is considered 2-4 business days. However, this type of visa is valid to cross the border by car, by bus, by plane or by ferry. At the moment, crossing the Russian border by train is not available. (Russian visa for Finnish citizens, 2020)

3 SOKOS HOTELS OF ST. PETERSBURG

Sokos Hotels Group is one of the most popular and famous group of hotels in Finland. In almost every city in Finland tourists might find an accommodation of Sokos Hotels Group. In total, there are 50 hotels in the country. Furthermore, two Sokos Hotels are located in Tallinn, Estonia and three in St. Petersburg. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020)

The main difference between Sokos hotels is that the hotels are divided into three completely different types: Original, Break and Solo. All guests are unique and have their own personality. Therefore, such a classification was made in order for the guests to choose accommodation according to their requirements. Each group is distinguished by its individuality:

Original Hotel represents Finnish hospitality. The guests always feel at home. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020)

Hotel Break excels in its energy and joy. The guests are be able to escape from everyday routine and regain their strength for future achievements. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020)

Hotel Solo presents a unique opportunity in everything. Each room has its own story and design. The guests might choose a room based on their mood, character and feelings. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020)

3.1 Basic Hotel Information

The first Sokos Hotel was opened in St. Petersburg in 2007. In St. Petersburg, there are one **Original Sokos Hotel** and two **Solo Sokos Hotels**.

Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden is located in the historical part of the city, next to the Technological Institute metro station. Hotel guests are able to quickly reach the city center, the airport, railway stations and the ExpoForum, where a large number of exhibitions and important meetings are organized. (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden, 2020)

Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge is located in the central part of the historic city, on Vasileostrovsky Island. Guests of the city are able to reach the metro and the most famous places of St. Petersburg at walking distance, go to a hockey match at the Yubileiny Sports Palace and enjoy draw-bridges during white nights. The hotel is distinguished by the unique format of a city resort, which combines elements of an old building and the allusion of Art Nouveau architecture in Scandinavian style. Hotel guests do not forget to maintain a healthy lifestyle while staying at the hotels and could enjoy the spa area, and fitness center in the Palace Bridge Wellness Club, and on the third floor enjoy a game of golf in the first city of GORKI Golf indoor area Academy. (Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge, 2020)

Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilevskiy is located on Vasileostrovsky Island, in the center of the historical part of the city, where the world-famous Hermitage and the longest avenue of the city - Nevsky Prospect - and two metro stations are within walking distance. Hotel guests can discover the national dishes of the northern peoples and spend an evening in the 8th Line pub watching sports events in the Resin restaurant. (Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilevskiy, 2020)

3.2 Hotel Features

There are individual requirements for the hotel for each tourist and guest of the city. However, there are general characteristics of the hotel that reveal the relevant requirements and desires of the guests: (Iosefovich, 2013)

1. Location

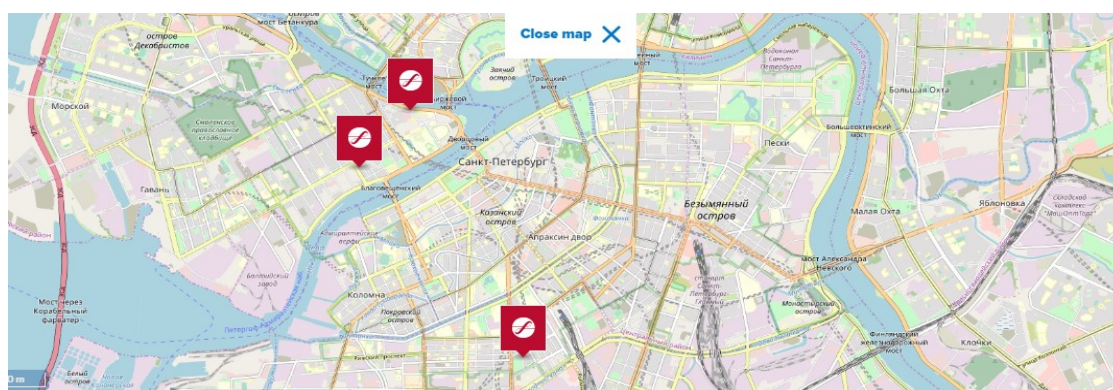


Figure 4. Google map

According to Figure 4, three hotels have a convenient location in the city. Sokos Hotels are at walking distance from the metro and in the center of the historical part of the city. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020)

Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden is located near the Baltic metro station (direction Peterhof, Lomonosov and other historical and tourist destinations) and the Vitebsk Station (direction Pushkin, Tsanskoye Selo, Gatchino). A 5-minute walk is Tekhnologicheskyy Institut metro station, from which tourists could reach the Moscow railway station (direction Moscow) and the Finland railway station (direction Vyborg, Repino, Zelenogorsk and Helsinki, Finland). City guests are able to quickly reach Pulkovo Airport and ExpoForum. The hotel is located near the Mariinsky Palace, where the federation meetings and other important world political meetings of the heads of state are held. Moreover, there are the Mariinsky Palace (the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation), the Arbitration Court of the North-Western District, the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation and PJSC Gazprom Neft next to this hotel. Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden is surrounded by a great quantity of historical cultural monuments and museums. The hotel's address is Bataysky per. 3 A, 190013, St. Petersburg. (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden, 2020)

Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge is located near two metro stations: Sportivnaya and Vasiliostrovskaya. Hotel guests are able to quickly reach to the Yubileiny Ice Arena, where Dynamo St. Petersburg hockey club matches, ice shows, and concerts are held. Opposite the Ice Palace is the Petrovsky Sports Complex. Due to its close proximity to the Vasiliostrovskaya metro station, the hotel's patrons are able to reach the Gazprom Arena, where football matches are held, and the Gazprom headquarters and the tallest building in Europe - Lakhta Center. Furthermore, the hotel is located in the city center and next to the Spit of Vasilievsky Island, from where one of the best views of the city and the Neva River opens. The hotel's address is Vasileostrovsky island, Birzhevoy per. 2–4, 199004, St. Petersburg. (Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg, 2020)

Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky is located on Vasileostrovsky Island and within walking distance of Vasiliostrovskaya metro station, the LenExpo concentration center, Erarta Museum of Modern Art, near the Mariinsky Palace, and other historical places of the city are close by hotel. In addition, the Marine Station, where cruise ships come from Helsinki, Finland; from Tallinn, Estonia; from Stockholm, Sweden, is located a short way off, on the same island as the hotel. The hotel's

address is Vasileostrovsky island. 8 Liniya 11-13, 199178, St. Petersburg (Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg, 2020)

2. **Star rating.**

The most popular criterion among tourists and visitors is the quantity of stars that were assigned to the hotel. (Iosefavichus, 2013) **Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden** and **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky** have had the status of a 4-star hotel since 2015. **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky** has had the status of a 5-star hotel according to the classification of hotels and other accommodation facilities since 2016. (Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg, 2020; Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg, 2020)

3. **Group.**

Loyal customers prefer to stay at famous hotel groups on account of knowing that certain groups meet their expectations and satisfy their needs. In addition, the famous hotel groups have a certain status and image for their guests. (Iosefavichus, 2013) The Sokos Hotel Group belongs to Radisson Blu Hotels, which is world famous for its quality rooms, service and prestige. This is one of the reasons why future hotel guests choose Sokos Hotels in St. Petersburg, and in Tallinn and in the whole of Finland. Since this hotel group is more common in Finland, Finnish guests choose rather familiar hotels. (Sokos Hotellit/Radisson BLU, 2020)

4. **Price.**

Price criterion is very important when choosing a hotel. The tourists choose a hotel that the guest can afford based on their budget. (Iosefavichus, 2013) The price for a night for two guests in large selection of 4-5-stars hotels starts from €18 in St. Petersburg. (Trivago St. Petersburg, 2020)

- One night for two guests in the **Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden** costs €36 - €95 depending on the class of room.
- One night for two guests in the **Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Garden** costs €72 - €259 depending on the class of room.
- One night for two guests in the **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky** costs €39 - €104 depending on the class of room.

These prices satisfy the average tourist on the Russian market. However, if the prices of hotels are compared in the whole of the Sokos Hotels Group, in St. Petersburg the price for a room per night will be lower than in Finland and Estonia. (Hotels St. Petersburg, 2020)

5. Name.

The name of the hotel is an important part of hotel. Guests prefer to stay in hotels with recognizable and fashionable names. (Iosefavichus, 2013) St. Petersburg hotels **Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden**, **Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge** and **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky** have such distinctive features in which the customers will be welcome in hotels. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020)

6. Size.

The size of the hotel always matters. The staff is able to satisfy the needs of all guests, regardless of the number of rooms and guests booked, despite the size of the hotel. (Iosefavichus, 2013) **Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden** has 348 comfortable rooms that are decorated with natural materials. The hotel has 11 equipped conference rooms for important negotiations and meetings. Guests are able to visit the hotel restaurant Mr. Grön to enjoy gourmet dishes. Fans of football, hockey, or other sports might watch matches in Sports' Bar 84. (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden, 2020) **Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge** has 324 spacious rooms and a modern conference room that is feasible to accommodate up to 350 people. Guests of the city might visit and enjoy Spanish cuisine in the Sevilla restaurant or in the unique Dans le Noir restaurant, where guests have dinner in complete darkness. (Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge, 2020) **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky** has 255 non-smoking rooms, and a restaurant and lounge bar, where guests can relax and unwind at the end of a busy day. (Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky, 2020)

7. Bed size.

The size of the bed and its comfort are the most important points of a hotel room. (Iosefavichus, 2013) The guests will be always satisfied with the time spent at the hotel if they have a significant night's sleep and are rested and full of energy in the morning. Each room at Sokos Hotels Group has a comfortable bed with a great mattress and two pillows. The guests are able to choose the right pillow for themselves. There are two types of pillows of different sizes and fillings (on request - allergenic blankets and pillows). (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg,

Room details, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg, Room details, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg, Room details, 2020)

8. **Age.**

This criterion is individual for each tourist. Some would like to stay in hotels with history design. However, others prefer to stay in hotels with a modern design. (Iosefavichus, 2013) The first hotel from Sokos Group was opened in June 2007 - **Sokos Hotel Olympic Garden**. In 2020, the hotel will be 13 years old. The age of the hotel is average, and it is periodically updated. (Sokos Hotels St.Petersburg – 10 лет /Sokos Hotels St.Petersburg – 10 years old, 2017) **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievskiy** was opened in early 2009. The hotel is only half a year older than the first one. Since the hotels are timely reorganizing and redecorating in order to ensure that the hotel guests are satisfied and do not experience discomfort due to the age of the hotel. (Sokos Hotels Group of St. Petersburg, 2019) **Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge** was opened in St. Petersburg from this hotel group in March 2009. (Hotel Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge in St. Petersburg, 2019)

9. **Design.**

The design of the hotel and rooms is the heart of the hotel. On the hotel's website or on the tourist booking website, the future guests can enjoy vivid and high-quality photographs of the hotel and choose the perfect room for their taste. (Iosefavichus, 2013) The design of the **Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden** is distinguished by its wooden trim and coziness that sets it apart from the other two hotels in St. Petersburg. Guests are able to experience Finnish hospitality and quality from the first minutes of their arrival at the hotel. (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg, Room details, 2020) The design of the **Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge** combines the details of an old building with modern Scandinavian architecture. The spaciousness in each room allows the guests to do sports right in the room. Customers do not feel constrained in movements. (Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg, Room details, 2020) Design **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilevskiy** is decorated with elements of Russian style. This hotel is the first gallery hotel in the city. Various exhibitions are constantly updated with paintings, sculptures, drawings, photographs, which hotel guests can visit and join in art during their business or tourist trip in St. Petersburg. (Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg, Room details, 2020)

10. **Services.**

The concierges at the hotels will always come to the aid of the guest if they require something. Their duties include showing the room to the guest, providing all the necessary information, accepting and executing all hotels' orders. (Iosefavichus, 2013) At Sokos Hotels Groups, the concierges are able to order the necessary tickets to the best theaters, museums or other events of the city, provide a transfer to the place of the event: order a taxi or a personal car, and always help with any information regarding the upcoming event in the city. (Concierge service, 2020)

11. Additional services.

Each guest is pleased to receive additional services and bonuses from the hotel. (Iosefavichus, 2013) Each room contains soft bathrobes and slippers, bath accessories (including an additional cosmetic set, shower cap, sets for brushing teeth and shaving), a tea station with a supply of tea, coffee and hot chocolate, a mini fridge (on request, a mini bar), two daily updated bottles of mineral water, ironing board, sewing kit, personal safe. An extra bed can be added if necessary. Each room has an individual air conditioning system. (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg, Room details, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg, Room details, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg, Room details, 2020)

Breakfast. For an additional fee, the guest can have breakfast in the restaurant at the hotel from 7.00 to 10.30. Breakfast costs €15 - €23. (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg. Breakfast, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Breakfast, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Breakfast, 2020)

Accommodation with pets. All Sokos hotels can accommodate guests' pets, and this must be reported at the time of booking. The cost of this service is €9, for co-owners of an S-Card - free of charge. (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg. Pets, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Pets, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Pets, 2020)

Disabled people. Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden, Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky and Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge offer rooms for people with disabilities. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020)

Parking. Parking is provided by reservation for guests of Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky. The cost is €14 per day. (Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Parking, 2020)

GORKI Golf Academy. Solo Sokos Palace Bridge Hotel is home to the first indoor Golf Academy in St. Petersburg, offering everything guests might need to play golf, or develop existing skills and keep fit during the winter season. VISION simulator rental starts from €14. (Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Gorki Golf Academy, 2020)

Conference hall. Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden offers a whole floor of modern conference rooms with the latest equipment, where everything is thought out to the smallest detail for productive work in an atmosphere of status and comfort. (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg. Meetings and events, 2020) **Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge** has 9 conference rooms that can be used for various events for up to 10 to 400 people. (Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Meetings and events, 2020) **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky** offers 5 Petersburg-friendly conference rooms for up to 55 people. (Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Meetings and events, 2020) The standard equipment of all conference rooms includes a video projector and screen, sound system, flipchart, pens, notebooks, free wi-fi. Hotel guests can rent additional equipment at the following price: laptop €50, clicker €12, flipchart €21. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020)

12. Availability Wi-fi

A must for the hotel in the 21st century is the availability of Wi-Fi. Sokos Hotels offers free Wi-Fi throughout the property. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020)

13. Spa, gym, and pool

There is always an advantage for a hotel to have a pool, spa or sauna in the building, especially for a city hotel. At each Sokos Hotels Group, guests are able to enjoy a sauna and other spa treatments. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020)

Sauna. Hotel guests have free access to the sauna at **Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden** and at **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilevskiy**. (Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Hotel guest sauna, 2020; Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg. Hotel guest sauna, 2020)

Wellness Club. Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge has a Spa area with the largest pool in the city center and a complex of saunas, a fitness center and DAY SPA free of charge for the hotel guests. **Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden** and **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilevskiy** have a 50% discount for

visiting the Spa. Opening hours: Wellness Club Monday-Sunday from 7:00 to 23:00. (Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Wellness club, 2020)

Gym. Hotel guests have free access to the gym at **Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden** and at **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilevskiy**. (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg. Gym, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Gym, 2020)

THANN Day Spa. The Spa at **Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge** offers a variety of services: massages (traditional and aromatic), wellness treatments, masks and scrubs, as well as manicures and pedicures. A single visit to a guest will cost from €20. (Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Treatments and wellness, 2020)

14. Reviews

Guest reviews affect the rating and the image of the hotel. When choosing a hotel, future guests usually explore popular booking sites, for example TripAdvisor. This web site is a reputable travel site where customers are able to find the suitable hotel or other travel destination. (Trivago St. Petersburg, 2020)



Figure 5. Rating of Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden

Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden on TripAdvisor is rated 4 out of 5 (Figure 5). (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden. Rating, 2020)



Figure 6. Rating of Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge

Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge on TripAdvisor is rated 4.5 out of 5 (Figure 6). (Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge. Rating, 2020)



Figure 7. Rating of Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilevskiy

Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilevskiy on TripAdvisor is rated 4.5 out of 5 (Figure 7). (Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilevskiy. Rating, 2020)

15. Websites and social networks.

Social networks and the hotel's web page are important and necessary to attract new guests. The social media marketing (SMM) department has to constantly update Internet resources. (Iosefavichus, 2013)

Sokos Hotels Group has several online platforms where guests are able to follow the news, plans, events and updates of the hotel: Pinterest, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Furthermore, there is a mobile application in which it is possible to book online, check bonuses by S-Card, check the arrival and departure dates and find the suitable hotel in Sokos Group. The interface is clear and easy to use. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020) The Sokos hotels have colorful,

versatile website which has all the necessary information: contact information with hotel representatives, detailed descriptions of each hotel, Special offers, Meeting & events, Corporate travel, Groups, Customer service and Loyalty cards. (Hotels St. Petersburg, 2020)

3.3 Hotel Meeting and Events Organization

Hotel meeting and events organization is an important part of the hotel. Moreover, the competition environment in St. Petersburg is great, therefore the Sokos Hotels Group should monitor the main competitors in the hotel business market. St. Petersburg is a large and second most important city in Russia. A large number of events of various sizes are organized in the northern capital. Dates of various events, world-class meetings and sporting events strongly affect the workload of the city and hotels. Hotels are always ready to provide conference rooms with all the necessary tools and additional services for business meetings and corporate events. (Hotels St. Petersburg, 2020)

Sokos Hotels provides opportunities for truly creative conferences in modern rooms and allows guests to harmoniously combine all aspects of an ideal event. There is an opportunity to transform the halls to create exhibition spaces, modernize rooms or organize a buffet table. Moreover, it is possible to order a designer menu of coffee breaks and buffets, as well as package offers from hotel restaurants or arrange by booking a room directly in restaurants and bars. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020) In the event that the company organizes regular trips to St. Petersburg and often stops at the Sokos Hotel Group, there is the possibility of concluding an annual reservation contract. With the help of such an agreement, rooms can be booked using the company code via the Internet or by telephone. Furthermore, you can receive discounts on the frequency of stay at the hotel. (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg. Meetings and events, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Meetings and events, 2020) There are two loyal cards: S-Card and S-Business. S-Card is a loyalty card for business trips. Loyal customers use it in all hotels and restaurants of the S-group. The cost - 25 EUR per year - pays off in a few nights at hotels. (S-card, 2020) S-Business card is a payment card, with the help of which there is always a discount of 3-5% of the room price. (S-Business Card – purchasing power for companies, 2020)

In addition, the Hotel Group often provides discounts on conference room and private event reservations. For example, in January after the New Year holidays it was possible to obtain a 30% discount when ordering 2 coffee breaks or 1 lunch or dinner for a group of 10 people for renting conference rooms. Moreover, if the total cost of the event was more than 500,000 rubles (7,150 euros), the renting a conference room would be free. (Special offer for events in Sokos Hotels St. Petersburg, 2020)

4 THE MICE OF ST. PETERSBURG

MICE refer to tourism market which includes business and leisure travel. Companies implicated in the MICE market work of corporate meetings and convention department of hotels, conference centers or cruise ships, tour operators and transfer companies, professional trade organizations, tourism boards, tourism trade associations, and travel-selling professionals. MICE is focused on organizing of events. Moreover, this market growing and dynamic, especially in in the large cities. (Figueroa, 2019)

St. Petersburg is considered the second largest city in Russia and it is possible to find many perspectives in any business field. St. Petersburg is a city with business tourism. The city hosts a large number of economic and political forums. The St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) is considered one of the most ambitious ones and has a positive effect in the field of business tourism. It has been held annually since 1997 in early June. Tourist flow is reduced by 15% in the off-season periods. Due to business tourism the profit is compensated and restores the balance. (TASS, 2018)

4.1 The Impact of City Events on the Hotel

There are always a large number of effects of events, which is a positive and negative impact on hotels. The positive aspect is increased profits, popularization of the hotel, a greater influx of tourists and hotel occupancy. The negative impact is the financial loss due to the underestimation of the tourist flow during a certain event. The deficiency of preparedness for the influx of tourists might be associated with a lack of staff and a lack of readiness to acquire staff. (How to advertise your hotel around a city event, 2017)

The hotel should be ready for the upcoming high-profile events. It is necessary to browse sites and posters about upcoming holidays, festivals, forums, political meetings, sports matches and traditional city events in advance (e.g., Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg for 2020 (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020), KudaGo (KudaGo St. Petersburg, 2020), Peterburg2 (Peterburg2, 2020)) St. Petersburg is the second most important city in Russia. All kinds of events are organized there. Information

about high-profile events of the city on the sites is updated annually. Therefore, the influx of tourists is predicted throughout the year and focused on the seasonal influx of tourists. Furthermore, it is necessary to focus on official weekends and vacations of the country. (Holidays in Russia 2020, 2020)

Table 2. Season periods of traditional and regular holidays in Russia

Winter	Spring	Summer	Autumn
January 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 - New Year holidays.	March 8 - International Women's Day.	June 12 - Day of Russia.	September 1 - Knowledge Day.
January 7 - Nativity of Christ.	May 1 - Holiday of Spring and Labor.	June (last decade) - Scarlet Sails.	November 4 - Day of National Unity.
February 23 - Defender of the Fatherland Day.	May 9 - Victory Day.	July - Navy Day.	
February (last week) – Maslenitsa.	May 27 - City Day - Foundation Day Saint Petersburg.		

To analyze the loading of hotels during certain events, season periods for researching traditional and regular holidays were chosen in Table 2. There are holidays which are more relevant due to having official free workdays. (Holidays in Russia 2020, 2020)



Figure 8. Weekends in Russia 2020

Official weekends during the year are important for predicting tourist flows throughout the year. In Russia, there is a special rule in the distribution of holidays. For example, if an official holiday is a day off (Saturday or Sunday), then an additional day off is added during the week. Every year the weekend calendar changes, therefore Sokos Hotels should check the official holidays every year. According to Figure 8 there are extra weekends in January due to New Year holidays, February 24, March 9, three additional weekends in May, June 12 and November 4. The largest flow of tourists falls on May and New Year holidays. (Calendar of Russian holidays, 2020)

4.2 City's MICE Categories

According to tradition the city hosts all kinds of events all year round. In most cases, they are regular and pass in the same periods. St. Petersburg's MICE can be divided into 6 categories depending on the season of the year: (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020)

1. Festivals and holidays of St. Petersburg – 157.
2. Sports St. Petersburg – 35.

3. Business St. Petersburg – 78.
4. Exhibitions – 81.
5. St. Petersburg for children – 21.
6. City events – 134.

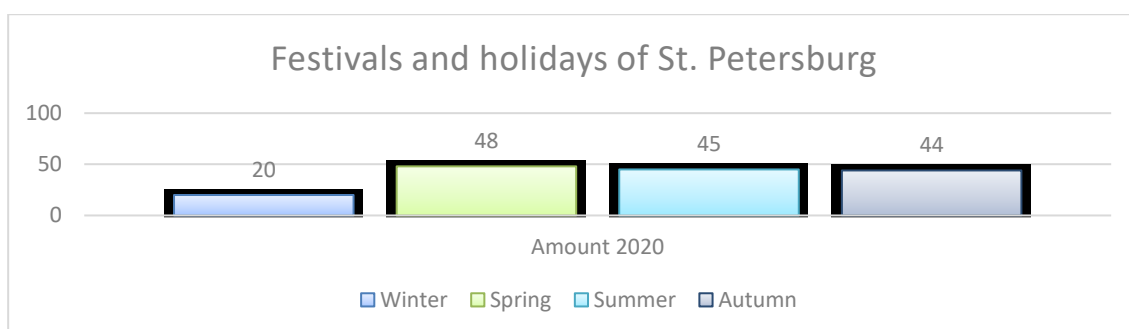


Figure 9. Festivals and holidays of St. Petersburg

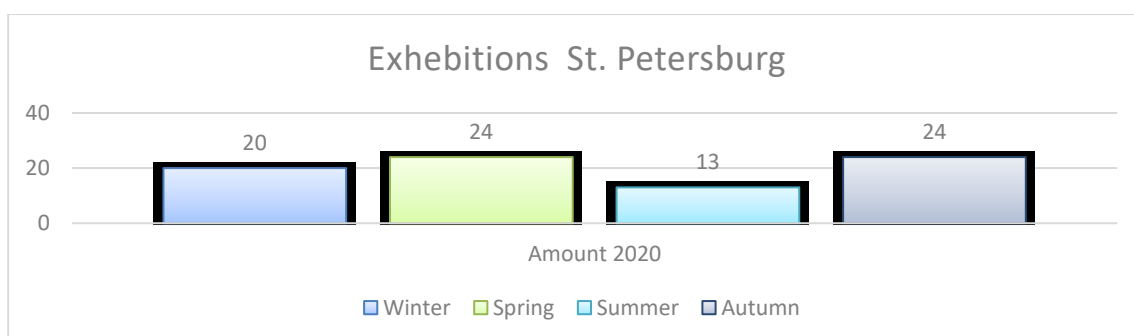


Figure 10. Exhibitions St. Petersburg

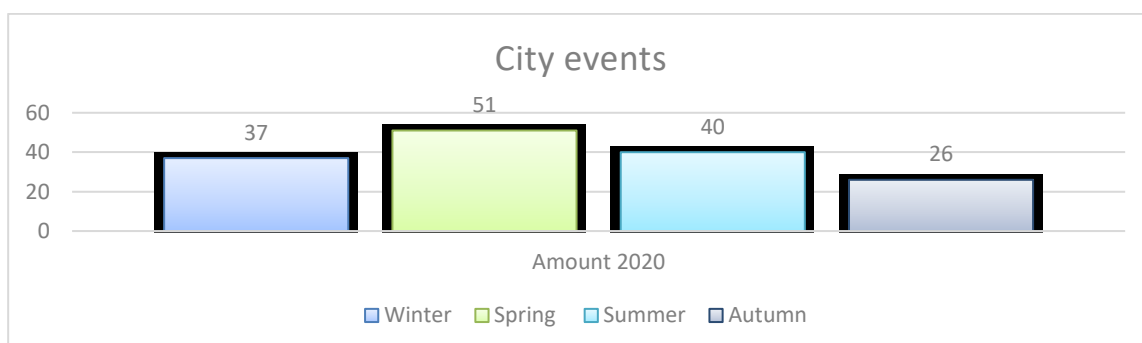


Figure 11. City events

According to figures 9, 10 and 11 created by the author, there are the most popular festivals and urban events during a year. In this case, during the season, an influx of tourists and city guests is possible, since such events are more relevant for city guests. In the case of city events, such events have a narrower focus on residents of St. Petersburg. (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020)

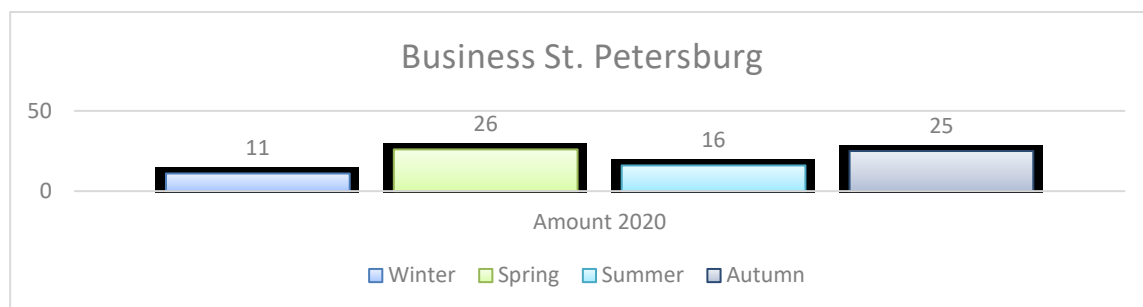


Figure 12. Business St. Petersburg

According to Figure 12 the next most important events are business meetings and forums. At such events, Sokos Hotels should monitor their period in the city. During international meetings, conferences and forums, tourists and members of the congress come to the city from all over the country and around the world. These events have a strong influence not only on the city, yet on the country as a whole. Moreover, the city often hosts meetings of the heads of state of near and far abroad countries. (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020)

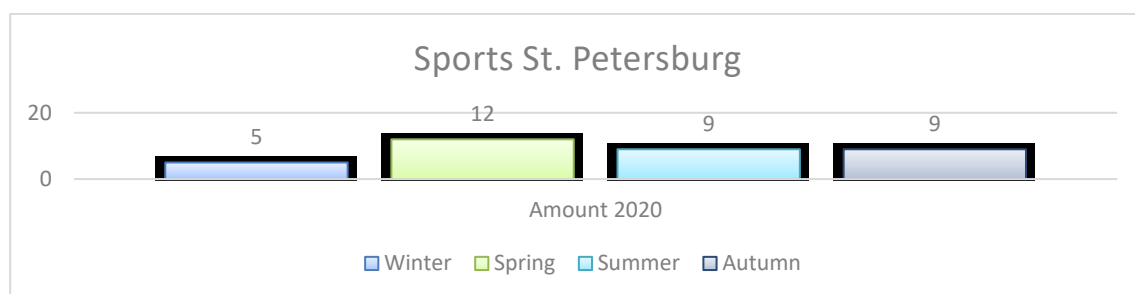


Figure 13. Sports St. Petersburg

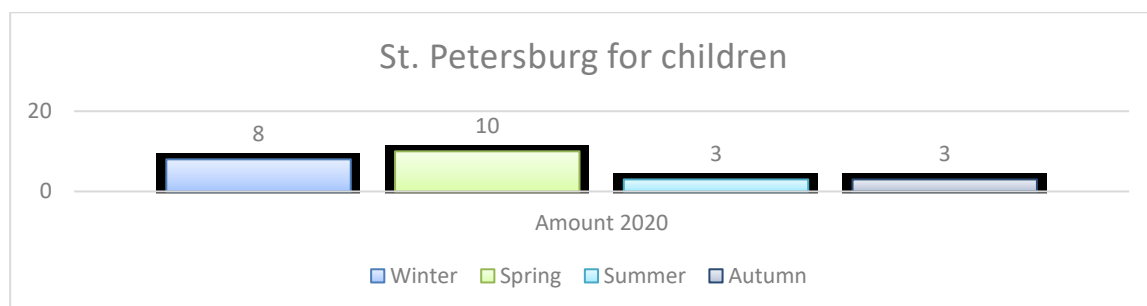


Figure 14. St. Petersburg for children

According to Figures 13 and 14, the least events per year take place in the field of sports and activities for children. In the case of sports, attention should be paid only to mass and worldwide matches, such as the World Championship or European Championship. During such opposing events, there are not only an influx of tourists, fans, yet influential members of the association. The past World Cup 2018 increased the influx of tourists into the city and the whole country. (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020)

Children's holidays and events are relevant during school holidays: winter - New Year holidays, week in spring - last week of March, week in autumn - last week of October and summer holidays - June, July and August. In these periods of the year, parents with their children are able to arrange weekends and come from other cities to St. Petersburg for these events. (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020)

According to number of MICE and their importance, Sokos Hotels Group should create a schedule for the year when certain meetings, forums, events and sports will be held, because they should be more emphasized due to the greater influx of tourists. (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020)

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the author uses the research method and analyses to identify marketing Sokos Hotels Group state. Moreover, the results are identified the best possible ways to cooperate with MICE which is the most attractive for city tourists.

5.1 Research Problem

In St. Petersburg there are a large number of different types and areas of events. Hotels are oriented not only to seasonal customers; the same bias goes to large-scale events of the city. It is necessary to identify certain popular types of MICE in order to determine appealing city events of tourists. Sokos Hotels Group does not have enough information about the upcoming events of the city and the resources to analyze MICE. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020) The objectives of the thesis are to study future events of the city and identify the most significant areas of the city for hotels. The reliability of the information is the important part of the research problem. (Lin, 2014)

The main venues for future important international exhibitions, forums and meetings are ExpoForum and LenExpo. The closest Sokos Hotels to the ExpoForum is the **Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden**. **Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge** and **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilevskiy** are on the same island and are located 20 minutes by car from the complex. Sokos Hotels Group cooperates with exhibition centers. Therefore, it directly receives information on upcoming city concentrations of all the scale of events. (ExpoForum Hotel Accommodation in St.Petersburg, 2020)

In addition, in between business meetings and forums, there are many sporting events and championships, the venues and stadiums of which are located close to the Sokos Hotels Group. The study concentrates on an analysis of the status of Sokos Hotels in the hotel market and the identification of the most popular sports events in the city for 2020-2024.

5.2 Research Method

Before talking about the research method that is used for this research work, the term “research” is necessary to be defined, as well as the methodology that is selected for analysis by Sokos Hotels Group. The term “research” has many variations of definitions from a large number of authors, however, the meaning in all definitions is seen alone and is associated with the identification of truth and the discovery of a new one. Research is the study of the subject and the problem and the task of which is to find new information and new views on the problem. (Dwyer, Gill, & Seetaram, 2012) There are two categories of research methods: qualitative and quantitative research methods. These two methods differ in that the quantitative method is used to analyze qualitative information through surveys and observations, quantitative methods are used as the basis for the collection and analysis of numerical data. (Neuman, 2009)

There are characteristics formulated by different scientists about the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods: (Creswell, 2009)

1. The qualitative method is used with natural conditions with the participation of a group of people and their behaviors during certain events.
2. Unlike quantitative analyzes, qualitative methods are based on assumptions, yet theories and hypotheses have not been established.
3. The author of the study is the only one in the work who collects data for the study.
4. The results of the study are descriptive in nature without the use of numbers.
5. The main task of the qualitative method is to understand the truth by means of experience, therefore it is possible to have several solutions.
6. In the process of analyzing with a qualitative method, the focus is on the process, product and result, because the task is to determine the truth of the process.
7. There is no generalization of details in the process of analyzing the topic, attention is paid to details.

8. The qualitative method interacts with human data sources; the reason is that the subject of analysis is a real subject.

9. During the analysis, sensitive and intuitive knowledge is used.

10. The main aspect of the study are truthfulness and objectivity.

The role of the researcher in the qualitative methodology is the primary tool that collects data for analysis. The author's task is to identify prejudices, values and assumptions at the first stage of the study. Moreover, the contribution to the work will be positive and useful, and not harmful. (Creswell, 2009)

5.3 Qualitative research method of the Sokos Hotels Group St. Petersburg and MICE

Qualitative research is not based on hypothesis. Moreover, authors should not make hasty conclusions before starting the study. The research approaches phenomena as a diverse and holistic complex, the researcher and the source of information are always in interaction between one another. The results always represent only those cases that are investigated and considered as subjective studies. (Crossman, 2020)

A qualitative research method was chosen to analyze this thesis. The reason for this choice was the fact that during the research there was not any opportunity to collect numerical data from the hotel due to the inability of Sokos Hotels Group to provide data outside the company. The study was based on the collection of data from open sources.

5.3.1 Analysis of PEST Factors Influencing the Hotel Business

The competitive situation in the industry is shaped by influence distant environmental factors, such as the socio-economic and political situation in the country and region. An analysis of the influence of environmental factors (PEST analysis) allows us to assess the influence of the political environment (P), economy (E), social environment (S) and the level of technology development (T), which is present in Table 1. PEST analysis – one of the simplest and most convenient methods

for analyzing the external environment of the enterprise; used to assess the key market trends of the industry, with which the threats and opportunities of the enterprise in the market are able to identify. (Strategic Planning Tools, 2013)

The political factors no doubt define the framework entrepreneurial activity. They create legislative acts, assign the role of state bodies, institutions and public institutions in the economic life of society, determine the conditions for the development of competition. Environmental degradation forces new laws to be introduced or toughened old ones. Business owners need to monitor everything that happens in the legislation for more proper product planning and effective development of marketing programs. (Kasahara, 2015)

The economic environment depends on the ratio of demand and offers, incomes and prices of goods, from the current situation. With its successful development, it is possible to anticipate demand, determine its structure and suggest trends. At adverse economic development, inflation, deficit, it is impossible to predict consumer behavior. Economic downturns, rising unemployment, affect consumer ability, people have become more careful when shopping. Market players should consider the characteristics of income distribution, consider geography in the structure of income distribution. It is important for them to focus on those areas where promising opportunities are opening up. (Kasahara, 2015)

The cultural environment is a system of life values, which shape human behavior, people's attitudes towards each other, public institutions, society, and the environment. Accepted traditions, customs, and habits of people affect the characteristics of consumption within a particular territory. A careful attitude to nature aroused the desire in people to see all the beauty of the world, to travel. The tourism business reacted to this with offers of goods for tourists: offers of travel agencies to visit wild places where civilization did not reach became popular. (Strategic Planning Tools, 2013)

Moreover, technological factors important in the era of innovative progress. Technology, improvement of processes and the introduction of new ways of functioning systems can dramatically change the established state of the market. It is important to constantly monitor the dynamics of technological changes in order to keep up with current market trends. (Strategic Planning Tools, 2013)

Table 1. PEST analysis matrix of Sokos Hotels Group in St. Petersburg

Political forces	Economic forces	Social forces	Technological forces
Aggravation of political relations.	Unstable economic situation in the country.	Increasing mobility of the population.	Increasing the level of innovation in the industry.
Change in tax legislation.	Seasonality in the fluctuation of demand for hotel services.	Trends in the hospitality industry.	Development of the Internet and mobile networks.
Periods of international events (World Cup, Olympiad, forums, etc.).	Decrease in real incomes of the population.	The image of St. Petersburg as one of the best tourists' destinations.	The growth of technological capabilities of competitors of C2C platforms.
	Development of transport infrastructure.	High customer requirements for the level of service.	

According to Table 1 by the author, political and economic forces have the most negatively the functioning of hotels. The state indirectly controls the industry. However, these forces can directly affect the tourist demand for hotels and their services. For example, the government carefully monitors the provision of visas to tourists and controls the possibility of an alternative when choosing accommodation. The negative impact on the political sphere is exacerbated by these relations in the country and abroad and a change in tax legislation. Periods of international events have a positive impact on the functioning of the enterprise, increasing the interest of guests of visiting the tourist center and the city-organizer of major events. (Boroday , 2019)

Economic factors like seasonality of demand, the unstable economic situation in the country and the decline in real income. The increase in business volumes stopped at the end of 2017 due to the imposition of sanctions and retaliation by Russia and Europe. Reducing room rates, increasing special offers and finding new customers became mandatory hotel work in low season. A favorable influence of the economic environment is the development of transport infrastructure in the

city: the expansion of the geography of airline flights, the development of river, sea, rail, bus and road travel. (Polyakova , 2019)

Social factors affecting hotel development market, associated with the needs of people in new experiences, travels around the world, leisure and work. Increasing the mobility of the population and the image of the city as one of the best tourist destinations create a favorable environment for the functioning of the hotel industry and the development of domestic tourism in St. Petersburg. The proximity of venues for world sports championships attracts both lovers of outdoor activities and sports. Furthermore, people interested in cultural sites and the history of the city. (Polyakova , 2019)

Technological factors in the field of functioning hotel industry enterprises are characterized by continuous improvement of the production process, online booking platforms and information. Positive factors include increasing industry innovation and developing the Internet and mobile networks. The processes of check-in and check-out of guests at the hotel, the creation of reservations, informatization are simplified. Internet and mobile support for foreign citizens, assistance in organizing transfers, excursions. However, customer-to-customer (C2C) competitors, for example Airbnb, surpass hotels, primarily in the price category, are actively entering the market. Moreover, this platform uses extensive of the Internet and mobile devices, optimizing the search and selection according to the fundamental characteristics for customers. (Polyakova , 2019)

In general, the external environment has a positive impact and is quite favorable for the development of the hotel industry. Advanced PEST analysis of Sokos Hotels Group is written by the author and presented in Appendix 1.

5.3.2 Analysis of Hotels Marketing Environment

During the identifying the main threats and their level is used Michael Porter's five competitive forces model. Five structural units describe factors that create competitive advantages and long-term profit of a product or service. Moreover, this analysis supposes to identify the ways to maintain the profitability of a product or service and further competitiveness of the company in the market. (Porter, 2008)

- The threat from substitute services still exists, yet their share is small (medium level of threat from substitute services).
- The threats of intra-industry competition are high market saturation and growth. The product on the market is standardized for key properties yet differing in additional advantages. Fierce price competition in the market, there is no possibility of price increases (high level of intra-industry competition).
- The threats of new players entering the market by assessing entry barriers are economies of scale and increased competition in the market. 2-3 large players occupy about 50% of the market, high level of investment and costs for entering the industry (prosper for more than 1 year of work). There is an access to distribution channels is limited. Moreover, the state intervenes in the industry. Besides, existing players reduce the price at a low level due to any attempt to enter a cheap offer. The growth rate is high and growing (medium threat of exit but s players).
- Threats to the market power of buyers consist in the fact that sales are evenly distributed among all buyers. The company's service is partially unique. There are distinctive features that are important for customers. The customers switch only with a significant difference in price and dissatisfaction with the secondary characteristics of services (medium threat of customer withdrawal).
- The threats from suppliers are wide selection of suppliers, unlimited in volumes, low costs of switching to other suppliers (low influence of suppliers).

Summing up the five parameters, Michael Porter's method has identified five threats with medium and high influence levels. Firstly, the solution to the threat from substitute services is to expand the range of unique additional services. (Porter's Five Forces of Competitive Position Analysis, 2013) Secondly, the decision of the threat of intra-industry competition is constantly tracking the proposals of competitors, improve the guest services, and raising awareness of unique services and special offers. Thirdly, the solution of the threat from new players is consolidate Sokos Hotels Group's position in the industry, engage in attracting new customers, modernize the services provided, create loyalty programs. Fourthly, the decision of the threat of loss of current customers is sustaining and improving the uniqueness of services, proposing high service at an affordable price, attract new ones and strengthen communication with old customers

through promotions and special offers. Fifthly, the solution of the threat to supplier instability is conducting negotiations to have possible special conditions and lower prices with long-term co-operation.

5.3.3 Analysis of the Marketing Activities of Hotels

Sokos Hotels has an active position in the hotel business market. The presence of strengths allows hotels to conquer the pressure of the competitive environment and to realize the opportunities available in the industry. SWOT analysis reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, opportunities and threats to the external environment. (Fine, 2009)

The strengths of the selected hotels are attractive the location in the centre of St. Petersburg, the standards of service for international hotel chains, the availability of loyalty programs. For examples, S-card bonus cards allow owners privileges in Sokos hotels in St. Petersburg, cities of Finland and Estonia, discount on meals in hotel restaurants, special offers for accommodation. Opportunities for the fruitful functioning and growth of the enterprise are to increase the mobility of the population, the development of transport infrastructure and the introduction of modern technologies. (S-Business Card – purchasing power for companies, 2020)

The threats to the development of the hotel are changes in the legislation governing tourism, a decrease in real incomes and increasing competitive pressure from customer to customer (C2C) platforms. The weaknesses of the hotel are the limited target audience in terms of income, insufficient marketing policy in the field of SMM and obsolescence of enterprise assets. (Boroday , 2019)

Sokos Hotels Group should reinforce the marketing policy in social networks, it is necessary to develop a clear account management plan with the content of useful information for hotel guests, a notification of changes in the legislation relating to inbound tourism, a demonstration of the hotel's capabilities that are most attractive to tourists, informing about existing promotions and special offers. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to expand the target audience, which is limited in income due to the level of the hotel. For further manifestation of strengths, the enterprise should continue to adhere to a high level of service, which customers often note above all,

actively improve bonus programs, add new opportunities for owners. Detailed SWOT analysis of the hotels is written by the author and presented in Appendix 2.

5.3.4 City's MICE During the One Year.

There are three categories of events: festival and holidays, sport and Business meetings, which were identified by the author in chapter 4 and a chart was drawn up of the number of annual events for one year, shown in Figure 20 and in Table 3.

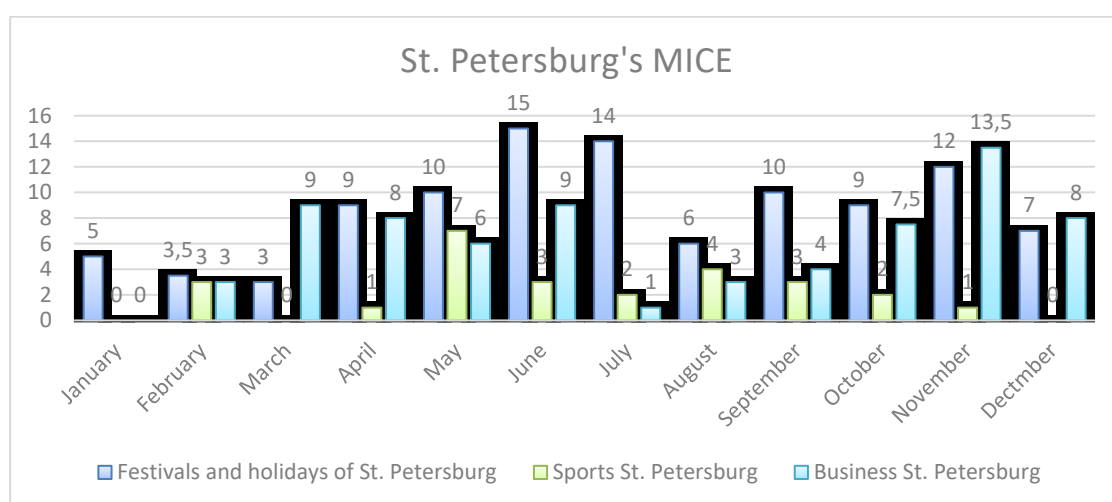


Figure 20. St. Petersburg 's MICE

According to Figure 20 Hotels Group should notice to periods which are illustrated in Table 3. This table shows in detail what types of annual events are important and popular for tourists. (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020)

Table 3. St. Petersburg 's MICE

MONTH	MICE
JANUARY	New Year holidays and Christmas holidays
FEBRUARY	Business forums, winter competitions and February 23

MARCH	Business forums and conferences of international scale and March 8
APRIL	International festivals and conferences
MAY	City sporting events, May 1 and 9 (almost 2 weeks off) and international forums
JUNE	Holidays / festivals - Scarlet Sails, business meetings - International Economic Forum (June 3-6) and sporting events - Europa Football Championship 2020 (July 13, 17, 22)
JULY	A large number of summer festivals - VK fest (July 18-19), Political meeting and UEFA 2020 (July 3)
AUGUST	International festivals of various kinds, sporting events and business forums
SEPTEMBER	Festivals and closures of seasonal events, business forums and sporting events
OCTOBER	Closing of seasonal festivals, the period of economic and business forums and conferences
NOVEMBER	Closing of seasonal fairs, the period of economic and business forums and conferences
DECEMBER	Closing of seasonal festivals and the beginning of New Year's fairs, the period of economic and business forums and conferences

Summing up, certain months in 2020 are highlighted: June and July due to UEFA 2020, which refers to an event of global scale. According to Table 3 and Figure 13 by author, there are MICE types which are related to annual events. Sokos Hotels Group should pay attention to three categories of events. If the hotel focuses on business events, then March-June and September-December of the months, which are distinguished by the number of significant events. If the hotel focuses on sporting events, then February and May-September of the months, which are distinguished by the number and seasonality of events. If the hotel focuses on festivals and holidays, then Sokos Hotels Group should highlight the summer period, the end of spring, the beginning of autumn and the middle of winter. (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020)

5.3.5 Marketing Cooperation with Sport Venues

Marketing cooperative is the idea of uniting from two people, companies that are willing to build long-term profitable business relationships. Moreover, cooperation is built on 4P marketing channels: at the level of product development, sales promotion, pricing mechanisms and the mechanism of placement (or distribution). During the cooperation, members of the business relationship combine and use all kinds of resources: physical, capital and labor. In the case of overcoming resource constraints, cooperation participants share costs to conquer external pressures and problems. (Dieke & Karamustafa, 2000)

There are two types of cooperation horizontal (distribution of marketing activities occurs at the same stages) and vertical (systemic approach, where the distribution of marketing activities occurs at different stages). In the case of Sokos Hotels Group in St. Petersburg and sports grounds (Gazprom Arena, Sports Complex Yubileiny, Petrovsky Stadium and Sibur Arena), vertical cooperation is suitable to this collaboration because these companies belong to different sectors of tourism and began to operate in different periods. The sport venues in St. Petersburg were founded in 1925 Petrovsky Stadium; in 1967, the Sports Complex Yubileiny; in 2013 Sibur Arena; in 2017 Gazprom Arena. Sokos Hotels Group was open in 2007. There are some ways and marketing tools to create and promote collaboration between Sokos Hotels Group and Sport Venues. (Dieke & Karamustafa, 2000)

First of all, cooperative pricing arrangements should be developed through the joint sale of hotel match tickets. The hotel has a purchase service and tickets for events. Another option is to buy tickets for a sporting event and book a room at the nearest Sokos Hotels Group at the same time. Customers will be offered a transfer from the hotel to the sports arena. (About Sokos Hotels, 2020)

Secondly, cooperative advertising and sales promotion is an effective tool for increasing productivity. Sokos Hotels Group and Sports Venues are able to create joint advertising on banners, social networks, radio or television. For example, the Zenit Club has a radio station, when advertising future games in St. Petersburg it is possible to mention the Sokos Hotels Group to host the club's fans. (Radio Zenit, 2020)

Thirdly, cooperative development of souvenir production from sports clubs of the city and Sokos Hotels Group could be one option. The products must be developed in terms of quality, quantity and price. (SKA SPb, 2020; Zenit SPb, 2020; Dynamo SPb, 2020)

Fourthly, cooperative arrangements in the use of the Internet is an important point in collaboration between companies. Sokos Hotels Group and Sports Venues have the opportunity to use a social network as a key tool for promoting cooperation. Among the social networks the most popular ones are Instagram, YouTube and VK. Sokos Hotels Group has accounts in all social networks, as well as Sports Places and high-speed teams. (Sheniger & Rubin, 2017)

According to BranED book, uniqueness of brand value (UBV) is one of the tools to promote and cooperate with companies including with sport venues:

- Capture attention and interest are the first steps to collaborate. Sokos Hotels Group is recognizable in the hotel business such as Gazprom Arena, Sports complex Yubileiny, Sibur Arena and Petrovsky Stadium, which attracts attention due to popular name and large quantity of MICE.

- Being creativity to position company and a strategy. This advice provides to attract more customers to these collaborations. (Sheniger & Rubin, 2017)

In addition to marketing tools Sokos Hotels Group should use the formula of Stephen B. Sample (2002): the 70/30 leadership formula, where 30% of the time is spent on the main issues, and the remaining 70% is spent on a routine process that helps others and connects the community. Due

to receiving and researching of customer feedback hotels and sports venues improve and modernize promoting of the Sokos Hotels Group in St. Petersburg and collaborations with sport events and to satisfy the maximum number of needs of your customers. (Sheniger & Rubin, 2017)

There are studies on the interconnectedness of diverse and numerous sports events and hotels, which show a close connection between sports tourism and hotel business. (Hansen, 2013)

5.4 Data Collection

Sokos Hotels Group has to monitor sporting events and schedule for the long term, to be prepared for arrival and register hotel guests in large numbers. Matches of home teams Dynamo, Zenit and SKA are updated every season and every month, so focusing only on local games is unreasonable. Moreover, the residents of the city mostly go to home games and hotels should not count on a large influx of tourists. (Dynamo SPb, 2020; Zenit SPb, 2020; SKA SPb, 2020)

St. Petersburg has recently become the venue for a large number of world sports competitions. In addition, in 2022 it is planned to host the European Athletics Championships at Petrovsky Stadium. This information is still being clarified and will be known only in May 2020. (Президент ЕА: Петербург мог бы провести ЧЕ-2022 по лёгкой атлетике на высочайшем уровне/EA President: Petersburg could hold the European Championship-2022 on track and field athletics at the highest level, 2019) In 2024, the European Handball Championship could be organized in St. Petersburg, yet other countries were identified during the selection of applications: Austria, Hungary and Switzerland. Thus, from November 28 to December 15, 2024, the women's European Championship will be hosted by Innsbruck, Budapest, Debrecen and Basel. (Handball Federation of Russia, 2020)

According to an article from the TASS electronic journal, which discussed the possible world and European championships, the exact large-scale events of the previous four years were identified, which are presented in Table 4. (TASS, 2018)

Table 4. Sport Events in St. Petersburg 2020-2023

Sport Events	Locations	Dates
--------------	-----------	-------

Russian Football Cup (Semi-final Zenit - Spartak)	Sports and Concert Complex Gazprom Arena	April 23, 2020
Euro 2020 (Belgium - Russia)	Sports and Concert Complex Gazprom Arena	June 13, 2020
Euro 2020 (Finland - Russia)	Sports and Concert Complex Gazprom Arena	June 17, 2020
Euro 2020 (Finland - Belgium)	Sports and Concert Complex Gazprom Arena	June 22, 2020
Euro 2020 (Quarterfinals winner ⁴¹ - winner ⁴²)	Sports and Concert Complex Gazprom Arena	July 3, 2020
UEFA Champions League (Final)	Sports and Concert Complex Gazprom Arena	May 29, 2021
World Volleyball Championship	Sports and concert complex Sibur Arena	August 26, 2022 - September 11, 2022
EuroSkills	The ExpoForum Convention and Exhibition Center	September 11 - September 18, 2022
Ice Hockey World Championship	Sports and Concert Complex Petersburg	May 2023

The Table 4 above shows that at the moment the busiest year for sporting events is the current 2020. The Russian Cup could be organized in St. Petersburg in 2020. (Полуфинальный матч Кубка России «Зенит» – «Спартак» пройдет в Петербурге/Semifinal match of the Cup of Russia “Zenit” - “Spartak” will be held in St. Petersburg, 2020) In the summer of 2020, a series of matches of Group B of the European Football Championship (EURO 2020) will be held in the city. (UEFA 2020 SPb, 2019) In 2020-2021, the UEFA Champions League will be held, and St. Petersburg will be honored to host the final in 2021 after a series of world football matches. (UEFA 2021-2023, 2019) In 2022, Russia will host the World Volleyball Championship. The Federation International de Volleyball (FIVB) approved eight cities, including St. Petersburg, which will host a series of matches from August 26 to September 11, 2022. (Ivanov, 2019) In 2023, the new Ice Arena in St. Petersburg, which will be reconstructed on the site of the old one, will host the Ice Hockey World Championship. In 2019, the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) approved to host all championship matches in one city in Russia. The new arena will be located alongside Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden. Moreover, the sports complex will belong to the SKA hockey club, which conducts regularly a large-scale series of matches in the city. (Panyshev, 2019) It is necessary to notice to another EuroSkills European Championship of Professional Excellence, which will be held at the ExpoForum Convention and Exhibition Center from September 11 to September 18,

2022. This event does not apply to sporting events. Moreover, the EuroSkills organization involves quite complex engineering and technical measures and 28 European countries will participate in this competition. (EuroSkills SPb, 2019)

The above global events have a great impact on St. Petersburg. Firstly, it shows the status and level of preparedness of the city for further world events. The city has all the infrastructure that is needed to organize any meetings and concentrations at any level. Secondly, all major events attract a large flow of tourists, fans and visitors. In addition to a large number of MICE participants, a large tourist flow is formed. This item has a direct impact on the hotel business.

In case of cancellation or rescheduling of sporting events in sports complexes, regular matches of city teams are often held. Furthermore, the official sites feature events related to the entertainment industry, such as concerts and performances. (Gazprom Arena, 2020; CK "Юбилейный"/Yubileiny Sport Complex, 2020) Furthermore, due to quarantine against the background of coronavirus, people should stay at home and not gather in groups of 50 people or more. The tourism industry is in danger of ruin. In China, due to an outbreak of coronavirus, the occupancy of hotels declined 75% from January 14 to 26. (Coronavirus: Preliminary hotel performance impact, 2020) In the case of the Russian hotel business, at the time of March, many hotels were closed. **Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden** and **Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge** are closed from March 23 to April 30 due to reduced tourist flow. (Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg, 2020; Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg, 2020)

5.5 Limitation

The study was aimed at studying and researching the future events of St. Petersburg, which should occur over the next four years 2020-2024. A greater emphasis was placed on events in the sports sector. All the information presented in the dissertation is relevant at the time of writing the study from the middle of January till the end of March. The data was used from various reliable sources, both Russian and foreign. The following are the problems the researcher encountered:

- Not all sources have available information on the status of future MICE.

- The dates of many events have not yet been determined.
- Due to force majeure and unforeseen situations in the world, this is especially true at this time due to coronavirus, many events can be canceled.
- Forecast schedules of upcoming world non-annual events can be made only approximate.
- Absence of data collection from the hotel.
- The situation that happened with coronavirus and quarantine in the world.

6 Recommendation to Sokos Hotels in St. Petersburg

The conclusion is based on the above analyzes in Chapter 5 that Sokos Hotels Group has excellent opportunities to cooperate with many city conventions such as the location of the hotel in the city center and quality infrastructure. All hotels are located in the city center, so they have a great opportunity to focus on the cultural activities of hotel guests and collaborate directly with travel agencies, museums, galleries and theaters. The hotels have the collaboration with the ExpoForum Convention and Exhibition Center. Sokos Hotels supports the tourist flow during off-season periods and refers to business tourism. (ExpoForum Hotel Accommodation in St.Petersburg, 2020)

During the organization and during sporting events, it is necessary to carefully study Sokos Hotels Group's audience coverage to identify the most potential customers. Those guests might become the loyal customers for future city events. Moreover, this is the best way to maximize the flow of tourists in the hotel. There are three audience funnels: Bottom-of-funnel - a hotel near a city event, Middle-of-funnel - a hotel near a city's attractions and Top-of-funnel - a hotel near the city or area. (How to advertise your hotel around a city event, 2017)

Bottom-of-funnel is an orientation towards the hotels next to the event. During the Football and Volleyball Championships, emphasis should be placed on the **Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge** and on the **Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilevskiy**. Two hotels from the Solo Sokos Hotels group are located in a relatively close radius from the main sites: Gazprom Arena, Sibur Arena, Petrovsky Stadium and Yubileiny. (Gazprom Arena, 2020; СК "Юбилейный"/Yubileiny Sport Complex, 2020; Sibur Arena, 2020; Petrovsky Stadium, 2020) During the World Hockey Championship, attention should be related to the **Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden**. The hotel will be located next to the new Ice Arena, where the championship will be held. (Merk, 2019)

Sokos Hotels Group should start working with these sports venues to attract customers from the Championships. During the city matches of St. Petersburg's teams there is the option of placing teams in hotels and fans from other cities and countries. In St. Petersburg, there are three famous sports clubs: Zenit (football, volleyball and basketball clubs) and hockey clubs Dynamo and SKA. In the city every year there are a large number of matches over the seasons. Two hotels of the group are located close to four important sports venues in St. Petersburg: the Yubileiny sports complex (the home area of the Dynamo hockey club and the Zenit basketball club) and the

Petrovsky stadium (the training base of the Zenit football club and EURO 2020) are located on the Petrograd side, Sibur Arena (the home ground of the Zenit volleyball club) and Gazprom (the home ground of the Zenith football club and the venue of all the most significant matches of the city and the country) arena are located on Krestovsky Island. (СК "Юбилейный"/Yubileiny Sport Complex, 2020; Dymov, 2019; Sibur Arena, 2020; Gazprom Arena, 2020) After the 2017 Confederations Cup, Saint Petersburg participates in many sporting events, such as the World Cup in summer 2018, the traditional Russia-Finland ice hockey matches, and the SKA-CSKA match at Gazprom arena in December 2018 and 2019. Saint Petersburg has started to develop in the sports sphere, which attracts a large number of fans and tourists. The tourist flow is growing, as most of the city's visitors prefer to come to St. Petersburg after major events. (Regular season, 2019)

Sokos Hotels Group should create advance advertisements with sport venues to attract new guests to hotels on sports fields, hotel web pages and events. The hotels have the ability to provide special offers for fans and event participants and check constantly the schedule and calendar of events of the city. There is a unified calendar of city events in St. Petersburg as mentioned in chapter 4 of this thesis. This calendar is updated annually, therefore it is possible to plan certain business and sports seasons for tourists at the end of each year. (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020)

In addition to recommendations marketing ways and tools such as formula of Stephen B. Sample 2002 (the 70/30 leadership formula), UBV and other tools as mentioned earlier in chapter 5 should be utilized. Successful creating and promoting at the beginning of cooperation between of companies is necessary to increase popularity of hotels in the city among tourists and their capacity. (Sheniger & Rubin, 2017)

In 2020, the Chairman of the SPIEF 2020 organizing Committee, Andrey Belousov, decided not to hold the SPIEF economic forum due to the Declaration by the world Health Organization of an emergency of international significance in connection with an outbreak of coronavirus and information about its spread in the countries participating in the forum. Due to the epidemic other business and sports events will be canceled. Furthermore, Euro 2020 was rescheduled for next year due to the rapid spread of the pandemic. (Euro 2020 postponed until next summer, 2020) In connection with the recent outbreaks of the coronavirus epidemic, there is a danger of a decrease in tourist flow due to border closure and quarantine. There is a likelihood that world events in the field of sports can be canceled or rescheduled one year later. During the coronavirus period,

closing hotels during quarantine is the only solution to reduce losses and maintain a safe environment for employees and guests. (Coronavirus in Russia, 2020)

7 Conclusion

In St. Petersburg, thousands of city events are being organized annually, which have a great influence on the tourist flow and hotel business. In the 2nd Chapter of the thesis, analyzes were conducted on the Influence of Environmental Factors, Marketing Environment and Marketing Activities of Hotels, which showed that the Hotel Group is ready to accept a large number of guests, guests of different status and tourists from different areas of recreation. Hotel features satisfy all consumer needs. As a result of the conducted analyses, Sokos Hotels Group has average level of threats in the hotel business and has the opportunities to collaborate with other companies.

Furthermore, the hotel has partnerships with the main venue for international economic, scientific and political meetings around the world. This increase in tourist flow in the Northern capital is striking in demand and competition in the hotel market. However, most tourist flows are seasonal. In the thesis, certain periods and moments of the year in St. Petersburg were determined that attract the guests of Sokos Hotels Group. They are Summer - holidays, the famous White Nights, the brightest and warmest days when the organization of holidays, summer festivals and vacations begins in the city; early Autumn - the excitement of the summer guests of the city falls and new theater seasons begin - the visiting card of the city; mid-winter - New Year's holidays and vacations, fabulous fairs and festivals; end of Spring - most cultural sites engage summer mode in May and the weather becomes warmer. (Туристические сезоны в Санкт-Петербурге/Tourist seasons in St. Petersburg, 2020; How to advertise your hotel around a city event, 2017)

In the off-season periods, Sokos Hotels should confide to the calendar of city events and conventions. St. Petersburg has always been saturated with events of different levels of scale and significance. The city hosts a large number of political meetings, international conferences and forums, scientific and cultural events, as well as sporting events. (Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg, 2020) After the 2018 World Cup, there are more and more visitors to the city every year. However, due to the current situation in the world, there is not certain schedule and informational about the World and European Championships. Therefore, the hotels themselves should monitor and verify the true information for the upcoming season. The hotel needs to create a forecast year-round to understand how many visitors it will have for the season. There is an option to focus on annual city events that occur in the same time period. However, the greatest influx of tourists falls on those times when world-wide

events are being organized place in the city, such as the World Cup. The problem is that such events are not officially announced in advance, and there is always a risk of cancellation of the planned championship due to an anti-doping and political scandal or virus. (Seryakov, 2020; Допинг-скандал вокруг Российского спорта /Doping scandal around Russian sports, 2020)

In addition to the results of the work done, Marketing Cooperation with Sport Venues and Sokos Hotels Group were identified as one of the ways to promote hotels in the city and attract more guests. (Sheniger & Rubin, 2017) Moreover, marketing tools were identified for improvement and modernizing of promoting hotel's brand in the market. According official statistics of tourist flow in St. Petersburg during sports events, this cooperation will be successful during the period of sporting events in the city, which should be held in 2020-2024. (Статистика рынка туризма Администрации Санкт-Петербурга/Statistics of the tourism market of the Administration of St. Petersburg, 2020)

The thesis shows greater emphasis on the city's sporting events, which will be held in 2020-2023. Global events can be tracked in advance. For example, as those that were selected during the study are the Football World Championships 2020-2021, the 2022 Volleyball World Championship and the 2023 World Hockey Championship. The hotel should often check the media for new future events. The city already has experience in conducting such events. Every year St. Petersburg increases its potential for large-scale world events. Collaboration with sports facilities in the city will be one of the successful options for promoting hotels in the Northern capital. (UEFA 2021-2023, 2019)

At the moment, the main task is to follow the news related to the coronavirus and the quarantine situation. There is a possibility of closing the tourist season in 2020, due to the closure of borders between countries. (Sukhorukova & Kokoreva, 2020)

8 References

- About Corinthia Hotel.* (2020). Retrieved from Corinthia Hotel St.-Petersburg: <https://www.corinthia.com/>
- About Courtyard by Marriott Vasilievsky.* (2020). Retrieved from Courtyard by Marriott Vasilievsky: <https://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/ledcy-courtyard-st-petersburg-vasilievsky/?scid=bb1a189a-fec3-4d19-a255-54ba596febe2>
- About Crowne Plaza Hotels.* (2020). Retrieved from Crowne Plaza Hotel St-Petersburg: https://www.ihg.com/crowneplaza/hotels/us/en/st-petersburg/ledly/hoteldetail?cm_mmc=GoogleMaps_-_CP_-_RU_-_LEDLY
- About Domina St. Petersburg.* (2020). Retrieved from Domina St. Petersburg: <https://spb.dominarussia.com/en/>
- About Sokos Hotels.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/about-us>
- Becar, N. (2018). *Hotel Real Estate Market Overview*. Saint Petersburg: NAI Becar.
- Booking.com St. Petersburg.* (2020). Retrieved from Booking.com: <https://www.booking.com/searchresults.en-gb.html?aid=376376&label=bookings-name-x9XjJRNqhtTGZ30YXWfPUQS267724389816%3Apl%3Aata%3Apl%3Apl22.650.000%3Aac%3Aap%3Aneg%3Afi%3Atikwd-65526620%3Alp1005761%3Ali%3Adec%3Adm%3Appccp%3DUMFuZG9tSVYkc2RIlyh9Yf23yREhrOV9Yc>
- Boroday, V. A. (2019). *The system of Russian regulation of tourist activity in the Russian Federation*. Retrieved from Cyberleninka: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/sistema-gosudarstvennogo-regulirovaniya-turistkoy-deyatelnosti-v-rossiyskoy-federatsii/viewer>
- Brodal, G. S. (2005). In G. S. Brodal, & S. Leonardi, *Algorithms – ESA 2005* (p. 763). Palma de Mallorca, Spain: 13th Annual European Symposium.
- Calendar of Russian holidays.* (2020). Retrieved from Dreamtime: <https://www.dreamstime.com/calendar-year-russian-holidays-weekends-monday-first-day-week-calendar-year-russian-holidays-image145228307>
- Concierge service.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-vasilievsky/we-recommend>
- Coronavirus in Russia.* (2020, March 16). Retrieved from The Moscow Times: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/03/16/coronavirus-in-russia-the-latest-news-march-16-a69117>
- Coronavirus: Preliminary hotel performance impact.* (2020, February 4). Retrieved from Hotel News Now: <http://hotelnewsnow.com/Articles/300124/Coronavirus-Preliminary-hotel-performance-impact>
- Creswell, J. (2009). *Research Design Qualitative*. California: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Crossman, A. (2020, February 2). *An Overview of Qualitative Research Methods*. Retrieved from ThoughtCo.: <https://www.thoughtco.com/qualitative-research-methods-3026555>
- Dieke, P., & Karamustafa, K. (2000). *Cooperative Marketing in the Accommodation Subsector: Southeastern Mediterranean Perspectives*. Strathclyde: Thunderbird International Business Review.
- Dwyer, L., Gill, A., & Seetaram, N. (2012). *Handbook of Research Methods in Tourism*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

- Думов, V. (2019, June 21). *Легкоатлетам придется подождать. Стадион «Петровский» будет тренировочной базой во время Евро-2020/Athletes will have to wait. Petrovsky Stadium will be a training base during Euro 2020*. Retrieved from Спорт день за днем: <https://www.sportsdaily.ru/articles/legkoatletam-privetsya-podozhdat-stadion-petrovskij-budet-trenirovochnoj-bazoj-vo-vremya-evro-2020>
- Dynamo SPb.* (2020). Retrieved from Dynamo: <http://dynamo-spb.com/>
- Euro 2020 postponed until next summer.* (2020, March 18). Retrieved from BBC Sport: <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/51909518>
- EuroSkills SPb.* (2019, March 4). Retrieved from Санкт-Петербург: <https://topspb.tv/news/2019/03/7/v-peterburge-obsudili-podgotovku-k-euroskills/>
- Expoforum Hotel Accommodation in St.Petersburg.* (2020). Retrieved from Expoforum: <https://inter.expoforum.ru/booking-hotels>
- Figueroa, A. (2019, May 7). *Mice: Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions*. Retrieved from TripSavvy: <https://www.tripsavvy.com/what-is-mice-in-the-travel-industry-3252496>
- Fine, L. (2009). *The SWOT Analysis: Using your Strength to overcome Weaknesses, Using Opportunities to overcome Threats*. South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Gazprom Arena.* (2020). Retrieved from Gazprom Arena: <https://gazprom-arena.com/eng#rec78114031>
- Handball Federation of Russia.* (2020, January 25). Retrieved from Championship: https://www.championat.com/other/news-3956099-rossija-ne-poluchila-pravo-provedeniya-che-2024-po-gandbolu-sredi-zhenskih-komand.html?Utm_source=copypaste
- Hansen, E. (2013, May 28). *Hoteliers score business with sports groups*. Retrieved from Hotel News Now: <http://www.hotelnewsnow.com/Articles/19287/Hoteliers-score-business-with-sports-groups>
- Holidays in Russia 2020.* (2020). Retrieved from Weekends 2020: <http://xn--b1aeaq1acd6dzce.com/vihodnie2020.html>
- Hotel Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge in St. Petersburg.* (2019). Retrieved from SPb-guide: https://www.spb-guide.ru/hotel_sokos_palace_bridge.htm
- Hotels St. Petersburg.* (2020, March 14). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg>
- How to advertise your hotel around a city event.* (2017, October 27). Retrieved from Pegasus: <https://www.pegas.com/blog/how-to-advertise-your-hotel-around-an-event/>
- Iosefavichus, G. (2013, July 15). *15 signs of a good hotel*. Retrieved from GQ: <https://www.gq.ru/travels/15-priznakov-horoshego-otelya>
- Ivanov, V. (2019, May 28). *От Калининграда до Сибири. Где пройдет волейбольный ЧМ-2022/From Kaliningrad to Siberia. Where will the volleyball World Cup 2022*. Retrieved from Sport-express: <https://www.sport-express.ru/volleyball/reviews/kakie-rossiyskie-goroda-poluchili-pravo-na-provedenie-chempionata-mira-po-voleybolu-2022-goda-1549823/>
- Kasahara, E. (. (2015). *Practical Strategic Management: How To Apply Strategic Thinking In Business*. London: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte Ltd.
- KudaGo St. Petersburg.* (2020). Retrieved from KudaGo: <https://kudago.com/spb/>
- Lin, L. (2014). *Interviewing Successful Hotel Managers*. Los Angeles: Lin & Pavelson B.V; 1st edition.

- Merk, M. (2019, May 24). *St. Petersburg gets 2023 Worlds*. Retrieved from IIHF Ice Hockey World Championship: <https://www.iihf.com/en/events/2019/wm/news/12726/st-petersburg-gets-2023-worlds>
- Neuman, L. (2009). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches (7th Edition)*. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-olympia-garden>
- Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-olympia-garden/service?id=4517816_392918
- Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg, Room details*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-olympia-garden/roomdetails>
- Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg. Breakfast*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-olympia-garden/breakfast>
- Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg. Gym*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-olympia-garden/gym>
- Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg. Hotel guest sauna*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-olympia-garden/hotel-guest-sauna>
- Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg. Meetings and events*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-olympia-garden/meetings-and-events>
- Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden Saint Petersburg. Pets*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-olympia-garden/pets>
- Original Sokos Hotel Olympia Garden. Rating*. (2020). Retrieved from Tripadvisor Traveler Rating: https://www.tripadvisor.com/WidgetEmbed-cdspropertydetail?locationId=653765396&partnerId=C1BCAEC5A4CA40CE829F723AC1676AFB&display=true&lang=en_US
- Panyshv, P. (2019, September 23). *Россию уважают! ЧМ-2023 пройдёт в Петере на самой крутой арене в мире/Russia is respected! World Cup 2023 will be held in St. Petersburg at the coolest arena in the world*. Retrieved from Чемпионат: <https://www.championat.com/hockey/article-3553141-championat-mira-po-hokkeju-2023-goda-projdjot-v-rossii-podrobnosti.html>
- Peterburg2*. (2020). Retrieved from Peterburg2: <https://peterburg2.ru/>
- Petrovsky Stadium*. (2020). Retrieved from Petrovsky Stadium: <http://www.visit-petersburg.ru/en/leisure/196642/>
- Polyakova, K. A. (2019, June). *Сдерживающие факторы развития внутреннего туризма в Российской Федерации/Constraining factors in the development of domestic tourism in the Russian Federation*. Retrieved from Young scientist: <https://moluch.ru/archive/261/60455/>
- Porter, M. (2008). *The Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*. New York: Free Press.
- Porter's Five Forces of Competitive Position Analysis*. (2013, June 11). Retrieved from CGMA: <https://www.cgma.org/resources/tools/essential-tools/porters-five-forces.html>
- Radio Zenit*. (2020). Retrieved from Radio Zenit: <http://www.radiozenit.ru/>
- Regular season*. (December 2019). Noudettu osoitteesta SKA: <https://www.ska.ru/en/championship/game/2019-12-19-20-00/>

- Russian visa for finnish citizens.* (2020). Retrieved from Russia visas: <https://www.evisarussia.com/requirements/finland/>
- Saint Petersburg Vedomosti.* (2020, February 5). Retrieved from Saint Petersburg Vedomosti: https://spbvedomosti.ru/news/country_and_world/v-proshlom-godu-peterburg-posetili-10-4-mln-turistov/
- S-Business Card – purchasing power for companies.* (2020). Retrieved from S-Business Card: <https://s-business.fi/en/>
- S-card.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels Group: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/s-card>
- Seryakov, A. (2020, March 16). *Что будет с Евро-2020. Прогноз: УЕФА перенесёт чемпионат Европы из-за коронавируса/What will happen to Euro 2020. Forecast: UEFA will postpone European Championship due to coronavirus.* Retrieved from Championship: <https://www.championat.com/bets/article-3996415-evro-2020-otmena-raspisanie-kalendar-sroki-provedenija-kogda-nachalo-stavki.html>
- Sheniger, E., & Rubin, T. (2017). *BrandEN: Tell Your Story, Build Relationships, and Empower Learning.* John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.
- Sibur Arena.* (2020). Retrieved from Об Арене Сибур: <https://siburarena.com/aboutus/>
- SKA SPb.* (2020). Retrieved from SKA: <https://www.ska.ru/>
- Sokos Hotellit/Radisson BLU.* (2020). Retrieved from Lakimiesliitto: <https://www.lakimiesliitto.fi/palvelut-ja-edut/jasenedut/alennukset-majoituksista/sokos-hotellit-radisson-blu/>
- Sokos Hotels Group of St. Petersburg.* (2019). Retrieved from World of indians: https://www.indiansworld.org/Articles/hotel_peterburg_sokos.html#.XkO96TEzbIV
- Sokos Hotels St.Petersburg – 10 nem /Sokos Hotels St.Petersburg – 10 years old.* (2017). Retrieved from Hotelier.PRO: <https://hotelier.pro/news/item/3207-sokos>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-palace-bridge>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-palace-bridge/service?id=4517836_392918
- Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg, Room details.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-palace-bridge/roomdetails>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Breakfast.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-palace-bridge/breakfast>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Gorki Golf Academy.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-palace-bridge/activities>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Meetings and events.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-palace-bridge/meetings-and-events>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Pets.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-palace-bridge/pets>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Treatments and wellness.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-palace-bridge/treatments-and-wellness>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge Saint Petersburg. Wellness club.* (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-palace-bridge/gym>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Palace Bridge. Rating.* (2020). Retrieved from Tripadvisor Traveler Rating: <https://www.tripadvisor.com/WidgetEmbed->

- cdspropertydetail?locationId=648852184&partnerId=C1BCAEC5A4CA40CE829F723AC1676AFB&display=true&lang=en_US
- Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-vasilievsky>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-vasilievsky/service?id=4517827_392918
- Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg, Room details*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-vasilievsky/roomdetails>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Breakfast*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-vasilievsky/breakfast>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Gym*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-vasilievsky/gym>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Hotel guest sauna*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-vasilievsky/hotel-guest-sauna>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Meetings and events*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-vasilievsky/meetings-and-events>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Parking*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-vasilievsky/other-services>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky Saint Petersburg. Pets*. (2020). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels: <https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/st-petersburg/sokos-hotel-vasilievsky/pets>
- Solo Sokos Hotel Vasilievsky. Rating*. (2020). Retrieved from Tripadvisor Traveler Rating: https://www.tripadvisor.com/WidgetEmbed-cdspropertydetail?locationId=653776922&partnerId=C1BCAEC5A4CA40CE829F723AC1676AFB&display=true&lang=en_US
- Special offer for events in Sokos Hotels St. Petersburg*. (2020, 01). Retrieved from Sokos Hotels St. Petersburg: https://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/special-offers/offer/special-offer-for-events-in-sokos/025287465_392918
- Strategic Planning Tools*. (2013, June 11). Retrieved from CGMA: <https://www.cgma.org/resources/tools/essential-tools/strategic-planning-tools.html>
- Sukhorukova, E., & Kokoreva, M. (2020, March 12). *Как пандемия и запреты на полеты повлияют на туризм. 5 главных вопросов/How a pandemic and flight bans will affect tourism. 5 main questions*. Retrieved from Rbc: <https://www.rbc.ru/business/12/03/2020/5e69d3819a79476aeb6edd2>
- TASS. (2018, May 23). Retrieved from TASS: <https://tass.ru/pmef-2018/articles/5224148>
- Trivago St. Petersburg*. (2020, March 14). Retrieved from Trivago: <https://www.trivago.com/?aDateRange%5Barr%5D=2020-03-14&aDateRange%5Bdep%5D=2020-03-15&aPriceRange%5Bfrom%5D=0&aPriceRange%5Bto%5D=0&iRoomType=7&aRooms%5B0%5D%5Badults%5D=2&cpt2=4244614%2F100%2C1320%2F105%2C1322%2F105&iViewType=0&blsSeoPage=0&sortingId=2&>
- TurStat*. (2019, December 31). Retrieved from Regnum: <https://regnum.ru/news/society/2821890.html>
- UEFA 2020 SPb*. (2019, November 30). Retrieved from UEFA.com: <https://en.uefa.com/uefaeuro-2020/news/0257-0e1ac53f9bf7-629ef3a8ab99-1000--%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%87>

D0% B8-% D0% B5% D0% B2% D1% 80% D0% BE-2020-% D0% BF% D1% 80% D0% BE% D0% B8% D0% B4% D1% 83% D1% 82-% D0% B2-% D1

UEFA 2021-2023. (2019, September 24). Retrieved from UEFA.com:

<https://ru.uefa.com/uefachampionsleague/news/0255-0e99f5913fed-3d583a7924c2-1000--%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D1%8B-%D1%85%D0%BE%D0%B7%D1%8F%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D1%84%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B2-%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B3%D0%B8-%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BC%>

Zenit SPb. (2020). Retrieved from Zenit: <https://fc-zenit.ru/>

Допинг-скандал вокруг Российского спорта /Doping scandal around Russian sports. (2020, March 4). Retrieved from Tass: <https://tass.ru/doping-skandal-vokrug-rossiyskogo-sporta>

Единый календарь событий Санкт-Петербурга/Unified calendar of events of St. Petersburg.

(2020). Retrieved from The official website of the St. Petersburg Administration:

https://www.gov.spb.ru/gov/terr/reg_vasileostr/sector-po-svyazyam-so-sredstvami-massovoj-informacii/edinyj-kalendar-sobytij-sankt-peterburga-na-2020-god/

ПМЭФ-2020 отменили из-за коронавируса/SPIEF 2020 canceled due to coronavirus. (2020, March 5). Retrieved from Интерфакс: <https://www.interfax.ru/business/697967>

Полуфинальный матч Кубка России «Зенит» – «Спартак» пройдет в Петербурге/Semifinal match of the Cup of Russia "Zenit" - "Spartak" will be held in St. Petersburg. (2020, March 1). Retrieved from Санкт-Петербург: <https://topspb.tv/news/2020/03/4/polufinalnyj-match-kubka-rossii-zenit-spartak-projdet-v-peterburge/>

Президент ЕА: Петербург мог бы провести ЧЕ-2022 по лёгкой атлетике на высочайшем уровне/EA President: Petersburg could hold the European Championship-2022 on track and field athletics at the highest level. (2019, March 01). Retrieved from Российский Стадион: <https://stadium.ru/news/253905>

Рост туристического потока в Петербурге в 2019 году ожидается на уровне 10%/The growth of tourist flow in St. Petersburg in 2019 is expected to reach 10%. (2019, June 25). Retrieved from ТАСС: <https://tass.ru/obshchestvo/6591171>

СК "Юбилейный"/Yubileiny Sport Complex. (2020). Retrieved from СК "Юбилейный": <https://www.yubi.ru/about/>

Статистика рынка туризма Администрации Санкт-Петербурга/Statistics of the tourism market of the Administration of St. Petersburg. (2020, March 11). Retrieved from Официальный сайт Администрации Санкт-Петербурга: https://www.gov.spb.ru/gov/otrasl/c_tourism/statistic/

Туристические сезоны в Санкт-Петербурге/Tourist seasons in St. Petersburg. (2020). Retrieved from Petersburg dvor: <https://dvorspb.ru/advice/explore/tourist-season/>

9 APPENDICES

9.1 Appendix 1

Table 5. - Advanced PEST analysis matrix of Sokos Hotels Group.

Forces	Expert review (1-5)				Average rating	Weight coeffi- cient	Expert review (1-5)				Direc- tional influ- ence	Aver- age rating	Weighted Average Rating
	E1	E2	E3	E4			E1	E2	E3	E4			
Political forces													
Aggrava- tion of political relations	4	5	5	4	4,5	0,073	5	5	4	5	-	4,75	-0,347
Change in tax law	4	3	4	3	3,5	0,057	3	4	4	4	-	3,75	-0,214
Interna- tional events	5	5	4	5	4,75	0,078	3	3	4	3	+	3,25	0,254
													-0,307
Economic forces													
Season- ality in fluctuat- ing de- mand for hotel services	4	5	5	5	4,75	0,078	5	5	5	4	-	4,75	-0,371
Unstable eco- nomic	4	3	4	3	3,5	0,057	5	4	4	3	-	4,0	-0,228

situation in the country													
Decrease in real incomes	5	5	5	4	4,75	0,078	4	5	5	5	-	4,75	-0,371
Development of transport infrastructure	5	5	4	4	4,5	0,073	4	4	5	4	+	4,25	0,31
													-0,66
Social forces													
Increasing population loyalty	5	5	5	4	4,75	0,078	4	5	5	4	+	4,5	0,351
Hospitality Trends	4	3	5	3	3,75	0,061	3	3	4	3	+	3,25	0,198
Image of St. Petersburg as one of the best tourist destinations	5	5	4	5	4,75	0,078	5	5	4	5	+	4,75	0,371
High customer requirements	5	4	4	5	4,5	0,073	4	5	4	5	+	4,5	0,329

for service level and product quality														
													1,249	
Technological forces														
Increasing Industry Innovation	4	5	4	5	4,5	0,073	5	4	5	4	+	4,5	0,329	
The development of the Internet and mobile networks	5	4	5	5	4,75	0,078	4	5	5	4	+	4,5	0,351	
The growth of technological capabilities of competitors C2C platforms	4	3	5	4	4	0,065	5	5	4	4	-	4,5	-0,293	
													0,387	
Total					61,25	1							0,669	

9.2 Appendix 2

Table 6. - Detailed SWOT analysis of Sokos hotels.

Forces		Opportunities			Threats			Summary Evaluation
	Factors	The introduction of modern technology	Increasing mobility	Development of transport infrastructure	Changes in legislation governing tourism	Decrease in real incomes	Increasing competitive pressure from C2C platforms	
Strengths	Attractive location	1	3	5	0	1	4	14
	International Service Standards	5	5	2	2	4	5	23
	International Service Standards	4	4	3	2	2	4	19
Weaknesses	Limited income target audience	0	1	0	0	-5	-4	-8

	Asset obsoles- cence	-5	-2	-3	0	0	-4	-14
	Weak Social Media Market- ing Pol- icy	-3	-2	-1	-4	-3	-5	-18
Summary Evaluation		2	9	6	0	-1	0	32

9.3 Appendix 3

Table 7. - Assessment of the competitiveness of hotels

Criteria for evaluation	Sokos Hotel	Domina St. Petersburg	Corinthia Hotel St. Petersburg	Crowne Plaza St. Petersburg Ligovsky	Courtyard by Marriott Vasiliievsky
Range of services	5	5	4	4	3
Flexible pricing and special offers	4	5	5	4	3
Service level	4	4	4	5	4
Updating the site and social networks	4	4	5	4	3
Rating of booking.com	4	5	5	4	4
Convenience of location	5	4	5	4	5
Number fund	5	3	5	4	4
Loyalty programs	5	4	3	4	5
Innovation activity	4	4	4	3	3
Targeting different consumer segments	4	4	5	3	4