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Faculty of Economics  
Lomonosov  
Moscow State  
University

# Networking of Small Tourist Destinations: Evidence from Russia



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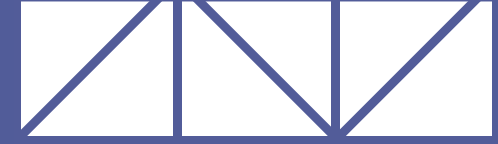
June 2019



## Agenda



- Purpose of the study and research questions
  - Role of tourism for small towns
  - Reasons for small tourist destinations' networking
  - Levels of small tourist destinations networking
  - Association of Small Tourist Towns of Russia (ASTT)
  - Design, methodology and results of the research based on ASTT data
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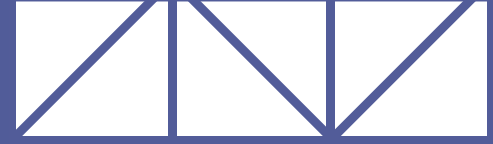
There are **1117** cities and towns in Russia

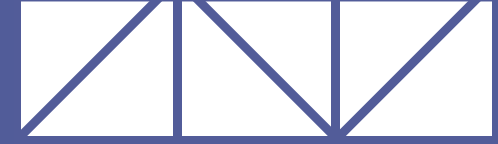


**789** of them are small

(with population less than 50 000 people)

# Why small towns matter? (2)





**The study aims to identify the features of small destinations' network cooperation based on the experience of the Association of Small Tourist Towns of Russia (ASTT).**



## **Key research questions**

- **What motivates small tourist towns to join ASTT?**
- **What are the features of the network interaction of small tourist towns?**
- **What are the benefits gained by small tourist towns after joining ASTT?**



**Tourism plays an important role in the development of small towns (Donaldson 2018)**

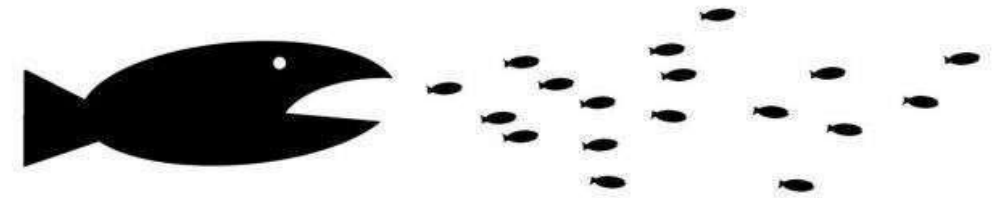
**International studies show that tourism can have a positive impact on both the indicators of urban development and the quality of life of small towns' inhabitants (Haralambopoulos, Pizam 1996; Tsundoda, Mendlinger 2009)**

**However, small towns often lack resources and opportunities to fully develop their own tourist potential (Mingaleva et al. 2017)**

**Evidence from various countries shows that networking is one of the most effective ways to increase the small tourist destinations' competitiveness (Haugland et. al. 2011)**

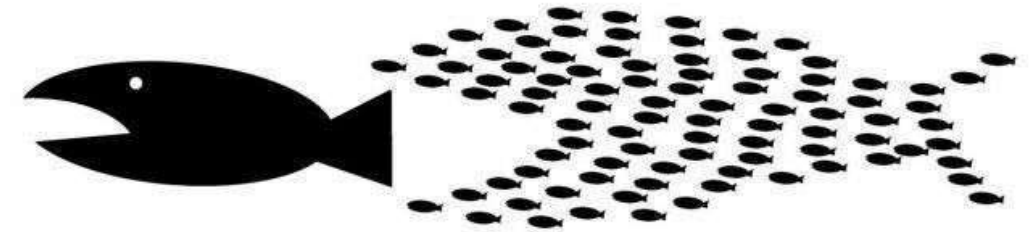


- Joint creation and promotion of the tourist product
- Best management practices exchange
- Marketing strategies' coordination & cobranding
- Lobbying of small towns' interests at the national level

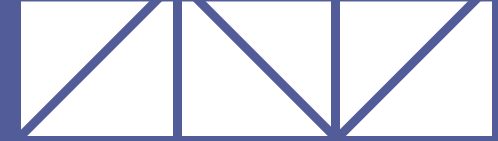


**DON'T PANIC,**

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**ORGANISE!**



## 1. International small tourist towns' associations and networks

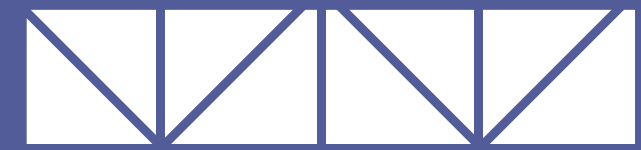


## 2. National small tourist towns' networks



## 3. Regional and local tourist towns' network (e.g. towns within common tourist route)





Founded in 2007, currently unites 13 towns from 9 regions:

## Small tourist towns of Russia



Azov



Elebuga



Uglich



Kargopol



Suzdal



Gorokhovets



Elets



Tobolsk



Myshkin



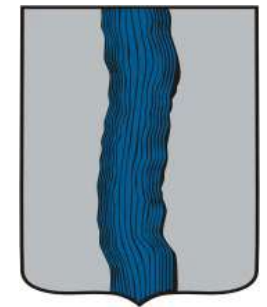
Solikamsk



Borovsk



Kungur



Tarusa



The study is based on a survey and a set of structured interviews with **local authorities** of ASTT cities: heads of municipalities and heads of departments responsible for tourism development



The structure of the questionnaire - **22 open and closed questions**, interview - another **12 questions**



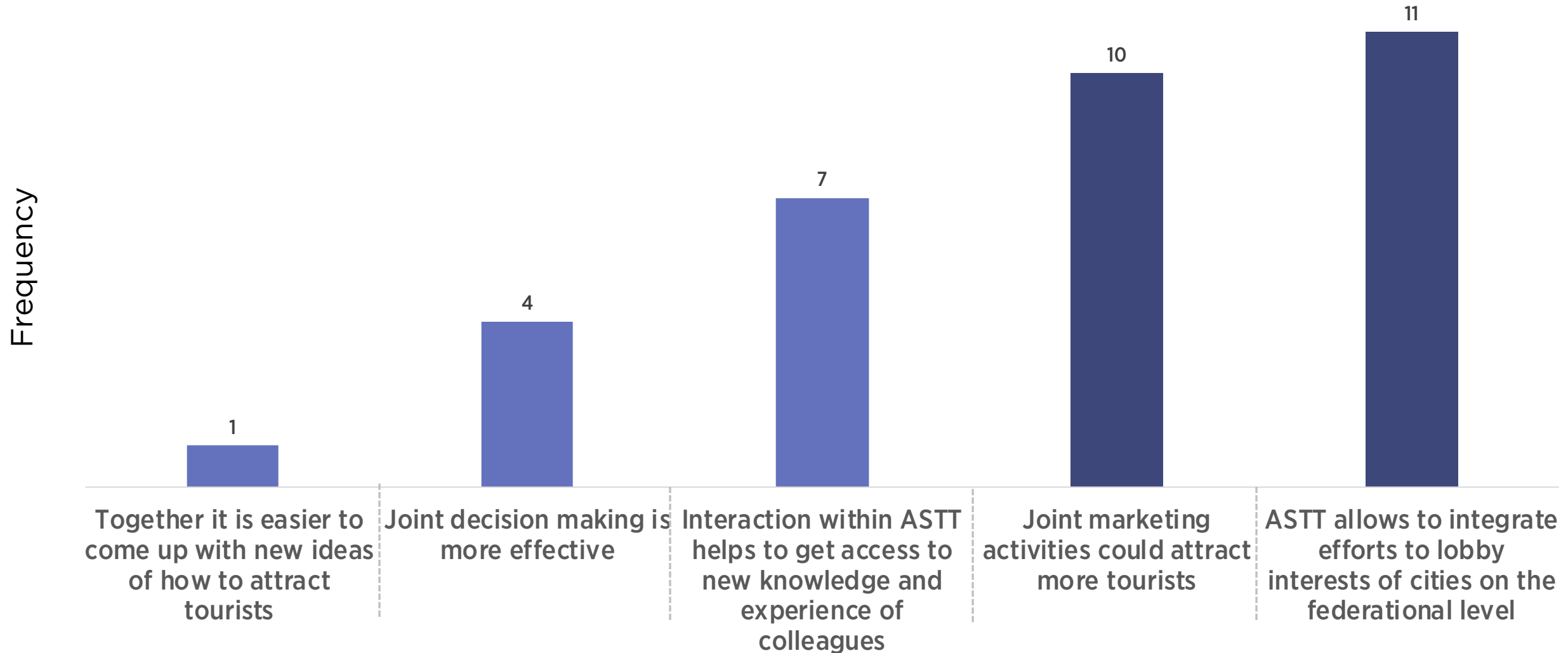
Research was conducted **January-March 2019**



Questionnaires were received from **12 of 13 ASTT cities** (response rate = **92.3%**)

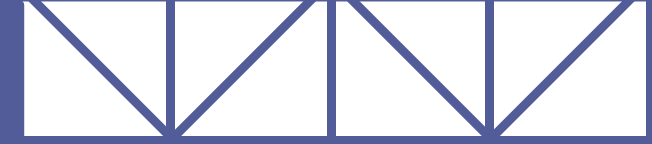
Data was processed by statistical and content analyses

# Reasons for joining ASTT



*Source: based on survey quantitative analysis*

*\*\*Not more than 3 options could have been chosen*



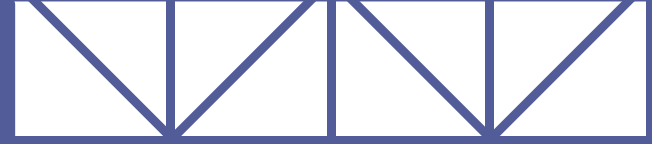
**Do you think that the administration of your city is involved in the joint decision-making process within ASTT?**

**YES - 100%**

**Is there a control over commitments execution by ASTT members?**

**YES - 92%**

**(1 response - Hard to say)**



**Does the administration of your city participate in the process of creating and managing the ASTT web-site?**

**YES - 100%**

**Does the administration of your city participate in organization of the Festival of Small Towns of Russia?**

**YES - 100%**

# Particular aspects of ASTT networking



	Average score (5-point scale)
Satisfaction with the results of joining ASTT	<b>4,83</b>
Success of ASTT events	<b>4,83</b>
Willingness to cooperate and support peers from other towns of ASTT	<b>4,75</b>
Getting new knowledge during the interaction with other ASTT participants	<b>4,67</b>
Ability to defend the city interests at the federal level more effectively	<b>4,67</b>
Impact of joining ASTT on the city brand awareness	<b>4,58</b>
Fulfillment of commitments by participants in ASTT	<b>4,58</b>
Support from peers from other ASTT towns	<b>4,50</b>

*Source: based on survey quantitative analysis*

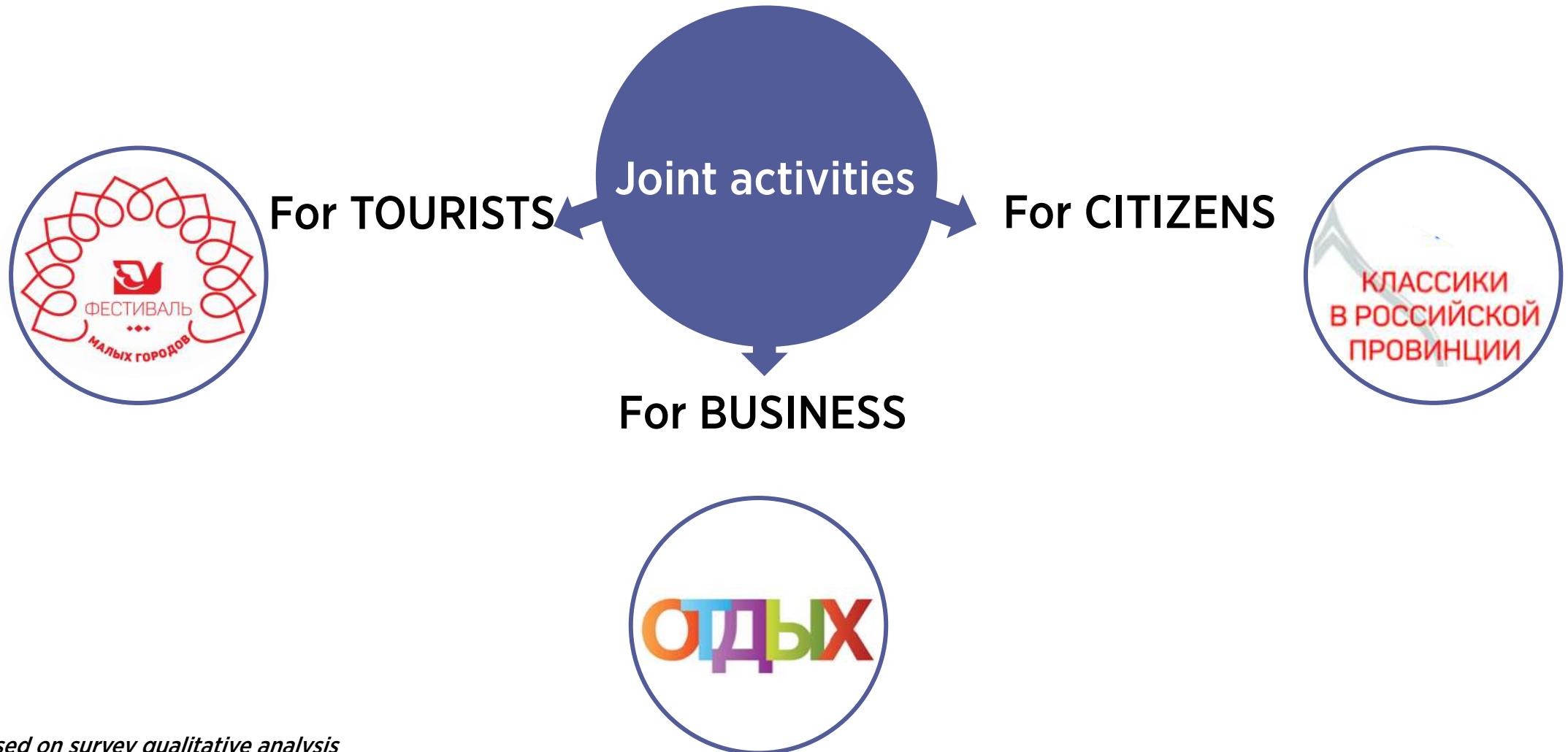


Respondents believe that the key direction of cooperation of ASTT participants is related to its **marketing activities**

**10** out of **12** respondents are involved in joint marketing projects

At the same time most of ASTT's activities are connected with **lobbying of small towns' interest** at the national level (at the federal government etc.)

Three ASTT events for different audiences:



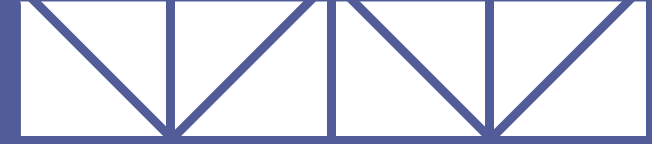


# Benefits of joining ASTT



## TOP-5:

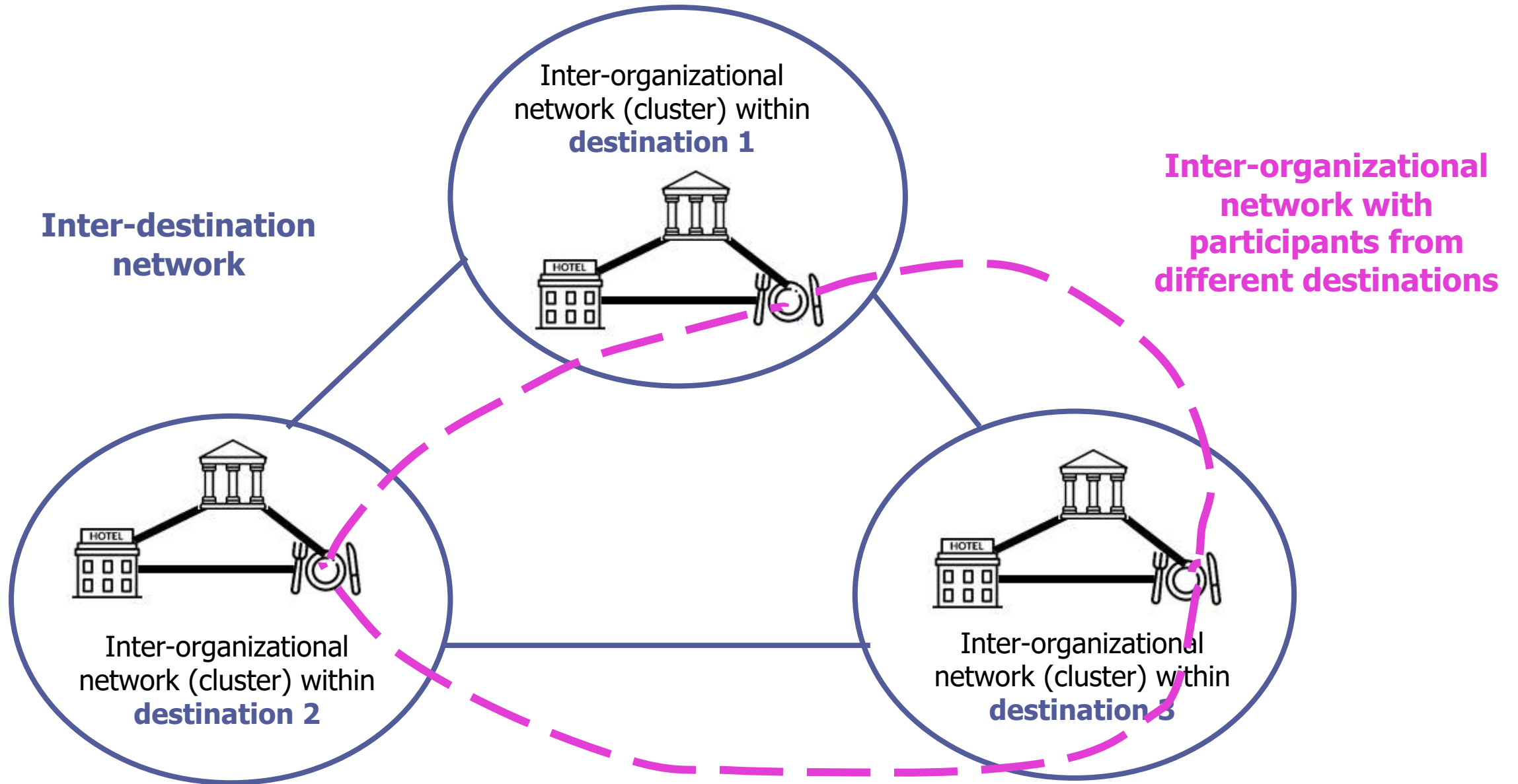




## TOP-5



# Results



- Despite authorities of many ASTT's cities believe that their networking is aimed at joint marketing activities, in reality, most of the association's efforts are aimed at lobbying small towns' interests at federal level
- Key marketing areas of networking within ASTT are related to the exchange of best practices in event marketing and city branding
- Participation of a small town in ASTT (inter-destination network) has a positive influence on the willingness of local authorities to develop tourism clusters (intra-destination network)
- Tourism cluster development is constrained by low level of trust and cooperative behavior of local businesses

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