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The Future of Tourism Development in the Podlaskie Voivodeship

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Abstract

The main objective of this article is to answer the following research questions: What actions should be taken to encourage the development of tourism in the Podlaskie Voivodeship? In what time perspective will the specified actions be executed? For the achievement of this purpose, the Delphi method was used. Research results indicate that the thesis concerning the construction of a tourist offer based on valuable natural areas of the Podlaskie Voivodeship is of strategic importance for the development of tourism, and also specify its likely duration in the period of 2016-2030. They pointed to the lack of strategic importance, of the thesis regarding the need for the involvement of foreign investors in the financing of the construction of key tourism investments in the region for the development of tourism. In the case of the thesis concerning the construction of an airport in the region, which would give impetus to tourist traffic, despite the indications of its high significance for the development of tourism, it will never be realized.

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Introduction

In modern times, the development of tourism constitutes a contribution to the economic growth in many regions. Unfortunately, it is strongly dependent on a number of phenomena occurring both within the region and beyond it. Operating in such uncertain and constantly changing conditions forces, primarily the regional policy-makers, to prepare and develop competitive and developmental strategies of shaping tourism in the next several years.

The ability to manage the development of tourism in the region results primarily from the following competences of the provincial government enabling the adoption of the regional development strategy and the spatial development

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plan (Kirylyuk, 2009). As is clear from the research by J. Ejdy and D. Szpilko, the 15 of 16 Polish provinces have developed strategies for tourism development. The methodology for preparing this document demonstrates a number of weaknesses. For each region, it is virtually identical and narrows down to conducting a tourism audit, SWOT analysis, identifying goals and strategic directions and operational programs. Also, the variety and a wide range of identified objectives and strategic directions, makes it difficult to identify the priority ones among them, thanks to which tourism would have a chance for rapid development in the region. The analyses also show a very low level of participation of regional representatives, representing entrepreneurs, scientists, public administration, non-governmental and social organizations and the media, even though their participation at every stage of the preparation of strategies in terms of the implementation of the identified objectives and directions of development is extremely important. The low level of participation in creating strategic documents causes the stakeholders not to identify with the worked out objectives and directions of development, because of which they do not feel co-responsible for their implementation (Ejdys, Szpilko, 2013).

The main objective of this article is to answer the following research questions: What actions should be taken to encourage the development of tourism in the Podlaskie Voivodeship? In what time perspective will the specified actions be executed?

In the research process the Delphi method was used, known and used in many areas of research in many countries, and representing a new approach in the process of building a tourism development strategy in Poland. This method constitutes a response to the identified weaknesses of the current process of formulating the strategic documents in the sphere of tourism. It enables a multi-faceted look at the analysed phenomenon with the involvement of a wide range of experts and stakeholders of the analysed area and to achieve a consensus on many complex cases. The simultaneous use of the Delphi method in building the vision of the future development of tourism in the Podlaskie Voivodeship will be the basis for the verification of the structure and the correct application of the prepared research tool, and will indicate the potential for future research.

1. Methods

The Delphi method was used for the achievement of the purpose. It is a qualitative method combining the knowledge and opinions of experts in order to reach an informed consensus on a complex issue (Linstne & Turoff, 1975; Veal, 1992; Weber & Ladkin, 2003). H. Linstone and M. Turoff (2002) define it as a structured group communication process aiming to ensure the operational effectiveness of an independent community of people who as a group strive to solve a complex issue. This objective is achieved by using iterative rounds, during which experts are supplied with questionnaires interleaved with feedback from the preceding rounds (Powell, 2003; Briedenhann & Butts, 2006).

The use of the Delphi method to solve complex problems in the sphere of tourism is widely recognized (Green, Hunter & Moore, 1990). This is confirmed by a number of projects completed and presented in the international scientific literature since the early 80s of the Twentieth century. This method has been used in the field of tourism in countries such as Nova Scotia (Canada), (Kaynak & Macauley, 1984), Hawaii (USA), (Liu, 1988), Singapore (Yeong, Keng & Leng, 1989), Hong Kong (Lloyd, la Lopa, & Braunlich, 2000), Croatia (Kaynak & Cavlek, 2006), Botswana (Kaynak & Marandu, 2006), Taiwan (Lee & King, 2008), Iran (Asadi & Daryaei, 2011), Venezuela (García-Melón, Gómez-Navarro & Acuña-Dutra, 2012), Ukraine (Rio & Nunes, 2012).

The research process, using the Delphi method, consisted of 4 main phases: preparatory phase, pilot study, proper study, analysis of the results. In order to implement the first stage, 42 experts from the broadly understood tourism sector in the Podlaskie Voivodeship were invited to participate in a panel. Among them were the representatives of science, business, government, non-governmental organizations, protected areas, cultural institutions and the media. As a result of the works, the experts formulated a total of 36 Delphi theses, from which 12 theses were accepted for the further research process after consultations (see Table 1). A research questionnaire was also developed.

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