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.

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 (Kiryluk, 2009). As is clear from the research by J. Ejdys 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,
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

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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