

19th International Scientific Conference; Economics and Management 2014, ICEM 2014, 23-25
April 2014, Riga, Latvia

The methods used in the construction of a tourism development strategy in the regions. A case study of Poland¹

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Abstract

The paper presents the results of the analysis of the tourism development strategies in the Polish regions in terms of the methods used for their preparation. Based on the conducted examination of the documents, a comparison was made between the identified methods and the methods most often used in foresight projects, through their representation on the so-called foresight diamond. The weaknesses in the selection of methods in the process of developing a tourism development strategy in the regions compared to the foresight projects were also pointed out.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the Kaunas University of Technology.

Keywords: Strategy; tourism; region; foresight.

1. Introduction

Tourism is the determinant of the development of many regions. Because of this fact, countries take measures to create conditions for further growth in this sector, wherein it is strongly dependent on the phenomena occurring both within the region and beyond. This forces the regional decision-makers to use the available tools of strategic management, aimed at building the competitive advantages of tourist reception regions.

Strategic management is a complex, continuous management process, set at formulation and implementation of effective strategies conducive to a higher degree of compatibility of the organization and its environment and the

¹ The project was funded by the National Science Centre on the basis of the contract No. DEC-2012/05/N/HS4/02055

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achievement of strategic objectives (Griffin, 1996). In contrast, strategy is the identification of the major, long-term goals and the adoption of such courses of action, as well as the allocation of resources that are necessary to achieve the objectives (Chandler, 1962).

In practice, it is impossible to prepare an original strategy enabling the achievement of a competitive advantage, solely through the correct application of the standard methods and procedures. The main problem is not the procedure for the activities and analyses, but the persons preparing the strategy. In the absence of policy makers, on whose initiative effective approaches will be developed, and who in fact will implement them, all the methods and tools will remain useless.

The answer to the problems regarding the creation of the development strategy are the foresight studies, used successfully in the implementation of the prospective long-term projects in relation to a variety of areas and industries (since recently in Poland, and since the seventies of the twentieth century around the world). Grupp and Linstone (1999) define foresight as an equivalent of a set of systematic efforts to look into the future and make the most efficient choice. At the same time, foresight assumes that there is no one single future. Depending on the actions or lack of actions in the present, many variants of the future are possible, but only one of them will occur.

The results of foresight projects illustrate the effects of the work of high-level experts and the feelings of a broad group of stakeholders. Therefore, they constitute a different class of documents than the expert opinions and government strategic documents (Matusiak, Kuciński, & Gryzik, 2009). Strategic Foresight integrates the ideas, procedures and the instruments of trend research, research on the future, in order to support the strategic decision-making processes and initiate the planning and innovative activities (Müller, 2008).

The objectives of foresight are implemented using a variety of tools and methods, both strictly scientific and heuristic, based on expert intuition. The iterative nature of the process enables the foresight to be treated as a permanent approach in thinking about the future and act as a useful tool when attempting to manage it (Magruk & Jańczuk, 2009).

The research processes adopted in the foresight studies conducted so far assume the utilization of a sequence of methods of various types (Nazarko, 2013; Ejdyś, 2013). The catalogue of research methods used in foresight studies is extensive, and consists of methods and techniques borrowed from management, as well as those developed by the futurologists (Kononiuk & Magruk, 2008). The methods adopted for the foresight studies constitute a large group, from which the most commonly used methods have been placed by Popper (2008) on the so-called foresight diamond, reflecting their basic typology. They have been divided according to the following criteria: nature (quantitative, qualitative and indirect); ability to collect and process information, expertise, creativity and interaction (Fig. 1).

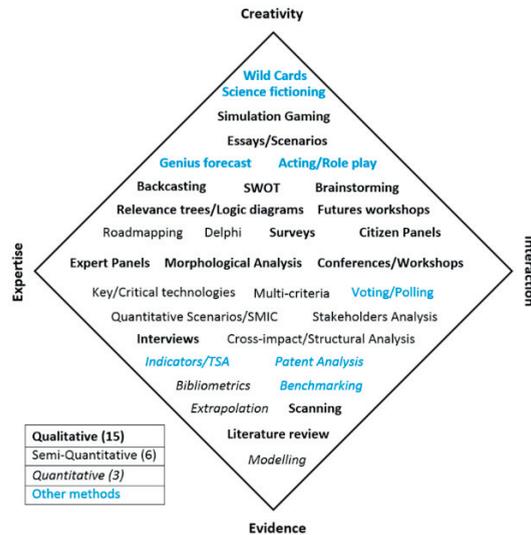


Figure 1. Foresight diamond - the methods used in foresight projects
 Source: Popper, R. (2008). How Are Foresight Methods Selected? *Foresight*, 10/6, 62-89.

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