

Destination Management Organization and Creating the Quality of Tourist Product of a Region

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Abstract

In the era of increasing competitiveness on a tourism market and the continuing battle for customers between particular tourist regions of the world, Europe, and the country, there is constant search for methods and ways to achieve a competitive advantage in a given market takes place. Many entrepreneurs also come to the conclusion that the mere price competition and the use of the latest methods of promotion are not sufficient. The present tourist is more and more educated and demanding. He expects that the services, which he pays for, fully satisfy his requirements. Therefore, in tourism the quality of provided services is becoming increasingly important. The article presents the activities which can be taken by the Destination Management Organization (DMO) to shape effectively the quality of the tourism product of the whole region.

Key words

Quality, Destination Management Organization, Tourist product.

Introduction

Regional tourism product has a very complex character. Many institutions have an influence on its formation. Therefore, attention to ensure proper quality standards of tourism services is perceived by individual entrepreneurs and by the governments of tourist regions as one of the chief assets which can help to achieve the competitive advantage on the tourist market. However, recognizing the complexity of the problems associated with the process of creating the tourism product of the region and ensuring its proper quality, entrepreneurs and the authorities of tourist regions look for a corresponding institution which could tackle these tasks. Such an institution seems to be the DMO assumed to coordinate the activities of local governments and a local tourism industry to develop tourism in the region. UNWTO defines the Destination Management Organization as an entity which integrates local authorities, enterprises and other organizations involved in the development of tourism and/or enables to create partnerships around a shared developmental vision. The ultimate objective of the DMO is the development and promotion of a tourist region by coordinating and carrying out certain key activities such as finance, strategic planning, marketing, decision making and the development of regional tourism products¹. Shaping the regional tourism product can be also such a goal.

Tourism product of a region

In the literature there are many definitions of a tourist product. In general, Ph. Kotler² defines a product as anything which can be on the market, gain attention, be acquired, used or consumed, satisfying one's desire or need³. The tourism product of a region, therefore, can consist of various elements which, related appropriately to each other, form a package of material goods and services which meet the expectations and needs of the tourist, for which he is willing to pay the required price. In practice, we rarely deal with the provision of all services related to a given tourism product by a single entrepreneur. The most often particular components of the tourism product are created by separate entrepreneurs, for example hoteliers, restaurateurs, managers of ski lifts, transport companies, etc. All of them, providing services connected with a comprehensive tourism product, generally care for their own interests often forgetting about general-regional interests. The appropriate combination of selected elements in one product by one tourist

¹ *Survey on destination governance. Evaluation report, Destination Management Programme, Madrid 2010.*

² Kotler P.: *Marketing. Analiza, planowanie, wdrażanie, kontrola.* Warsaw: Gebethner & Ska 1994, p.400.

³ More on the issue of the elements of a regional tourist product in the article by P. Gryszel, D. Jaremen, A. Rapacz, *Opportunities for social tourism development by managing the process of tourist product creation* published in the publication and by P. Gryszel, *Działania Lokalnej Organizacji Turystycznej na rzecz kształtowania jakości produktu turystycznego regionu.* in: *Kształtowanie jakości produktu turystycznego regionu z zachowaniem rozwoju zrównoważonego.* Instytut Turystyki, Warsaw 2004.

enterprise is not always possible because it is not the owner, often for economic reasons, of all desired components of the product. The particular entrepreneurs - owners of the individual components of the product often treat each other as competitors, which does not allow them to create a comprehensive tourist offer.

The quality of the tourism product of a region

In practice and theory there are many definitions of quality. The concept is used every day usually with the meaning of luxury goods and services, that is of "high quality". It may be low, acceptable, appropriate, high. All definitions of quality take the economic - marketing shape and relate to the customer's requirements, e.g. Ph. Kotler argues that quality is the sum of characteristics of a product or service which decides about the ability of a given product to meet specific needs⁴. UNWTO provides the following definition of quality: "Quality is the fulfilment, at a fixed and accepted price, of all legitimate demands and expectations of the customer, with simultaneous respecting the quality requirements for safety, hygiene and availability of tourist services, and the harmony of human and natural environment"⁵. However, following Daria E. Jaremen quality of a tourist product of a region, due to its complexity, can be defined as a set of characteristics/features of the tourism product of a region which decide about its ability to meet the identified and suspected (expected) needs and expectations of tourists appearing in connection with their stay in a given area for tourism purposes. It can be assumed that quality means a certain defined grade of compatibility between expectations and perceived by tourists features and elements of the tourism product offered by a given region⁶. The client expects such a tourism product of a region (a service provided to him) which:

- will meet his needs, providing satisfaction and contentment,
- will not cause problems,
- will be provide at a convenient time and place,
- whose price will correspond to the value it presents⁷.

Analyzing the problems of the quality of a tourist product of a region, two main dimensions of quality, so called technical and functional quality cannot be forgotten.

The technical quality is everything which the customer receives in the process of providing services. It depends on the qualifications and skills of the personnel providing services, and the material resources used in the service process. Elements of the tourist product of a region affecting the technical quality of the product include among others:

- accommodation and catering base (standard, the level of provided services),
- tourist attractions of the region, including the condition of the natural environment, their development and access for tourists,
- tourist attractions of the region, including the organization of mass events, folklore,
- transport infrastructure, availability of the region and internal transport development, marking tourist attractions, journey time,
- the level of tourists' safety,
- a system of tourism information and promotion and a system of reservation and distribution of services,
- weather conditions,
- aesthetics of the surroundings and a community infrastructure,
- the level of prices,
- qualifications of tourist personnel,
- the image of a region.

The functional quality is determined by how the customer is served. This is a way in which he is treated by the personnel of tourist enterprises, the inhabitants of the region. This quality is shaped during a direct contact with a tourist when the service is provided, but also it is shaped by tourists themselves, their behaviour and opinions. Its level is significantly influenced by hospitality of the inhabitants of the region,

⁴ Kotler Ph.: *Marketing... publ. quat.*, 49.

⁵ Kachniewska M.: *Zarządzanie jakością usług turystycznych*. Warsaw: Difin 2002, p. 59.

⁶ Jaremen D.E.: *Jakość produktu turystycznego regionu*. In: *Turystyka w strategii rozwoju miast i gmin Ziemi Kłodzkiej*. Collective work edited by L. Koćwin. Wrocław: Wyższa Szkoła Zarządzania „Edukacja” 2004, p.61.

⁷ Wąsowicz E.: *Produkt turystyczny i jego jakość*. In: *Markowe produkty turystyczne*. Collective work edited by A. Panasiuk. Szczecin-Niechorze: Fundacja na rzecz Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego 2004, p. 173.

the attitude towards tourists, commercialization of everyday life and treating the tourist only as a potential customer.

DMO tasks for the good of the shaping the quality of the tourism product of a region

Taking into consideration the complexity of the tourism product of a region, thus a large number of elements evaluated by tourists and affecting its quality, it appears that shaping the quality of a tourism product of a region is not an easy task. The quality of a regional product is affected by both the economic subjects and local authorities, and residents and tourists visiting a given region. Therefore, it is necessary to find an appropriate institution which could affect the high level of the quality of the tourist product of a region. The DMO, focusing in its ranks both representatives of the tourism industry and local government units, can be such a successful institution. Caring for the development of a region through the development of tourism and regional tourism products, the DMO can play a significant role in the process of shaping the quality of these products. The DMO activities for the good of shaping and improving the quality of the regional tourism product include:

1. Improvement of tourism personnel. Activity in this area will consist organizing professional courses and training on various subjects. This training should be directed to the employees of tourism enterprises who have a direct contact with tourists visiting the region and employees of paratourist enterprises. An important activity of the DMO should be also education of the inhabitants of the region, whose aim is to make people aware that the local hospitality should be the basis for achieving success in the market, and the inconveniences of living in a tourist region caused by an increased tourist traffic can be compensated, as a result of the use of the tourist multiplier, by increased incomes of all residents of the region.

2. Activities for the development of tourism infrastructure in the region. Through a wide range of promotional activities, the DMO can encourage potential investors to be interested in the region. Through proper actions it may also influence the local authorities in order to create favourable conditions for investments. Infrastructure meeting all the safety requirements and corresponding with binding norms and standards should be created. New investments should lead to the improvement of tourist development of the region and have a positive impact on the sense of comfort of tourists visiting the region.

3. Conducting publishing activity. It should refer to, among others, preparation of promotional materials about the region, development of a catalogue of tourist offers (so called a product catalogue) and its current updating, cooperation with regional and national publishing houses in editing and issuing maps, book guides and tourist sources.

4. Cooperation with the mass media. The subject of the cooperation should be ongoing transmission of news releases, organizing press conferences, study tours for journalists and tour operators. These actions should be aimed at creating a positive image of the region in the eyes of potential visitors and tourists visiting the region.

5. Organization and co-organization of mass events in the region. In this regard, the DMO can play a role of a coordinator in organizing major mass events in the region. Organization of mass events raises the attractiveness of the regional tourism product, and thus it has a positive influence on its quality.

6. Setting the calendars of tourist events. This concerns the coordination of activities at the arrangement of the calendar for events in the region, so that there is not too much competition between particular tourist enterprises, so that major events are not organized at the same time, and so that the organization of events actually contributes to the extension of the tourist season.

7. Participation in the regional tourist information system. The DMO involvement in the functioning of regional and national tourist information system increases the availability of the regional tourism product, and significantly affects its positive image in the eyes of tourists.

Involvement of the DMO in the tourist information system should consist of:

- conducting a regional tourist information centre,
- conducting a local tourist information bank,
- coordinating the flow of information between the points of tourist information,
- conducting online information service,
- creating a system of labelling tourist attractions facilitating significantly getting around the region, thus resulting in the improvement of the perceived quality of the regional tourism product.

8. **Creation of a trade mark promoting the region and administrating it.** The DMO should order to announce a contest to develop a promotional logo of the region. All products signed with such a logo would be perceived as branded products, thus as high-quality products.

9. **Inspiring, help to create, develop and promote regional tourist products.** Thanks to a wide training - promotion activity the DMO can significantly influence creating local tourist offers. The DMO may also deal with the development of concepts and marking out thematic tourist routes in the region.

10. **Initiating tourism market research, participation in statistical and marketing surveys.** One of the main tasks of the DMO should be constant monitoring the tourism market through independent carrying out research of the tourist market (mainly geography of arrivals, tourist preferences, meeting their expectations). The results of the research should be used to improve the quality of providing services, thus to improve the quality of the regional tourism product.

Summary

Taking into consideration the importance of a regional tourism product, it should be noted that creating its quality is not an easy and fast task. In the process of creating a regional tourism product there are involved a significant number of subjects, not always directly related to a given product, and the shape of the regional tourism product is influenced by many elements not always having an economic nature. Efforts to raise the quality of a regional tourism product should be based on five pillars:

- system activity,
- cooperation and partnership,
- continuous improvement,
- leadership,
- past experience⁸.

The institution which can take on the implementation of these activities is the DMO.

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⁸ Jaremen D.E.: *Jakość ...*, publ. quat., p. 65.