

Cooperation and Competitiveness of a Tourism Area

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Abstract

The current tourism market is a highly competitive market. To effectively compete in this market with other tourist areas it is necessary to focus on developing appropriate methods for efficient management of tourist reception areas. It appears that the management in tourism destinations and tourist regions should be based on the public - private partnership model and on cooperation of businessmen in creating a regional tourism product. Only such cooperation can lead to gaining the effect of synergy in the tourist market. The synergy effect, however, will increase the competitiveness of destinations on the tourist market.

The aim of this paper is an indication of the benefits of tourism subjects cooperation as an act contributing to the improvement of the competitiveness of the tourist reception area.

Key words

cooperation, competitiveness of tourism regions.

1. Competitiveness of tourism destinations

The problem of competitiveness in relation to enterprises has been a point of interest to economists for many years. The theory in this area is rich and well developed. In its general sense, the company's competitiveness is similar to the concepts of economic efficiency and the effectiveness and skills used in economic sciences and management (Pierścionek 2003). It can be assumed that the competitive will be the entity which is, thanks to the effective management operating, capable of obtaining such a cost reduction, and thanks to strategic management increase the value of the company, which will also enable it to strengthen the market and competitive position, and secondly, will provide high investment attractiveness (Nawrot 2009). In other words, the competitiveness of an enterprise is expressed in gaining advantage over market competitors through meeting the needs of consumers with products of proper quality, delivered in the right place and time, at a price which they are able to accept.

In the case of tourist regions (destinations) competitiveness is a problem more complex because it depends not only on the enterprise and ability of the company owner, but also on the efficiency of the territorial socio - economic systems and their ability to the expanded reproduction of regional and national resources. The specificity of regional competitiveness is the simultaneous competing of manufacturers with competing of the environment in which they operate (Markowski 1999).

According to T. Markowski, regions may compete in a direct or indirect way. The indirect competing should be understood as the existence or creation of regional environmental conditions for companies operating in them allowing them to obtain a competitive advantage in the elements being out of control of their actions. It can be expressed and measured with the competitive abilities of companies located therein. However, the direct competing means competing of entity territorial units, which compete for different types of benefits, access to financial resources, attracting outside investors, maintenance of capital in the region, location of agencies and government institutions, and the broadest speaking - for the social and economic development ensuring the high quality of life (Gorynia Łązniewska, 2009).

From the point of view of the direct competition, tourist destinations (regions) are capable of competing in the area of:

- gaining access to national and international markets,
- attracting domestic and foreign investors and tourists,
- getting the location of important institutions' headquarters and their agencies,
- obtaining the right to organize events of high importance and national and international meetings,
- implementation of large infrastructural, ecological, social projects,
- gaining financial help from the European Union and other international financial institutions (Nawrot 2009).

All these actions are to contribute to the creation of a regional tourism product and its effective sale on the tourist market. It should also be noted that a very important element of the destination competitiveness are its tourist attractions. They are inextricably linked with the space in which they are located, they cannot be moved, and they very often have a unique character. They are a core part of the regional tourism product. All this means that, both from the point of view of an investor as well as a tourist, it is possible to achieve a tourist pension. Investors achieve additional benefits resulting from the investment location in a given region (destination), for example, fashion

for leisure in the resort, its popularity with tourists, and its reputation cause that the same accommodation can be sold at higher prices than in the neighbouring locality.

On this basis we can assume that the competitive tourist destination is such an area which can win the competition with other regions or destinations, and from the point of view of tourism, destination competitiveness means the ability to create such a tourist offer (tourist product) which would differentiate a given destination from others, and as a result, would attract tourists and increase the socio-economic benefits resulting from the tourism development in the area.

Competitiveness of tourism destinations depends on many factors. They are often factors independent on the region (destination), like fashion for practicing certain forms of tourism, economic policies of the government, tourist attractions making its potential. However, many of these factors can be created through actions within the region, for example through promotion, policies of the region authorities, an adequate system of tourist products distribution, hospitality, management of visitors, tourist management and cooperation of various actors in creating a regional tourism product.

The measure of the competitiveness of tourist destinations (regions) is the ability to make effective use of tourist resources and adaptation to changing conditions. This is consistent with such a notion of competitiveness, which defines it as the ability to achieve the objectives smoothly. In the case of the tourism reception areas (destinations), the most important goal is to derive the permanent benefits from tourism development by all economic subjects in the area (Alejziak, 2008).

2. The influence of cooperation on competitiveness and development of tourist destinations product

A tourist product of the tourist reception area has a very complex character. It comprises the following components:

- the original (primary) destination offer, which has an impact on motivation and determines the choice of visits (travelling) location - they are usually natural and anthropological attractions,
- supplement (additional) destination offer, which creates conditions of stay and enables to use the original offer of the region - it is often described as the tourist and para-tourist infrastructure,
- the availability of destinations, which should be understood as investment, speed and comfort for the visitor to reach the destination,

- the destination image, having a strong influence on the choice of the tourist region by the visitor, as well as the image of the service organization within the region,
- an appropriate price, which is for the visitor the sum of expenditure for transport, accommodation, meals and other services, and which is dependent on the season, a type of purchased services, the exchange rate, distance to the destination, the means of transport, the region.

Many factors and institutions have an influence on the creation, promotion and marketing of the regional tourism product. Therefore, cooperation of many actors and institutions is required in order to prepare a professional regional offer, which will meet consumers' expectations and will enable to achieve a competitive advantage on the market. It can have a character of:

- a) *vertical cooperation*, i.e. cooperation of entities from various sectors in order to create a chain of services, for example, a common creation of tourist packages;
- b) *horizontal cooperation*, i.e. using the economy of scale - cooperation of the economic subjects of the same type, for example, a shared kitchen or laundry for a few hotels;
- c) *lateral (side) cooperation*, i.e. exchange of experiences with other sectors, such as partnership in the sphere of technology - the company Quelle cooperated with Neckermann in the area of mail-order sales of tourist offers,
- d) *spatial concentration* (agglomeration effect), i.e. the use of heterogeneous agglomeration effect - concentration of various attractions and services in the destination.

This cooperation, however, faces many obstacles of formal and mental nature. It may be noticed that Polish entrepreneurs forced between the years 1945 -1989 to the mandatory cooperation in the form of e.g. cooperatives, are very reluctant to take action to prepare a tourist offer together.

Three basic stages of achieving the tourist destination management can be seen in the tourist reception areas (Fig. 3). In the first stage, which can be called a phase of coexistence, the economic subjects operating in the tourist resort, or in a given region do not notice the need to cooperate with each other. Each subject works independently to achieve its own goals. Other subjects are treated as competitive, or if they offer a different category of product, they are considered to be neutral.

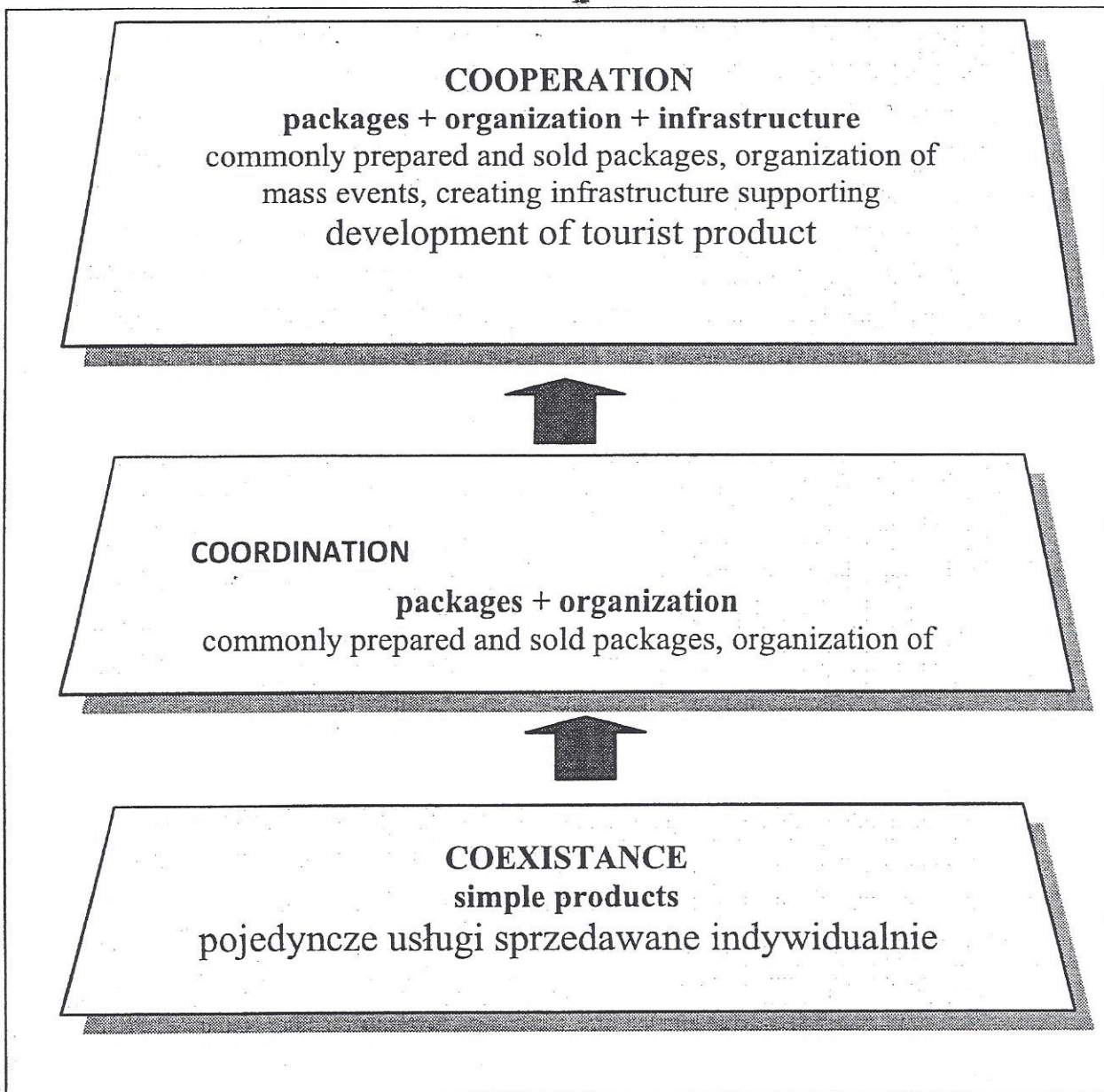


Fig. 1. Stages of achieving the tourist destination management

Source: own studies.

This state does not last long. When one of the subjects wants to expand its activity, or if there is an arrangement between several actors, then competition appears, or there are first signs of cooperation. In the second stage, called the stage of coordination, entrepreneurs begin to see the need for cooperation. The first products are prepared in the form of packages by entrepreneurs, whose offer complements, e.g. the owner of a stud farm organizes holidays 'in the saddle' together with a neighbouring guest house. In this phase of cooperation entrepreneurs often decide to join an already functioning outside marketing group, whose aim is to help them to find customers, and through

joint orders, reduce transaction costs. They sometimes also decide to start their own group. Networking products are also created. Organization of large mass events designed to attract more tourists to the destination or the region can be a sign of cooperation. In the third stage, called the phase of cooperation, Local Tourist Organization is created most often. Entrepreneurs create a joint tourist offer tailored to the requirements of specific market segments. A suitable tourism infrastructure is created in order to adapt better the tourism product to the tourists' requirements. The area begins to be perceived as a destination, and in order to sell the tourist product more effectively, a local reservation system is created, which significantly reduces transaction costs and helps to attract customers. To commercialize the tourist product, as the next phase of cooperation, Organization (Institution) of Destinations Management, being the local tour-operator is created - an establishment organizing the reception (Destination Management Company DMC)

3. Summary

The contemporary situation on the international tourism market is characterized by a sharp competitive struggle between particular destinations. Cooperation between the tourist operators in order to achieve the synergic effect is necessary to enable the earning a satisfactory income from tourism business. In addition, the area of tourist reception should be treated as one big enterprise in which particular 'components' and 'parts' of the final tourism product are manufactured in the respective 'departments' and on appropriate 'work places' (in hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions, souvenir shops, transport enterprises, etc.) This 'enterprise' should be efficiently managed, so that a profit could be shown at the end of the accounting period. A region - a tourist destination can be seen in such a way at the beginning of the 21st century.

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