

## **PRO-QUALITY ACTIVITIES IN A TOURISTIC ADMINISTRATION AS A CREATING VALUE ELEMENT OF THE MIDDLE POMERANIAN REGION**

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**Abstract:** The client is a more and more demanding subject of the tourist market, which needs to consider not only a price but also accessibility, attractiveness, variety, complexity, timing, quality, etc. As a result there is a necessity to undertake development-strategic actions in different sections of tourist companies and locals. The main goal of the article is to introduce pro-quality activities in a tourist area by the tourist entities. This is possible with using quality managements systems, pro-quality instruments, using quality systems. This will help to gain the proper functioning and development of the organizations and gain the regional advantage.

**Key words:** tourism, quality, management system, competition, improvement

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, tourism is the fastest growing sector of the global economy. Any changes in this area result in the development of particular tourism activities. These changes often become the force, which drives the competitiveness, and in particular creates suitable functioning conditions for new entrants or new tourist services. On the one hand, this situation creates opportunities, and on the other hand, operational dangers for tourism enterprises, gminas, cities and other entities, which are determined to develop the region and local community.

Appropriate management, which is focused on the quality (through proper management systems and quality management systems), increase chances of success for entities, which form the tourism via development activities. Simultaneously, this management minimizes risks, which are connected with economic crisis, competition, etc. The result of this management direction is the added value, which is a determinant of competitiveness described as a competitive advantage.

Therefore, it should be remembered that the fight for clients (both domestic and foreign, in various ages) takes place in many areas, in different dimensions and with using different agents. That is why, an adequate quality of provided services and clearly defined

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directions of touristic and para-touristic enterprises, including entities creating tourism, help to shape the product, tourism industry and economic development in the region. Adopted plans and activities of local governments play a very important role in these actions. It is therefore assumed that the proper functioning and development of both tourism enterprises and the rest of tourism sector create the added value (Value Based Management). It forms the right economic and social image of the region.

The aim of this article is to present the importance of introducing pro-quality activities in the field of tourism via entities, which provide and create tourism services. The thesis assumes that pro-quality activities facilitate entities in actions, which aim to meet customer's requirements. Simultaneously, pro-quality actions help entities to develop their activity in a competitive tourism market. This study was based on the literature analysis and statistical methods – in particular, comparative methods.

### **ESSENCE OF THE TOURISM – THE ECONOMIC ASPECT**

The importance and level of tourism are very large in the development of regions. They could be considered in many categories and may concern among other things: elements from the travel and accommodation in a certain place or the form of economic activity. Simultaneously, they are a subject of research in many scientific disciplines. To the main implications of these researches, we can include among other things economic, psychological and social aspects, etc.

It should be stressed that the existence and development of tourism is substantially associated with the economic dimension, because especially tourist activity (economic entities providing services) and its functions (among other things: educational, recreation and health, ethnic, economic and political (Meyer, 2006) provide individual (links) values in a complex chain of values in providing tourist services.

The development of service activity and the increase of life expectancy positively influence on the service sector, which also includes tourist services. According to the forecast in the next few years, development of the service sector will provide  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the global GDP (Kachniewska, 2002).

In accordance with the WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) terminology, in the tourism industry<sup>1</sup> in Poland provided 19,7 billion zlotys in 2007 what represented 1,4% GDP and it is estimated that in 2017, this industry will amount to 42,1 billion zlotys presenting 2% of GDP (Golembki, 2009).

Therefore, it should be assumed that changing needs of our society, climate changes and price competitiveness will cause the development of tourism movement – tourism industry, including mostly entities of tourism industry (Meyer, 2006; Rapacz, 2001) like tourism enterprises and entities, which provide tourist services. They have a direct or indirect influence on the development of tourism in the certain region. It ought to be remembered that not only tourist entities, but also “stewards of the region” (the entity, which is responsible for the economic development in the region) and demographic situation form the tourism movement.

The faster is the development of touristic enterprises, the region gets more funds resources to create an appropriate infrastructure, as well as image and tourism potential – the tourist product. The proper infrastructure, friendly environment (also for investments) and tourist attractions are only a few factors, which stimulate and motivate entities to the development. The quality of provided services is a very

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<sup>1</sup> Industry including the production of goods and services, which are directly or indirectly connected with the tourism, for example: transport, gastronomy – consumption – food, accommodation, recreational, rehabilitative and health services, etc.

important element too. It concerns both enterprises, which directly provide tourism services for example: hotels, motels, spas and indirect enterprises i.e. travel agencies, transport and catering companies, etc.

### **THE QUALITY OF TOURISM SERVICES**

Nowadays, the quality has become an interdisciplinary term, which is used both in science and practice. It is proved by different interpretations of the quality. We can include to these commentaries, inter alia (Olkiewicz, 2013):

- some degree of perfection – Platon (Bank, 1996);
- compliance with requirements (Ph.B. Crossy, 1979);
- totality of characteristics and features of product or service, which are connected with the ability to satisfy stated and predictable needs (ISO 8402:1994);
- degree, in which a set of inherent qualities meets requirements (ISO 9001:2006);
- full realization of a set of requirements, which means achieving a state of the relative perfection (Kolman & Tkaczyk, 1996);
- it is something what can be improved (Skrzypek, 2000);
- sum of characteristics of product and service, which decide about the ability of product to fulfill specific needs (Kotler, 1994).

The quality can also be identified as a set of qualities, values, appropriate and emotional attributes, which decide about the degree, in which a certain product meets receivers' needs (Panasiuk, 2005). This interpretation of the "quality" definition means that customers perceive the quality in different ways. For each receiver the "quality" can mean different things, for example (Hamrol, 2008)

- *form of the product*: material product, merchandise, article, prefabricated element, service, product;
- *characteristics and features*: functionality, innovation, economy, esthete, accuracy and precision of realization, reliability, timeliness, sustainability, accessibility, prestige and brand, price;
- *subject*: producer, supplier, country of origin, size of entity;
- *phase of existence*: operation, maintenance, warranty period (including quality of guarantee).

Therefore, it can be concluded that on the one hand, the quality is a certain set of characteristics, abilities of products, services, system or process, which are needed to meet requirements of a customer and other interested parties, and on the other hand, it determines the necessary knowledge from disclosing defects and errors in functioning of the organization in order to perfect (improve) the product, merchandise or service and also management. This understanding of the quality has a big impact on the interpretation, identification and determination of the importance of quality services (including tourism services).

The specificity of services, in particular its qualities (Kachniewska, 2002; Kowalczyk, 2009; Urbaniak, 2004; William, 2006): immateriality, diversity, instability, inseparability, etc. influences on the difficulty in identification and measurement of service quality, including tourism services.

Paradoxically, services have a great impact on the creation of consumption structure, enabling the generation of new needs, goods and services and simultaneously on the other hand, they define a quality measure through the tendency of buyers to shopping, preferences and tastes. In a word, the development of consumption is the force of economic development and it increases the quality of offered and provided services, contributing to the development in competitiveness among enterprises.

This state is visible in tourism services, which are a set all actions to meet needs of tourists concerning travel and realization of its target, develop tourism companies and increase the competitiveness among them. In the era of economic crisis, majority of touristic and para-touristic entities rely on the quality (process of continuous improvement of offered services), because they know that the higher offered standard in a competitive price, the higher turnovers and very often longer period of provided services. Therefore, it can be assumed that the quality in tourism is a realization of all client's lawful demands and expectations for a fixed and accepted price while respecting quality requirements in health, safety and accessibility (Kachniewska, 2002). Quality has become a motivator to build a company's image, its competitiveness and position in the tourism market.

### **PRO-QUALITY ACTIVITIES IN TOURISM SERVICES**

Compliance with all requirements of law, analysis and adaptation to constantly changing customer's expectations force tourism entities to constant improvement in all areas of their functioning. One of the basic, popular, public-oriented and aimed at quality improving activities is the implementation of quality management system or quality-oriented management system.

On the one hand, these systems can be voluntarily implemented (quality management systems) for example: ISO 9001 – Quality Management System, ISO 14001 – Environment Management System, PN-N-18001 – Safety and Occupational Health Management System, and on the other hand (depending on the range of provided services - quality-oriented systems) systems, which are implemented by relevant authorities, for example: Health Safety of Food Assurance Systems: GHP/GMP, GMP+, HACCP consistent with requirements of: ISO 22000, Codex Alimentarius, DS 3027 (Provision of safety food production with HACCP).

No matter what management system will be selected by enterprises, it aims to improve the functioning and increasing the provided quality. Pro-quality activities begin at the stage of awareness about their needs, and then they are realized in the planning phase. Enterprise obtains the best benefits in the case of determining long-term pro-quality activities including in the quality strategy, which is supported by the identified management system or integrated management system. Entities with the strategy do not always implement or certify management system, because they would be subject to the systematic supervision of the certification unit.

However, long-term pro-quality activities (including also activities, which perfect management systems) in touristic and para-touristic companies are often burdened with big costs resulting from the need to adapt their organization to the customer's requirements, quality standard, competition, standards, etc. among other things in the area of infrastructure, legal requirements and human resources. It should also be remembered that quality management systems or quality-oriented management systems are elements in creation of the added value. Due to their specificity, they significantly act on basic areas of the organization, such as:

- finances (profitability, return on sale, appropriate financial management, including diversification of sources and allocation of financial surpluses);
- human resources (including human capital potential, conditions and manner of work, wages, career paths, etc.);
- production / services (focusing on effectiveness of production processes, logistics, quality of offered and provided services, price, quantity of products or services, etc.);
- customer's satisfaction (especially the analysis of the client – his or her segmentation, monitoring, needs, etc.).

The added value arises inter alia by introduced “innovations” in the field of creation and provision of touristic service, which often includes modifications in the provision of services process, the needs to modernize facilities (raising their standards), expansion or reduction in the amount of services, adjustment of a price to the offer, etc.

It is important among other things for the customer (meet his or her needs, ensuring the availability to the offer, attractiveness of the offer, reliability, solidity and repeatability of this process), entrepreneur (growth of profitability, efficiency, improve timeliness, suitable creation of the image, etc.) and the formation of competitiveness, which is realized in the region.

The Middle Pomeranian region is a coastal area characterized by many touristic attractions resulting from the geographical location, proper climate and tourism potential. Table 1 presents the use of systems in hospitality business for 15 May 2013 in two chosen coastal cities.

**Table 1.** Management system in the hospitality business

Specification	Hotels ***		Hotels ****		Hotels *****	
	Koszalin	Kołobrzeg	Koszalin	Kołobrzeg	Koszalin	Kołobrzeg
ISO 9001	-	4	-	4	-	-
ISO 14001	-	-	-	2	-	2
HACCP/ISO 22000	1	2	-	4	-	3

Analyzing the data presenting in table 1 and 2, it must be assumed that hospitality services in Koszalin are provided at a lower level than in Kołobrzeg. There may be several reasons of this situation: the main reason may be a small number of hotels in Koszalin what causes a little competition in the sector. For comparison, Sopot has 12 hotels (3 five-star hotels, 3 four-star hotels, 6 three-star hotels), and Kraków has 79 hotels (6 five-star hotels, 12 four-star hotels, 61 three-star hotels).

**Table 2.** Number of hotels in analyzed location

Specification	Koszalin	Kołobrzeg
Hotels ***	3	8
Hotels ****	-	6
Hotels *****	-	3

Comparing the number of hotels in Kołobrzeg (47,078 inhabitants) and Sopot (38,584 inhabitants), we can find out that the state of hospitality in both cities is similar to each other. On the other hand, it significantly lags behind in Koszalin (109,233 inhabitants), although it has twice as many inhabitants and it is located 11km away from the sea. To the next reasons, we can include a small number of facilities with standardization, and also hotels with implemented quality management systems. The realized analysis shows that two five-star hotels have an integrated management system according to the ISO 14001 and ISO 22000, and only one of them has ISO 22000. It could be said that the „categorization commits”, because all five-star hotels have management systems, which are consistent with ISO 9000 standards.

Classification in four-star hotels was formed in a slightly different way. Integrated management systems were used in four hotels. One of them had ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 22000 integration, two of them had 9001 and 22000 systems, one had ISO 14001 and ISO 22000 series and one only had ISO 9001 standard. Only one four-star hotel does not have the management system, which is compatible with ISO standards. Poor interest was observed among three-star hotels, because only two of them had the integrated system ISO

9001 with ISO 22000 and only two hotels had ISO 9001 standard. It means that only half three-star hotels respect requirements of ISO quality standards. The most common operating systems in hotels are systems connected with the food security (supply chain, collective nutrition) and the quality management in the enterprise. Possession of standardization and certified management systems increases costs of hotels' functioning, as well as enforces a continuous modernization of building infrastructure and improvement of provided services. Not all entities want to incur such an alternative cost, which does not guarantee the success and can be allocated to other development activities.

According to the adopted definition that the quality of touristic service is the whole features, which are connected with the ability to meet identified tourist's needs, a special attention should be paid on the fact that the customer (tourist) will connect individual components in the service quality evaluation, thereby creating a quality assessment of its totality (Zawadzka & Zieliński, 2012). Individual components create a touristic chain of values, which consists of, inter alia: information obtained before travelling, making reservation, travel, first impression of the accommodation place and target location, meals, touristic attractions, historical and cultural values, natural environment, infrastructure, memories, etc.

Each of these elements creates some value, which should be positive, and the sum of all above components determines a complex satisfaction of the client and price, which customer is willing to pay for provided services. All components are related with each other through various touristic and para-touristic organizations. We can include to the main entities, which create a so-called "touristic cluster": travel agencies, transport companies, accommodation, entertainment, cultural facilities and also regional and central authorities.

If entities do not take any pro-quality activities, they will not increase their market value, which is the basis of value based management (VBM). It is also worth mentioning that the development of tourism supply has a significant effect on the region's image, suitable climate of region's development and growth of the Economic Value Added (EVA<sup>2</sup>). The rate of value growth will significantly depend on the tourism movement, which presents negatively in Koszalin-Kołobrzeg relation, as shown in table 3.

**Table 3.** Utilization of accommodation facilities

Utilization of accomodation facilities	2010	2011	2010	2011
	Koszalin		Kołobrzeg	
Foreign tourists	3047	4656	105635	106630
Provided overnight stays	61019	61681	2431366	2689545
Foreign tourists	5012	8101	816535	948078

Table 3 shows that the tourism movement is a motivator in creation of market added value. This movement is dependent on accommodation facilities, which is also dependent on regional authorities. From the customer's (tourist's) point of view, steward of the region is mainly responsible for the development in a certain region. Analyzing cases of Koszalin and Kołobrzeg, the meaningful development is noted in Kołobrzeg. It is an effect of long-term pro-quality activities, which are supported by the appropriate development strategy including tourism. Pro-quality activities, which are realized by local government, can be implemented in two directions. The first one may concern the quality management system, which will be introduced in the Office. This action aims to improve organization of work, maximize customer's satisfaction via parameterization of different types of services,

<sup>2</sup> Economic Value Added is an economic profit, which creates a value for the organization's owner

introduction of a transparent service, examination of the work effectiveness and customer's satisfaction, etc. On the other hand, these activities can be connected with the planning of tourism's development in the region. The main areas of "intervention" include:

- financial sphere;
- planning (urban) sphere;
- organizational and institutional sphere;
- information and marketing sphere.

Financial areas – these are resources, which are used by local government. The government is willing (often must) spend them on activities, which are connected with the tourist activation. Usually, these resources are allocated among other things on ongoing maintenance, maintenance or repair of cultural institutions, protected natural areas (touristic attractions), support of touristic event organizations, promotions, etc. For comparison, expenditures of Koszalin and Kołobrzeg on tourism are shown in table 4.

**Table 4.** Expenditures on activities associated with tourism  
(Source: own study based on City Hall Koszalin and City Hall Kołobrzeg data)

Total tourism expenditures	2008	2009	2010	2011
Koszalin	54 536,00 PLN	-	85 756,00 PLN	64 999,00 PLN
Kołobrzeg	-	83 133,20 PLN	9 367 680,18 PLN	4 787 862,25 PLN

Data in Table 4 show, which city is more focused on the tourism development. For sure an important element, which determines the size of financing, is the location of cities – it especially concerns a direct access to the sea. For comparison, City of Sopot in 2010 incurred expenses on tourism in the amount of 41 million zlotys, and in 2011 – about 30 million zlotys.

This example presents that there are many factors, which determine the amount of expenditures for the development of tourism. The planning (urban) area is an important area for tourists and potential investors, because it concerns the allocation of terrains (often with an attractive location) for infrastructural investments such as: hotels, guest houses, spas, amusement and culture parks, etc. This area is aimed at improvement of existing touristic offer. It gives the possibility to create new touristic entities and generate a new tourism movement. On the one hand, the organizational and institutional area may concern taking any actions, which support touristic organizations (also non-profit organizations). They contribute to the increase in touristic activity. On the other hand, this area try to build a partnership (including Public – Private Partnership) to increase investment opportunities in the certain region.

Also activities, which are connected with the transfer of tasks to the realization by subordinated units and the determination of their verification and financing, will be in the scope of this area. The last very important area is the information and marketing area. Institution of local government, which is aimed at the development of tourism within the framework of information and marketing activities, can promote the city through different media, information materials (brochures, newsletters, leaflets, maps, etc.), website, etc. It should be remembered that all areas are closely connected with each other. The intensification of actions in one area forces an extension in other areas. This action has an effect on the economy development and forming the region's image. For local government, the development of regional tourism by pro-quality activities creates the added value via among other things:

- wider access to the business knowledge, including market researches, analyzes of customers and potential investors (of the tourism industry) needs;

- opportunity to establish new business contacts;
- knowledge of potential partners possibilities (PPP);
- development of the tourism business;
- reduction of unemployment;
- increase the number of customers / tourists using touristic services;
- growth of revenues;
- better recognition of the region;
- improvement of the residents' quality of life.

Also customers / tourists will be able to observe, among other things:

- better access to the new and more attractive offer of products and touristic services;
- better access to information about touristic services;
- prices competitiveness of offered services;
- higher quality of the residence infrastructure;
- complexity of services;
- higher quality of offered services.

### CONCLUSIONS

Currently, the tourism industry (like the entire economy) is going through the time of crisis. Despite many limitations, it slowly accelerates and develops forming a basis of competition. More and more often, there is a "fight" not between tourism enterprises, but between local governments. In order to obtain the competitive advantage, entities (from I and II sector) take pro-quality activities, which are aimed at the development of tourism in a certain region, where the instrument is "quality".

It gives them great possibilities to create their own brand, image, direction of development and it indicates the level of formation in the enterprise. Moreover, it shows them their place in the chain of market value creation. Comparative analysis presents that there are significant problems in development activities in the scope of tourism. It may result from existing conditions, which can include: location, lack of proper infrastructure and created image, lack of touristic product, too small touristic movement and often no concept of attracting tourists.

The use of pro-quality activities in different areas, for example through the use of management systems in tourism organizations, will significantly influence on the quality improvement in offered services, the adaptation of their activities to the European standards, repeatability of processes at a determined level, modernization of tourist entities' infrastructure and the possibility of modern technology implementation. All listed activities will contribute to increase the potential and touristic movement in a certain region.

Moreover, actions undertaken by local government, which are aimed at improving the quality of tourism, will be positively influenced on the development of tourism and the whole local society. Benefits resulting from implemented changes will meaningfully contribute to the growth of competitiveness between entities and region. Simultaneously, it will raise their value and importance in the country and Europe.

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