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MARKET MONITORING AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM ON A LOCAL SCALE

MARZENA WANAGOS¹

AGNIESZKA SMALEC²

TOMASZ STUDZIENIECKI¹

¹Department of Service Economics
Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Commodity Science
Gdynia Maritime University

✉ Morska 81-87, 81-225 Gdynia, Poland

Email: m.wanagos@wpit.am.gdynia.pl, t.studzieniecki@wpit.am.gdynia.pl

²Department of Services Marketing
Faculty of Management and Economics of Services
University of Szczecin

✉ Cukrowa 8, 71-004 Szczecin, Poland

Email: agnieszka.smalec@wzieu.pl

Annotation

The new economic concepts emphasize the importance of intellectual capital including knowledge and social relations. The skill of obtaining information and using it makes an important factor in the management processes. The range of the entities cooperation within a specific area and the effectiveness of such cooperation depend among others on the local market awareness. Such cooperation may be supported by a systematic market monitoring by the local government. This opens up the opportunities for not only reasonable targeted cooperation but an effective management of the resources owned by particular local organisations, and development creation as well. The aim of this paper is to present the importance of tourist market monitoring in tourism development on the local scale and the manner it is built, taking the city of Gdynia as an example. This article is based on the respective literature study and research, including surveys spread among travel agencies for inbound tourists located in the city of Gdynia. For the surveyed entities the knowledge about the tourist market is of great importance and the urge to mutually cooperate and have access to the current information big enough to have the local government of the city of Gdynia implement a special "Tourist Market Monitoring Programme".

Key words

economic development, monitoring, government, tourist market, management

JEL classification: R11, R19, O29, O35

1. Introduction

Monitoring is commonly considered to be a tool of correctly managed development, both on the local and regional scale. The knowledge on the condition and changes occurring in the space and within various human activities facilitates the planning of rational development (Dąbrowski, 2009). The issue of tourism market monitoring is handled scarcely, both as implementation and research (Panasiuk, 2006). The respective literature usually offers surveys on spatial development monitoring (Czochański, 2013) rather than the pure demand-supply issue, specifically in the broad system meaning of the tourism monitoring (March, Wilkinson, 2009; Antošová, Gomez, 2014). From the practical point of view, the tourist market research is not carried out in an extensive way; it usually is of non-continuous character nor common methodology (Marciszewska, 2017). The use of such data is limited as well. Therefore, it is vital for the monitoring to adopt the system-based approach.

The monitoring (development, market, space etc.) system must be comprehended as a multifactor, complex system (in terms of functionality, organisation, space and time) considered as study process and methodology (of a determined scope of study methods allowing for its functionality) and also in terms of the material and organisational context as a structure – a collection composed of interrelated action procedures, technology and information tools, organizational and legal solutions, collections of data (gauges, indicators) and also result analyses and cooperating institutions (the so called institutional environment) including human teams managing the said system (Dąbrowski, 2009).

Referring to the tourist market, these factors are most commonly measured on the local scale: tourist traffic, elements of tourist supply or the city visual aspects (Travis, 1982). The public statistics data is confined to only a few factors: usually the number of accommodation and to what extent it had been used (Małachowski, 2015). As a result, we do not get a comprehensive image of all the changes and processes occurring to the tourist management in a given locality. Monitoring must be run in a system-based way, be of a continuous character to cover many subsequent years and with applied methodology that allows for a comparison and correlation of many types of information. The monitoring-borne information must reach the target entities both inside the given locality and outside (Besculides, Lee, McCormick, 2002). Thus, the implementation of the market analysis system must be accompanied by communication activities – a wide-range information directed at the interested entities (Min, 2013; Falk, Kilpatrick, 2000; Frauman, Banks, 2011).

The importance of the tourist market monitoring has the theoretical aspect – finding the methodological solutions for tourist surveying tailored for the specific characteristics of the city and its developmental opportunities, and the practical one – implementation, mastering and right usage of the collected data in a continuous way in order to improve the skill of data processing for the purpose of development and management trying to match the changing environment (Kizielewicz, 2015; Kastenholz, Cameiro, Marques, Lima, 2012).

An effective city tourist development policy must respond to the changes occurring to the surrounding world (Anderson, O'Dowd, 1999, Szromnik, 2011). In order to make it possible, a permanent analysis of factors and phenomena is a must to make efficacious decisions (Kotylak, Małachowski, 2017; Kizielewicz, Lukovic, 2013). For this reason, the following simultaneous actions must be taken:

- putting diagnoses of the tourist condition in terms of social, economic and spatial aspects,
- monitoring the changes in phenomena and processes within the tourist economy,
- analysing the development trends and the mechanisms of their occurrence,
- drawing conclusions, evaluating, assessing and recommending the decisions to be taken,
- verifying and introducing corrections to the actions aimed at tourist development,
- forecasting the changes to the tourist market and setting targets responding to the market potential.

Both in scientific and practical terms, and from the point of view of methodology and research range, monitoring must make part of the process which includes:

- a) diagnosing the subject matter of the study – the details and frequency of the exploration itself, methods, features etc. – in the statistical, spatial and time contexts;
- b) organisation of the data collection – such as data hierarchy, systematics, reference levels, information structure etc.;
- c) index selection – indicator choice and grouping, their value and application measures to be used by practitioners.

Discussing the surveys carried out in a given area, region or locality, a few questions must be answered in the first place: Why do we need the monitoring system? In what way can the monitoring system serve the creation and implementation of the developmental foundations? Which entities will be interested in the cooperation with the use of the monitoring? Who should be in charge of the market monitoring (planning, surveying, data collecting, data processing, financing etc.)? In what way should the data and information be used for the creation of the development directions? (Forsyth, Dwyer, Clarke, 1995; Dietrich, Garcia-Buades, 2009) Conditions for good monitoring are: consistent methodology, long research time, consideration of the specificity of the place (city etc.), cooperation of entities (fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Conditions for good monitoring

Source: authors' own processing

From the point of view of the local tourist economy it is the local government bodies which are responsible for the growth of tourist functions in their towns and cities through their actions supporting tourism, by putting the tourist development into the right track and thus controlling the assumed aims on the local scale (Daugstat, 2008; Cawley, Gillmor, 2008; Bessièrè, 1998). The local government also has a significant importance in terms of entities integration within the tourist services, support given to the said entities in creating specific offers for tourists and their promotion (Kaczmarek, Stasiak, Włodarczyk, 2005; Mitchell, De Waal, 2009; Park, Yoon, 2009; Ahn, Lee, Shafer, 2002). Gdynia, a young city of average size, very favourable seaside location and harbour functions, has not included in their policy the point to make the tourist function prevail over other ones (The City of Gdynia Development Strategy). However, tourism is a bonding element of the urban life and for this reason the city authorities decided to boost its development and introduced the “Tourist Market Monitoring Programme”.

The process of building up the tourist monitoring system taking into account the specific characteristics of a city involves many entities (Wolska, Kizielewicz, 2015). At the start, it is important to identify whether the entities handling the local tourist issues are interested in obtaining information about the tourist market and if the cooperation with them and their involvement in acquiring this knowledge is reasonable. The precondition for starting work over establishing the monitoring system is comprehensive consultations and initial diagnostic research (Decrop, 1999; Antořová, 2014). This paper, focusing on the model of the city of Gdynia, presents the first stage of the programme which may turn into a complex system of the tourist market study; its diagnoses, analyses and forecasting.

2. Research methodology

The aim of this study is to show the importance of the tourist monitoring in the development of the city of Gdynia. The research was started as a response to the demand for the tourist monitoring by the local entities involved in tourist services in the city. Those recommendations resulted in the Municipality creating the “Tourist Market Monitoring Programme”. At present there are activities underway aiming at implementing this system.

Prior to the decision taken by the Gdynia local government to activate the initial actions aiming at the monitoring system implementation, meetings and discussions with Gdynia based entities involved in the tourist services had been organised. Between August 2017 and April 2018, four such meetings were held with 32 entities (both of commercial and non-profit nature) (tab. 1).

Tab. 1: The business-type structure of the entities participating in the research

Entities offering accommodation	6
Entities offering catering services	8
Culture promoting entities (museums, theatres etc.)	4
Entities offering sporting events and activities	2
Associations and Foundations	4
Universities and Institutions of Higher Education	2
The City Management	1
Other entities (National Forests, Railway etc.)	3

Source: authors' own processing

In order to expand the group of interested entities, a questionnaire was suggested which also aimed at completing information which would trigger the start of the Gdynia tourist market monitoring process.

The conclusions from the meetings and consultations helped constructing the questionnaire form which contained five short closed questions. The method was based on the diagnostic opinion poll carried out with the use of questionnaire technique. Target selection was used – the entities located in the city of Gdynia running tourist business. It was assumed that the problem concerns those entities which are linked to the city in terms of the area. The research covered the businesses which represent tourist services: hotel industry, catering, travel agents, culture, sports, institutions managing leisure areas such as forests, and also schools and commerce. The selection was made following the draw survey – the number of registered economic entities. The assessment error was 3%, while the number of the study sample was set at $n = 86$. The Questionnaire was sent to the respondents by electronic mail following a telephone conversation. The answer refusal ratio was within 1–3%. The Questionnaire contained five closed questions with various answer cafeterias. The following survey elements were analysed: the assessment of the current awareness of the tourist market condition in Gdynia, opinion concerning the implementation of complete studies of the tourist market, indication of an entity which would coordinate such studies, declaration of participation in the said study, indication of the level of importance of such research to the involved entities. The Respondent's Particulars included in the Questionnaire allowed for an analysis of the surveyed group in terms of their business nature (hotel industry, catering, travel agents, education institutions, culture etc.) and their type (commercial or non-profit). Descriptive statistics methods were used to analyse the collected data.

Within the structure of the surveyed entities, the following were identified: 34% hotel businesses, 21% catering businesses, 6% travel agents, the remaining 38% were of other nature. 81% of them were of commercial type while 19% made non-profit organisations.

3. Research results

The results were made into a comprehensive report on the discussion-based meetings and surveying with the use of the Questionnaire. The Questionnaire-based survey was complementary to the earlier conclusions drawn from the discussion-based meetings with the representatives of the entities broadly making up the tourist management in the city of Gdynia.

The meetings were based on consultations and discussions. They resulted in a number of conclusions which turned into recommendations for the actions taken by the local government. The conclusions were as follows:

- entities dealing with tourism have insufficient knowledge of the tourist market which affects their decisions concerning their tourist services,
- market research system is non-existent just as the system of information exchange between particular entities is missing,
- the knowledge of the tourist market must be comprehensive; the surveys must be repetitive and carried out on a longer run,
- the tourist potential and knowledge of the same must make the basis for the identification of the major trends for tourism development in the city and making use of the area in a rational way,
- the created image of the city must not be incidental; the city needs to be aware of how to use the available tools and aim at targets identified in advance,
- the tourists traffic (in terms of concentration and space) must be measured with the use of various methods in order to provide the most realistic result.

In order to meet the above mentioned requirements a comprehensive project is needed based on survey and development issues, made up specifically to cover the characteristic features of the city.

Our survey provided also information on the very low level of the knowledge on the city tourist market. Among the representatives of the surveyed entities there occurred no one who would admit having sufficient command of the subject. The questioned entities acquire such information from many sources which takes a long time to process. In the scale of six grades of their knowledge (where 1 means the lowest level while 6 the highest), proposed to them, the majority of answers fell on levels 2 & 3 (70%); only 8% saw their level as 5. This means, there is no flow of information between the entities, the use of the available sources and their analysis is time-consuming yet incomplete at the same time.

Thus, there is no doubt that the opinion on the need to activate comprehensive research of the tourist market was almost fully unanimous. The majority of the surveyed entities (82 out of 86) opted for the implementation of such

research. Only 4 entities among the questioned ones did not have an opinion on the subject. They were travel agencies dealing in outbound tourism.

On of the survey items was a request to indicate an entity coordinating the tourist market research, if activated. 67 entities (nearly 78% of the surveyed group) were of the opinion that it should be the Commune Authority, 10 entities (11.6%) were of the opinion that it is a task for a specifically designed organization combining tourist businesses while 9 entities (10.5%) pointed to scientific units based in the city of Gdynia. During the discussions, there were frequent opinions that such research should be carried on by a few cooperating entities where each would be responsible for different elements of the monitoring process.

All surveyed entities declared contribution to such research implemented in the city of Gdynia. Such declaration is vital as it promises that at the time of market research implementation, the monitoring system will be supported by the said entities, which in turn gives an opportunity of effective research.

The Questionnaire also asked about the level of importance of tourist market study for the operations of the surveyed entities. The 1 to 10 scale was offered, where 1 meant the lowest level of importance, and 10 the highest. Majority of respondents ticked level 8 (as much as 62%), 21% ticked level 7, 14% level 9, while 2% opted for level 6. The analysis of the entities which marked the highest level of market research importance for their operations showed that it was the commercial businesses (hotel and catering industry). Those entities are in need of very reliable information on the current market to make their business viable.

Conclusion

The post-discussion considerations and research results show clearly that the monitoring of the tourist market has become an important issue for a modern city, represented here by Gdynia, which perceives its development in a broader perspective. Tourism, as one of many urban functions, appears to be significant enough to make them approach the project of monitoring. In the first place, it will allow for putting the knowledge on the tourist market phenomena and processes to order, improving the cooperation between the entities to facilitate not only taking reasonable business decisions by them but creating new values on the basis of experience exchange as well.

Good knowledge of the tourist market is important for the city authorities to make effective decisions in terms of economy, social life and spatial management. It is also vital for the entities offering tourist services in order to facilitate them building up the tourists-targeted products bringing profit to them. It is also important for tourists – to create opportunities for happy stays for them and – finally – for the city inhabitants so that their living standard might improve. The implementation of the monitoring system of the tourist market in the form of a reoccurring survey carried out permanently with the use of a coherent methodology, will bring only benefits to the city both in the economic and social aspects. The research carried out in Gdynia showed at the same time that the tourist market users – the entities responsible for the market shaping up – were very positive about this project and expect the city authorities to implement it.

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