The proposition of strategic change in thinking and the acting

Between the years 2007 and 2013, we will witness a radical change in Poland’s social and economic systems. After the breakthrough we saw in the years 1989-1990, these new changes will be particularly significant. It has been expected, negotiated and it become a fact. On the turn of the year 2007, Poland will be recognized as a proper and rightful EU member. Rightful, because it fully takes over the responsibilities and rights subsequent to the Treaty. Proper, because it participated in preparing and resolving the budget of European Union and it now it is facing before the problem of its realization. First full budgeting cycle within the European Union will define the position of Poland in the 21st century.

The nature of this breakthrough will determine the directions as well as the pace of changes in all walks of life. Those who fail to understand this, or refuse to embrace it, will deprive themselves of the opportunity to develop and progress. Embracing the opportunity means making choices which will determine the nature of the strategic development. The prosperity of Polish tourism stands before the need to make these choices. The choices that will take place will have definite impact on the behaviors and attitudes of tourism related enterprises.1

If the choices turn out accurate, and the process of implementation of the strategy of development is effective, then all participants of tourism market have to undertake the challenge. In order for this to be achieved, we need to stop perceiving the various elements of the market and begin to think in the categories of efficiently functioning national tourism corporation. It is indicated in the current tourism market position. The opinion of individual subjects of market is in principle positive. However, the system’s opinions are less optimistic.2

The system formulation and proper management of the tourism market subjects is a chance for accelerated development.

The structure of corporation – not the one declared today – but the one actually cooperating in the process of achieving the appointed strategic aims – should be made up of: strategic top, line of support and the operating base.

1 See: Obłój K., Strategia organizacji, PWE, Warsaw 1999 r.
Figure no 1. Structure of “National Tourism Corporation

The strategic top should devise the strategy of development of Polish tourism as well as create structural and legal basis for its implementation. The line of support should expend, promote and disseminate the knowledge by using the scientific potential of academies, the research and development skills of individuals, and co-operation with associations and tourism agencies. The operating base is composed of tourism enterprises. The success of the whole market and its individuals depends on the process of initiating and innovating the new knowledge.

Strategic dilemmas, which should be solved by the national tourism corporation, are multidimensional. In this statement I am going to refer to two integrally connected options of choice in the strategy of development.

First concerns the strategic change that should take place in the formation of the theory of tourism. Second is connected with a choice of approach that is taken to formulate the strategy of trade development. ³

The primary problem slowing the development of Polish tourism is the reluctance of tourism businesses to develop a product-orientated strategy.

Tourist product, its structure, strengths and specific characteristics, have become the main factor of the strategy orientated to the direct fight with a competition. This type of approach is defined by K. Obłój (1999) as a process of building strategic superiority that can take the form of either the strategy of frontal attack or the strategy of avoiding the competition.

The essence of the strategy of attack is to recognize the weaknesses of the competition and attack them by using the whole potential of one’s own strengths. The frontal attack can bring us to taking over the defeated market, but – with regards to specific nature of tourism product – it will not increase the sale nationwide.

The strategy of avoiding the competition, in its foundation, is the strategy of defense. Moreover, it is a niche strategy, based on narrow distribution channels. It is possible to build the success of tourist enterprise founded on that strategy by creating, for example, new products in the area of extreme and unconventional tourism. However, it should be remembered that the niche strategy would not reform into the success in scale of trade.⁴

The attempt to create the strategic superiority on the market of tourist services, according to the strategies introduced, seals up the development on certain sales level. The products of various companies force each other out of the market.

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⁴ wg Łobożewicz T., Bieńczyk G., Podstawy turystyki, Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczna, Warszawa 2000 – adventurous skiing is being practised by about 50 people
The nationwide sale stays on the same level, and then grows slowly periodically. In the situation where direct competition sharpens, we note a temporary fall in sale. Building the strategic superiority in the mode of the strategy orientated to product, allows the companies to stay on the market, but does not guarantee the development in the scale of enterprise. In consequence it does not guarantee the development of tourism in Poland.

Poland’s tourism strategy should be built on the synthesis of values based on the strategy of winning the market and the strategy of creating the new market. These strategies should be oriented to satisfying those needs and expectations of potential customers which he or she is not yet aware of.

The strategy of winning the market should be a leading strategy for institutions which constitute the strategic top of national tourism corporation and whose mission is stimulating the development of Polish tourism.

The main purpose of strategy of creating the new market, as it is defined by K. Oblój (1999), is to satisfy the customer's needs by using innovative supplies and skills. The strategy of winning the market depends on taking advantage of strengths of the company in order to satisfy particular needs of the customer.

The strengths of Polish tourism are values of the country as well as easy access to those located abroad. The success of the strategy of winning the market, to a considerable degree, depends on the knowledge on whether or not, potential customers in the country and abroad, are aware of it. In the Polish society this awareness seems to be at least insufficient.5

The purpose of the strategic top is to emphasizing the educational and cognitive function of tourism.

The main target of the line of support is to join the process by completing both the educational and scientific mission. In practice, implementation of the strategy of winning the market requires integrated lobbing, promotional and advertising campaign in the scale of the whole “Corporation”.

Indicating and taking advantage of strengths of Poland as a tourist product will not assure the development of Polish tourism. The strategy of winning the market should be supported by the strategy of creating the new market. The successful creating and implementing this strategy requires innovative approach to taking advantage of supplies it administers.

Reliable scientific research is the base of every innovative activity. Here into I respect those being conducted at the moment in the country. I use and admire the uniwersity studies, scientific bulletins and reports that are dealing with this subject matter, like The Tourism Institution as well as others. However, my impression is that majority of them have a nature of preliminary research and are not pragmatic enough. The theory of tourism, created by us-

5 On the turn of 2005/2006 I conducted preliminary scientific research verifying the hypothesis related to advisability and possibility of using the strategy of winning the market in aspect of development of Polish tourism. 100 Polish people aged between 25 and 60 have participated tin the research. They represented proportionally differentiated level of education, living in all main regions of the country.

The research was led in a form of short inquiry. The questions meant to check the general knowledge on tourism values in Poland.

Level of general knowledge:
- 17% studied – good;
- 21%studied – satisfying; (they were able to characterize 5-7 attractive tourist regions of Poland, justify the choice and characterize their basic values);
- 62% studied – disappointing.

It in the same cycle of research, 23 native habitants of Łądek Zdroj were asked the following questions: Where is the Arboretum located? What period do the ruins of Karpień castle come from? As well as several questions on the history of złotogórskie area. The participants were mainly young students. Only six persons gave answers I was satisfied with.
the scientists - is not always comprehensible for those who must implement it in practice.  

Tourism is an interdisciplinary science, but it is not a field of science, or a scientific discipline, it is scientific specialization. As a faculty it is qualified into the field of culture of physical education. It is good to know your own place, but it does not always have to be comfortable.

The disciplines of science directly connected with the development of tourism include: economic, humanistic, medical, natural sciences, architecture and culture of physical education. The nature of various studies of tourism science is to be well founded on condition that transferring the property of different sciences into tourism will be accompanied by not only interpretation, but also creative development.

If we really think about development of Polish tourism, then it is necessary to coordinate the nationwide research, as well as increase the activity of academic centers. We need larger autonomy in the area of science about physical education and then the scientific efficiency. This is mainly possible by institutionalization of the research and its autonomy. It will not be achieved in the situation where only one of the six Polish Physical Academies had created the independent faculty structure dealing with the problems of tourism and recreation.

If the strategic change will take place, the scientific research will deliver a completely new knowledge. The academies, by promoting this knowledge, shall form new skills. This will initially be sufficient to build an intellectual capital capable of innovating the tourism trade.

The flexibility ought to be the main directive stimulating the innovative approach to satisfying the customer's needs. However, the purpose is to create a new type of relationship between the tourist enterprise and the customer.

The flexible approach should mainly concern the process of formation the structure of the product on its three conventional levels – not as it has been done so far – on the level of extended product.

The core (center) of tourism product, containing the basic advantages for customer, has got completely different nature than electro-technical or food products. The core of the tourism product is a description of tourism values of a particular area. In consequence, the set of basic advantages becomes considerably more spacious – and often happens to be very difficult to classify. It almost always guarantees performing of practically all tourism functions: health-, relax-, education-, cognition- as well as economy-related. It is not possible to deny the customer right to make a free choice, but if tourist enterprises want to do business

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8 I get the impression that in the offer of Polish tourism companies the schematism is obligatory and the flexibility nothing but declared.

In April 2006 I led the participating observation of Polish tourists’ attitude to the product – two-week holiday on Tunisian island Djerba. It was fully organized by the Travel Agency X and included 163 people. About 40 of them (about 24-25%) participated in the proposed trips organized by the agency. 18 people (11%) used hired cars for a period of 2-3 days. About 50 people (30%) used local transport to do the sightseeing. 39% of participants of the holiday decided to hang around in the hotel and participate in the entertainments organized in there.

This example shows the schematism in preparing the offer by the Travel Agency. Lack of flexibility was a cause of:

- organizer’s offer from the area of extended product was consumed in 25% only - loss for organizer;
- tourists, who hired cars and did not know local prices and customs, overpaid - loss for tourists;
- tourists who decided to go on trips using local transportation and did not know and understand the local cultural behaviors put themselves at risk.
consequential with this fact, they have to skillfully control the process of making choice.

The description of the real product, in the situation when a customer is interested solely in the value and costs he or she is to bear, becomes less useful information for each party of the transaction.

Extended product? The attributes of the extended product have been so deeply standardized – the free stay for children up to three years old, additional insurance, the on-line reservation, additional trips, etc. – that it is being used by everyone, though commonly at unsuitable place or time. The customer is often more taken aback by lack of values included into extended product, rather than by their presence.

While implementing the directive of flexibility in the area of product, it is better to give up the three-dimensional marketing approach to designing the product (adopted from the general theory of marketing) for the benefit of including in this process the customer and composing with him the structure of tourist product, obviously in definite frames.

The appeal for a flexible and therefore innovative approach to designing the offer of tourist enterprises strengthens the identified trends in tourism development.

The holiday period closes in more and more. In consequence, the holiday has to be planned according to customers’ expectations who cannot afford to loose a single day or even half a day out of their five or seven-day holiday.

If we manage to support the tourism enterprises with the pragmatic property of scientific centers, promote and use tourist values of Poland, and shape them up into a unique product, external competition will not be able to duplicate such solutions hence a new type of market shall be created.9

We are and will be receiving this kind of support for form European Union funds. Polish Church has already used eight million Euros. This is as much as annual funds for Polish agriculture received from European Union.10 We should congratulate the Church and wish ourselves similar effectiveness. Strategic change in thinking and acting is the only condition for success.

References


9 Obłój K., Strategia organizacji, PWE, Warsaw 1999, s.269.
10 Information from PAP - 23.08.06.