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The Strategy for Water Tourism Promotion in the Westpomeranian Region

Recently, European tourism leading tendency refers to the increasing diversification – the popularization of traveling as well as an increase in the number of persons making use of tourist offers with a simultaneous dissection, and specialization of offers corresponding to precisely specified expectations of target groups of a given financial status. The community of tourists is increasing and it diversifies with regard to every single perspective. The above mentioned is related to the development of marketing and sales as well as the designing of tourist products forming basic tools to define the offer and its clients. The competition operating in individual tourist markets is stronger and stronger. The value of tourist assets for individual groups of tourists changes rapidly. Tourist companies are subjected to globalization, which leads to the standardization of tourist products easily available almost all over the world and relatively easily verifiable thanks to the development of communication techniques and intensive information flow. The success of the seller of a tourist product, to a greater and greater extent, depends on marketing and promotion whereas, less and less on assets, management and services used for its generation.

New forms of tourism and recreation requiring specialized equipment and skills are constantly established. A new phenomenon in the field of culture and tourism refers to the fact that a part of new forms of spending leisure time relates to extreme experiences and personal risk. The said constitutes a symptom of the increasing significance of tourism and its stronger embedding in the lifestyle typical of inhabitants of bigger communities. The majority of tourist markets have a global range, however, cultural diversification does not decrease and the cultural context becomes an integral and significant element of tourist services, assets and places.

Polish tourists are oriented on the location (locality, region) rather than on the product, and the most important criteria for their decisions refer to: the individual experience, the price as well as the surrounding of the place of the stay. Their expectations regarding the quality of the service (especially referring to the standard of the accommodation base) are on the other hand increasing, additionally; interest in trips abroad is growing, in particular with regard to leisure travel. There appear considerable transformations within the scope of expectations and the profile of offered services. The significance of active forms of spending time increases, relaxation combined with physical activity and exploration of natural assets replace passive way of spending time on the beach. There is also a development of water inland tourism – sailing, canoeing as well as new, popular especially among young people, water sports.

The specificity of the Westpomeranian Region refers, among others, to the diversification and the considerable extension of aquatic areas within the region. The above mentioned, poses challenges and opportunities within the scope of the development of water tourism and its use for comprehensive social and economic development. This is reflected by undertakings implemented by the self-government of the region and individual municipalities and designed to increase the quality of tourist infrastructure (in particular ports and marinas), new products created as well as the increasing



access to information about them. Simultaneously, we may experience a growing role of marketing of tourist services for the purpose of increasing the existing potential and ensuring effects expected with regard to the economic dimension. Tourism economy of the region, including the sector of water tourism, shall consider above specified determinants concerning globalization, professionalism and commercialization of tourism.

The Strategy for Water Tourism Promotion in the Westpomeranian Region is intended to establish mechanisms of operation along with instruments which will allow meeting challenges. It applies to the field of tourism which plays a key role for the Westpomeranian Region and simultaneously forms a part of the concept of the development of the whole sector. The self-government of the Region assumes the role of a competent executor of the Strategy. Still, the execution of individual goals and actions defined within their scope will be possible only with the engagement of all the stakeholders – units of territorial self-governments, companies, non-governmental organizations. Natural resources of the region and its goodwill constitute the common good and within the range of the promotion of the water tourism they fall into the scope of numerous relations with the interest of particular infrastructure operators and disposers of individual tourist products. The Strategy is targeted on the utilization and strengthening of the whole potential in order to establish a strong, competitive position of tourism and the whole economy of the region.

The Westpomeranian Region enjoys perfect conditions for water tourism. Its specificity refers to a unique combination of a wide access to the coast, a big area of the sea inland waters and their connection with the area of the Oder River estuary demonstrating a considerable diversification of water forms, as well as a high concentration of post-lake areas. Such an accumulation of landscape and tourist virtues together with water resources and their internal diversification constitutes a sensation on a national scale and there are no comparable areas in Europe.

Relaxation on the seaside still constitutes a favorite form of spending leisure time form Poles, however, gradually, they discover a rich variety of water sports and recreation. Although, the model of inland sailing is still predominating, in case of windsurfing and kite surfing it is the seacoast that attracts the biggest numbers of advocates of such sports. Forward-looking, they shall be treated as the most attractive area for water tourism in Poland. Still, to a smaller extent, the Oder River and inland waters are used for that purpose. An exception refers to the development of water tourism in the vicinity of the Szczecin Lagoon and the Dąbie Lake waters with an extensive network of marinas.

The potential of water tourism in realities of Poland is not based on a simple, direct relation of water resources with the intensity of actions. For the time being, a vogue for active lifestyle gradually appears, whereas, along with the improving of lifestyle standards, Poles allocate bigger and bigger funds for relax and related to that purchase of equipment and services. So far the scale of this phenomenon has not been proportional to water resources of Poland, some of the biggest resources in EU countries. Some other imbalance has taken place on a territorial layout of water tourism movement – it dominated for years on Mazuria region, where the total area of water bodies does not exceed noticeably resources of surface waters of the Westpomerania. Gradually, seaboard regions minimize that disparity. Additionally, it shall be noted that there is an increasing interest of foreign

tourists both in short-term trips to the Polish waters, as well as permanent mooring of yachts in ports of the Polish coasts.

Referring to external detriments, related among others to the process of the statistical analysis for this Strategy a methodology has been adopted combining statistical elements with an expert assessment stemming from a long-lasting practice of the market observation. The analysis is based on the identification of key types of water tourism which dominate in the Westpomeranian Region – sailing, canoeing, windsurfing and kitesurfing as well as diving. Additionally, also other forms of activities are undertaken. So far very niche water skiing, which for several years may be practiced in the region thanks to a newly constructed artificial lift on the Trzęsiewko Lake in Szczecinek, attracts new fans. It shall be however stated that identified thematic areas present almost the whole potential and most important aspects of the dynamics of water tourism development in the Region.

The implementation of the “Strategy of Water Tourism Promotion in the Westpomeranian Region” shall facilitate the creation of the potential of that sector as an important element of tourist economy in the Westpomeranian Region, and consequently it is aimed to facilitate its competitiveness and economic stability. As a consequence of the promotion of the sector in shall reach in 2020 – along with resort tourism – the rank of the most dynamically developing tourism segment in the region, whereas, selected fields of water tourism (sailing, kitesurfing, windsurfing, and diving) will obtain the status of a national leader and a significant destination in this part of Europe.

Well preserved natural environment, numerous water bodies and free access to them as well as consistent infrastructure development along with increasing standards of facilities and quality of provided services will grant the whole region, as well as individual entities operating in the region, conditions favorable to build a reliable and strong goodwill of water tourism. The above mentioned will demonstrate an asset of integrity – the whole Westpomeranian Region will be unambiguously associated with perfect conditions for water sports as well as all forms of recreation relating to relax at water’s edge. At the same time, the development of specialized services offered in individual parts of the region and manifesting themselves through market availability of water tourism products of the highest quality will occur. The range of the above mentioned will correspond to assets and the specificity of water bodies in the region. Under the aegis of the “Westpomeranian Water Land”, profiled sub-brands will be established or creatively modified with regard to expectations and needs of tourists. Western and northern edge of the region, whose environmental and landscape determinants refer to the Oder River, the Szczecin Lagoon and the Baltic Sea, will be managed within the scope of the development of the Westpomeranian Sailing Route. An inland part, from Szczecinek to water bodies in the vicinity of Myślibórz and Barlinek, will face infrastructure development and enhancement, and consequently the region will obtain a sailing destination complementary with regard to the Westpomeranian Sailing Route, significant at the national scale and demonstrating further development prospects. Another virtue of the eastern and southern part of the region will refer, even to a greater extent than currently, to canoeing fans. Implemented organizational and promotional activities will lead to a considerable increase in recognizability and popularity of water bodies themselves as well as other elements of the offer constituting a strong, autonomic product. Both

sailing as well as canoeing will retain their status of forms of practicing tourism of environmental, niche character with regard to mass leisure tourism, however, in comparison to their initial position, their popularity and the number of tourist activities executed on the area of the region will be considerably increased. The number of people taking to the extreme forms of sailing (e.g. windsurfing, kite surfing and their variations), diving as well as to other forms of active recreation on water has increased significantly at the territory of our region. Frequency of recreational trips connected with these forms of recreation will grow and these trips will be evenly distributed throughout the extending tourist season thus the expenses of individuals will raise as well. Due to the increased access to information and its clarity in the message of promotion particular locations destined for water tourism, as well as whole areas which in the past have faced developmental deficiencies (post-lake areas, Easter water-edge of the Szczecin Lagoon) will become tourist destinations and therefore will benefit from intensified expenses on tourist and related services.

Experience connected with development and extension of the tourist offer gained by the tourist branch as well as the local environment in the period by 2020 will lead to change of awareness and increase organizational proficiency connected with tourist servicing. Local self-governments with cooperating entities will be prepared in a better way to develop the offer and adjust it to the requirements related to the emerging trends, technological innovations, cultural and economic changes, behaviors, expectations and needs of the clients. Proficiency in collecting and processing data on the structure and requirements of the market as well as ability to convey it into proper management decisions will become more and more essential. Competitive supremacy of the region stemming from natural conditions, efficiency of the investment process and increasing standard and scope of services will be completed by intelligent management of the efficient marketing matter, which will widen the scope of the offer's influence on the home and foreign markets. The Westpomeranian Region – as the area perfectly prepared for conducting the above mentioned forms of recreation – will become destination more frequently visited by foreign tourists, mainly from Germany and Scandinavia.

The organized promotional and informative activities will be of multipurpose nature. They will be based on the available technological instruments and requirement for fast and common access to information focused not solely on the tourism but connected with complete set of data related to the region and its offer. Numerous channels of the information-flow will be activated and their receivers will be more involved in the process of the development of the region's goodwill in the field of the water tourism. Through participation in the evaluation and verification process of the level and scope of the water tourism offer (mainly via social media and developed loyalty programs) the clients will become more involved in creation of quality and character of the local market. The emotional involvement of the water environment in the development of water tourist potential in the Westpomeranian region will grow significantly. The development of the water tourism goodwill in the region will be followed by "quality" understood as a high reputation among the representatives of the target group.

As a result of the activities specified in the "Strategy for Water Tourism Promotion in the

**Westpomeranian Region” and the process described above
in 2020 the Westpomeranian Region will be perceived as a very attractive region of water
tourism, recognised in the region as well as in Europe.**

A vision of the market development based on activities within Promotion Strategy of the Water Tourism in the Westpomeranian Region will be executed through three aims:

1. Development of information

Within this aim there will be undertaken several activities in order to create an optimal scope and subject of information on the water tourism in the Westpomeranian Region. There are currently neither any procedures nor tools for collecting and processing or using this kind of data. Pursuing this aim will lead to digesting activities within this scope, standardizing procedures, their pace and efficiency of their execution. Due to relatively limited possibility to gain competitive supremacy in the field of the product innovation and interfering in the subject of the offer of entities functioning on the market, it will be a basic field of support provided by the Westpomeranian government - acting as the proper executor of the Strategy. As a result there will be possible proper promotion in a form of distribution of reliable and complete information by means of verified and effective tools.

2. Establishing of the goodwill

It is the light of the management oriented on meeting the needs of clients of territorial units this is the region that constitutes the subject of actions intended to build the goodwill proper for a given product or service existing in the market and striving for the clients' interest. It is however, necessary to maintain the specificity of created goodwill as common good of the whole self-governmental community, without excisions and favoring individual entities. The above mentioned goal is targeted on achieving two effects essential for the implementation of the vision of the Strategy; this refers to the ensuring of recognizability of desirable ideas and beliefs with regard to a given product with a simultaneous maintaining of the integrity of the profile and message of the specific region. Within this scope there will be developed information spreading forms adjusted to the subject of Strategy and concurrent with the implemented procedure of the region's profile development. In this aspect wording of the document corresponds to the existing and implemented assumptions related to the development of the region's goodwill. The execution of this aim includes both undertaking activities directly focused on the creation of the information spreading forms as well as on raising standard, of services and quality of product, which should be presenting the goodwill. It should be taken under consideration, however, that the region's government has limited competences and needs to cooperate with the external entities.

At the same time it is in line with the interest of economic entities as well as social communities fulfilling the role of water tourism operators to maintain the integrity of the goodwill of the region and facilitate its high positioning.

3. The distribution of information

The subject goal is oriented on maximizing of the efficiency of the flow of generated information with the use of any and all potential instruments and forms of distribution. For that purpose their hierarchization appropriately to the specificity of the product, that is, water tourism has been conducted, as well as the dynamics of changes taking place in the media market has been considered. A fundamental tendency taken into account refers to the progressing segmentation of clients, their orientation on strictly defined offer and corresponding to it forms of the information transfer, an increasing role of feedback information as the factor of the offer formulation, as well as the individualization of market activities. All the above mentioned factors enforce such logic of communication activities, which place a bigger and bigger emphasis on expectations and possibilities concerning the reception of information by clients, and simultaneously depart from limitations of the forwarder. The Strategy follows the role of traditional instruments, accounts for the experience related to the promoting of tourist products by means of fairs, points and centers of tourist information as well as traditional media. Simultaneously, an arsenal of activities anticipated for it accounts for key role of possibilities offered by the Internet, available thanks to the Internet instruments of forming and spreading messages, including based on the tendency to socialize information flow, as well as adjusting of the message to still new solutions and still not introduced applications and methods of their use..