

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REGION'S TOURISM ATTRACTIVENESS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF A HOTEL'S PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

Background. In the literature there is a shortage of studies devoted to the use of regions' attractiveness in the marketing communication of hotels. This paper addresses the above mentioned issue. Based on survey results it can be concluded that a region's attractiveness plays a major role in the choice of a destination and the ability to use it can enhance the competitiveness of accommodation facilities.

Research aims. The objective of the paper was to investigate the importance of the region and its attractiveness to purchase decisions made by hotel customers, thus assessing the potential of the use of a region's tourism attractiveness as a promotional element for hotels.

Methodology. The empirical section of the paper presents the findings of a survey carried out with the use of a questionnaire in the PAPI format. The research procedure was group-based in character and was conducted by trained moderators. The research covered 237 potential hotel customers – students from Poland, Ukraine and Austria.

Key findings. The respondents indicated the great importance of the region's attractions and the quality of accommodation facilities when making their travel decisions. Moreover, they stressed the significant, though not key, impact of regional assets on decisions to select a particular accommodation facility. The findings suggest the need to better exploit the attractiveness of the surrounding area in marketing materials designed to stimulate the demand for hotel services.

Keywords: Tourism product, tourism region, hotel service, product levels, consumers' preferences.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a significant sector of the economy in many regions and states. As a consequence, a number of studies addressing issues of tourism attractiveness have been conducted. They show the sources of competitiveness of tourism destinations, characterise its components, demonstrate the specifics underpinning the tourism market, and describe the characteristics of the consumers, i.e. the tourists, and the determinants driving demand from their perspective. As a result, the issue of the management of the competitiveness of a tourism region and the enterprises based in it has become an important research problem which is analysed below. Researchers have attempted to address questions, among others, on how to stimulate tourism expansion, how to boost demand for a destination's products and the offers provided by local entrepreneurs.

Numerous studies present the profile of a tourism destination as a product, and describe its elements. These include hotel and catering infrastructure (Sala, 2010, p. 268). Its importance is often emphasised, implying that it can have a positive impact on tourism decisions. At the same time, however, a relatively small number of studies focus on the reverse relationship, and depict the hotel as a product with a specific, but significant element being its attractive location in a region with tourism assets. This correlation will be discussed in this paper with the aim of assessing the potential for exploiting the tourism attractiveness of the region as an element facilitating hotel promotion. This aim is linked to the research hypothesis which claims a significant role for a region's attractiveness as a determinant influencing purchasing decisions made by customers, which should result in its robust use in the process of hotel marketing communication management. This hypothesis was verified in the purposefully selected research group – students aged below 25. According to the assumption adopted, this is a group of potential hotel customers who stand out for their mobility and growing prosperity with future professional careers gaining momentum after graduation. As a result, it is expedient to analyse the preferences and habits of this group in the context of the formulation of long-term marketing strategies implemented in hotels.

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

The literature on the subject provides a plethora of definitions of the tourism product. In many cases they can be classified into two groups. The first one covers definitions depicting a tourism product from a broad perspective – as a tourism region or a destination*. The second one encompasses approaches to a tourism product as an individual service provided by an entity in the region. In this paper, the authors will focus on the first classification of the product discussed. In layman's terms, it may be described as all attractions and services likely to be sold to a visiting person (Sung, 2013, pp. 8–9). However, the literature offers a variety of more complex approaches. For instance J. Kaczmarek, A. Stasiak, B. Włodarczyk, while reviewing product categories, typify a product as “being an internally coherent set of elements distinguished by their specific location in the space, characterised by tourism assets” (Kaczmarek, Stasiak, & Włodarczyk, 2010, p. 76). Whereas A. Panasiuk, while defining a destination from a demand perspective, refers to the approach whereby this is a travel destination connected with its characteristic functions and attributes (Panasiuk, 2014, p. 79). Likewise, a tourism region is defined by E. Dziedzic, who claims that this is a place to which tourism traffic is channelled (Dziedzic, 1998, p. 9). The approaches together indicate that a tourism region is an area which attracts tourists. Central to the demand for a product created are tourism attractions, yet a requirement for the success of a destination is also its availability as well as the level of amenities for travellers (Holloway, 2002, p. 7). The assertion reflects the definition of the tourism region proposed by Buhalis, who explained that this is “a combination of all products, services and experiences provided on the given territory” (Buhalis, 2000, p. 98, as cited in Żemła, 2010, p. 430).

It should be emphasised that what the above definitions suggest is that a region's tourism product comprises several specific attributes such as: complexity, diversity, or lack of owners. The first seems to be of utmost importance. In general, tourists leaving their homes not only buy access to attractions, but also catering services and accommodation facilities. A typical tourist travelling to a specific place purchases a number of related components, she/he makes use

* These terms will be used interchangeably in this paper.

of the place's assets, as well as available accommodation, catering, and transport infrastructure. Accordingly, it is possible to pinpoint a whole range of entities and components fostering tourist satisfaction, as well as a variety of contributors driving the competitiveness of the tourism region. For example, L. Dwyer and Ch. Kim specified more than 100 such variables, then divided them into 6 groups and 22 subgroups (Dwyer & Kim, 2003, pp. 400–405).

Also, it is worth underlining the point that satisfaction achieved by tourists, and thus their urge to return to the specific destination or their willingness to recommend it, is an effect of the overall rating given to the region's product. For example, this rating will certainly not be the highest, even when there are excellent natural assets, if a tourist fails to find satisfactory accommodation facilities. As explained by C. Vassiliadis, tourist satisfaction is dependent on numerous elements forming a tourism product, such as transport, catering services, accommodation facilities, attractiveness and service costs (Vassiliadis, 2008, p. 440). As a consequence, there are strong interdependencies among the elements of a destination's tourism product. They are fragmentary products which are complementary to one another. Hence, collaboration between entities across the tourism market is advisable, as it may produce a significant competitive advantage over other destinations and entities operating in the territory.

The reference literature also provides insights into model approaches which illustrate the specifics underlying a tourism product in a schematic manner. For example, A. Panasiuk presents the structure of the tourism product in a simplified, yet remarkably structured way. The author identifies two spheres of the product discussed: tourism commodities and equipment as well as tourism services. Tourism commodities and equipment include tourism assets (natural and cultural resources continually functioning in the specific territory), tourism attractions (product elements available at a specific time) and tourism development (any equipment present in the specific territory and used to meet tourists' needs). Tourism commodities and equipment are used to provide tourism services which involve basic services (accommodation, catering and transport) and complementary services, e.g. recreation, entertainment or guides (Panasiuk, 2014, pp. 115–124).

For a tourism destination product, two spheres which are key for tourists can be identified – its attractiveness and infrastructure. The first is mostly concerned with stirring the tourists' interest in the

destination, and thus their decision to travel there. Meanwhile, the second, largely determines the comfort of the visit, which translates considerably into satisfaction. At the same time, however, it was highlighted that these two spheres do not fully incorporate the product's components. The tourism product also comprises other entities, e.g. health care or trades operating in the region, because tourists also make use of their offers, as well as the attitudes and behaviour of the local inhabitants, who strongly affect the "ambience" of the site. Essentially, it is necessary to emphasise their importance and numerous models of a destination's product contain a hospitality parameter as a vital element of the entirety discussed (Dwyer & Kim, 2003, pp. 400–405; Ritchie, Crouch, 2005, pp. 63, as cited in Żemła, 2010, p. 215).

Attention should be drawn to the fact that previously specified definitions or schemes find accommodation to be a central element of a tourism destination's product. A. Panasiuk describes it as a principal element of tourism development (Panasiuk, 2014, p. 119). Nevertheless, few studies devoted to issues of the provision of accommodation services as part of the tourism product can be found in the literature. The investigation of such interdependency seems to be reasonable as evidenced by the studies carried out by some authors.

M. Kachniewska stresses that the local context is actually an element for assessing a product and a hotel's services. Importance is attached to the emergence of an attractive product that has been appropriately designed, is associated with the region, its history and culture, and which already goes beyond the potential of the hotel enterprise, thereby encouraging collaboration, in this respect at least (Kachniewska, 2012, p. 210). Furthermore, the study focuses on the fact that the creation of a network of products, where a hotel's services appear to be one of its elements, may be a vital contributor to competitiveness and thus help to counterbalance the expansion of transnational corporations (Kachniewska, 2014, pp. 27–42). M. Hundert and A. Pawlicz, on the other hand, specify factors related to location as one of two variables governing the price levels of hotel facilities (Hundert, Pawlicz, 2014, pp. 200–201). M. Turkowski maintains that a hotel's services are not subject to consumption as such, and are rather services which merely enable the travel to and stay at the travel destination (Turkowski, 2003, p. 34, as cited in Karapuda, Sidorkiewicz, 2014, p. 84). In effect, there are examples of hotels with such extensive offers that they can individually attract visitors, though it does not alter the fact that in

the vast majority of cases the demand for a hotel's services is a result of travelling to the specific place.

The issues of the relationship between a hotel's product and a tourism destination's product may be illustrated on the basis of the concept of product levels. Following the classical categorization, four spheres may be identified: product core, actual product, extended product, and potential product. However, it should be remembered that different studies identify between three and five levels. For instance, Rajagopal distinguishes three (disregarding a potential product from the classification presented) (Rajagopal, 2009, p. 217). Likewise, three levels are described by K. Mukerjee. However, they comprise product essence, expected product, and augmented product (Mukerjee, 2009, pp. 37–38). Meanwhile, five levels are pinpointed by P. Kotler and others (Kotler *et al.*, 2009, p. 506).

It seems that categorisation into 4 spheres is the most appropriate for illustrating the depicted independencies between a hotel and a region. In the following characteristics profile, three spheres are linked to the product offered in the market at a given moment. The last one, however, represents the potential possibilities of its development. On the whole, this concept may be effectively applied to hotels. In this situation a product core involves those elements that provide opportunities for spending the night there, which is the bedrock of a hotel's services. At this level, the enterprises discussed are fully comparable. The competition among them begins at the level of the actual product which proves to be pivotal for the comfort of the stay. For instance, elements constituting this sphere include swimming pools, children's indoor playgrounds and conference rooms. These are elements which may be essential for many customers when making purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, the region tends to be a part of other spheres embedded in the hotel product. It should be pointed out that it is in the interest of the hotels and their managers to make guests spend as much time as possible at their facilities. Such a situation may imply their satisfaction, and moreover it provides opportunities for generating extra income via paid hotel attractions. On the other hand, a hotel is not capable of ensuring all recreational options. Additionally, it should be kept in mind that one of the key motives driving tourism is cognitive reasoning. Therefore, an attractive location likely to satisfy specified needs should be seen as an element of the hotel's offered product and a source of its competitive advantage.

Moreover, based on the region, it is possible to extend the hotel product and create additional value for customers due to the complementary nature of tourism products provided by various enterprises. For instance, this may occur when offering discounts for services rendered by other entities (ski lifts, amusement parks), designing joint packages, or offering guide services at hotels. It seems that these possibilities are embedded in the sphere of the augmented product, yet they may be more ingrained in the potential product as they are not fully exploited.

It is necessary to emphasise that not all authors assign destination assets to the hotel product. For instance, R. Reid and D. Bojanic distinguish the following in their classification of hotel product levels (Reid & Bojanic, 2010, pp. 283–284):

- product core – in line with the previously presented approach;
- facilitating product – product elements such as: reception desk or restaurant enabling access to the product core;
- supporting product – product elements such as, e.g. 24-hour room service or multilingual personnel which shore up the performance of the primary hotel function, distinguishing individual offers and generating extra value for consumers.

These authors focused only on those elements which had been previously classified as actual elements of the hotel product. However, it seems that this product should be approached from a broader perspective.

As revealed previously, there is a plethora of interdependencies between a tourism region and its hotels, as described by numerous authors. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that these relationships are extensively investigated in a wide range of studies with an empirical character. For example, L. Sheehan, R. Brent, and S. Hudson analysed interactions occurring among three key groups of destination stakeholders: local authorities, hotels and local organizations charged with marketing activities to promote the region (DMO). The study, conducted in three large US cities, showed that each group possesses specific and complementary resources, and as suggested by the authors, at the heart of the effective promotion of the destination are their collaboration and mutual alignment (Sheehan, Brent, & Hudson, 2007, pp. 64–74). Similar issues were also addressed in the research carried out by J. Nawarro and A. Martinez-Martinez, who, using a Spanish example, confirmed a hypothesis which presumed the

positive implications of a city's promotion on its hotels' competitiveness. Overall, these authors highlighted that specifically in the case of small hotels it is necessary to expand the knowledge transfer network in an attempt to boost this interdependency (Nawarro & Martinez-Martinez, 2009, pp. 1489–1503).

Destination assets have a significant meaning for the tourism business, as they exert substantial influence on the magnitude of the demand for the region's product. In consequence, the second and crucial group of empirical studies places the spotlight on issues of tourism demand. As stressed by A. Niezgoda, customer satisfaction and choices made are central to an enterprise's success in the market economy, thereby making it important for tourism enterprises to examine the determinants fuelling demand for the products offered by them (Niezgoda, 2012, pp. 11–12). Such a situation also applies to hotel enterprises. For example, M. Domaradzka and R. Rouba explored issues of demand and the impact exerted by instruments such as loyalty programmes on its creation (Niezgoda, 2012, pp. 329–344). A significant research area closely connected with demand is the analysis of consumer behaviour (e.g. Kizielewicz, 2014, pp. 285–308). After all, the identification of consumers' attitudes and preferences allows for better adjustment of the product, and thus it should stimulate the urge to buy it.

Research into tourism demand, including tourist preferences and habits, appears to be crucial. It should be remembered that the business environments in which enterprises operate, including hotels, are subject to robust shifts which also affect tourists' purchasing expectations and consumption patterns (Alejziak, 2011, pp. 131–133). Therefore, it is legitimate to continually monitor them in the bid to anticipate new trends and tailor the products offered.

The literature also features papers that reveal the interdependencies between a region's attractiveness and the potential for promoting the tourism enterprises operating on its territory. For example, D. Buhalis made a wide-ranging analysis of the requirements for shifts in the approach to destination marketing in the 21st century, thereby revealing the need for partnership and coordination of actions between regional authorities and private enterprises (Buhalis, 2000, pp. 97–116). Nawarro and Martine-Martinez positively verified the hypothesis, maintaining that "City promotion initiatives are positively associated with hotel competitiveness" (Nawarro & Martinez-Martinez, 2009, pp. 1489–1503) based on the example of Spanish

cities. In another study, Dirke and Karamustafa revealed the benefits arising from cooperation for small and medium-sized hotels (Dieke & Karamustafa, 2000, pp. 467–494). However, despite empirical research and theoretical studies dedicated to the issue addressed, it appears that in certain areas of analysis there continues to be a shortage of studies, e.g. analysis devoted to specific recipients' groups and the potential of exploiting a region's attractiveness for the promotional activities of the individual region. This paper contributes to a closing of the gap. Its empirical section revolves around an analysis of demand in the selected group of potential consumers across the retail sector.

METHOD

As revealed above, the region where the hotel is located may be a significant driver of demand for the services offered by the facility, which largely affects purchasing decisions made by consumers. In many cases, tourists first choose the place where they intend to go, followed by a selection of the specific hotel enterprise as a result. Such a mechanism behind decision making should be taken into account by entrepreneurs, who should equally nurture a positive perception of the region where the facility is located.

Clearly, it is obvious that a hotel located in Banff (in the centre of the most famous part of Canada) is perceived as more attractive as the location offers a broad spectrum of diverse activities, remarkable landscapes and advanced infrastructure, than a similar hotel situated in Cochrane, positioned near Calgary, one hour away by car from the Rocky Mountains. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that in many cases hotels are located in settings with comparable attractiveness or in settings which are more appealing to certain target groups. In such a situation, it is the ability of the hotel management that determines whether possibilities related to location will be utilised for generating value for customers. However, it appears that they are often not fully utilised, despite the considerable significance of the region in customers' purchasing decisions.

The reference literature points out that the customer's viewpoint should provide a foundation for modelling a hotel's services (Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2000, p. 75, as cited in Grobelna, 2009, p. 148). As

a consequence, in the empirical section, the authors examined the opinions held by potential consumers of services, while focusing on the factor of the attractiveness of the tourism region. The research was based on a survey questionnaire in the PAPI format (Paper and Pencil Interview). The research procedure was group-based and was conducted by trained moderators with selected groups of Polish and Ukrainian students, including those studying in Austria. When selecting the research sample, it was assumed that these are people currently distinguished by above-average tourism mobility with high potential growth in income when their professional careers gain momentum after graduation. Therefore, the importance of these people for the tourism market, including hotel enterprises, will also grow significantly. It has been shown that the role of young tourists has been rapidly enhanced over the last decade through, among other things, the increased number of journeys made by young people and the increased expenditure incurred by the community discussed (Demeter & Bratucu, 2014, p. 115). Furthermore, reports published by the World Tourism Organisation reveal data which confirms the previous statements:

- between 2000 and 2010 the number of international journeys made by the group discussed rose from 136 million to 187 million, which accounts for 20% of world travel, with the number of international journeys made by young people forecast to rise to 300 million in 2020;
- expenditures of the group discussed in 2010 totalled USD 165 billion;
- young tourists spend more and their travels tend to be longer than those of average tourists.

Moreover, it should be kept in mind that there is a greater probability that young people will return to a specific destination; they are often the pioneers who discover new destinations; they are not easily discouraged from travelling in the event of social unrest, diseases, natural, or terrorist threats (*The power...*, 2011, pp. 6–8). This exemplary statistical data makes it clear how important the role of young people is to the tourism industry. However, at the same time, when analysing the research findings, it is necessary to take into consideration the fact that young tourists make use of hotel services relatively more seldom than people aged 30–50, and they tend to search for low-cost options.

The survey questionnaire was prepared in two language versions: Polish and English, in compliance with the language adaptation of the

research tool. The selection of the sample was guided by the respondents' ages, their geographical origins (Poles, non-Poles) and the factor of high mobility in the case of students who did not come from Poland.

The respondents can be divided into three groups: Polish students – 105; Ukrainians – 37; international students studying in Austria – 95. The survey was part of a larger research project which concerned the elements and tools of marketing communication across the region and this determined the selection of the group. It should be stressed that as the sample selected was not representative and as the research was poll-based in character, it should serve merely as an introduction to more in-depth discussions.

This paper focuses on the assessment of the attractiveness of a tourism region, as a selected factor that has proven to be especially appealing in previous analyses, and its implications for purchasing decisions with regard to hotels. Overall, this factor, assessed in relation to young people, may be immensely important in the designing of marketing activities for hotel enterprises.

FINDINGS – ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The hypothesis described at the beginning assumed the strong relevance of the region as a determinant driving purchasing decisions made by hotel customers. As a consequence of its positive verification, an effective use of the region and its assets for hotels' promotional activities is recommended.

Table 1. Relevance of factors selected while making travel decisions

Factor	Rating average	Factor	Rating average
Travel costs	4.25	Quality and effectiveness of the local transport	3.21
Climate	4.05	Quality and access to stores	3.2
Quality of accommodation facilities	3.97	Architecture facilities, museums	2.97
Access to attractive sites	3.7	Special events, festivals	2.89
Diversity of holiday-recreation offer (swimming pools, cinema, parks, children's playgrounds)	3.65	Destination brand (known, popular)	2.49

Catering quality	3.55	Options for practising various sports disciplines, related infrastructure	2.36
Easy access	3.51	Folk art in a specific area	2.32
Natural assets (wildlife)	3.38	Presence of places of religious merit	1.73
Clubs, theme parks	3.34		

Source: own study based on the survey conducted.

Notice: respondents assessed the relevance of factors on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 5 was the most relevant).

An analysis of the relevance of selected factors while making travel decisions constituted the starting point for in-depth discussion. As can be seen from Table 1, costs, climate and accommodation facilities topped the rating, followed by such factors as natural assets, access to attractive sites, clubs, theme parks, or diversity of the holiday-recreation offer which all attained a rating average above 3.0. All the specified elements contribute to the attractiveness of the destination product. The average rating across the surveyed group of consumers shows that these factors are vital for selecting a travel destination. In general, such an outcome also provides the rationale for the assertion that a destination product will play an important role in the purchasing of a hotel product by a young person. It appears that involvement in certain activities during a hotel stay is typical for the group analysed, thereby prompting them to take advantage of the attractions in the surrounding environment and spend relatively less time in the accommodation facility. Moreover, it should be noticed that P. Naidoo, P. Ramseook-Munhurrin, and J. Ladsawut, also citing research by other authors, paid attention to the role played by similar factors for building consumer satisfaction. Specifically, critical factors fostering tourist satisfaction included the environment, climate, recreation services, and area culture (Naidoo, Ramseook-Munhurrin, & Ladsawut, 2010, pp. 113–124, as cited in Glińska, Krot, 2011, p. 613). However, it is also essential to bear in mind that survey responses are not identical to actual behaviour. For example, M. Falk, when analysing shifts in the demand for winter holidays in 28 Austrian resorts, found that certain weather conditions (sunny days, snow quantity, etc.) lead to only small changes in demand (Falk, 2013, pp. 1–17).

Table 2. Factors determining the selection of the accommodation facility

Factor	Rating average	Factor	Rating average
Development of the locality where the facility is situated – tourism infrastructure, cleanliness, stores, restaurants, etc.	3.68	Personnel's high qualifications	3.14
Location in a site with an attractive environment	3.65	Discount card and related benefits	3.11
Promotions, discounts to price	3.6	Recommendation placed on the Internet	3.08
Easy access, adequate local road infrastructure	3.56	Locality, known, popular region, strong brand	3.03
Friend's recommendations	3.47	Location in the vicinity of a large urban agglomeration	3.1
Attractions other than natural ones in the neighbourhood, e.g. monuments, theme parks, etc.	3.41	Discounts for products offered by collaborating entities	2.96

Source: own study based on the survey conducted.

Notice: respondents assessed the relevance of factors on a scale from 1 to 5.

The subsequent questions included in the survey questionnaire directly referred to factors governing the selection of the accommodation facility (Table 2). The questions involved factors concerned with location, alongside factors directly related to the facility. Since “region” was classified as an extended product and potential product in the model of the hotel product levels, elements of the actual hotel product such as, e.g. offer, amenities or price were omitted in responses to the questionnaire. Attention should be focused on the relatively high rating given to factors such as: locality development, location in a place with an attractive environment, and the presence of attractions other than natural ones. A lower score was given to the region's brand and the possibilities of receiving discounts for products offered by collaborating entities. Such a situation does not alter the conclusion that the consumers surveyed indicated that elements of the destination's product are essential to the purchasing process, for example, when purchasing accommodation, which provides another rationale for harnessing this fact in the marketing activities of the hotel.

Table 3. Type of information sought on accommodation websites

Information	Rating percentage	Information	Rating percentage
about the price	95%	about neighbouring attractions	56%
about options to reach the facility	62%	about available discounts	56%
about possibilities of spending free time in the neighbourhood	62%	about extra services provided in the facility	46%
about room amenities	61%	about facility amenities	41%
about reservation conditions	57%	about products offered by collaborating entities	18%

Source: own study based on the survey conducted.

Notice: respondents assessed the relevance of factors on a scale from 1 to 5.

Meanwhile, Table 3 presents information about what respondents searched for on hotel websites, which proved to be an effective tool in the marketing of the enterprises discussed. On the whole, it should not be surprising that consumers mostly seek practical information concerned with the price, amenities, or ways of reaching a facility. At the same time, attention should be paid to the ratings connected with neighbouring attractions and the possibilities of spending free time in the surrounding area. They were reported as important by 56% and 62% respondents, respectively. Hence, this is a significant percentage. These figures show that information related to the destination's product is information frequently sought by customers, and thus it should not be ignored by hotel managers.

CONCLUSIONS

As revealed in the study, infrastructure, including accommodation infrastructure, is a vital element of a destination's product, and is an element which strongly affects its assessment. As a result, it affects tourist satisfaction, thereby triggering the urge to return to and recommend the site.

At the same time, it should be kept in mind that a region's assets may become an important stimulus to the demand for the hotel enterprise. At its core is the provision of accommodation and services to the customer, though an attractive location generates added value,

creates opportunities for spending free time in different ways and thus influences consumers' purchasing decisions. As emphasised beforehand, a tourist, when making a decision about travelling, first opts for the destination and then specific service providers in the region.

Therefore, the empirical section of this paper provides arguments in favour of the hypothesis which presumes the significant role of a region's attractiveness in driving purchasing decisions when selecting a hotel. The survey conducted on a group of young individuals revealed a number of rationales in favour of the above hypothesis, though the specific selection of the research sample should be kept in mind. They include the following:

- the consumers surveyed, while gauging the relevance of factors that potentially drive the selection of the destination, identified elements of the region's attractiveness as crucial incentives in their purchasing decisions;
- elements of a region's attractiveness were indicated by respondents as significant in the selection of the accommodation facility;
- as reported by the respondents, information about the region is not the most frequently sought information on a hotel's website, yet it should be regarded as being important information from the perspective of potential customers.

The facts above combined with the theoretical analysis and the findings from the research conducted by other authors show the potential that the region has to stimulate the demand for a hotel's products. Taken together, these findings support the acceptance of the hypothesis and lead to certain recommendations for people in charge of the management of the entities discussed, so as to establish more effectively their operational strategy (including promotion) on the basis of the region's attractiveness. This can be done in a number of ways, e.g. presenting the location in promotional activities, placing more detailed descriptions of the destination in ongoing marketing communications, establishing various cooperative relationships with managers of attractions located in the region, or recommending opportunities for enjoying free time using neighbouring attractions.

Importantly, it should be highlighted that there is a need to continue research in this field. The empirical analysis only provided insights into a narrow spectrum of investigated issues. Hence, it is expedient to address the following research questions:

- to what degree do hotel enterprises make use of the surrounding region while building their competitive advantage?
- what barriers emerge when building networks of local contacts to generate value for individual hotels?
- what are the purchasing preferences among hotel customers in groups other than young people?

Fundamentally, answers to the questions raised may be sought using diverse methods. This may be accomplished through in-depth interviews conducted with hotel representatives responsible for promotional activities. Also, due to the immense diversity and specifics of hotels, it is worth carrying out a case study dedicated to the interactions occurring between a hotel and its tourism region. For example, such research was conducted in Australia by E. Laws, N. Scott, and N. Parfitt, who focused on the relationships between the images of analysed entities (Laws, Scott, & Parfitt, 2002, pp. 39–55). Moreover, a broader research study should be conducted that will be devoted exclusively to the impact exerted by the destination on purchasing decisions made by hotel consumers.

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ZNACZENIE ATRAKCYJNOŚCI TURYSTYCZNEJ REGIONU W ZARZĄDZANIU DZIAŁANAMI PROMOCYJNYMI HOTELU

Abstrakt

Tło badań. W literaturze występuje niedobór badań poświęconych wykorzystaniu atrakcyjności regionu w komunikacji marketingowej hoteli. W niniejszej pracy zajmujemy się tą kwestią. Opierając się na wynikach badań, można wyciągnąć wniosek, iż atrakcyjność danego regionu odgrywa główną rolę w wyborze destynacji, a zdolność jej wykorzystania może zwiększyć konkurencyjność obiektów noclegowych.

Cel badań. Celem tej pracy było zbadanie znaczenia regionu i jego atrakcyjności w stosunku do decyzji zakupu dokonywanych przez klientów hoteli. W ten sposób oceniono potencjał wykorzystania atrakcyjności turystycznej danego regionu jako elementu promocyjnego dla hoteli.

Metodologia. W części empirycznej pracy przedstawiono wyniki badania przeprowadzonego za pomocą kwestionariusza w formie PAPI. Procedura badawcza miała charakter grupowy i została zrealizowana przez przeszkolonych moderatorów. Badanie objęło 237 potencjalnych klientów hoteli – studentów z Polski, Ukrainy i Austrii.

Kluczowe wnioski. Respondenci wskazywali na wielką wagę atrakcji regionu i jakości obiektów noclegowych w odniesieniu do podejmowania przez nich decyzji związanych z podróżą. Ponadto podkreślali istotny, choć nie decydujący, wpływ zalet regionu na decyzje wyboru konkretnego obiektu noclegowego. Wyniki badań sugerują konieczność lepszego wykorzystywania atrakcyjności okolicy w materiałach marketingowych przeznaczonych do stymulowania popytu na usługi hotelarskie.

Słowa kluczowe: produkt turystyczny, region turystyczny, usługa hotelarska, poziomy produktów, preferencje konsumentów.