

## THE MAIN ASPECTS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITY IN THE AREAS WHICH ARE VALUABLE FROM THE NATURAL POINT OF VIEW IN NW POLAND

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Tourism and other forms of outdoor activity may be practised within the areas with valuable nature or which are under protection only when these are subordinate to the rules of protection of nature and cultural values [Ptaszycka-Jackowska, Baranowska-Janota 1985]. The good condition of the natural environment on such terrain, which has a relatively small degree of anthropogenic changes, is the basic factor that has a big influence on the attractiveness for tourism.

On such terrain there are usually many protected areas (nature preservations, landscape parks, etc.), that is why tourism pressure ought not to be in excess because of the potential *danger of damage to valuable nature*. The natural environment which is damaged causes tourists' interest in it to decrease significantly and a polluted natural environment also causes negative influence on all the people. As a result the region may lose its value for tourism and its economic significance.

In the light of these circumstances there is a need for planning tourism development according to rules which will assure protection for the unique wildlife and for the natural environment. Valuable areas, rare individual species (which are in danger) and also the valuable parts of cultural heritage are efficient magnets which attracts the tourists. As a consequence these components are becoming one of the main factors stimulating an increase in the local economy. Perceiving tourism as a commercial product which helps to supply communes' budgets ought to persuade the local authorities administration to give more priority to the protection of nature there. Understanding of this should in the local authorities doing more to invest in tourism in this region; because tourism is very important part of local economy.

Based on diagnostic research<sup>1</sup> it is possible to make a statement that in general, in areas with valuable nature tourism has a spontaneous, unorganised character without any comprehensive programs in the analysed region of NW Poland. That is why putting all efforts to change this reality towards being in accordance with the conception of sustainable economic development seems to be necessary [Żabińska 2000]. So, tourism development ought to be based on specific goals. This will make it possible to adapt tourism merchandise to the region's tourism resources and will assure protection for the natural environment. There is a need to create a strategy of tourism development, which ought to be realised according to the following directions (strategic targets):

- adjusting tourism to conform to the resources of the natural environment, in accordance with the rules of sustainable development and steering of the tourist traffic.

<sup>1</sup> The diagnostic research of the state of tourism development was carried out, in the territory of the communes situated along the Noteć River and in the Pszczewski Landscape Park (Lubusian Province in NW Poland). The research was carried out in the period 1997-2002 and May-November 2004. 10 communes were analysed: Stare Kurowo, Lipki Wielkie, Drezdenko, Mikdzyrzecz, Mikdzychyd, Pszczew, Przytoczna, Trzciel and Wodzisław. The following research methods were used: land penetration and analysis of communes' documents.

- development of ecological and historical education for the increase of the ecological consciousness of tourists and the local community;
- redesigning of the local tourism environment;
- making an integrated tourism information system;
- reducing the effects of stagnancy and unemployment in the region by stimulating local community to take part in serving the tourist traffic;
- promoting a region in Poland and abroad;
- persuading the local authorities to consider tourism as a commercial industry which helps to supply communes' budgets.

Due to limited capacity of this paper the author focused on the analysis of the chosen, more important aspects of strategic targets (mentioned above), which are significant for this studied region of NW Poland.

Preparing tourism development for the areas with valuable nature it is important to remember that any investments and tourists' enjoyment (of this areas) ought to be in subordination to protection of nature, of the landscape and of the cultural heritage. Because of the abundant natural environment of high value in analysed region of NW Poland and modern trends in tourism, the most adequate kind of tourism (for this territory) is **COGNITIVE TOURISM** (ecotourism and touring).

In general, the main aims of ecotourism are to educate people about showing respect for nature and also protecting the natural environment. These aims can be realised by direct ecological education, development and having their desire for understanding the natural world fulfilled and also having an interest in the problems of protecting of nature. At present tourists show more and more interest in this subject and in discovering the natural processes, phenomena and individual species of flora and fauna..

Many valuable endangered areas which have relatively small anthropogenic changes and with big biological diversity in the researched terrain of NW Poland, causes the increase of the foreigners' interest in this region of Europe. These tourists may be willing to pay significant financial costs for the possibility of admiring the beauty of polish wildlife and nature. This situation creases good circumstances for fast development of this kind of tourism but it needs careful preparation of the tourism environment and also the arranging of natural tourist events (undertakings having prepared programs of visiting, observing and of ecological education).

Touring (as educational tourism) has similar aims. Besides education (acquiring knowledge) this is a tool create peoples' interest, personalities and patriotism. The regional cultural heritage is still underestimated by the local communes' authorities and its needs (concerned with the preservation) are belittled. However, investments in preservation may cause the tourism offerings of this region to be more attractive.

Mentioned above kinds of tourism ought to have priority in the areas with *particularly valuable nature and which are under protection* (that are situated in the analysed part of NW Poland) because of importance of the good conditions of the natural environment.

**EDUCATION.** Any kind of tourism ought to be concerned with acquiring knowledge [Jobońiewicz 1997]. That is why tourism must be considered in connection with ecological and historical education – components which are currently the most important tasks of tourism. These components expand people's knowledge about nature, history, regional culture and they also initiate people's feelings of respect for nature and their wishes for preserving every ingredient of the natural environment (ecosystems, species, landscapes,

etc) for the next generations. Large knowledge about values of a region causes the increase of its worth in the feeling of local communities and also the increase of its worth for native and foreign tourists.

Direct education in specially prepared areas is one of the most attractive and effective ways of acquiring a knowledge of nature and of the local history. This statement is confirmed by local communities' opinions [Piekarski 2001; Kitowska, Piekarski 2004] and has often been indicated by many authors [Pawlaczyk 1993, Stępczak 1996]. Tools for acquiring this kind of education can be ecotourism, touring and didactic paths. A cooperation between *tourism organisers and local schools* has great importance too.

**STEERING (OF) THE TOURIST TRAFFIC.** *Development of the tourism industry and increasing tourists' pressure (on the environment) must not make the natural environment be endangered. Instead, tourism ought to cause an eagerness for protecting nature. That is why there is a need for steering of the tourist traffic, moving its concentration to the areas with higher resistance against damage. Also, rules for using the areas with valuable natural environment ought to be created. The main tasks of steering of the tourist traffic are:*

- demarcation of zones for tourist usage;
- locating the base of accommodations in terrains beyond areas with particularly valuable nature;
- designing new elements of the tourism environment to;
- assure that nature is not endangered;
- give tourists optimal enjoyment of natural attractions;
- organising ecotourism and touring this way, to be able to;
- have monitoring of tourist traffic in the areas with particularly valuable nature;
- direct tourists' attention to the areas which are less endangered;
- promote the value of that region and also providing education for the increase of ecological consciousness of tourists and of the local community.

**AGROTOURISM** shows the developing tendency in the researched area at present. This circumstance causes the increase of tourism function (state of tourism development) in the analysing terrain. Agrotourism is a specific way of spending free time and it is an alternative to common tourism (e.g. qualified or passive tourism). It can offer more attractions at a lower price. This kind of tourism is one of the ways for activate the village communities living in the terrains with unemployment. Agrotourism development in any region depends on a few main factors: local authorities' support, good patterns and initiative of farmers. An enterprising way of seeing this kind of tourism requires changing of the farmers' attitude, acquiring of new competencies in management, marketing and selling. The local authorities' support for agrotourism ought to displayed by allocating much more funds to the development of agrotourism farms than so far, while creating strategic documents of communes' development. General assumptions of realising the development of agrotourism are as follows:

- increasing of the number of agrotourism farms;
- enlargement of agrotourism offerings;
- efforts to make the tourist season much longer;
- improving the standards of service;
- keeping the sanitary standards at a high level;
- complying to the rules of protection of nature.

Execution of the above tips will be helpful for decreasing of pressure (by tourists) in the terrains which have valuable nature that is endangered. The local communities'

engagement in creating their tourism industry will reduce the unemployment in the analysed region.

The next factor of activating the local community is organising a seasonal tourism service base: creating the service points of tourist equipment, increasing the number of bicycle establishments, establishing selling-points of tourism guides of that region, souvenirs and locally hand-made goods, expanding the number of gastronomic points, etc. this service base should be located in the places of relatively big concentrations of tourist traffic.

Development of tourism in the areas with particularly valuable nature, which realise the mentioned strategic targets is an endeavour to execute the main assumptions of the conception of space order, on which ought to be based all politics and space planning at present [Wiatrak 2000].

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**Abstract.** In this paper the authors made analyses of the chosen aspects of modern tourism development in the areas with particularly valuable nature. These analyses were based on the research carried out in the years 1997-2002 and 2004, in the territory of 10 communes located in NW Poland.

The natural environment in the analysed area has a lot of biological diversity and also the anthropogenic changes of this terrain are insignificant. Abundant natural resources are the big tourist attraction in this area for both native and foreign tourists. This value ought to stimulate the local tourism development, which should cause an increase in the local economy. However, a strategy of tourism development must not cause nature to be endangered. Invariably, it ought to be in accordance with the rules of sustainable economic development.

**Key words:** tourism development, ekotourism, agrotourism