THE USE OF LOCAL CULINARY RESOURCES AS THE ENHANCER OF THE REGION'S TOURIST APPEAL - CASE STUDIES

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Abstract:

The tourist is increasingly interested in real products that have their own history, are specific and unique to the area. Such inimitable, place-specific products are cuisine, traditional objects and crafts. Local products can create a market advantage of the area and affect the development of its tourist function. The promotion of such products is often part of the activities led by local authorities, various organizations and associations. The Podkarpackie Voivodeship (Subcarpathian region) undoubtedly has a rich and interesting offer of local products which are one of the basic factors building the attractiveness of the region's tourism offer. This review paper presents examples of using local culinary products as enhancers of the tourism offer of the region. In addition, it presents the results of quantitative and qualitative research conducted by University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszów and MillwardBrown SMG/KRC among the participants of the incoming tourist traffic in Podkarpackie Voivodeship concerning, among others, their opinions on the attractiveness of the region.

INTRODUCTION

Competitiveness and attractiveness of the region is determined by such factors as transport accessibility, the environment and the product range. Regional products and local resources can create a competitive advantage of the area and affect the development of its tourist function.

For several years there has been a new trend in Polish tourism towards emphasizing one's regional affiliation, building mechanisms of local and regional development based on the promotion and protection of cultural and natural heritage of individual areas. More and more regions start to realize that local products of exceptional values arising from the history, culture and traditions of a given environment should be cultivated and protected because they can create a brand for the site.

The tourists also show a tendency to seek and consume products that are traditional, regional and unique to individual places. Today's tourists frequently want their travel to be extended outside the designated trails and delve into the authentic local culture, they are interested in what is unique, not mass and want to experience and "taste". They are increasingly interested in real products that have their own history, producer, and are area specific. The products that can be unique to places are culinary products.

The main aim of this article is to show, based on the examples from the region, how to use culinary products as the components of tourism products of the region. In pursuing this objective an assumption has been made that owing to tourism products based on the culinary resources it is the heritage of the region that is protected and preserved while the area and local community receive a much needed stimulus for their development. The study also presents the results of quantitative and qualitative research conducted among the participants

of incoming tourist traffic in Podkarpackie Voivodeship concerning their opinions on the tourist attractiveness of the region. The study was performed by diagnostic survey with the survey as a research tool and the applied technique was the questionnaire.

THE REGION'S ATTRACTIVENESS AND LOCAL PRODUCTS

There are numerous examples confirming the fact that a well-promoted and well-exploited local product can be an enhancer of the area's development by creating jobs and sources of income, activating local entrepreneurship or leading to a change in the region's function, e.g.: into tourism-oriented.

According to J. Majewski, composing tourism products and strengthening their brand based on the most important tourist attractions undoubtedly contributes to improving the image of the region (country), and thus increases the competitiveness of its tourism offer and the so-called perceived attractiveness [Majewski 2000:127].

Back in the 70s of the 20th century experts noted a two-way relationship that exists between the region and the products created in its territory. This phenomenon is referred to "the effect of origin," and it involves consumers assigning products certain characteristics and assessing their quality based on subjective opinions, beliefs and ideas on the places of origin of these goods. With respect to this effect, there also occurs the opposite situation when the local (and also regional) product builds the image of the region. When the product is recognizable and valued then a village or a whole region is able to use such an opinion to build its positive image among customers, e.g.: potential tourists and investors. A popular product of good quality thus helps to strengthen and increase the so-called attractiveness of perception [Florek 2007:118-119].

Most commonly local products are part of the heritage passed down by previous generations, they have a specific nature, they are original and therefore difficult to counterfeit or imitate in other areas, which affects the competitive advantage of the place where they are produced or located. Because of the unique characteristics that distinguish local products from other goods or services many travellers will retain and associate the place of origin of local food, handicrafts, architecture, etc. The way the public perceives local products must act on how they will perceive the places from which they originate and this in turn will contribute to the competitiveness of individual regions.

Development of the region based on local products also fits into the context of sustainable tourism, defined as "any form of tourism development, management and tourist activity that sustains the ecological, social and ecological integrity of the area, and maintains for future generations intact natural and cultural resources of these areas " [Zaręba 2000:142]. Products of sustainable tourism can be created based on various resources of the region, such as architecture, folklore, customs, rituals, regional cuisine, monuments, narrow-gauge railways, traditions of agricultural production and others. Hence sustainable tourism takes various forms, like agritourism or eco-tourism (nature tourism, tourism of active recreation in the nature) [Puciato 2009:204].

Traditional local products can become a sort of investment in the future for local communities and a stimulus to achieve socio-economic benefits, and taking into account the changing trends and growing demand for trips involving elements of culture and local history - they can contribute to the increase in popularity of the region [Krupa 2014:74]. These assets must be broadly recognised as valuable, competitive and influential not only in terms of enhancing economic benefits of individual producers of particular products, but also as profitable for the local community and the region, which can be measured by economic development in tourism and related industries.

LOCAL RESOURCES AS PART OF TOURISM PRODUCTS OF THE REGION

Local products are part of the heritage of the region or country. These products build the advantage of the region and its wealth, which can become a source of entrepreneurial activity for the local population as well as an attraction and encouragement for tourists.

A local product means a product or service which the inhabitants of the region identify with, produced in an original and environmentally friendly way out of locally available raw materials [Gałek, https://fundacjaekopotencjalpm.wordpress.com, (access Nov. 2016)]. They may range from:

- food products (e.g.: cheese, liqueur, wine, honey, etc.).
- handicrafts (such as products of clay, paper, paintings, sculptures, etc.)
- services based on local heritage (e.g.: workshops in handicraft, culture and nature education, guiding services, etc.)
- local events (e.g.: local holidays, fairs, festivals, rituals).

The product's indigenousness is also determined by its "production area "and "range". A local tourism product ranked the lowest in the hierarchical structure of tourism products is that which "production area" is limited to a single locality, commune, groups of communes, a district, touring park or another small geographical space. A higher rank in the hierarchy gets a regional tourism product whose "range" covers a much larger area (e.g.: geographical, ethnographic or historical region, or a province) [Kaczmarek i in. 2010:110-111].

Between these two types of tourism products, there is also a structural relationship. Tourism products of the region are created based on local products i.e. resources of a given locality and in particular with the use of cultural, historical and natural heritage. These legacies are therefore a form of attraction around which unique tourism products can be created. It is mainly for them that tourists flock to a given place - they are the core benefit for the buyer. In addition, thanks to its originality and connection with the place of occurrence they can become a showcase or a feature of the region.

Subcarpatian is the region rich in cultures and flavours. The cultural mosaic of this region was highly influenced by different national and ethnic traditions created here for centuries. Podkarpackie Voivodeship undoubtedly has a rich and interesting offer of local products, which are one of the basic factors building the attractiveness of the region's tourism offer. Among the many local resources from the Subcarpathian region this study selected and focused on cuisine which provided the ground for the development of more structurally and spatially extended tourism products of the region that have become increasingly interesting for tourists in recent years and contribute to the promotion of the region.

The first example of such a product is "The Subcarpathian Flavours Trail" (developed and implemented by the Association "Pro Carpathia", the Marshal's Office of Podkarpackie Voivodeship and Podkarpacka Regional Tourist Organisation).

Paving the culinary trails is now one of the most common forms of popularizing culinary tourism [Kowalczyk 2008:27]. In Poland, for several years, there have been created culinary trails whose main role is to promote regional culinary traditions and local food products. The first Polish culinary tourism products included the "Silesian Tastes", Culinary Route "Herb-scented Małopolska Village", Małopolska Honey Region, Małopolska Fruit Trail, Bean Valley Trail, Lubusz Trail of Wine and Honey, Oscypek Cheese Trail in Podhale highlands and the route "Podkarpacki Vineyard Trail" [Pro Carpathia 2012:3].

The Subcarpathian Flavours Culinary Trail was established in the autumn of 2013, first bringing together 39 catering facilities. The trail encompassed such facilities as road houses, hostelries, taverns, inns, saloons and restaurants. Each facility has in the menu at least three regional or traditional dishes and is certified. Currently the trail includes 50 facilities and represents one of the biggest culinary trails in Poland [www.podkarpackiesmaki.pl, (access Dec.2016)]. According to Krzysztof Zieliński, Promotion director of the Association "Pro

Carpathia" and responsible for the creation of the trail, it offers the most varied cuisine in Poland, which was affected by different national and ethnic traditions arising here for centuries: On the trail, you can try the cuisine typically served in Polish manor houses and in borderland areas, but also that of peasant origin (e.g. from the ethnic group called Lasowiacy or from the Rzeszów region) the cuisine of Wallachian shepherds (which gave rise to the Lemko and Boyko ethnic cuisines), and there are also present: Armenian, Jewish, German, Austrian and Hungarian cuisines [Zarówna, www.smakizpolski.com.pl (access Nov. 2016)].

"A culinary trail is an ideal solution for the tourists who expect not only excellent weather, affordability and varied attractions. It is the quality and culinary heritage which they put in the first place. (...) A culinary journey is surely complemented with accommodation in a unique location, unusual forms of sightseeing, opportunities to get some adrenaline rush or learn about the culture through contact with local people. Regardless of the season, the Podkarpackie Voivodeship provides its visitors with an interesting culinary offer and diverse rest and recreation opportunities"- claims Jarosław Reczek, Director of the Department of Promotion, Tourism, Sport and International Cooperation of the Marshal's Office of Podkarpackie Province [www.smakizpolski.com.pl, access Nov. 2016)]. A culinary trail actually promotes the exploration of the region through its rich culinary traditions and invites to learn about the region through dining experience [Zieliński 2013:28-29]. This is definitely an interesting and original proposal made by Podkarpackie Voivodeship, which only enhances the tourist attractiveness of the region.

Another example of a culinary local product which was used to create tourism products of the discussed region is the wine.

Wine is one of the oldest components of material culture of humankind. Its production and consumption have a long tradition [Myśliwiec 2006:11]. The development of Polish wine making tradition was significantly influenced by the clergy (Cistercians, Benedictines, Franciscans, Dominicans) who in the eleventh and twelfth centuries produced wine mainly for liturgical purposes, and due to high cost of transporting wine from abroad started to grow their own crops [Krupa, Dul 2009:60]. The most important centre of viticulture in Podkarpackie Voivodeship in the twelfth century was Przemyśl. The local court gathered experts in wine making from the Byzantine Empire and Crimea. Unfortunately, the seventeenth century with its long lasting wars caused the destruction of the country and abandoning the tradition of wine making [Myśliwiec 2006:13]. In the region, however, the wine production was not completely abandoned. Many people remained engaged in the wine trade.

To these days the Podkarpackie Voivodeship is the largest and fastest growing wine region in Poland. This is also confirmed by statistics from the largest and most prestigious wine events in Poland - the Convention of Polish Winemakers organized for several years by the Polish Institute of Vine and Wine and Wine Magazine. Tasters and wine critics jointly emphasize that in the wines from the Podkarpackie the region's flavour is very clear, they have a recognizable style and most importantly, they are repeatable [www.winiarzepodkarpacia.pl' (access Nov.2016)]. Currently, the region is seen as the cradle for the rebirth of Polish wine, it is a leader in this sector and a wine educational centre in Poland.

The Podkarpackie wine is known and recognized as a regional feature. It fits perfectly with the development and promotion strategy of the province as an ecologically pure, agricultural, yet innovative region. The winemaker basin is concentrated in the vicinity of such towns as Jasło and Krosno, Rzeszów and Jarosław and Przemyśl (more than 160 vineyards). Vineyards keep growing, the region is increasingly developing its enotourism offer, the vineyards are founding their tasting centres and winemakers more and more often

offer their guests not only wine but also a meal composed of local specialities and guest rooms.

The Podkarpackie vineyards have been merged together with other facilities and institutions related to wine making, under the concept of a tourism product "Podkarpacki Vineyard Trail". The trail is an original idea of Magdalena Dul [Dul 2008]. It starts in Jasło-Polish capital of wine - and runs from the vineyard "Golesz" through the surroundings of Dębica, Kolbuszowa, Rzeszów, Dynów, Łańcut, Jarosław, Przemyśl up to the vineyard "San River Valley" in Sanok. Like other such routes this product of the Podkarpacie region offers a tour of the vineyards, cellar tour, wine tasting and boarding in restaurants serving local food and wine.

Enotourism trail is a successful and frequently used method of promoting vineyards and wine regions as well as a source of income for the wine farms. It should be noted that in addition to the Podkarpacki Vineyard Trail, the region also has marked Jasielski Wine Route, the Subcarpathian Region Food and Wine Trail and the Subcarpathian Flavours Trail whose offer includes visiting vineyards and tasting wine.

A similar role have wine events in which Polish and foreign producers can present their offers, get to know each other, establish contacts and win over customers. In 2016 Subcarpathia held the 19th edition of the International Days of Wine in Jasło - an event that gathers every year more and more exhibitors and wine lovers. It is also an opportunity to familiarize the participants of the event not only with the culture of this region, but also with those of Jaslo's partner towns from Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Ukraine [Krupa, Dul 2009:82-83].

PROMOTION OF LOCAL PRODUCTS

The illustrated examples of local culinary products expected to enhance the tourism features of the region confirm that tourism in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship can be developed based on the promotion of folklore, the out of date lifestyle and on the exploration of the "otherness".

According to the qualitative research report entitled: "Tourism potential of Eastern Poland - a study preceding the advertising campaign" developed by Maison Research House for the Polish Tourist Organisation in 2009, people who visited the Podkarpackie Voivodeship for tourism purposes saw the strengths of the region mainly in small, charming places where they could feel the cultural diversity and the climate of the old days (folklore, ancient way of life, history) [www.pieknywschod.pl:20, (access Nov.2016)].

In the same year the University of Information Technology and Management in Rzeszow prepared at the request of the Marshal's Office of Podkarpackie Province the "Survey of incoming tourism in selected tourist reception places of Podkarpackie Province in the period from May - September 2009," in the light of which the Poles visiting Podkarpackie Province were most fond of the landscape (33% of total responses), tidiness, order (approximately 13%) and hospitality, politeness and friendly atmosphere at the hosting places (total 14%). "Good food, weather, nature, roads quality, peace and quiet, accommodation received responses of approx. 3 to 5%. The "remaining" responses, representing approx. 12% of the reviews, provided positive ratings for: aesthetic inns and roadside filling stations, renovated historic buildings, well-maintained pavements and facilities for the disabled." [www.turystyka.wrotapodkarpackie.pl, (access Nov. 2016)].

A similar result was delivered by the following edition of the research entitled: "The survey of incoming tourism in Podkarpackie Province" conducted by Millward Brown SMG / KRC in 2011. Atmosphere, friendliness and hospitality of the hosts, security and a range of catering offer were top-rated elements of the stay in the region, and the greatest satisfaction the visitors of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship derived from the landscape, nature, historical

monuments and tourist attractions [www.turystyka.wrotapodkarpackie.pl, (access Nov. 2016)].

Founding in recent years of new thematic and cultural routes, heritage centres and education farms is a response to the tourists' preferences, to the need of enhancing tourism in the region as well as a confirmation that the value of tradition has been recognised, as shown by the actions taken by local governments, community, manufacturers, providers and organizations involved in development and promotion of tourism. It is important for these operators to lead adjusted action as only a common accord can create complementary tourism products and allow for their effective promotion. Without effective promotion tourism products in the region will not find their recipients. In turn, in order for to customers be impacted, there must be established an adequate system of communicating with the market.

As per the simplest definition, "promotional activity involves informing, communicating and influencing the decision making of potential customers by familiarizing them with the offered products and stimulating their interest in buying" [Rogers, Slinn 1996:85]. While choosing instruments and promotional measures the account should be taken of the expectations of the target segment, the type of product, the conditions of competition and the product awareness among buyers.

A typical promotion of tourism products based on local products such as: a specific cultural trail usually includes the following actions:

- marking the trail, i.e. setting up signboards in places of of attractions,
- issuing promotional materials such as folder, leaflets, maps, developing a multimedia presentation or a trail guide containing the itinerary, description of the route and of the most interesting attractions on the trail and in the area,
- developing a dedicated website,
- organization of various events on the trail like tours, competitions, concerts, etc.

Additional proposals for action are listed by A. Mikos von Rohrscheidt, and they include contacts with tour operators specializing in cultural expeditions, distribution of information materials (published also in foreign languages) in tourist information centres, travel agencies, hotels and organizations supporting tourism in Poland and abroad, regular press releases before the season and during the season, arranging media travel for media representatives (study tours) as well as the organization of products knowledge competitions, collecting points for sightseeing or other forms of entertainment and competition for tourists [Mikos von Rohrscheidt 2008:400-401].

As of today, there can also be found other solutions in terms of promoting tourism products based on local resources, among which especially worth mentioning are:

- producers networking, creating cluster structures (e.g.: the Cluster of Traditional and Regional Product "Subcarpathian Flavours")
- building umbrella brands (e.g.: "the Krakowski Kredens brand"),
- engaging the so called brand ambassadors who, given their authority or a familiar face, can promote the product,
- running shops selling local products, as well as souvenirs,
- organizing shows, tastings, stands with local products, e.g.: in local shops, restaurants, tourist information centres, community cultural centres,
- initiating study tours combined with the presentation of local products, receiving region-related gifts,
- participation in fairs, exhibitions, bazaars,
- certification.

When promoting tourism products composed of local, traditional products the focus should be placed not only on typically transactional result of the promotion but also on

creating a climate around the product to reach the customer who wants to participate, contribute and feel a kind of spiritual kinship with the promoted good or service [Gaweł 2011:160]. Therefore, promotional campaigns of such products should refer to concepts such as history, uniqueness, identity, singularity and desire to learn. The trick is to combine these categories with new technologies, modern ways of learning, digital channels of information, distribution and the like.[Gaweł 2011:161]. It must be remembered that the way the local or regional product will be promoted and thus received by customers has an impact on the perception of the place from which it originates. The image of the product should therefore express its specificity and the value it brings, convey its distinctiveness and carry a strong emotional message to the consumer [Kowalik, Sikora 2007:17].

The experience of different regions has shown that successfully carried out promotional activities lead to concrete benefits, such as:

- attracting local markets (exchanges between regional manufacturers, local sale)
- increasing the number of visitors to the region,
- increased interest in and knowledge of the region,
- entering domestic and foreign markets,
- achieving "the effect of origin" under which the local product builds the image of the region (a recognizable and respected product can be used by the region to build its positive image),
- promoting entrepreneurship within the local economy (new companies -jobs-income for the inhabitants the increase in the living standards -taxes for the communes),
- use of local resources,
- pursuing passions, cultivating family traditions,
- attachment to the region, a source of pride.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Using local products for the development of tourism in the region and enhancing its attractiveness is a well-founded idea given the strength of the achieved benefits. What is more, it is one of the best ways to promote tourism in less popular regions. An example of a yet poorly-explored region is Podkarpackie. This is an area abundant in a variety of local resources which are one of the basic factors that build the attractiveness of the tourism offer of the region and thus develop its tourist function. The key issue is to undertake measures for the development of attractive tourism products based on local products, which should be the main objective of regional and local tourism organizations, local authorities and undertakings interested in tourist services. It is important to align joint activities that will lead to the creation of tourism products and their effective promotion by proper marketing.

Conclusions:

- The diversity of cultural values and local traditions of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship allows its visitors to use the abundant attractions and taste traditional dishes which can not be found in other places;
- Efficient use of local culinary products for the purpose of altering the features of the region and thus improving its competitive position requires involvement and reaching agreement as to the concept from different parties, including local communities, producers, retailers, local authorities, local organizations and others;
- These assets must be broadly recognised as valuable, competitive and influential not only in terms of enhancing economic benefits of individual producers of particular products, but also as profitable for the local community and the region, which can be measured by economic development in tourism and related industries.

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