

THE POSSIBILITY OF OVERCOMING SEASONALITY OF POLISH COASTAL TOURISM – THE CASE OF THE POMORSKIE VOIVODSHIP

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Abstract

Purpose – In the Baltic Sea basin a particularly serious barrier to the development of coastal tourism is its seasonality. Its consequence is a lack of opportunities for sustainable development, which leads to imbalance in terms of local economy, the environment and social inequalities and tensions. The objective of this paper is to present the possible methods of overcoming negative effects of seasonality in the Polish coastal regions, especially in the Pomorskie Voivodship.

Methodology – The study used a number of analytical methods based on sources obtained through desk research: the critical analysis of materials from the subject's literature, statistical reports and an analysis of official documents, normative acts and regional strategies. The empirical part, presented in the form of a case study, was developed on the basis of results of expert interviews, including IDI representative of the regional tourist organization.

Findings – Infrastructure used by the coastal tourism sector and the previous offer and practice of coastal tourism on the Polish coast have created mass tourism with neutral price elasticity of demand. Such a character of demand eliminates the effectiveness of some marketing tools.

Contribution – Critical analysis of documents from the EU to the local levels of governance of coastal tourism has shown that there is a gap in this linkage of documents. There are not any strategies or plans at the national level dedicated to coastal tourism. This means that the framework of activity set at the supranational level is not effectively used by Poland. Local solutions without national government support may not generate the expected results.

Keywords coastal tourism, seasonality, Pomorskie Voivodship, differentiation in the tourist product

INTRODUCTION

The significance of tourism in modern economy results from several factors which give it its unique character. Despite its global scale, the effects (both positive and negative) are felt locally, and the development of the sector is faster than global trade, for example, in the food or automotive industry. Tourism in the world export of products and services is the third, only after fuels and chemicals, and the value of transactions made in the sector accounts for 7% of the value of the world export (UNWTO, 2016). Unlike in other sectors, fluctuations in the global economy do not have a negative impact on tourism. Analysis of the data on tourist arrivals during the current decade shows that the number of tourists is increasing every year by 4 to 6% (World Bank), in 2015 reaching the number of 1186 million (UNWTO, 2016). At the same time, the world income calculated as GDP *per capita* grew by an average of 2.5% (World Bank).

Maritime and coastal tourism have been recognized as one of the most important elements of tourism in Europe contributing to its regional development (Britton, 1996; Shaw and Williams, 2000; Spiriagevas, 2008) and also as one of five economic activities related to the sea with the greatest development potential. Such tourism has been included in the so-called Blue Economy (Blue Growth), which includes maritime sectors with the greatest development potential (COM(2012) 494 final). Tourism associated with the use of sea and ocean waters classified according to the criterion of tourist activity is divided into three areas: coastal tourism, sea tourism and cruise tourism. Cruise tourism is often synonymous with sea tourism (Ecorys, 2013); coastal tourism is the tourism of border areas of land and sea; maritime tourism is the tourism associated with use of waters near the mainland (e.g. sailing, surfing) and the tourism associated with the movement on the waters or between them (e.g. cruising) is sometimes distinguished as cruise tourism. Maritime tourism and coastal tourism are an important sector of the European maritime economy and an important sub-sector of tourism. It is estimated that maritime and coastal tourism employs more than 3 million people, and the added value of the sector is over 183 billion euros (COM(2012) 494 final; Ecorys, 2013). Coastal tourism enjoys the largest share in employment and in creating the added value. It generates more than 2.5 million jobs and over 130 billion euros GVA (COM(2014) 86 final).

In coastal regions sometimes the only economic resources are natural resources, which are a tourist attraction. Paradoxically, that is what drives the development of these areas, but at the same time it can be a destructive force (Orams, 1999). Excessive exploitation of natural resources in relation to the economic sector whose operation is based them results in environmental degradation, which in turn will result in a less attractive tourist destination. Moreover, in coastal regions, in a climate where difference in between summer and winter months is high, seasonality becomes a negative phenomenon strongly influencing the development potential of the region. In some situations this phenomenon may become a destimulant for growth and a threat to economic development.

1. SEASONALITY – WEAKNESS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Seasonality is a phenomenon in these areas of economy which largely depend on the natural climatic conditions – tourism, agriculture, or forestry. The literature on this subject is extensive, but there is no universally accepted definition. In the numerous definitions of seasonality, authors emphasize seasonal patterns (sources), the effects of seasonality (sources), or the characteristics of demand generated by tourists' preferences (sources). In view of the objective of the paper, the authors assume that seasonality is a situation in which sustainable development of a given region is impossible. None of the aspects of sustainable development – economic, social or ecological one – has conditions for stable development. This is due to periods of over-exploitation of resources in each of the spheres, followed by periods of low activity or its total absence.

Some authors believe that a decline in activity is one of the positive effects of seasonality – resting time, the time to regain strength before the next peak (Murphy, 1985; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Brougham and Butler, 1981; Draktos, 1987; Grant *et al.*, 1997). The negative effects of seasonality can be presented by classifying them according to particular spheres that contribute to sustainable development. The greatest threats to economic development are caused by: uneven income streams, low return on investment, higher, sometimes impossible to estimate *ex ante* variable costs in the high season, lack of qualified workforce, lack of motivation for seasonal workers to raise competencies (BarOn, 1975; Baum, 1998; Butler, 1994; Bender, Schumacher and Stein, 2007; Butler and Mao, 1997; Goulding, Baum and Morrison, 2004; Cellini and Rizzo, 2012). Among the effects that negatively affect the environment and natural resources, the most frequently mentioned are: waste production, noise (created by people, transport or by tourist attractions), air, road, water transportation, and disturbance of wildlife (Bender, Schumacher and Stein, 2007; Croall, 1995; Kizielewicz and Luković, 2015; Jang, 2004). Social sustainability issues apply to both residents and visitors who experience discomfort due to traffic congestion, increased crime, including increased amounts of illicit products and services, and an increased risk of terrorist attacks (Jang, 2004).

Climate characteristics, especially air temperature and rainfall, shape the nature of seasonality. In the dominant literature, the pattern of seasonality is: (i) single peak pattern: peak, shoulder and off-peak seasons (Wall and Mathieson, 2006; Kennedy, 1999); (ii) two-peak seasonality: two seasons – e.g. mountains in summer and winter (Butler, 1994, 9), (iii) non-peak seasonality pattern: mostly in urban areas (Butler and Mao, 1997).

Four major seasonal management strategies are presented in the literature to counter the negative effects of seasonality or at least reduce the scale of their effects. These include: pricing policy, governance, changing the tourism product mix, and market diversification (Baum and Hagen, 1999; Nadal *et al.*, 2004; Sutcliffe and Sinclair, 1980, Witt *et al.*, 1991).

2. WEAKNESS OF THE POLISH COASTAL TOURISM

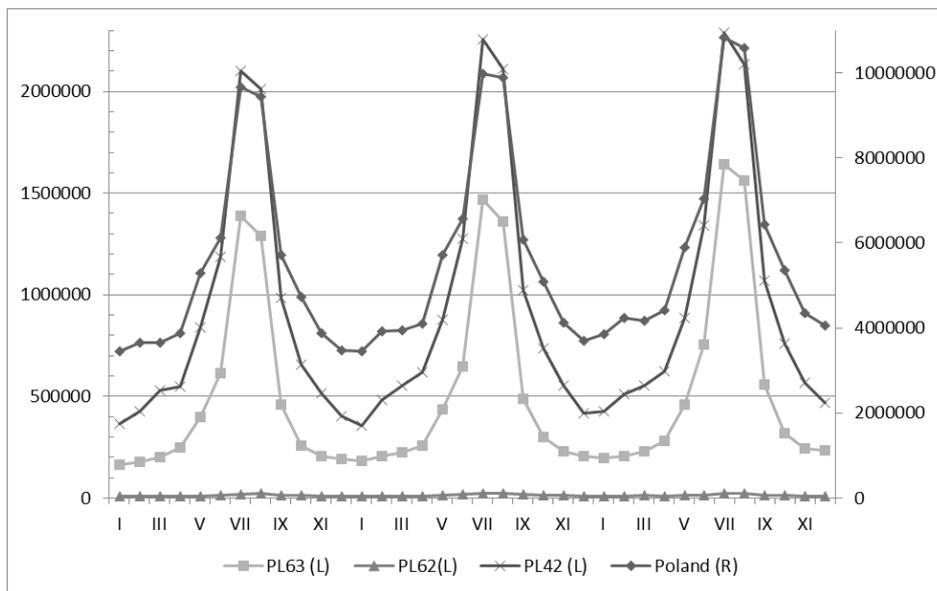
2.1. The problem of seasonality

The Polish coast of the Baltic Sea belongs to three voivodeships – in the nomenclature of European statistics to three units at the NUTS2 level. These are:

- Zachodniopomorskie Voivodship (PL42), with almost 21% of gminas (communes – NUTS5 level) situated on the Baltic coast, either the open sea or the Pomeranian Bay,
- Pomorskie Voivodship (PL63), where 22% gminas are directly adjacent to the Baltic Sea, either the open sea or the Gdansk Bay,
- Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship (PL62), a voivodship with the least marine character with only 4% of gminas lying on the coast, but not of the open sea, but the Vistula Lagoon, which connects to the Baltic with the Pilawa Straits (Studzieniecki, 2016).

In terms of the highest number of tourist arrivals (mainly July) in Poland, about 10–11 million nights are spent, including about 3.6–3.7 million in the coastal regions (PL42, PL63 and PL62). In the months with the lowest tourist traffic (January), there are about 3.5–3.8 m tourists on the national scale, with 0.5–0.6 million tourists in all coastal regions counted together.

Figures 1: Number of nights spent in coastal areas of the Baltic (2015).



Source: Central Statistical Office, 2016.

It is clear from the analysis of changes in occupancy rates (Fig. 1) that among coastal voivodships, variability in the Pomorskie and Zachodniopomorskie voivodships is a perfect fit in Wall and Mathieson's definition of seasonality (2006, 57). It is easy to highlight the decisive peak of the season (July–August), off-season (December–February) separated from each other by shoulder seasons: March–June and September–November.

In order to indicate the seasonality of the coastal region, the basic seasonality indices were calculated (more on this subject: Arnold, 2008; Bigović, 2012; Black, 2002; Fernandez-Moralez, 2003; Lim and McAleer, 2008; Nadal *et al.*, 2004; Fernandez-Moralez and Mayorga-Toledano, 2008; Xu, 2003; Wanhill, 1980; Yacoumis, 1980; Wanhill and Yacoumis, 1980). The following indices were selected: seasonality range, seasonality ratio, seasonality indicator and Gini coefficient (Tab.1).

Tables 1: **Seasonality indicators for Poland and coastal regions in years 2013-2015**

NUTS	2013				2014				2015			
	SRG	SR	SI	G	SRG	SR	SI	G	SRG	SR	SI	G
PL0	118.2	1.84	0.5	0.20	117.7	1.80	0.6	0.20	117.3	1.82	0.5	0.20
PL63	262.8	2.98	0.3	0.42	256.9	2.93	0.3	0.41	259.3	2.95	0.3	0.43
PL42	197.1	2.39	0.4	0.33	202.5	2.41	0.4	0.33	191.7	2.36	0.4	0.32
PL62	126.4	1.50	0.7	0.22	83.8	1.52	0.7	0.17	96.6	1.66	0.6	0.19

SRG – seasonality range, SR – seasonality ratio, SI – seasonality indicator, G – Gini coefficient

Source: authors' own calculations based on data from Central Statistical Office, 2016.

Analysis of the indicators presented in Table 1 allows concluding that all of the selected measures indicate that the Pomeranian region has the highest seasonality among the surveyed ones. The results are: insufficient (although improving) accommodation base; a fragmented tourist offer that is focused primarily on traditional products; insufficiencies in the area of an innovative approach to tourism and its products; a lack of adequate cooperation between industry's organizations and companies in developing new products and services and in implementing development projects; insufficient qualifications of employees and limited access of the sector companies to obtaining funds for their development needs; uneven distribution of demand for services, resulting in problems with supply, garbage disposal, congestions, media delivery, *etc.*; inefficient energy systems, water supply, sewerage (Ministry of Sport and Tourism, 2015; Inter-Ministerial Committee on Maritime Policy of the Republic of Poland, 2015; Sejmik Województwa Pomorskiego, 2012).

2.2. Other weaknesses of the Polish coastline region in the context of tourism development

The mainstream model of the Polish seaside tourism is still a model of "sun and beach" causing problems of imbalance and, consequently, high external costs. Low innovativeness of tourist services on the Polish coast is a remnant of the impact force in Poland (until 1989), the centrally planned economy. In the pre-transition period – state holiday centers or company holiday centers were created on the coast, and generally they were the same thing, because the companies were state-owned. Private tourist services were limited to hiring lodging in private dwellings. Lack of possibilities to spend a holiday abroad meant that the demand was so high and inflexible that neither the service provider nor the local authorities saw the need to invest in rural coastal areas. Sun and beach tourism did not require any expenditure.

Since the beginning of the transformation a change in the demand has been observed – a greater opportunity to travel abroad, which after 2004 (Polish accession to the EU) became available for everyone. This caused a decrease in the interest in the Polish coast. From the point of view of supply there have also been changes – restructuring and privatization caused that owners of coastal B&Bs went bankrupt or sold their businesses to private entities. In view of the above consequences of the previous centrally planned economy and additional disadvantages associated with inadequate infrastructure, the non-urbanized Polish coastal areas are now facing a number of problems that can be classified in several groups: (i) lack of the appropriate level of

knowledge (lack of people with the right qualifications, which means a lower quality of offered services and lower competitiveness of facilities providing services for tourists, which in turn means price competitiveness and results in lack of funds for the development of tourist facilities); (ii) low innovativeness in the sector (lack of knowledge with regard to local businesses; authorities and other stakeholders do not support the development of innovative tourism products that enhance the attractiveness and availability of the coast); (iii) the European network of protected areas Natura 2000 (lack of extensibility of tourist facilities, lack of development of road infrastructure; on the other hand, tourist attractiveness thanks to clean environment leads to a higher burden on the environment and the ecosystem); (iv) the small scale of business enterprises working for the sector of coastal tourism (mainly micro-enterprises operate in the sector, which are not resistant to socio-economic and/or political turbulences; the small scale of operations and the low level of assets constitute difficulties in gaining access to financial sources, both with respect to commercial banks and the EU funds); (v) lack of spatial planning (lack of planning results in the unfavorable structure in production in terms of GVA – services with low GVA replace services with higher GVA; similar problems also occurred on the crowded shores of the Mediterranean: in Greece or in Spain (Yepes and Medina, 2005).

3. POSSIBILITY OF APPLYING SEASONALITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

3.1. Possibility of effective use of pricing

In the case of the Polish coast, the pricing strategy is of little importance. The theorem is based on empirically estimated rates of elasticity (price and income) of demand for tourism services and neoclassical demand and supply theory.

According to Crouch (1992), up to 63% of the research results he analysed indicate that demand for international tourism is characterized by income elasticity expressed by the ratio > 1 in the long term (Li *et al.*, 2005; Song *et al.*, 2010). This means that a given increase in income proportionately corresponds to a greater increase in demand for tourist services. This confirms Friedman's permanent income hypothesis and gives a reason to believe that the long-term economic growth will lead to even faster development of tourism (in terms of the number of tourists), *ceteris paribus*.

With regard to price elasticity of demand for tourism services, estimating the nature of demand is much more difficult. This can be explained by the fact that demand is primarily determined by income and with regard to prices by relative prices and costs of transportation. But there are many other factors, some related to prices and difficult to extract: exchange rates, competing destinations, seasonal factors, marketing expenditure, migration, business travel, economic activity and others (Lim, 1997). Despite the difficulties in estimating price elasticity of demand, the vast majority of research points out negative elasticity (Rossello), so in accordance with the law of demand. In the long term, the value of the ratio of income elasticity of demand for tourism services fluctuates around 1 ($E_{DPrice} = -1$) (Hall and Lieberman, 2003; Tunaer

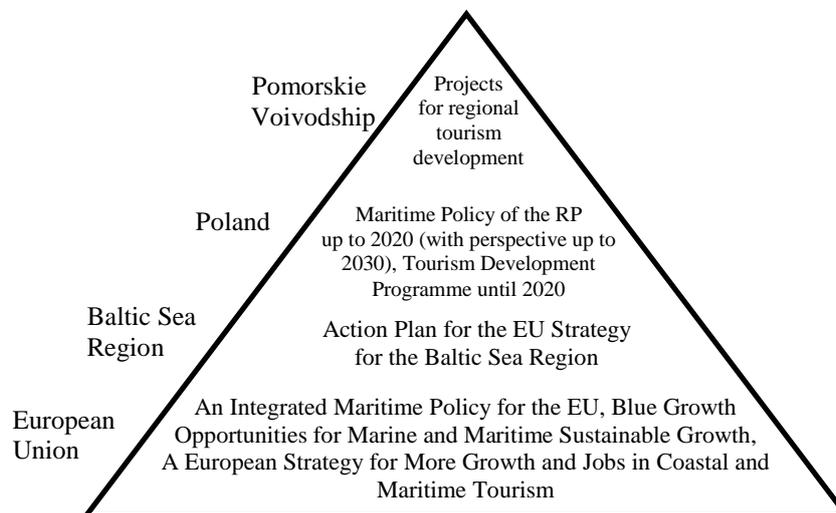
Vural, 2012). This, in turn, allows claiming that in the long run changes in local prices do not affect changes in the amount of revenue from tourism activities.

This explains why, especially in poor (even relatively) areas, tourism, as the most important sector, primarily focuses on mass-tourism (Boissevain, 1996), in which revenue growth is generated by an increase in the number of tourists served. The subject literature also suggests that tourism is important in the areas where other activities are limited by access to resources or access to markets. Hence, tourism in the regions remote from industrial centers – including coastal, agricultural and other peripheral regions, e.g. border regions or islands – is of high importance (Spiriajevas, 2008; Okech, 2010). Special significance of coastal tourism has been emphasized as this is a kind of activity for which coastal regions constitute natural space for development.

3.2. Coherence of multi-layered policies towards coastal tourism

As Bertucci claims (2002, p.3), “a healthy governance environment seems to be the most important factor in making tourism a successful activity for sustainable development” (in Wesley and Pforr, 2010). The features of effective governance comprise: (i) a transparent political environment facilitating representation and participation; (ii) political and regulatory coherency; (iii) partnership between state, private interests and civil society (Wesley and Pforr, 2010). The development of coastal tourism has been the subject of elaboration of many strategic papers at various levels (Fig. 2.).

Figures 2: Coastal tourism in different strategic document.



Source: own study.

3.2.1. EU level

Coastal tourism can be regarded as an important link in the efforts to implement the Europe 2020 Strategy (smart development, sustainable development, inclusive growth). It is an area in which there is a need to create innovative products. Expectations towards maritime economy were first written down in the Integrated Maritime Policy for the EU (COM(2007) 575 final). On the one hand, the turn towards seas and oceans was also beneficial for coastal tourism – weaknesses were identified and opportunities to overcome them were pointed out. On the other hand, by intensifying the known for ages activities and developing and promoting completely new forms, active use of the seas resulted in the newly emerged field of potential conflicts connected with access and unlimited use of the sea waters. This applied not only to the areas of open waters, but also to the use of waters in the coastal zone (COM (2012) 494 final).

It was recognized that the coastal tourism sector is a sector with great potential for development, which is characterized by unused so far opportunities of economic growth and high potential for job creation. The labor market in this sector is so diverse in terms of the required knowledge, skills and competencies of employees that even people so far excluded from the labor market have a chance to find a job in this sector.

3.2.2. Macro-region's solution

On the macro level, in the annexed Action Plan for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region there are references to coastal tourism. The plan identifies a need to diversify the tourist offer. Especially in this macro-region, due to strong seasonality, it is necessary to diversify offers and to resign from the model 3S. An example is the project "Routes to the Baltic Maritime Heritage – Increasing Visibility and Accessibility (VIABAL)", whose goal is "to build the capacity of business operators within tourism/ visitors sector to develop and run a joint Baltic Maritime Heritage related products and services (...) to increase the level of transnational cooperation between rural coastal sites and operators, and make more visible the Perceived Attractiveness of the Baltic Sea region, especially of rural coastal regions" (EUSBSR).

3.2.3. Polish solutions - Polish national and local strategies and policies

The issues of coastal tourism were included in "The Maritime Policy of the Republic of Poland until 2020", although they were little addressed in this document; the focus was mainly on defining the problems for the development of this sector, among which seasonality was pointed out as the most important. The activities for the development of coastal tourism which were listed in the first place were: "development of a new tourist offer on the Baltic coast, including the low season" (Inter-Ministerial Committee on Maritime Policy of the Republic of Poland, 2015), without indication of the authorities responsible for implementing such solutions. The document does not specify either methods of achieving the objectives or exact measures of achieving the objective. Among the indicators that have been adopted to monitor the implementation of maritime policy in this area, there are, *inter alia*: the level of utilization of accommodation for coastal gminas in July-August, the level of utilization of accommodation for coastal gminas during the low season, the number of new

investments aimed at developing tourism, accommodation capacity in coastal gminas, *etc.* None of the indicators provides either a base value or an expected value.

“The Tourism Development Program until 2020” is a strategic plan for the development of Polish tourism prepared by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism. There are no outstanding issues regarding coastal tourism. Throughout the document, “seasonality” appears only twice - in the context of one of the weaknesses of Polish tourism, without any indication as to the actions that reduce the effects of seasonality. Possible directions of the development of the Pomeranian Voivodship, and *inter alia* its tourism, are described in “The Pomeranian Development Strategy until 2020” (Sejmik Województwa Pomorskiego, 2012). The document lists the priorities of local authorities among which the most important is: “(...) the independence of the tourist offer of the seasons, its differentiation based on the potential of the leisure industry, and stronger specialization of the region in the field of health tourism and business. At the same time, the Provincial Government of the Pomorskie Voivodeship has committed itself to the development of chain tourism products as well as regional heritage and cultural offer. At the same time, the following indicators were used as success factors: the number of tourists, the number of visitors per 1000 inhabitants, the number of international exhibitions, the number of spectators, the audience and visitors to cultural institutions per 1000 inhabitants. No absolute reference values were adopted for the indicators. It has been written that each indicator should rank the voivodeship among the top three in the country. The indicator “the number of people using off-season accommodation” for which the desired rate of change was determined was: “average annual increase of 3%”.

4. PRODUCT DIFFERENTIATION FOR ROUND YEAR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT – THE CASE FROM THE POMORSKIE REGION

The Pomorskie Voivodeship actively works to promote tourism development and extend its tourist offer for the whole year. During the recent years there have been many interesting projects, in which the Pomorskie region has participated. Those projects have been based on the unique regional resources and have focused not only on leisure and pleasure travelers, but also concentrated on many other areas, such as sports or cultural activities, to increase both the region’s accessibility and to make it a year-round tourist destination. The examples of such projects are presented in Table 2.

Tables 2: **Characteristics of the selected projects for regional tourism development in the Pomorskie**

The name of the project	Project characteristics
“Enjoy South Baltic! – Joint actions promoting the South Baltic area as a tourist destination”	The innovative nationwide project carried out by partners from Poland, Lithuania and Germany in the years 2011-2014. This project was oriented towards cooperation with the tourist industry in terms of linking the sales offer inbound for the Baltic Sea destination.
Promotion of the Pomeranian Amber Trail	The project aimed to use the theme of amber to increase the perceived tourist attractiveness of the Pomorskie Voivodeship, by presenting a rich and multifaceted tourist offer of the region that is accessible all the year, and by communicating its values. The project was co-financed under the Regional Operational Programme for the Pomorskie Voivodeship for the years 2007–2013.
Revitalization of the European cultural route in the South Baltic region – Pomeranian St. Jacob’s Trail	The main aim of this initiative is to strengthen the existing cultural heritage in order to use it for the regional development as a new tourism product in the region of the South Baltic. The Pomorskie Regional Tourist Organization (PROT) is responsible for the demarcation of the course of St. Jacob’s Trail in the area of the Pomorskie Voivodeship and to develop the concept of its development and promotion.
Development and promotion of the Hydrotechnical Monuments Route	Within this project PROT aims to: - repair or replace information signs directing to specific objects entered in the trail of hydrotechnical monuments, - change the selected signs in case of rebuilding road junctions and - add new information signs. Moreover, two tourist publications were planned to be issued: a leaflet with information about the selected objects and a trail map with described attractions. Additionally, meetings with tourist guides and local tour operators were held to present the most current and detailed trail offer. This project was co-funded by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of the Republic of Poland.
Guidebook to products of bicycle tourism	The main objective of the project was to develop several dozen tourist packages, which provide interesting proposals for cycling tourists who are resting in the Pomorskie. This project was realized by PROT and co-funded by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of the Republic of Poland.
“Amber Heritage Network”	A system for the exchange of experience and information in the field of preservation and promotion of amber heritage in the South-Eastern Baltic region – this project aimed to transfer knowledge, experience and best practices related to preservation and use of the amber heritage to create a competitive tourist offer and to build a long-term and inter-regional cooperation between the environment and the tourist industry from the Pomorskie Voivodeship and the Kaliningrad region. The project was co-financed from grants provided by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through funding from the program of EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, with PROT being the project leader.

The name of the project	Project characteristics
„Pomorskie – Dobry Kurs” (<i>Pomerania – A Good Course</i>)	The objective of the project was to prepare and carry out a comprehensive and professional promotional campaign of the Pomorskie region. This campaign was based on the strong brand of the Pomorskie Voivodeship as well as the selected directions of tourism development which are most strongly identified with the specific and the unique character and the offer of the region. The key aim of the project was to show the alluring image of the Pomorskie region. The project was co-financed by the European Union from the European Regional Development Fund (Regional Operational Programme for the Pomorskie Voivodeship for 2007–2013) and the budget of the local government of Pomorskie. In realization of this project PROT was a partner of the Department of Tourism of the Office of the Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship.
„Pomorskie nabierz kolorów” (<i>Pomerania - Gain colors</i>)	This tourist campaign was realized under the Regional Operational Programme for the Pomorskie Voivodeship for the years 2007–2013 and was implemented in cooperation between the Pomorskie Regional Government and PROT in the years 2010-2012. Without dissociating from the widely recognized image of the region as an excellent place for a summer holiday, this project has enriched the Pomorskie region with the tourist offer for all 4 seasons. In this interesting way the Pomorskie region invited visitors to relax in spas, to rest actively on a variety of bike, canoe, horse and cultural trails – sharing the history of the sub-regions of Kashubia, Kociewie, Powiśle, Slupsk Land and Żuławy.

Source: Pomorska Regionalna Organizacja Turystyczna: <http://www.prot.gda.pl/projekty-zrealizowane/>;
<http://dtp.pomorskie.eu/pomorskie-nabierz-kolorow>.

The Pomorskie region is a unique area that offers top quality leisure activities which are currently promoted under the brand “Pomeranian Prestige” (Pomorska Regionalna Organizacja Turystyczna). This is an interesting and complex offer, extending the region’s availability for the whole year, fulfilling needs of even the most demanding tourists visiting the Pomorskie destination. The idea of this initiative came from Pomorska Regionalna Organizacja Turystyczna - PROT and has been supported by the local authorities, including Gdańsk and local catering industry. This project is consistent with the promotion program of premium-type leisure services of the Pomorskie region and has been granted funding from the Ministry of Sport and Tourism of the Republic of Poland (Pomorska Regionalna Organizacja Turystyczna).

“Pomeranian Prestige” refers to five pillars that represent very attractive proposals for spending free time in the Pomorskie region, such as culinary (as the starting point), amber and design, yacht and golf, shopping and lifestyle, medical and spa (see Tab. 3).

Tables 3: **Characteristics of the project Pomeranian Prestige**

The name of specialized area	Characteristics of the tourist proposition
Culinary	Restaurants in the city (modern, traditional); Restaurants in the region (modern, traditional); Recipes; Events; Regional products
Amber and Design	About amber; Amber attractions; Design; Amber galleries; Events; Offer
Yacht and Golf	Into the hole; Catching the wind; Marinas; Sailing schools; Events
Shopping and Lifestyle	Shopping spree; In style
Medical and Spa	Leisure & Spa; Fit & Healthy

Source: Pomorska Regionalna Organizacja Turystyczna: <http://www.pomorskie-prestige.eu/>.

Summing up, the vision of tourism as a modern and open tourism economy that is based on smart specializations making the region attractive during the whole year may significantly contribute to strengthening competitiveness of the region and increasing its attractiveness. However, the precondition for achieving the desired effect is to overcome some of the weaknesses that result from seasonality (clause 2.2.), whose reduction or elimination is at the responsibility of the national authorities.

CONCLUSION

Seasonal management takes care of four possible strategies, which include: pricing policy, governance, changing tourism mix and market diversification.

The well-organized list of negative aspects of mass tourism on the Polish Baltic coast (especially the Pomorskie Voivodship) and selected seasonality measures (Tab. 1.) showed that so far there has been no effective action carried out to increase the attractiveness and availability of the coastline for potential tourists. Negative effects of unbalanced economy are the results of the character of demand for tourism services with a simultaneous lack of integrated tourism policy taking into account the specifics of coastal tourism economy.

Due to the lack of possibility to use the pricing policy and governance in seasonal management on Pomorskie coastal projects for tourism products that change the tourism mix and diversify the market may be a remedy for this state of affairs.

The first step from which the local government started the process of changing the nature of tourism in the Pomeranian Voivodship was the development of projects aimed at both prolonging the season, flattening the differences between the peak and off-peak number of tourists (Tab. 2) and diversifying tourists arriving in the Pomorskie Voivodship (Tab. 3 – as an example of activities addressed to a group of more demanding tourists).

So far, it has been difficult to assess the effectiveness of the measures taken. There are two reasons – too short time since the launch of programs and too short period of statistics describing seaside tourism (Eurostat has been publishing such data since 2012, the Polish Statistical Office - only since 2013). The issue is important not only from the point of view of the Pomorskie Voivodship, where areas with only developed tourist functions are significantly weaker economically. The political, social, economic and climatic changes taking place in and around Europe lead to a change in the preferences of tourists with regard to holiday destinations. A coherent, attractive tourist offer based on the appropriate quality of tourist infrastructure (including transport) can attract tourists who will contribute to economic development. Otherwise, tourism, especially the negative effects of seasonality, will contribute to the social, economic and ecological degradation of the Polish coast.

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