

COOPERATION WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AS ONE OF THE BASIC ELEMENTS CONCERNING THE ACTIVITY OF THE PRESENT-DAY DMO

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ABSTRACT: In this article, the significance was presented of cooperation with the widely understood external environment (authorities, tourist industry etc.) in the activities of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs). A review of theoretical issues and also an analysis of research carried out by various authors confirmed that the factor analysed is one of most important factors in the hierarchy of the functioning of DMOs. The author's own research that was carried out by him at the beginning of the year 2013 in relation to a sample of 50 European DMOs from 19 states (those that represent national, regional and local levels) confirmed the legitimacy of the abovementioned proposition. The author carried out the analysis with the use of the method of point quality classification. It was not only that the current significance of the element examined was assessed in the activities of DMOs, but its importance was indicated in the past (the period 5-10 years ago) as well as its potential significance in the future (in the span of 5-10 years). The results of the research explicitly demonstrate a growing significance of cooperation with the environment in the activities of the prevailing majority of the organizations analysed. The analyses and conclusions presented in the article serve to confirm that the element examined constitutes one of the most important spheres of the functioning of present-day DMOs.
Keywords: cooperation, environment, DMOs, activity.

RESUMEN: Este artículo presenta el significado de la cooperación con el ambiente externo (autoridades, industria turística etc.) en el contexto de las actividades de las DMOs (Destination Management Organizations). Una revisión de cuestiones teóricas y también un análisis de pesquisas realizadas por varios autores confirmaron que el factor analizado es uno de los más importantes en la jerarquía del funcionamiento de las DMOs. La propia investigación del autor, que fue realizada en el inicio del año 2013 en relación a una muestra de 50 DMOs europeas de 19 estados (representando los niveles nacional, regional y local), confirmó la legitimidad de la propuesta supra referida. El autor realizó el análisis recurriendo al método de evaluación por puntos. No fue sólo evaluado el significado actual del elemento analizado en las actividades de las DMOs, pero su importancia fue indicada en el pasado (en un período de 5 a 10 años), y también su significado potencial en un futuro próximo (en un período de 5 a 10 años). Los resultados de la pesquisa demuestran explícitamente una importancia cada vez mayor de la cooperación con el medio ambiente en las actividades de la mayoría de las organizaciones analizadas. Los análisis y conclusiones presentadas en el artículo sirven para confirmar que el elemento analizado constituye una de las esferas más importantes del funcionamiento de las DMOs actuales.
Palabras-clave: cooperación, medio ambiente, DMO, la actividad.

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RESUMO: Neste artigo é apresentado o significado da cooperação com o ambiente externo (autoridades, indústria turística etc) no contexto das atividades das DMOs (Destination Management Organizations). Uma revisão de questões teóricas e também uma análise de pesquisas realizadas por vários autores confirmaram que o fator analisado é um dos mais importantes na hierarquia do funcionamento das DMOs. A própria pesquisa do autor, que foi realizada por ele no início do ano de 2013 em relação a uma amostra de 50 DMOs europeias de 19 estados (representando os níveis nacional, regional e local), confirmou a legitimidade da proposta acima referida. O autor realizou a análise recorrendo ao método de avaliação por pontos. Não foi apenas avaliado o significado atual do elemento analisado nas atividades das DMOs, mas a sua importância foi indicada no passado (num período de 5 a 10 anos), mas também o seu significado potencial num futuro próximo (num período de 5 a 10 anos). Os resultados da pesquisa demonstram explicitamente uma importância cada vez maior da cooperação com o meio ambiente nas atividades da maioria das organizações analisadas. As análises e conclusões apresentadas no artigo servem para confirmar que o elemento analisado constitui uma das esferas mais importantes do funcionamento das DMOs atuais. **Palavras-chave:** cooperação, meio ambiente, DMO, atividade

INTRODUCTION

The success of individual destinations on the tourist market is determined by many factors. It depends on an adequate approach of appropriate entities to all the spheres connected with the development of tourism. A comprehensive process of management of destination is mentioned too. As stated by Fyall (2010), a comprehensive approach to the management of a destination can be related to the so-called 15C, i.e. 1) complexity and control; 2) community; 3) change; 4) crisis; 5) complacency; 6) customers, co-creation and visitor experience; 7) culture; 8) competition; 9) commodification; 10) creativity; 11) communication; 12) channels; 13) cyberspace; 14) consolidation; 15) collaboration. The last of the spheres mentioned above, i.e. cooperation, is of a great significance. Furthermore, according to Cândea, Stâncioiu, Mazilu and Marinescu (2009), the process of the management of a destination clearly "brings closer" those entities which so far have been acting separately.

An attempt to assess the significance of cooperation in the activities of present-day DMOs constitutes the chief purpose of this article. The article is fundamentally divided into two parts. The first part covers theoretical issues concerning the problem examined. The second part is of an empirical nature: it presents the results of the research carried out by the author in selected European DMOs concerning the significance of the sphere of cooperation in the activities pursued by organizations in this area in the past, present and future. In the article, other sources were also made use of, including research results by other authors concerning cooperation undertaken by DMOs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Idea of cooperation

Cooperation is defined by Gray (1989) as "(...) the process of joint decision taken by crucial stakeholders concerning a specific problem". Cooperation or partnership refers to those people and organizations from public, private and non-government sectors that become involved in a voluntary, innovative and mutually beneficial relation to take up joint objectives through an amalgamation of their resources and knowledge (Nelson and Zadek, 2000). It is accepted that cooperation is a very difficult process (Huxham, 1996) and, furthermore, over a half of all the current relations in the area of cooperation have proved to be ineffective (Fyall and Garod, 2005; Kubickova and Wang, 2011). This is evident based on the results of research which indicate the most important barriers of cooperation in the tourist sector, i.e.:

1. Internal:
 - a) interpersonal – lack of trust, lack of previous experience, and lack of partner fit,
 - b) organizational – deal with a number of organizational issues such as what are the mutual benefits, is there a return on investment, does the company have a clear vision, and how the performance and integrity of a company is viewed.
 - c) individual – individual characteristics could be divided based on skills and qualities
2. External – can be defined as those that are out of a company's control. The main themes that were observed during the interviews were changes in the economic climate, changes in trends and bad press.

As stated by Bramwell and Lane (2000), cooperation in the tourist branch can be best described using such expressions as "coalition", "forum", "alliance", "task group" or "public-private partnership". As stated by Panfiluk (2012), public administration units are those entities that have at their disposal a full range of those instruments that are indispensable in the management of a tourist region. Nevertheless, remarks are being more and more frequently expressed that it is not correct to attribute the responsibility for the functioning of the entire management system to local government institutions alone. The regional management system is dependent on a simultaneous involvement of numerous entities: both from the public sector and the private sector (Vanhove, 2005).

The management of a destination should be based on the activity of the appropriate organization based on a public and private coop-

eration (Padurean, 2010). This process must include the elements of cooperation and leadership. This is also the rule for continuous raising of the level of mutual trust among stakeholders.

Cooperation with DMOs

Destination Management Organizations are defined by the World Tourism Organisation (UN-WTO) as "(...) those organizations which are responsible for management and/or marketing of individual tourist destinations" (World Tourism Organisation, 2004). According to Majewski (2007) these are "(...) organizations which are responsible for the coordination and supporting of the activities of all the entities involved in the marketing of destinations". Collins and Buhalis define Destination Management Organizations as the providers of products and information technology services to customers, agents and suppliers in the sector of tourism (Mendling, Rausch & Sommer, 2005). According to Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formica and O'Leary (2006), Destination Management Organizations are non-profit entities which aim at the generation of the visits of tourists in a given area. As stated by van Harssel (2005), DMOs mean organizations that lead a community's hospitality and tourism industry and are often a driving force behind local economic development plans.

Destination Management Organizations may occur in one of the following forms: national tourism authorities (NTAs) or organizations (NTOs, responsible for management and marketing of tourism at a national level); regional, provincial or state DMOs (RTOs, responsible for the management and/or marketing of tourism in a geographic region defined for that purpose, sometimes but not always an administrative or local government region such as a county, state or province) and local DMOs, responsible for the management and/or marketing of tourism based on a smaller geographic area or city/town (World Tourism Organisation, 2004). According to other sources, DMOs may occur as: national Tourism organizations' Regional/provincial state tourist organizations; City tourism organizations; Coastal resort organizations; Ski or other sport organizations (Mintel, 2005).

It is generally accepted that the present-day DMOs realize many tasks, and the most important ones include the following:

1. product management: including consultancy, booking services, personnel development, product development,
2. management of the region: creation of partnerships in the destination, sustainable development, attracting new investors etc. (Batarow, Bode and Jacobsen 2008).

The range of the activities of DMOs is considerable. It involves not only strictly marketing activities, but to a significant extent it con-

cerns any undertakings in the area of destination management (Borzyszkowski, 2011). The realization of these tasks is possible owing to, among other factors, a wide cooperation with various entities that are interested in the development of a destination. As a matter of fact, the very idea of the functioning of DMOs is to a significant extent based on the rules of cooperation (or even partnership). According to Klein, over the years, DMOs functioned mainly in the form of government institutions. However, he emphasizes that recently, more and more DMOs have been formed based on the rules of public and private cooperation or even in a completely private form (Batarow, Bode and Jacobsen, 2008). The creation of DMOs within the framework of the rules of public and private partnership offers definitely better possibilities of development and implementation of various marketing initiatives (Zahra, 2006).

At present, it is difficult to talk about the development of a destination and at the same time successful activities of DMOs while not taking care of cooperation with the external environment. As emphasized by Wagenseil (2010), the tasks of DMOs need to focus on several spheres, i.e. planning, information, design of tourist offer, marketing communication, sales and lobbying. Within the framework of the last sphere, particular significance is attributed to all the issues of cooperation with external entities. It is worth it to mention that many authors emphasize the issue of cooperation as one of the pillars of the functioning of the present-day DMOs. For example, Majewski (2007) makes a reference to "(...) the recognition of all the entities that may be interested in development" and further to "attracting them". Also Morrison, Bruen and Andersen, while distinguishing five functions of DMOs, indicate issues connected with cooperation or even "a support to the tourist branch", stating that a Destination Management Organization is a "coordinator of industry" (Presenza, 2005).

As emphasized by Heath and Wall, representing the interests of all the entities interested in the development of tourism, marketing of a destination and coordination of some activities in the area of the development of tourism can be included among one of the most important non-marketing activities of DMOs (Presenza, 2005).

Gartrell (1994) demonstrated that the most important areas of the functioning of DMOs include support to the activity of all the entities involved in the promotion of incoming tourism to a given destination.

The problem analysed was also indicated by Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formica and O'Leary (2006), who specified the following basic challenges for DMOs:

1. an adaptation to technological changes,
2. management of expectations,

3. "from the marketing of the destination to the management of the destination",
4. new levels of competition,
5. recognition of creative partnership as a new lifestyle,
6. finding new ways to achieve success.

The partnerships or areas of cooperation of DMOs may occur on different levels, e.g. between the individual administrative levels (regional, local ones), or between the individual entities (the private or public sector). Increasingly, the role of the DMOs is to assist in the development and maintenance of these partnerships, particularly to facilitate the planning and delivery of destination management to ensure a quality of experience for visitors (World Tourism Organisation, 2007).

It is worth mentioning that apart from the traditional understanding of cooperation between DMOs and the external environment, similar activities within the framework of individual organizations play an important part as well. This concerns those entities which possess a membership structure; hence, different forms of cooperation between the individual members of a given Destination Management Organization acquire a special significance.

COOPERATION OF DMOS WITH THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT: THE PRESENT STATE AND THE DIRECTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

There are a number of studies in the literature concerning the problem of a widely understood cooperation in the activities of DMOs. For example, the representatives of 35 Hungarian DMOs attributed an essential significance to the public and private cooperation. Though 59% of the respondents indicate a significant role of the public sector in the management of a destination, on the other hand, all the respondents found that "(...) the public and private partnership is the best way to deliver promotion and management of a destination". As many as 92% of the respondents found that the development of tourism should take place within the framework of an integrated structure (Bakucz, 2008).

The practice shows that there are fundamental differences in the scope of cooperation and satisfaction from this cooperation in various regions or countries. As stated by Kučerová and Makovník (2007), this phenomenon is clearly evident in the example of regional tourism organizations in Austria and Slovakia. The assessment of the public and private cooperation was as follows (Table 1):

Table 1: Assessment of cooperation in regional tourism organizations in Austria and Slovakia

	No opinion	Insufficient	Sufficient	Good	Very good	Excellent
Austria	6.06%	3.79%	18.81%	43.18%	26.52%	2.27%
Slovakia	1.69%	36.44%	28.81%	31.36%	1.69%	0.00%

The values presented in the Table 1 demonstrate significant differences in the perception of satisfaction in relation to cooperation in both countries analysed. Wang (2009) presents in detail the problem of public and private cooperation in tourism. The author proves that individual efforts on the part of separate entities produce a considerably smaller effect than in the case of cooperation. This problem is particularly evident in the increasingly competitive tourist market. The author also mentions the so-called scale benefit through joining the efforts and activities of all the stakeholders.

Ryglóvá (2008) makes a reference to the fact that there is no interest on the part of the private sector in acceding to regional tourism organizations (or even cooperation with them). As an example, she presents the Tourism Organization of South Moravia (Centrála cestovního ruchu Jižní Morava – CCRJM). On the one hand, 90% of the companies examined confirmed that CCRJM directed a question and a request to them concerning cooperation and, on the other hand, 61% of them are not going to undertake any cooperation with the organization. The author explains this phenomenon with a very weak position on the market and a poor image of CCRJM. Generally speaking, the author relates problems with the development of regional structures (on the example of CCRJM) to several issues:

1. Insufficient cooperation of the public, business and non-profit sectors: the absence of the functioning cooperation is a brake for the development of tourism and prosperity.
2. Superiority of tourism regional authorities: tourism regional authorities as well as the destination management companies in the individual areas cooperate with entrepreneurs only very little or they do not do so at all.
3. Inconsistent presentation: for example the tourist offer is presented in different ways on many web portals.
4. Insufficient qualifications: tourism services of a good quality cannot be ensured on the required level if they are provided by non-qualified workers without the ability to speak foreign languages.
5. Insufficient tourist infrastructure: it is a given fact that the development of tourism is closely connected with the quality of tourist infrastructure and the complementary services.
6. Little knowledge about the possibilities of financing from the EU sources: regarding the low level of cooperation, businessmen

have a rather poor knowledge about the possibility to use financial means from the European sources (Ryglová, 2008).

In the period from January to March 2013, the author carried out his own research with the use of a questionnaire. One of the purposes of the research was to define the significance of cooperation between DMOs and the external environment (local governments, tourist branch, etc.). In the research, the method of point quality classification was used. The entities examined were requested to present the significance of the factor in the scale from 0 to 5, where 0 was an element which does not occur, 1 – an element which is the least important, and 5 – the most important element. The organizations examined were asked to indicate the rank of a given factor in three periods, i.e. in the past (5-10 years ago), at present, and its potential significance in the future (during the coming 5-10 years). The results of the research were obtained from a total of 50 European organizations which represented 19 countries (Croatia, Latvia, Slovakia, Belgium, Finland, Austria, the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Spain, Sweden, France, Wales, England, Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, Montenegro, Estonia, Serbia). From among the results obtained, 4 (i.e. 8%) constituted organizations of a national nature (these were national tourism organizations: NTOs). Regional entities constituted the next group: 20 (40%). Among the organizations examined, local entities were dominant: in total, there were 26 of them (i.e. 52%). The author wishes to mention that in the case of national DMO, the research results are to be treated with considerable reserve due to the sample being small. In spite of this, a decision was made to take them into consideration in this analysis. Generally, it is to be observed that the significance of the factor examined in the opinion of the organizations examined is systematically increasing (Table 2).

Table 2. Importance of cooperation in the activities of selected DMO (n=50)

No.	Entities	Significance of the factor (at an average)		
		Past (5-10 years ago)	At present	Future (in 5-10 years)
1.	National (n =4)	2.75	4.00	4.75
2.	Regional (n = 20)	3.35	3.95	4.35
3.	Local (n = 26)	3.17	3.88	4.35
4.	In total (n=50)	3.21	3.92	4.38

Source: Author's own research

An increase was observed of the significance of cooperation with the external environment on all levels (i.e. national, regional and local). Generally speaking, this phenomenon can explicitly be recognized as positive: it means that cooperation with the environment both at pre-

sent and in the coming future is to gain more significance. It is worth to emphasize that according to the predictions by organizations on all the levels, ultimately the factor analyzed will achieve on average the value of over 4 points. However, the diversified pace of changes in the entities examined needs to be noted (Table 3).

Table 3. Pace of changes (in percent) of the rank of cooperation in the activities of DMO

No.	Entity	Pace of changes (in %)	
		At present/past	Future/at present
1.	National (n =4)	+45	+19
2.	Regional (n = 20)	+18	+10
3.	Local (n = 26)	+22	+12
4.	In total (n=50)	+22	+12

Source: Author's own research

The research demonstrates that the average pace of the increase of the significance of cooperation with the environment in the activities of all the DMOs analysed is currently higher than it is predicted in relation to the nearest future. It can be observed that this pace is definitely higher in the case of national structures. Regional and local entities are characterized by a similar pace of changes in the factor analyzed. This is confirmed with the presentation of the pace of changes in the extreme periods (i.e. between the past and the future). In the case of national organizations, the pace of changes was on average 73%, in the case of regional organizations: 30% and local organizations: 37%.

It is also worth to indicate the results of specific single DMOs. In the case of two local organizations (in Hungary and in Austria), no information was obtained on the significance of the factor in the past due to the fact that these organizations started their activities relatively recently (in 2011 and 2012). From among the 50 organizations examined, only 12 organizations defined the rank of the factor analysed in the past to the highest degree (i.e. "5"). In the case of the current activities, there were already 16 organizations, and in the case of the coming 5-10 years, as many as 30. It is worth to emphasize that 11 organizations in all the three periods indicated the maximum value (i.e. "5"). On the other hand, two cases were observed where the rank of the factor decreased. However, it should be clearly emphasized that in the prevailing majority of the cases, the individual organizations assessed fairly high the significance of cooperation with other entities. Thereby, it can be assumed that this sphere plays a significant part in

the hierarchy of their activities. What is more, a further growth of its significance is to be expected in the coming future.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The discussions presented above demonstrate the significance of cooperation with the environment in the activities of modern DMOs. An analysis of theoretical deliberations as well as a review of the research results provided by selected authors and by the author of this article demonstrate that the factor analyzed is one of the most important in the activities of DMOs. These activities are to be recognized as justifiable because it is difficult to talk of the development of a competitive destination without undertaking intensive activities aimed at cooperation between all the entities interested in the development of tourism.

The analyses presented above serve to confirm the results of the author's own research carried out in the years of 2002-2003 in relation to selected European national tourism organizations. The answers obtained from 10 organizations (from the Czech Republic, Finland, the Netherlands, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Germany, Poland and Romania) demonstrate that the factor of "cooperation with environment" obtained on average 4.8 points out of 5 points possible. As compared with the other 9 factors (publishing activities, information, promotion, market research, development of existing tourist products, stimulation of the development of tourism in regions, creation of new tourist products, improvement of the quality of tourist services, investments in the sphere of the tourist infrastructure), the factor analyzed achieved the highest value: the average for 10 factors was 3.74 (Borzyszkowski, 2005). This is reflected in many studies, e.g. by Millington, Cleverdon (1999). They are of the opinion that "(...) the largest (...) evolution of the activities of National Tourism Organizations involved the system of public and private relations. This was mainly manifested in a greater involvement (not only of the financial nature) of the private sector in the issues of the functioning of National Tourism Organizations". The research results presented above seem to confirm that this tendency may concern all the DMOs (both national and regional or local ones).

When comparing the theoretical issues concerning the problem under examination and the results of the research carried out by the author and other scholars, it can be explicitly found that the problem analysed is considerable to the prevailing majority of DMOs. It is also of significance that according to predictions, the role of this factor should still increase in the coming future. In the author's opinion, a number of factors have had an influence on this situation. The

appreciation on the part of individual DMOs of the possibilities offered by cooperation with the environment is to be certainly counted among these factors. An accumulated effort of many entities certainly yields considerably larger effects than the sum of their single activities (the synergy effect). Moreover, the growing significance of cooperation in the activities of DMOs may be the result of the current economic situation of many countries that are wrestling with the current economic crisis. This crisis involves many national economy sectors; it also has had an impact on tourism. This concerned not only DMOs alone, but in particular many tourist sector entities. In this situation, many entities have concluded (quite rightly so!) that wide-scale cooperation can be an excellent way to limit the effects of the economic crisis. In spite of this, the author predicts that the factor examined, even in those situations where there is no threat of the effects of the crisis, will have an increasing significance to individual destinations in the future. Notwithstanding the fact that the research carried out indicates a smaller pace of the increase of cooperation in the near future than at present, no marginalization of this phenomenon is to be expected. On the contrary, individual DMOs will be more and more frequently appreciating the role of cooperation in the creation and development of a competitive destination.

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