

DEVELOPMENT OF MARKETING OF CULTURE IN THE KURPIE REGION

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1. Introduction

From time immemorial, culture has been an integral part of the life of mankind. While being created over the years by the mankind itself, it was developing the identity of inhabitants of a given territory. Actually, this is thanks to culture that people were jointly engaged in activities relating to various fields of life, both those belonging to the spiritual sphere and those associated with everyday tasks, such as, for example, ceremonies that accompany harvesting the crops. All that used to unite the natives of a given region. Later on, the language (dialect), costume, and artistic creation have developed.

Currently, in the era of progressing globalization, the cultural identity of regions is disappearing and thus becoming a unique product which needs to be rescued from oblivion, and which may contribute to achieving goals relating to economic development. Making use of culture for economic purposes is most widespread in a particular field of market operations, namely “marketing”. It is aimed at understanding consumers behaviour, and such an intervention in the market so that to satisfy consumer needs. Marketing operates within many areas; this paper, however, deals with activities associated with the promotion and sale of a particular product, i.e. culture. In such a case, we are talking about marketing of culture.

2. The essence of marketing of culture

The notion of marketing of culture appeared for the first time in the scientific literature in 1967, in the following form: “cultural institutions, such as concert halls, museums, opera houses or libraries, provide specific goods which are of great interest to customers. In view of this fact, cultural institutions have begun to compete for the customer. In this struggle, marketing operations may prove very useful, and the very concept of marketing can, after certain modifications, be applied in the sphere of high culture” [3, pp.287–191]. A dozen or so years later, further papers were coming out, which primarily dealt with the subject of management in culture. At the same time, a number of significant definitions of marketing of culture were developed, such as the following: “the main goal of marketing of culture is to win over an appropriate number of consumers of a product being a work of an artist, which will ultimately lead to obtaining a better financial result” [1, pp.78–89]. In other words, it can be said that the goal of marketing of culture is not to satisfy the needs of a previously specified customer, but to reach a consumer who will appreciate the artist’s work. In this context, the role of the customer is obviously performed by the audience; however, one must not forget donators, providers, foundations and other organizations operating for the benefit of culture.

The specificity of a product on the cultural market often leads to a situation when product orientation gets the best from market orientation. The subject and goals of marketing in cultural institutions are different depending on whether organizations use product orientation, or market one. In the first scenario, the main goal of marketing of culture is to win over an appropriate number of consumers of a product being a work of an artist, while in the second one, it is to win approval of people from the world of culture for a given piece of work, and to win over an appropriate number of consumers who will perform the ultimate verification thereof [4, pp.67–76].

Marketing operations cannot yield positive results if they diverge, to some extent, from the main marketing goal of cultural institutions. Marketing instruments may only be appropriately selected and

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used in practice when they contribute to fulfilling the set intentions. Each main marketing goal should be outlined using partial goals which will help devise a marketing plan and control it. After having precisely defined the goals, it may be concluded whether cultural institutions can be used in marketing operations and whether actually result in the achievement of the goal of their combined use.

Operations in the world of marketing of culture are supported by other types of marketing, such as territorial, product or promotional marketing. They all cover separate fields; however, while exploring them in a more detailed way, it may be observed that they relate, to a large extent, to the very marketing of culture [2, pp.58–69]. The above considerations prove that marketing of culture deals with promotion and adjustment of local product, and, in particular, intangible assets as included in the composition thereof, in order to arouse a potential customer's interest in that product as well as with discovering and assessing the market potential in a given region.

3. Methodological assumptions of the research

The subject of the research was the marketing operations being conducted within the area of the Kurpie region. Its aim was to provide answers to the following research questions: Which operations may lead to the best possible promotion of the Kurpie region? Which group of people are they addressed to? How have those operations affected the development of the economy and tourism within the area?

The timeframe for the research was 3 years, namely the period of 2010–2012 years. The conclusions were based on qualitative marketing research in the form of an observation and interview. Observations for the purpose of achieving the aims of the study were carried out during the participation in a variety of events, where one could observe changes occurring year after year, and concerning the organization and course thereof, as well as the people being recipients of promotional operations.

Another method used in the study was an individual interview which is a manner of collecting information from primary sources with the researcher being in a direct contact with respondents, and an interview questionnaire being the measuring instrument. An appropriate interview was conducted with a culture operator and was used to obtain information on the course of action and the methods of promotion of the Kurpie region. Other information was provided by secondary research i.e. data and information as generated by the Central Statistical Office (GUS). They concerned both the issues related to tourism market (elements of demand and supply) and the development of economy within the area concerned.

4. Characteristics of the Kurpie region

Kurpie is a region located in the northeastern part of the Mazovia (Mazowsze) region. The oldest traces of human presence in this area date back to approx. 1,000 years BC, while the traces of the first settlers date back to the 12th century AD. The central point of the Kurpie region is the town of Ostrołęka, where the most important organizations involved in the promotion of the Kurpian culture, i.e. museums, libraries, etc., are concentrated. A significant fact is that, there are actually only two towns with municipal rights, namely Ostrołęka and Myszyniec.

Myszyniec is one of the most recognizable places in the Kurpie region. This situation is probably due to an annual feast associated with the forest bee-keeping traditions in the Kurpie region, the so-called "Kurpie Region honey-harvesting". The feast is held on last Sunday of August. It is based on re-enactments recreating forest bee-keepers' customs originated from as early as the 16th century. In addition, fairs of honey, folk art, various books, handicraft products, bee-keeping equipment, and honey-containing products are held there. This is probably the only event of its kind in Poland, which not only reconstructs the old traditions of the Kurpie region inhabitants, but also unites the natives and promotes the region while extending the knowledge thereof among Polish and foreign tourists coming to that feast, year after year, in increasing numbers. In 2004, the Myszyniec Centre of Culture, Sports and Recreation was awarded a certificate of the Tourist Product of the Year by the Polish Tourist Organization for organizing the Kurpie Region Honey-Harvesting.¹

¹ http://www.myszyniec.kurpie.com.pl/index_pliki/page0002.htm 13.03.13r.

Another occasion that attracting many tourists from both Poland and abroad is the Palm Sunday, and the accompanying event as held in the village of Łyse, known as the “Palm of the Kurpie Region”. Its origins date back to the 1960s, when in 1969 a competition to find the most beautiful palm was announced for the first time. In the Christian tradition, the Palm Sunday is associated with going to church with a sort of a palm commemorating Jesus Christ’s arrival in Jerusalem. The inhabitants of the Kurpie region have invented their own design of a palm being made of a variety of forest plants and extremely colourful flowers of tissue paper. Without doubt, those palms may be referred to as works of art as they are not only exceptionally colourful and carefully crafted, but also because of their 4-meter length. The Palm Sunday is a cyclic feast. The most phenomenal part of the entire event is the procession during which each palm is well visible.

Currently, the “Palm of the Kurpie Region” feast in Łyse not only relates to the competition to find the most beautiful palm; in addition, performances of both folk ensembles being active in the Kurpie region and other ensembles as invited from outside the region may be enjoyed during the event. An indispensable part thereof is also the fairs where various works of folk artists can be bought. Similarly to the “Kurpie Region Honey-Harvesting”, popular bands and important personalities from the world of politics and culture are invited there as well.

One of the more commonly known events related to the promotion of Kurpian culture is undoubtedly the “Kurpian Wedding”. It is held in Kadzidło, a village situated near the town of Ostrołęka. Similarly to the above-mentioned cultural events, it is based on the old-time customs of the inhabitants of the Kurpie region. It was held for the first time in 1994. That event shows, with an almost perfect accuracy, the Kurpie natives’ customs related to the ceremony of a wedding, which is held in several locations, and is organized by the local cultural institutions. Spectators who come to see the event become wedding guests with all the associated “privileges and responsibilities”.

In Kadzidło, the Kurpian Homestead is also found, where a variety of buildings of the traditional Kurpian architecture are located. The Household is an open-air ethnographic museum, and is a branch of the Kurpian Culture Museum in Ostrołęka. The buildings included in the facility originate from various locations and times. The museum also organizes events such as “Disappearing Trades”, “Kurpian Wedding”, and the “Sunday in Kadzidło”, aimed at presenting the culture and traditions of the inhabitants of the Kurpie region to a wider audience.

The open-air ethnographic museum in Kadzidło is not the only relic of the past remaining after the old Kurpie region inhabitants. There are many of them to be found in the district of Ostrołęka. An extremely important element of the promotion of the Kurpian culture throughout the country and beyond it is the works of the present-day folk craftspeople, which can be most often bought at fairs organized during cultural events. The typical works of folk art include Kurpian decorative paper cut-outs, amber products, palms made of tissue paper flowers, figurines made of dough (the so-called “byśki”) as well as wood carvings most often depicting the images of saints, since the inhabitants of the Kurpie region are an exceptionally religious “nation”. Handing down the skills relating to folk art is of utmost importance to the survival of tradition, since it is those skills, along with the recreation of the old ceremonies that create the identity of the Kurpie region and its inhabitants. Along with the Kurpian architectural monuments, the area of the district of Ostrołęka offers many other locations and buildings worth seeing, which include inter alia, palaces, manor houses, and religious buildings originating from as early as the 16th century. All the above-mentioned items also affect the promotion of the culture of the Kurpie region, mainly due to the fact that they are located in an area where it is just impossible not to come across people that are closely connected and identifying themselves with the region.

5. Promotion of the Kurpian culture – activity of organizations and cultural centres

The events being organized within the Kurpie region have a common aim, namely arousing the interest in the culture of the region and its inhabitants among the largest possible number of people. It certainly does not happen without the need to use appropriate methods of promotion.

The selection of those methods is the responsibility of local cultural centres; however, the activity of other organizations operating for the benefit of the region also has a significant influence on providing information. In this case, the most commonly known institution of this kind is the Union of Kurpie with its head office in Ostrołęka. It was established in 1996, and is open to persons connected with the region by birth, residence, or love thereof. The motivation for the establishment of such an organization was a raise in the Kurpie inhabitants' awareness of the significance of culture for the development of the region, which determined making an attempt at establishing a supra-political union with a nationwide, or even cross-border, scope. Currently, the Union has approx. 300 members, including both individuals and numerous institutions, enterprises, schools and communes. It is involved in organizing seminars and conferences, publishing books and periodicals as well as organizing competitions and the above mentioned regional events. The main goals of the activity of that institution include, inter alia: the integration of the Kurpie inhabitants and people connected with the region, both indigenous inhabitants of the Kurpie region and those living outside it; work for the benefit of the material and spiritual development of the Kurpie region and its inhabitants; saving the spiritual and material cultural heritage of the Kurpie inhabitants, manifesting itself by, inter alia, folk art, feasts, language, songs and customs.

Every year the Union takes on a new venture; the goal, however, stays always the same: it is the promotion of the region to the biggest possible extent. What is of great significance to achieve that goal is a large number of the members of the Union. Each of them, due to their knowledge of both the area where they live and its inhabitants, knows how to reach them. What is extremely important in the promotion of any product is the identification of customer needs, and their preferences. The great popularity of events, at which dances and singing are predominant, undoubtedly indicates that this is an excellent way to attract a larger possible number of purchasers of that product of culture. In response to the consumers' needs, there are numerous dancing and singing ensembles in the Kurpie region, which can be seen at almost every cultural event within the area concerned, as well as throughout Poland. They include, inter alia: "Jegodecki" from Zalas, "Puszcza Zielona" from Łyse, or "Kurpiaki" from Myszyniec.

Establishing any organization which is to unite as many people as possible requires a lot of work and funds. The Union of Kurpie's programme of activities is open, and everybody who wants to contribute to the development of the Kurpie region will always be welcome. As for the Union, the establishment process was initially based on a widespread information campaign (Internet and press). That has yielded the expected results, and the Union has been gaining new members who provided new ideas on raising awareness of the Kurpian culture among the public. Those ideas are put into practice in a form of publications (the "Kurpie" monthly magazine), organization of seminars and conferences, etc.² What is also extremely important is the activity of the members themselves who launch various types of undertakings in their places of residence, actively participating in the organization of regional events, or being the initiators thereof. The goals and plans of the activity for a given year or period are developed on the basis of the current needs of inhabitants and addressees of the cultural offer of the Kurpie region. It's necessary to take into account the real aspects associated with the resources being at disposal in the form of staff or funds. For the period of the coming 3 years, the priority for the Union of Kurpie is to protect, develop and teach the Kurpian dialect. So far, a Kurpian dialect learning course has been organized, after completion of which the participants will be granted a certificate. Textbooks as well as a dictionary are also being prepared.

All the above-mentioned goals and accomplishments would not have been achieved without appropriate marketing instruments. As regards the sphere of culture, tools belonging to three fields are used in this case, namely the territorial and product marketing and, in particular, the promotion, the basic function of which is extending the knowledge on the product, in a form of a cultural offer, among the target group. Promotional operations of the Union of Kurpie are primarily addressed to the aware Kurpie inhabitants, both those living within the region and outside it, and, secondly, to

² http://www.zwiazekkurpiow.pl/statut.php?subaction=showfull&id=1231531672&archive=&start_from=&ucat=7&#Rozdzial_VI_27.03.13r.

the Kurpian children and youngsters. Thirdly, they are addressed to inhabitants of other regions, who are interested in the Kurpie region, or inhabitants of Poland. Fourthly, they are addressed to any persons being interested and eager to participate. When determining the addressees of the operations, the organization is guided by their current and potential needs. In case of such activity, nobody can force anybody to do anything, as it happens, for example, in high-budget TV commercials where it occurs against the will of a viewer. That group consists of thousands of people.

Speaking about the manner in which information on the Kurpie region is provided to the consumers of the culture market, the main role is most often performed by: a website, own periodical, and cultural events. Thanks to those, consumers learn about new undertakings of the Union, the dates and course of events, and a tourist offer of the region and the economic assets thereof. All that results in extending the knowledge of culture of the Kurpie region among those already interested, and those who only begin to take interest therein. What is also important is the cooperation with both the local and external media.

Undoubtedly, the cultural offer as prepared by the promoters of the Kurpian culture must be referred to as abounding, since everybody will find something interesting for themselves. An important role in such a state of affairs has been certainly performed by the precise determination and identification of the consumers' needs, as well as changes being introduced to the already operating mechanisms of action. An example of such changes is the introduction of commercial bands' concerts to the programme of events, or the activity of the ensemble "Jegodecki" from Zalas, which combines Kurpian songs with popular music and composes new musical arrangements.

The activity of both the Union of Kurpie and other people, for whom the protection of cultural heritage is important, also bring about changes in the economy of the region. In this situation, the links between marketing of culture and the territorial marketing, which actually merge, can be seen clearly. Operations carried out in one sphere affect the situation in other one. This is due to the fact that the territorial marketing may be defined as a market concept of managing a given territory in such a manner so as to satisfy the inhabitants' needs. It is also essential to predict the trends in changes as well as make appropriate use of the resources being at disposal. In this particular case, the inhabitants' needs certainly include attracting the maximum possible number of customers to their agritourism farms, as well as an increase in the number of jobs in the region. One of the resources is also own cultural offer, which is used in both marketing of culture and the territorial marketing. Agritourism farms of the area concerned offer their visitors not only an opportunity for taking a rest in the fresh air, but also for tasting traditional Kurpian dishes. A similar situation is found on the market of enterprises in the region. In their offers, they provide regional products, demonstrating their affiliation to the region by presenting it in the name of the enterprise, which is later associated with the Kurpie region, thus supporting the promotion of the region. An example of such an enterprise is e.g. the Kurpian Bakery with brand shops throughout Poland.

The GUS statistical data indicate that the interest in regional events in the Kurpie region has been on the increase year after year, and, for example, approx. 50 thousand people come every year to the "Kurpie Region Honey-Harvesting"; moreover, over the last 3 years, this figure has shown a growing tendency. As for the "Palm Sunday", in the period under analysis, about 10–15 thousand people that came to the event were recorded. This tendency is growing as well. The figures demonstrate that actions taken by local governments, cultural centres and other organizations are indeed appropriate, since focusing on the culture of the region and the promotion thereof yields positive results. This relates to both raising the inhabitants' awareness and establishing their identity, the growing tourists' interests in the region, and the economic development. This is indicated by the actual increase in the number of people being accommodated in the district of Ostrołęka, which has been growing, year after year, by approx. 100 people: in 2011, it amounted to 369 people, while in 2012 to as many as 467³, as well as an increase in the population, which,

³ http://www.stat.gov.pl/bdl/app/dane_podgrup.dims?p_id=480952&p_token=0.573844954604283 29.04.2013r.

starting from 2010, amounted to, respectively: 85 510, 87 623, and, in 2012, 87 719.⁴ The willingness to promote the culture of the Kurpie region unites the inhabitants of that area in their actions for the comprehensive development of their home region.

6. Conclusion

The Kurpie region is a land of outstanding beauty which has not been fully discovered yet, abounding with its landscape and relics of the past, getting to know of which allows understanding of the entire Polish culture and tradition. The Kurpie region does not need vast water bodies or beautiful mountains to be an attractive region. It is sufficient for it to have its own unique cultural assets which significantly support the development of tourism. Undoubtedly, the region attracts tourists with its folk customs and handicraft. This indicates an interesting past and distinctive cultural achievements of the population residing in the areas of the former Primeval Forest. The described tourist attractions of the Kurpie region, and the results they yield to the region in a form of the increase in the number of tourists being interested in the Kurpian culture allow drawing a conclusion that the Kurpie region enchants its visitors with its nature and folk motifs. It also provides an opportunity for the participation in Kurpian feasts, which allows learning about the local customs. It can be proudly said that the Kurpie region is a beautiful land being the green lungs of Poland, which attract tourists.

The research results indicate the importance of culture for the economy of the region. It is an element uniting its inhabitants, and supporting the collaboration for the development of a given territory. An essential part of those actions is making use of marketing tools which result in an increase in the interest in the region just through culture. This is because culture is different in almost every part of Poland, which, in addition to being separated as regards the access to natural resources, or the terrain of a given area, results in a situation where seeing a product of culture makes us associate it with a certain region.

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Summary

The aim of the research was to identify the operations in the field of promotion of culture, being carried out in the Kurpie region, and to determine the influence thereof on the development of the region. It may appear that culture does not play a major role in the development of a given area; however, such a conclusion is erroneous. Thanks to culture, people identify a specific territory, and the dissemination of products of culture makes the territory becoming recognizable, and not only to people interested in a product being strictly cultural but also to investors who may probably have not yet considered starting a business activity in e.g. the Kurpie region.

Key words: marketing of culture, territorial marketing, promotion of culture.

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⁴ http://www.stat.gov.pl/vademecum/vademecum_mazowieckie/portrety_powiatow/ostrolecki.pdf 29.04.2013 r.
http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/l_ludnosc_stan_struktura_30062012.pdf 29.04.2013 r.