



Aleksander PANASIUK

# PROMOTIONAL DILEMMAS OF A TOURISM PRODUCT OF ENVIRONMENTALLY VALUABLE AREAS

Aleksander **Panasiuk**, Prof. – *Jagiellonian University in Kraków*

Correspondence address:

Faculty of Management and Social Communication

Institute of Entrepreneurship

Department of Entrepreneurship in Tourism

Prof. St. Łojasiewicza 4, 30-348 Kraków

e-mail: [aleksanderpanasiuk77@gmail.com](mailto:aleksanderpanasiuk77@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT:** The study involves the issues of promotional activities undertaken in terms of supporting a tourism product of environmentally valuable areas. It includes the theoretical aspects of promoting a tourism product and the structure of a tourism product of environmentally valuable areas. There is also a discussion on typical forms of tourism movement in environmentally valuable areas. The most significant part of the work includes issues concerning the promotion of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area and an indication of their limits. The objective of the study is to consider dilemmas pertaining to promotional activities undertaken to give marketing support to a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area, especially in terms of its range and intensity.

**KEY WORDS:** promotion, tourism economy, tourism marketing, tourism product, environmentally valuable area

## Introduction

Trends currently observed on the tourism market also concern tourism in environmentally valuable areas. Therefore, competitiveness of tourism offers also refers to tourism products of these areas. Reaching target markets effectively requires influencing consumption through undertaking marketing activities, including promotion. These activities may be conducted by both commercial entities (direct providers of tourism services), tourism regions as well as through special attractions connected with making environmentally valuable areas and places available.

The subject of the study is a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area and support it gets through promotion. The deliberations focus on the issue of undertaking promotional activities by competent entities in tourism economy in order to reach consumers (tourists). Taking account of the fact that environmentally valuable areas are subject to various forms of protection, excessive promotion and causing significant interest among tourists are not explicitly recommended. Therefore, in the study the author formulated promotional dilemmas of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area which result from in particular a relation between sustainable tourism and mass tourism. Thus, the objective of the study is to consider dilemmas pertaining to promotional activities undertaken to give marketing support to a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area, especially in terms of their extent and intensity. The deliberations are theoretical and conceptual. Such research methods were applied as a critical analysis of literature on the subject, logical operations and a holistic method.

## Promotion of an area's tourism product

Marketing as a field of practical managerial knowledge is used in many fields of economic and social life not only in enterprises providing finished market goods, i.e. producing goods and generating services, but also in local authority bodies, municipal enterprises, territorial communities, non-profit institutions, social organizations and associations (Szromnik, 2006, p. 33). The concept of marketing is widely known in business and is also adapted to many forms of non-commercial activities; it can be easily used within a commercial aspect of developing a tourism product of environmentally valuable areas as well as in activities of entities enabling access to tourism assets and attractions in these areas to the interested tourists.

In the analysis of marketing activities in the field of tourism, a five-element mix marketing structure is used (Payne, 1993, p. 150; Palmer, 1994, pp. 279-300) whose an integral element, apart from a product, price, distribution and personnel, is promotion.

Promotion should be treated as a form of communication of market entities (Wiktor, 2005, p. 40), i.e. communication of providers with consumers, co-operators and competitors. It encompasses activities and instruments enabling informing the surroundings about an organization and its offer. It is an element of the mix marketing structure which determines the market position of an entity that generates promotion, thus enables influencing other market participants through providing them information on an offer, encouraging them to get this offer, as well as gives grounds for creating an opinion about a provider and the scope of their activities on the market, and as a result it should contribute to the growth of demand for the offer range (Sznajder, 1993, p. 4).

Promotion in tourism economy involves presenting values of a region and its location and undertaking activities popularising region's assets among entrepreneurs (including investors), professionally active people, academic youth and potential tourists. These activities should not be limited to supporting economic values, but their task is also to point out values of the natural, cultural and scientific environment (Markowski, 2006, p. 101).

A tourism product interpreted in a broad sense (area's product) is a category which is equally complex as a product of a region, thus marketing activities (including promotion) conducted in regional areas and tourism areas are of a similar nature.

Instruments for promoting a region have been adopted from a marketing concept used by enterprises producing goods and providing services and are also called the promotion-mix. Therefore, these are internally integrated instruments and entities undertaking promotional activities decide which of them should be used, with what intensity and how specific instruments should be connected. Marketing literature provides many classifications of elements making up the promotion-mix. Trying to be objective, the following instruments should be distinguished (Panasiuk, 2013, pp. 163-183):

- personal selling,
- advertising,
- public relations,
- publicity,
- sales promotion,
- sponsorship.

Whereas not all of the aforementioned instruments may be used with an equal intensity in terms of promotion of a region. Personal selling and spon-

sorship are of considerably minor importance, similarly to sales promotion which may be used to a limited extent (Meffert, 1989).

## Tourism product of environmentally valuable areas

A tourism product is a set of goods and services which tourists use and which are a special subject of their interest. To specify the interpretation of the term tourism product, one should differentiate its narrow and broad aspect (Panasiuk, 2014b, pp. 113-115). From a narrow perspective, a tourism product is everything that a tourist can acquire (e.g. transport, accommodation, catering, cultural services) (Medlik, 1995, p. 243). The remaining elements, connected with tourist impressions and feelings, are connected with the definition of a tourism product in a broad perspective. A tourism product can take the form of numerous combinations of particular elements. However, it should always meet tourists' needs, i.e. their expectations concerning a tourism product which consumption results in satisfaction (Bąk, 1999, p. 121). In terms of psychology, a tourism product may be understood as a sum of impressions which a tourist receives during and after its consumption as well as a tourist's complex experience from the moment of leaving their permanent place of living until their return (Smith, 1994, pp. 583-586; Medlik, Middleton, 1973; Żemła, 2000, p. 27).

A broad perspective of a tourism product results in considering it as a spatial category. In terms of this aspect, an area's (place's) tourism product is defined as a product that has a complex structure developed by many entities and consisting of many single elements which are partially similar, partially heterogenic, but always complementary (Hołderna-Mielcarek, 1998, p. 10). However, a tourism product of an area is not just a sum of all tourism goods and services offered in a given area. It is a special, spatially determined product which consists of selected elements of tourism potential (or existing simple products) of a given area which are joined thanks to a superior idea determining its originality, distinctiveness and market attractiveness (Kaczmarek, Stasiak, Włodarczyk, 2005, pp. 100-101).

Hence, the interpretation of the essence of a tourism product forms the basis for explaining the concept of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area. It should be emphasised that a tourism product may be considered in various ways depending on tourist's identified needs.

Environmentally valuable areas are highly biodiverse areas whose resources must be managed in a planned and sustainable way (Żegleń, 2010, pp. 549-550; Panasiuk, 2015, pp. 185-198). These areas are a crucial factor for the development of many forms of tourism, including: ecotourism, heri-

tage tourism, specialized tourism, agri-tourism. Tourism goods become the purpose of travelling and determine the strength of the tourism potential (Niedziółka, 2010, pp. 569-570).

A tourism product of an environmentally valuable area should be interpreted as a sum of material and non-material elements of the tourism potential of an area whose essential component is high quality natural values and attractions constituting a dominant reason for tourist trips to an area.

Similarly, to a tourism product, a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area can be interpreted from a narrow and broad perspective. These perspectives also determine elements making up this product.

From a narrow perspective, a product of an environmentally valuable area should be associated with services connected with undertaking this form of tourism activities (accommodation, catering, transport, high-quality natural values and attractions).

A product of an environmentally valuable area, treated as an area's (place's) product, consists of components being tourism products understood narrowly (tourism services) and elements connected with tourism offers of tourism places and destinations in environmentally valuable areas (natural values together with general and specialist facilities as well as additional services).

A factor determining an actual distinction of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area should be reasons directly concerning existing natural values and attractions made available to tourists and influencing reasons for coming to a specific destination.

A tourism product of an environmentally valuable area is spatially determined. It is a synergistic combination of an offer of a tourist destination and offers of tourism entrepreneurs in a given environmentally valuable area, and, therefore, it contributes to providing various tourism services. Nevertheless, in an environmentally valuable area there can be elements which are single, narrowly understood tourism products that have a very specific and single tourism function.

Detailed elements making up the structure of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area include, among other things, (Panasiuk, 2015, p. 190):

- values of the natural environment which are not typical tourism values (the clean natural environment and the abundance of its values, landscape),
- tourism values (e.g. a national park, natural monuments, a natural history museum),
- tourism attractions (e.g. an outdoor event organized in a national park, canoeing, a rally),

- elements of tourism facilities for all forms of tourism (transport, accommodation, catering, recreational, information facilities, other additional facilities),
- specialist tourism facilities for environmentally valuable areas (e.g. tourist walking, water and cycling routes, educational and thematic paths and trails, specialist equipment rentals and service providers),
- typical tourism services (offered by commercial and public entities),
- other tourism services dedicated to nature tourism (e.g. guide services).

A product understood in such a way is also connected with detailed conditions of using a tourism offer in protected areas (e.g. a limited number of tourists on trails or in touristically attractive places, the necessity of having specific qualifications, having skills and equipment to undertake the forms of qualified tourism in protected areas, limitations concerning the size of tourist groups, participants' age, time spent in protected areas, etc.).

The range of elements making up the structure of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area constitutes a general framework which can be adjusted to various forms of tourism in these areas. The diversity of elements results from the abundance of tourism values and attractions in these areas as well as from the state of tourism facilities. Moreover, it depends on the requirements of consumers who select relevant elements of an offer together with their quality in order to satisfy their tourism needs in an environmentally valuable area.

## Forms of tourism movement in environmentally valuable areas

Areas that feature atmospheric and biosphere conditions favourable for humans are environmentally valuable areas, and thus they are intensively used by tourists. Not only should existing and potential environmentally valuable areas be publicly available in accordance with defined rules, but they should be also under appropriate legal regulations that would limit an extensive tourists' impact on the environment. The presence of tourists in environmentally valuable areas and their various behaviours can lead to negative effects. Therefore, the applied legal regulations should help to eliminate the tourist-nature conflict, whilst enabling the co-existence of nature with tourists and tourists with nature (Sikora, 2010, pp. 190-181).

Environmentally valuable areas are a crucial factor for the development of tourism. They include protected areas, mainly in the form of national and landscape parks, nature reserves and natural monuments. Functions of legally protected areas are very complex; apart from a protective function, they also have other ones: economic, tourism, recreational, educational func-

tions (Sawicki, 2014, pp. 41-43). Due to the development of tourism, protected areas are the basis for local and regional development.

Consumers of a tourism product of environmentally valuable areas are tourists who, in very simple terms, can be classified into the following groups for which an environmentally valuable place or area constitutes:

- a) the main goal of travelling, whereas the main reason for coming and staying is:
  - mainly the fact of staying in a such an area (e.g. sightseeing, educational tourism),
  - the exploration of natural values (e.g. active, exploration tourism),
- b) only a place of a stay, whereas tourism values and attractions are of minor importance (e.g. recreational tourism at the seaside).

The listed types of tourists directly determine the impact of their behaviour on natural values and attractions. In terms of the first listed group, these are more conscious behaviours and generally their impact on the natural environment should not lead to its degradation. In the second case, and in the case of mass tourism in particular, tourists' behaviours can have a high level of the human impact on the environment. Nevertheless, an active tourist on a mountain trail undertaking sightseeing tourism activities as well as a passive tourist undertaking recreational tourism activities at the beach can negatively influence the natural environment.

A decisive factor is identifying two groups of tourists using a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area. The first group comprises conscious tourists who mainly undertake individual tourism activities and have a low level of the human impact on the valuable natural environment. The second group consists of tourists of a low level of awareness who mainly undertake mass tourism activities and have a high level of the human impact on environmentally valuable areas. Therefore, completely different marketing and promotional activities should be addressed to both groups of consumers.

### Promotion of a tourism product of environmentally valuable areas

Undertaking promotional activities connected with a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area should be a task executed by using adequate and well-thought-out tools and addressing the target market properly.

The fundamental scope of the discussed issues involves the following aspects of promoting a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area:

- a) an attributive aspect – referring to a subject which is promoted, a value or tourism attraction (e.g. a natural monument, a botanical garden), a tour-

- ism area (a forest area, a water basin), events connected with natural attractions, a tourism natural route (e.g. walking, water route),
- b) an institutional aspect – concerning entities conducting promotional activities in term of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area (a city, a municipality, a region, a national park, a natural history museum),
  - c) an instrumental aspect – pertaining to the selection of promotional tools, including in particular:
    - the selection of specific means (media) of promotion,
    - methods for making means of promotion reach consumers (target markets) – tourists,
    - the measurement of promotion effectiveness.

The listed examples can constitute a direct subject of the undertaken promotional activities with regard to a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area. From the point of view of tourists' groups, suitable instruments and forms of promotion, as well as their intensity, should be selected.

In terms of entities, three fundamental approaches can be indicated in relation to promotion of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area undertaken by:

- a) commercial entities – according to general market rules, by providers of tourism services which can select all available tools to influence customers directly (advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, sponsorship),
- b) territorial entities (municipality, city, region) – taking account of the adopted territorial marketing solutions, not fully commercially, considering a specific product or its elements as the main subject of promotion, or as one of many elements which make up a tourism offer of a given area (advertising, public relations, publicity, sponsorship, sales promotion),
- c) tourism values and attractions of a highly-protected place – under the special conditions – using only selected means of promotion, mainly information (public relations, publicity, information, sales promotion).

When undertaking promotional activities, a dilemma is to select not only means (television, press, outdoor advertising, advertising publishing or the Internet) but also the content of the message which should refer to a place itself, a value and an attraction in a proper manner. It is a significant issue to apply such an approach which would not result in excessive interest in highly-protected areas (e.g. national parks), but, on the other hand, it would not discourage and, consequently, would not limit possibilities of using protected places for some forms of tourism. Table 1 presents the scope of instruments applied to promotion of a tourism product of environmentally valuable areas. It is an attempt to draw attention to the diversity of components of a product and specify entities responsible for promotion (Panasiuk, 2014a, pp. 32-33),



methods for using promotional tools, determine the level of intensity of promotional activities as well as indirectly indicate types of tourism offer consumers undertaking some kinds of tourism.

**Table 1.** The scope of instruments applied to promotion of elements of a tourism product of environmentally valuable areas

Product element	Promoting entities	Methods for using promotional instruments	Intensity of promotional activities (on a scale of 0 to 5)	Examples of promotional aspects (reaching target groups)
Single natural values	Local authorities Tourism organizations Environmental protection organizations	Educating Informing Encouraging	3	Environmental education Sightseeing
Natural areas (forests, water basins, mountains)	Local authorities Tourism organizations	Informing Encouraging Attracting	3	Sightseeing Qualified tourism
Nature tourism attractions (e.g. events, gardens)	Local authorities Tourism organizations Event organizers Entities managing attractions	Informing Encouraging Attracting	5	Sightseeing Mass tourism
Protected areas	Entities managing protected areas Environmental protection organizations	Educating Informing	1	Environmental education Sightseeing
Specialist infrastructure and services in protected areas	Business entities Local authorities Tourism organizations	Informing Attracting	5	Qualified tourism Mass tourism
Tourism infrastructure and services (accommodation, catering, transport, additional ones)	Business entities Local authorities Tourism organizations (including local tourism organizations) Cultural and educational institutions	Attracting	5	Mass tourism

Source: author's own work.

The summary presented in table 1 is a form of a discussion on dilemmas of promotion of a tourism product of environmentally valuable areas. On the one hand, these areas together with product elements should be accessible, thus supported promotionally. On the other hand, natural elements, including those of great natural uniqueness, should be protected and should not be exposed to influence that tourism, and in particular excessive tourism move-

ment as well as developing tourism infrastructure, causes. Plenty of natural values are of decisive importance for tourism when creating a tourism offer (a sea, lakes, mountains) as they are directly exposed to the extensive tourists' impact on the environment. It happens in areas where the developed tourism economy often functions and intensively promotes its offer. A significant part of natural areas are protected areas where tourism movement of various intensity is observed. Tourism promotion of these areas should involve mainly educational activities connected with protecting these areas and not exposing them to excessive tourism movement.

The listed activities should correspond to specific instruments and means of promotion of selected intensity and a method of communication with a target group. In the case of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area, it should be noted that such instruments, mainly in terms of public relations and publicity, should be selected so that excessive interest in tourism in these areas is not caused as it could lead to environmental degradation. Simultaneously, all forms of promotional activities should be properly planned to not limit access to places for tourists interested in nature, qualified and exploration tourism and tourism which does not pose a risk to the natural environment. Therefore, entities conducting promotional activities should select instruments of promotion skilfully and in a well-thought-out way and address them to all people potentially interested in arriving in a given place, or assign promotional activities to particular segments of tourists: mass tourists and tourists interested in nature tourism as well as in the aspects of environmental protection.

The most difficult aspect of the analysis of issues connected with promotion of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area is measuring effectiveness. At the same time, it can be claimed that in both the entire national economy as well as tourism economy it is a difficult task and there is often no measurement. Promotion effectiveness should be measured, especially when there are specific funds allocated to that (e.g. publication and distribution of brochures and leaflets). With regard to entities dealing with a commercial range of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area, promotion effectiveness can be analysed in monetary terms (revenues, profit). For the purpose of the analysis of the effectiveness of activities conducted by entities in given areas, especially by entities managing protected areas, quantitative measurement should be deemed adequate – the size of tourism movement (the number of domestic and foreign tourists). Simultaneously, this is one of the main dilemmas when undertaking activities aimed at promoting a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area. Therefore, the policy of promotion of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area should be focused on information and educational policy.

## Conclusion

The presented deliberations, especially those in the last part of the study, should be considered as the introduction to a discussion. It seems that the discussed issues refer to individual consideration of both tourists staying in environmentally valuable areas as well as entities undertaking promotional activities in terms of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area. It should be highlighted that a tourism product of environmentally valuable areas as a market offer follows the same market rules as other offers on the market. Excessive promotion as well as media coverage referring to, e.g. ecologically endangered areas or areas in which controversial economic or protection activities are conducted (e.g. in the region of Białowieża Forest), can cause excessive interest of potential tourists and an increase in tourism movement. On the one hand, it will be beneficial to local and regional tourism economy, on the other hand, intensified tourism movement has a negative impact on protected areas. In such cases, promotion of a tourism product of an environmentally valuable area or just extensive media coverage concerning a situation in such an area becomes a dilemma not only in market terms, i.e. seller (tourism area) – consumer (tourist), but also in social terms.

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