INTRODUCTION

Port cities in the world perform various functions. Some of them are famous for trade where a dominant role is attributed to cargo shipping, but there are also such cities which, thanks to the unique location, are tourist destinations for hundreds of thousands of cruise ship visitors. There are also those that combine these two features, as for example the city of Gdańsk, which for centuries has been considered to be the capital of amber, historical and cultural center of Northern Poland, but it has also been an important area for sea trade. Annually, Gdańsk is visited by over two million visitors including a significant group of cruise passengers.

Tourist attractiveness of coastal regions is one of the most important factors affecting decisions of cruise ship-owners about including them into cruise routes programmes. One has to remember that competition between ports and coastal regions in the Baltic Sea region to attract cruise ship-owners is very strong. The purpose of this article is to identify the factors that decide about tourist attractiveness of the city of Gdańsk as an important stage of cruise travels and to evaluate the potential of the city of Gdańsk as a cruise tourist destination. In article, a research hypothesis has been formulated that in Poland the term “a cruise tourist destination” refers to a wider territorial area than an area of a city. The reason for that is to satisfy cruise passengers’ needs and to offer them a wide range of sightseeing packages in the region.

1. METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

This article was created from a part of results of research carried out in several stages. At first in 2013, standardized interviews were conducted with the Coordinator of the Gdańsk Tourist Organization in Gdańsk. This is an organization which is responsible for development and promotion of tourism in Gdańsk. Moreover, there was also conducted a research in the Pomeranian Regional Tourism Organization, which deals with promotion of tourism in the Pomeranian Region. Finally, in 2014 surveys were carried out on a sample of 1197 cruise passengers from ships calling at the seaport in Gdynia. The purpose of this part of research was among others, evaluation of tourist attractiveness of the Gdańsk Region. In research, a random method of multi-layered selection of a sample, using the R. Zasępa’s formula, has been applied. In addition, test results carried out among visitors to Gdańsk contained in reports of the EURTOTES Institute were also included. Moreover, methods of comparative analysis, a deduction method and a “desk research” were also used.

2. CRUISE DESTINATION IN THE MICRO AND MACRO SCALE

In the literature, the term “tourist destination” is defined in different ways. According to CH. Cooper and the others, described a destination as “the focus of facilities and services designed to meet the needs of the tourists” [1, p. 102]. Some authors like for example N. Leiper [10], defined “a tourist region” in the same way. Next, M. Kachniewska and the others also described a term “a tourist reception area” in the similar way [3, p. 61]. J. Kaczmarek, A. Stasiak & B. Włodarczyk – “a tourist product of a region” [4, p. 76]. World Tourism Organization (UN WTO) defines a tourist destination

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2 Artykuł recenzowany
3 Questionnaire interview consisted of 13 questions, only open questions. The research was conducted on the 22nd of October, 2013.
4 An questionnaire interview consisted of 16 questions, only open questions. Research was conducted on the 6th of November, 2013.
5 An questionnaire interview was prepared in five foreign languages (English, German, Spanish, Italian and French and it consisted of 10 questions. The research was conducted in the high season from June to September 2014.
as "the place visited that is central to the decision to take the trip" [16]. N. Leiper wrote that tourist destinations are „locations which attract tourists to stay temporarily” [9, p. 397]. But for example S. A. Haugland, H. N. Bjorn-Ove Gronseth & J. Aarstad said that, “a tourist destination can be considered as complex networks that involve a large number of co-producing actors delivering a variety of products, and services” [2, p. 268].

Cruise tourist destination can be analyzed at the micro level, i.e. in the narrow sense of the word and refers to a single seaside village or town and at the macro level, i.e. in the wide shot, when a seaside tourist region is treated as a cruise tourist destination. Cruise tourist destination has its own specificities, which consists of the following elements, i.e.: location in the region having access to the sea coast, good climate conditions for cruise travels, operation of sea ports and infrastructure necessary to support cruise ships, communication accessibility to the port (land, water, air), the unique attractiveness of tourist amenities port cities and coastal region and adequate level of tourist development enabling sightseeing while cruise ships stay in the seaports, as well as the availability of a variety of services and cultural-entertainment, sports-recreational and commercial events etc. These and other factors have a significant impact on decisions of cruise ship-owners as far as cruise routes and places of cruise ship visits are concerned. Regions, which are called "sunny regions", such as: the Caribbean Sea or the Mediterranean Sea, are the places with the largest concentration of cruise tourist destinations. In addition to the physico-geographical conditions, the uniqueness and attractiveness of a tourist destination are the most essential. Tourists are able to endure lots of hardships while traveling. They sometimes agree on poor weather conditions and numerous difficulties and all in the name of sensations that will be accompanied by watchi: Northern lights, or wild fauna on glaciers, etc. Cruise ships passengers from different parts of the world are interested in exploring the most important tourist attractions offered in regions where cruise ships are handled, in spite of the fact that, single port cities are included in the cruise routes programmes. Obviously, the most important thing is the fact that tourist destinations, famous for its unique cultural heritage and natural environment, should be included in the cruise routes programmes. Therefore, cruise ship-owners, when planning cruise routes, try to include the most famous city in the world into programs in order to attract the greatest number of potential tourists. This phenomenon is quite common in the world, and it is due to the fact that tourists are more demanding and it is not enough for them to visit famous places and historical monuments. They look for new alternative form of travels in the places where ships are handled. Local tour-operators prepare various tourist packages on shore to satisfy tourist’ expectations and needs, including active offers such as: bicycle tours, riding, playing golf, or stays in the theme parks, etc.

Summing up, a cruise tourist destination could be defined as: "a place with a high level of port infrastructure to support visitation from large cruise ships, a high level of destination awareness among the cruise industry, a high degree of industry capacity and port infrastructure to support around visits, a high level of tourism destination infrastructure to support cruise ship visitation as: attractions, accommodation, activities, access and amenities” [7, p. 110][17, p. 14].

3. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF GDANSK AS A CRUISE TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN THE LIGHT OF RESEARCH

The Gdansk Coast Region is an area of outstanding tourist attractions, which attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists from home and abroad. Cruise ship passengers, from cruise ships calling at Gdynia and Gdansk, are a significant group of tourist visiting the Gdansk Coast Region. For example in 2013, 57 cruise ships were handled in the Gdynia seaport, bringing 80.528 passengers and Gdansk was visited by 31 cruise ships and 10.508 passengers. A record number of cruise ship calls were recorded in 2009, when Gdynia was visited by 98 cruise ships and 134.895 passengers, and Gdansk - 40 units and 16.753 passengers [13, p. 5]. (Figure 1.)
Tourist attractiveness of a city or a region (a tourist destination) should be considered taking into account some essential elements, i.e.: the existence of natural and cultural tourist attractions, tourist amenities and communication accessibility. Following this line of reasoning, one can assess the tourist attractiveness of the city of Gdansk, as a cruise tourist destination in a micro scale, and the Gdansk Coast Region as a cruise tourist destination in the macro scale. Gdansk is a town with a 1000-year tradition, with numerous unique monuments. It is called a capital of Amber and the center of Solidarity and also the center of organization of numerous cultural-entertainment and sport events. Local travel agencies, which offer sightseeing tours in the city of Gdansk, usually include the most famous attractions of the city in tour programmes such as: the Royal Route, the Artus’ Court, the Neptune’s Fountain, the Amber Museum and the National Maritime Museum, but also the Great Crane, St. Mary’s Basilica and the Oliwa Cathedral.

However, it is worth to underline that almost on board of every cruise ship calling at polish seaports there are usually several thousand passengers, and each of them has got different expectations and needs regarding travelling. Therefore, just for them, local tour-operators prepare alternative sightseeing programmes beyond the boundaries of the city of Gdansk.

The analysis of offers prepared by local tour-operators proved that cruise passengers have a wide range of various tourist programmes to choose in the Gdansk Coast Region. In these programmes, there are included sacred and secular monuments, objects of art and culture, among them in particular: the Castle of the Teutonic Knights in Malbork and the Castle in Gniew, Cathedral Basilica in Pelplin or Museum Kashubian Pottery in Chmielno, but also monumental lighthouse on the Hel Peninsula and many others. Moreover, tour-operators also prepare interesting programmes for tourists who prefer active way of spending time such as: stays on the golf course (eg. Postolowo), bicycle tours with different levels of difficulty, or horse riding and even spending time in Aqua Park in Sopot. And lovers of water sports can make use of the coastal beaches in Tri-City and water tourism and recreation at the Baltic seaside. In addition, tourists are excited about an opportunity of making purchases on St. Dominic’s Market in Gdansk, participation in the World Amber Championship or other events.
Cruise ship-owners, when planning routes and making a selection of cruise tourist destinations, closely analyze the conditions prevailing in different bioclimatic regions of the world. Cruise ship market is particularly sensitive to various weather anomalies. In Gdansk and the region, as well as in the area of the Baltic Sea, the cruise ship market shows a strong seasonality and is concentrated mainly in the high tourist season. Fortunately, during the period from June to September, in the Gdansk Coast Region, there are the best bioclimatic conditions on the Polish Baltic seacoast for cruising. An average wind speed on the Gdansk Coast is rather permanent for the whole year and it is 4 m/s. During the tourist season, it is also recorded minimum days with mist and with wind above 7 B (Beaufort scale) and high number of sunny hours per a day [6, p. 799].

In spite of the above mentioned factors determining the tourist attractiveness, the state of organization of tourist services and tourist development of the area also make an important role. In Gdansk, tourist infrastructure has been developed perfectly. There are numerous luxurious hotels including six five-star (i.e. Hilton Gdańsk, Podewills Old Town Gdansk, Radisson Blu, Hotel Dwór Oliwski i in.), lots of four-star-hotels (i.e. Hanza Hotel, Scandic Hotel, Cubus etc.) and more than 100 of lower category that offer in total 17 thousand beds. Moreover, there is also a wide offer of gastronomic services offering dishes from all over the world. However, as far as tourist service supporting cruise ships calling at Gdynia or Gdansk seaports is concerned, just only a few local tour-operators carries on its activities in this regard. These are: Baltic Gateway Poland in Gdynia, Sport Tourist Ltd. in Gdynia, Sanus Travel Andrzej Ossowski in Sopot and Fifi Travel in Gdansk, and sometimes also Mazurkas Travel Agency Ltd. from Warsaw.

Actions taken by the various tourist organizations, and first of all, Gdansk Tourist Organization (GTO) and Pomeranian Regional Tourist Organization (PRTO) have a significant impact on the recognition of Gdansk as a cruise tourist destination. Gdansk Tourist Organization plays a key role in the promotion of the city of Gdansk as a cruise tourist destination. From a study carried out with the GTO Coordinator shows that the organization is involved in lots of initiatives to shape the image of the city of Gdansk, as a city-friendly for tourists. For example, tourist information system in Gdansk, which is supervised by the GTO, works smoothly and it is well evaluated by tourists. Thanks to them a few interesting initiatives have been realized, such as: “Tourist Card Gdansk – Sopot - Gdynia Plus”, mobile apps gdansk4u MOBILE, or tourist portal “gdansk4u.pl” and a product called ”audio-guide Gdansk”. GTO also indicates that the local authorities in the city of Gdansk has pointed out a few major directions for creating the image of the city and among them are as follows: Gdansk the City of Freedom, the Capital of Amber, the City of opportunities and also marine tourism, that refer to its most important values such as: amber, solidarity, monuments, cultural events and the sea. In opinion of the GTO, in the process of creation of the image of the city of Gdansk, maritime nature is convex for example through activities such as: promotion of a water tram in Gdansk, improvement the quality of beaches in Gdansk, promotion of the Sobieszewska Island as a treasure island and also successful participation in the international organization called Cruise Baltic. GTO is the initiator and executor of a directory and search engine of tourist products, which arose in July 2013. There are a total of 45 products which are divided into six categories and seven of them are related to the theme of the sea.

Meanwhile, from an interview conducted with the Director of the PRTO in Gdansk, it follows that they prepared and effectively made the campaign entitled “Gdansk, Sopot, Gdynia - Three Cities – One Destination”, where Gdansk has been promoted as a historical city, Sopot, as a health resort, and Gdynia - the city of finance and maritime culture. “PRTO led promotional campaigns in various markets in the world and among them at: Scandinavian, English, German, Spanish, Italian and Japanese. Thanks to their activity and participation in JATA Tourism Forum & Travel Showcase 2012 in Tokyo, Gdynia was visited by the cruise ship with tourists from Japan in 2014. PRTO also represents the Polish side, as a partner of the project „Enjoy the Baltic”, whose purpose is to develop cultural heritage, tourism and SPA & Wellness in the area South-East of the Baltic Sea. In addition, the PRTO is also a partner in Baltic Sea Tourism Forum that provides a platform for creation of tourist products and their promotion in the Baltic Sea region” [5, p. 252-253].
Communication accessibility to a seaport from the sea and to main tourist attractions in the region are important elements that determine the attractiveness of a cruise tourist destinations. Thanks to investments made by the authorities in the Gdansk seaport over the past few years, it was greatly improved communication accessibility to the seaport, not only from the sea, but most of all on land. These activities greatly facilitated communication with the environment and the availability of the most important tourist attractions in the region, including the historical center of the city of Gdansk. Gdansk has got a direct access to the sea and one of the largest seaports in the Baltic, but technical parameters of berths renting for cruise ship at the seaport in Gdansk allow only for handling small units. The seaport in Gdansk is a typical port of call, because it is located in the immediate surroundings of an attractive tourist destination - the city of Gdansk that is the main destination for cruise passengers visiting Poland. The distance from the seaport to the city center is only 8.5 km and a travel takes only a few minutes by bus and a taxi. However, due to hydro-technical barriers, the seaport in Gdansk is able to handle only small cruise ships with about several hundred passengers on aboard. Cruise ships are supported by three waterfronts: Westerplatte Quay (max length of a cruise ship up to 225 m and draught up to 9.3 m), WOC II Quay, (max length of a cruise ship up to 170 m and draught up to 8.6 m) and also Cpt. Ziolkowski Quay, for smaller units [8, p. 28-29]. The fact that, the port in Gdansk may support only small cruise ships, it is not a barrier, because the seaport in Gdynia, which has got much better hydro-technical conditions, especially at the French Quay, is an incoming port for giant cruise ships coming to visit the city of Gdansk and the surrounding area. The seaport in Gdynia supports the greatest number of cruise ships and with the highest tonnage GT among all seaports in Poland annually, what gives a share at the level of 69%, while Gdansk has got the share – 28.77%. Nevertheless, the city of Gdynia is not a cruise tourist destination for cruise passengers, but only an incoming seaport. Cruise passengers are taken for sightseeing tours in the Gdansk Coast Region by local tour-operators. In these cases, it is observed an interesting phenomenon. On aboard of cruise ships, photos promoting the places worth visiting onshore are presented by cruise ship-owners’ travel agents. (Photo 1, 2, 3 i 4).

Photo 1. The Oliwa Cathedral in Gdansk on MSC Orchestra (MSC Cruises)

Photo 2. The Great Crane in Gdansk on MSC Orchestra (MSC Cruises)
In the case of cruise ships calling at Gdynia seaport, the most famous attractions in the Gdansk Coast Region presented on photos such as i.e. historical monuments on the Długa Street in Gdansk, the Great Crane in Gdansk, or Oliwa Cathedral and the Teutonic Knights in Malbork are signed with the name Gdynia (Poland) (Photo 1, 2, 3 i 4). This is made for cruise passengers in order to facilitate the identification of places where the sightseeing tours begin. Nevertheless, there is no one photo with attractions in Gdynia, because the city of Gdansk and the Teutonic Castle in Malbork are considered to be the main tourist destinations attracting travelers to visit the Gdansk Coast Region. It is worth to point out that techniques regarding signing all tourist attractions with the name “Gdynia” have been intended and it is considered a cruise tourist destination in the macro scale.

The cruise ship-owners when planning the cruise routes take into consideration numerous various factors, first of all the tourist attractiveness and uniqueness of seaport cities and coastal regions. The ship-owners are able to accept different conditions of port facilities and infrastructure in the seaports if a tourist destination is so unique that tourists will be willing to purchase a cruise.

Eurotest Institute reported that, during summer in 2012, the city of Gdansk was visited by a total of 2,884 thousand tourists including 2,211 thousand of domestic tourists and 673 thousand of foreign tourists [8, p. 74]. At the same time, the seaport in Gdansk was visited by 29 cruise ships with 8,294 cruise passengers, and the seaport in Gdynia – 69 cruise ships with 108,628 passengers, what gave in total 116,922 passengers. Of course, as mentioned above, not all cruise passengers decide to explore Gdansk and they choose other offers. Assuming that the vast majority chooses sightseeing tours in Gdansk, generally speaking, one can estimate that the percentage of cruise passengers in the number of foreigners visiting the city of Gdansk amounted to 17.4% in summer 2012.

Empirical research carried out among cruise passengers in 2014 showed that 36.09% of the total surveyed respondents (432 passengers) declared that the attractiveness of a tourist programme was the main reason for making decision about purchasing tours in Gdansk. However, 31.75% (380 passengers) indicated that the uniqueness of cultural heritage of the Gdansk Coast Region was the most important influencing factor. Other tourist attractions of the region did not have any significant impacts on purchases made by tourists in Gdansk Coast Region.
The results of research regarding the image of the city in tourists’ opinions delivered interesting information. The research conducted by the Eurotest Institute proved that foreign tourists indicate the most common aspects referring to historical monuments of the city of Gdansk such as: St. Mary’s Church, the Old Town, the Great Crane or the Neptune’s Fountain. Gdansk is also associated with St. Dominica Bazaar, Solidarity or EURO 2012, sea coast and sandy beaches [8, p. 15]. It has also been confirmed by the Gdansk Tourism Organization and Pomeranian Regional Tourist Organization. In their opinions, tourists mainly associate Gdansk with: amber, sea, historical monuments and the solidarity. The research conducted by the Eurotest Institute showed that 97.1% foreign tourists visiting Gdansk usually visit the historical part of the city. In the Old Town, they mostly visit St. Mary’s Basilica (39.2% of total respondents), Mariacka Street (31.1%), the Artus’ Court (13.9%), the Great Crane (13.4%) and the Main Town Hall (11.7%). In spite of above mentioned attractions, foreign tourists also visit the Oliva Cathedral what was declared by 8.1% respondents [8, p. 10].

CONCLUSIONS

The hypothesis formulated in this article that “a term cruise tourist destination refers to the wider territorial area than an area of a city…in this case the city of Gdansk”, has been verified positively. The research proved that cruise passengers visiting polish seaports usually purchase various tourist offers proposed by local tour-operators in the Gdansk Coast Region and they do not limit themselves to visit only a major tourist attraction of the region like the city of Gdansk.

Local and regional authorities in coastal regions, the boards of seaports and also tourist industry are involved in creation of the image of their areas as cruise tourist destinations. They dream about that their regions could be visited on a regular basis by hundreds of cruise ships with thousands of tourists from all over the world. The city of Gdansk, but rather the Gdansk Coast Region, is an important cruise tourist destination in the Baltic Sea Region, nowadays. However, it is necessary to point out that in an era of a strong competitiveness on the tourist market, only regions where all entities are involved in joint cooperation for promotion of a region as a cruise tourist destination with the high quality of services and good standard of infrastructure have got any chances for reaching success.

Abstract

Tourist attractiveness of the sea coast regions is one of the most important factors affecting cruise shipowners’ decisions about including them into programs of cruise routes. Competition between seaports and coastal regions the Baltic Sea market in order to attract cruise lines is strong. The purpose of this article is to identify the factors that determine tourist attractiveness of the city of Gdansk as an important stage of cruise travels. The results of original research, carried out among cruise ship passengers visiting the coast of Gdansk in 2014 and also the results of the Eurotest Research Institute from Gdansk carried out among visitors to Gdansk, have been presented in this article.

Miasto Gdańsk jako morska destynacja rejsów turystycznych

Streszczenie

Atrakcyjność turystyczna regionów wybrzeża morskiego jest jednym z najważniejszych czynników wpływających na decyzje armatorów o włączeniu ich do programów tras wycieczkowych. Konkurencja między portami morskimi i poszczególnymi przybrzeżnymi regionami Morza Bałtyckiego Ponadto walka konkurencyjna pomiędzy portami morskimi o armatorów statków wycieczkowych jest niezwykle silna. Celem tego artykułu jest identyfikacja czynników, które decydują o atrakcyjności turystycznej miasta Gdańska jako ważnej destynacji rejsów turystycznych. W artykule przedstawiono wyniki badań, prowadzonych wśród pasażerów statków wycieczkowych odwiedzających wybrzeże Gdańska w 2014 roku, a także badań prowadzonych przez Instytut Eurotest.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


