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REGIONAL PRODUCTS OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN LITHUANIA: POTENTIALS, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Summary: Cultural-tourism products of high quality that represent the specificity of the region have undoubted cultural, social and economic benefits to the region and its population. The article was aimed at reviewing the chosen cultural tourism products in Lithuania (historical, ethnotourism and culinary tourism products). The survey revealed that most of the products that are developed in Lithuania and are accessible to tourists are authentic and reflect the history of the region and its uniqueness. However, these products require improvement and cooperation among the professionals of the field. What is more, people that are responsible for their realisation often lack competencies in management and marketing. These products contribute to the increase of the awareness about the region and bring economic benefit to its residents.

Keywords: cultural tourism, regional tourism products, Lithuania.

JEL Classification: R1, R11.

Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest developing sectors in the world. Regardless of economic fluctuations, political instability and the abundance of natural cataclysms, cultural tourism keeps growing.

As the analysis of data accumulated and processed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) shows, the sector has been continuously growing and the revenue received from it has been increasing. These trends are observed not only in the European Union but in other countries as well

[UNWTO, 2015]. The tourism in the European Union involves almost 2 million companies most of which are small or medium-sized enterprises. In addition, this industry employs around 5.2% of all employed people which makes up about 10 million jobs mostly taken by young people [Komunikat Komisji do Parlamentu europejskiego..., 2010].

Recent years have seen the strengthening of regionalism in Europe and the construct of the “Europe of the Regions” being advocated [Čėpaitienė, 2010]. These trends are also recorded in the development of tourism, as it is inseparable from geographical and cultural distinctness of regions [Olearnik, 2013]. A profusion of tourism products and their popularity among tourists depend on the potentials of the region (abundance of tourism resources, their proper adaptation and application to the needs of tourists). The available resources also affect the competitiveness of the region and the attraction of investments as well as the creation of new jobs.

However, it does not necessarily mean that a region with a huge potential of resources will become a tourist attraction. It should be emphasised that it is not the amount of tourism products but their uniqueness and interface with the region that matter. Moreover, an important role is played by the preparedness of human resources to develop, sell and administer such products. This, in turn, depends on the attitude of local authorities towards tourism.

The object of our research is products of cultural tourism in Lithuania (historical, ethnographic and culinary tourism). The aim of the research was to find out how much these products are related to the region of origin and what the possibilities are to attribute them to the products of regional tourism and use them by simultaneously increasing the popularity and visibility of the region. Unfortunately, it is impossible to answer all the questions arising due to the newness of the subject and its broad scope. A long-term research is required for interviewing both the developers of the products and the tourists as well as the representatives of the public administration sector. This article is rather of problem-focused nature and serves as an excursus into further research.

1. The problem of defining a regional tourism product

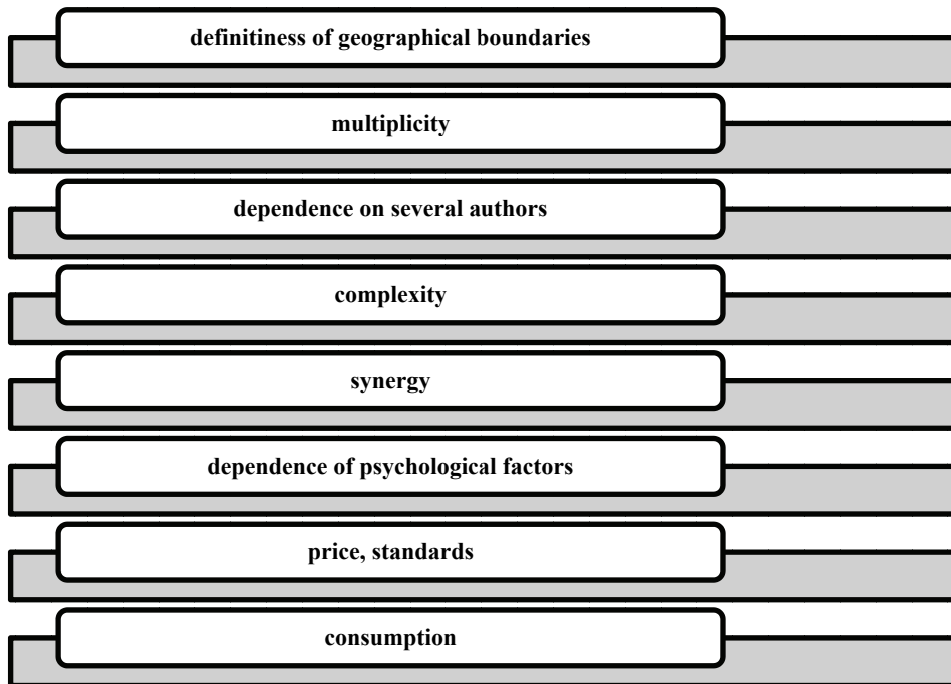
The growing variety of the types of tourism demonstrates that a 21st century tourist is continuously looking for new experiences and seeks to realise his/her permanent desire to see something new and unique. This wish not only expands the map of travels, but also poses new challenges to the destinations that are

already popular among tourists (in the context of our article, to the regions of tourism). It should be stressed that some new potentials are seen for Lithuania here. As various research show, Lithuania is still a little-known tourist destination (compared to such markets as Japan, China, USA, etc.). Tourists visit Lithuania during travels which include a few countries in the Baltic region (and a visit to Lithuania is only a component of a travel package). They visit only the main tourist locations without having an opportunity to evaluate the uniqueness and exclusiveness of our country (they most often visit Vilnius, Trakai, and Kaunas). In such a case, Lithuania becomes one of the many countries that tourists visit and learn about by looking through the window in their buses. The main issue here is how to get these tourists back and make them spend more time within the territory of Lithuania.

Tourism products of high quality contribute to the increase of visibility and popularity of tourism regions. As noted by J. Mazurek and E. Kasperska [2014], one of the best ways to create an appropriate image of the region is by developing attractive regional tourism products. More attention is being paid to the fact that, when developing new products, their connection to the region of origin should be emphasized. It is also highlighted that regional tourism products may become a factor which could contribute to the competitiveness of the region and become its distinct feature and a recognizable attribute which could attract tourists [Lewandowska, 2009].

Unfortunately, scientific literature contains a number of inconclusive discussions and a lack of definitiveness; we still have no established term to define a regional product, its characteristics and specificity. In parallel, such terms as regional tourism product, tourism product of the locality [Molenda, 2011], local tourism product and branded tourism product are used. A question emerges whether we talk about the same product or these are all different tourism products. Researchers who explore these products lay down the criteria which enable a better understanding of the essence of the object under review (Figure 1).

Unquestionably, the reflection of regional identity and specificity is among more important criteria of the definition of a regional tourism product [Nyurenberger, Yegorova, 2015, pp. 234-238]. Attention should be also drawn to the multiplicity and complexity of such products and the importance of cooperation among human resources of the region in developing such products and realising them.

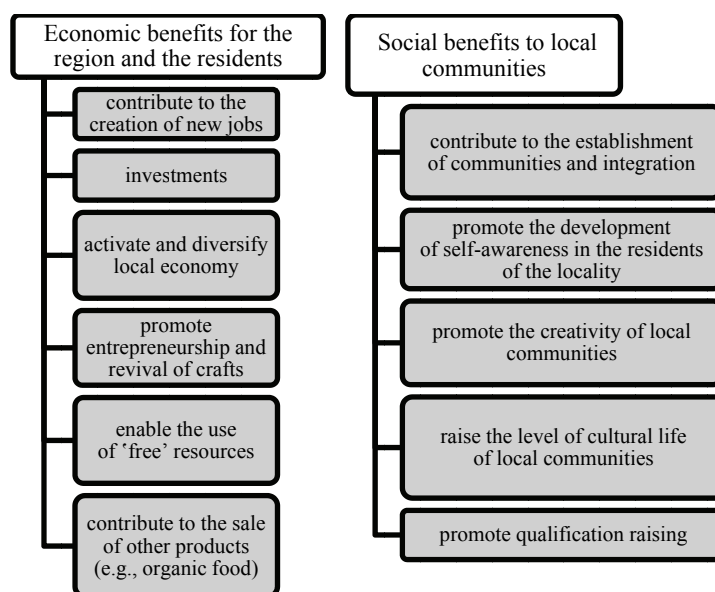
Figure 1. Criteria for defining a regional tourism product

Source: Based on: Kaczmarek, Stasiak and Włodarczyk [2005].

2. Regional tourism product and its influence on the region

There are no doubts that currently available and newly emerging tourism products are beneficial not only to the region itself but also to its population. J. Mazurek and E. Kasperska [2014] underline the threefold usefulness of these products: to the region, to the community and the residents. In the article, we will analyze economic and social benefits as the products under the consideration hardly indicate any ecological advantages (Figure 2).

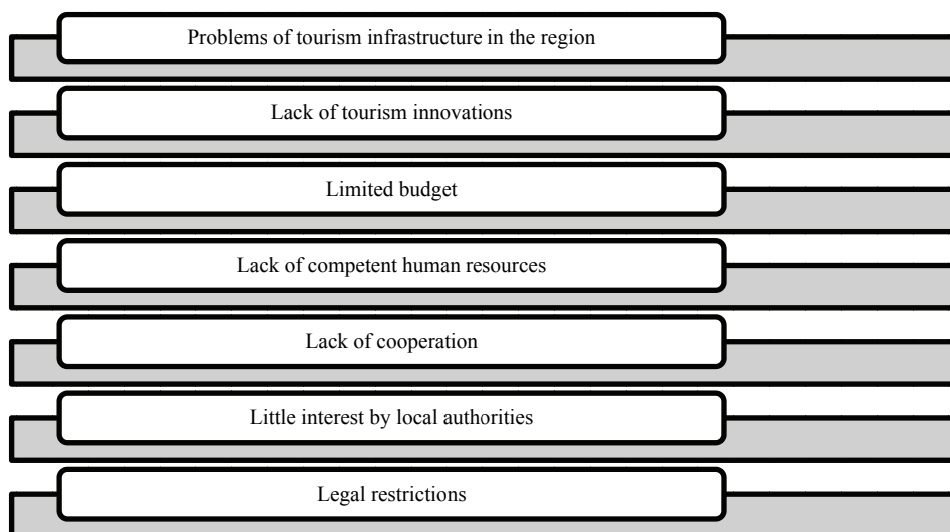
There are various studies which mostly focus on the economic benefits of tourism products for the population of a region. New tourism products provide new jobs. It should be emphasized that jobs are created for the groups of residents that find it difficult to enter the labour market, e.g., older and retired women. The development of regional tourism products promotes the expansion of new businesses (in particular, small and medium-sized as well as family businesses) and attracts investments as well as provide the residents with the opportunity to receive additional income (e.g., farmers earn from regional culinary products).

Figure 2. Aspects of the benefits of regional tourism products to communities

Source: Based on: Mazurek and Kasperska [2014].

Public benefits of tourism products to local inhabitants/communities are of no less importance. Very often local population sees few prospects for its members, especially in rural areas, and is not proud of the place it lives in. Meanwhile, tourists who come to the region may become the reason for the establishment of communities as well as a factor which promotes the entrepreneurship and creativity of communities and enables the restoration of old traditions and crafts. Moreover, further development of regional tourism products prompts the expansion of human resources of the region, their continuous improvement and qualification raising. Competitive regional tourism products become the trademark of the region, the basis for its marketing and can contribute to resolving the problem of seasonality and improving the level of quality of the infrastructure in the region.

However, in often cases, the economic, political and mental problems prevailing in the region (Figure 3) hinder the development and sales of tourism products. In addition, the problem of the lack of competence of human resources operating in tourism (many small and family businesses fail, do not withstand the demanding conditions and go bankrupt during the first year of activity).

Figure 3. Problems of further development of regional tourism products

Source: Based on: Mazurek and Kasperska [2014].

When examining the problems of ‘unpopularity’ of regional tourism products, it has been noticed that these problems too become obstacles for service providers for turning their ideas into reality: a) few ‘fresh’ ideas in creating regional tourism products (copied from neighbours), b) the developed products are hardly (or very little) related to the culture and history of the region, c) the price of regional tourism products, and d) the popularity of kitsch.

3. Scope of cultural tourism product

Cultural tourism could be considered the type of tourism which is most typical to the entire European Union at the moment. It includes historical, architectural, ethnographic and industrial heritage which constitutes the economic structure of the region. The development of cultural tourism is important for the country and is more often highlighted in the national [*Lietuvos turizmo...*, 2014] as well as international documents [UNWTO, 2015], meanwhile, cultural tourism products which are developed on the basis of heritage occupy an important place in the range of experiences of the consumers of tourism products which includes educational and social aspects. Tourists tend to positively assess cultural heritage tourism products for the experience gained, emotional impressions,

deepened knowledge about the local place; they find these products attractive for their authenticity and because they are genuine [Io, 2013].

Authenticity is an important criterion of a cultural tourism product. It is often linked to the ways in which specific values are ‘performed’; it relates to feedback that is formed by the individual experiences of tourists; and it is often linked to the factor of how deep their perception of a more authentic self is [Sims, 2009]. It is likely that consumers will associate a product more with the authenticity, if:

- it corresponds to the preconceived notions by tourists about what is typical in terms of experience in that particular place,
- corresponding environment is created,
- there are connections with certain traditions or the element of naturalness [Sims, 2009].

Regional identity is often closely associated with the authenticity. Although there are no doubts that links with regional identity increase the value of products made in that region as well as its attractiveness to tourists, there is little research in this field, especially research related to the creation of regional identity [Christensen, Kenney, Patton, 2015].

The changing motives and goals of travelling contribute to the development of other subtypes of cultural tourism as well. An increasing number of tourists are interested in the products of ethnographic and architectural tourism. Tourists often ‘pull off’ popular tourist routes and choose to go to less visited places. A perfect example could be water and wind mills which receive an increasing interest from tourists. In addition, folklore tourism has also become more popular, though it is a relatively new type of tourism product. On the other hand, it means live learning which engages and gives the opportunity to participate. When discussing the combination of folklore and tourism, the phenomenon of festival tourism is apparent [Jordan, 2012].

Products of culinary tourism are no less important. They often provide the opportunity to incorporate different types of heritage and to present them to tourists in a complex and ‘packaged’ manner. Products of culinary products are also often analyzed from the perspective of regional tourism product [Christensen, Kenney, Patton, 2015].

In Lithuania, cultural tourism is considered to have a huge potential, nevertheless, at the same time it is admitted that this field of tourism encounters a number of problems [Rukuižienė, 2006; Barkauskienė, Barkauskas, 2012].

If appropriate measures are found to tackle the existing political and economic problems, it would be possible to create a favourable environment for

creating competitive cultural tourism products in Lithuania which could potentially attract the interest of local tourists and tourists from neighbouring countries as well as of tourists from more remote areas. Our country has good conditions for the expansion of culinary tourism products as a number of old recipes have survived up to modern days and it is possible to restore the old production techniques (e.g., baking bread). Besides, the Lithuanian culinary heritage is related to the traditions of other nations that also make it unique and distinct (e.g., the culinary heritage of Karaites which is considered an inseparable part of Trakai). Lithuania also has a number of examples of exceptional architectural heritage (wooden architecture) which is still little known among tourists. We have favorable conditions to develop historical tourism since a number of important events have taken place in the territory of Lithuania that are important not only to the Lithuanian population (e.g., the genocide of the Jews in Lithuania). Non-material heritage (the basis for the development of folklore and ethno tourism) is of no less importance as it leads to a better understanding of Lithuania's history and the specificity of the way of life of its inhabitants (e.g., musical folklore and narratives).

It is important to emphasise that the aforementioned resources are always closely related to the regions of origin and it is impossible to repeat them in other locations without losing their authenticity.

4. Tourism regions in Lithuania

Scientific literature depicts discussions on what a tourism region is and what are the criteria that define it. A tourism region is a locality which provides tourism services and products in a specific geographical territory which is characteristic of: the abundance of cultural and natural resources and a well-developed network of infrastructure and communication [Kruczek, Zmyslony, 2010]. In Lithuania, a tourism region is defined as a territory which features certain common economic, geographical and cultural traits in which a distinctive tourism is developed. Researchers list quite different models of tourism regions which resulted from various researches and different criteria. Most often, two methods are used in regionalisation as follows: *a territory is divided* according to the established criteria (regional units are singled out) or the adjacent territories which have similar resources and conditions for the development of tourism *are integrated* [Kruczek, Zmyslony, 2010].

The Lithuanian Tourism Development Programme 2014-2020 accentuates the priority tourism development regions. It is highlighted that these are the territories of Lithuania which have the highest amount of tourist resources and where the conditions for the development of priority tourism products are the most favourable [*Lietuvos turizmo plėtros...*, 2014]. Based on the current situation of tourism infrastructure, the available resources and popularity among tourists, the programme distinguishes the following regions:

- Vilnius region (includes Vilnius city, Vilnius district, Širvintos district, and Trakai district municipalities);
- Coastline region (includes Klaipėda city, Klaipėda district, Palanga city, Kretinga district, Neringa, and Šilutė district municipalities);
- Region of the lower reaches of the Nemunas River (includes Kaunas city, Kaunas district, Birštonas, Kaišiadoriai district, Jurbarkas district, Šakiai district, and Prienai district municipalities);
- Region of southern Dzūkija – ethnographic region in south-eastern Lithuania (includes Druskininkai, Lazdijai district, and Varėna district municipalities);
- Region of eastern Aukštaitija – High Lands, ethnographic region in the north-east Lithuania (includes Zarasai district, Ignalina district, Utena district, Anykščiai district, and Molėtai district municipalities);
- Region of the uplands of Žemaitija – Samogitia or ‘lowlands’ (includes Telšiai district, Plungė district municipalities) [*Lietuvos turizmo plėtros...*, 2014].

In our article, we analyse the way of regionalization (the historical and ethnographical criterion) which helps better convey the uniqueness of the resources of cultural tourism and historical distinctness. Based on this criterion, five ethnographic (ethno-cultural) regions are singled out as follows: Aukštaitija (High Lands), Dzūkija (Dainava), Mažoji Lietuva (Lithuania Minor), Suvalkija (Sūduva), and Žemaitija (Samogitia or Low Lands).

5. Methodology

The article presents the results of the survey carried out in Lithuania from 2013 to 2015. To achieve the goal, the triangulation of the research methods was employed [Wilson, 2014]. The combination of several methods was chosen to collect a detailed and comprehensive information. The survey under the discussion incorporates meta-analyses of several cultural tourism products involving document analysis, analysis of websites (publicly available descriptions of tourism products), and general observations. Such harmonization of methods ena-

bled the authors of the article to make a thorough analysis of the selected cases of cultural tourism products in Lithuania. Details provided on the websites of tourism services providers about the offered products were examined as well as the details on the events organised in Lithuania and provided on the websites of the Lithuanian ethno-cultural centres (Vilnius Ethnic Culture Centre, Klaipėda Ethnic Culture Centre, Kaunas National Culture Centre), and the websites of folklore groups.

The cases of cultural (historical, ethnographic and national heritage) tourism products were selected with the aim to reflect the most important areas of Lithuania's heritage (culinary heritage, folklore, architecture, 'live history' events).

The culinary heritage of one of the most distinct regions, namely, Samogitia, as well as the culinary heritage of the national minority of the Karaites, and the Lithuanian bread as the product of culinary heritage were analysed.

To have a broad analysis on the products of cultural tourism in Lithuania, products of ethno-tourism were also scrutinised. The cases of use of architectural heritage for the purposes of tourism are still rare (exceptional monuments of wooden architecture – wind and water mills – are the cases of the best adaptation for tourism purposes). Each ethnographic region of Lithuania has retained a distinct musical folklore which mirrors the history of that particular region. It is one more resource which was used in the analysis. It was also considered how the events of ethnographic (folklore festivals) and historical (events of 'live history') heritage have been adapted to the development of tourism products.

Criteria of the analysis: product supply, authenticity and reflection of regional identity, attractiveness of information, innovativeness, accessibility to Lithuanian and foreign tourists, educational elements, related events and programmes.

6. Result analysis

During the survey, it was identified that Lithuania has a wide range of authentic, poorly commercialized supply of cultural tourism products, however, only part of these products is related to the specificity of regions. In addition, the aspect of regionality is little used in the marketing of these products.

During the analysis, some problems of adaptation of cultural heritage products for the purposes of tourism emerged (Table 1).

Table 1. Key problematic aspects in relation to cultural tourism products

PROBLEMS + pronounced problematic aspects +/- partial problems identified	Cultural tourism products		
	Historical tourism products	Culinary tourism products	Ethnographic tourism products
Link between the product and the region			
Authenticity	-	-	-
Reflection of regional identity	+	+	+
Focusing on client/tourist			
Inability to identify tourists' needs and expectations	+	+	+
Product is little known beyond the region	+/-	+/-	+
Orientation towards narrow targeted groups	-	+	+/-
Lack of the educational element			
Accessibility of the product during the off-season	+	-	+
Marketing			
Undefined target markets	+/-	+/-	+
Non-innovativeness in terms of dissemination of information	+	+	+
Linguistic problem (information in Lithuanian only)	+	+	+
Uninteresting and 'dry' presentation of information	+/-	+/-	+
Sale of product			
Quality of product realization	+	+	+
Authenticity of the locality	-	+/-	-
Knowledge about the product supplied by the provider	-	-	-

The least number of problems was identified while analysing products according to the criterion of authenticity. The cultural tourism products under consideration are typical authentic products as: old production technologies are used (e.g., culinary tourism products are made on the basis of old recipes and using authentic production technology), the product is consumed in a historical environment (e.g., mills are adjusted for educational programmes or become the basis for the emergence of tourism infrastructure in the region), details on heritage are introduced using authentic forms of presentation (musical folklore, e.g. performance of multipart songs and reconstruction of the old texts and their performance).

However, it should be noted that the fact that cultural tourism products become popular and turn into mass products leads to the occurrence of kitsch (e.g., ready-to-cook products are used in order to reduce production costs and production time). Such manifestations can be seen during 'live history' events where historical context is 'simplified' and the modern way of its presentation is chosen. This may make tourists feel disappointed in the product as well as in the region.

Most of the analyzed products are closely related to the region of origin. When analysing culinary heritage products, it was noticed that they are perhaps the best way to reflect the specificity of the region, however, there is a lack of specialized information oriented towards corresponding tourist flows. A culinary heritage product is often taken 'for granted' and local people forget that tourists often come from totally different cultural environment and it might be difficult for them to perceive the uniqueness of such product. When analyzing the cultural heritage products of the Karaites, a better situation has been stated than in the case of culinary heritage of the region of Samogitia. In the cases under review, the products corresponded to the definition of a regional product in terms of the defined geographical boundaries and the specificity of national heritage (the product must meet the requirements of national heritage which are specified in legislation). In addition, the themes of the 'live history' events were linked to the region and historical context.

The analysis has demonstrated that the heritage of the Karaites is presented better and is easily accessible both to the Lithuanian and foreign tourists compared to all the rest examined products. This is determined by the place of origin and consumption of this product, namely, Trakai, the old capital of Lithuania which is included in all national tourist routes. Besides, a considerable role has also been played by the fact that, in the case of the culinary tourism product of the Karaites, a closer cooperation between tourism and heritage product producers as well as a more developed educational element were identified. All this makes this product more attractive to a wider audience. Meanwhile, the problem of focusing on narrow tourist markets was mostly seen when analyzing the supply of bread baking products. It turned out that the main tourism product is educational programs which are provided by organizations that are directly related to tourism, namely, Lithuanian museums [Žuromskaitė, Dačiulytė 2015]. The Lithuanian bread is presented in tourism fairs and represents Lithuania, however, it is seen only as a culinary product or a souvenir, meanwhile, the rich educational potential remains not fully exploited as the existing educational programs are mostly intended for schoolchildren. There are almost no programs in English which could be a complex part of a tourist route. This fact signals that the potentials of the product are exploited only partially and that not all the financial benefits are received from this opportunity (this product is not available for individual tourists, it is intended for organized groups only).

One of the problems which came into light when analyzing cultural tourism products in Lithuania is insufficient orientation towards targeted market or inability to identify it. This leads to the situation where sometimes products are too

much focused on narrow consumer markets (e.g., orienting the educational tourism products towards pupils and using the folklore tourism products to attract only the visitors from the same or the neighboring regions). The products of cultural tourism are often accessible to only a small portion of the consumers' market for the fact of their localness (they are known to a handful of consumers because of the poor marketing).

Having analyzed the folklore events of ethnographic heritage, namely, festivals, and referring to the classification offered by O'Sullivan [O'Sullivan, Jackson, 2002], it has been determined that a considerable part of festivals constitute small-scale, so-called home-grown, events which, though being the messengers of an authentic culture, have little links to tourism as they are mostly focused on the local community. Another part of festivals is of regional nature. Only national and international events are mostly related to domestic and inbound tourism. They can be attributed to the group of festivals which are attractive for tourists. It should be admitted that compared to other products under analysis, a higher integration with the tourism industry is noticed in this field: a relatively higher proportion of ethnographic heritage (festivals) tourism products is available in foreign languages, some festivals are incorporated into programs which are offered to tourism agencies, however, the way information is presented is not attractive enough and this fact leads to the statement that these products are not sufficiently intended for foreign tourists.

A considerable part of the offered products are poorly adapted for the attraction of foreign tourists. There is a lack of proper dissemination of information on tourism products, especially in English. One of the analyzed cases has shown that 'live history' events are only available in Lithuanian. Besides, no information on the events is available in any foreign language.

Furthermore, organizations which are directly related to tourism (tourist information centres, municipal offices, travel organizers, etc.) where professional tourism specialists work, provide only summaries of information on cultural tourism products (events, festivals, programs, etc.) on their websites and give links to the websites of original producers of the products. Meanwhile, websites of products' providers lack attractive presentation of information; there is almost no information in English.

A complex approach towards the development of tourism products, cooperation between organizations which provide tourism services and the potential developers of tourism products are missing. To publicize the products, only the traditional marketing tools are used (information in local media, in often cases, incomprehensible information is provided on the service provider's website, brochures).

Conclusions

Good quality cultural tourism products which meet the specificity of the region undoubtedly have cultural, economic and social benefits for the region and contribute to the increase of its visibility. Developers of such products gain personal benefits: employment rises, new jobs are provided, additional sources of revenue occur. However, the conducted review demonstrates that such products require a lot of effort in Lithuania; they are not sufficiently well developed to become recognizable and competitive, the available cultural potential is not fully exploited.

The trend of commercialization of cultural heritage, where the authenticity is sacrificed in exchange of popularity of a cultural tourism product, is a cause for concern as, to reduce production costs or to make the product cheaper in order to make it available for a wide audience, the manufacturers of the product simplify the process of production (the case with traditional pastries kibinai).

The publicizing and popularizing of products lack cooperation among the entities of the tourism industry. Only a small part of these products is accessible to foreign tourists as most of them are available in Lithuanian only.

To sum up, there are all reasons to talk about cultural tourism products in Lithuania, however, there are many management and marketing-related problems which have to be solved in order to make their economic benefits to the region and its population tangible.

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**REGIONALNE PRODUKTY TURYSTYKI KULTUROWEJ NA LITWIE:
POTENCJAŁ, PROBLEMY I PERSPEKTYWY**

Streszczenie: Jakościowe regionalne produkty turystyki kulturowej przynoszą korzyści kulturowe, społeczne i ekonomiczne dla regionu i jego mieszkańców. Celem artykułu było przybliżenie wybranych produktów turystyki kulturowych na Litwie (produkty turystyki historycznej, etnoturystyki i kulinarnej). Badane produkty turystyczne cechuje autentyczność oraz odzwierciedlają one historię regionu. Jednak produkty te wymagają jeszcze udoskonalenia i ściślejszej współpracy ze specjalistami czy naukowcami. Także wiele problemów wynika z braku kompetencji menedżerskich i marketingowych ludzi odpowiedzialnych za ich realizację. Mimo to już teraz przyczyniają się do podnoszenia świadomości regionalnej i przynoszą korzyści ekonomiczne dla regionu i jego mieszkańców.

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka kulturowa, Litwa, regionalne produkty turystyczne.