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TYPES AND LEVELS OF STRATEGIES BEING ELABORATED BY TOURISM ENTERPRISES

**RODZAJE I POZIOMY STRATEGII UKŁADANYCH
PRZEZ PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWA TURYSTYCZNE**

Introduction

Currently, more and more enterprises provide tourists with their products. There are also many business units that run production or commercial activities, indirectly related to a tourism¹. This is mainly due to the profitability of running business in this area. Since the middle of the last century, there has been a dynamic development of people mobility outside their places of permanent residence. As A. Anszperger points behind World Tourism Organization, in the years 1950 to 2002 the total number of international tourists increased from several to over 700 million. What is more, the forecasts indicate that this trend will continue in the future. In 2200, the number of people who will make at least one tourist trip lasting a day or more will amount to 1.6 billion². Each of these people would need both services (e.g. accommodation) as well as products (e.g. tourist guidebooks) of a tourist nature.

In order to properly and profitably meet travel needs of population, companies already present on the tourism market (as well as those that will start operating there in the future) have to make usage of tool in the form of strategy. In researchers opinion that it is still and invariably one of the most important management instruments, having a decisive impact on achieving appropriate results by every economic entity, including this of touristic nature³. Strategy enables company to adapt to its environment in the best possible way. It shows where a company wants to fulfil its goals and mission⁴. For this reason, "many

¹ Compare: J. Sikora, *Agroturystyka. Przedsiębiorczość na obszarach wiejskich*, Wyd. C.H. Beck, Warszawa 2012, p. 28.

² See more: A. Anszperger, *Turystyka wschodzącym działem gospodarki narodowej*, [in:] *Funkcjonowanie gospodarki polskiej w warunkach integracji i globalizacji*, ed. D. Kopycińska, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2005, p. 83.

³ See: R.S. Kaplan, D.P. Norton, *Wdrażanie strategii dla osiągnięcia przewagi konkurencyjnej*, PWN, Warszawa 2010, p. 1–5.

⁴ See: M. Armstrong, *Jak być lepszym menedżerem*, Dom Wydawniczy ABC, Warszawa 1997, p. 379.

companies in the economy owe strategy a success and at least equally many failures can be explained by strategic management errors”⁵.

In the article, the author emphasizes the great importance of a well-developed set of criteria and decision-making rules for the proper functioning as well as development of a tourist organization in a changing environment. He also presents management levels on which plans should be laid out and adapts adequate types of strategies to them. Checks whether companies already operating on the market are aware of the role of strategic planning and what types of strategies are arranged by them at particular levels. Empirical basis of considerations is a factual and bibliographic query regarding management as well as instruments offered by it. The conclusions and assumptions resulting from the literature studies regarding the diversity of strategies that can be developed by tourist enterprises have been confirmed by management practitioners. In order to verify observed regularities, a survey was conducted in the form of a direct, free interview (informal variant) with ten entrepreneurs, heads of entities participating in exchange processes that are carried out on the tourism market.

Levels of tourism enterprises' strategy

Conducted survey ensured the author that the number, and even type of management levels present in tourism enterprises may differ significantly between individual companies. At the same time, however, in almost every case the criterion for separating individual levels are information needs (smaller or larger) of decision-makers at a particular level, managers who develop strategic plans. In the majority of enterprises one can indicate the presence of three basic levels of management, whose names can be referred to the terminology commonly accepted in the literature, indicating the presence of strategic, tactical and operational level.

Although the name of the highest among them may suggest that the strategy is formulated only there, respondents confirmed that it is also formulated at lower levels of management. The adjective: “strategic” preceding the formulating: “management level” suggests in this case: the fact that decisions at this level are made by the most important people in a tourism company, all the strategies they develop have a dominant and guiding nature as well as they concern whole operations taking place within the tourism enterprise and are elaborated in order to set long-term direction of firm’s operations.

J. Mikołajczyk confirms that decisions bearing strategic marks, are taken at all levels of management. He explains that the strategy developed by top management is of a key importance, “focuses on doing right things”⁶, while at lower levels it focuses on how to do them in the right way. In this case, therefore, it plays an instrumental role. It is a tool for implementing the guiding idea of the touristic company’s functioning, developed by the management or the supervisory board. In this context, it is a detailed refinement of

⁵ K. Oblój, M. Trybuchowski, *Zarządzanie strategiczne*, [in:] *Zarządzanie. Teoria i praktyka*, ed. A.K. Koźmiński, W. Piotrowski, PWN, Warszawa 1995, p. 123.

⁶ J. Mikołajczyk, *Ekonomika handlu*, WSiP, Warszawa 2008, p. 192.

the main strategy. Such conclusions are summed up by the researchers as follows: "in fact, we can not only talk about strategy at one level without referring to the other levels. [...] strategies are closely related and overlap in a specific area"⁷. The fact that the strategies overlap each other cannot be equated with their similarity. Differences between them can be considered in the following aspects: purpose, scope, allocation methods, sources of competitive advantage, major decision areas etc. (table 1).

Table 1. Tourist enterprises-characteristics of strategies on individual levels of management

Level of strategy Specification	Strategic	Tactical	Functional
Goals/tasks	Aggregated goals of the tourism company (development, profitability, profit, etc.)	Limited by the company's goals, aggregated around tourist products or markets (e.g. guided tours or Polish market).	Limited by the goals of the company and its strategic business units. Aggregated around a specific product or tourism market (e.g. sales, market share).
Scope	The choice of markets and areas of activity in which tourism company should be involved. Strategy of firm's development.	Choosing which products should be sold on which markets. Strategy for the development of tourism company business area.	Determination of the target market, width and depth of the assortment, marketing policy of the tourist product.
Resources allocation	Allocation between areas of activity.	Allocation between products or markets and separation between company's functional departments.	Allocation between marketing-mix instruments for each product or tourism market.
Sources of competitive advantage	Mainly because of financial, material and human resources, better organization and management (planning, organizing, conducting and controlling) as well as synergy effects.	Mainly thanks to the strategy of competing and better competences of the cadres in relation to the competition currently present on the tourist market.	Mainly due to the effective placement of a tourist product on the market, the superiority of marketing elements (e.g. more recognizable brand) in relation to competitors.
Essential areas of decision-making	Financial policy, technologies (e.g. transportation), intra-sector cooperation, problems of organization (including structure and culture), diversification of activities.	Assortment and distribution policies, market development.	Supplies, 4P: promotion, price, touristic product, place (detailed matters).

Source: own elaboration on the basis of: J. Lipecki, *Charakterystyka strategii przedsiębiorstwa*, "Ekonomika i Organizacja Przedsiębiorstwa" 1996, no 4, p. 28.

⁷ K. Janasz et al., *Zarządzanie strategiczne. Koncepcje, metody, strategie*, Wyd. Difin, Warszawa 2008, p. 87.

Strategy, determined by the highest managerial teams in tourism enterprises, can be named as corporate. It should be seen as a conceptual pattern of a tourist organization's functioning and development in an environment changing in the future⁸. Corporate strategy is primarily about determining what tourism products should be offered by the company and on what markets. Top- management must consider whether the organization should focus on just a few markets and products (e.g. selling holiday stays in Croatia). Or maybe it should conduct a broader activity, be more diversified in terms of both selection of potential customers as well as products offered to them (both holiday stays and trips, organized throughout the entire Mediterranean basin).

Strategy at the lower level concerns the interests and operations of entities sometimes called in the literature as strategic business units⁹. This term means separate operational units, grouping within the enterprise all kinds of tourist activities, aimed at satisfying needs of the traveling population. At this level managerial team is looking for answers to the questions: in what way an entity should compete in the market it supports, how its offer should be constructed, in what way split resources within its scope, what customers the entity should serve, etc. Generally speaking "business units' strategy is moving to determine how an entity should proceed in the market, how it should act on the given resources and conditions prevailing in the market"¹⁰.

Functional strategy issues include questions about particular aspects of the tourism company's operations or functions, including among others: sales, marketing, finance, personnel management including this directly servicing tourists, etc.¹¹ Functional strategies relate to the specific (functional) aspects of the operations of each basic economic micro-entity that is also a tourism enterprise. Strategic criteria at the functional level include programs relating to business functions of a company. Most often they take a form of long-term programs and relate to specialized functional fields or issues of special importance, falling within the scope of a given function (main subject of an interest). They focus on the ways that enterprise approaches its basic functional activities, and thus on crafting and refining analytically its basic strategies and business strategies¹². In this context, functional level strategies complement the overall hierarchy of strategies.

Types of strategy on individual levels

The dynamics of management processes and quick changes taking place in the environment of tourism enterprises result in a great variety of applied strategies¹³. The list of strategies developed at individual management levels covers several types, however not

⁸ Compare: R. Otręba, *Sukces i autonomia w zarządzaniu organizacją szkolną*, Wyd. ABC a Wolters Kluwer business, Kraków 2012, p. 53.

⁹ See: G. Johnson, K. Scholes, R. Whittington, *Exploring corporate strategy*, Prentice Hall, Harlow 2008, p. 223.

¹⁰ J.A.F. Stoner, R.E. Freeman, D.R. Gilbert, Jr., *Kierowanie*, PWE, Warszawa 2001, p. 270–271.

¹¹ See: Z. Kreft, Z. Mokwa, *Dylematy zarządzania strategicznego w holdingu*, [in:] *Strategie rozwoju organizacji*, ed. A. Stabryła, T. Małkus, Wyd. Mfiles.pl., Kraków 2012, p. 18.

¹² See: K. Janasz et al., op. cit., p. 107–108.

¹³ See more: T. Kramer, *Podstawy marketingu*, PWE, Warszawa 2004, p. 183.

all of them are present in all companies. In the following part, the author reviews only the most important types of strategies assigned to individual levels of management, therefore distinguished on the basis of the criterion of their origin.

One of the special type of corporate level strategy is the international. It applies to:

- domestic tourism companies that decide to enter other geographic markets,
- international touristic companies wishing to continue internationalizing their activities or seeking to transform into multinational or global entities.

Top management level of each of these entities have to define ways of maintaining a permanent competitive advantage in the international environment. It has to decide and define in which countries the company should start competing, how to enter these new markets, if (and to what extent) touristic product range should be modified, finally how to manage operations abroad in order to gain an advantage over competitors.

Network strategy, also known as collective, is another type of strategy often developed by people holding managerial positions at the highest management level in tourist companies. In case of situation where the relationship between two or more enterprises goes beyond the usual b2b market transactions and evolves towards the joint implementation of a specific economic undertaking (e.g. creation of a large hotel group), companies are dealing with a partnership agreement, alliance or cooperation network. Strategy being developed for the needs of such a project can be described as network-based. "The point here is that strategic managers have to care not only about the strategies of their own company, but also about giving direction to a certain set of companies with common problems"¹⁴. Theoretically, such a strategy can be determined by the staff of only one entity dominating the network (e.g. the largest travel agency). In practice, however, it is usually the work of the leaders of all enterprises – members of the coalition.

In tourist companies operating on a single geographic market and not involved more broadly in intra-sector cooperation, there is no need to arrange the above-mentioned, specific types of corporate strategy. Their top-management can focus on creating traditional strategies that do not have a broader context, regarding the enterprise as an individual stuff and not embedded in a wider international environment. Taking into account the direction of development, can be distinguished¹⁵:

1. development strategies – associated with significant company expansiveness. It can be expressed by striving to overtake new markets in the long term, which is usually accompanied by an increase in investment outlays and products' diversification. The expression of these changes will be technological, organizational, product (structural) and ownership transformations;
2. stabilization strategies aimed at maintaining current *status quo*, trying to keep current concept of the enterprise in the surrounding environment;

¹⁴ J.A.F. Stoner, R.E Freeman, D.R. Gilbert, Jr., op. cit., p. 277.

¹⁵ Compare: A. Stabryła, *Zarządzanie strategiczne w teorii i praktyce firm*, PWN, Warszawa 2000, p. 59.

3. restructuring of remedial nature, aimed at eliminating irregularities related to the functioning of the organization and creating mechanisms that will protect the company against future or dynamic errors that can affect the continuous improvement of processes occurring in the company. This requires development of an effective early warning system;
4. defensive – focused on survival as well as minimization of failures. They often involve withdrawal from certain geographic markets, limitation of the range of offered tourist products, reduction of employment and sometimes even partial or complete liquidation of the entity;
5. complex, being the combination of aforementioned, i.e. top management assume using a different strategy: of development, stabilization, restructuring or defensive in individual units of the enterprise.

Each of the corporate strategies can take one of three forms, depending on who specifically decides about its shape. They are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Tourism companies' strategies: bureaucratic, autocratic and enterprising

Strategy		
Bureaucratic	Autocratic	Enterprising
arranged by		
people most suitable for this purpose (according to the obliged organizational structure) or designated according to formal procedures.	in many times a spontaneously formed team of managers, among whom may be representatives of the lower management level.	the most significant person or group in the company. A characteristic feature of this strategy is the vision imposed by the decision maker.

Source: personal studies on the basis of: P.A. Wickham, *Financial Times corporate strategy casebook*, Financial Times. Prentice Hall, Harlow 2000, p. 274–275.

At the next level of management, competitive strategies of individual business units are formulated. That is the basis on which they achieve a competitive advantage on their markets. In a competitive situation, customers make a choice based on the perceived value they receive for money, in other words, a combination of price and product benefits that are important to them. Therefore, people who formulate strategy for a business unit have to make the right decision regarding the price of a tourist product and its quality. The choice made is synonymous with the adoption of one of 8 strategies (figure 1).

Strategy, so called: without adornments is connected with combination of low prices of touristic products with their low quality. In this case, it is assumed that buyers will not consider such products to be particularly attractive, but this fact will be compensated by small amounts of money that they will have to spend on the purchase. It is used in market segments characterized by high sensitivity to prices (according to the practitioners' opinion, for years this concerned, for example, school trips). The low price strategy, in turn, is about

striving to set a lower price level than competitors while maintaining similar noticeable advantages of the product or service as those offered by competitors. It is used in the case of business units offering products in market segments unattractive from the point of view of competitors, the same ones where pressure from competition can be avoided¹⁶.

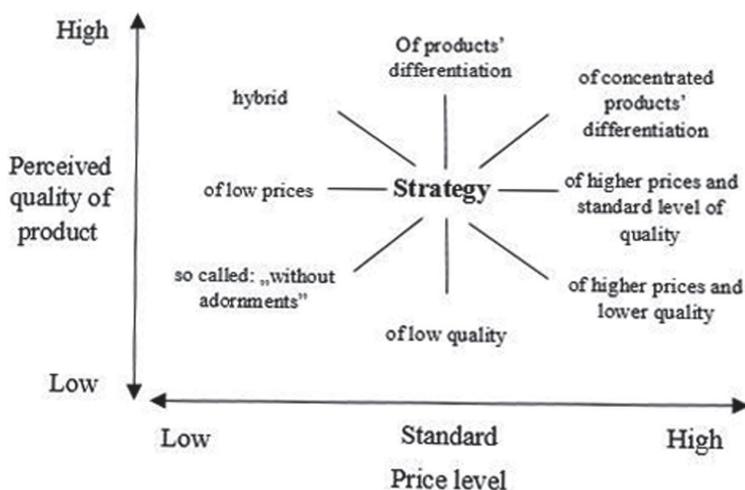


Figure 1. Strategic autoremament on lower managerial level in tourism enterprises

Source: own elaboration on the basis of: G. Johnson, K. Scholes, R. Whittington, *Podstawy strategii*, PWE, Warszawa 2010, p. 186.

In economic terminology, the term product differentiation is understood as giving it distinctive features on the background of substitutes¹⁷. Strategy of product differentiation assumes the necessity to distinguish touristic product through the higher value offered to customers. It strives to offer a product better than the competition (e.g. by employing regular flights, with a better service level than in the case of budget charter). It can occur in two variants: with an increased price or without a higher price (particularly effective). Even more advantageous from the buyers' point of view can be application by the company so called: hybrid strategy, consisting in striving to diversify products while imposing lower prices than competitors. Less interesting than this, although often beneficial for the company, is the strategy of concentrated product differentiation, which means providing high quality products to a selected market segment, but at high prices. This type of strategy is used by some specialized travel agencies offering exclusive trips to the furthest corners of the world, often organized with taking into account individual preferences of tourists (e.g. a trip to the Arctic Circle). The remaining of the three possible mid-level

¹⁶ See: G. Johnson, K. Scholes, R. Whittington, *Podstawy strategii*, PWE, Warszawa 2010, p. 185–194.

¹⁷ See: V. Magin, *Competition in marketing. Two essays on the impact of information on managerial decisions and on spatial product differentiation*, Gabler Edition Wissenschaft, Wiesbaden 2006, p. 111.

management strategies are actually hypothetical because they involve offering products that are unattractive from price versus quality system point of view.

The third level in the hierarchy of tourism enterprises' strategies consists of functional strategies. Table 3 lists the main problems undertaken by these strategies.

Table 3. Subject matter of functional strategies in tourism enterprises

Functional field	Point of interest
Finances	Asset management, dividend policy, sources of financing, debt policy, capital structure.
Marketing	Tourist product, pricing policy, promotion, corporate social responsibility, distribution channels of tourist products, position on the market.
Human resources	Human resources policy, relations between employees, state regulations, development of managerial staff, motivating, humanization of work.
Research and development	Development of tourist products, licenses, technology forecasting, e.g. changes within means of transport.

Source: personal studies on the basis of: R.W. Griffin, *Podstawy zarządzania organizacjami*, PWN, Warszawa 1996, p. 255.

Marketing strategy should be understood as a plan to take advantage of the strengths of the organization, so as to meet in a most appropriate way the needs and requirements of customers and thus gain an advantage over the competition on the tourism market¹⁸. In other words, it is about a wise (the best possible within the scope of possessed abilities and resources), shaping company's policy on issues of promotion, distribution and other, listed in table no. 3. It is in order to fulfil main marketing principle, which claims to serve appropriately customers' needs¹⁹. Mentioned strategy can consists of two programs: the first defines target market or markets, the second one (built of detailed strategies), refers to the marketing-mix programme, i.e.: price, product, distribution and promotion²⁰. In order to develop marketing strategy, tourism company must establish a combination of markets that it will handle and decide on the marketing-mix composition in order to achieve a lasting competitive advantage over its market rivals²¹.

The human resources strategy can be defined in general as a philosophy of how people are managed in organization, what has a bearing on policy and practice relating to the staff. It deals with an extremely important subjective factor determining the success of a tourist business venture. Researchers emphasize that nowadays people are the most valuable assets and corporate resources. "After the departure from the economy of the industry,

¹⁸ See more: O.C. Ferrell, M.D. Hartline, *Marketing strategy*, South-Western Cengage Learning, Mason 2011, p. 19.

¹⁹ See: R. Kozierski, *Biznes nowych możliwości*, Oficyna a Wolters Kluwer business, Warszawa 2012, p. 67.

²⁰ Composition of the marketing mix consists of: price, product, place and promotion (concept of 4P). They represent market-driven and purchaser-controlled factors controlled by the company. For example, an enterprise can convince buyers to make purchases by intensifying promotion activities. Compare: T. Sztucki, *Encyklopedia marketingu. Definicje, zasady, metody*, Wyd. Placet, Warszawa 2008, p. 170.

²¹ See more: O.C. Ferrell, M.D. Hartline, op. cit., p. 19.

where the scope of employees' duties was mainly limited to the care of equipment and machines, there was a huge breakthrough. Today, the value of the product, services as well as innovative solutions for products and processes are created by a man. All of these elements affect the profit of the enterprise and the position of the given company on the market mainly depends on them²².

No less important is financial strategy. This type is sometimes referred in literature to as a financial plan of the entity, intended to provide him with material existence²³. In this sense, it can even be considered in terms of a fundamental functional strategy which is of key importance to the tourist enterprise²⁴. This strategy is mainly about making decisions regarding the optimization of the capital structure (determining the proportion between equity own and foreign capital). Its elements also include: debt policy, asset management methods and dividend policy.

The last of the strategies, commonly appeared on operational level is research and development. The main decisions taken within its framework concern whether a company should focus on extending the offer of tourist services with several new positions or modernize (possibly improve, if needed) the existing ones²⁵. It also includes forecasting trends in technology as well as breakthrough innovations, such as those that concern the possibility of offering tourists faster and more comfortable ways of traveling.

Conclusion

Strategy should be defined as a set of criteria and decision rules shaping the functioning and development of an organization in a changing environment²⁶. In practice, it takes the form of a plan that "informs in which activities company should be engaged, how to use the possibilities of creative cooperation (synergy) between different units and how to distribute resources among them"²⁷. The strategy should be always defined in a long-term perspective (at least for three years), with five years being considered as a strategic time dimension²⁸.

Being aware of the leading role of the strategy for proper functioning of enterprise and it's development opportunities, it is not surprising that different types of strategies

²² K. Huk, *Kształtowanie oferty przez firmę doradczo-szkoleniową. Studium przypadku firmy Absolute*, [in:] *Organizacje komercyjne i niekomercyjne wobec wzmożonej konkurencji oraz wzrastających wymagań konsumentów*, ed. A. Nalepka, A. Ujwary-Gil, Wyższa Szkoła Biznesu w Nowym Sączu, Nowy Sącz 2010, p. 145.

²³ See: M. Jaśniok, *Strategie marketingowe na rynku politycznym*, Oficyna a Wolters Kluwer business, Kraków 2007, p. 109.

²⁴ Researchers do not agree which operational strategy is the most important. For example, some of them believe that financial, while the others attribute this role to marketing one. In turn, R.C. Clarke et al., is of the opinion that making this kind of gradation is unjustified, as every company needs to be conscientious to develop each of the functional level strategies. None of them can be ignored or downplayed. Compare: R.C. Clarke et al., *Strategic financial management*, Irwin, New York 1988, p. 4.

²⁵ See more: K. Janasz et al., op. cit., p. 110.

²⁶ See: J. Fudaliński, *Analizy sektorowe w strategicznym zarządzaniu przedsiębiorstwem*, Wyd. Antykwa, Kraków 2002, p. 25.

²⁷ B. Niedbała, M. Sierpińska, *Controlling operacyjny w przedsiębiorstwie*, PWN, Warszawa 2003, p. 66.

²⁸ Compare: E. Geffroy, *Clienting: jedyne co przeszkadza to klient*, Wyd. Placet, Warszawa 1996, p. 65.

are being developed at the non-identical management levels in the tourist enterprises operating on the market. Through the article's chapters, the author tried to present types of strategies most often cited by researchers as well as used by practitioners, and above all to emphasize the differences between types and levels of strategic thinking. At the same time, however, he is aware that the considerations do not fully cover topic related to the types of strategies. It seems to be extremely spacious especially due to the fact that there is no entire agreement between the researchers regarding the set of criteria on the basis of which the strategy should be differentiated. New concepts and approaches to this issue are constantly emerging in textbooks. However presented considerations may constitute the basis for further, in-depth studies and research.

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Streszczenie

Przesłankę podjęcia trudu przygotowania pracy stanowiła potrzeba zidentyfikowania rodzajów strategii opracowywanych na poszczególnych szczeblach zarządzania w przedsiębiorstwach turystycznych. Rozważania prowadzone są w oparciu o kwerendę bibliograficzną dotyczącą zarządzania strategicznego, jak również na podstawie wyników sondażu przeprowadzonego w formie wywiadu bezpośredniego, swobodnego (niesformalizowanego) z dziesięcioma przedsiębiorcami, kierownikami podmiotów uczestniczących w procesach wymiany, które dokonują się na rynku turystycznym.

Słowa kluczowe: poziomy i rodzaje strategii, szczebel zarządzania, przedsiębiorstwo turystyczne

Abstract

Main premise of undertaking this article preparation was the need to identify the types of strategies developed at particular management levels in tourist enterprises. Considerations are based on a bibliographic query concerning strategic management as well as based on the results of a survey conducted in the form of a direct, free (informal) interview with ten entrepreneurs, managers of entities participating in exchange processes that take place on the tourist market.

Keywords: types and levels of strategy, management level, tourism enterprises

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