



ICZM and Tourism – A Field Study

The Present State and the Future Challenges for Tourism in the Odra Lagoon Region

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Abstract

Tourism is one of the important economic sectors in the Odra Lagoon Region and strongly affects the coastal development. The existing problems are manifold and have been the topic of the Greifswald sub-project of the scientific joint project ICZM-Oder.

Water based tourism has achieved only a satisfactory level: Despite the growing number of moorings, the network of existing ports is not perfect. New marinas should be developed as a mixture of a traditional and a modern infrastructure and the thoughts of sustainability should be respected. Maritime tourism must be integrated into reviving maritime awareness and combined with maritime traditions of merchant shipping and the navy and the likes.

The existing protected areas guarantee an effective protection but also play a decisive role in the development of tourism. The history of the landscape and the character of the man-made landscape should be adequately respected. Due to the coastal character, the water-based tourism offerings must be integrated in the existing programs for the development of sanctuaries more than ever. The limited potential of the growth of domestic tourism underlines the necessity of international marketing. Common cross-border marketing should cover both the supra-regional interests and the local characteristics.

1 Introduction

Coastal tourism has been one of the most important sources of income for the local population since the last hundred and more years and is an example for the transition of the traditional economic structures to the service economy. The recreational sector is linked very close with the maritime economy due to the water-bounded character of tourism; but it also plays its own role concerning the wide spread other offers in the fields of health, nature, outdoor activities and culture.

Despite the growing numbers of overnight stays and arrivals of tourists, the recreational sector in the Odra Lagoon Region faces manifold problems concerning the interactions with nature and land use competition, the problematic structure of target groups due to the demographic development or the present state of the marketing structures and activities with room for improvements. Due to the importance of the tourism for the economy of the coastal region and the multitude of local and regional stakeholders with own interests and perspectives, the decision has arisen to incorporate the further development into an ICZM process, respectively the scientific work on ICZM in the Odra Lagoon Region.

The Greifswald sub-project on sustainable tourism plays a special role within the whole scientific project on Integrated Zone Management in the Odra Lagoon Region. On the one hand it is the only sub-project aside from the AGENDA-office in Rothenklempenow and thus very close to the region. On the other hand the scientific (theoretical) work on tourism and its interactions with the region has been replaced by the framework of consulting and middle-term management planning occasionally and will continue in the traditional manner in the next project phases.

The sub-project on sustainable tourism has been structured into three parts accordant to the circular model of the tourism management (figure 1): Part one covers the **stocktaking** of the tourism infrastructure; part two includes the formulation of the **vision statement** with general proposals for the development. After long discussions in the region, the **management plan** has finally been launched. It fulfils the general ideas of the development of tourism with concrete proposals and includes ideas from the private sector and authorities as well as own ideas. All these documents (Steingrube, Scheibe & Feilbach 2004, Steingrube, Scheibe & Feilbach 2006; Steingrube, Scheibe & Feilbach 2007) are published at the ICZM-website. They are still in process and will be corrected and updated until the end of the project.

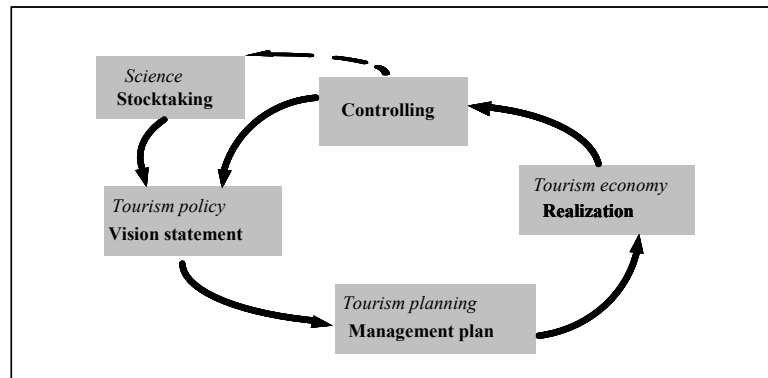


Figure 1: The circular model of the tourism management

It is evident that the development in the Odra Lagoon Region must comply not only with the existing legal framework but also the several planning documents. Aside from the basic documents from regional planning (e.g. the regional development concepts), there are special documents concerning the general development aims of the tourism sector (e.g. the tourism concept 2010 of the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania [Wirtschaftsministerium Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2004]) or the water tourism sector (e.g. “*Standortkonzept Sportboothäfen an der Ostseeküste*” [Ministerium für Arbeit, Bau und Landesentwicklung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2004]) or the report “*Entwicklungschancen des maritimen Tourismus in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*” [dwif, OIR & FVR 2000]).

The following paragraphs give an overview of the state-of-the-art and new challenges for the future of three topics with a special importance for the further development of the region: water based tourism, the interactions between nature and tourism and the problem of the joint tourism marketing of the whole region.

2 Water based tourism in the Odra Lagoon Region – present state and perspectives

There is no doubt that water based tourism is one of the most important sectors of the system of recreation at the southern Baltic Sea Coast. Water tourism includes not only the classical water sports like boating and fishing or water based activities like bathing and beach sports. Furthermore it includes the water oriented cultural tourism with its typical festivals and maritime museums; the third pillar is the broad variety of tourism boating like daytrips along the shore or cruises with duty free shopping or long-term cruises and ferry passages, see figure 2.

But this is not all. We should not forget the general importance of the maritime scenery with ports and ships for the destination: Most of the tourists here do not have own practical experience with water and ships, but they wish to see them during their holiday stay on the Baltic Sea coast. Thus it cannot be a mistake to develop water based tourism. But both the chances and the risks of the further development, especially with the goal of sustainability, should be seen.

Both the Baltic Sea and the Odra Lagoon are destinations for holiday boating trips with a long tradition. The first yacht clubs were founded at the beginning of the 20th century. Aside from the domestic population, which has a notably high amount of their own boats, especially sportsmen from Berlin and the surrounding hinterland of the federal state of Brandenburg with a direct link via the canals and the River Odra come here regularly to cruise the system of coastal lagoons and rivers.

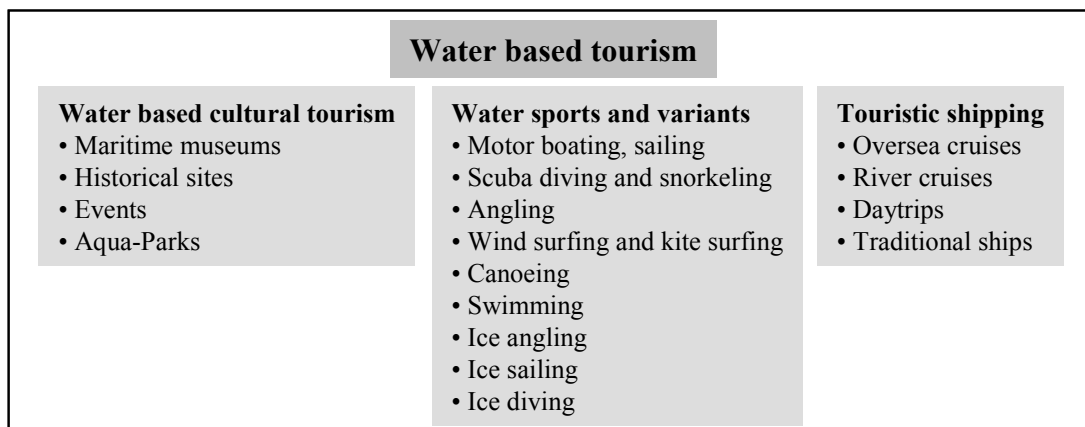


Figure 2: The traditional pillars of water based tourism (dwif & BTE 2003, modified)

The number of the active recreational sailors in the urban agglomeration Berlin is constantly large, for instance boat ownership there is estimated with up to more than 23,000 boats (cf. mediamare 2000). Even if not all cruise the Odra Lagoon at the same time, the demand for boot moorings and additional services is large. Here there is a definitive chance for further development, but there is also the problem of overcrowding.

On the other hand the development status is only satisfactory. The network of yacht marinas is incomplete; e.g. ports are missing on the coasts of the islands Usedom and Wolin for the special purpose of emergencies due to bad weather conditions. The distance between the existing ports is too large and overstrains the small crews of the boats. The long open coast does not guarantee the protection against storms; but the port planned in the middle of Usedom could be the solution (cf. Ministerium für Arbeit, Bau und Landesentwicklung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2004). It could be the challenge for an ICZM-process to identify the best location for such a marina.



Figure 3: Rural recreational port without modern harbour infrastructure in Kamminke (Usedom)

But the existing yacht ports face further problems. The infrastructure of many of the smaller ports does not meet the requirements of the sportsmen. An addition the most important equipment (e.g. toilets, showers, energy and freshwater supply) is urgently necessary. Some of the existing marinas, especially on Polish territory but also on the northern shoreline of the German part of the Odra Lagoon are to be renewed completely. The current Polish initiatives to “roll up” the situation are exemplary. Finding the best solutions for the integration of these activities in the network of tourism development could be a grateful mission of the ICZM-process.

It is evident that the development should not be focused on quantity, but also on quality. The existing initiatives to label should be expanded; only several ports (e.g. Mönkebude, the “Lagunenstadt Marina” in Ueckermünde) and others participate in the information and labelling system “*Gelbe Welle*” (cf. <http://www.gelbe-welle.de>). The planned network of yacht ports from Widuchowa via Szczecin up to the mouth of the river Dziwnow seems to be a good base; the co-operation in the field of labelling is planned thanks to the good personal relationship of the local players.



Figure 4: The entrance of the Marina Lagunenstadt Ueckermünde with the “Gelbe Welle” label

It was only half true when the high number of boats in Berlin was shown as the base of a stable development. The “boom” of demand after yacht moorings which was postulated at the beginning of the nineties is still missing. The reasons can only be assumed. Wrong marketing could be one of them; the real demand behaviour of the typical “Berlin sailors” has probably been misjudged. Of course they use their boats for the holiday trip to the Baltic Sea; but there are only small trends to move the boat to the coast in general. Apparently the good access to public transport is not a guarantee for the broad demand after seasonal yacht moorings in the Odra Lagoon Region (cf. Hoffmann 2007). A systematic analysis of the request in the source regions has been missed up to now and underlines the necessity of the linking of the coastal area with the (touristic) catchment area.

On the other hand this situation reminds us to rethink the existing plans for marinas (cf. the planned numbers of yacht moorings, e.g. in the “*Standortkonzept Sportboothäfen an der Ostseeküste*” [Ministerium für Arbeit, Bau und Landesentwicklung Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2004]). It is known that the tourism market is geared on the demand for service. The aims of sustainability should not be forgotten. That applies to the dimension of the new marinas overall. Modern ports like “Hohe Düne” in Rostock are interesting and good for the image of the region, but they do not fit into the landscape of the Odra Lagoon and should be avoided. Contrarily, smaller ports with a manageable number of moorings and a typical architecture of the infrastructure should be supported emphatically.

Even if the marinas and yachts seem to be the most important source of income for the water tourism suppliers, the other kinds of water sports with their chances and problems should not be forgotten.

They all have their own importance for the attractiveness of the region, but the possibilities of growth are limited in general.

Fishing as a hobby could profit from the long-term positive change of the water quality which could be the result of the present ICZM activities concerning the EU-water framework regulations. This is very popular especially within the domestic population, but it suffers from the bad water quality of the River Odra and the Odra Lagoon. There is a chance for the improvement of the water quality. The number of fish species is again increasing, especially in the rivers. The deep sea fishing is a very popular sport among the tourists. But the reduced fish stocks in the Baltic Sea cause the reduction in the fishing of trawlers. The civil conversation of parts of the fishing fleet could be one of the thinkable solutions for the actual problems of fishing (cf. *dwif, OIR & FVR 2000*).

Wind surfing and kite surfing are water sports with a high degree of attractiveness not only for the sportsmen but also for the casual bystanders. But surfing demands waves; the calm water of the Odra Lagoon is good for beginners, but not for the professional players. In so far the potential is limited. We should not forget the trend towards individuality and the problems with surfers in protected shallow water areas (cf. *Schemel & Erbguth 2000*).

Scuba diving is one of the water sports with continuously growing numbers of sportsmen. It is not only a water sport; most of the organisations offer special courses on oceanography and underwater archaeology; so diving could stand for cultural tourism or nature tourism under water. But unfortunately the number of shipwrecks and archaeological sites even in the Odra Lagoon as well as in the Pomerian Bight is more than limited as is the stock of other underwater attractions (cf. *Wieland 1999*). The improvement of the water quality does not automatically mean an increasing number of interesting fish species and more attractiveness. Even if scuba diving is a water sport with a high speed of growth in general (cf. *dwif, OIR & FVR 2000*), this does not apply for the Odra Lagoon Region.

Canoeing is very trendy and it fits especially to the protected areas because it inherently stands for sustainable water tourism. But the increasing number of ship passages along the Odra River and on the Baltic Sea in general causes a high risk for the canoe tourists and the other water based activities (cf. the experiences of a canoe trip described in [*Bennett 2007*]).

With several shipyards, the large port of Szczecin is the most important maritime centre of the whole region. Surprisingly, maritime awareness seems to be underdeveloped (it was the result of one of the public presentations of the tourism vision statement); the key therefore could be in the complicated historical development during the 20th century with a lot of discontinuities and breaks in the tradition. The Southern Baltic Sea Parliamentary Forum last year pointed out the importance of the maritime awareness for the whole population, especially of the youth.

Thus the water based cultural tourism and the touristic shipping play an important role. Of course, both forms of leisure activities appeal not only to the tourists, but also to the domestic population. It could help them to find out its own new position to maritime topics. All forms of maritime culture are welcome, especially offers with traditional ships and handicrafts or maritime events like the Tall Ships Race 2007 in Szczecin. There are a lot of maritime events round the Odra Lagoon every year; the problem of a temporal overlapping becomes more and more evident. A direct competition between two destinations should be avoided (cf. *Wandmacher 2007*).

3 Eco-tourism as a special development instrument in protected areas

Most of the water sports have close contact to nature, or water sports without nature are unthinkable. Undoubtedly the research area is one of the most attractive landscapes of Middle Europe. The changeover between various coastal types with cliffs and flat shores is unique. The number of species and biotopes worthy of protection is large. Thus the high density of protected areas of various types is welcome. Especially the Nature Parks and the Wolin National Park with their large area of coverage are effective instruments of the conservation of nature.

But the current discussion about the planned National Park along the river Peene reminds us to think about the objective character of the landscape surrounding us. Agriculture and the loss of forests over thousands of years throughout history should not be forgotten. Even if some of the landscapes look like they were shaped by nature, most of the existing forests and open landscapes are the result of the intensive use over the years. This human impact of settlement, agriculture and industrialisation should be included in the goals of adequately protecting large areas because this could be the link to other forms of tourism. The most important motive for the tourists to come here are the beach, the own health, the cultural heritage and events (cf. Breitzmann 2004). Nature is only the background; only bad changes in nature are noticed. To associate culture and nature could be the key to inspiring new target groups for the aims of landscape protection.

The aims of protection and an attractive and active recreation in protected areas do not preclude each other. Fortunately the administrations of the three important sanctuaries are open for new ideas; but the comparison between the touristic offers here and in protected areas of comparable landscape (e.g. Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony) shows reserves. It is noticeable for the nature refuges of the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, that various kinds of water sports are excluded, sometimes even canoeing (cf. brochure "Erlebnisreich Natur", Tourismusverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2005). The attractiveness of the protected landscape is formed by the interaction between land and water, and that should be reflected in the tourism offerings. The chance to combine environmental education with trendy activities should be passed; bird watching is interesting - bird watching from an old, traditional ship under sails could purely and simply be an unforgettable adventure.

There is another problem for tourism activities in refuges. Often the administrations organise the offers alone. On the one hand there is the benefit of a high quality of offerings, especially in the field of environmental education, guided tours or the likes. On the other hand there is the danger of the unfair competition between the administration with public financial support and private competitors who are working at their own risk.

Fortunately, the positions of conservationists and (touristic) users have continuously converged during the last years. The two BALTCOAST projects in the Greifswald Bay and in the German part of the current focus area clearly showed the success of a qualified dialogue and can be seen as a forerunner to an ICZM-process in the whole region.

4 The joint marketing of the touristic area Odra Lagoon Region

The existing refuges are not the only unique selling points for tourism in the research area. Every destination has its own typical and characteristic touristic environment and infrastructure. The broad variety of offers could induce a wide spread demand after tourist services and attract different target groups.

The good start of the tourist season 2007 should not cover up the existing problems. The number of overnight stays has been stagnating for some tourist seasons. The potential for the domestic tourism both in Germany and in Poland is limited; additional growth seems to be possible only with "new" tourists from abroad. Especially in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the quota of foreign guests of less than 3 % can be increased (cf. Wirtschaftsministerium Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2004, p. 35). The low degree of popularity is not only the main reason for the low percentage of foreign guests in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania in general, but also in the Odra Lagoon Region in detail. A joint marketing of the whole region could be a key to success.

But the reality differs significantly from that. The potential tourist who is looking with the help of common search engines with keywords like "tourism" or "recreation" or "Western Pomerania" finds a confusing diversity of destinations and offers. Only at first glance there is a hardly manageable confusion of brands and destinations, structures and responsibilities. At second glance the system is logical, but only on the Polish site. The Polish structures are typical centralistic oriented with clear

responsibilities in the Voivodship, in the districts and in the municipalities. It can be observed for instance at the international tourism fairs, within the web-design and in the printed matters (cf. <http://www.zrot.pl>).

The German system is focused on supra-regional (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania with the web-site <http://www.auf-nach-mv.de>) and regional marketing (Western Pomerania with the web-site <http://www.vorpommern.de>, the Isle of Usedom with an own web-site <http://www.usedom.de>) on the one hand and the accentuation of local characteristics on the other hand. Nearly every destination has its own logo, the co-operation of the direct neighbours in the horizontal direction and with the super-ordinate structures in the vertical direction is imperfect. The almost aggressive marketing of the three so called *Kaiserbäder* (*Heringsdorf*, *Ahlbeck* and *Bansin*) should be the example.

Attempts to re-organise this system have not yet been successful. The (probably expensive) idea of the family brand “*Stettiner Haff – viel zu schön zum Weitersagen*” has been established only in the Uecker-Randow-Region (cf. <http://www.stettiner-haff.de>); the touristic stakeholders, especially on the Isle of Usedom, could not warm up for that idea to be merchandised together with features like the flat beaches with reeds and the low water quality of the Odra Lagoon. They still prefer their own brands.

But the idea of the joint marketing with a family brand is the only right path to increase the degree of popularity abroad; from the scientific view the label “Szczecin Lagoon” is to be preferred. For this there are some good reasons. The landscape is unique around the Baltic Sea shorelines. The agglomeration of Szczecin is the only location which is well-known around the world. The region is reachable easily with all forms of transportation. The infrastructure can satisfy nearly all demands for recreation and activities. Possibly the common label should stand beside brands like “Usedom” or “Rügen”.

Of course, joint marketing should include several concrete aims and measures. The mostly accepted vision statement (Steingrube, Scheibe & Feilbach 2006) could therefore be a base. But the next step must be realisation. First ideas have been born together with the Agenda-Office and local stakeholders. Probably the Government of the Polish Voivodship Western Pomeranian should become the leaders. The necessary financial support could be shared between all sub-regions; the joint application for financial support from the European Union should be a further solution.

5 Discussion and outlook – need for action and future challenges

The analysis of two the most important development fields (water based tourism and eco-tourism) shows the following characteristics:

- a. The attractiveness for water based activities (in comparison with other coastal regions) is limited. The natural background does not allow modern fun-sports or motor-based activities. Nature-oriented forms of water sports (canoeing, hobby fishing) have the best chances. Despite the growing numbers of paddlers and anglers in general the economic effects are limited.
- b. The eco-tourism is based on refuges with a young history. The administrations have to gain experiences to interact with a tourism industry with a great history. The experiences of other protected areas are suitable to only a limited extent. On the other hand it gives the chance for new ideas and unorthodox co-operations with other touristic service suppliers. The tourists see the nature-based offers more as an additional attraction, not as an exclusive reason for a visit. New target groups should be developed by co-operating with other touristic sectors (health tourism, classical bath-tourism).

The current activities in the Odra Lagoon Region take up most of the ideas and approaches:

- The Uecker-Randow district and the Voivodship Western Pomerania develop a joint maritime-touristic concept and carry on the ICZM-activities directly. Although the concept is focused on

the development of a network of marinas the other water based activities are integrated adequately. Unfortunately the district Ostvorpommern does not participate.

- The Uecker-Randow district started a benchmarking process to profit from other European border regions. The results of the Tour.Com project show that most of the experiences between The Netherlands and Germany or France and Germany are applicable for the Odra Lagoon Region (cf. dwif 2005).
- The municipalities of Usedom and Wolin developed an integrated concept to solve the traffic problems of both islands (http://www.bmvbs.de/Anlage/original_942039/Integriertes-Verkehrsentwicklungskonzept-Usedom-Wollin.pdf).
- The new tourism concept of Usedom shows a high level of integration with a lot of new forms of co-operations between several sectors of tourism (http://www.projectm.de/www_mb/de/_special/de_special_usedom_2015.php).

The current activities reveal one general problem: The interactions between all sub-regions of the region around the Odra Lagoon are improvable. It underlines the necessity of a joint marketing concept articulately.

The Odra Lagoon tourism faces with the climate change long-term challenges, too. The expected increasing demand after touristy service in the Baltic Sea Region forces to rethink the strategies for a sustainable development. Until now the aims of the sustainability do not extravagante; but the growing attractiveness due to the better natural conditions could necessitate (re-)defining of sustainability of tourism in the Odra Lagoon at all. New forms of steering could be needful. That will be a rewarding task not only for the tourism sub-project, but for the whole Integrated Coastal Zone Management process in general.

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