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Using Conceptions of Knowledge Management in Selected Travel Agencies in the Tarnów Sub-Region

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**USING CONCEPTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT
IN SELECTED TRAVEL AGENCIES
IN THE TARNÓW SUB-REGION**

Abstract

Globalization of economy, technological development and increasing competition about limited resources make tangible values, including knowledge, the key factor in economic growth. These phenomena influence national economies, households and enterprises. As a result, an increasing group of business entities, including also tourism companies, use the concept of knowledge management. The aim of this thesis is to analyse knowledge management performed by selected travel agencies from Tarnowski Subregion. Two main research methods are used in the thesis: documentation research method and diagnostic survey method. Based on the documentation method and using data from the secondary sources, one has made an inventory of travel agencies located in Tarnowski Subregion. Then, based on the diagnostic survey method and by means of questionnaire technique a research has been carried out on use of knowledge management at 44 travel agencies. The surveyed owners or managers of travel agencies indicated financial resources, then human resources and tangible resources (knowledge, patents, know how) as the most important groups of resources. Knowledge management is the most popular concept of management used at the surveyed travel agencies. Using and acquiring knowledge are the processes most frequently realized within this method. The most often used knowledge management tools there are: intranet, document management systems and workflow systems. According to the respondents, knowledge

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resources and trust-based interpersonal relations are the most important areas of knowledge management at their enterprises. It seems that large significance of the issues discussed in the thesis makes reasonable to continue research on this subject area

Keywords: knowledge, management concept, tourism enterprises, travel agencies, Tarnowski Subregion

Introduction

Globalization of economy, technological progress and growing competition for limited resources are causing non-material values, including **knowledge**, to become the key factor in the socio-economic growth and development nowadays. This has its implications in both the macro- and micro economic spheres. On the macro-scale, with reference to modern national economies, it is clearly visible that possibilities of extensive growth identified with increasing the amount of used resources are being exhausted. The transition to intensive growth linked to greater effectiveness of the possessed and used resources is not possible without investment in the intellectual capital, which – in consequence – should result in the accretion of knowledge. An excellent example of this phenomenon is the Polish national economy slowly exhausting its extensive potential and whose further growth will be dependent on the technological progress and increase in effectiveness. Unfortunately, decision-makers do not seem to perceive these hazards and take up too few actions aimed at expanding both the research and development sector and better cooperation between the world of science and economic practice.

A rise in the significance of knowledge can also be observed among micro-economic subjects. Members of a great part of households are expanding their competences nowadays, acquiring new knowledge and qualifications through participating in various forms of education and professional improvement. Only a constant rise in competences can offer a chance to effectively compete for jobs with other people. Knowledge is also incrementally becoming a vital resource of modern enterprises. It is more and more often acknowledged to be the fourth, following land, capital and work, production factor, without which it is impossible to generate new market value today. Therefore, the process of acquisition and suitable application of knowledge is increasingly gaining significance in companies, through e.g. the implementation of **knowledge management**. This idea

of management is used by a still expanding number of companies, also belonging to the fast-growing tourist market. One of the types of the tourist company where the problem area of knowledge management appears to be of particular importance is the travel agency. In fact, it is travel agencies which, to a large extent, co-decide about the growth of the whole tourist economy and possibilities of gaining economic profits resulting from development of tourism in reception areas.

Despite the fact that there exist a lot of works dealing with the use of the conception of knowledge management by companies of different branches of economy, there are few publications relating to tourist organizations, including travel agencies.¹ Moreover, the relevant studies conducted to date have not dealt with the problem of implementing knowledge management by economic subjects located in the area of Tarnów sub-region.

The **cognitive aim** of this work is assessing the degree of using knowledge management by travel agencies based in Tarnów sub-region. The work has also its **practical goal**, since it will allow indicating to people who are responsible for managing subjects of the tourist market the most important processes, instruments and areas of knowledge management whose implementation can contribute to an economic success of companies which they run or manage.

The main thesis of the work: travel agencies based in the area of Tarnów sub-region make use of knowledge management in their activity.

In order to verify the main thesis the following auxiliary theses have been proposed:

Auxiliary thesis 1. Non-material resources make one of the most important groups of resources of the travel agency under analysis.

Auxiliary thesis 2. The conception of knowledge management is sometimes used in the examined travel agencies solely in a fragmentary way.

In the present work, two main research methods: **documentation method** and **diagnostic survey method** are used. At the first stage of the examination, within the framework of the first of the above-mentioned methods, an analysis of materials coming from secondary sources has been carried out. These are the materials and data elaborated by the Chief Statistical Office, the Ministry

¹ D. Puciato, *Wykorzystanie zarządzania wiedzą w wybranych przedsiębiorstwach turystycznych z województwa opolskiego*, "Folia Turistica" 2012, No. 26, pp. 163–182; D. Puciato, *Endogeniczne uwarunkowania metod i technik zarządzania wykorzystywanych w przedsiębiorstwach hotelowych z Wrocławia*, "Handel Wewnętrzny" 2013, No. 5, pp. 261–274.

of Sport and Tourism and the Institute of Tourism in Warsaw. As a result, an inventory of all the travel agencies based in the area of Tarnów sub-region has been completed. At the second stage of the studies based on the method of diagnostic survey, the questionnaire technique has been applied. The research tool is a survey questionnaire relating to selected areas of innovativeness of subjects dealing in the tourist market. The questionnaire consists of 20 open-ended questions, semi close-ended questions, close-ended questions and demographics questions. Prior to commencing the basic studies, the questionnaire was subjected to pilot research and all the errors found were eliminated. The survey's (basic) research was conducted with owners or managers of 44 travel agencies based in Tarnów sub-region between April and May 2013. The sub-region includes the following counties: Tarnów, Dąbrowa, Brzesko and the county capital of Tarnów. The results of the research were then subjected to statistical treatment, in which an analysis of the structure was carried out and presented in tables and diagrams.

In our work, we have presented the essence of the conception of knowledge management in modern enterprises, elaborated on the characteristics of travel agencies, and presented the results of survey research related to the use of knowledge management in travel agencies in Tarnów sub-region.

1. The essence of knowledge management

Knowledge is often associated with data and information, although there are fundamental differences between these terminological categories. Data means all single numbers, facts and notions of the source-related and unprocessed character. Information means processed data presented in the context being of interest to the receiver. On the other hand, knowledge means information enriched with experience, interpretation and reflections of the receiver. The most significant features of knowledge are the following: **dominance, inexhaustibility, simultaneousness and non-linearity**.² Knowledge occupies a dominant place amongst the other resources, and thus is of strategic significance to the functioning of each company. Its inexhaustibility manifests itself in that during passing knowledge

² W. Grudzewski, I. Hejduk, *Zarządzanie wiedzą w organizacjach*, "E-mentor" 2005, No. 8; B. Kaczmarek, W. Walczak, *Zarządzanie wiedzą we współczesnych przedsiębiorstwach*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2009, pp. 134–156.

its supply does not decrease. Knowledge is also of simultaneous nature, since at the same time there are many people who can be using it in many places. The non-linearity of knowledge, in turn, is linked to the fact that there is no one-directional dependence between the amount of knowledge and the competitive potential of the company.

The process of knowledge management is connected with the optimal usage of intellectual resources of an enterprise, with the aim to maximize its value. An attempt at precise defining this management method causes a lot of difficulty, though, because – as K. Perechuda claims – the “management of knowledge is a very capacious notion covering basically everything, since knowledge means a thought, that is a non-material being, out of which – according to cosmogony – the Universe is born. Due to that, this notion should not be defined.”³ Nevertheless, the literature features four basic meanings of knowledge management.⁴

1. **Functional** – including realization of individual functions of management and operational functions related to identifying, transferring, creating, storing, joining, or selecting knowledge. This is a process which concentrates on the resources of knowledge and processes associated – with knowledge through realization of the functions of planning, organizing, motivating and controlling, aiming to realize targets of the organization.
2. **Processual** – marks a conduct aiming at creating suitable environment which will make it possible to effectively realize operational functions, e.g. the implementation of organizational systems to optimize the main processes related to knowledge, climate, culture and organizational structure directing people to generating knowledge, sharing it and applying it in an appropriate way.
3. **Instrumental** – concerning the selection and application of legal, economic-financial, organizational or technological instruments which contribute to the course of main processes with the participation of knowledge on all the levels and areas of the organization.
4. **Institutional** – covering the system of workers’ posts and teams (the strategic and operational level of the organization, formal and informal organi-

³ K. Perechuda, *Dyfuzyja wiedzy w przedsiębiorstwie sieciowym. Wizualizacja i kompozycja*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 2005, p. 7.

⁴ B. Mięka, *Zadania organizacji w zakresie zarządzania wiedzą*, “E-mentor” 2006, No. 17.

zation) which realize the functions and tasks in the scope of organization's knowledge management.

The management of knowledge can also be differently patterned, with **the resource model**, **the Japanese model** and **the processual model** being dominant at the moment. The resource model of knowledge management advances knowledge as the most important resource of the enterprise found both in the company itself and in its environment. The condition behind the effectiveness of knowledge management here is co-existence of the five elements such as: acquisition of knowledge from the environment, implementation of innovations in the enterprise, experimenting, joint solving of problems and holding key skills (physical, technical and management systems, employees' competences, norms and values). The Japanese model relates to the repetitive cycle of four processes of knowledge conversion: internalization – changing explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge, socialization – changing tacit knowledge into tacit knowledge, externalization – changing tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge and combination – changing explicit knowledge into explicit knowledge. The approach to knowledge management in this model is based on the following principles: knowledge is not only a set of data and information, but also values, emotions and premonitions. Knowledge management also rest on the notion that each person in the company is engaged in creating knowledge, with managers of the medium level playing a particular role in this process. According to the process model, knowledge management makes it possible to create, popularize and use knowledge to realize targets of the organization. The process of knowledge management consists of three main phases: acquiring knowledge, sharing it and transforming knowledge into decisions.⁵

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the most vital processes involving knowledge in the organization, namely: **localizing**, **acquiring and developing knowledge**, **sharing knowledge**, **making use of knowledge** and **retaining knowledge**. The basis for the realization of the processes are the following: goals, people, technology, organizational structure and organizational culture. These dimensions form an area subject to operationalization in the form of detailed strategic, technological and personal actions.⁶

⁵ A. Sopińska, P. Wachowiak, *Modele zarządzania wiedzą w przedsiębiorstwie*, "E-mentor" 2006, No. 14.

⁶ M. Morawski, *Przedsiębiorstwo zorientowane na wiedzę*, "E-mentor" 2006, No. 16.

Table 1

The most significant processes involving knowledge

No.	Process involving knowledge	Characteristics of the process
1	Localizing knowledge	Defining external and internal sources of knowledge and making it possible for workers to localize it.
2	Acquiring knowledge	Making use of knowledge from external sources through: purchase of patents or licenses, employing external experts, taking over firms, purchasing counselling services.
3	Developing knowledge	Acquiring skills, creating new products, improving processes in order to change the acquired knowledge into concrete actions. Owing to this, competences of the organization and its employees rise.
4	Sharing knowledge	Making information and skills available in such a way that they could be of service to the whole organization.
5	Applying knowledge	Concentrating on effective using of knowledge and on overcoming such barriers as: routine, concern about positions, overrating one's own value, breaking unwritten rules, wrongly-oriented leadership.
6	Retaining knowledge	Preserving the acquired knowledge through selection, storing and updating data so as to prevent losing valuable knowledge.

Source: G. Probst, S. Raub, K. Romhardt, *Zarządzanie wiedzą w organizacji*, Oficyna Ekonomiczna, Kraków 2002, p. 40–46; K. Perechuda, M. Sobińska, *Scenariusze, dialogi i procesy zarządzania wiedzą*, Difin, Warszawa 2008, p. 130–139.

Implementing knowledge management in the organization can be realized by means of the methodology proposed by M. Żmigrodzki⁷ according to which the undertaken actions are performed within several main areas (Figure 1).

⁷ M. Żmigrodzki, *Metodyka zarządzania wiedzą*, "E-mentor" 2006, No. 13.

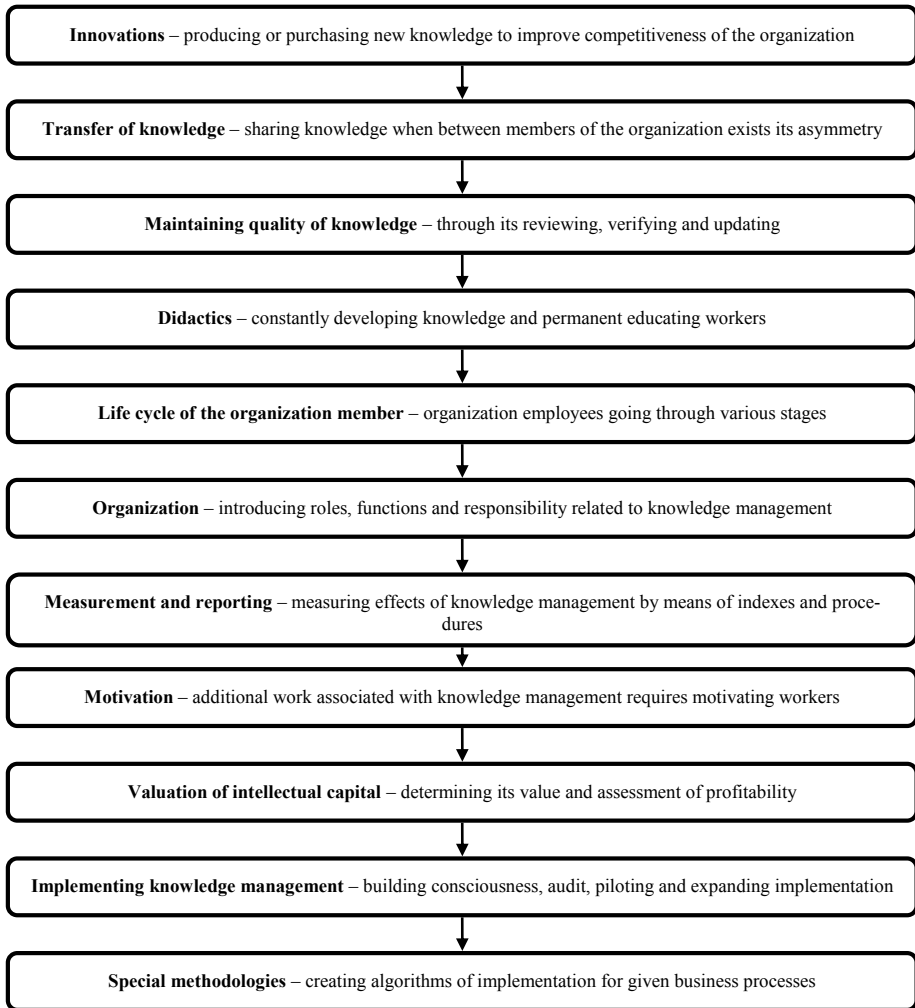


Fig. 1. Proposition of methodology of the knowledge management implementation in the organization

Source: M. Żmigrodzki, *Metodyka zarządzania wiedzą*, "E-mentor" 2006, No. 13.

In the process of knowledge management, various information technologies are often utilized, the most popular of which being:⁸

- a) **Business Intelligence** – systems serving to analyse quantitative data with the aim to make prognoses and facilitate making business decisions;
- b) **Systems of group work** – supporting the functioning of working groups through exchange of information and documents between workers;
- c) **Systems of work circulation** – serving to assign to workers individual tasks as well as to guarantee an even distribution of workload;
- d) **Systems of managing relations with customers** – coordinating relations between the company and its clients with the aid of the telephone call-center, managing the process of sale and providing post-sale services, coordination of servicing processes and analysis of customers' data;
- e) **Systems of managing documents and content** – with the aim to collect, render available and manage documents and their description;
- f) **Corporation portals** – Internet technologies securing access to information from different sources to workers and customers, which is adjusted to their needs;
- g) **Search mechanisms** – index sets of information and make searching for documents possible according to different criteria.

2. Travel agency as a subject of tourist economy

The tourist market can be considered within two frameworks: objective and subjective.⁹ The former relates to the process of establishing the object and terms of purchase–sale transaction of tourist products, which is realized by subjects of the tourist market. The subjective framework treats the tourist market as a sum of subjects in the market, including: manufacturers of tourist products (tourist companies), purchasers of tourist products (individual or institutional customers), and also institutions and organizations which carry out tasks connected with the state's interventionism in the tourist economy (subjects

⁸ D. Jemielniak, A. Koźmiński, *Zarządzanie wiedzą*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2008, pp. 307–328.

⁹ A. Panasiuk, *Ekonomika turystyki i rekreacji*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2011, pp. 113–122.

of the tourist policy). Taking into account the added value, generated into the tourist economy and the place of services of organization and intermediation in the tourist chain of values, **travel agencies** make a very important group of tourist enterprises. They can be defined as a system composed of both material and non-material resources and processes which take place between individual resources, as well as inside these resources. The major or sole type of business activity within this system is rendering services related to organization of tourism or/and intermediation.

The **organizational service** consists in creating ready tourist products (events) from appropriately set and synchronized, as regards objective, spatial and temporal elements, partial services (the use of hotels, gastronomy, recreational and healthcare centers, transport, insurance, etc.). Creating this type of packages is the domain of business activity of **tour-operators**. The **intermediation service** is connected, on the other hand, with selling – by a tourist intermediary (an agent) – partial tourist services, or full tourist packages offered by the operator.¹⁰ The characteristic features of the activity of tourism organizers and tourist agents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Characteristics of the activity of organizers and tourist agents

Type of travel agency	
Tour-operator	Tour agent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Purchases partial services from producers on their own behalf, on their own account and at their own risk, – Sells to the customer their own tourist product, bearing responsibility towards the latter for its proper execution, – Remuneration comes from the margin profit – price markup, which they pay to producers of partial services, – Prepares a tourist product for the anonymous customer or upon a concrete order from a purchaser 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Acts on behalf of a producer of partial services or a tour-operator, – Sells services of the subject for the benefit of which they act, does not bear responsibility towards the purchaser for proper performing services and does not take the risk of not selling a product, – Remuneration comes from commissions – the part of the retail price for the service which the principal resigns from in favor of the agent, in return for selling the product

Source: A. Konieczna-Domańska, *Gospodarka turystyczna*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Szkoły Głównej Handlowej w Warszawie, Warszawa 2012, pp. 256–277; A. Konieczna-Domańska, *Biura podróży na rynku turystycznym*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008, pp. 24–30.

¹⁰ A. Konieczna-Domańska, *Biura podróży na rynku turystycznym*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008, pp. 15–26; B. Meyer, *Obsługa ruchu turystycznego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2011, pp. 69–94; A. Panasiuk, *Gospodarka turystyczna*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008, pp. 142–145.

Travel agencies can be classified on the basis of various criteria, among which the most important appear to be the following: **direction of activity** and **product specialization**. Taking into account the former, travel agencies can be divided into **inbound** and **outbound**. Inbound agencies specialize in servicing exclusively domestic and foreign tourists arriving in the area of tourist reception in which the agencies are economically active. On the other hand, outbound agencies service domestic and overseas tours of inhabitants of the area where they run their business activity. According to the criterion of product specialization, travel agencies existing in the tourist market can be divided into ones specializing in, for instance, tourism geared towards the following: leisure, cognition, pilgrimage, qualified tourism, business or agro-tourism. Part of the subjects in the tourism organization and intermediation market also make use of other criteria of market segmentation, among which the most popular are as follows: age, height of income, or destinations preferred by tourists.¹¹

Travel agencies, through realization of many important **functions relating primarily to satisfying tourists' needs and creating the size and structure of the tourist market demand**, are subjects making use of knowledge management seems particularly well-justified. Owing to travel agencies, a potential tourist can purchase tourist services distant in time and space, or else, full package services in one place. The tourist, while buying the product here and now i.e. at the time and place convenient to him/her limits the uncertainty and risk of not purchasing the desired services in the case he/she would not use the offer of a travel agency. Purchasing a global tourist package by a tourist at one seller results also in that the responsibility for a wrong performance of services is assumed by one economic subject. Filing claims with a few enterprises based in different places would be troublesome. It also needs mentioning that travel agencies, as institutional customers, hold a much stronger – in comparison with an individual client (a tourist) – bargaining power. Therefore, such agencies can obtain offers from producers of partial services – more attractive as regards price and quality – consequently limiting the risk of their low quality.¹²

¹¹ E. Szymańska, *Biura podróży na rynku usług turystycznych*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Białostockiej, Białystok 2009, pp. 14–34.

¹² D. Puciato, B. Goranczewski, A. Łoś, *Innowacje w biurach podróży*, "Ekonomika i Organizacja Przedsiębiorstwa" 2011, No. 7, pp. 15–23; K. Mrozowicz, D. Puciato, *Geneza i agonia organizacji. Studium atrofii pośredników turystycznych w świetle analizy strukturalnej rynku turystycznego Podkarpacia*, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Ekonomiczne Problemy Turystyki No.18, Szczecin 2012, pp. 49–62.

Travel agencies also contribute to restricting **information asymmetry** which occurs between tourists and providers of partial services. Customers, getting acquainted with offers included in a brochure issued by the travel agency, acquire a possibility of comparing products of interest to them supplied by different providers of tourist services and selecting those which satisfy them most. Breaking the information asymmetry by subjects dealing in tourism organization and intermediacy is also connected with the fact that travel offices – apart from creating and distributing tourist products – render services of tourism-related counselling. Customers do not always need to realize what kind of product will be able to meet their needs in the best and most complex way. Informing, advising, or educating potential tourists by employees of travel agencies can consequently create new needs in purchasers, as a result of which the size and structure of the tourist demand will change. The demand is stimulated by marketing actions undertaken by travel offices and related to the realization both of modern marketing conceptions (e.g., **4P**) and innovatory ideas (e.g., **relational marketing**). The process of marketing management, both at the stage of market and marketing research and as already realized marketing strategies, is also strongly linked to non-material values, such as information and knowledge. This concerns chiefly such areas of travel offices' activity as: an analysis of needs and tourists' preferences, market segmentation, creating a tourist product, pricing, creating a system of discounts, building databases of customers, the research of customers' satisfaction and analysis of value.

3. Selected aspects of knowledge management in travel offices from Tarnów sub-region in the light of empirical studies

Over half the examined travel agencies (52.27%) are companies dealing solely with tourist intermediation, 29.55% realize both intermediation services and organization of tourism at the same time, while 18.18% run exclusively the tour-operator's activity. The most popular legal-organizational forms within which the economic activity has been realized are individual ownership companies (43.18%) and civil partnerships (40.91%). Among the analyzed travel offices there are also joint-stock companies (9.09%), cooperatives, limited partnerships and limited liability companies. The largest group among the analyzed subjects comprise small businesses (50%) and micro-companies (36.36%). There are also subjects qualifying as medium-sized and large enterprises (6.82%). The highest

number of the analyzed companies of the organization of tourism and tourist intermediation are localized in a city with over 101 thousand inhabitants (38.64%), every fourth one (25%) is based in a city of less than 20 thousand inhabitants, 22.73% – in a city with the population ranging from 20 to 100 thousand inhabitants, while 13.64 run their activity in the country (Table 3).

Table 3

Characteristics of the analyzed travel offices

Specification	Number	Percentage [%]
Type of realized activity		
Organization	8	18.18
Intermediation	23	52.27
Organization and intermediation	13	29.55
Total:	44	100.00
Legal organizational form		
Private ownership company	19	43.18
Cooperative	1	2.27
Civil partnership	18	40.91
Limited partnership	1	2.27
Limited liability company	1	2.27
Joint-stock company	4	9.09
Total:	44	100.00
Size		
Micro	16	36.36
Small	22	50.00
Medium-sized	3	6.82
Large	3	6.82
Total:	44	100.00
General location		
Country	6	13.64
City with less than 20 thousand inhabitants	11	25.00
City with the population ranging between 20 and 100 thousand inhabitants	10	22.73
City with the population ranging between 101 and 200 thousand inhabitants	17	38.64
Total:	44	100.00

Source: own elaboration.

For the surveyed owners and managers of travel agencies, the most important resources are the financial (52.27%) and human (50.00%) groups. Every third respondent (36.36%) has pointed to the non-material resources such as: knowledge, information, *know-how*, patents and licences. To every sixth examined one (13.64%) the most important are the traditional material resources (Figure 2).

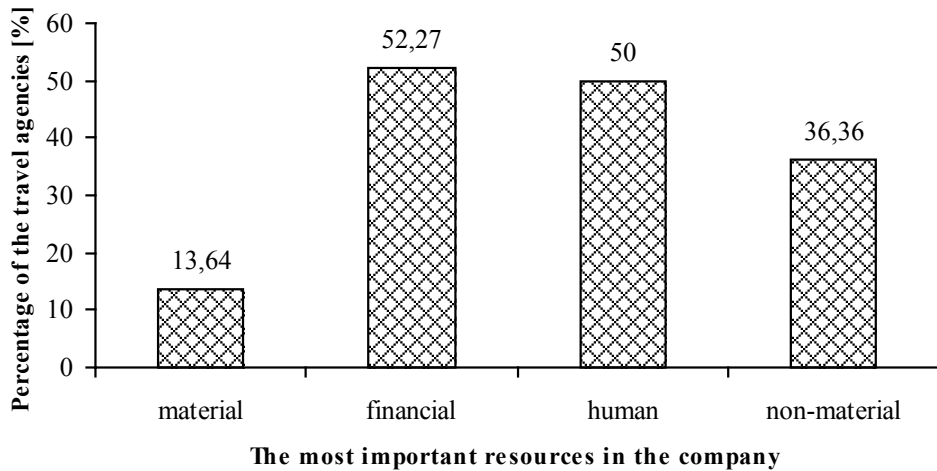


Fig. 2. The most important resources in the analyzed travel agencies

Source: own studies.

Among the conceptions, methods and techniques of managing the travel agency, the respondents have most frequently declared making use of the following: knowledge management (61.36%), management through targets (47.73%), management through effects (27.27%) and franchise (22.73%). On the other hand, the analyzed companies have used the following to a lesser extent: benchmarking (6.82%), outsourcing and lean management (2.27% each, respectively) (Figure 3).

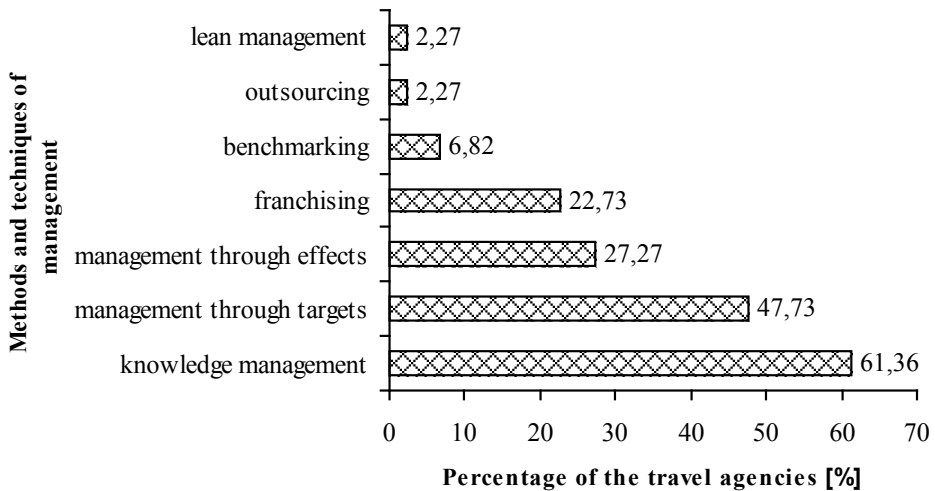


Fig. 3. Conceptions, methods and techniques of management made use of in the analyzed travel agencies

Source: own studies.

Among the travel agencies whose representatives declared making use of knowledge management, the most popular knowledge-using process has been its application (96.30%). This takes place primarily during creating new offers of tourist products, as well as during promotions and distribution. Almost 63% of the surveyed have indicated that they acquire knowledge from external sources, mainly as a result of the following: participation in trainings and courses, participation in tourist fairs, observation of leaders in the market, cooperation with other companies, getting acquainted with offers provided by their competitors, studying traditional or Internet-based brochures or participation in study tours. Representatives of every third examined travel office have also pointed to the development and sharing knowledge, chiefly through organizing trainings and internal workshops, making knowledge available on webpages and passing important information during meetings with co-workers. Every ninth surveyed subject locates knowledge inside and outside the organization, while one travel agency realizes the process of retaining of knowledge by creating and updating databases in the electronic form, mainly relating to products on offer, promotion and distribution, pricing, behavior of competitors in the market and cooperation partners (Figure 4).

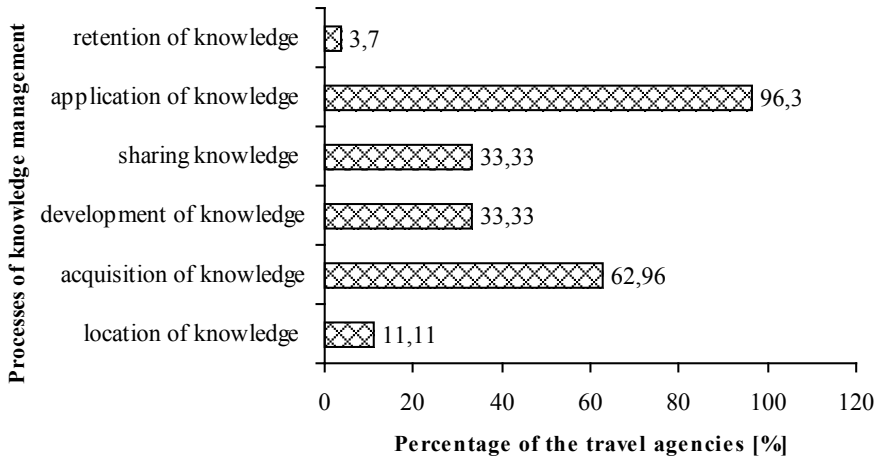


Fig. 4. Processes with the use of knowledge in the analyzed travel agencies
Source: own studies.

The most popular tools of knowledge management in the analyzed offices are the following: the Internet (37.40%), systems of managing documents (33.33%), systems of work circulation (25.93), systems of group work support (25.93%) and data warehouses (18.25%). Three respondents have pointed to the decision support systems and one has indicated corporation portals (Figure 5).

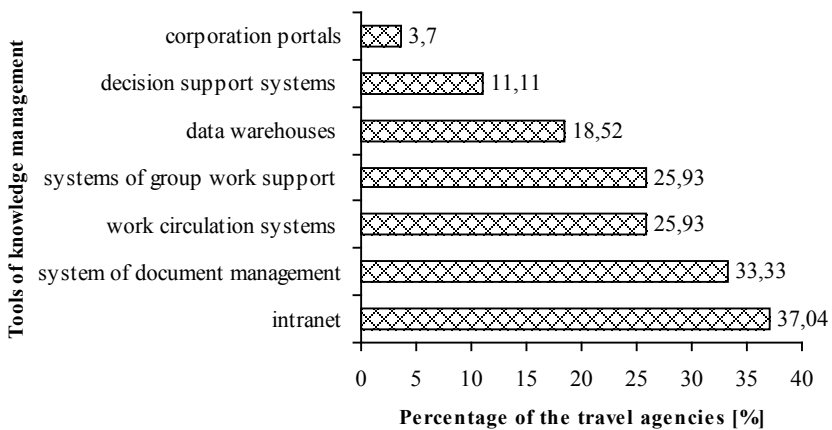


Fig. 5. Tools of knowledge management applied in the analyzed travel agencies
Source: own studies.

The examined owners and managers of travel agencies have acknowledged the following to be the most significant areas of their companies' functioning, from the point of view of the knowledge management: resources of knowledge (55.56%), interpersonal relations based on trust (44.44%), information technologies and incentives motivating employees to use the method (29.63% each, respectively), the attitude on the part of managers towards knowledge management (25.93%) and also the very process of managing itself. Less than 15% of the respondents have pointed to the organization structure and 11.11% of the questioned – to organizational culture (Figure 6).

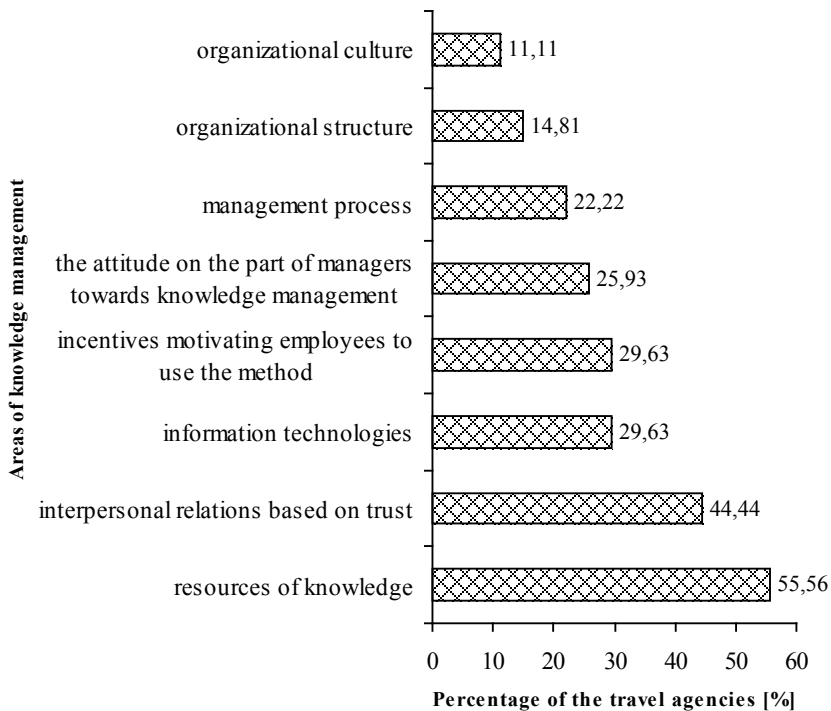


Fig. 6. The most significant areas of knowledge management in the analyzed travel agencies

Source: own studies.

Note: The majority of questions in the questionnaire offered the option of selecting more than one answer and therefore the sum of individual percentages may exceed 100.

Conclusion

An analysis of the conducted research points to the fact that knowledge management is a popular conception of management applied by those responsible for running the travel agencies based in the area of Tarnów sub-region. The majority of the analyzed subjects, however, realize only the selected knowledge-related processes such as, primarily, acquisition and application of knowledge. This can attest to the state that part of the managers do not make use of the method of management in a complex manner or do it in a fragmentary way only. One confirmation of this hypothesis is the fact that the questioned owners and managers of travel agencies consider financial to be their most vital enterprise resources. This demonstrates, on the one hand, great importance of knowledge without which one is unable to manage a modern company today, while on the other hand making us aware of the necessity of popularizing knowledge management, first and foremost its methodology, among managers dealing in the tourist market. The realization of the full process of knowledge management could contribute to improving the economic-financial condition and, in consequence – to expanding the developmental prospects of the travel agencies under analysis.

The considerable cognitive and applicative significance of the problems raised in this article makes it only too justifiable to carry out further deepened studies with reference to the process of making use of knowledge management. Such research should be extended to cover also other types of tour companies, primarily hotel enterprises and subjects identified with tourist information as well as ought to take into account a greater number of subjects in the whole country.

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WYKORZYSTANIE KONCEPCJI ZARZĄDZANIA WIEDZĄ W WYBRANYCH BIURACH PODRÓŻY Z PODREGIONU TARNOWSKIEGO

Streszczenie

Globalizacja gospodarki, postęp technologiczny oraz rosnąca rywalizacja o ograniczone zasoby, sprawiają, że kluczowym czynnikiem wzrostu gospodarczego są obecnie wartości niematerialne, w tym wiedza. Zjawiska te mają swoje implikacje zarówno

dla gospodarek narodowych, jak i dla gospodarstw domowych oraz przedsiębiorstw. W konsekwencji coraz większa grupa przedsiębiorstw, w tym również firm turystycznych, wykorzystuje koncepcję zarządzania wiedzą. Celem pracy jest analiza wykorzystania zarządzania wiedzą przez wybrane biura podróży z podregionu tarnowskiego. W pracy wykorzystano dwie główne metody badawcze: metodę dokumentacyjną oraz metodę sondażu diagnostycznego. W ramach metody dokumentacyjnej, wykorzystując dane pochodzące ze źródeł wtórnych, dokonano inwentaryzacji biur podróży, zlokalizowanych w podregionie tarnowskim. Następnie na podstawie metody sondażu diagnostycznego, za pomocą techniki ankietowej przeprowadzono badania dotyczące wykorzystania zarządzania wiedzą w 44 biurach podróży. Najważniejszą grupą zasobów, dla ankietowanych właścicieli lub menedżerów biur podróży, były zasoby materialne, następnie ludzkie oraz niematerialne (wiedza, patenty, *know how*). Zarządzanie wiedzą było najpopularniejszą koncepcją zarządzania wykorzystywaną w badanych biurach podróży. W ramach tej koncepcji realizowano najczęściej procesy wykorzystania oraz pozyskiwania wiedzy. Najczęściej stosowanymi narzędziami zarządzania wiedzą były: intranet, systemy zarządzania dokumentami oraz systemy obiegu pracy. Zasoby wiedzy oraz oparte na zaufaniu stosunki interpersonalne, to natomiast zdaniem respondentów najważniejsze obszary zarządzania wiedzą w ich przedsiębiorstwach. Duże znaczenie poruszanych w pracy kwestii powoduje, że zasadne wydaje się być prowadzenie dalszych badań w tym obszarze tematycznym.

Słowa kluczowe: wiedza, koncepcje zarządzania, przedsiębiorstwa turystyczne, biura podróży, podregion tarnowski