SUMMARY

The doctoral dissertation entitled “Designing and Implementing Cross-Border Tourism Products in Regions Divided by the Polish-Czech Political Border” addresses the problem of transforming the potential of borderlands into a coherent, accessible and sustainable tourism offer. The starting point of the dissertation is the assumption that the mere presence of attractions on both sides of the border, the existence of cooperation projects, promotional materials, routes or events does not yet create a mature cross-border tourism product. Such a product requires the deliberate design of value, experience, accessibility, partnership and a durable management mechanism that continues after project funding has ended.

The main aim of the dissertation was to develop guidelines for supply-side actors of the cross-border tourism services market concerning the process of designing and implementing cross-border tourism products in regions divided by the Polish-Czech political border. This aim was achieved by systematising the concepts of cross-border tourism, the cross-border tourism services market and the cross-border tourism product, identifying the specificity of the Polish-Czech borderland, conducting empirical research, and developing a product design procedure, an implementation procedure, practical recommendations and a set of indicators for monitoring the effectiveness and sustainability of the product. The scientific problem of the dissertation was formulated as the question of how the process of designing and implementing a cross-border tourism product should be organised in regions divided by the Polish-Czech political border.

The dissertation is situated within management and quality sciences, particularly in the fields of marketing management, service management, and process and project management. The empirical research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach based on methodological triangulation. The first stage included a review of the literature and an analysis of existing documents, including strategic, programme, implementation and reporting documents related to cross-border cooperation and tourism development. This was followed by quantitative research conducted among 390 tourists using the offer of the Cieszyn Silesia – Těšínské Slezsko Euroregion on both the Polish and Czech sides of the border. The quantitative material was analysed using reliability analysis, factor analysis, cluster analysis, structural equation modelling and multi-group analysis. The research was complemented by individual in-depth interviews with representatives of the Polish and Czech sides of six euroregions located along the Polish-Czech border. These interviews made it possible to interpret quantitative findings from the perspective of practitioners responsible for cooperation, projects and the development of cross-border tourism offers.

The results indicate that the Polish-Czech cross-border tourism services market is not a homogeneous space of supply and demand. It functions rather as a system of related but not fully integrated practices, shaped by organisational, informational, linguistic, promotional and cultural asymmetries. The dissertation defines the cross-border tourism product as an integrated offer based on resources located on both sides of the border, but requiring a common theme, a clear value proposition, standards of use, information channels, partnership and coordination. Its maturity is determined not only by the

attractiveness of resources, but also by product readiness, understood as the tourist's actual ability to find information, plan the route, make a reservation, receive assistance, move across the border and evaluate the experience after the visit.

The quantitative research and segmentation confirmed that there is no single universal recipient of the borderland tourism offer. The identified tourist segments differ in their mobility, interest in offers on both sides of the border, motivations, price sensitivity and readiness to use integrated products. This means that effective design should lead to a portfolio of product modules adapted to different groups of recipients rather than to one general offer addressed to everyone. Structural equation modelling indicated the importance of marketing components for interest in the offer, while the qualitative research confirmed that the key barriers include dispersed responsibility, the absence of an operator, the project-based logic of financing, insufficient updating of information, language barriers, weak integration of communication channels and inadequate monitoring of results.

The research hypotheses adopted in the dissertation were directional and served to organise the research process. The first hypothesis, concerning the dispersed nature of the design of cross-border products, was confirmed to a significant extent, with the reservation that some more structured initiatives do exist. The second hypothesis, concerning the insufficiently coordinated nature of implementation, was also largely confirmed, especially with regard to the problems of maintaining the product after the end of a project. The third hypothesis, which assumed that a process-oriented approach to designing a cross-border tourism product should be based on various marketing concepts integrated into a coherent whole, was confirmed.

The main result of the dissertation is the development of a design procedure and an implementation procedure for cross-border tourism products. The design procedure leads from the establishment of a partnership mandate, the diagnosis of the potential of the shared area and the segmentation of recipients, through the strategic concept, product architecture and co-design with stakeholders, to prototyping, testing and the preparation of a product card. The implementation procedure shows how to move from an agreed concept to a product actually available on the market through the designation of an operator, formalisation of the partnership, securing resources, preparation of standards, communication, distribution, pilot implementation, monitoring, maintenance and further development. The theoretical contribution of the dissertation lies in clarifying the categories of the cross-border tourism services market and the cross-border tourism product, as well as in proposing a process-oriented and integrated approach to managing cross-border tourism products. The practical contribution includes procedures, decision gates, a product card, recommendations and indicators that can support euroregions, local governments, tourism organisations, cultural institutions, attraction managers, entrepreneurs and project partnerships in designing, implementing, monitoring and improving cross-border tourism products.