



EUROPEAN  
REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
FUND



## DEVELOPMENT OF KURZEME AS A FISHING TOURISM DESTINATION

### *Synopsis*

The task of the handbook is to create Kurzeme as a fishing tourism destination, focusing primarily on measures to promote coastal fish resources and increase the export capacity of fishing as a niche tourism by strengthening the management of a unified thematic business network. Taking into account the potential resources of Kurzeme fishing tourism, sea trout is used only as a flag fish, in parallel evaluating all types of fishing tourism opportunities in Kurzeme. Taking into account the length of the seashore and popular inland fishing places, Kurzeme is already the leading region in Latvia in fishing tourism, attracting anglers from Latvia, Lithuania and other countries.

The addressee of this handbook is equivalent to the main target groups of the whole project: small and medium-sized enterprises (sports and recreational fishing service providers, fishing guides) and their associations, regional government institutions, tourism associations. As well as related tourism and hospitality service providers (hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, etc.) that can benefit from the development of fishing tourism. Also related companies in other sectors: equipment and clothing manufacturers, fishing shops, bait growers, etc.

### **1. The concept of fishing tourism and inclusion in the tourism and hospitality industry**

Travel for fishing purposes, which includes at least one day, is much more attractive for those working in the tourism industry, as it includes many services that are necessary: accommodation, catering, transport, licenses, etc. They can also be both local and foreign tourists. Focusing on foreign tourists (which could be defined as inbound tourism) is also attractive due to other aspects, more often the main target groups are more solvent, in addition to the main motive - fishing, they are also interested in a wider context - cultural and natural heritage, country and society even more opportunities to offer related services.

The hobby of fishing has in recent years increasingly emphasized the catch and release principle, which is less quickly adopted in local communities with a long tradition, but is becoming more evident in tourism, especially in countries where material well-being does not follow a survival strategy.

The conclusion of successful fishing does not only depend on the number of kilograms transferred, but in fishing tourism, as in other travel purposes, much more emphasis is placed on the aspect of fishing as an experience, hobby, passion, lifestyle pampering and adventure process.

### **2. International market potential and target groups.**

One of the problems in Latvia tourism is the relatively small market in the regions, which does not allow for the full development of specialized tourism products, creates an intuitive desire of entrepreneurs to work with as many different target groups as possible, thus making the offer more universal but losing competitive advantage in a particular segment.

The local fishing market is relatively large. About 100 000 fishing, crayfish and underwater hunting cards are sold per year, which are a mandatory condition when fishing in public waters.

However, there is more potential from a business point of view outside the domestic market - in the nearest foreign countries. The Baltic Sea as a fishing destination is generally binding for both the US and Japanese markets, but in the context of fishing tourism in the Kurzeme region, strategic priorities are related to the priority foreign markets defined in Latvia's tourism marketing strategy.

Of the types of fishing, spinning is more popular, but the same number of competitions also take place in float fishing and ice fishing, less in fly fishing or other types, which also indicates the approximate size and distribution of the segment.

### 3. Kurzeme fishing tourism resources

In order to analyse the offer of fishing tourism and the potential to create exportable products, it is necessary to understand the main resource - fish. The most interesting fish for fishing tourists in Kurzeme are sea trout, vimba and flounder. In summer, it is possible to catch cod by fishing from a boat at sea. In the spring, especially at the end of May, boating at sea in the coastal zone is especially interesting due to wind fish.

#### 3.1. Fish, fishing spots and season

The **sea trout** enter Kurzeme rivers in the autumn to spawn. In Latvia, it is forbidden to keep sea trout in the catch all year round, it can be caught only with the "catch and release" method.

**River trout** have a declining population due to climate change, river overgrowth, beaver activity and excessive fishing activity in well-known areas, as well as weak controls on prohibited practices.

Rivers of Kurzeme are not suitable for **salmon** fishing, and population of wild or naturally grown salmon is decreasing.

**Flounder** (flatfish) fish from the sea shore. The busiest time is October and November, with slight adjustments depending on the weather.

**Carp** are actively caught from April to October.

In terms of individual locations, **Lake Usma** has extensive recreational opportunities for fishing holidays and a well-developed network of hospitality services around the lake. Including focused on foreign customers.

**Lake Puze** is among the most popular places among anglers in Kurzeme with the highest fish density in Latvia, where it is allowed to fish from both rowing boats and electric motor boats. However, near Lake Puze, unlike Lake Usma, there are practically no hospitality services in the immediate vicinity of the lake.

#### 3.2. Development potential and limitations of fishing products

There are certain risk conditions affecting business when developing fishing tourism products that need to be taken into account. Due to the hot summers of recent years, population of the most sensitive river trout is decreasing and heat-resistant fish species are beginning to multiply. If the municipalities want to develop one of the rivers for salmon fishing, licenses must be introduced and fish stocks must be replenished regularly, as elsewhere in Europe.

The location of places suitable for fishing is even throughout the territory of Kurzeme.

It is very important to observe ethical principles in the development of the fishing tourism offer, which forms the thinking of a responsible business standard, and not only to observe the minimum requirements specified in regulatory enactments.

#### **4. Product development and strengthening of competitiveness for the international market**

This is an unexplored, but globally demanded business niche, where by properly creating an offer and precisely directing the standards of your service; you can often be in nature, meet like-minded people from all over the world, more often indulge in fishing and earn money.

##### **4.1. Conditions for a competitive product**

In a fishing tourism product, the value chain is a complex connected by the angler for his own needs and for purchases at a distance from the fishing place, which are often unrelated to the fishing destination (equipment, facilities, clothing, guides, etc.). These items have a high annual expenditure, which depends on the wealth of the angler's household for hobbies and passion. The second part is related to local services during the fishing experience, consisting of a fishing guide (qualified tourist guide who specializes in knowing the local fishing conditions), tourist accommodation, catering services, local transport, local shopping, etc.

The development of fishing tourism products should focus on the international market, which distinguishes the level of service offered.

##### **4.2. Using a service design approach**

The full fishing tourism service package includes:

- ✓ meeting the customer at the airport,
- ✓ transfer services from the airport to the accommodation,
- ✓ accommodation services
- ✓ presentation of a previously developed program to clients,
- ✓ personalized fishing guide services throughout the client's stay, counselling, help to succeed (catch fish, understand time, context, nature and fish behaviour, etc.)
- ✓ offering entertainment services in the free time from fishing
- ✓ providing information on fishing grounds and equipment,
- ✓ transport services from the accommodation to the fishing grounds
- ✓ provision of inventory and equipment for fishing (boats, echo sounders, special clothing, etc.), but not fishing rods, each of which has its own specially tried and

completed. Must be the most important items to be replaced more often (mini-shop / inventory reserve)

- ✓ providing information on the purchase of inventory and equipment.
- ✓ catering services, taking into account the specifics of the product process
- ✓ caught fish processing (evisceration, preparation) additional service
- ✓ bad weather alternative - plan "B" in case of failure, etc.

The price of the service depends on the specific knowledge of the fishing guide about fish habits and the desire to cooperate with the client not only during fishing, but also in his free time. If the offer of a fishing tourism package is of high quality or with a very individualized approach, special treatment, customers most often return and use it repeatedly.

## **5. Marketing solutions**

### **5.1. Branding and storytelling marketing**

Every fishing place is made special not only by its fish resources and by the context of its natural landscape, but also by historical events, human destinies and stories that highlight the special nature of these places. The stories emphasize the identity of the place - substantiate their origin and meaning of existence, distinguish them from other similar places, create opportunities to connect with the stories of experienced anglers, the values of the local community and the vision of future development. The stories allow for an even better understanding of the long-lasting relationship between man and fish, in the context of a unique culture. The story evokes an intellectual and emotional connection between the fishing spot, the fish and the angler. Experience in fishing and, of course, in various life situations and events related to nature, along with the stories of hunters, has gradually developed into a peculiar genre of storytelling.

In order to use the power of fishermen's stories and historical traditions, to make it a purposeful and organized process, involved in business, a brand management approach should be used. In practice, this means focusing on the mission's business and a higher price for the services provided, which are filled with higher added value, rather than "selling eel at a sprat price".

Brand positioning is best understood by comparing the specific identity and values of the site with other similar fishing sites. Differences and special strengths together with competitive advantages are formulated in a positioning sentence that "sells", but at the same time arouses interest, desire to experience the place, join its values, survive the story. On the surface, key values are selected that incorporate the site's identity and link it to a vision for future development. This is where the legend of the brand is formed - a story that is like an essence of a place.

The brand is developed over a longer period of time, creating its value, in the next stage it is given a certain graphic standard - a unified visual identity, which allows to strengthen marketing communication. A strong brand keeps its promise to anglers, shows its mission in action, allows it to get involved, and sets its own specific actions and ethical norms - its operating standards. The brand gives its owners a competitive advantage in the market, which is ensured by the loyalty and repeat purchases of attracted customers, the desire to recommend this place to their friends, which is a particularly strong form of marketing communication in the field of

hospitality. The brand helps to maintain relationships with customers in the long term, gives them a certain character and opportunities to express themselves - it is much more than a random, spontaneous visit to a place.

Location identity stories based on values and accurate facts can be integrated into the processes of the provided fishing services, using the service design planning approach. The centre has guests with their needs, expectations and enthusiasm. In turn, the stories are complemented by the message, values, ideals and mission of the modern brand. If the story is included in a tour format in addition to the main task of a fishing guide, then an important aspect is to be able to structure them thematically so that the story is complementary and provides a comprehensive picture of the main topics: , landscape, nature and culture, farming, present, future plans, etc.

## **5.2. Sales tactics**

From the marketing point of view, an integrated marketing communication approach can be used to attract guests. Preventing fragmentation, duplication of information and ignoring certain important stages of fishermen's decision-making. Mutually coordinated marketing communication is implemented by many parties involved in Kurzeme as a fishing tourism destination, which creates a unifying and mutually complementary effect. The thematic specialization of fishing tourism is taken as a basis, creating a standardized and well-coordinated approach to the sale of services. For each company and destination, it is highlighted by the introduction of a certain style of corporate color and visual material. It must create succession and a comprehensive presentation of ideas, complementarity, and the materials for guests and marketing communication in general must be interconnected, including compatible with other tourism topics or fishing places outside Kurzeme. Kurzeme as a single fishing tourism destination marketing communication activities are planned comprehensively, based on the approach:

### **FISHERS' ROAD TO KURZEME**

Sales communication should work as much as possible in the first stages in order to create more interest and desire to visit Kurzeme and maintain relations in the long term. Digital marketing tools are currently the most effective.

For each communication tool used, the reference point is the conversion rate, ie how much the return on the activity in question is from the moment of attention to the actual travel and what is the ratio of real visitors to the resources invested. Entrepreneurs of Kurzeme fishing tourism destination need to improve their individual sales handwriting by implementing the introduction of service design thinking in the sale of their service, developing more knowledge about their customers. Knowing the customer's needs and implementing the marketing concept "Fishermen's Road to Kurzeme" will allow service providers to implement strategic tasks: prolong the customer's stay at the destination, create satisfaction and desire to share positive enthusiasm, and desire to visit tourists or the destination in general. These recommendations work in direct customer acquisition (B2C); for the involved intermediaries and sales partners (B2B), there is a need to develop a personalized approach with direct sales, in-depth customer and offer research and presentation of benefits. It is in the interests of the Kurzeme region to

promote greater involvement and initiative of its entrepreneurs, not to leave the marketing activities of the destination to the discretion of the municipality's tourism specialists.

Framework for developing an integrated marketing communication approach with the main target groups:

(A). Motivation, ideas and dreams to fish in Kurzeme, which can be achieved by:

- ✓ cooperation with the opinion leaders of the target groups, for example, bloggers on fishing topics;
- ✓ visits of journalists and thematic coverage of Kurzeme fishing opportunities in the media;
- ✓ emotionally appealing visual material on Instagram or elsewhere on social networks - ideas that are widely spread to be able to reach new customers;
- ✓ TV projects, series of fishing as a hobby and travel cycles - emphasis on the best fishing places and seasonal trends, etc.;
- ✓ recommendations of friends who already have a positive fishing experience in Kurzeme; u. c.

(B). Evaluation of travel (to Latvia) possibilities, consideration of alternative fishing places for Kurzeme:

- ✓ comparisons made on the website using search engines Google.com, etc. ;
- ✓ visual stylistics, photo and video material that can be quickly found and obtained for comparison;
- ✓ price comparison for basic services (overnight stays);
- ✓ comparison of transport and access alternatives (incl. flight to destination), etc.

This is one of the main considerations why it is important to strengthen and maintain a clear thematic positioning of the Kurzeme destination, to invest in the recognition of fishing as a lifestyle and to create a common graphic standard. It works directly in the comparison stage in order to strengthen the desire to make a decision among the alternatives to visit the tourist attractions of Kurzeme region.

(C). Fishing holiday - trip planning:

If the customer has reached this stage of decision-making, then all digital communication tools start working. The most important thing here is the joint "Baltic Sea Fishing Tourism Supermarket": [balticseafishing.com](http://balticseafishing.com), which in time could become the site No. 1 also in search engines by key keywords, work much more broadly.

The second most important sales site for the planning stage in export markets is [Latvia.travel](http://Latvia.travel) fishing tourism section, which must be very precisely positioned on the main target markets,

include the interests of the Kurzeme region with well-thought-out brand images and practical planning information.

The third most important fishing holiday planning platform, which is managed by the Kurzeme region itself and is still not adapted to the needs of the brand theme and interested business cooperation network (missing the section Fishing holidays).

Only on the next level are local tourist destinations and specific business websites. It is possible that their content is much better prepared and relevant to the international audience of fishing holidays, but at full marketing power will work only if the links and representation are at all the highest levels.

#### (D). Service booking

This stage is important because once the reservation has been made, the main task of marketing communication is completed, which includes four successive stages: attention> arousal of interest> emotional desire to purchase services> booking the service. The purposeful sales communication trend is focused on the full marketing communication cycle, possibly shortening the customer's thinking time between the moment of real interest and a specific booking.

#### (E). The trip. Transit route.

There are many tools now, although not always well coordinated with each other. Navigation programs, printed and digital maps, tourist signs, outdoor advertisements, etc. It is more important to invest in the previous stages.

#### (F). Experience. Adjustment of plans.

At this stage, the printed materials at the service points during the trip, TIC recommendations, service provider recommendations, additional sales activities of specific service providers, road signs, impulsive decisions influenced by weather, basic needs or some emotional advertising are in operation. Such accurate information allows you to better plan your time and navigate your destination. It is the responsibility of entrepreneurs and tourism professionals to look after these tools and fill in the missing information, including more relevant branding.

#### (G). Feedback. Dreaming.

Full cycle marketing communication Kurzeme tourism destination and specific service providers continue to maintain relations even after fishing holidays. Informal contact maintenance, "tracking" on social networks, loyalty program incentives, reminders for news about advantageous offers on the smartphone, etc. can encourage repeat purchase choices.

The most effective tools must be chosen at each stage, but they must also be coherent and interconnected, following a similar sales style. The need for interested operators to be well coordinated in order to be able to reach the major sales platforms, to facilitate destination visits in general, to be able to "raise the voice of fishing tourism" on regulatory issues and to reap other common benefits of competitive cooperation.

## **6. Networking of parties involved in Kurzeme fishing tourism and unified management solutions.**

A common marketing strategy is stronger if different companies, including competing companies, combine part of their resources, achieving greater interchangeability of the whole destination between other fishing destinations, allowing potential anglers to make first choices about arriving in Kurzeme.

The conditions for co-existence in a network are the definition of common external markets with more precise target groups and the ability of economic operators to engage in coordinated destination management, priority marketing measures and co-financing. The challenge is to raise awareness among every entrepreneur, including other stakeholders, that misunderstood local competition weakens marketing power to external markets, while good coordination and cooperation allow for more efficient use of resources, better positioning of strengths and greater return on jointly implemented activities.

In order to mobilize more diverse resources to achieve common goals, such a network should be designed as a private-public partnership. At the initial stage, legal status is irrelevant. The group of entrepreneurs must see common interest and business opportunities that have already been approved in Kurzeme. It is necessary to form a group of leaders, to set an ambitious vision for the future, to determine the main tactical steps to get there, to implement a short-term project that provides confirmation, material and emotional evidence for the strength of joint cooperation. The legal status of the network can then be formalized; it can be established as a new NGO, can be included as a specific strategic direction within the community "Usmas krasts".

In summary, the major strategic challenges at this stage are to increase the more coordinated involvement of the private sector in the joint thematic network on governance, decision-making and participation with financial resources for joint initiatives, and to harmonize internal communication between stakeholders. Balticseafishing.com online export supermarket has the potential to develop into the most powerful sales platform for fishing holidays around the Baltic Sea internationally and Kurzeme fishing tourism stakeholders have all the key to take advantage of this opportunity.