



Staycation as a way of spending free time by city dwellers: examples of tourism products created by Local Action Groups in Lesser Poland Voivodeship in response to a new trend in tourism

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ABSTRACT

Social and economic changes contribute to changes in the lifestyle of modern society, including as well the method of spending free time. City dwellers who, because of economic reasons, have to altogether resign from package holidays or just reduce expenses, are searching for an opportunity to relax in the countryside and towns located near their home. Therefore a phenomenon called staycation, which consists of visiting one's own city or its closest neighbourhood, is becoming more and more popular. Tourism products aimed at different groups of visitors are created in response to the changing needs and expectations of people. Local Action Groups are especially active in this field and in recent years they have run many projects concerning the creation of places attractive for a visit, relaxation and recreation. The purpose of the article was to present examples of tourism products created by these associations in Lesser Poland Voivodeship. The products presented in this article can be connected with the phenomenon of staycation and the current needs of dwellers concerning spending free time. Local cultural heritage and natural environment are becoming the basis for supralocal tourism products which allow promoting rural areas, little towns and outskirts of urban agglomerations.

Keywords: staycation, tourism product, offer of spending free time, city dwellers, Local Action Group, Lesser Poland Voivodeship

1. INTRODUCTION

City dwellers search for an opportunity to spend their free time away from their homes, to forget about everyday lives, to change the social and cultural environment and regenerate physical and mental strengths. One should list here not only package holidays and going to holiday resorts but also one-day and weekend trips, which are a characteristic element of the life of city dwellers. Such trips were developed and got more popular in the 19th century in connection with the processes of industrialisation, dynamic development of urban agglomerations and the changes in dwellers' lifestyle.

It is becoming more and more popular, especially in big European urban agglomerations, to spend holidays at home or close to it (staycation). The idea of staycation was developed as a consequence of the global financial crisis of recent years [3,15]. The necessity for allocating smaller financial resources for holiday or weekend trips contributed to shaping a new model of spending free time. City dwellers have rediscovered their place of living or have chosen opportunities for relaxation close to it. The aim of their trips is both to get to know the natural environment and cultural heritage [17]. City dwellers do bike tourism, visit regional museums, participate in cultural and outdoor events, use thematic cultural trails for walkers, bikers and drivers. They visit small towns where there are monuments dating from different centuries and historical urban layouts. To relax they choose areas situated near water, to be able to do water sports, and forest areas, which in turn make it possible to organise walking, biking and horse riding trips. Rural areas and little towns, often situated near agglomerations and therefore easy to access, answer these needs of city dwellers. It is because of their localisation in relation to urban agglomerations and their varied attractiveness that they might become destinations of city dwellers who choose staycation.

In the times of consumption lifestyles and freedom of travelling, attracting tourists and convincing them to travel to a given place is of key importance. Therefore it is necessary to adapt the tourism offer to their preferences [16]. Local governments more and more frequently undertake actions aiming at enriching and varying a tourism offer of individual municipalities, making it suitable for the needs of target groups and giving it a complex and varied character [6]. The role of Local Action Groups has been very important in recent years. They run projects aiming at diversification of the functions of rural areas in the direction of non-agricultural activity, which also becomes part of the development of widely understood tourism. The created tourism products can answer the new trend of spending free time and doing tourism – staycation. However, this process requires integration of activities of local authorities, private entrepreneurs and non-governmental organisations. Joint projects run by these associations contribute to enriching and diversifying the tourism offer in rural and rural-urban municipalities and engaging the local community in their creation.

The purpose of the article was to present examples of tourism products created in recent years in Lesser Poland Voivodeship by Local Action Groups (LAGs). Lesser Poland Voivodeship is characterised by a big potential of tourism development based on natural and cultural heritage. The products described in the article are aimed at people interested in one-day and weekend trips, which might be identified with the previously mentioned staycation trend. A search query of archive materials and annual reports of Local Action Groups was done and websites of the created tourism products were analysed by the author of the article. Information from the interviews with representatives of the local government concerning the use of information and communications technology in promotion and tourist information in

municipalities of Lesser Poland Voivodeship was also used. The research included investment projects concerning the development of tourism and the offer of spending free time which were implemented by LAGs in 2013-2015.

2. STAYCATION: A NEW FASHION OF SPENDING FREE TIME BY CITY DWELLERS

Cities generate the highest number of tourists, therefore the tendencies and motivations of tourists from this area are an indicator of the development of tourism offers [12]. The global financial crisis which took place a few years ago influenced the society heavily, also in relation to tourism. In consequence, people started reducing expenses connected with holiday trips or resigned altogether from travelling and started to spend their free time in their place of living and its neighbourhood [3,14]. This phenomenon is called staycation (stay-at-home-vacation). Another matter which contributes to the development of the staycation trend are the changes in lifestyles and working styles, as a result of which people resign from one longer holiday in order to have a few shorter ones and choose places which are not far away [4,7,13]. As a result, one-time holiday trips get shorter with the simultaneous increase in their frequency in a year. People living in large cities in particular look for places to which they could escape from stress and everyday surroundings. An increasing interest in city breaks [3, 12] and spa and wellness offer [11] can be observed.

Staycation means staying at home during holidays and using tourist attractions situated near the place of living [9]. It is a form of rest, relaxation and escape from everyday reality and routine and getting to know new or yet undiscovered places, similarly as during longer holiday trips and package holidays. The difference is that people stay in their own city and at home [9,10]. Staycation can consist of sightseeing one's own city or the nearest neighbourhood. It is also an opportunity to make new contacts or renew contacts with family, friends and neighbours by spending time together [8,17]. Staycation can be connected with different types of environmental, cultural and special tourism. Currently it is fashionable to spend time actively, also during the holidays [16]. The significance of ecology in tourism is increasing, which is reflected in the interest in tourism in rural and forest areas. Other, similar types of spending free time connected with staycation are nearcation (a short vacation in which tourists visit places close to where they live) daycation (one-day trips around the area organised at weekends and days off work, daycationers do not stay away overnight) or agrocation (a way of spending free time in which tourists stay on farms in suburban villages and often participate in farm activities) [17]. These needs are a part of other current and more and more popular trends in travelling connected with slow travel or tourism off the beaten track [2,5]. Rural areas and little towns situated near urban agglomerations have a tourist potential for staycation. Seeing the current trends of spending free time by city dwellers, local governments undertake actions to create tourism and recreational offer [6,16]. In recent years Local Action Groups have been especially active in this area, and also other partnerships which are created by territorial governments, not only municipalities but also county governments, in agreement with other entities, e.g. local and regional tourist organisations, development agencies or non-governmental organisations [18]. Moreover, also local communities from villages and small cities situated near urban agglomerations use the tourist offer in their area, not only city dwellers.

3. SELECTED EXAMPLES OF TOURISM PRODUCTS CREATED BY LOCAL ACTION GROUPS IN LESSER POLAND VOIVODESHIP

In the article the author concentrated on a few chosen examples of tourism products which were created by Local Action Groups. These entities have been active in this field in recent years and provided a lot of solutions. They are partnerships created by the units of local governments (e.g. foundations, associations, regional societies) and representatives of local communities (e.g. entrepreneurs, farmers). They were created under the EU Leader Program (fr. Liaison Entre Actions de Development de L'Economie Rurale), which was initiated in 2004 to develop rural areas [18].

The cooperation of municipalities within LAGs facilitates integration of activities and introduction of common development aims also for tourist activation of the region [1,6]. As a consequence, created tourism products use characteristic for a given region elements of natural and cultural heritage. Rural areas and small towns have a big potential for the development of one-day and weekend tourism, recreation and sightseeing, both cultural heritage and natural environment. In the Lesser Poland Voivodeship operates 32 LAGs, which include 115 rural municipalities and 41 urban and rural municipalities (Figure 1). In case of Lesser Poland Voivodeship, we can talk about creating supralocal tourism products by combining and promoting together tourism values of a few municipalities within one unified territorial brand. The created tourism products are aimed predominantly at the dwellers of urban agglomerations, above all Kraków, but also Tarnów and Nowy Sącz. LAG's offer can also constitute an interesting alternative of spending free time for the dwellers of the areas which are included in the tourism product. Below you can find examples of selected tourism products from Lesser Poland Voivodeship created by LAGs: Teasures near Krakow (Skarby blisko Krakowa) (cooperation of municipalities within one LAG) and Western Lesser Poland (Zachodnia Małopolska), Eastern Lesser Poland by Bike (Wschodnia Małopolska na Rowerze) and Gateway to Pogorze (Wrota Pogórza) (cooperation of a few LAGs).

The product "Choose the direction. Gorlickie-Sadeckie Area" ("Obierz kierunek. Gorlickie-Sądeckie") was also brought to the attention, and this product was created within a different cooperation agreement but also clearly shows the direction of the currently undertaken in this region actions for the development of tourism and recreational offer. Within these projects, attractive areas encompassing a lot of municipalities were created or re-exposed. In this way new tourist regions were created. Visitors can use trails (biking, walking, nordic walking, horse-riding), which are marked (with boards, maps, road signs) and equipped with recreation infrastructure (e.g. sheds, scenic overlooks, hearths), questing trails, organised holidays packets and attractions such as thematic parks, amusement parks, and monuments, which can be found in the area of municipalities functioning within the territorial brand. Cultural events and outdoor events are organised as well. Each of the chosen tourism products has their characteristic traits and for that reason is an innovative offer of spending free time in a given place. It is also worth emphasising that there are actions of organisational and marketing character undertaken by LAGs for the creation of tourism products connected with infrastructural investments, e.g. revitalisation of historic urbanist layouts or road investments, which are done by other entities, and it also contributes to the increase in popularity of these areas.

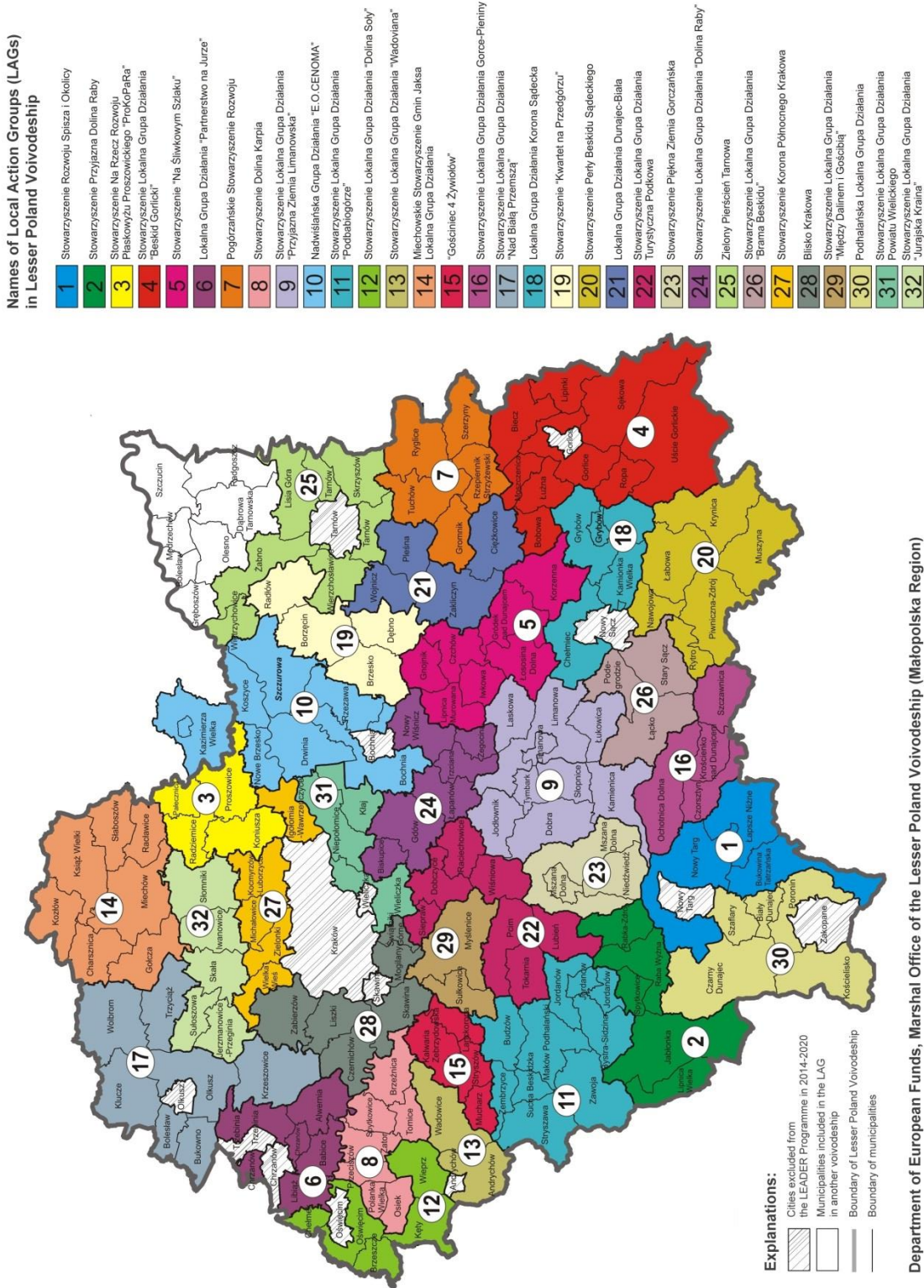


Figure 1. Local Action Groups (LAGs) in Lesser Poland Voivodeship in 2016.
 Source: Department of European Funds, Marshal Office of the Lesser Poland Voivodeship (www.prow.malopolska.pl)

Marketing actions connected with creation of tourism products include as well widespread information actions outdoors (boards, signposts, maps and plans). More and more often, apart from printed materials, electronic tools are used, such as interactive kiosks, websites and popular mobile applications which can be used on portable devices.

Municipalities situated near Krakow act swiftly to create attractive tourism products, an example of which is the project “Treasures near Krakow” (“Skarby blisko Krakowa”) done by the Local Action Group Near Krakow (Blisko Krakowa). In this case the aim was to create a joint product for four municipalities near Krakow: Skawina, Swiatniki Gorne, Czernichow and Mogilany, situated on the south west of Krakow. The treasures from the title are in this case areas valuable because of nature, architectural, construction and cultural monuments, local museums, attractive landscapes which make it possible to relax in an active way. Very often these are widely unknown places and therefore underestimated in comparison with such attractions as the Wieliczka, or Bochnia, Salt Mine, Niepolomice and Niepolomice Forest (Puszcza Niepołomska), which also neighbour with Krakow and for many years have been very popular with visitors. In the area of the municipalities included in the project “Treasures near Krakow (“Skarby blisko Krakowa”) there are several walking, biking and horse-riding trails, recreation (sheds, benches and tables) and other (e.g. playgrounds) infrastructure.

Apart from the cooperation of municipalities within one LAG, it should also be emphasised that there is a wider cooperation undertaken by LAGs with each other. Tourism products of wider territorial reach get created in this way, examples of which are Western Lesser Poland (Zachodnia Małopolska), Eastern Lesser Poland by Bike (Wschodnia Małopolska na Rowerze) and Gateway to Pogorze (Wrota Pogórza) which combine values, attractions and monuments of individual municipalities within supralocal brands. In case of Western Lesser Poland these were municipalities belonging to eight LAGs: on White Przemsza (Nad Białą Przemszą) (4 municipalities), Jurassic Region (Jurajska Kraina) (5), Rural Areas of Olkusz Municipality (Obszary Wiejskie Gminy Olkusz) (2), Partnership in the Jurassic (Partnerstwo na Jurze) (5), Krzeszowice Spa (Zdrój Krzeszowice) (1), the Crown of the Northern Krakow (Korona Północnego Krakowa) (5), Near Krakow (Blisko Krakowa) (4), the Carp Valley Association (Stowarzyszenie Dolina Karpia) (7). The aim was tourist activation and joint promotion of municipalities which are in the north-west part of Lesser Poland Voivodeship e.g. Chrzanow, Czernichow, Krzeszowice, Olkusz, Skawina, Trzebinia, Zabierzow. Walking and biking trails were prepared as well as nordic walking and kayaking ones. Ten suggestions for thematic trails were prepared and their routes include local cultural and natural attractions. In the area encompassing the project there is a varied recreation-sport infrastructure, among others swimming pools, a windsurfing school, climbing walls, studs, a golf course, tennis courts, a ski slope and thematic amusement parks in Zator and Inwald.

Similar initiatives were also implemented in other parts of the voivodeship. Eastern Lesser Poland by Bike (Wschodnia Małopolska na Rowerze) and Gateway to Pogorze (Wrota Pogórza) are projects run in cooperation with five Local Action Groups: Green Ring of Tarnow (Zielony Pierścień Tarnowa) (6), Dunajec-Biała (4), the Plum Trail (Na Śliwkowym Szlaku) (7), Quarter at Przedgorze (Kwartet na Przedgórzu) (4) and Pogorzanski Association for Development (Pogórzańskie Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju) (5). In the first case the main aim of the project was the development of biking tourism.

The other combined the cultural richness and natural variety of these municipalities under the common brand of Gateway to Pogorze. It consist of many places and buildings divided into seven thematic categories (e.g. monuments, sanctuaries, studs, restaurants).

It is a proposal to visit the region on the basis of seven main motives, such as: Sweet Gateway (Słodkie Wrota) (local sweet products), Gateway to the Past (Wrota Przeszłości) (places important in the history of the region and country, monuments) or Religious Gateway (Święte Wrota) (sanctuaries, places of cult of saints, churches, roadside shrines). By using the tool of gamification it is possible to participate in a some kind of a field game while visiting.

There many more examples of projects of this kind which have been created in Lesser Poland Voivodeship in recent years. Apart from complex supralocal tourism products, single initiatives aiming at creating attractive places to spend free time are also interesting solutions e.g. in a form of scenic overlooks with the accompanying infrastructure, which is used to rest and relax. The Local Action Group Gate to Beskid (Brama Beskidu), to which Stary Sacz and Podegrodzie belong, suggested to the visitors a innovatory solution in the form of a scenic overlook of a spiral shape in Wola Krogulecka (about 550 metres above sea level). The view from the viewpoint includes the view of Beskid Sadecki, Dunajec Valley, Sadecka Valley and Beskid Wyspowy, and in its neighbourhood there is a recreation infrastructure (a shed, benches, a hearth, a toilet, a car park, a playground for children).

Tourism products of this kind are created not only by LAGs but also within the cooperation of other entities. That is why another project “Choose the direction. Gorlickie-Sadeckie Area” (“Obierz kierunek. Gorlickie-Sadeckie”) is worth mentioning as well. It was created in cooperation with the Gorlice, Nowy Sacz counties and Malopolska Regional Development Agency (Małopolska Agencja Rozwoju Regionalnego) and Malopolska Tourist Organisation (Małopolska Organizacja Turystyczna) from Krakow. Also in this case the starting point for creation of the tourism product was cultural and natural heritage. Characteristic traits of the gorlicko-sadecki region were used, which are, among others wooden monuments of architecture and construction, multicultural history, health resorts, traditions of oil industry and, in the category of natural values, Beskid Sadecki and Beskid Niski. “Gorlickie-Sadeckie” offer includes wide opportunities to do active, cultural and culinary tourism. Apart from walking, biking and driving trails, five proposals of thematic trips (paid) were prepared. An innovative proposal of visiting attractions of the region are dogtrekking trails, which include Stary Sacz, Gorlice and Magura Malastowska, and questing trails.

A characteristic element of the process of creation of these tourism products are intensive promotional activities with the use of many different electronic media. Websites and mobile applications are created, there is communication in the social media. It is a clear answer to the changing needs of people concerning the access to information as well as the methods of using them. Users of mobile applications can use such functions as, for example, geolocation and GPS navigation, memory of trails, thematic search (e.g. attractions, restaurants or accommodation, cultural and open-air events), educational games, discounts for the services of local entrepreneurs. They function offline and do not require an Internet connection. They are a way of widening information resources and functions of websites, or function parallel to them. Some websites include additional functions thanks to which it is possible to get to know attractions of a given place. An example are virtual walks with panoramic photographs, which were prepared both for open areas and the insides of monuments (e.g. churches and museums) and educational games.

4. CONCLUSIONS

1. Nowadays there is an increasing interest among city dwellers, especially big urban agglomerations in Europe, in spending free time near their place of living. This phenomenon is called staycation and includes one-day trips in one's city or the neighbourhood organised individually at weekends and days off work. Staycation is connected with the global economic crisis and people allocating less financial resources to travelling, and also the changing needs concerning the participation in tourism.
2. Rural areas and small towns situated near urban agglomerations have a tourist potential for the development of staycation. Local authorities, seeing current trends in tourism, undertake actions aiming at enriching tourism and recreational offer and matching it to the needs and expectations of target visitors.
3. Local Action Groups (LAGs) are very significant to the development of the offer of spending free time in rural municipalities and rural-town municipalities of Lesser Poland Voivodeship. They were created within the EU project Leader Program and are a form of partnership of the units of territorial governments, non-governmental organisations and representatives of local communities. In recent years LAGs have been very active in creation of new tourism products directed mainly to dwellers of urban agglomerations.
4. Projects realised by LAGs include organisational, infrastructural and marketing activities. They contribute to the promotion of local natural and cultural heritage in a new, attractive form. The created tourism products most frequently include thematic tourist trails (walking, biking, horse-riding, dogtrekking), regional museums and ecomuseums, organisation of cultural events or outdoor events, as well as investments concerning recreation and sport infrastructure. In this way supralocal tourism products are created.
5. The created tourism products are intensively promoted with the use of different tools. In recent years the main role has been played by electronic media, such as Internet websites with varied functions, mobile applications, interactive kiosks and social media, which is the answer to the changing needs of people regarding the access to information and using it.

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