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Development of cooperation between residents and local authority in tourism destination

Abstract

The aim of the article is to present the results of the research on cooperation between local authorities and residents in three tourism destinations in Poland. The article puts forward a thesis on key importance of cooperation between local government and residents for local development. The article researched whether there is cooperation between local government and residents in taking decisions which concern local development and whether residents are satisfied with the realisation of the tasks by local government. Authors also researched whether in areas with developed tourist function residents are aware of their participation in tourism development. Results indicate that despite cooperation of local authorities with the residents which is declared by the representatives of local government, local community does not perceive such cooperation. The residents of the municipalities are not satisfied with the realisation of local government tasks as far as fulfillment of residents needs is concerned. The results indicate therefore the necessity of work connected with the increase of residents awareness about their participation in decision-making process and the necessity of informational actions.

Keywords:

tourism destination; tourism product; cooperation; local government; residents; Poland

Introduction

Since 1990, local government in Poland has been a crucial component of public authority system. Due to its tasks and civic character it is able to maintain a close link between public authorities and the electorate. At the local level, decisions on development projects and priorities have to be based on cooperation between local authorities and community members. Therefore, both, the local government authorities and communities can be regarded as basic entities in the process of development of tourism destinations. Positive attitudes of local community members are impinging on the tourism related development decision, tourism product as well as on the attitudes towards tourists. While the locals employed in the tourism and tourism related services usually hold positive attitudes towards tourism and tourists owing to them deriving economic benefits from tourism industry, the attitudes towards tourism and tourism development from the rest of community members is

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less predictive. Yet, the local residents overall are, in the mind of visitors, an important element of the region attractiveness as they endow it with tradition, local customs and cultural identity (Nieżgoda, 2006). Due to the ever increasing awareness of the interdependence of various stakeholders in creation of tourism product, there is a need to research issues involved in cooperation between different interest groups, especially representatives of the local community (who should, at least in theory, display proactive attitude in tourism related decision making process) with residents .

Cooperation between local authorities and residents

While the issue of community involvement in tourism planning is attracting research attention for over thirty years, the relationship between the local authority and community representatives has only recently come into the focus of research attention. Most of those involved in research on community participation in tourism planning agree that local residents, most often through the community groups and associations, should be included in tourism development planning from the very outset (Jamal, & Getz, 1995; Selin, & Chavez, 1995; Fyall, 2003; Waddock, & Bannister, 1991; Bramwell, & Sharman, 1999; Araujo, & Bramwell, 2002; Augustyn, & Knowles, 2000; Bramwell, & Lane, 2000; Reed, 1997, 1999). If the decisions concerning development of tourism in a region are not made in consultation with the residents already at the planning stage, it will be more probable that the residents will be opposed to its implementation. In general, Gray (1989) argues that the acceptance of any proposal which is the result of common debate is greater if those who have to follow the rules are from the very beginning involved in decision-making process (see: Bramwell, & Sharman, 1999). However, the benefits of public participation are far greater than that of simply accepting the change. According to Williams, and Lawson (2001), community participation at an early stage of development facilitates learning about their values and aspirations. It helps, for example, in taking decisions on allocation of the money earned through tourist activities. Even wider set of benefits is acknowledged by Roberts, and Bradley (1991) who state that enabling wide participation of various stakeholders in the decision making process, including local communities, makes possible to gain knowledge about other stakeholders, acquire new skills and share ideas which, in turn, fosters understanding of regional problems and allows for generation of new and innovative solutions (see: Bramwell, & Sharman, 2000).

However, just consulting with the community is not sufficient. Lankford, and Howard (1994) have found that residents are willing to support development of tourism in a region, if they had not only an opportunity to participate in planning and evaluation process, but also they have to know that their opinions and needs are actually taken into account by local authorities and stakeholders. It is confirmed by Simmons (1994) who states that residents participation in tourism planning depends on their perceived influence on the planning process and their individual awareness of a degree to which they are having a real influence on final decisions. Their ability to influence the planning process, further argues Hernandez (1996) is determined by personal involvement, advisory support, resources and goods available to the residents.

To ensure support for the development of tourism in a region from various interest groups is not so simple. Except for many potential benefits which are connected with tourism such as economically empowering local community, decreasing unemployment rate, improving local budget and local infrastructure) residents also perceive potential drawbacks of tourist activity, e.g. noise, environment pollution, acts of violence, congestion, etc. Murphy, and Murphy (2004) think that, for a local community to get

tourism support, it is necessary to supply education about tourist industry to the residents – clearly formulated, sufficiently precise and featuring information about benefits and costs of tourism development. Many studies show that with increased understanding of the tourism industry, residents demonstrate increased levels of support for the industry. First of all, the data related to the costs of tourism development in a region should not be hidden from residents, as they are generally aware of it. Murphy, and Murphy (2004) also recommend conducting annual, independent audit of the tax revenues, employment in tourism and other effects connected with it and publishing it in the local press. It would be the best if such study was financed and managed by the institution or organisation perceived in a community as objective and neutral.

The attitudes of residents towards tourism development can be different between various destinations, as well as between community members of a destination. While early theory on community reaction to tourism development, such as proposed by Doxey (1975), suggest that the reaction of residents towards visitors will change from the early euphoria, through the apathy, annoyance and eventually antagonism, as tourist numbers swell and locals gradually lose control over the tourism development. However, the subsequent research has found out that the attitudes of locals towards tourism and tourists are far more complex (Jurowski, Uysal, & Williams 1997; Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002; Williams, & Lawson, 2001), and depend on an array of factors such as the length of residency, economic dependency on tourism, distance of tourism (activity) centre from resident's home, birthplace, residents involvement in tourism decision-making, demographic characteristics, level of knowledge about tourism and its significance to the local economy and others. It is to be expected that the level of participation, be real or perceived, in decision making process also depends on an array of factors, of which probably the age and education will be one of the most important. Namely, with the increased education residents are better equipped to gather information, make an informed decision or create an attitude towards certain issues, more eloquently express their views and opinions and better utilize various communication channels. The education is also likely to be compounded by age, as usually younger residents tend to be better educated and more apt in using variety of communication channels, especially Internet.

It is important to realise that there is no legal obligation of social participation in tourism planning and that the participation, using different consensus reaching techniques, is connected with many problems, e.g. working groups might get dominated by strong personalities which impose their views on others. It is also not easy to develop cooperation between individuals (residents) and organizations as there are those who gain direct and indirect benefits from tourism development, as well as there are entities which perceive differently the effects of the development (Bohaire, & Elliot-White, 1999). Due to this fact one should be aware that social participation on a wider scale is rather an ideal than reality. It does not change the fact that in planning tourism development should strive to ensure participation of a wide group of local community representatives, while taking into account financial and organisational constraints. It is important to secure the conditions for open and sincere dialogue.

While the knowledge of the residents attitudes is important in a decision making process, ascertaining and monitoring their attitudes can not be taken as a substitute for the community participation in the tourism development decision making process. Yet, the research on the actual level of cooperation between local government and residents in decision making pertaining to the tourism development has received only a

scant attention from tourism scholar. The research reported here aims to fill this gap, by presenting results cooperation between the public authorities and three municipalities with the different degrees of tourism development. Specifically, three research questions were formulated guiding this research and the subsequent data analysis:

- to what degree is a cooperation achieved between local residents and local public authorities in making decision impacting on or relating to the development of their communities
- to what extent residents are satisfied with the performance of the local public authorities, and
- to what extent, residents have positive attitude towards tourism and can contribute to develop it in areas they live

Study area

The research was conducted in Poland. Since 1991 tourism is becoming increasingly important for the Polish economy, generating about 15 million tourist arrivals and 55 million overnights in 2007 and increasing almost 20 percent over the last 5 years (Instytut Turystyki). In 2008, tourism has contributed 7,7 percent (directly and indirectly) to the GDP (WTTC). Most of it is generated by domestic travel, while the foreigners are mostly attracted to major cities of Poland like: Warszawa, Poznań, Kraków or Wrocław. Tourism activity enfolds mainly in the seaside area, around the lakes and up in the mountain ranges. Of those, the most popular are north Poland destinations such as Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot, Międzyzdroje, Ustka (seaside area), south Poland destinations such as Zakopane, Karpacz, Szczyrk, Wisła, Bystrzyca Kłodzka (mountain area), and Kaszuby and Mazury districts (the main lake areas).

Poland, a country of 40 million residents, is administratively divided into 2478 districts (Polish: gmina – the smallest administrative unit), belonging to 16 larger regions. Early extremely centralized public administration has, since 1990, given way to the decentralization and, in this process, the central government has handed over most of its duties and responsibilities to local government units. Subsequently, local public authorities are in charge of initiating as well as regulating local development process which, in theory at least, should be tuned to the needs and aspiration of local communities. Local government units have legal obligation to perform tasks aimed in relation to tourism development. In particular, this refers to tasks in the following areas:

- spatial planning, land management, and protection of the environment
- technical infrastructure (local roads, streets, squares, bridges, traffic organisation, water and sewage, waste management and sewage treatment, cleanliness and sanitation, electrical power and heat supply, local transport, etc.)
- social infrastructure (health service, cultural facilities, health and fitness facilities including recreational grounds and sports amenities)
- public order and fire protection.

As in other European countries, the function of a national tourism organization (NTO) is performed by the Polish Tourism Organization. The PTO is a non-government organization which has, by taking over certain functions from the central government bodies and institutions (specifically in the area of marketing and promotion), become part of the centralised tourism management system.

At the lower levels of tourism management there are DMO (destination management organizations) which provide regional/local platforms for collaboration between all entities and stakeholders interested in tourism development in a given locality – local governments, the business sector, and public/community organisations. The most important task of regional and local tourism organizations include: collecting, processing and updating information on local tourism attractions and tourism offers; designing and developing tourism offers based on local/regional attractions and integrating local communities in the process of improving tourism attractiveness of their localities.

In Poland, it is a statutory obligation to conduct consultations with the social partners when defining development policies. The input of the various social partners is ensured through their representatives who articulate their own goals and purposes. As the community is, therefore, involved in the preparation of strategic documents, it is also more ready to implement the proposed actions and projects and/or to control their implementation. It is supposed that such participatory practice will motivate community stakeholders to support development policies, take an active role in its implementation and act as a natural advocate of the recommended activities and actions. However, the preparation of local development strategies and plans in Poland is not without difficulties, of which probably the most serious one is in relation to its credibility. Namely, the time span of a local strategic development plan is about 10 to 15 years. In that time span, there are many changes ranging from the changes of the party in power to frequent changes in personnel at all levels of government, making it difficult not only to implement strategic plans but also to communicate the strategic development measures, priorities and actions to the electorate. The second major hurdle refers to the fact that the planning process in Poland, owing to the legacy of central planning, is considered to be a think of the past and is viewed with suspicion (Nieżgoda, 2006), partly obstructing the entire planning process as well as the community participation in the formulation of plans.

Methodology

SELECTION OF DISTRICTS (gminas)

The selection of geographic areas for the research is based on diversity of natural attractions. Given that natural attractions usually straddle the boundaries of territorial units, the selection process in each case began with a comparative evaluation of several districts belonging to a larger geographic region. We applied a sequential selection process whereby, in the initial stage a tourism region (a destination comprising several districts), was identified and subsequently a single district in each destination was selected for investigation. The research was conducted in three diverse (by attraction type) tourist destinations: coastal, rural and mountain. The purposive selection of districts (one in each destination), taking account of social and economic features of individual territorial units, consisted in a gradual reduction of the number of districts in the sample by applying successive selection criteria of a multidimensional comparative analysis (Table 1).

Thus the research is based on case studies of three diverse tourist districts. The following three districts were selected for investigation (representing coastal, rural and mountain destinations respectively): Ustka, Kartuzy in Kąszub region and Bystrzyca Kłodzka.

Table 1

DESCRIPTION OF CRITERIA USED IN DISTRICT SELECTION

Step	
1	<i>General:</i> the research will cover three types of tourist destinations: coastal, rural (lake districts), and mountain.
2	<i>Geographic scope of the research:</i> for financial and operational reasons (limited resources and research focus of University staff) the research is limited to provinces in western Poland.
3	<i>Determination of the role of tourism in the districts (gminas).</i> For this purpose four levels of tourism role in the districts' economies have been identified: dominating, meaningful, not significant, and marginal. It has been decided that the research will focus only on those districts where tourism is a dominating or meaningful part of the local economy (the first two levels). For this, two categories of indicators was used. The first category refers to tourism demand, expressed by tourists overnights versus district population (Schneider's indicator). The second category refers to natural features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - degree of forestation (all types of destinations except urban) - territorial affiliation with lake districts (rural destinations) - length of coastline (coastal destinations) - elevation diversity per unit of area (km²) (mountain destinations)
4	<i>Selection of regions</i> composed of several (at least two) districts sharing the same natural attractions and forming an integral whole by tourism function.
5	<i>The final selection of districts.</i> In each destination type one district (gmina) was selected for further investigation. The selected territorial unit must have the greatest potential for realising marketing activities compared with other districts in the same region. The most important selection criteria were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - income per capita in the district - investments per capita in the districts

SURVEY SAMPLE SELECTION

The sampling frame covered two groups of respondents: a) a local government representative (a purposive selection: the mayor or a person delegated by the mayor) and b) district residents with random sampling based on a simple two-stage sample selection (Churchill, 2002). A district map was divided into squares and in each square an identical number of respondents were selected by random sampling. The sample size was determined by a method based on historical evidence (the use of tables determining the sample size on the basis of intended number of analyses in sub-groups and the geographic scale of a region, based on experience of previous surveys and researches) (Sudman, 1976, after: Kramer, 1994). For empirical illustration, and given the explorative character of the research, the initial number of surveyed units (respondents) was 600, i.e. 200 in each investigated district. The research on community participation in the three Polish municipalities have taken place in September 2003 – interviews with local authorities and in December 2003 – residents survey. This was considered the most appropriate timing for undertaking this research as it was outside the main season. The socio-demographic structure of the sample is presented in Table 2. The comparison on gender, age and education with the population profile has verified with the chi-square (χ^2) test.

Table 2
**THE RESIDENT SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS IN TERMS
 OF GENDER, AGE AND EDUCATION (%)**

Socio-demographic characteristics	Districts		
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	Kartuzy	Ustka
Gender			
female	56.0	59.0	58.0
male	44.0	41.0	42.0
Age			
18-29	30.5	31.0	20.5
30-44	26.5	26,5	29.0
45-59	29.0	30,0	36.0
older than 60	14.0	12,5	14.5
Education			
primary school	22.5	19.5	21.5
vocational training	18.5	18.5	22.5
secondary education	39.0	40.0	39.5
higher	20.00	22.00	16.5

Given a sociological nature of the investigation, data was collected by face-to face standardised interviews with the use of a questionnaire. For each of the two groups of respondents a separate questionnaire was designed. It contained 22 questions divided into four subject groups: elements of the destination's attractiveness affecting residents' quality of life; existing and declared collaboration between residents and the local government; impact of tourism on district development both in the economic and social aspects (negative and positive impacts of tourism), and analysis of attitudes towards sustainable development (awareness of goals, declared actions). In the questionnaire design we used closed-ended questions, in some cases providing an open-ended response variant ("other, such as..."). The survey was conducted by trained interviewers (students of Poznan University of Economics). On average an interview was completed in about 30 minutes.

Results and discussion

In order to understand the political context in which development unfolds in these three districts, a study was conducted with the public authority representatives with an aim to ascertain what are their aims, encapsulated in their mission statements, as well as what are the mechanism through which the public participation is ensured in these three study sites (Research question 1). As could be seen from Table 3, quality of life is explicitly or implicitly made part of their mission statements and the community participated in the process of defining the mission. However, the fulfillment of the mission is difficult to ensure, as none of the three selected research site has not defined the quality of life indicators neither has implemented any research through which they would be able to monitor it.

Table 3

MISSION AND ACTIVITIES CONCERNING DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN THE THREE DISTRICTS

Districts	Mission	Public participation	QOL monitoring
Ustka	High quality of life of the residents of Ustka municipality.	yes	no
Kartuzy	Kartuzy municipality – the land of educated and entrepreneurial people who are rich with the values of the Kaszuby culture, the people who realise their dreams for the sake of local community on the basis of Christian values, good of a family and social solidarity.	yes	no
Bystrzyca Kłodzka	To achieve European level of life quality for the residents through the use of natural attractions of Bystrzyca Kłodzka municipality.	yes	no

The first aim of this research was to ascertain to what degree is a cooperation achieved between local residents and local public authorities in making decision impacting on or relating to the local development, in particular, authors wanted to know to what extent the local residents think that they influence the decisions important for local development.

As already mentioned, according to the Polish statutory obligations, during preparation of development strategies the authorities should take into account opinions of the representatives of local community, under assumption that this process would ensure that development policies reflect community goals and aspiration and, such, there is greater likelihood that such policy will be supported by the communities, implemented and monitored for its success. The local government representatives are of the opinion that this was ensured in their districts in a variety of ways (Table 4.).

Table 4

FORMS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RESIDENTS IN THE THREE DISTRICTS

Forms of communications	Districts		
	Ustka	Kartuzy	Bystrzyca Kłodzka
Presenting comments by residents in local council	✓	✓	✓
Direct, informal meetings	✓	✓	✓
Contact through the website		✓	✓
Contact through local press	✓	✓	✓
Cooperation with residents' associations		✓	

Although public authority representatives believe that the crafting of the mission statement, vision development and subsequent strategic development options have been a process where the residents have participated through a variety of communication means, the residents do not share this opinion (Table 5). This means that, although the public participation in the process of crafting strategic documents is mandatory, in practice this is poorly implemented.

Table 5

**PERCEIVED LEVEL OF INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT
DECISION BY RESIDENTS**

Municipality	% perceiving to have influence on decisions
Ustka	39.5
Kartuzy	22.0
Bystrzyca Kłodzka	10.5

As a sub-question to this one, the information on the communication channels used to participate in the decision making process was also collected via a multiple response question. It appears that those that have reported having an influence on the development planning and decision making, have participated in the meetings and discussion forums organized by the public authority, as almost 61 per cent consider this method to be the most efficient. The next most popular was the “possibility to present comments to local authorities” (38.1%) and “presenting comments in the local press” (23.4%) were the next two, but far less popular, than the meetings with officials. Comparing the answers of both groups of respondents indicates too small level of cooperation between local authorities and residents, the lack of residents participation in development strategy of districts surveyed – residents think they do not have high influence on development decisions.

Regardless whether residents perceive to have an influence on decisions taken by the public authority, they still evaluate the efficiency of the public authority in terms of steering community development in a desired direction. To ascertain a degree to which the community members are satisfied with the performance of their public authority (Research question 2), a battery of question was designed pertaining to the residents satisfaction with the performance of their local government, such as the extent to which the local government responds to their needs, the communication between the government official and residents, the extent to which the government maintain the community order and manages the education and health system and, finally, in defining development strategy.

In general, the residents of all three districts mentioned that the local authority representatives are mostly focused on satisfying their own personal needs and interests, such as gaining financial advantage (i.e. corruption), facilitating their private business or advancing their political careers. This, in the opinion of residents, was more important than working towards local community benefits (Table 6). However, in tasks relating to the environment protection, managing health, education, safety and security and developing strategies, residents are mostly polarized, with a relatively large proportion either agreeing that the local government is performing well or having just an opposite opinion. Finally, it appears that the local governments in all three municipalities were failing in relation to responding to the needs of their residents and the ways communication is enabled between them and local government officials (the former result in relation to the lack of cooperation can be confirmed). To know the residents’ needs constant communication is necessary. In practice, however, it is very difficult to communicate effectively with local community, generally because very often it is too expensive for local authorities. Communication via Internet, which nowadays seems to be very convenient and rather cheap, seems not to be sufficient as, for example, in Poland a lot of older people still do not use Internet. For Polish local governments it is still too expensive to ensure communication through traditional channels such as post or telephones. On the other hand, residents are often not interested in searching for any information from local authorities (not all residents read local press, posters and other information about what is happening in place where they live).

Table 6

THE OPINION OF THE RESIDENTS RELATED TO THE REALISATION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT TASKS

Statements	Districts	% response		
		Yes	No opinion	No
Fulfillment of local authorities personal interests (i.e. corruption, private business, political needs, favorable contracts)	Ustka	83.0	6.0	11.0
	Kartuzy	71.0	20.0	9.0
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	66.5	16.5	17.0
Local government ability to respond to the needs of residents	Ustka	29.5	5.5	65.0
	Kartuzy	31.0	6.5	62.5
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	19.5	8.5	72.0
Communication between local government and residents (i.e. personal meetings, via Internet, local press)	Ustka	26.0	8.5	65.5
	Kartuzy	25.0	18.0	57.0
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	23.0	14.0	63.0
Environmental protection	Ustka	60.0	4.0	36.0
	Kartuzy	39.0	8.5	52.5
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	43.0	9.5	47.5
Managing health, education, safety and security	Ustka	49.5	3.5	47.0
	Kartuzy	57.5	6.5	36.0
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	34.5	7.0	58.5
Crafting development strategy	Ustka	41.0	13.5	45.5
	Kartuzy	58.0	9.5	32.5
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	31.5	12.5	56.0

The residents' responses also indicate that residents in the three districts are of very different opinion when it comes to evaluation of the performance of their local government. The environment protection activity is the activity mostly noticed by the residents of Ustka (60%), among whom there is also a consensus relating to the fulfillment of the personal needs by the local government representatives. Residents of Kartuzy were among those most satisfied with the social role of their local government – maintaining good health and education system and taking good care of public safety and security, although there is still room for improvement, given that such positive role were perceived by 57% of residents. The majority also think that the government does a good job in strategic development planning, even though only about one fifth of its residents have stated that they have participated in the planning process. The reason for that could be probably the fact that residents of Kartuzy are people of a very strong local identity. They belong to the nation of Kaszubi, they have their own dialect, culture and traditions. Residents of Ustka or Bystrzyca Kłodzka are people who came to those places after World War II.

The results of the research in the three districts indicate, therefore, the necessity to work on increasing residents awareness about their possibility to participate in decision-making process (including drafting development strategies) as well as the necessity to undertake communication campaign (internal promotion). That this indeed is much needed is supported by their opinion in relation to securing communication between residents and local government. Only about one fourth of the residents in the three municipalities (26% in Ustka, 25% in Kartuzy and 24% in Bystrzyca Kłodzka) think that the local authority fulfills this task. If it is recalled, from Table 4, that all three municipalities ensure a range of communication channels for the residents and, furthermore, that all three governments claim the participation of residents in decision making process, the residents' response is somewhat confusing. It might be that local government is not putting a sufficient effort in ensuring public participation and

that the statutory obligation for stakeholder input is implemented only declaratively, without much attempt by the local government to ensure community wide input.

The residents are also dissatisfied with fulfillment of their needs by the local government. It is alarming that 72% of the respondents in Bystrzyca Kłodzka, 65% in Ustka and 62.5% in Kartuzy believe that local government does not deal with the needs of residents which is contrary to the goals stated in local development strategies. It is also disturbing to know the results which show that 83% of the respondents in Ustka, 71% in Kartuzy and 66.5% in Bystrzyca Kłodzka think that “local government deals with fulfilling its own and private needs”. In Kartuzy and Bystrzyca Kłodzka many respondents do not have their opinion on this topic which is a sign of certain lack of opinion on problems of private persons working in local government and could be the reflection of objective attitude of the respondents.

It might be also that the local governments are indeed seeking community wide participation, but that they do not have sufficient level of skills to actually ensure this participation while, at the same time, residents are not particularly keen to participate in the life of their community. However residents, as show the results of the next question (presented below), residents have positive attitude towards tourism.

In relation to the Research question 3, it is encouraging that overwhelming majority of the residents in all three municipalities think that local community could contribute to tourism development (95.0% in Ustka and in Bystrzyca Kłodzka and 87.5% in Kartuzy). It might be the confirmation of positive attitude of the residents in the three districts towards tourism development, willingness and sense of responsibility for the local development.

Table 7

THE OPINION OF THE RESIDENTS CONCERNING POSSIBILITY OF THEIR INFLUENCE ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Statements	District	Percent of answers – “yes”
Community can contribute to tourism development	Ustka	95.0
	Kartuzy	87.5
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	95.0
Community can not contribute to tourism development	Ustka	5.0
	Kartuzy	12.5
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	5.0
Friendliness and professional service	Ustka	70.7
	Kartuzy	63.2
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	65.3
Positive attitude towards tourism	Ustka	63.9
	Kartuzy	60.3
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	58.9
Education in the area of tourism	Ustka	42.4
	Kartuzy	49.4
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	57.4
Own proposals related to the development	Ustka	25.7
	Kartuzy	42.0
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	44.2
Involvement in tourist services quality	Ustka	13.1
	Kartuzy	25.9
	Bystrzyca Kłodzka	30.0

Residents in the three districts are of the opinion that they can contribute to the tourism development, especially in terms of friendliness and service quality and by being positive towards tourism development in particular. In Bystrzyca Kłodzka and Kartuzy, more often than in Ustka, the opportunity to present one's own proposals related to the local development as far as the improvement of tourist services quality is concerned (44.2% in Bystrzyca Kłodzka, 42% in Kartuzy, and in Ustka only 25.7%) were perceived as more important. It is important to stress that grass-root initiative is an important element which contributes to the local development, bearing in mind that it is the residents who know the best opportunities and attractiveness of a region, its local conditions – material and financial resources, tradition and cultural values. Even small communities have their own interests, views and visions of development, including tourism development. One should take them into account during planning and defining strategy of local development. It is also important to remember that local people are most often suppliers of services who have direct contact with a customer – tourist and the speed of reaction to the problems depends on them. Presented information, observations or just problems can be solved on condition of ensuring co-operation of the local authority with the local community.

In Bystrzyca Kłodzka it is also noted the highest share of residents who perceive tourist education as an opportunity for the residents to contribute to tourism destination development. It is quite intriguing result, remembering that it is in this destination that the persons dealing with tourism in local government administration have the most specialised education. Among the surveyed groups only in Ustka there was noted statistically significant connection between perception of the role of the residents in tourism development and employment in this sector. Summing up, one can state that residents acknowledge the importance of tourism in local development and also their own role in tourism development which lets us positively verify hypothesis 3. The study showed similarity of the answers in many issues in all surveyed municipalities.

Conclusions

This research was conducted in order to ascertain the level of participation of local communities in the planning process in general and, in particular, in the process of tourism development. In general, there is a disparity of view in relation to the perceptions of the community participation between the local government representatives and residents. Although the representatives of the local governments claim the contrary, in reality residents mostly do not see their own influence on decisions related to the municipality and cooperation of the local government with entities fostering local development. Furthermore, the residents are mostly dissatisfied with the performance of their local governments.

However, even though residents claim to have little influence over the decisions pertaining to the local development, they have positive attitude towards tourism and, furthermore, they perceive the possibility of their own influence on tourism development in the area they live in. Democratic models of development, which take into account the contribution of stakeholders which are directly interested, should not be perceived as the goal in its own right but also as a method which is supposed to ensure that negative effects of tourism development will be under control.

This lack of community participation in local decision making process can, partly, be attributed to the government lack of initiative but, there are also alternative explanations or factors that can be partly responsible for such situation, such as lack of experience in the process of democratic society development, low citizen's awareness of

the participation possibilities and the importance of their involvement or due to the social stagnation as a result of material problems and lack of ability to get adjusted to relatively short period of capitalism in which benefits are gained by active and entrepreneurial attitudes. These factors might help explain the apparent lack of responsibility of local residents for what is happening in their communities what, in turn, is the explanation for small commitment to work of local government which was elected by its residents. (Niezgoda, 2006).

Comparison of the answers of the respondents from local governments in the studied areas indicates that local governments notice “escape of young people who seek to improve their life conditions”. Therefore in local governments one could observe awareness of certain level of dissatisfaction of the residents and readiness to look for better life conditions. In Kartuzy and Bystrzyca Kłodzka there was even stressed attitude of the residents: “they don’t want to live in the area of the territorial unit but they don’t have enough resources or motivation to change the place of living”. Therefore, there is a need to introduce solutions that would lead to the increase in attractiveness of the surveyed municipalities as place of living, and activities connected with marketing orientation of the area and “orientation at the resident”.

Discussing the scope of local government tasks which results from Polish regulations, local government can be a partner for the residents. In the three districts participating in this study, however, research shows some shortages and defects due to which residents do not feel that they are partners in the process of local development. In tourism destinations, residents may have significant potential in its creation. The potential might be properly used in support, understanding and appropriate activities of local government. Cooperation of local government, entities and community, and the satisfaction of the participants of decision-taking process depend on fulfilling few conditions by the authorities such as information delivery, ensuring participation by residents in the planning process and their participation in the implementation phase as well as investing in the community awareness programs.

This study is an attempt to fill the gap in the literature in relation to the actual involvement of residents of tourism destinations in the planning process, especially in the context of the relatively recently democratized society such as is the case of Poland. It can serve as a good starting point for future dynamic research which is very often suggested for topics like cooperation/partnership. Dynamic approach is needed and can be helpful, for example, in getting to know level of residents’ participation in creating tourism strategy, their knowledge about local tourism, their awareness of benefits and costs connected with it. There is a need for more research on tourism development and cooperation antecedents in Poland and other recently democratized societies in Europe. Further research effort should be put in identifying factors that stimulate or inhibit tourism cooperation, what should be done and how to create good conditions for cooperation development in tourism destinations.

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