

Tourism as a Chance for Development of Peripheral Rural Areas within the Eastern Part of Lubelskie Voivodship

Joanna Szczęsna, Monika Wesołowska

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland

Abstract

The peripheral rural areas of the eastern part of the Lubelskie Voivodship are very attractive in terms of their natural and cultural environment, however, despite its various tourism resources, the region's potential in this respect is not fully exploited. The paper presents the main tourism resources of the discussed region and indicates opportunities for using them in various forms of tourism and as potential tourism products. Furthermore, the current development level of the tourism function in the region has been identified, as well as actions aimed at improving it.

Keywords: sustainable development, peripheral area, eastern part of Lubelskie Voivodship, tourism potential, tourism development indicator

Introduction

One of the most important contemporary concept of socio-economic development is the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development is based on three pillars: sustainable economic growth, social growth and environmental protection (Simkova 2007). Sustainable development can be considered on two planes: qualitative as well as spatial. Because of geographical, historical, political and economic conditions, peripheral areas are marked by low development. In comparison with areas located in the centre of a continent, country or region, they contend with numerous socio-economic problems. This concerns rural areas in particular (Rudnicki 2011; Tarkowski 2008). For that reason, referring to the concept of sustainable development, in the worldwide discussion, development of tourism is universally propagated. This kind of economic activity is regarded as a way to diversify employment and income of local communities and thereby to improve living standards. At the same time, as it can be often observed, development of tourism in peripheral areas contributes to preserving cultural heritage and nature (Aref and Gill 2009; Mbaiwa and Stronza 2010; Nilsson 2000; Pröbstl 2010; Simkova 2007).

The eastern part of the Lubelskie Voivodship is a historically shaped border region in the wide sense of this notion. This is the political, administrative and economic borderland between Poland and the entire European Union representing the western tradition and their eastern neighbours: Ukraine and Belarus. This is also a cultural borderland in aspects ethnic and linguistic (peripheries of the eastern and western Slavic lands), as well as religious (the meeting point of the religious influences of Rome and Byzantium) (Gnot 1974).

The Lubelskie Voivodship has a traditionally agricultural character with a low level of urbanization. Agriculture is the dominant sector of economy in this area owing to good agroclimatic conditions and the peripheral character of the region. Nevertheless, due to the fragmented structure of farms, poor technological advancement and marketability, as well as overstaffing in agriculture, average income from farming is low. These phenomena cause negative social effects among rural inhabitants. Depopulation trends are noticeable, resulting in decreased population growth and

migration of young people to cities and abroad, in consequence of lack of prospects for work and decent earnings in the country (Bański et al. 2014).

At the same time, the eastern part of Lubelskie Voivodship, owing to its complex history, has a lot of cultural monuments from traditions of many nations and religions. These cultural treasures create significant tourism potential, providing opportunities for development of various forms of cultural, leisure and active tourism. Hence, tourism is an alternative and supplementary economic sector, generating additional income in the borderland.

The aim of this paper is to present tourism resources of the eastern part of Lubelskie Voivodship and to identify opportunities for development of various forms of tourism and creation of tourism products. Another objective of the study is to determine the current development level of the tourism function in the analysed area, to indicate barriers to its progress and actions which could be taken to improve it. The research objectives have been pursued through analysis of source materials comprising scientific literature and statistical data. Development of the tourism function has been described with Baretje-Defert's indicators and the accommodation base density indicator. The research field covers five border counties of the Lubelskie Voivodship: the counties of Biała Podlaska, Włodawa, Chełm, Hrubieszów and Tomaszów.

1 Tourism resources of the eastern part of Lubelskie Voivodship as the basis for tourism development

The borderland of the Lubelskie Voivodship has a pristine and almost untouched natural environment, preserved in a number of protected areas. In the border counties of the Lubelskie Voivodship there are: the Polesie National Park and the International Biosphere Reserve "Western Polesie," seven landscape parks, protected landscape areas, numerous reserves and "Nature 2000" areas. The Lubelskie Voivodship is situated at the crossing of the Great European Valleys Zone and the European Old Mountains and Uplands Zone, which results in a considerable diversity of its landscape: from the lowland scenery of the Lublin Polesie with its marshes and lakes, through the loessial Lublin Upland to hilly Roztocze, as well as the occurrence of many fauna and flora species, including species which are unique on a European and global scale. The Bug River valley, which is an unregulated natural river surrounding the region from the east, is a highly attractive area in terms of its landscape and recreational potential. The eastern section of the Łęczna-Włodawa Lakeland, which is the recreation and leisure base for the entire Lubelskie region, lies in the Włodawa county and partly in Chełm county. In the eastern part of Lubelskie Voivodship there are also geotourism attractions—e.g., the Miocene limestone quarry in Nowiny and the site of fossilized trunks in Siedliska, Tomaszów county, or the chalk pit in Chełm, providing the basis for development of a new branch of nature tourism—geotourism.¹

Owing to the borderland character of the Lubelskie Voivodship, its location at the crossing of historical international trade and communication routes, as well as the national and religious diversity of this area in the past, the region is rich in tangible culture values, as well as historical ones, such as sacred objects, dwelling houses, farm buildings, public utility buildings, military objects, memorial places or historical greenery, and original assets of intangible culture in the form of local traditions and customs, folklore and cuisine.

According to the list of the National Heritage Board of Poland,² in the area of the five eastern counties of the Lubelskie Voivodship there are 150 temples and groups of temples entered in the register of monuments: Roman Catholic, Uniate, Orthodox and Evangelical Augsburg churches, Judaic synagogues and 21 chapels. These objects frequently have specific architecture and design, comprising a mix of elements typical of various religions. Historical cemeteries are even more diversified. Among 126 objects in the examined area, there are Roman Catholic, Uniate, Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish and Evangelical cemeteries, as well as cemeteries for various denominations

1. See: Katalog obiektów geoturystycznych w Polsce, available at http://www.mos.gov.pl/kategoria/2398_katalog_obiektow_geoturystycznych_w_polsce/.

2. See: Zestawienie zabytków nieruchomych, available at http://www.nid.pl/pl/Informacje_ogolne/Zabytki_w_Polsce/rejestr-zabytkow/zestawienia-zabytkow-nieruchomych/.

and war cemeteries of different nations and epochs. Furthermore, in the region there are 108 monuments of architecture and landscape: monasteries and seminaries, palaces and manor houses, farm buildings, military objects, gardens and parks. Other objects with the status of historical monuments are mostly farm buildings and utility buildings, for instance watermills, windmills, granaries, stables, distilleries, water turrets; individual public utility buildings, such as schools, hospitals, offices, inns, as well as a significant number of military objects, e.g. fortifications of the Brest Fortress in Biała Podlaska county and places of martyrdom, such as the Nazi German extermination camps from World War II in Bełżec and Sobibór, located respectively in the counties of Tomaszów and Włodawa. These monuments of tangible culture, very diversified and frequently of unique multicultural character, offer considerable potential for development of various forms of cultural tourism.

On the basis of the most attractive historical objects, thematic tourist trails have been created—e.g., “The trail of Orthodox churches,” “The friendship trail of the Bug River,” “The trail of Jewish culture traces,” “The trail of merging cultures” and “The historical trail,” which run, wholly or partly, through the borderland of the Lubelskie region. Furthermore, the eastern part of the voivodship has considerable potential for development of pilgrimage tourism and religious-sightseeing tourism. There are several worship centres of the local and regional range, representing various denominations, including sanctuaries of local martyrs, such as the Sanctuary of the Blessed Martyrs in Pratulin, Biała Podlaska county. The centres of the Marian cult are the sanctuaries in Kodeń, Leśna Podlaska, Chełm, Orchówek, Hrubieszów, Nabroź, Tomaszów Lubelski, Lubycza Królewska and Tarnoszyn. Among the worship centres of saints it is worth mentioning the Sanctuary of Podlasie Uniates in Kostomłoty with the only Neo-Uniate parish of the Byzantine-Slavic rite in the world, and the Orthodox St. Onuphrius Monastery in Jabłeczna.

In the counties near the border there are a dozen or so archaeological excavation sites, including the remains of so-called Czerwień Towns, characteristic of this area, which were the object of the Polish-Ruthenian rivalry in the 10th and 11th centuries. They can be an attraction for enthusiasts of historical and archaeological tourism. The rich intangible heritage of the eastern part of the voivodship, preserved in the form of local traditions, rituals, folklore, cuisine or remembrance of the past, can be explored during various events organized quite frequently in this area. Some examples are the Orthodox holiday of St. Onuphrius in Jabłeczna, the Fair in Hola, the Contest of Regional Traditions of the Bug River in Sławatycze, the Festival of Three Cultures in Włodawa, or various folk art fairs and folk music festivals. Thematic villages and homesteads are interesting regional tourism products, presenting local customs and activities, everyday and holiday rituals, folk handicraft and other crafts, but also preserving memory of important events from the history of a given region. In the border counties of the Lubelskie Voivodship there are three such villages: Żeszczynka—“Milk Village,” Masłomęcz—“Goths’ Village” and Studzianka—“Tatars’ Village.” These villages offer a whole set of services in a given thematic style.

Another cultural value of the region, unique on a global scale, is the horse stud farm in Janów Podlaski, existing since 1817, where horses of pure Arabian and Anglo-Arabian blood are bred. These horses are sold to stables throughout the world at auctions organized annually, which are one of the biggest trade and tourism events in the region. There is also a horse-riding club at the stud farm, with sports events organized several times a year. The farm is normally open to visitors and offers horse rides and hippo-therapy sessions, as well as an accommodation and catering base. The natural and cultural potential of the eastern part of Lubelskie Voivodship is big enough to create opportunities for development of very diverse forms of tourism, for example agrotourism and eco-agrotourism, weekend and holiday leisure tourism, ecological, sightseeing and nature exploration tourism, especially birdwatching.

In the eastern part of the voivodship there are 3500 tourist trails. These are canoeing, hiking, bicycle and equestrian trails, as well as car routes. Moreover, in the Tomaszów county there are professional cross-country skiing runs. Therefore, the region has favourable conditions for development of qualified tourism, especially cycling, horse-riding, hiking (including Nordic walking), canoeing and cross-country skiing. The multicultural and multi-faith heritage of the region is

conducive to development of various forms of cultural tourism, including rural-culture, culinary, sentimental, martyrological, regional, thematic and educational tourism.

2 Barriers to development of tourism in the border counties of the Lubelskie Voivodship

According to the natural and cultural assessment by Tucki (2009), over 40% of the communes in the border counties of the Lubelskie Voivodship are highly or very highly attractive in terms of natural environment, and more than 50% are highly or very highly attractive in terms of cultural values. However, significance of the tourism function in this area is rather limited, except for some communes. One of the indicators of tourism development of a region is the accommodation base density indicator, expressed as the number of accommodation places per 1 km² of a given area. For communes in the counties of the eastern part of the Lubelskie Voivodship, this indicator is very low (fig. 1). Only in 6 municipalities the indicator of group accommodation base density exceeds 9 and in the typically tourism-oriented Włodawa commune, located near Białe Lake, the indicator is at a level of 6–9, whereas in 41 there are no group accommodation places at all.

Another indicator of tourism function development is Baretje-Defert's indicator showing the number of accommodation places per 100 inhabitants of the area. Generally, this indicator is also low. It is the highest in typically tourism-oriented communes: in the Włodawa Commune—above 12, in the Susiec and Janów Podlaski communes—around 6–9 (fig. 2). According to Warszzyńska (1985) tourism in the areas where Baretje-Defert's indicator is between 6,25 and 25 has a supplementary function. Hence, there are only 3 such communes in the surveyed region, while the other communes, with lower indicators, are just in the initial stage of the tourism function development or this process has not even started there yet.

An insufficient accommodation base is one of the major problems in development of the tourism sector throughout the Lubelskie Voivodship, but especially in the rural areas. In the border counties, which are rural areas of significant tourism potential, there are only 15 agrotourism farms registered in the Polish Federation of Rural Tourism.³

In the discussed area there is also a shortage of other elements of tourist infrastructure, including sports and recreation facilities or catering establishments, especially those serving local products and dishes. There are difficulties in transport resulting from the poor condition of roads and lack of convenient bus or train connections in this area.

Another problem is insufficient use of cultural heritage. Many interesting historical objects are in bad technical condition or are not available for tourists, whereas they could substantially contribute to the tourist offer of the region. In the former case, the dilapidated objects should be renovated and revitalized for tourism purposes. Depending on capacities and needs, these objects could be turned into accommodation and catering establishments, conference rooms, museums, open-air museums or regional chambers, multifunctional culture centres adapted to organization of various events and services, education and information centres, or shops with regional products. In interesting objects

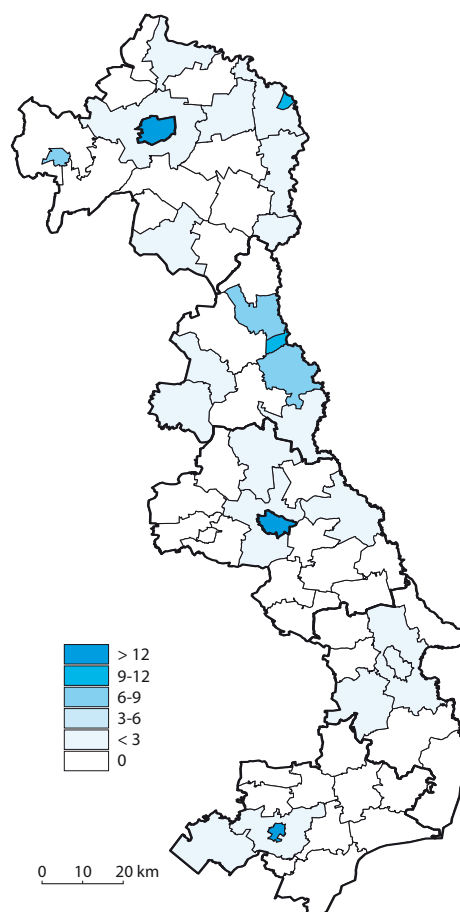


Fig. 1. The indicator of group accommodation density in communes of the border counties in the Lubelskie Voivodship

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of data of the Central Statistical Office of Poland

3. See: Webpage of Polska Federacja Turystyki Wiejskiej at <http://www.pftw.pl/>.

which fulfil other roles, the tourism function should be introduced at least to a certain degree by opening these objects to visitors or rendering other tourist services.

A shortage of diversified tourist services is one of the major problems in tourism development of the region. In this context, the above-mentioned thematic villages are positively distinguished. They have created a tourism product on the basis of the local historical and cultural heritage and they offer a range of thematically associated tourist services.

Apart from visiting historical objects and admiring nature, contemporary tourists also expect other ideas which would enable them to use efficiently the time of their holidays. The discussed region has potential, but also needs development of services in:

- education—lessons, workshops, educational trails, information and education boards, green schools teaching about the natural environment, history and culture;
- culture—exhibitions of traditional crafts and arts; music, folklore and ritual events based on local traditions, as well as historical and reconstruction events referring to important historical and cultural phenomena in this area;
- sports and leisure—sports and recreation infrastructure and activities for various interest groups; rehabilitation objects and services, spa and biological regeneration objects;
- services for tourists—tourist information; professional guide services with emphasis on local historical and cultural heritage, meetings with local artists or other representatives of the local community; availability of maps and publications about the region;
- trade—souvenirs thematically connected with the region, traditional dishes, local crafts and arts.

The social and environmental barriers to tourism development in the eastern Lubelskie Voivodship include:

- lack of experience of rural inhabitants in dealing with tourism and reluctance to take risk
- infrequent membership of tourism associations and poor cooperation between business entities
- lack of suitable training courses, encouragement and logistic assistance for inhabitants, aimed at development of tourism activities
- inadequate financial support from local governments for development of tourism and insufficient involvement in obtaining EU funds designated for this purpose
- lack of actions and initiatives of communes, aimed at creating the common vision of tourism development in the region (products, infrastructure, services)
- poor tourism marketing of the region

Conclusion

The eastern part of the Lubelskie Voivodship is an area of considerable, but largely unexploited, natural and cultural tourism potential, in which tourism can be a very good supplement to agriculture as a dominant form of economic activity in the borderland of the voivodship. Furthermore, development of this branch of economy in the discussed area can become at least a partial solution for depopulation and unemployment in the region. New jobs in the tourism sector would be able

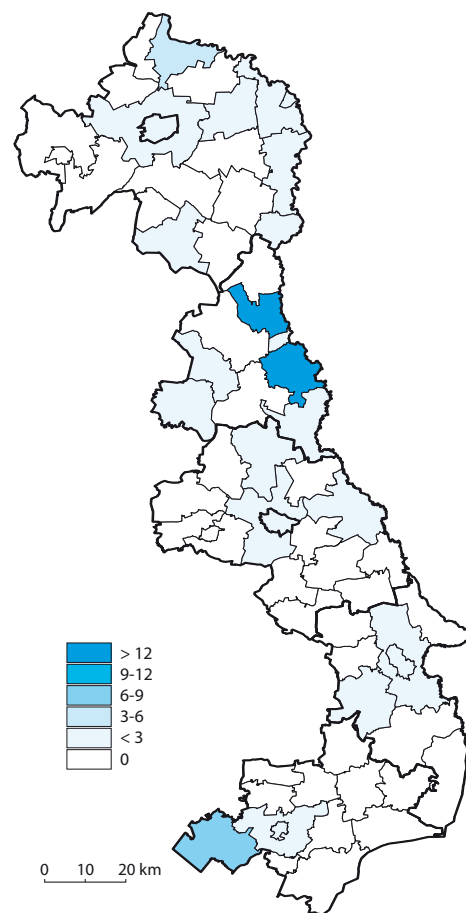


Fig. 2. Baretje-Defert's indicator in communes of the border counties in the Lubelskie Voivodship

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of data of the Central Statistical Office of Poland

to retain some young people who now migrate to cities, other regions or abroad in search of work. However, in order to enable better development of tourism in this region and a significant contribution to GDP growth, a number of actions should be taken. The first level of action is to prepare a vision of tourism development in the discussed area, as regards branded tourism products, tourism infrastructure and services. Another level of action is investment in development of general infrastructure (e.g. roads) and typical tourism infrastructure which is inadequate in the examined region. A very important element is also education of the local community on opportunities for starting a business in the tourism sector. Such training courses should present examples of good practices in development of tourism in the rural areas of other regions and states. A necessary factor in growth is extensive promotion, encompassing various media, because the discussed area is very weakly known, despite its considerable natural and cultural assets. In order to make any investments in development of tourism, significant financial resources are necessary. Communes from the border counties should become much more active in obtaining EU funds because, as demonstrated by research (Tucki and Świeca 2008), the absorption level is low, even though there have been some financial programmes directed at growth of tourism in recent years. Furthermore, all actions promoting tourism in the eastern of Lubelskie Voivodship should be undertaken in co-operation between communes, so that the entire borderland could implement a cohesive policy of the tourism sector development.

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