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The role of Generation Z's local identity in creating a sustainable tourism product

Rola tożsamości lokalnej pokolenia Z w kreowaniu produktu turystyki zrównoważonej

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to study the influence of the sense of local identity among young generation of Poles on their attitudes towards tourists, which shapes the product in the context of sustainable tourism. The authors try to solve the research problem of whether the local identity of the young generation of Poles influences their attitudes towards tourists, and whether attitudes influence the tourism product, taking into account differences in the size of the place of residence. The original approach is to study the local identity of Generation Z by residents of large cities, small towns and villages. A qualitative empirical study was conducted using the focus group interview method (focus survey) with the place attachment scale modified for the article. The research resulted in demonstration of positive impact of a strong sense of local identity on the formation of a tourism product. The research yielded new information indicating that young people have a sense of local identity and are attached to their place of residence, without any relation to the type (or size) of residence. It was observed that in smaller centres (towns and villages) young people have positive attitude towards tourists. In cities, the attitude of local population can be described as indifferent, from which the conclusion follows that the phenomenon of overtourism has not been noticed. The relationship between local identity and the sustainable tourism product demonstrated in the article indicates the need to take into account the characteristics of the local population that are not related to tourism, but affect the attractiveness of the tourism product. The role of the local community and its attitude toward tourists in shaping a sustainable tourism product is confirmed.

Keywords

local identity, tourism product, generation Z, sustainable tourism

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest zbadanie wpływu poczucia tożsamości lokalnej młodego pokolenia Polaków na postawy wobec turystów, co kształtuje produkt w kontekście turystyki zrównoważonej. Autorki starają się rozwiązać problem badawczy, czy tożsamość lokalna młodego pokolenia Polaków wpływa na jego postawy wobec turystów oraz czy postawy wpływają na produkt turystyczny, z uwzględnieniem różnic dotyczących wielkości miejsca zamieszkania. Oryginalnym ujęciem jest badanie tożsamości lokalnej pokolenia Z w podziale na mieszkańców dużych miast, małych miasteczek i wsi. Przeprowadzone zostały jakościowe badania empiryczne przy zastosowaniu metody zogniskowanego wywiadu grupowego (badanie focusowe) z wykorzystaniem zmodyfikowanej na potrzeby artykułu skali przywiązania do miejsca. Rezultatem badawczym jest wykazanie pozytywnego wpływu silnego poczucia tożsamości lokalnej na kształtowanie produktu turystycznego. W wyniku badań uzyskano nowe informacje, wskazujące, że młodzi ludzie mają poczucie tożsamości lokalnej, są przywiązani do miejsca zamieszkania bez związku z typem (czy wielkością) miejsca zamieszkania. Zauważono, że w mniejszych ośrodkach (miasteczka i wsie) młodzi ludzie są pozytywnie nastawieni do turystów. W miastach nastawienie mieszkańców można określić jako obojętne, z czego wynika wniosek, że nie zauważono zjawiska określanego jako *overtourism*. Wykazany w artykule związek tożsamości lokalnej z produktem turystyki zrównoważonej wskazuje na konieczność uwzględnienia cech ludności lokalnej, które nie są związane z turystyką, ale wpływają na atrakcyjność produktu turystycznego. Potwierdzona została rola społeczności lokalnej i jej nastawienia do turystów w kształtowaniu produktu turystyki zrównoważonej.

Słowa kluczowe

tożsamość lokalna, produkt turystyczny, pokolenie Z, turystyka zrównoważona

JEL: Q01, Z13, Z33

Introduction

'Place' differs from related concepts of 'space' or 'location' in that it is defined by meaning, and therefore content (Lewicka, 2012). In the concept of territorial marketing, 'place' is not only an area in geographical sense, but it also includes people, culture, natural and anthropogenic resources, infrastructure and any future possibilities associated with that place, which provide the basis for creating a product, including a tourism product (Kotler et al., 1993). Defining a tourism product is rooted in the assumptions of tourism marketing by Krippendorff (1971), who defined a tourism product as a complex and multi-dimensional set of tangible and intangible goods and services that provide a variety of benefits to consumers in the tourism market. Constituting the essence of the product, in line with the marketing orientation, the need to satisfy the needs of tourists provides an opportunity to achieve the goals of sustainable tourism by incorporating features in line with the expectations of environmentally conscious people and seeking an offer that is in line with the trend of sustainable development.

In works in the field of territorial marketing (Kotler et al., 1993; Szromnik, 2016; Ward, 2002), the tourism product is defined as one of the subproducts, which are specific sets of utility offered to interested groups of customers. Functional subproducts (e.g., investment product, housing product, social product, etc.), overlapping each other, create a complex, multidimensional structure and the role of sustainable tourism stems from the need to integrate tourism into the other functions that territorial units perform.

As shown by the results of research (Bartoluci et al., 2014), the compliance of the offer with the idea of sustainable tourism ensures its development into an integrated set of recognizable product. This idea is based on the elimination of conflicts between the recipients of various subproducts, which include: residents, tourists and investors (Niezgoda, 2006; 2023; Kušèer & Mihaliè, 2019; Diaz-Parra & Jover, 2021; Kruczek et al., 2022). In particular, problems arising the phenomenon of overtourism, which causes and overtourism dystopia, related to the paradox of tourism which threatens to destroy the product expected by tourists, are highlighted (Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019). One of the effects of these phenomena is the detraction of tourist attraction, which can result from the erosion of the quality of the tourist experience involving superficial and hurried sightseeing, and also the disappointment of tourists which results from experiencing the reluctance of local people (Kowalczyk-Anioł, 2023). The literature explores the causes and

determinants of residents' aversion to tourists, or even tourismphobia (Milano, 2017).

At the same time, many authors have emphasised the importance of community attitudes and opinions in shaping a tourism product that is in line with the idea of sustainable tourism (Scheyvens, 1999; Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Mak et al., 2017; Kline et al., 2019; Niezgoda, 2023). Manning and Dougherty (2014) noted that a continued direct involvement of all community groups in destinations, and the identification of values and sensitivities professed is critical to the success of implementing sustainable tourism as a development option. The role of local residents in shaping a product in line with the concept of sustainable tourism stems from their importance in sustaining the local culture, which is the basis for differentiating a tourism product. At the same time, it is worth pointing out that residents' satisfaction with their quality of life, as reflected in their contact with tourists, is of great importance for the quality of the tourism product. Preservation of both local culture and high quality of life are values supported by sustainable tourism development (Niezgoda, 2006) and, at the same time, related to the category of local identity of residents and their attitude towards their place of residence.

The analysis of phenomena resulting from overtourism has mainly focused on large cities (Kowalczyk-Anioł, 2023; Jover & Díaz-Parra, 2022), particularly port cities (Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019), whereas works that recognise the problems of attitudes of residents in smaller towns and cities are definitely fewer (Žemla et al., 2021). The first research gap spotted in this article concerns residents' attitudes towards tourists in areas other than cities (villages and small towns). The second research gap relates to the study of the identity of the younger generation, as the research to date mostly captures residents as a single, homogeneous group (local community). The third research gap concerns the relationship between residents' sense of local identity and their attitudes towards tourists, which has influence upon the tourism product.

The purpose of the article is to explore the relationship between the sense of local identity among the young generation of Poles and their attitudes towards tourists, which shapes the product in the context of sustainable tourism. Taking into account the observed research gaps, the authors assess the local identity of the generation Z divided into residents of big cities, small towns and villages. The authors attempt to solve the following research problem: Does the local identity of the young generation of Poles influence their attitudes towards tourists? The course of the argument also indirectly develops the following questions:

- 1) Do Generation Z's attitudes towards their place of residence, and their sense of satisfaction, influence the 'atmosphere' of a place, and thus the attractiveness of a tourism product?
- 2) Is there a perceived connection between statements about identity and attachment to place and sustainable tourism objectives?
- 3) Does the sense of local identity and attitude towards tourists among Generation Z representatives differ according to the size of the centre of residence (city, small town, village)?

In the sustainable tourism approach, the concept of local identity underpins the creation of an area's product. 'Place identity' is defined as a set of elements and characteristics of a place that enable it to be identified and distinguish the same from other places (Twigger-Ross & Uzzel, 1996; Hernandez et al., 2007).

References to cities are most common in the literature, and the local identities of rural residents are explored to a lesser extent. At the same time, authors emphasise that, in tourist reception areas, residents have positive attitude towards sustainable development (Niezgoda, 2006; Postma et al., 2017), but differences in views on the impact of tourism depend on their background and values (Rämet et al., 2005).

In management work, and territorial marketing in particular, the need for identity research stems from the fact that one of the most significant challenges facing contemporary organisations is the blurring of boundaries between their interior and exterior environments (Figiel, 2015, p. 20). Groups with differing needs and preferences respond differently to various forms of social communication, resulting in the need to emphasise unique characteristics and therefore, notice identities. As Tucker (2001) noted, the acceptance of tourism development often depends on whether it remains under control of local population, and on the balance between hospitality and their entrepreneurialism. This aspect is important in planning of the tourism product, where, given the prospects for development, the importance of young people as future tourism service providers and residents of attractive areas should be emphasised.

The issue of residents' attitudes and reference to tourists is presented in terms of the scale of changing attitudes of residents towards tourists, most often indicated through the Doxey Index, also known as the Irridex Index (Doxey, 1975; Szromek et al., 2020), which analyses residents' attitudes from enthusiasm, through acceptance, irritation, to antagonism (Niezgoda, 2006). An important issue, necessary for planning and managing tourism development, is the influence of various factors upon residents' behaviour,

including their age (Kruczek et al., 2022). In the tourism market and destinations, tourists' behaviours may be perceived differently by young than by older and longer-established residents. As previous research has shown (Niezgoda & Kowalska, 2020), young people seek contact with the local community to a greater extent than older people.

There is a distinction in the literature between so-called generations X, Y and Z. Pendergast (2010) calls the most recent Ys (cohort 1995–2000) the 'igeneration' (2010), but other authors refer to it as 'post-millennials' or Generation Z. This article assumes that Generation Z is the one born between 1995 and 2012 (Wiedmer, 2015; Cilliers, 2017; Salleh, et al., 2017; Moscrip, 2019).

Research methodology

In order to analyse the relationship between the sense of local identity of the young generation of Poles and their attitudes towards tourists, the authors conducted a qualitative empirical study, using the focus group interview method (focus study). The authors analysed the emotional attitude (attachment) towards the place of residence using a place attachment scale modified for the purposes of the article (Lewicka, 2012; Michalska-Żyła, 2008).

Data collection

The study was conducted within six groups of 8 to 10 participants. Respondents were young people studying in Poznań, at three universities with a tourism-related educational profile. The selection of so-called affinity groups was intended to increase the respondents' sense of security, which fosters the level of honesty that exists between them in natural settings (Lisek-Michalska, 2013). The survey was conducted in March 2023 at the universities' locations. Each discussion lasted 90 minutes without interruption, with the authors of this article acting as moderators.

To investigate possible differences in the sense of local identity, it is important to remember that some of young people studying in the city come from smaller locations (towns and villages). The selection of respondents was purposive and related to the research gaps identified by the authors. Recruitment was a two-stage process. The first stage involved the identification of the students' places of origin, and on this basis, in the second stage, the respondents were assigned to groups.

Consequently, two groups each were separated, representing the types of places of origin of students relevant to the study, according to the criterion: cities – over 100,000 residents, small towns – up to 100,000 residents, and villages – up to 15,000 residents. The decision to separate groups homogeneous in terms of the type of place of residence is justified by psychological mechanisms – interaction with people perceived as similar promotes greater openness, encourages the sharing of experiences and reduces a fear of evaluation (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

A key issue of the research conducted was to focus on the behavioural aspect of respondents' attitudes.

The research tool was a semi-structured interview scenario with a list of themes prepared to be addressed. It consisted of two main thematic parts. Part one dealt with the sense of local identity; part two with the attitudes of the younger generation toward tourists. The topics initiated by the moderator in part one were the sense of identification (who they are, who they feel they are), attitudes toward the place of residence under the influence of staying away, the sense of distinctiveness/uniqueness of the place of residence, the sense of local sentiment, the sense of local satisfaction and the sense of spatial stability. In part two, the initiated theme was respondents' attitudes toward tourism. Themes from both parts addressed the research questions posed in the paper.

Analysis and findings

The material that formed the basis for further work consisted of detailed transcriptions of the interviews, made independently and saved in MS Word. It was also supplemented by the participant observation notes taken. The research material included three key elements: the verbatim statements of the students, their non-verbal behaviours, and additional comments containing descriptions of communication events. The study in all groups proceeded according to the established scenario, and no significant problems that the authors associate with focus studies were experienced, such as the risk of groupthink, group polarization, vanity or social conformity (Oyster, 2002).

In part one, at the beginning of the survey, using the local identification scale, respondents were asked about their sense of identification, who they were, who they felt they were. Respondents were given a choice of options: an inhabitant of their locality, an inhabitant of their region, a Pole, a European, a citizen of the world, equally of each, unable to say.

In groups where members were residents of large cities, the predominant responses were that respondents felt primarily Polish and inhabitants of their locality. In the case of representatives of smaller towns, the following indications appeared first and foremost: an inhabitant of their locality and a European, while in the case of inhabitants of rural areas, the terms "I am a European" and "a citizen of the world" prevailed (Table 1).

Table 1. Scale of local identification of young Poles

Size of locality	Scale of local identification (majority of responses)	Examples of statements
City	1. Resident of his/her locality 2. A Pole	"I feel I am a Poznaner" "I feel that I am first and foremost attached to Poznan" "I immediately say that I am a Poznaner and that I love my city" "I feel I am a citizen of my country" "I am first and foremost Polish"
Small town	1. Resident of his/her locality 2. A European	"I completely identify with my locality, I praise and advertise it at every opportunity" "I feel European first and foremost, I like my town and its history, but I am planning to move"
Village	1. European/global citizen 2. Resident of his/her locality	"I feel that Europe is my home" "I don't feel attached to my locality because it is a village and I prefer the city, I think I could live anywhere" "The whole world is my home" "I like my locality, I am strongly attached to it and I like it for the vast opportunities it gives me to spend my free time and for the peace and quietness"

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

Adopting the results of previous studies that indicate the openness of young people to the phenomena of contemporary tourism (Kruczek et al., 2022; Niezgoda & Kowalska, 2020), the further part of the study asked respondents whether staying in other places had changed their attitude towards their place of residence. In response, respondents indicated that it had, and that it had influenced their perception of their place of residence. Here, positive responses were mainly from residents of smaller towns and villages. Residents of large cities, instead, mostly felt unable to state clearly whether their attitudes had changed (Table 2).

The authors then analysed the respondents' attitudes towards their place of residence, taking into account the following categories: sense of distinctiveness/uniqueness of one's place of residence, sense of local sentiment, sense of local satisfaction and sense of spatial stability (Michalska-Zyła, 2008).

In the sense of distinctiveness/uniqueness of one's place of residence, respondents were asked the question: do you feel your distinctiveness as an inhabitant of: a city/village, a region/province/country? In the responses, positive reactions prevailed (similarly among residents of large cities, towns and villages), although single negative answers as well as a lack of clear response to the question could also be observed in each of the surveyed groups: "it is difficult for me to say". Respondents were also asked whether they liked to emphasise their individuality, e.g. in other places where they lived. Here, the responses were dominated by rather negative answers, with only a small group of respondents (mainly rural residents) taking the view that if they felt their distinctiveness, then "why not emphasise it?".

Another question, as part of the survey on the sense of distinctiveness/uniqueness of one's place of residence, concerned uniqueness and pride in one's place of residence. Vast majority of respondents answered this question enthusiastically, with many statements indicating positive attitudes, including references to national identity. However, there were also negative views on the subject. Respondents' statements indicated that these mainly concerned rural residents and those people who, in the earlier discussion, did not show a high degree of attachment to their locality (question one – scale of local identification) (Table 3).

Analysing the content of the statements, it is possible to see a connection with the objectives of sustainable tourism, which include strengthening attachment to a place, the desire to care for the place of residence and the possibility of strengthening social capital resulting from the desire to stay in the region.

When examining the respondents' sense of local sentiment, it was noted that they emphasised their relationship with their region of residence and locality primarily in the context of close family ties, as indicated by members of all surveyed groups, both residents of large and smaller towns and villages. An important element from the point of view of a sustainable tourism product is the noting, mainly by the inhabitants of small towns and villages, of peace and quiet as elements that determine attachment to a locality, a sense of its uniqueness and distinctiveness. In a further section, respondents were also asked whether they were planning to move from their village. In each of the groups surveyed, there were voices indicating a very high degree of attachment to their place of residence, which results in

Table 2. Has staying in other places changed your attitude towards where you live?

Size of locality	Majority of responses	Examples of statements
City	Hard to say	"Neither yes nor no, it is difficult to define" "On the one hand yes, on the other no"
Small town	Staying in other localities changes my positive attitude towards the place of residence	"I didn't realise it before, I appreciated the intimacy of my town" "I realised that I liked my town for its size, lack of traffic jams, varied culture and the charm of the streets"
Village	Staying in other localities changes my positive attitude towards the place of residence	"The older and more experienced I get, I appreciate the charm of my village, I feel I could live here" "It's a village, contact with nature; more peaceful and quiet than a big city; now I appreciate it, everywhere's close which makes me like living here"

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

Table 3. Sense of distinctiveness of place of residence

Size of locality	Sense of distinctiveness/uniqueness	Majority of responses	Examples of statements
City	Sense of distinctiveness	High, but I don't like to emphasise my individuality	"I think my town is beautiful with its unique identity"
	Sense of uniqueness and pride	High	"I am very connected to my town, I love its history and uniqueness. It is unique and I am very proud of it" "My locality is unique, I enjoy spending time in it, I am proud of its history and culture, but I don't like to brag about it"
Small town	Sense of distinctiveness	High, but I don't like to emphasise my individuality	"The climate and the tranquillity in my locality make it unique and make me want to return there"
	Sense of uniqueness and pride	High	"It's a special place and very close to me, I'm proud of it but I don't somehow emphasise my distinctiveness"
Village	Sense of distinctiveness	High, and I like to emphasise my individuality	"I like to wander around my locality, I'm interested in its history, I emphasise mine as well as its distinctiveness"
	Sense of uniqueness and pride	Medium and low	"My locality is not special and I am not particularly proud of it" "I am not connected to my locality, there is nothing special about it, I will not return to it after my studies"

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

respondents' temporary lack of desire to move (Table 4).

As part of the survey of opinions and attitudes towards a sense of local satisfaction, an auxiliary question was also asked. Comprising of three parts, it was as follows: do you think that (a) how you live is more important than where you live?, (b) your standard of living matters more than where you live?, and (c) if you found another, better place to live, would you move there with no regrets?

Despite a strong sentiment that emerged in the earlier discussion and the lack of plans, by a large proportion of respondents, to move out of their locality, predominant responses in each of the groups surveyed were that their bond with the locality, while quite strong, was not strong enough to make respondents stay there forever. Thus, the in-depth discussion revealed a lack of a clear attitude towards the place of residence. Young Poles tend to take the view that "how they live matters more than where they live".

During the discussion, a difference of opinion between inhabitants of smaller towns and villages

was noticeable. On the one hand, there were statements pointing to the advantages of these places compared to the city, while on the other hand, respondents indicated a desire to "get away" of villages or small towns (Table 5).

The next questions concerned respondents' sense of spatial stability. The survey began by asking respondents whether they were interested in the development of their locality and whether they were taking action for its benefit. In all surveyed groups (irrespective of the size of their place of residence), responses indicating fairly high interest in the changes taking place in their place of residence prevailed, although vast majority of respondents (in each surveyed group) were unable to indicate specific efforts they've undertaken for the benefit of their own community. Additionally, respondents did not admit any desire to meet their compatriots abroad (Table 6).

The second part of the survey concerned respondents' attitudes towards tourists. During the discussion, two main positions were clarified: from very positive to an indifferent attitude (Table 7).

Table 4. Sense of local sentiment

Size of locality	Sense of local sentiment (separated categories)	Examples of statements
City Small town Village	Close family ties	"This is where I grew up, I spent all my childhood, I have a large part of my family here, my grandparents, to whom I am attached" "I grew up here and I have family here whose history interests me" "I have a great sentiment for my locality because I spent my whole childhood here, I know all the corners" "I feel attached because I have lived here since I was a child. I have my favourite places where I like to hang out with my friends and family"; "I have lived here since I was born, I know all the corners" "I have lived here since I was born, I know my way round here, I have friends and all my close family here"
Small town Village	Slow	"This is where I grew up, among nature, peace, quietness and the atmosphere of a small town. Life here is slower and more peaceful, I always feel at home because I know everything here" "I like my town for its size, lack of traffic jams, varied culture and the char of the streets" "The climate and the tranquillity make me want to return there"; "I like my village for its size, lack of traffic jams, varied culture and the charm of its streets" "I like coming back to it, the reason being the sentiment and memories of the place, but also the fact that it is attractive in terms of nature and therefore good to live in"
City Small town Village	No plans to move out of their locality	"Here I have a circle of friendly neighbours and friends, I enjoy spending my free time here. I feel that this is my little homeland and I cannot imagine living anywhere else" "I identify strongly with my locality and am unlikely to plan to move" "I love my locality and I don't plan to move"; "I always prefer to move when I go away" "I always prefer to return to Poznan when I leave. At the moment I can't see any other city to live in than this one" "I love my town and I don't plan to move, even though it's hard to find a job here" "Even though it is difficult to find a job here, I am attached because this is where my relatives live so I would like to stay here"

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

In the next part of the survey, respondents were asked whether they were happy to show their guests (tourists) around their village, which is related to participating in the development of the tourism product. Vast majority of respondents do so with great willingness and this applies to residents of all surveyed localities. Respondents' pride in their locality and pleasure in sharing its attractions with others were evident in their answers.

Respondents highlighting, in the discussion, benefits of tourism development for their place of residence pointed out the conditions that should

be met in order for their attitudes toward tourists to remain positive. The following statements can be put forth, confirming the necessity of shaping a product in accordance with the concept of sustainable tourism: "they don't bother me, we need them, but they have to be cultured", "unless they are noisy and litter, they are ok", "I like conscious tourists, I miss some culture and good manners among them". There were also statements that focused on the impact of tourists on the quality of life of residents of towns or villages visited: "Crowds of tourists cause huge

Table 5. Sense of local satisfaction

Size of locality	Majority of responses	Examples of statements
City	I could live anywhere	"I am looking for a place where I could live well, it doesn't have to be my locality where I live now" "I want to move somewhere where I will have better prospects"
Small town	I could live anywhere, but also in my locality	"Before, I had not realised how attached I was to my town. I only appreciated its intimacy after I went to study in the big city. I love my town's historic old town, pretty boulevards and the people I meet every day. I want to come back here"
	I could live anywhere, just not in my locality	"It's a small town, too small for me, so at the moment I find myself best in Poznan where I study"
Village	I could live anywhere, but also in my locality	"It's a village, with nature all around, more peaceful and quiet than the city, everywhere is near so I like living here and I don't want to move away"
	I could live anywhere, just not in my village	"It's a village and I prefer the city, I think I could live anywhere and visit my family at any time"

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

Table 6. Sense of spatial stability

Size of locality	Sense of distinctiveness	Majority of responses	Examples of statements
City	Tracking changes and developments in the city	Yes	"I am interested in its history and development, I think its golden time is yet to come" "I'm always reading about what's going on here"
	Activities undertaken for the benefit of the city	Not	
	Willingness to meet compatriots abroad	Not	
Small town	Tracking changes and developments in the town	High, but I don't like to emphasise my individuality	"When I come back I ask my family what has happened" "I try to keep up to date"
	Activities undertaken for the benefit of the town	Not	
	Willingness to meet compatriots abroad	Not	
Village	Tracking changes and developments in the village	High, and I like to emphasise my individuality	"I keep track of what is going on there" "I talk to my family about it"
	Activities undertaken for the benefit of the village	Not	
	Willingness to meet compatriots abroad	Not	

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

traffic jams and people cannot move freely, for example, on the promenade, in the streets. Then, there is recklessness of tourists, they treat the streets like a sidewalk, bring noise and dirt, prices

are increasing; they behave as if everything is due to them, as if they were the 'lords of the place', "tourists can disturb the tranquillity of my village which is a small place".

Table 7. Attitudes towards tourists

Size of locality	Attitudes towards tourists	Majority of responses	Examples of statements
City	Attitude towards tourists	Indifferent	"My attitude is indifferent to them, they visit and I don't bother them" "They are indifferent to me, they don't bother me or help me" "They are indifferent to me because I don't see them every day" "They can be both a benefit and a nuisance, I have an indifferent attitude towards them" "Indifferent; unless they bother me, they are ok" "I do not care if they are there; they can be a nuisance" "I don't care if they are, they can be"
	Willingness to show tourists around their city	Yes	"As soon as I have an opportunity I often speak to them in English and tell them about the attractions in my locality" "When I meet them e.g. in Poznan I always react nicely and try to help them"
Small town	Attitude towards tourists	Positive	"I am happy that tourists visit us and drive our local economy" "When tourists come, the city grows" "Tourists are a major source of income for local people" "They provide employment opportunities (museums, accommodation, souvenir sales)" "Tourists make us realise that this is an attractive place, worth seeing"
	Willingness to show tourists around their town	Yes	"If I have an opportunity to show my locality to tourists, I do it with pleasure" "I am glad that they visit my village, I am happy to talk to them, I would like even more tourists to come, because there is a lot to offer here"
Village	Attitude towards tourists	Positive	"We need them because we can make money on their visits" "They give us an opportunity to make money and we get better access to attractions that otherwise would be closed, unless there are tourists coming"
	Willingness to show tourists around their village	Yes	"I am always willing to help" "I am happy to show them hidden corners of my village"

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

The attachment to place shown by the majority of respondents is the basis for creating local capital and strengthening the product of a place, including the tourism product. The right attitude of local residents towards tourists allows for creation of an atmosphere of place (*genius loci*), which, while not measurable, influences the feelings and satisfaction of tourists.

It was also observed that there was a clear convergence of statements about attachment to place conditioned by connection to the region of residence and locality in the context of close family ties, silence and tranquillity rated as desirable qualities for living. These three characteristics confirm that natural and social conditions are important in shaping a tourism product in line with the concept of sustainable tourism.

Conclusions

In order to achieve the goal, which referred to the study of the relationship between Generation Z's sense of local identity and their attitudes toward tourists, seen as factors shaping the product in the context of sustainable tourism, the findings of the study were analysed in the form of a focus group interview. Taking into account the research gaps observed, the authors assessed the local identity of Generation Z by residents of large cities, small towns and villages.

Responding to RQ1 and RQ2, it was noted that the sense of local identity in the statements analysed translates into a sense of pride and a desire to share attractive qualities of the place of residence with tourists. Most of the young people

surveyed indicated a strong sense of identity and attachment to their place. Young people are eager to show tourists around the locality when they feel it is close to them and attractive to them. Thus, one can see positive impact of a strong sense of local identity on the formation of a tourist product. A slightly higher degree of attachment to the place of residence (identification with the locality of residence, a sense of uniqueness of the place, local sentiment, local satisfaction and spatial stability) was shown by respondents of smaller towns and villages.

In response to RQ3, regarding the variation in the sense of local identity and attitudes toward tourists among Generation Z representatives, depending on the size of their place of residence (city, town, village), the answer is not clear. Young people have a sense of local identity, they are attached to their place of residence, without any relation to its type. However, a clear, unambiguous positive attitude towards tourists (no overtourism effect) was noted only in smaller centres (towns and villages), whereas in large cities young people's attitudes towards tourists are indifferent (Figure 1).

Previous studies have indicated that the level of environmental sensitivity of representatives of generation Z – the one that features environmental and social awareness – may be relatively lower due to the fact that their lives are intertwined with social media, and the level of interaction with the environment (nature) is low (Samitra & Rozi, 2017). The present study did not confirm these findings, as it has been shown that the characteristics of young people can serve to shape a product in line with the concept of sustainable tourism.

Another important and new finding from the present study is that it complements the findings

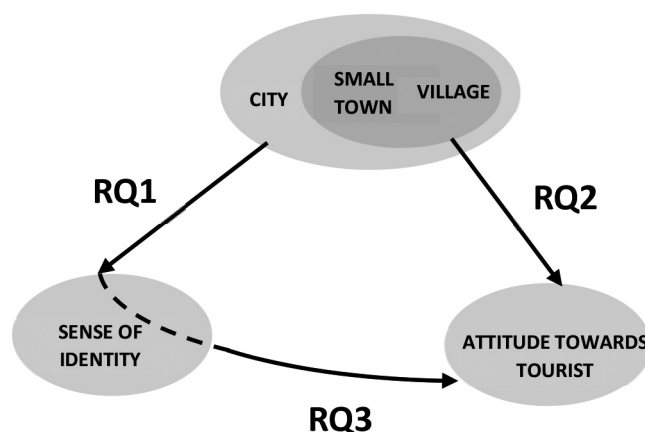
of Chicca and Shellenbarger (2018), according to which pragmatic representatives of Generation Z are open to various ideas, but rarely participate actively in social issues, and that they prefer passive activism instead. Indeed, the present study showed that not only are young people open to new ideas, but they are also willing to engage with tourists. As demonstrated by Dwyer (2018), the concept of sustainable tourism should consider attracting those tourists whose interests are in line with the lifestyle of the visited community, and positive effects according to this concept are brought about by a deeper relationship between guests and hosts.

Thus, an important social implication of the present study is to indicate positive attitudes of young people both towards tourists and, more broadly, towards sustainable tourism goals. The study showed that young respondents in Poland do not exhibit characteristics resulting from overtourism that other authors point out on the example of major tourist cities (Kowalczyk-Anioł, 2023; Jover & Díaz-Parra, 2022; Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019).

These differences also point to practical implications. According to the cited Doxey Index (1975), it can be indicated that Polish young respondents are in the first two stages of attitudes toward tourists, indicating that tourism can be an important and supported field in the market layout of a specific territory. Therefore, it is important to study the attitudes of young people, whose energy and willingness to stay can contribute to strengthening the social capital of the region.

The authors are aware of limitations of the research. One should remember that due to the chosen research method the results are not

Figure 1. Research results. Verification of the hypotheses set



Source: own elaboration.

representative, and it is not possible to estimate entire communities on the basis of the data obtained using this method. However, it was recognized that the addressed issue of consumer behaviour requires selection of a qualitative method of data collection, which allows for a more detailed explanation of the issue at hand:

obtaining background information, initiating ideas, detecting needs, formulating hypotheses. The discussion recorded can provide a basis for further more in-depth research on the topic of local identity, its impact on attitudes toward tourists, and the formation of the tourism product.

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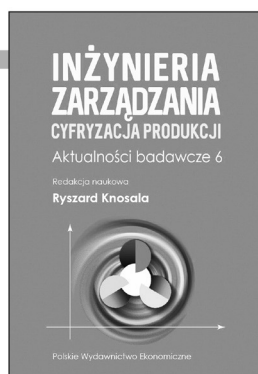
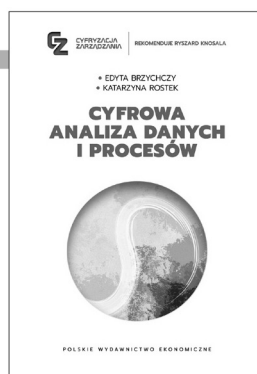
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Zapowiedzi

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