

Original Paper

The Development of Health Centres due to the Cooperation in Clusters in Poland

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Abstract

Increasing competition in the market of health tourism, enforces various forms of cooperation. This collaboration may take the form of a network-cluster, where there is cooperation between municipalities, spa companies, organizations and research centers. A good example of such activities in Poland are: Kuyavia and Pomerania Organisation of employees LEWIATAN, Cluster “Świętkorzyskie Spas”, Innovation Cluster “For Health-Sudeten” or cluster “Medicine Poland South East”.

Keywords

clusters, health centres, health centres' cooperation

1. Introduction

Travelling for health reasons is one of the oldest forms of tourism. Its roots reach the most distant past since natural resources were the only medicinal form available at that time. Contemporary health tourism is determined by numerous factors, which are created by the market, both by the producers, who are constantly improving their offer as well as by the tourists who require the highest level of service. Growing competition on the market of health tourism requires constant cooperation as well. This kind of cooperation can be achieved by different means. These can include a chain connection, where the participants are local communities, boroughs, municipalities, health resorts, a wide range of organisations, societies and universities. One of the forms of such connections in health centres can be creating a network and establishing a cluster.

Michael E. Porter (1998, p. 78) defines cluster as “geographic concentration of interconnected companies and institutions in particular field. Clusters encompass as array of linked industries and other entities important to competition”. They may include, for example, supplies of specialized inputs such as

goods, researches and providers of specialized services. This definition was introduced to economics by M. E. Porter (1970).

Porter and Kramer (2011, p. 8) also say that “No company is self-contained. The success of every company is affected by the supporting companies and infrastructure around it. Productivity and innovation are strongly influenced by clusters”.

Clusters deal not only with business but also with different institutions such as academic programs, trade associations and standards organizations. They may also involve numerous public assets in the surrounding community, such as schools and universities, clean water, fair-competition laws, quality standards, and market transparency.

Clusters can be also noticed in majority of successful and developing regional economies. Furthermore, they contribute to the development of productivity, innovation, and competitiveness. Logistical efficiency and ease of collaboration can be expanded by local suppliers. Stronger local capabilities in such areas as training, transportation services and related industries also boost the productivity. Without a supporting cluster, conversely, productivity suffers.

The perspective of cluster development in health tourism faces European Union politics which is based on clusters and aims at increasing the level of competitiveness as far as the management of the spa areas and tourist reception are concerned. Enforcing competitiveness on tourist market by the means of clusters is obtained mainly by the development of entrepreneurship and innovation on the areas which have been analysed. European Union defines cluster as a way of organising productivity due to geographical location of business entities and other organisations specialising in the same areas of business activity, developing mutual market, as well as outside market relations, which contribute to the development of innovations and competitiveness of cluster members and the area of their activity.

2. Objective, Material and Method

The main aim of the article is to examine the possibilities of the use of tourist cluster in the area of health resorts taking into consideration the offer and the action. The article deals with cluster in Galicia, which are a part of “Medicine Poland South East” as well as Kuyavia and Pomerania Organisation of employees LEWIATAN, Cluster “Świętokrzyskie Spas”, Innovation Cluster “For Health – Sudeten”.

Nowadays spas are considered as effectively working entrepreneurs who support country's economy. Furthermore, they boost local and regional development. One of the key factors ought to be the use of numerous health resources in order to develop innovative and comprehensive products of health and recreational tourism which should be fundamental as far as Polish spa industry is concerned. It is worth mentioning that spa destinations contain far many advantages than other tourist centres. Therefore, it is not necessary to build the product offer from the scratch. It is enough to develop it, to enrich and to extend it.

Market forces spa centres to improve their offer and to adjust it to the needs of clients and patients. Contemporary spas are not only health resorts, but also the centres of recreation, tourism and culture.

They also offer a wide range of attractions. Innovative ideas introduced by these centres aim at increasing income, developing consumption of the customers and taking advantage over other competitors.

By categorizing issues into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, SWOT analysis is one of the top tools and techniques used in strategic planning. SWOT assists in the identification of environmental relationships as well as the development of suitable paths for countries, organizations, or other entities to follow. SWOT analysis is a useful way to probe the general environmental position of a new trend, technology, or a dynamic industry. By using SWOT analysis, it is possible to apply strategic thinking toward development of medical tourism market in Poland.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Examples of Spa Clusters in Poland

Galician spas and health resorts are an integral part of “**Medicine Poland South East**” cluster. It is the first attempt to create marketing group which aims at common promotion and joint actions taken in order to change their image and improve their operation.

“Medicine Poland South East” cluster is the first and the most exclusive medicinal cluster in Poland. It was established in 2007. Widely developed medicinal subjects are accompanied by spas and enterprises dealing with medicine, telecommunications, and information technology and consulting. At present there are 45 members of business entities and over 20 entities cooperating from five south-eastern Polish voivodeships. These include Lesser Poland Voivodeship, Silesian Voivodeship, Subcarpathian Voivodeship, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship and Lublin Voivodeship. The cluster is further supported by various institutions dealing with business as well as universities, municipalities and government entities. The “Galician Spas and Health Centres” group working within the cluster is an excellent example of creating a regional brand. This brand aims at development and promotion of different forms of tourism in spa and health regions. Patients are offered not only medicinal treatments, but also different forms of physical activities. These include 3.000 km tourist routes, historical places, attractive monuments and historical places, nature monuments as well as other fascinating tourist attractions.

The Galician Spas and Health Centres include: Iwonicz Inc. Spa, Rabka Inc. Spa, Wysowa Inc. Spa, Rymanów Inc. Spa, Krynica-Żegiestów Inc. Spa, Kraków-Swoszowice Inc. Spa. All of them are promoted by the slogan “Galicia means health and tradition”.

Kuyavia and Pomerania Organisation of Employers LEWIATAN. On the 1st of July 2013 **Medical Tourism and The Wellness Cluster** was created. The Cluster acts on the basis of its own rules and agreement with Lewiatan, the assigned Leader of the Cluster. The main objective of the Medical Tourism and Wellness Cluster is to promote Health and Wellness Tourism in Poland and abroad, as well as to create mutual connections between: medical companies, specialized suppliers and with other companies with related business branches.

The Cluster organizes conferences and courses on Health and Wellness, participate in national and international exhibitions and fairs and acquire external funds for project realization for the cluster

members and the cluster itself. The cluster also would like to involve economical and market analysis as well as market research and marketing services for the cluster members. It wants to build marketing and sales strategies in order to gain new patients both from Poland and abroad.

On December of 2013 **Cluster “Świętokrzyskie Spas”** was established. More than 20 cluster members are entrepreneurs, research institutions, business support organizations, local governments, cultural institutions, foundations, entities engaged in the development and promotion of health-related tourism. Cluster coordinator is the Regional Center for Innovation and Technology Transfer. Cluster’s mission is to build a platform for cooperation in the field of the broader health tourism, in particular: the promotion, implementation and dissemination at the local and regional level objectives. The aim of the Cluster is to create a cooperation platform for its members to implement the common projects.

The cluster focuses on transfer of knowledge and technology in the field of innovative health-related tourism in particular from the European Union and the dissemination of good practices, to promote health-related tourism development based on local resources of raw materials, using innovative technologies. The cluster would like to promote activities for the development of tourism in the context of pro-health protection and development of cultural heritage.

Cluster “For health-Sudeten” is a platform for cooperation of diversified business entities, organizations and universities, established in order to exchange and use of a common knowledge base and skills training. This collaboration is focused in the area of health services and medical spa, tourism and education.

It contributes to enabling effective combination and use of the potential of people, businesses, universities, research units, business environment institutions and regional authorities. Area of operation of the cluster is focused on creating services, preventive health care, promotion of healthy lifestyles and environmental protection, promotion and building a positive image of the region.

The main determinants of the creation of innovative cluster initiative “For health-Sudeten” is to increase health awareness in a society that is aging at the same time, a variety of diseases and increased incidence of so-called. Diseases of civilization, increased interest in forms of wellness and health tourism and spa. Other factors underpinning the development potential of the project is the involvement of entities that have the potential in the area of unique natural resources are located in a privileged geographical location and provide excellent conditions for the provision of services and a high standard of preventive services and leisure.

3.2 SWOT Analysis of Medical Tourism Market in Poland

SWOT analysis is an analytical model that considers and determines the external environmental issues (opportunities and threats) along with internal issues of the examined organisation (strengths and weaknesses), so it allocates the proper strategy on considered situations. To perform the SWOT analysis of medical tourism market in Poland, information was gathered and relevant findings from the secondary data published in various research journals, articles, and websites and government reports.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Medical Tourism Market in Poland

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local concentration of enterprises • The cross-sectoral nature of enterprises declaring their readiness to participate in the initiative • Rich natural resources and natural spas: healing waters, geothermal waters, varied terrain, specific bioclimatic conditions, landscape parks, forests, waters • Rich cultural potential • Diversified tourism resources-database accommodation, catering, network of trails tourist and thematic paths • The centuries-old tradition of providing spa services • High level of qualifications of staff and services Medical • Well-developed ecological and municipal infrastructure as well as a network of stores, post offices, banks, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor quality of tourist services in tourist accommodation and accommodation facilities • Poor marketing of towns and products • Poorly qualified hotel staff to handle demanding tourists and travellers • Limited financial possibilities of municipalities and the local spa and tourist industry, hampering the development of investments • Poor communication accessibility of spas • No vision of action and strategy.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The growing role of research and innovation in regional programs in the context of the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy • European, national and regional programs • The interest of enterprises in the sector in raising competitiveness through access to new types of services and cooperation with universities • Attempts to undertake coordinated actions by self-government authorities in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation • Development of business support institutions • Geographical and specialization diversity of Polish spas • Tourist, cultural and sports base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of innovation policy in the region • Insufficient availability of bank credit and loan and guarantee funds • Insufficient tourist infrastructure • Lack of a clearly defined government's tourist and health policy (along with government-local government and public-private partnership) • Too slow liquidation of environmental pollution • Lack of funds for an effective tourism promotion policy at home and abroad • Lack of clearly defined in policy health instruments and mechanisms for the functioning and development of health resorts, and in particular in the field of structural changes

• Foreign investment	proprietary spa companies,
• EU funds for the development of municipalities	investment and healthcare financing
health resorts especially in the area	• Lack of system support for spas similar to those
infrastructure and staff improvement	existing in European Union countries (Italy,
• The need and social understanding for	Hungary, etc.).
health prophylaxis	
• Increased interest in tourism	
health resort in Europe and in Poland as a factor in	
the development of local and regional economy	
• Fashion for “clean air”, healthy,	
active rest and ecological food	
• Revitalization of historic Polish spa centers as an	
important element of national heritage.	

4. Conclusions

The tourism market forces the spa centres to adjust to contemporary worldwide trends in health tourism. Only the places that meet the customers' demands and provide services at the highest quality will survive on the free market economy.

The main tasks and actions connected with the development of health centres ought to include support for the spa development, tourism and sport infrastructure as well as establishing Polish health tourism both on the local market as well as European Union markets. Moreover, it is also crucial to improve customer service, to provide a wide range of trainings and courses for staff employed in health centres and health communities. Additionally, it is important to develop and support promotional activities (Koniusz & Węglarz, 2009).

The members of cluster are frequent participants of different forms of professional trainings dealing with management in tourism and marketing. These trainings enable them to use the existing resources in order to become competitive on the tourist market and to meet the changing demands of customers. Joint trainings and promotional programmes are one of the best way to use the resources and possibilities offered by tourist spas and health centres. The true success perspective, which is based on the highest quality of competition, brings together the science and educational markets, local communities. It is also one of the factors contributing to development of clusters. Clusters ought to provide the highest achievements as far as dynamic, global economic development of the country.

Making a wide range of deals and business agreements enforces the development of Polish spa centres and initiates such developments that will help to introduce innovative methods of management and investments' financing.

This kind of cooperation may turn to be the most attractive due to the easiness of forming cluster societies and possibility of establishing cooperation. The perspective of success based on the highest

quality of competition brings together the science and educational markets, entrepreneurs and local societies. Additionally, the establishment of a new cluster enhances the cooperation between these entities. Clusters are supposed to be the crucial factor influencing the achievement of high rates as far as reaching the top during the race towards a dynamic, global economic development of a region.

Some trends can be identified in the EU cluster policy. One of them is raising the quality of existing clusters and increasing the number of world clusters (world-class clusters). The European Commission estimates that there are about 150 clusters in Europe, which can be considered clusters of this type due to the size of employment, the number of entities and the area of specialization. One of the most important directions of the European Commission activity is to improve the quality of cluster management and to streamline management processes in cluster organizations and to develop competences of managers managing clusters. No less important is the internationalization of small and medium enterprises through clusters.

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