

Questing in urban tourism - between innovation and wasted potential

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.62875/tk.v2i131.1479>

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Abstract: The present study is an attempt to fill the large gap in a narrow group of publications with an assessment of the degree of understanding and actual use of this theoretically innovative form of making natural and cultural heritage accessible. The aim of the work was to confront opinions about questing in the scientific literature with the actual picture of its implementation in Poland. An attempt was made to answer the question: why, after twenty years of functioning of questing in Poland, with a long list of advantages and positive assessments of this method in the literature, questing is still poorly recognized in tourism, including urban tourism? In order to critically evaluate the image of questing in publications, desk research methods were used. Secondary source materials were analysed – scientific articles in the field of tourism and recreation from the period covering 2008 – 2023. A verification of the content of quest leaflets was carried out in field conditions and covering all towns in the Małopolskie [Lesser Poland] voivodeship. Barriers to the development of questing in Poland were documented, including, among others, a high percentage of quests outdated, impossible to implement year-round or devoid of a „treasure”. It was proven that the innovative aspect was emphasised, yet at the same time the definition as much as design principles, the notion of maintenance-free and the competition aspect - remain vague, contradictory or misunderstood.

Key words: questing, urban tourism, cultural heritage, innovations in tourism, city game, cultural tourism

Introduction

In the Marketing Strategy of Poland in the Tourism Sector 2012-2020, which emphasised the importance of the "3×E" (education, entertainment, excitement), questing was listed among the developing forms of tourism, alongside museum tourism, biographical tourism, study tourism, culinary tourism, literary tourism, film tourism and thanatotourism, among others [Droba, Przepióra 2014]. It fits into a broader group of methods of gaining the attention of the client-tourist by engaging them in direct interaction, i.e. moving away from the dominance of the transmission of content towards active participation in the co-creation of information about the tourist site being explored. A good example of organisational success in the field of questing can be found in countries that attach considerable importance to innovation and attractive leisure activities, such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Questing was born out of an approximately 150-year-old English tradition called Letterboxing, to which, in 1987, D. Clark added the treasure hunt motif while working for a non-profit organisation and looking for a way to involve young people in their

local community. Teaming up with S. Glazer, working with teachers, students and residents, they developed an integrated 'Valley Quest' programme in an area of 50 towns in the Connecticut River Valley in the states of Vermont and New Hampshire [Kazior 2008]. A comprehensive treatment of the topic of questing was presented by the aforementioned authors in a study entitled *Questing: A Guide to Creating Community Treasure Hunts* [Clark and Glazer 2004]. After almost twenty years of questing in Poland, the prevailing opinion in the literature, resulting from survey research, is that questing is not a popular form of spending free time [Tabaczyńska and Herbert 2014; Widawska-Stanisław 2018; Sala 2018]. Significantly, unfortunately, only a narrow group of works on innovative forms of heritage provision are those that include an assessment of the degree of their actual use [Tabaczyńska and Herbert 2014; Dzioban et al. 2017; Dolińska et al. 2018]. The first pilot studies of the degree of satisfaction with participation in questing are appearing [Dolińska et al. 2018], which show that this method has a narrow circle of faithful recipients. Many respondents declare that they are willing to participate for the first time. At the same time, however, a significant group indicates that they have tried it and are no longer interested.

According to Deli Clark and Steven Glazer, experts in the field of questing, an interesting quest is one that, in turn: has a well-hidden "treasure", is a good form of fun, its passage may be a challenge, is solvable, reflects the commitment of the authors, leads through an interesting area, has intriguingly written clues, tells an interesting story, and its repeated passage allows one to discover something new. A selection of qualitative criteria, out of the nine listed, is reviewed in this study in the Polish urban tourism setting.

The research covered both the product itself in the form of quests (leaflets), the image of this method of providing access to natural and cultural heritage in scientific literature, as well as the actual status of questing in the cities of Lesser Poland. In the field dimension, attention was paid, among other things, to the location of the start, the presence of the treasure and its form, the degree of updating of the tasks and their solvability, and the degree of updating of the directional clues. With the subject of the study outlined in this way, the aim was to juxtapose the obtained image of questing in the scientific literature with the actual level of its implementation in the field. An attempt was made to answer the question: why, with the long list of advantages of

this method of making heritage accessible suggested in the literature by its enthusiasts, is questing still poorly recognised in tourism, including urban tourism?

K. Czarnecka (2016) points out that the word quest is not yet listed in general dictionaries of the Polish language and also signals the lack of unambiguous solutions concerning the word's variety. Czarnecka (2016) defines a quest as an appropriately composed text describing a way to follow a certain route, not marked in the field, or a leaflet or other type of card containing the text, or a tourist route described in a special way, which can be followed by completing certain tasks. The latter meaning, of a quest as a route, is treated by many authors of publications in the context of a tourist product. In Poland, mobile quests are also created, in the form of mobile applications, available, for example, for smartphone users, not covered by the research for the purposes of this study.

Material and methods

Field work was carried out in November 2022 - June 2023 in 35 towns of Lesser Poland Voivodeship, out of 37 town centres selected for the research, in which quests officially published on the following websites were functioning in the researched period: bestquest.pl, questing.pl and questy.org.pl. In the period of the research quests from the mentioned websites were functioning in 59.7% of towns in Lesser Poland Voivodeship, and the highest number of them was in Krakow (20), Chrzanów (3), Gorlice (3), Olkusz (3) and Zator (3). In two centres no fieldwork was carried out due to the temporary suspension of the quests' functionality noted on the mentioned websites. The total number of leaflets verified in the field was 75 out of 84 selected for the research. The group of quest leaflets not included in the analysis included the aforementioned quests temporarily suspended, as well as those selected for research, but removed from the websites by the guardians or authors while they were in progress. A verification of the content of the leaflets was carried out in real field conditions in terms of the marking of the starting point (no correct location, unclear directions, etc.), descriptions influencing the solvability of the tasks and movement along the route (what does not agree in the field with the content of the leaflet, what impact does this have on the solvability of a given task and the ability to move to the next waypoint), the envisaged form of the treasure and its actual presence (no box, no seal, seal incomplete, damaged, seal is there but it is not

possible to nail it because there is no ink, approximate number of entries in the notebook), explanations of deficiencies obtained in the field, e.g., at facilities, i.e., obtained not from the author or quest supervisor. The results of this verification, carried out by the author of the study and fifteen trained observers, were recorded in a standardised form (il. 1). Those completing the evaluation form after the fieldwork, on the same day, checked the website (where the quest flyer was located) to see if there was any information about shortcomings in the quest, lack of solution, temporary lack of treasure, etc.

II. Brak aktualizacji treści w terenie z ulotką questu, niezgodność treści w ulotce z sytuacją terenową

Numer wersu	Opis problemu: 1. Co się nie zgadza w terenie z treścią ulotki? 2. Czy i jaki to ma wpływ na „rozwiązywalność” danego zadania? 3. Czy i jaki ma to wpływ na możliwość przemieszczenia się do kolejnego punktu trasy?
24	„Kieruj się na prawo, na zielone błonie” – Quest jest całoroczny, zimą nie jest zielone, informacja błędna, jednak łatwo odnaleźć to miejsce.
25	„Park z fontanną mamy” – zimą fontanna nie działa, zlokalizowanie jej jest utrudnione, ale możliwe dzięki dalszej treści
28	„Wskrziesiciel Krynicy w bujnych drzewach tonie” – w zimie drzewa nie są bujne, ale nie utrudnia to zlokalizowania wskrziesiciela.
33	„Gdy miniesz łabędzia z dowolnej strony” – nie udało się go odnaleźć, kolejne wersy pomogły obrać dobry kierunek.
35	„Jest tam buk czerwony” – zimą nie jest czerwony, jednak nie utrudnia to jego lokalizacji.
89	„Na kostce brukowej wybierasz prawicę” – pod warstwą starych liści i śniegu, ciężko odróżnić zwykłą ścieżkę od kostki brukowej, jednak łatwo się domyślić, o które miejsce chodzi, nie uniemożliwia to dalszego rozwiązywania.
102-103	„Za nim budynek „IT” przez ciebie szukany. Wejdz więc do środka, spisz litery zebrane.” – Niestety drzwi budynku były zamknięte, nie dało się wejść do środka. Przy rozwiązywaniu questu w listopadzie pojawia się problem, nie da się go dokończyć i odebrać pieczętki. Quest całoroczny - informacja błędna.



VIII. Wyjaśnienia wykazanych wyżej braków, uzyskane od opiekuna questu wskazanego w ulotce questu:

Wyjaśnienia według wskazanych danych w ulotce. W przypadku telefonu – do trzech prób połączeń, a w przypadku e-maila – do dwóch wysłanych e-maili i 10 dni oczekiwania na informację.

Odpowiedź opiekuna questu: „Dziękuję za wnikliwą analizę questu. Tak to niestety jest, że questy tworzy się w naszej strefie geograficznej z myślą o jakiejś porze roku. 99% naszych turystów korzysta z tej gry terenowej w okresie wiosna-lato-jesień. W okresie zimowym nie wszystkie wskazówki są czytelne ale dotychczas turyści traktowali korzystanie z gry w zimie jako większe wyzwanie. Dotychczas nie mieliśmy żadnych skarg związanych z realizacją tego questu”.

II. 1. Excerpt from the quest evaluation sheet

Source: Own elaboration

In the group of chamber methods, the desk research method was used for the purposes of the study. An analysis of documents - secondary source materials, which

constituted literature related to the use of questing in Poland, was carried out. In order to carry out a broad, systematic literature review, 34 works were finally selected (29 Polish-language and 5 English-language), indicated in Google Scholar and found in the literature lists of items indicated by GS. The search terms were "questing", "quest" and "questing trails" in Polish and English as of 30.11.2023. The aim of the selection of databases and search terms was to find a wide pool of publications, which, however, entailed limitations, for example, the selection of the term 'quest' meant that some articles without reference to questing issues were excluded, moreover, works in which questing was only a side thread were removed, while issues related to gamification, urban games, geocaching, etc., were also removed. The analysed works were narrowed down to journal articles, conference papers and monograph chapters published between 2008 and 2023.

The above research was complemented by participatory and structured observation conducted by the author during workshops and on quest routes as a questing instructor, author of quest leaflets, and organiser of field games between 2017 and 2023.

Results

In the course of the fieldwork carried out, problematic situations in the implementation of questing in the cities of Lesser Poland were noted, potentially influencing the later image of the method in the evaluations and opinions of tourists.

According to D. Clark and S. Glazer's [2004] guidelines, an interesting quest is one that, among other things, has a well-hidden 'treasure'. The presence and form of the treasure are the threads most often mentioned in the comments of people who completed the quest and evaluated it on Internet portals or in analogue logbooks. In 83% of the quests prepared in the towns of Małopolska, the presence of the treasure was envisaged as an integral part of the stamp/seal, and only in 7% did the quest leaflet not provide for such a route ending (tab. 1)(il. 2).

Tab. 1. Presence and form of treasure in the leaflets of Lesser Poland urban quests (75 leaflets)

Treasure in the form of a stamp/seal	Virtual treasure	Treasure in the form of a massed symbol in the field	Another form of treasure [e.g. listening to a bugle call]	The treasure is not provided for
64	2	2	2	5

Source: Own elaboration

Wracaj tą samą drogą. W pierwszą w prawo skreć.
Kawałek w dół do ulicy Mickiewicza teraz pod.
Centrum Kultury, Sportu i Turystyki jest z lewej.
To tu Krajowa Szkoła Stolarska mieściła się drzewiej.

Później były tu inne instytucje, w tym kino.
O muzeum stolarstwa niestety słuch zaginął.
Naprzeciw **U R Z A J N I A S I B** z herbem nad wejściem.
To Radwan. Idź w lewo, jeszcze nie na przejście.

W stronę rynku. Na murze z lewej jest tablica mała:
T O B A R Z E T W O P R Z E D C I O T Kalwarii tutaj działa.
Obok jest zebra – tu przejdź na stronę drugą
I na wprost Sądową idź chwilę niedługo.

Gdy skreś w lewo. Ty skreś z nią także.
Dojdziesz do pawilonu meblowego, a jakże!
Zwróć uwagę na zielony budynek po drodze –
Jesteś przy dawnej żydowskiej synagodze.

Przy wejściu do pawilonu odczytaj tablicę:
Ten **200 224 451 10 25 18** powstał w rocznicę
100-lecia założenia cechu rzemieślniczego
Przedsiębiorców z Kalwarii zrzeszającego.

Możesz tu oglądać kalwaryjskie wyroby
W rozmaitych stylach, zależnie od mody.
Siedzioba Cechu także tutaj się znajduje.
Dziś blisko 300 rzemieślników reprezentuje.

Główną ulicą idź w lewo znów do rynku.
Po drodze stań przy jeszcze jednym budynku:
Jest tu dawnych narzędzi rzemiosła wystawa.
Warto na nią wstąpić – to ciekawa sprawa!

Hasło questu:
S K R Z Q V R A N K A I A R M I
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17
P V S I A kod: $424 \times 2 + 42 + 20 - 100 = 3827$
18 19 20 21 22

Miejsce na skarb:

Masz już skarb? Graj dalej!

Wejdź na **www.questy.org.pl**:
• załóż konto i dodaj do niego ten quest
• korzystaj z 600 questów w Polsce
• zdobywaj odznaki questowe
• pobierz aplikację z questami tutaj =>

Zdobądź odznakę
PTTK Questy –
Wyprawy Odkrywców

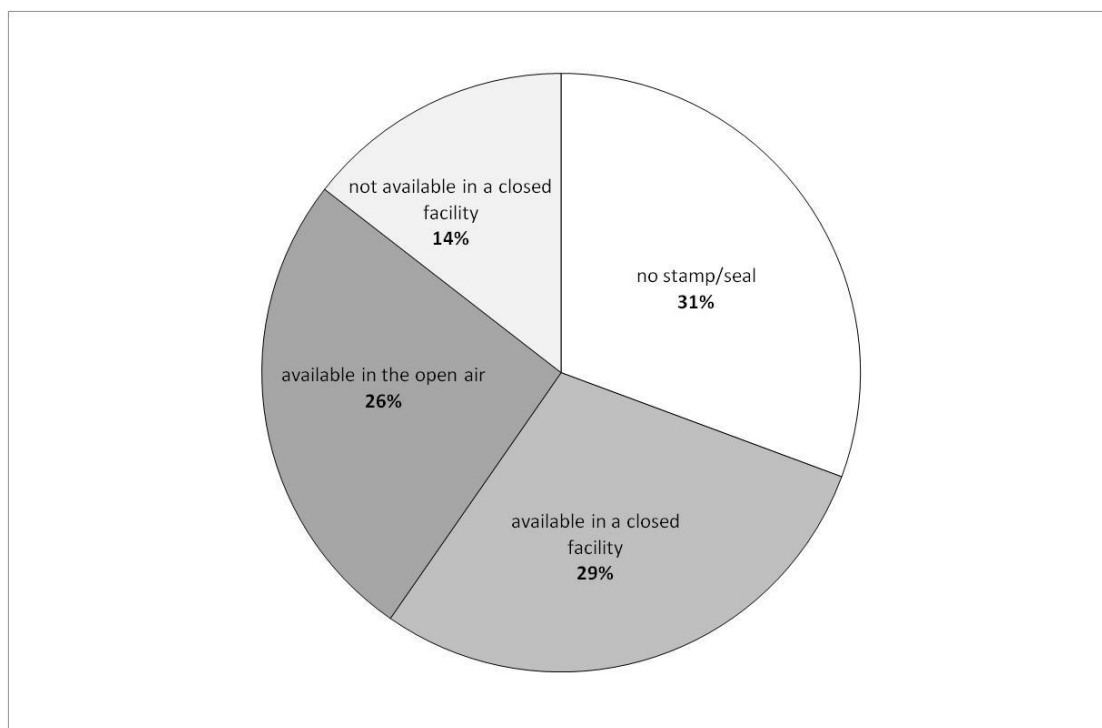
questy
WYPRAWY ODKRYWCÓW

questy
Księga Questu
LOGBOOK

questy
Sukces mebli
u strop kalwarii!

Il. 2. Sample excerpt from the quest flyer with the finalizing treasure and Stamp
(phot. W. Warcholik)

However, during fieldwork in Małopolska's towns and cities, it was shown that in 45% of the Małopolska quests the presence of the treasure was not recorded or the treasure was inaccessible, because the site where it was hidden was closed (il. 3).



Il. 3. Availability of treasure in Lesser Poland urban quests in 2023

Source: Own elaboration

Field verification showed that in 93% of the analysed cases the starting point of the quest route was unambiguously determined and that there was a small number of errors in the descriptions of the puzzles and directional clues (tab. 2). The adoption of average error values per leaflet is not methodologically justified. It was confirmed that there are numerous error-free leaflets and very few examples of descriptions that make it completely impossible to reach the end of the quest route. Classification of the quest into the category "unsolvable" is very difficult to specify, as it can result, among other things, from the impossibility of solving individual tasks as well as solving the final password, which can often be obtained without having all the puzzles solved. In the case of incorrect directional clues, in most cases reaching the treasure was possible based on clues from subsequent tasks, the map, etc.

Tab 2. Errors in the leaflets of Małopolska city quests (75 leaflets)

Incorrect description that affects the solvability of the task	85
Incorrect description that does not affect the solvability of the task	59
Incorrect description which makes it difficult to continue to move correctly	43
Incorrect description that does not affect further correct movement	34

Source: Own elaboration

Errors in terms of directional clues were influenced by, among other things, street names that did not exist, i.e. not updated in the leaflets, information provided on information boards. In the case of the boards, it seems important to consider two alternative solutions - frequent updating of the content in the leaflets or not including quests based on objects with a potentially short period of operation in the field. It is important to note that the authors of the leaflets do not assume that the tourists will participate in the questing in winter, in bad weather or after dark, which unfortunately does not inform the clients about the difficulties connected with it in the leaflets. The authors do not assume that the solution to the quest or the directional cue is not visible in fog or snow conditions, and the guardians of the "year-round quests", after a telephone contact, are surprised that the tourist undertook the effort of solving the quest in winter. There were also examples of quest keepers being unaware of an outdated leaflet. In the situation of identified errors, feedback from guardians about the lack of complaints proves that there is little interest in questing among tourists not only in periods outside the strict tourist season. Numerous examples of sections rich in content related to the topic of the quest were noted, as well as long sections that were uninteresting and poor in tasks, allowing for efficient use of the tourist's time. The comments also noted the so-called "couch" sections, i.e. tasks that can be solved without the need to be present in the field. A separate problem, requiring a separate study, is the language aspect of the leaflets. Very numerous examples of "forcefully" maintained rhyming, sentences thus deprived of sense were noted. An interesting observation in the course of the work carried out for the purposes of this study was the information obtained from the quests' supervisors, when contacted in the event of problems with obtaining a stamp/seal or the lack of sufficient clues to solve the quest. They reported that it was the first time they had encountered the situation of solving quests in winter or that the quests were not designed to be completed in winter, after dark, etc. (and such information was not present on the website or in the leaflets).

After analysing the literature related to the presence of questing in Poland with the desk research method, it was found that in more than half (59%) of the examined works the authors consider this method to be innovative. The most important observation of the desk research was that as many as 41% of the works dealt with the phases of questing, but only 12% of them included any aspects of the post-launch

phase, i.e. updating the content, the activities of the quest leader, etc. The authors of these works also considered the method as innovative.

Discussion

In studies on questing in Poland, there is a noticeable lack of consistency in the description of the method and indirectly in the understanding of its essence, manifested in defining questing as a field game [Jalinik 2013; Pawłowska 2014; Rogowski 2016, Warczyńska 2016; Dolińska et al. 2018, Widawska-Stanisław 2018; Sławinska and Sapała 2023], an educational outdoor game [Połucha and Žukovskis 2015; Dzioban et al. 2017], a variation of an urban game [Sławinska and Sapała 2023], a form of off-road game similar to a game of toss [Likhtarovich and Szustka 2013; Kasperska 2014; Sala 2018], or a tourist game [Żyto 2018]. Authors also use the phrase 'questing games' [Mączka and Kozak 2017] or questing is defined as a type of field game similar to an urban game [Droba and Przepióra 2014]. Questionable differences between city games and questing are sought in the educational element or suggest that while the main purpose of questing is to familiarise participants with elements of cultural heritage, in city games this is not necessary. However, in the literature it is commonly believed that also outdoor games are a combination of sightseeing, educational, active recreation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage functions [Tzima et al. 2021; Gómez-Ruiz et al. 2021]. A group of authors believe that questing is confused with field or urban games [Kaganek and Kurek 2016] and that by its form it only refers to patrol games or scouting trips, but is not a synonym for them, or a one-off urban game that requires the involvement of many co-organisers in its preparation [Wilczyński 2011]. According to W. Warcholik [2019b], a quest is not a field game, urban game, etc., as it does not bear the signs of competition. The remark that in quests the participants' task is to solve puzzles set on their route and they have to do it in the fastest possible time seems unjustified [Kaganek and Kurek 2016]. The approximate time given in the quest leaflet is mainly of organisational importance, giving the possibility to plan the tour of the space, the logistics involved in moving from the 'treasure' point to the starting point, where the car is parked, etc. [Kaganek and Kurek 2016]. What is puzzling from the point of view of the tourist service is the lack of communication information of the treasure place (of course without giving a specific location in order not to cancel out the effect of looking for a box, a stamp/seal) in the vast majority of quest leaflets. An interesting

view on the subject of competition in the context of questing is presented by A. Warczyńska [2016], locating it only in digital versions, where tasks appear on the monitor when the device "clicks" on the correct location and such a system can award points for correctly solved puzzles and for the time of passage. In another perspective, this author points out that additional incentives for the realisation of questing routes are badges, e.g. PTTK National Tourist Badge [Warczyńska 2016]. As a fundamental difference between questing and an urban game, some authors of studies consider the premise that an urban game is generally a one-off event and it requires the involvement of many people at a given time, while questing can be treated as an independent product, not requiring supervision and control by the organisers [Droba and Przepióra, 2014; Banasik and Fiszer, 2014]. Other, difficult to justify attempts to define the differences are claims that the preparation of a quest is more time-consuming than a game, requires much more knowledge about a given area or that a quest can be completed at any time [Banasik and Fiszer 2014].

As mentioned above, an important criterion included in the 'interesting quest' guidelines [Clark and Glazer 2004] is the assumption that the quest is solvable. This fact results not only from the precisely outlined puzzles and directional clues in the leaflet, but also from the field accessibility of the objects they are based on. Authors of studies on questing write that a quest can be passed at any time [Banasik and Fiszer 2014], and reaching the weather-protected boxes [Sala, 2018] is an excellent antidote to boredom, even during bad weather [Smalec 2015]. Only a few authors of studies suggest that questing is more attractive during favourable weather conditions [Dzioban et al. 2017]. It is difficult to say from where the authors derive the information that quests make it possible to explore a given place all year round [Smalec 2015], and that the routes are available almost 24/7 [Warczyńska 2016].

The form of the finalisation of questing and the description of the treasure itself is presented very differently in the literature, including. as: a prize box [Pietrzak-Zawadka and Zawadka 2015], a place for a surprise or treasure [Czarnecka, 2016], a box [Smalec 2015], a chest [Kazior 2008], a small weatherproof box [Sala 2018], a sealed box [Sala 2018], a box/box with a stamp/seal [Wilczyński 2011; Banasik and Fiszer 2014; Połucha 2015], a stamp/seal with a representation symbolising a given quest [Pawłowska 2014; Pietrzak-Zawadka and Zawadka 2015; Smalec 2015; Czarnecka 2016; Sala 2018], or finally a hidden treasure chest where

the treasure is the stamp/seal [Warczyńska 2016]. An important issue in the context of the accessibility of the field sites and, above all, of the "treasures" is to verify that the quests are indeed independent of the working hours of the institutions where they are hidden. A closed space entails limitations: the participant of the game has to reckon with the hours of access to the site and the possible cost of the ticket. Questing then loses the value of full freedom [Czarnecka 2016]. In the case of Małopolska urban examples, the methodological correctness of the development of the content of the leaflets in terms of the accessibility of the objects on the trails should be emphasised. As shown above, although the authors of the quests planned the presence of treasures in 43% of the leaflets in closed objects, i.e. those that are not generally accessible 24/7, only 14% of such cases turned out to be inaccessible during the field verification. This confirms the results of previous work, for example for Krakow, where only one Krakow example suggested taking the route during the working hours of a library facility relevant to the scenario [Warcholik 2019b].

In the vast majority of studies on questing, authors draw attention to its 'unmanned', or autonomous nature. The prevailing statements are that a guide is not needed to walk the trail [Likhtarovich and Szustka 2013; Pietrzak-Zawadka and Zawadka 2015; Mączka and Kozak 2017]. The quest's autonomy is seen as an embodiment of the 'guide yourself' principle [Wilczynski 2011; Polucha 2015], i.e. do it without supervision or control by the organisers [Czerska 2016; Smalec 2015]. This means that, in contrast to a city game, a developed questing trail does not require further maintenance when it is made available for independent exploration by all interested parties [Wilczyński 2011]. However, it should be remembered that the authors of individual questing trails become responsible for the participants of the game, among other things for their safety. The responsibility also shifts to the care of the treasure chest [Warczyńska 2016]. Repeated statements are that once developed questing scenarios it is enough to publish them and encourage independent exploring by all those interested [Droba and Przepióra 2014] and that the quest requires practically no maintenance, it works on its own and without interruption [Banasik and Fiszer 2014], as it then works on its own, without people who have to operate it [Wilczyński 2011]. However, it could hardly be more misunderstood that this method of sightseeing, education, active recreation, and heritage promotion is usually documented by so-called 'dead quests' [Warcholik 2019a]. Few authors conclude that

the quest's autonomy does not exempt quest keepers from the need to update and check the trail [Przysiężna et al. 2014; Warcholik 2019b]. They emphasise that it is the task of the guardians to check the contents of the box in which the treasure is hidden and to verify that there is a stamp/seal with a pad and ink, a notepad, a pencil [Przysiężna et al. 2014; Warcholik 2019b](il. 4, il. 5). It is necessary to check the quest route for changes that have occurred on it that could affect the successful completion of the route and the finding of the treasure [Przysiężna et al. 2014]. For example, as W. Warcholik [2019b] has shown, in the case of the quests developed in Kraków, this problem has been minimised by the fact that all 17 examples have clearly defined guardians, with at least one form of contact (phone, email, website) given in the leaflets. The routes are under the care of foundations, museums, libraries, landscape parks, schools, cooperatives and private entities. A model example of this phase of the development and implementation of questing was given by A. Warczyńska (2016) - the Wielkopolska Quests series - created by the Provincial Public Library and Cultural Animation Centre in Poznań. Each route, before it received the graphic design of the series, was verified in the field by the questing consultant of RPLCAK. All quests that were qualified for the series were placed on the website www.regionwielkopolska.pl. The guardians of the individual quests verify the paths several times a year and check the condition and availability of the treasure chest. Quests in which the chest is systematically destroyed and the guardian fails to fulfil his/her function are removed from the database until the route is made available again.



Il. 4. Example of an object with a need to be removed from the quest flyer due to a change in accessibility (Kraków, Bronowice) (fot. W. Warcholik)

A - the moment the quest is launched, B - current situation (2023)



Il. 5. Example of an object with the need to change the content of the quest leaflet due to a change in its features (Kraków, Mydlniki) (fot. W. Warcholik)

A - the moment the quest is launched, B - current situation (2023)

Innovations, understood as new forms of tourist attractions (e.g. field games, questing), are specific to tourism, originated in its field and have practitioners and tourism organisers as their authors [Olearnik 2015]. Many authors of studies on questing in Poland consider it an innovation. If understood mainly as an implementation of a new product, significantly different from products previously introduced to the tourism service market, questing can indeed be considered in terms of marketing and organisational innovation [Mączka and Kozak 2017]. According to Pawłowska [2014], the design and provision of a questing trail is a product innovation - creating new sightseeing opportunities or expanding those already existing in a given place, e.g. by complementing the network of tourist and cultural trails. Another issue is marketing innovation, as the trail enables the promotion of local cultural heritage in an unconventional way. Establishing cooperation between those responsible for tourism development at the local level in the public, private and

social sectors, as exemplified by the decision to implement the questing method, will be an organisational innovation. Alongside the fact of questing as an innovative tourism product [Pawłowska 2014; Połucha 2015], there are statements that it is a kind of innovative way of activating tourists and more broadly - people interested in exploring selected regions and objects [Czarnecka 2016], an innovative form of active outdoor education [Likhtarovich and Szustka 2013], an innovative and attractive tool for territorial marketing [Droba and Przepióra 2014], one of the latest trends in tourism popularisation [Połucha 2015].

Authors of studies on questing assume that the creation of cultural and historical questing trails in Poland is a good example of multilateral cooperation of local governments, individuals and associations at the local level, whose aim is to popularise cultural heritage, so important for the development of cultural tourism [Mączka and Kozak 2017]. These include local action groups, cultural institutions and local governments, representatives of the creative industry, questing trainers, tourism organisations, associations working for local development, and tourism base managers [Pawłowska 2014; Przysiężna et al. 2014]. Volunteers are also involved - regionalists, animators, people with exceptional knowledge of the cultural heritage of a place, its history, traditions or folklore. A tourist guide, for example, can help with the selection of themes and sites and with consultations on historical and cultural content, as well as take part in the testing of the quest, the creation of the narrative and the selection of materials [Mikos von Rohrscheidt 2014, Brykalska 2019].

Authors of studies clearly emphasise that the creation of quests is a process in which representatives of the local community can participate [Pietrzak-Zawadka, Zawadka 2015], starting with the youngest children, through youth or student groups, up to adults [Kazior 2008; Pawłowska 2014]. W. Warcholik [2019a] reports that 63% of the analysed flyers were people directly related to the locality - residents, members of associations, local action groups. Thanks to quests, it is possible to see the potential of one's surroundings and start acting for the development of the local environment. Moreover, such action deepens the sense of identity and pride in one's place of residence [Wilczyński 2011]. The most positive effect comes from the intergenerational cooperation necessary during the process of creating quests, which creates mutual understanding and respect [Kuba, Tyczyński 2018]. Many times, the essence of place marketing activities is the search for *genius loci*, or the spirit of the

place [Wilczyński 2011; Jalinik 2013; Warcholik 2019a]. It is often on this that all strategies or regional brand differentiators are based.

The level of the above-mentioned, emphasised by the authors of the studies, multifaceted cooperation of local self-governments and individuals and associations at the local level in the context of the popularisation of cultural heritage, requires detailed research. The preliminary field verification has shown numerous examples of lack of basic knowledge about the functioning of the questing route among the entities responsible for providing the quest, or more precisely the treasure, providing directional clues, etc. There were also cases of quest leaflets being removed from the websites during the course of the research, after contacting their caretakers. This testifies both to a previous lack of interest in updating them on the part of the authors, the aforementioned local community and institutions, and indirectly to a questionable interest on the part of the tourists themselves, who would also probably have pointed out existing deficiencies.

Conclusions

In the face of increasing tourist and recreational pressure, there is a need to try to effectively channel tourist and recreational traffic away from the overcrowded destinations. As G. Gołoś [2013] postulates, quests and off-road games, among others, can be a tool for this type of intervention. It should be considered reasonable to undertake opinion surveys on new forms of cultural tourism [Dolińska et al. 2018], such as questing, slum tourism, urbex, esoteric tourism, geocaching. What needs to be looked into is the frequency and choice of methods of conducting such research, as the currently available results, that testify to the positive reception of questing, are mostly based on the opinion of people with very little knowledge of questing and its principles, often after their first encounter with it.

Ł. Wilczyński [2011] included six phases of a quest creation model: selection of the group (volunteers, guardians, stakeholders) → training on how to create quests → selection of places and the leitmotif of the quest → quest tests, corrections and promotion → quest layout, preparation of maps and narration → research on the place (talks, interviews). The results of the literature search and field verification of the leaflets of Malopolska city quests indicate the necessity of modifying this model to

introduce a very important seventh phase, which would include “modification”, or an update of the quest’s content. The limited functionality of the quests verified in the field in the course of this study points mostly to mistakes made by the quests’ authors and caretakers after their launch. Emphasising the phase of quest creation proposed in the model will allow us to eliminate the misinterpretation of the feature of questing that often appears in the literature, i.e. its unmanned nature.

Questing had a chance in Poland to become a branded tourism product, as Jalinik [2013] wrote about, pointing out how important the very process of preparing a tourism product is - carefully, without haste, with the possibility of dedicating a certain amount of time to each of its stages. Among other things, the 2022 and 2023 surveys showed examples of carelessness in the selection of treasure sites or even its absence in numerous quests, errors in the content of leaflets due to a lack of updating. Field verification of quest leaflets showed and confirmed earlier observations of poor promotion of this form of tourism, lack of interest of tourism entities in creating trails, availability of leaflets almost exclusively in digital version. Repeated in the literature statements that questing encourages tourists and local people to discover the values of the nearest area or that the result of these activities is mainly a marketing tool used to promote specific values and attractions were not strongly confirmed in the case of Malopolska's cities.

In the course of the conducted work new research threads emerged, not included in the above considerations, but indirectly resulting from them, such as the necessity to examine the causal connection between the scarce interest in the use of questing by city guides and its free-of-charge status, which does not bring tangible financial benefits to the service market. Wider research is needed into the issues of the language quality of questing leaflets, the use of cartographic materials and, more broadly, the educational aspect of questing. This need is a consequence of a very broad group of questing leaflet authors' competences, expressed by the authors of questing studies even by the statement "anyone can develop a quest". The fact, that the method, which, according to the literature, has been tested mainly in student groups and has not been verified in Poland in other age groups, is proposed to school groups and quests are often used by educational institutions in order to introduce the region, should be considered as worrying. There is a need for an extensive analysis of the texts of quest leaflets in the contexts signalled by Czarnecka [2016], i.e.

pragmatic, cognitive, compositional and stylistic, in order for them to be an effective tool for making heritage accessible.

The above considerations are a contribution to the discussion on the functioning of the method of providing access to natural and cultural heritage in the cities of Lesser Poland, but the results of the work cannot be generalised to other areas, including non-urban areas, to which, according to many authors of the studies, questing is mainly dedicated.

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Questing w turystyce miejskiej - między innowacją a zmarnowanym potencjałem

Abstrakt: Opracowanie stanowi próbę wypełnienia wyraźnej luki w wąskiej grupie prac z oceną stopnia zrozumienia i faktycznego wykorzystania questingu - teoretycznie innowacyjnej formy udostępniania dziedzictwa przyrodniczego i kulturowego. Celem pracy była konfrontacja opinii na temat questingu w literaturze naukowej z faktycznym obrazem jego realizacji na terenie Polski. Podjęto próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie: dlaczego po dwudziestu latach funkcjonowania questingu w Polsce, przy długiej liście zalet i pozytywnych ocen tej metody w literaturze, questing jest nadal słabo rozpoznawalny w turystyce, w tym w turystyce miejskiej? W celu krytycznej oceny obrazu questingu w literaturze wykorzystano desk research. Zanalizowano materiały źródłowe o charakterze wtórnym - artykuły naukowe z zakresu turystyki i rekreacji z okresu 2008 – 2023. Przeprowadzono następnie weryfikację treści zawartych w ulotkach questów w warunkach terenowych wszystkich miast województwa małopolskiego. Udokumentowano bariery rozwoju questingu w Polsce, w tym m.in. wysoki odsetek questów niezaktualizowanych, niemożliwych do realizacji całorocznie, czy pozbawionych „skarbu”. Wykazano podkreślanie aspektu innowacyjności, ale równocześnie nieprecyzyjne, sprzeczne lub błędne rozumienie definicji, zasad projektowania, bezobsługowości i aspektu rywalizacji.

Słowa kluczowe: questing, turystyka miejska, dziedzictwo kulturowe, innowacje w turystyce, gra miejska, turystyka kulturowa