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Tourist destinations in the light of senior citizens' memories

Abstract. The aim of this article is to present biographical narratives about tourist destinations retained in memories of seniors from the period of their youth, i.e. the 60s, 70s and 80s of the last century. The author's intention was to retrieve those distant memories during narrative interviews with respondents and use them to reconstruct information about tourist destinations. The respondents were not asked any specific questions about their holiday memories and were allowed to choose what they wanted to recall. The preferences revealed during the interviews resemble contemporary trends. It can therefore be concluded that despite the passage of time and all kinds of changes that have taken place over several decades, tourists are invariably attracted to the same destinations.

Keywords: tourism, recreation, tourist geobiographies, tourist activity, tourism product, choices

JEL Codes: L83; Z13; Y91

1. Introduction

The aim of the article was to obtain biographical narratives about tourist destinations retained in memories of seniors from the period of their youth, i.e. the 60s, 70s and 80s of the last century. Tourist destinations selected by the interviewees were compared with choices made by modern-day tourist to determine if preferences in this respect have changed over time. The author hypothesized that these preferences have remained largely the same despite the passage of decades.

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Tourist traffic can be defined as a voluntary movement of people looking for a temporary change of environment and rhythm of life. Tourist traffic is associated with a specific area, direction and period. Until 2020, tourism was a rapidly growing industry with huge profits.

Much of tourist traffic was often the result of spontaneous decisions made by tourists who did not always opt for officially recognized tourist destinations. Most tourists organized their own form of transportation to get to their selected destinations. Therefore, apart from aggregated statistical data, information about specific tourist destinations was obtained directly from respondents selected for the study. Because the period in which the respondents made decisions regarding tourist destinations is in the relatively distant past and is not covered by any type of official statistics, the author relied mainly on accounts provided by the respondents. It should also be noted that in the 60s, 70s and 80s many trips, especially those abroad, which were officially described as tourist trips, were in fact undertaken for commercial purposes.

2. Literature review

Following Krzysztof Mazurski and Mirosław Mika, the article focuses on recreational tourism, and a tourism region is defined as part of the physical space, which is or can be visited by (Mazurski, 2009, p. 7, Mika, 2014, p. 19). Michael Hall defines tourism as a form of temporary mobility with both temporal and spatial dimensions (Hall, 2009). According to Stephen Williams, tourism is a complex concept, covering not only the temporary movement of people to destinations that are disconnected from their everyday places of residence, but also the organization and course of their stay, activities, and facilities and services that are necessary to meet their needs. A tourist is defined as a person who makes a trip, for business, pleasure or education, at the end of which they return to the starting point, usually home (Williams, 2003, p. 3). According to the World Tourism Organization defined a traveler “as someone who moves between different geographic locations for any purpose and any duration” (*International Recommendations...*, 2010: 9). James Clifford uses the term ‘travel’ to describe various, more or less voluntary, practices of leaving home to go somewhere else. Such a displacement may be for a material, spiritual or scientific purpose. In both of these definitions, Podemski recognises the social and humanistic aspects of traveling, emphasizing that travel involves movement (Podemski, 2004, p. 7).

Bogdan Włodarczyk believes that research on tourist traffic is difficult because it is impossible to completely register this phenomenon and official statistics are only collected about registered accommodation facilities. For this reason, it is

necessary to use data from various sources, which should complement each other (Włodarczyk, 2011, p. 9).

According to Marek Kozak, tourism develops faster in places selected by tourists on account of their cultural values and well-developed tourism infrastructure, while natural values are of less importance (Kozak, 2008, p. 38). However, destinations are selected by tourists seeking to satisfy their needs, which is an important factor that stimulates spatial mobility and tourist behavior. Also, the choice of destinations is important in the analysis of tourists' spatial behavior, because each trip is a source of utility for the traveller. Also, previous experiences determine tourists' choices of destinations for future trips (Mika, 2014, p. 27-29). In other words, positive physical and mental experiences from past trips encourage tourists to return to the same place in order to experience those feelings again.

Marek Nowacki believes that tourist activity is driven by the search for intrapersonal authenticity, which can be triggered by feelings related to self-realization or bodily sensations. Sunbathing is an example of a tourist activity that evokes a sense of authenticity resulting from bodily sensations. On the beach, the body is relaxed and not subject to social or superego restrictions or controls. The routine of everyday existence is replaced by a state of relaxation, entertainment, spontaneity and fun, i.e., authenticity in an existential sense. In turn, the desire for self-fulfillment is what drives people to undertake adventure tourism, such as sea sailing, paragliding, parachuting, mountain climbing. However, for many people, holidays remain a way to create or strengthen family ties (Nowacki, 2010, p. 13). Because memories of vacations spent together are associated with strong emotions, they are retained for a long time and are often recalled during family gatherings, usually while viewing photos taken during the holidays. In this way, memories of tourist trips provide an insight into a person's world of tourist experiences.

Because such memories tend to fade and be forgotten, it is so important to catch these fleeting moments of a tourist's geobiography and capture them in photos. For Podemski, photos are a way of reporting reality and an expression of power, knowledge and appropriation of the photographed object. Photographing may seem like an objective reflection of reality, but, in fact, is a way of interpreting it and assigning meaning to it. Anyone can take a photo, and the desire to take photos affects the course of a journey. It often determines where people stop and what they look at. In this way, a journey is a strategy for producing a collection of photos, and can be treated as a form of commercializing individual and family memories. It seems that tourists take pictures in order to remember (Podemski, 2004, p. 81). The incentive for taking pictures is that they are tourist attractions, which, according to Nowacki, include all things that interest and pulls tourists from their homes (Nowacki 2000, p. 112-113). We can distinguish three stages of a tourist experience: the preparation phase – including the search for and purchase of a suitable offering as well as any other preparations before the departure

(consumption); the consumption phase – from the moment the tourist leaves the house to the moment of return; and the phase of memories – the so-called “product echo”, which takes place long after consumption has ended (Kaczmarek, Stasiak, Włodarczyk, 2002, p. 49).

In 2020, Grzegorz Godlewski predicted that in the long term tourism would become the strongest sector of the global economy, with countries spending more resources to promote their tourism potential in order to take advantage of it (Godlewski, 2020, p. 127). However, these predictions did not take into account the collapse of tourism as a result of the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic throughout 2020. As Bartłomiej Walas and Zygmunt Kruczek note: “The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically affected the entire supply chain in the tourism industry, [...] causing a financial breakdown for many companies” (Walas & Kruczek, 2020, p. 94). As Seyfi, Hall & Shabani observe, many countries, “in an effort to contain the advancement of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, many states have introduced unprecedented peacetime measures ranging from border closures and travel bans to the suspension of visa exemptions, as well as internal mobility restrictions, including full lockdowns and quarantine for incoming passengers” (Seyfi, Hall & Shabani 2020). Therefore, 2020 was, in many respects, completely different from all previous years, also as regards tourism.

3. Data and the method

Data for the analysis covering the period 1960-1980 were collected between 2017 and 2019 during biographical interviews. The autobiographical narrative interview method, developed by Fritz Schütze (1983), is a coherent methodological and analytical approach, which is based on certain epistemic assumptions and theoretical framework (Każmierska & Waniek, 2020, p. 11). Biographical information is collected in order to answer questions posed by the researcher. In the process of biographical reconstruction of the interviewee’s life, the researcher looks for factors and important motives. A narrative interview enables the subject to present experiences from specific phases or areas of life in the context of their entire life experience (Helling, 1990, p. 16-17).

The author conducted 17 interviews with senior citizens of Łódź, over the age of 65, who were selected from among her circle of family and friends. The interviewees were asked to talk about their life in general. In the actual analysis parts relating to holiday trips were selected from those biographical stories. As a result, out of 17 interviews, only fragments of 8 were used as research material that could be used for analyzing tourist and recreational activity. The author focused on the period when the narrators started going on tourist trips as adults to the end of the

1980s. One narrative was illustrated with photos obtained provided by one of the interviewee. The other narrators either did not want to share their private photos or did not have any photos from their tourist trips from that period because they had destroyed them.

4. Results

The first interview covers the period of three decades (1960s-1980s.) The interviewee is a woman, born in 1941:

(1) “We used to have a Fiat 126P, and later we bought a Zastava and we would often go on trips to nearby forests to pick mushroom (Fig. 1). Once, my husband and I went to visit his family, who lived in the former USSR in the town of Postawy. [...] My daughter and I went on vacation to the Polish seaside, to Chłapowo, Władysławowo (Fig. 2), and to a forest campsite near Głowno. I also liked going to the mountains (Fig. 3). When I was younger, I would travel with my friends, and then with my daughter (Fig. 4). The trip to Głuchołazy is the most pleasant of my memories. We almost always spent holidays together with my friend and her children.”

The second interview was conducted with a woman born in 1942:

(2) “When it comes to spending time, we would spend most of our holidays either in the Masurian Lake District or on the Sulejów Reservoir, because we had our own sailboat, so we would alternate between sailing holidays and holidays abroad. We’ve been to different places in Bulgaria, Italy, Croatia, Prague, Vienna, so there were many different trips. We went to different places in Italy three times.”

The third interview was carried out with a woman born in 1946:

(3) “Our parents would send us to summer camps or to our family. Then, while I was already working, I went on holidays financed from the Employee



Fig. 1. A car trip to the forest (1980)

Source: private photo archive.



Fig. 2. A trip to the Baltic Sea (1975)

Source: private photo archive.



Fig. 3. A trip to the mountains in my youth (1963)

Source: private photo archive.



Fig. 4. A trip to the mountains with my daughter (Głucholazy 1979)

Source: private photo archive.

Holiday Fund, and later I could also afford to travel abroad, to countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania. We also travelled to my husband's family, to the village of Grabina in the commune of Zadzim,¹ where we would help on my grandma's farm. In 1969, we went to Dresden. In 1971 we were on vacation in Ustka, and in 1973 – in Kołobrzeg. [...] In 1982, we bought a plot of land in Florentynów near Konstantynów Łódzki, where we went at weekends. [...] We also visited a natural habitat in Chrzastawa, which is a beautiful area surrounded by forests and lakes. [...] In 2007, my husband and I went to the sanatorium in Aleksandrów Łódzki for rehabilitation. In the following years we also spent time in Sopot and Mrzeżyno.”

The fourth interview was given by a woman born in 1941:

(4) “When I was still working, I would always spend my summer holidays in Ustka, because my workplace had a house and an area fenced in with thujas. It felt like we were with the family. Once I also went on holiday to Germany.”

The fifth interviewee was a woman born in 1942:

(5) “My first trip was to Minsk² in the USSR, I was around 30 then, it was an individual trip. The following year I went to Romania, and a year after that – to Hungary. [...] I went on vacation when I was alone. [...] And after the divorce, I was in an open relationship with R., who was a military man, so we went to places where they had military bases, such as Waplewo, Mielno, Ustka and others, but I don't remember now. I went to Slovakia for New Year's Eve, then we spent another New Year's Eve in Austria.”

The sixth interviewee was a woman born in 1949:

(6) “[...] when we were still working, it was possible to take 3-4 days off, including a Saturday, and a Sunday and we would go to Hungary. We didn't go there for tourism, but we travelled as tourists, taking some things you could sell there, so first you had to buy some products in Poland that were in demand in Hungary. [...] Now, every year we go to Turkey professionally, more or less every month, to buy clothes. In the summer we have only a three-month break, from May to August. In addition, we go on vacation. [...] When our son was 3 years old, we went to Władysławowo, then to Łeba, and then somewhere else, to Międzyzdroje. [...] Once we went to France, that was about 20 years ago, we returned in a car that we had bought there. [...] Oh, and then we started going on holidays abroad. We've been going every year. We have been to Turkey, we have been to Spain and France. We also travelled to Hungary before. We mostly go to Turkey, because we like it very much and we feel very good there. It's not just because I go there to

¹ A village 50 km west of Łódź.

² Since 1991, Minsk has been the capital of the sovereign Republic of Belarus.

buy stuff, it's really very nice. I mean the food and also it is a beautiful country, we always choose the all-inclusive option. We can afford it. And this year, for the first time after all those years, we went to Krynica Morska."

The seventh interview was conducted with a woman born in 1916. It should be noted that the narrator was 102 years old at the time of the interview, so some details of her memories may not have been entirely accurate.

(7) "After my grandson grew older, I could spend my free time how I wanted, so I visited my family in Skarżysko Kamienna and Starachowice. Apart from that, with my middle daughter, I went on 10-day trips abroad. I've been to Italy, France and Germany."

The eighth interviewee was a man born in 1949:

(8) "I would like to go somewhere, on some foreign trips, but I don't know foreign languages and I'm a bit afraid. Yes, I have been to Berlin, Prague, Budapest, Copenhagen, Malmö in Sweden, but all those trips were organized, guided tours. [...] My wife and I like to just go away, we go somewhere every year, often twice a year. This year we are looking forward to a stay in a sanatorium. [...] But I suspect that when I return from the sanatorium, we will go to the seaside for a week or two. Basically, we go somewhere every year."

The summary of destinations mentioned during the above interviews is presented in Table 1. The regions mentioned by the narrators are divided into those located in Poland and those located abroad. All foreign destinations are located in Europe.

The destinations mentioned by the narrators are shown in Fig. 5, which contains a map of Poland divided into provinces.

5. Discussion

According to statistical data about domestic trips published by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, there were 45.9 million domestic trips in 2017, which is 5.5% more than in 2016. Like in the previous years, the majority of those trips (28 million) were short (2-4 days), accounting for 61% of the total. The most visited provinces included Pomorskie (13.5%), Małopolskie (13.1%), Mazowieckie (12.0%), Zachodniopomorskie (11.5%) and Dolnośląskie (7.4%). The average length of stay was 8.5 nights for long-term trips and 2 nights for short-term trips. Tourism and leisure are the official reason of 57.8% of long-term trips and 29.5% of short-term trips (*Coraz więcej Polaków aktywnych turystycznie!*, 2017).

Table 1. List of tourist and recreational directions visited by the narrators from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s

Narrator's number	Destination	
	Poland	abroad
1	Chłapowo (Pomorskie Province), Władysławowo (Pomorskie Province), Głowno (Łódzkie Province)	Belarus (Postawy)
2	Giżycko, Mazury (Warmińsko-mazurskie Province), Sulejów, Zalew Sulejowski (Łódzkie Province)	Bulgaria, Italy, Croatia, Czech Republic (Prague), Austria (Vienna)
3	Grabina (Łódzkie Province), Ustka (Pomorskie Province), Kołobrzeg (Zachodniopomorskie Province), Florentynów (Łódzkie Province), Chrzastawa (Łódzkie Province), Aleksandrów Łódzki (Łódzkie Province), Sopot (Pomorskie Province), Mrzeżyno (Zachodniopomorskie Province)	Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Germany (Dresden)
4	Ustka (Pomorskie Province)	Germany
5	Waplewo (Warmińsko-mazurskie Province), Mielno (Warmińsko-mazurskie Province), Ustka (Pomorskie Province)	Belarus (Minsk), Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria
6	Władysławowo (Pomorskie Province), Łeba (Pomorskie Province), Międzyzdroje (West Pomorskie Province), Krynica Morska (Pomorskie Province)	Hungary, Turkey, France, Spain
7	Skarżysko-Kamienna (Świętokrzyskie Province), Starachowice (Świętokrzyskie Province)	Italy, France, Germany
8	Spa and seaside towns	Berlin, Prague, Budapest, Copenhagen, Sweden (Malmö)

Source: own study based on the interviews.

Compared with destinations mentioned during the interviews (see Table 1), one can partial overlap regarding Pomorskie, with Zachodniopomorskie being more popular with the interviewees.

According to the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, the foreign countries Polish tourists visited the most frequently in 2017 included Germany (2.4 million), Italy and Great Britain (1.0 million each), Greece (0.72 million), Croatia (0.71 million) and the Czech Republic (0.7 million) (*Coraz więcej Polaków aktywnych turystycznie!*, 2017).

Some of these countries were also mentioned by the respondents (Germany, Italy, Croatia and the Czech Republic). It seems that despite the passage of over



Fig. 5. A map of Poland showing tourist destinations mentioned by 8 narrators

Source: own study based on the interviews.

4 decades, preferences of Polish tourists regarding foreign travel have not changed much.

According to data provided by the Polish Chamber of Tourism for 2019, Turkey and Greece were the most frequently chosen destinations of foreign holidays. These two countries were visited by over 20% of travel agency clients. Other countries popular with Polish tourists include Bulgaria, Spain, Egypt, Tunisia, Albania, Italy and Croatia. The last one is most often chosen by tourists who organize their stays on their own. 2019 saw a rise in the popularity of destinations that had experienced a decline in recent years, such as Turkey, Egypt and Tunisia (*Zagraniczne wakacje...*, 2020).

As in the case of domestic destinations, foreign destinations popular with modern-day Polish tourists also partially overlap with those chosen by the interviewees: these include Turkey, Bulgaria, Italy, Croatia and Spain.

6. Conclusion

The case study described in the article shows a small fragment of personal tourist experience recalled by the interviewees. Tourism, by its very nature, is a changing and unpredictable socio-economic phenomenon. However, the tourist destinations presented in the article, visited by the interviewees in the period 1960-1980, partly coincide with destinations chosen by modern-day Polish tourists. Why do people representing different generations keep visiting the same places? Obviously, because they are as attractive as they have been for decades, and because they are located in Europe and, therefore, are relatively affordable. One obvious difference between the period in question and modern times is the ability to move freely across Europe that was seriously limited in communist Poland. This explains why holidays in Poland were by far the most frequently selected type of tourist or recreational trips. However, the research sample (8 interviews) was not representative and any more general conclusions about this topic would have to be supported with much more data.

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Destynacje turystyczne w świetle wspomnień seniorów

Streszczenie. Celem artykułu jest uzyskanie narracji biograficznych o miejscach destynacji turystycznych, które pozostały w pamięci seniorów z lat ich młodości, czyli lat 60-80. XX wieku. Zatem cel artykułu polegał na odtworzeniu tego, co pozostawiło w pamięci narratorów taką wartość, która została zrekonstruowana podczas fazy przypominania w trakcie wywiadu i przekazana badaczowi. Posłużono się metodą wywiadu narracyjnego, a dane źródłowe pozyskano z pierwotnych wypowiedzi, w których z założenia nie wypytywano o kierunki podróży, pozostawiając do decyzji narratorów to, o czym opowiedzą w trakcie przypominania sobie przebiegu całego

swojego życia, ponieważ człowiek w swoim życiu przemierza przestrzeń i zapisuje ten szlak we własnej pamięci. Uzyskane wyniki dotyczące eksplorowanych miejsc turystycznych pokrywają się ze współczesnymi kierunkami. Wnioski z przeprowadzonych badań są takie, że choć ludzie się zmieniają i następuje wymiana pokoleniowa, to jednak dążą oni w swoich destynacjach turystycznych do tych samych atrakcyjnych dla nich miejsc niezależnie od czasu.

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka, rekreacja, geobiografie turystyczne, aktywność turystyczna, produkt turystyczny, wybory



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