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ADAM JEZIEFSKI\*

## Managing reputation on TripAdvisor – a case study of Cracow’s hotel market

**Abstract.** The aim of the study described in this article was to establish if there are any patterns in the way different Cracow hotels manage their online reputation by responding to online user reviews. Reputation was analysed by means of quantitative variables representing some dimensions of reputation. Characteristics of selected hotels were investigated to show how they influence the way in which hotels respond to online reviews posted by hotel guests. 1327 replies to over 4000 reviews were collected by a web scraping tool called ParseHub. The significance of differences among group means in a sample was checked by one-way ANOVA analysis of variance and HSD Tukey test. It was found that three independent variables - having a social media profile, being part of a hotel chain and the TripAdvisor user rating - were factors that significantly differentiated hotels’ response to online reviews. Some differences to findings of previous studies were also identified, primarily in terms of the effect of star ratings and the number of rooms. It was concluded that Cracow’s hotels are better at managing their online reputation than hotels operating in other local markets and that visibility was the dimension of reputation that received the most attention.

**Keywords:** online reputation, electronic word of mouth, TripAdvisor, reviews

**JEL Codes:** L83, L86

### 1. Introduction

The Internet revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has changed multiple businesses and ways they operate in modern markets. One of the most important changes that have occurred is the growing importance of reputation in the online environment. Given the ease of sharing opinions, user reviews about all kinds of products

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have become very popular. Consequently, companies need to develop proper reputation management strategies that strengthen their image and ensure their identity is not tarnished or depreciated. Lack of appropriate and timely response can have disastrous effects for the company's operations and revenues. These issues are even more evident in the case of the hospitality industry, which year by year increasingly relies on online distribution channels. As more and more bookings are made online, reviews posted on various social medias become more important. As Zaman, Botti, & Thanh [2016] found in their study, before travelling potential guests checked at least one website containing user generated content, such as reviews, opinions or ratings. This shows how important electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has become to contemporary travellers.

On the other hand, studies have shown that hotel managers are not doing enough to successfully manage their reputation in the online environment and are not monitoring their social media channels or replying to the content posted by their past guests [O'Connor 2010]. However, O'Connor noted that the findings of his study should be qualitatively verified by other researchers with respect to different markets. There is also a lack of substantial research into how different types of hotels approach these issues. Xie, Kwok & Wang [2017] suggested that further studies should focus on the moderating effects of product types, such as hotel star ratings. Moreover, Xie et al. [2016] also pointed out that other variables (such as the room rate) should be analysed in terms of their influence on managerial responses. That is why this article aims to establish if there are any patterns in the way different Cracow hotels manage their online reputation through responses to the eWOM content.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Corporate reputation, image and identity

Reputation, in addition to corporate image and identity, is one of the most valuable intangible assets that companies possess. However, there are multiple definitions of this concept in the literature. Dąbrowski [2010] suggests that the lack of one definition can be attributed to the multidimensional usage of reputation in social studies. Gotsi & Wilson [2001] proposed defining reputation as the perception of the quality of the company, based on the company's way of communication and the experience of its customers. This definition of reputation can be used as a measurable variable enabling comparisons between different businesses and the choice of those with the highest reputation. Similarly, Dowling [2016] interprets the company's reputation as a reflection of its stakeholders' level of ad-

miration and respect in a given period. A similar idea can be found in the work of Walker [2010], who points out that reputation is a construct, which is strongly connected with the current perception of the company. Both Dowling and Walker distinguish corporate reputation from the corporate image. Dowling perceives company image as an element contributing to reputation while Walker defines it as a goal that the company is striving to achieve in the eyes of its stakeholders. The lack of a clear distinction between these two concepts is also mentioned by Dąbrowski [2010], who implies that the main difference between them is their origin. He suggests that the image is shaped by external factors, while reputation is determined by external and internal factors. This idea is further supported by Budzyński [2006], who also interprets a corporate image as a separate construct, which is defined as marketing communication aimed at external stakeholders. On the other hand, marketing communication was also analysed by Mohammed, Guillet & Law [2015], who connect it more with the idea of corporate identity rather than image or reputation. Moreover, the same authors suggested that hospitality businesses are lacking when it comes to the appropriate use of this dimension in their marketing strategies. At the same time, Love, Lim & Bednar [2017] stress that some elements can influence all three of these concepts. They give the example of the company's manager, who can be viewed as a variable with a strong impact on the identity of the company as seen by internal stakeholders while representing its image and reputation to external stakeholders.

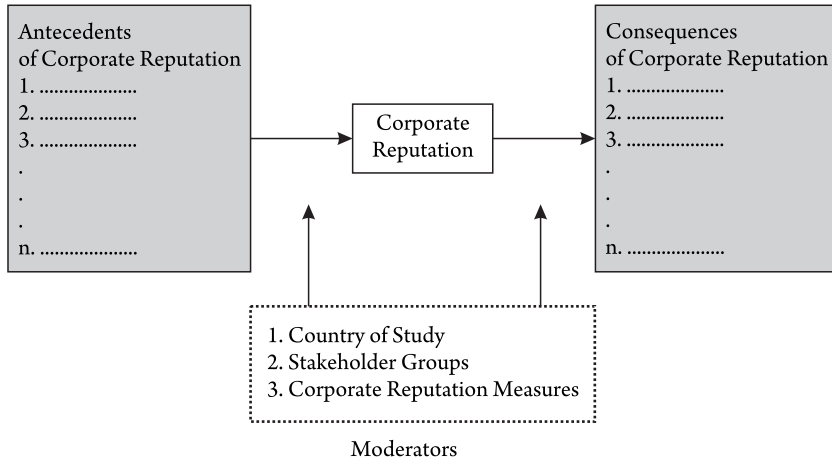
## 2.2. Dimensions of reputation

Given multiple definitions of corporate reputation, there are many frameworks for analysing the antecedents and dimensions of this construct. What is more, while some frameworks are similar across different fields of business and science, for many individual businesses sources of reputation are affected by their country of operation or stakeholders' perspective [Ali et al., 2014]. This relationship is presented in Figure 1.

At the same time, Głuszek [2013] identifies dimensions of reputation as “universal characteristics that make the company highly regarded by the stakeholders”. Similarly, Fombrun & Van Riel [2004] identify five universal dimensions of reputation, presented in Figure 2.

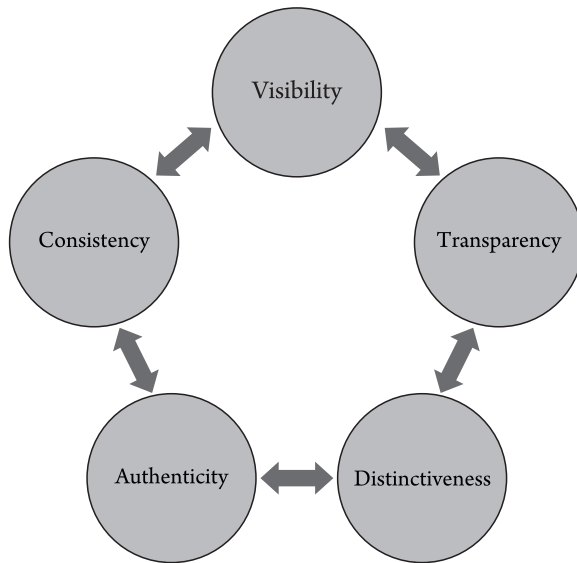
The first dimension (visibility) is defined by Głuszek [2013] as a sum of evaluations of all actions and communications that the company has made and expressed in a given period. The antecedents of visibility are marketing campaigns and the company's financial or social activities. Moreover, participation in corporate social responsibility programs can improve the company's visibility, which in turn can contribute to reputation growth. At the same time, Pant

Fig. 1. Moderators of reputation



Source: Ali et al. 2014.

Fig. 2. Dimensions of reputation



Source: based on Fombrun & Van Riel 2004.

& Pant [2018] report that a strong presence in social media channels can also boost visibility and reputation. This effect was observed for online and traditional customers. The second dimension (transparency) is defined by Kim & Kim [2017] as the company's readiness to share both positive and negative

information with its stakeholders. The findings of Kim & Kim [2017] suggest that without a sufficiently high level of transparency all marketing actions are impaired and have a limited effect on designated target groups. The third dimension (distinctiveness) is defined by Van den Bosch, de Jong, Elving [2005] as a sum of corporate business strategy and its corporate visual identity. The authors imply that in order to better distinguish itself, the company should have characteristic logos, slogans and a clear mission and vision statement. According to Wojnarowska [2013], the fourth dimension (authenticity) is reflected by the company's actions aimed at implementing its mission and vision values in everyday operations. Sisson & Bowen [2017] stress that this aspect is critically important during crisis management, as the lack of authenticity in corporate actions can result in greater reputation losses. The last dimension – consistency – is believed by Dąbrowski [2010] to be the hardest one for a company to achieve. Zarębska [2006] underlines the importance of this aspect in managing communications with internal and external stakeholders in order to ensure consistent messages to all parties involved. Finally, Fombrun & Van Riel [2004] suggest that all these dimensions need to co-exist within the same period in order for the company to establish a positive reputation.

### **2.3. eWOM**

Word-of-mouth marketing is usually considered to be one of the most powerful tools that can be used to advertise a company. Tkaczyk [2007] has shown that in the context of the Polish market this technique is 7 times more influential than traditional advertisements. However, with the emergence of the Internet, word-of-mouth marketing is frequently believed to be turning into eWOM – electronic word of mouth. Mishra & Satish [2016] define this concept as all forms of publicly available online content (both positive and negative) posted by previous, current or future customers. The authors underline that eWOM can take the form of text (e.g. reviews), numeric values (ratings in review) or nominal values (“Like” or “Dislike” buttons on social media). However, according to Huete-Alcocer [2017], it is important to recognise several differences between traditional WOM and eWOM. One of them is the different level of trustworthiness associated with each form: given that eWOM users usually have limited knowledge about the content's author, they are less likely to treat such information as equally credible. Moreover, Tham, Croy & Mair [2013] have proven that the lack of information about the author's expertise in the field discussed in the review makes eWOM even less trustworthy. On the other hand, Filieri [2016] states that the initially lower level of credibility can increase after users check the profile of the review's author. For example, TripAdvisor allows users

to check the number of reviews written by a given user, the number of “thank you” badges received or even personal information if the user has decided to share it on their profile.

## 2.4. Managing eWOM

Given the importance of eWOM in contemporary marketing strategies, companies should include it in their daily operations. Ismagilova et al. [2017] identified three stages of effective eWOM management. The first step consists in generating eWOM content. This stage includes all actions that the company can undertake in order to persuade customers to leave an online comment. According to Ismagilova et al. [2017], there are no universal solutions in this respect, and the range of possible tools is very wide. For example, individuals that are more prone to be motivated by recognition can be promised that their review will be promoted on the company’s website, while people who respond better to economic incentives can be invited to try and experience the company’s services for free. However, the last strategy can raise concerns regarding the impartiality of reviews and should be carefully managed [Ismagilova et al. 2017]. In the context of the hospitality industry, TripAdvisor provides tools, such as Express Review, that can be used to approach more customers with a request for a review. Posters and handouts located in the reception area are other alternatives that can make guests more aware of the possibility of leaving a review. The second stage of eWOM management involves monitoring and keeping up-to-date with the content posted online, which can influence the company’s reputation. Dutko [2016] points out that monitoring should not only be limited to the company’s online channels but should also include those of its main competitors, as they can also provide valuable information. In this way, the company can compare its strengths and weaknesses in terms of different properties in the market. Barnes & Jacobsen [2014] found that one third of all American companies did not undertake any monitoring actions, ignoring all of their online presence except for their website. The last stage of effective eWOM management consists in providing an appropriate reaction to online content, usually through posting a response to a review. The effectiveness of these activities was analysed by Xie et al. [2016], who found that replying to customers over time leads to an average increase of 0.23 in the hotel’s rating. What is more, the practice of leaving responses has also resulted in more reviews being posted by guests later on. A similar finding was reported by Roozen & Raedts [2018], who observed that posting responses to reviews can result in a greater volume of eWOM content in the future. As regards the content of such responses, Ho [2018] identified eight main approaches that hotels can use in creating their reply. The most effective one when dealing with negative reviews was to acknowledge the problem and describe how it was mitigated during or after the guest’s stay.

### 3. Materials and methods

The aim of the following study was to establish if there are any patterns in the way different Cracow hotels manage their online reputation by replying to reviews posted on TripAdvisor. Firstly, Cracow was chosen as the location for the study because it is Poland's most popular tourist destination, attracting both leisure and business travellers [Kościólek et al. 2018]. Similarly, the choice of TripAdvisor as a source of reviews was motivated by its status as one of the 3 most popular travel websites in the Polish Internet [Gemius 2018] and the fact it provides the most detailed information about hotel replies (such as response date and author).

The independent variables (hotel characteristics) were chosen following studies analysing similar relationships – such as effects of managerial response on consumer eWOM and hotel performance [Xie et al. 2016], monetizing managerial responses on TripAdvisor [Xie, Kwok, Wang 2017] or the framework proposed for measuring hotels' managerial responses [Perez-Aranda, Vallespín, Molinillo 2018]. The list of the independent variables and studies where they were used are presented in Table 1.

The dependent variables for measuring the effectiveness of hotel responses were also identified in the course of the literature review and are shown in Table 2. These variables were chosen to partially represent the dimensions of reputation. Although the collected quantitative data do easily lend themselves to an

Table 1. Independent variables

Hotel characteristic	Variable type	Source of the data
Star category	Ordinal	Central Register of Hotel Properties ( <i>Centralny Wykaz Obiektów Hotelarskich</i> )
Number of rooms	Discreet	TripAdvisor profile of the property
Average price for a double room in the last 6 months	Discreet	TripAdvisor profile of the property
Rating	Ordinal	TripAdvisor profile of the property
Hotel type	Nominal	TripAdvisor profile of the property
Number of reviews	Discreet	TripAdvisor profile of the property
Existence of property's Facebook profile	Nominal; dichotomous	Google.com
Belonging to a hotel chain	Nominal; dichotomous	Google.com

Source: own elaboration.

Table 2. Dependent variables

Dependent variable	Example in the literature	Data source
Percentage of replies	O'Connor 2010	TripAdvisor profile of the property
Time needed to post the response	Perez-Aranda, Vallespín, Molinillo 2018; Wang, Chaudhry 2016the authors examine the effect of publicly responding to hotel guests' reviews on subsequent reviewer ratings. The authors find that manager responses to negative reviews (MR-N	TripAdvisor profile of the property
Length of the response	Zhang & Vasquez 2014	TripAdvisor profile of the property

Source: own elaboration.

in-depth analysis of reputation, their volume ensures a certain accuracy of the findings. The percentage of replies represents the share of reviews that received a response from the hotel, reflecting its online visibility, i.e. its strong presence and activity in social media channels [Pant, Pant 2018]. The time taken to post response is associated with the dimension of consistency and indicates swift and timely reactions in communications with external stakeholders [Zarębska 2006]. Finally, the response length is related to the dimension of transparency dimension, as longer reviews usually contain more information. This supports the idea of transparency as “openness of CSR information disclosure” [Kim, Kim 2017]. The dimensions of distinctiveness and authenticity are harder to measure by means of quantitative variables and would require the use of text-mining methods.

The data were collected in the first two weeks of October 2018 from the TripAdvisor website using the method known as web scraping or web parsing. A free web scraping tool called ParseHub was used to collect reviews and information regarding all 272 hotels and accommodation providers in Cracow. However, as suggested by Xu & Li [2016], only 20 reviews from each hotel were selected for analysis and establishments with fewer than 20 reviews were excluded. This procedure was applied to make sure that each hotel had equal representation in the sample of reviews. Moreover, reviews or replies in a language other than Polish were also excluded. The final dataset consisted of 201 businesses, 4002 reviews and 1327 hotel replies. The data were analysed using Excel with add-ons, such as Solver, Fuzzy Lookup, and macros created by the author. The significance of differences among group means in a sample was checked by one-way ANOVA analysis of variance and HSD Tukey test.



## 4. Results & Discussion

### 4.1. Hotel category

As can be seen in Table 3, the mean values of the dependent variables differed significantly between hotels within each star category, especially when it comes to the percentage of replies and the time taken to reply. The above average number of replies was observed not only in 4-star and 5-star hotels but also in the uncategorized segment. The results are partially consistent with the findings of Xie, Kwok & Wang [2017] indicating the highest response rate for hotels with higher star ratings. Interestingly, Cracow hotels analysed in the study had a higher average

Table 3. Results for “star category” variable

Star category	Number of units	Mean percentages of replies [%]	Mean time taken to repl [days]	Mean reply length [characters]
5*	12	38	41	322
4*	43	34	16	378
3*	74	29	38	349
2*	10	15	19	241
1*	4	33	6	165
Uncategorized	58	37	64	387
Mean		33	40	362
ANOVA test		<b><math>F = 3.036</math>;</b> <b><math>p = 0.045</math></b>	<b><math>F = 2.314</math>;</b> <b><math>p = 0.028</math></b>	$F = 0.730$ ; $p = 0.602$

Note: A significance level of 0.05 for ANOVA test; bold results are significant.

Source: own elaboration based on acquired data.

percentage of responses compared to London hotels studied by O'Connor [2010]. However, it is likely that the two studies are not comparable owing to the time gap between them. Also, hotels with fewer stars tended to post shorter replies. What is surprising 5\* properties have the second largest “time to reply” – only the Uncategorized segment had a higher mean. Moreover, the ANOVA test has shown no significant difference between the replies' length. These results are partially consistent with the findings of Xie, Kwok & Wang [2017], who observed that low-end hotels tended to post shorter responses, but high-end hotels were quicker to reply.

## 4.2. Number of rooms

Table 4 presents the results depending on the number of rooms. The ANOVA test shows the differences in all three dependant variables are statistically significant when the number of rooms is taken into account. There is a significant difference between hotels with more than 75 rooms and those that have fewer than 75 rooms. Smaller hotels reply to about 28% of reviews while the indicator for larger ones exceeded 40%. A similar relationship can be seen in terms of “Time to

Table 4. Results for “number of rooms” variable

Number of rooms	Number of units	Mean percentages of replies [%]	Mean time taken to reply [days]	Mean reply length [characters]
1-25	65	28	65	370
26-50	63	28	40	367
51-75	26	27	30	382
76-100	8	44	11	385
>100	39	47	15	327
Mean		33	40	362
ANOVA test		<b><math>F = 2.436</math>;</b> <b><math>p = 0.0486</math></b>	<b><math>F = 2.516</math>;</b> <b><math>p = 0.038</math></b>	<b><math>F = 2.750</math>;</b> <b><math>p = 0.035</math></b>

Note: A significance level of 0.05 for ANOVA test; bold results are significant.

Source: own elaboration based on acquired data.

reply” as properties possessing more than 75 rooms have a significantly shorter response time. Such results could suggest that larger properties have separate departments/designated personnel that is individually responsible for managing online reputation. These results stand in partial contradiction to the findings of Xie et al. [2016] indicating that hotel size did not affect managerial responses. However, in their study, the number of rooms was only investigated as a moderating variable, which might explain the different findings.

## 4.3. Average room price

As presented in Table 5, ANOVA test results show significant differences in all three dependent variables across the groups distinguished in terms of the average room price. HSD test showed most differences in % of replies. Smallest “% of replies” was recorded in the cheapest segment, surprisingly followed by the most expensive

Table 5. Results for “average price” variable

Average price per night [PLN]	Number of units	Mean percentages of replies [%]	Mean time taken to reply [days]	Mean reply length [characters]
< 200	28	15	47	383
200-400	114	34	32	365
400-600	31	45	49	385
600-800	4	67	14	345
> 800	24	22	73	290
Mean		33%	40	362
ANOVA test		<b><math>F = 4.333</math>; <math>p = 0.002</math></b>	<b><math>F = 2.466</math>; <math>p = 0.003</math></b>	<b><math>F = 2.517</math>; <math>p = 0.019</math></b>

Note: A significance level of 0.05 for ANOVA test; bold results are significant.

Source: own elaboration based on acquired data.

segment. On average, the largest percentage of replies and the shortest time taken to post a reply were observed in the PLN 600-800 segment. Interestingly, the most expensive hotels that one would expect to be the most interested in managing their reputation, were by far the slowest in replying and had the second-lowest percentage of responses. In the literature, few studies can be used for comparison in these respects. However, Aznar et al. [2018] found that there was a correlation between a hotel's average daily rate and its online ratings in social media, which seems to contradict the absence of a strong correlation in the Cracow study.

#### 4.4. TripAdvisor rating

According to the data (Table 6), rating on TripAdvisor has a significant relationship with reputation management strategies. Properties with a score of “4” or higher have much greater “% of replies” as compared to properties with a lower score. Time taken to reply is harder to contrast as properties with a score of “3” or lower have not replied to any of the reviews. Such results can be interpreted to mean that hotels with higher ratings are more aware of the need for a timely response and are more engaged in monitoring their social media profiles. Another thing worth noting is the time taken to respond by hotels with the highest user ratings. Although it is the shortest of all the groups, it means that even the best hotels take roughly two weeks to respond to guest reviews. All of these results are consistent with previous studies in this respect. Liu, Kim & Pennington-Gray [2015], who analysed hotel response strategies in crisis times also found that hotels with higher user ratings better had the shortest response times. Similarly,

Table 6. Results for “TripAdvisor rating” variable

TripAdvisor Rating	Number of units	Mean percentages of replies [%]	Mean time taken to reply [days]	Mean reply length [characters]
5	11	52	14	373
4,5	85	41	43	361
4	63	38	40	357
3,5	32	5	53	374
3	8	0	N/A	N/A
2,5	1	0	N/A	N/A
2	1	0	N/A	N/A
Mean		33	40	362
ANOVA test		<b>F = 6.319;</b> <b>p = 4.3E-06</b>	<b>F = 2.279;</b> <b>p = 0.019</b>	<b>F = 3.59;</b> <b>p = 0.010</b>

Note: A significance level of 0.05 for ANOVA test; bold results are significant.

Source: own elaboration based on acquired data.

Levy, Duan & Boo [2013] reported a positive correlation between hotels’ average user ratings and the percentage of responses. Interestingly, the highest hotel response rate recorded in that study was only 15%.

## 4.5. Hotel type

ANOVA test results indicate that there are significant differences between different segments in terms of the percentage of replies and the time taken to reply (Table 7).

Table 7. Results for “characteristic segment” variable

Hotel type	Number of units	Mean percentages of replies [%]	Mean time taken to reply [days]	Mean reply length [characters]
Family friendly	127	33	38	378
Business	147	40	34	370
Romantic	54	40	23	368
Mean		33	40	362
ANOVA test		<b>F = 3.185;</b> <b>p = 0.026</b>	<b>F = 3.441;</b> <b>p = 0.032</b>	F = 0.276; p = 0.960

Note: A significance level of 0.05 for ANOVA test; bold results are significant.

Source: own elaboration based on acquired data.

Business and romantic hotels on average reply more frequently and more quickly than family-friendly hotels, but the average response time of romantic hotels is 11 and 15 days shorter than that of business and family-friendly hotels, respectively. One possible reason why hotels of this type seem to care more about their online reputation is their need to make a more favourable impression on couples, who usually pay much attention of the hotel's image when looking for a place to stay [Bauer, McKercher 2003].

#### 4.6. Number of reviews

As can be seen in Table 8, the relationship between the number of reviews on TripAdvisor and management responses is very limited. Significant differences were identified by the ANOVA test only in the case of the time taken to reply and response length. These results seem counterintuitive, given that, according to

Table 8. Results for “number of reviews” variable

Number of reviews	Number of units	Mean percentages of replies [%]	Mean time taken to reply [days]	Mean reply length [characters]
< 201	85	35	25	313
201-400	34	35	77	416
401-600	22	34	78	331
601-800	24	25	32	374
> 800	36	30	22	391
On average		33	40	362
ANOVA test		$F = 0.687$ ; $p = 0.842$	<b><math>F = 2.487</math>;</b> <b><math>p = 0.048</math></b>	<b><math>F = 2.486</math>;</b> <b><math>p = 0.039</math></b>

Note: A significance level of 0.05 for ANOVA test; bold results are significant.

Source: own elaboration based on acquired data.

Ismagilova et al. [2017], generating eWOM and responding to it are parts of the same process and should be mutually related. Similarly, Xie et al. [2016] found that the number of managerial replies was positively correlated with the number of reviews left by customers. The discrepancies between the results obtained in the Cracow study and those mentioned in the other ones are hard to explain as the sample size and reference periods were similar in all cases.

## 4.7. Facebook profile

The Facebook profile was chosen as another independent variable as it is the most popular social network in Poland, with 96% of the hotels having their profile. This nearly universal use of social media is a standard feature of the hospitality industry of today. For example, a recent qualitative study by Michopoulou & Moisa [2019] found that all hotels in their survey had a profile on at least one social media platform. As can be seen in Table 9, the ANOVA test results show

Table 9. Results for “Facebook profile” variable

Does the hotel have a Facebook profile?	Number of units	Mean percentages of replies [%]	Mean time taken to reply [days]	Mean reply length [characters]
Yes	192	34	37	361
No	9	24	96	362
Mean		33	40	362
ANOVA test		<b><math>F = 3.933</math>;</b> <b><math>p = 0.045</math></b>	<b><math>F = 6.269</math>;</b> <b><math>p = 0.013</math></b>	$F = 0.916$ ; $p = 0.340$

Note: A significance level of 0.05 for ANOVA test; bold results are significant.

Source: own elaboration based on acquired data.

significant differences in the dependent variables between hotels with and without a Facebook profile. Those in the former group respond to almost 1.5 times as many reviews and do so in roughly a third of the time compared to the latter one. On the other hand, there is almost no difference between the two groups in reply length. These findings are supported by the study of Mellinas et al. [2016] indicating that hotels that actively managed their social media presence were also better at managing their profiles on TripAdvisor or Booking.com.

## 4.8. Being part of a hotel chain

The results for the last independent variable are presented in Table 10. It turns out that hotels belonging to a chain reply to significantly more reviews and take much less time to post a response. On the other hand, independent hotels tend to provide longer responses. All in all, it can be said that being part of a hotel chain has a good impact on reputation management. This can be explained by the fact that hotel chains usually provide their hotels with standard operating procedures,

Table 10. Results for “hotel chain” variable

Is the hotel part of a chain?	Number of units	Mean percentages of replies [%]	Mean time taken to reply [days]	Mean reply length [characters]
Yes	35	58	32	333
No	166	27	43	371
Mean		33	40	362
ANOVA test		<b>F = 14.87;</b> <b>p = 0.0001</b>	<b>F = 3.956;</b> <b>p = 0.048</b>	<b>F = 4.777;</b> <b>p = 0.030</b>

Note: A significance level of 0.05 for ANOVA test; bold results are significant.

Source: own elaboration based on acquired data.

including those regarding ways of responding to customer reviews. Similar conclusions were reached by Liu, Kim & Pennington-Gray [2015], who also found that chain hotels tended to respond to reviews more frequently. Mellinas et al. [2016] reported that chain hotels were better at managing their online reputation than their independent counterparts.

## 5. Conclusion

There are significant difference between the way Cracow hotels manage their online reputation in terms of the number of replies to user reviews and the time taken to respond between hotels that are part of a hotel chain and those that are not, between hotels that have a Facebook profile and those that do not and between hotels with a high TripAdvisor rating and those with lower ratings. While none of these factors produced significant differences between the groups with respect to response length, there was significant variation between hotels with different user ratings. As regards the number of hotel rooms, star category and hotel type, their relationship with the way the hotel managed user reviews was not so unequivocal. Significant differences were observed with respect to the time taken to respond but not in the percentage of replies. The most surprising finding were very small differences between hotels with different number of reviews and hotel replies. Most studies on the subject agree that generating and responding to online content are strongly correlated. Another unexpected finding that contradicts previous studies is that hotels with the highest star ratings were the slowest in responding to user reviews.

As for the dimension of visibility, measured in terms of the number of replies, the study results show that Cracow hotels, on average, do better than hotels in

other locations analysed by previous studies. The average hotel response rate was 33% for Cracow, which is much higher than the result for Texas (19%) [Kwok, Xie 2016] or New York City (30%) [Liu, Kim, Pennington-Gray 2015]. This might suggest that Cracow hotel managers are more active when it comes to managing eWOM than hotel managers in different countries. The closest hotel response rate was observed in New York City, which has a similar market share of business and leisure travellers as Cracow does. In the case of consistency, Cracow hotels did not perform equally well. On average it took hotels 40 days to respond to reviews, which is much longer than the average of 15 days in the American market [Wang, Chaudhry 2016]. The authors of that study point out that delaying the moment of response can have a negative impact on the average TripAdvisor rating. The Cracow study supports this finding, as there were significant differences between average user ratings of hotels depending on the time it took them to reply to user comments. Finally, when it comes to the dimension of transparency, measured in terms of response length, the average reply was around 50 words. This dimension of reputation was found to be the least differentiating dependent variable, which might suggest that response length depends on other factors (not considered in the study). This finding contradicts the results obtained by Xie, Kwok & Wang [2017]. For this reason, it cannot be confidently stated that there are significant differences between hotels in terms of specific dimension of reputation that are related to the independent variables analysed in the study.

The results of the study should be of interest to hotel managers by providing insights into ways in which different kinds of hotels the Cracow hospitality market manage eWOM. This information can be used to adapt and optimise strategies in this field and thereby improve their reputation. Moreover, while Cracow hotels seem to do better than hotels in other cities in certain aspects of eWOM management, there is still much room for improvement, especially in terms of speed of response. The study has also partially addressed the need for further research expressed by Xie, Kwok & Wang [2017], especially in the context of quantitative analysis. It also provides new data about a segment of the Eastern European hotel market regarding the managing of eWOM.

The main limitation of the study was the fact that the quantitative data collected in the study could not be used for a more in-depth analysis of the dimensions of reputation. Also, the quantitative data collected in the study could not be used for a more in-depth analysis of the dimensions of reputation. This is why, a qualitative study should be conducted to verify the findings and to investigate the two missing dimensions – authenticity and distinctiveness. Finally, the study showed that the problem of online reputation management in the Polish hospitality industry needs further research, since the results differ from those obtained in different countries.



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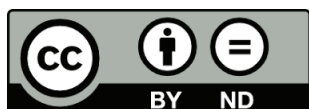
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## Zarządzanie reputacją na portalu TripAdvisor na przykładzie krakowskiego rynku hotelarskiego

**Streszczenie.** Celem niniejszego artykułu było określenie, czy istnieją zależności między typami krakowskich hoteli a sposobami, w jaki zarządzają swoją reputacją poprzez zamieszczanie odpowiedzi do treści online. Zarządzanie reputacją określono na podstawie analizy odpowiedzi udzielanych przez pracowników hoteli na opinie zamieszczone w TripAdvisorze przez gości. Poszukiwano zależności między cechami obiektów hotelarskich a odpowiedziami na recenzje gości hotelowych. Badaniu poddano 1327 odpowiedzi do ponad 4000 recenzji zebranych za pomocą programu ParseHub. Istotność różnic między grupami w próbie sprawdzono za pomocą jednostronnej analizy wariancji ANOVA i testu HSD Tukeya. Analiza wyników wykazała, że czynnikami istotnie różnicującymi odpowiedzi były zmienne niezależne: posiadanie hotelowego profilu w mediach społecznościowych, przynależność do sieci i ocena uzyskana na stronie TripAdvisor. Na podstawie przeprowadzonych badań można stwierdzić, że reputacja online krakowskich hoteli jest zarządzana lepiej niż w porównywalnych obiektach, analizowanych w innych pracach. Wykazano także, że widoczność, rozumiana jako liczba odpowiedzi na opinie w TripAdvisorze, jest najczęściej zarządzanym wymiarem reputacji.

**Słowa kluczowe:** reputacja online, elektroniczny marketing szeptany, TripAdvisor, recenzje



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JUSTYNA MACIĄG\*, JOANNA KANTYKA\*\*

## The relationship between the quality of the city's recreational offering and the physical activity of its inhabitants – results of a pilot survey in Bielsko-Biała

**Abstract.** The aim of the article is to outline the theoretical framework for studying the relationship between the quality of the city's recreational offering and the physical activity of its inhabitants. The study was based on a review of the literature and was supplemented with data from a pilot questionnaire survey. The pilot survey was conducted in 2016 and involved 180 inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała. Responses were collected during direct interviews based on the survey questionnaire consisting of two parts: International Physical Activity Questionnaire (short version) and recreational offering assessment questionnaire proposed by authors. The literature review revealed gaps in research and publications addressing the relationship between the quality of the city's recreational product and the level of physical activity of its inhabitants, and results of previous studies vary depending on their location (which was also confirmed by the pilot survey). According to the authors' pilot survey, the respondents preferred outdoor forms of physical activity (Nordic walking and fast walks). The majority of respondents can be classified as sufficiently active. No statistically significant findings were found between respondents' assessment of the service staff or the recreational infrastructure and the level of physical activity reported by inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała who participated in the survey. The innovative character of the work consists in developing and testing during the pilot survey a new theoretical framework for researching relationships between the quality of the city's recreational offering and the level of physical activity of its inhabitants. The authors propose extending the existing approaches involving mainly the assessment of recreational assets by including marketing, staff-related and organizational aspects. This calls for interdisciplinary research.

**Keywords:** physical activity, recreational offering, city, influencing factors

**JEL Codes:** I 12, I 18

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## 1. Introduction

Systematic physical exercise of appropriate intensity has a positive effect on the person's development and their physical, mental and social health [Bauman et al. 2009] and reduces morbidity and mortality levels [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1996]. Insufficient physical activity is the fourth major factor that leads to death.

„Physical inactivity is the fourth leading cause of death worldwide” [Kohl et al. 2012: 294]. The extent to which the need for physical activity is satisfied depends on many factors, including biological ones (age, sex, body type and others) [Ramires et al. 2017], psychological (a person's attitude towards physical activity and its perceived benefits) [Solomon et al. 2013; Canuto et al. 2013; Bauman et al. 2009], environmental (family, peers, school, etc.) [Nieboer, Cramm 2019]. Studies show that the physical activity of city dwellers is also affected by a combination of psycho-social factors and urban environmental factors, especially the quality of public space [Beenackers et al. 2014; Brownson et al. 2001]. There is a growing interest in developing integrated models for managing the quality of recreational products in urban areas [Maciąg, Kantyka, Praweńska-Skrzypek (eds.) 2018: 7; Thomas, Hodge, Smith 2009; Basińska-Zych, Bosiacki 2011: 355; Goins et al. 2013]. One can observe the growing awareness on the part of local authorities of their role in creating legislation and environment that fosters physical activity, while the task of satisfying emerging market expectations in this area is the task of private entities [Clark et al. 2010; Maciąg, Kantyka, Praweńska-Skrzypek (eds.) 2018: 7]. However, relatively little is known about the relationship between physical activity and factors that influence it, especially those relating to the urban environment and public space in which people live.

In view of these considerations, the authors formulated the research problem, the main objective of the study and the research questions that were used in the pilot survey conducted in the city of Bielsko-Biała. The purpose of this article is to present the existing research and the theoretical framework for the study of relationships between the recreational offering created by the city's authorities and the physical activity of its inhabitants. The research problem was formulated in the form of the following question: Does the way in which inhabitants perceive the quality of the city's recreational offering determine the level of their physical activity? To answer this general question, three specific research questions were put forward:

1. What aspects of the city's recreational offering are measured by other researchers in relation to the physical activity of inhabitants?
2. What methods and tools are used by other researchers to monitor the quality of the city's recreational offering and the physical activity of its inhabitants?

3. What are the relationships between the quality of the city's recreational offering or its elements and the recreational physical activity of its inhabitants?

The article consists of three parts. The first one, based on a review of the literature, presents the theoretical framework underlying the study; the second summarises the study results and last one contains a discussion, followed by conclusions and recommendations for further research and ideas for implementation.

## 2. The relationship between the quality of the city's recreational offering and the physical activity of its inhabitants – state of research

The following review of the literature provides the theoretical basis for research considerations addressed in this articles. The review focuses on the state of research on the relationship between the quality of the city's recreational offering and the recreational physical activity of its inhabitants. The following bibliographical databases were analysed: EBSCO, Scopus and the Web of Science. The review also supported by the Google Scholar search engine.

The databases were searched for the following key words: *physical activity, influencing factors, city or urban*. The search results, limited to articles in English published in peer-reviewed journals, are presented in Table 1.

In addition, the authors used Google Scholar to search for publications mentioned in the footnotes and references provided in the selected articles, which enabled them to find five more articles.

Table 1. Search results of the literature review (as at 30 September 2019)

Keywords	EBSCO	Scopus	Web of Science
<i>Physical activity Factors influencing City or urban</i> in the keywords	0	5	–
<i>Physical activity Factors influencing City or urban</i> in the abstracts	91 (28 full-text articles), 1 included in the analysis	206 (57 full-text articles), 11 included in the analysis	387 (202 full-text articles), 33 included in the analysis
<i>Physical activity Factors influencing City or urban</i> in the title	4 (4 full-text articles), 4 included in the analysis	4 (4 full-text articles), 4 included in the analysis	2 (2 full-text articles), 2 included in the analysis

Source: own research.

The selected articles were analysed taking into account the main research objective and the specific aims, limiting the scope to studies of healthy adults and city dwellers. Only articles addressing the relationship between the city's recreational offering or its elements and the physical activity of its inhabitants were taken into consideration. Ultimately, 10 articles were selected for in-depth analysis, whose results are shown in Table 2.

The analysis of academic databases shows the first articles devoted to the study of the relationship between the city's recreational infrastructure and the physical activity of its inhabitants date back to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the interest in this topic has been growing.

The literature review has revealed that the selected studies were largely interdisciplinary, combining public aspects of public management, organization management, health sciences, medicine, public policy and spatial management and planning. Two research strands are clearly visible in the studies. Some authors investigate factors influencing the level of satisfaction and the assessment of the quality of the city's recreational offering or its elements in the context of various forms of physical activity undertaken by respondents; others focus on factors that determine the level of physical activity in different social groups of city dwellers.

The most frequent form of physical activity investigated in the studies is walking. The authors emphasise the distinction that has to be made in research between transport-related and recreational or leisure-time physical activity, which are determined by different factors. The most commonly used research tool for measuring the level of physical activity is self-assessment based on the *International Physical Activity Questionnaire*. In addition, questionnaire data are supplemented by pedometer data or self-report travel diaries. In some studies, other country-specific research tools are used, such as the National Study of Neighborhood Parks (USA), the Short Questionnaire to Assess Health Enhancing Physical Activity (Denmark).

The quality of the city's recreational offering is measured using various questionnaire-based methods based on self-assessment of inhabitants supplemented by results of objective audits or GIS data. Researchers mainly focus on investigating relationships between infrastructural resources of the city's recreational offering and features such as accessibility, proximity, safety and facilities.

Depending on the location of the studies, their authors report different statistically significant correlations. There is clear evidence supporting the existence of correlation between physical activity and the infrastructural resources of the city's recreational offering (street layout, paths, street density, city design, accessibility, proximity). The authors also highlight the impact of social factors, such as the support of friends and neighbours and the sense of safety.



Table 2. Subject, scope, research methods and tools in studies of the relationship between people's physical activity and the quality of the recreational offering

Year of publication	Subject of assessment – forms of physical activity	Methods/tools used for assessing physical activity	Methods/tools used for assessing the quality of the recreational offering	Attributes/dimensions of the quality of the recreational offering that have a statistically significant impact on physical activity
2015 [Zhang et al. 2015]	Different forms of physical activity undertaken in urban green areas	Self-assessment made by inhabitants on types of undertaken physical activity, with walking being the most popular form	Online survey questionnaire, divided into 5 sections with multiple-choice and open-ended questions. Answers on a 5-point Likert scale. The sections referred to availability, access, maintenance, and environment. No statistically significant differences were found between assessment results after accounting for age and sex of respondents	The forms of physical activity were found to be significantly determined by the location of a recreational area, the quality of vegetation, the level of maintenance.
2008 [Forsyth et al. 2008]	walking	Reports about physical activity, the long version of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire and pedometer data. No significant differences between men and women	Geographical Information System (GIS), information collected on street layout, infrastructural elements designed for pedestrians, data about specific destinations (parks, recreational areas, shops, etc.). Quality assessment criteria/dimensions: residential density, connectivity, land-use mix	The study shows a correlation between GIS data and physical data, especially with respect to street and path layout
2010 [Gómez et al. 2010]	walking	the short version of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire.	Geographical Information System (GIS). The following features were assessed: density of public parks, number of street connections, number of metro stations and city-specific factors.	The study indicates a correlation between GIS data and physical data, especially the urban infrastructure and safety
2014 [Sugiyama et al. 2014]	walking	The long version of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire.	Research tool: Neighbourhood Environment Walkability Scale [Saelens et al. 2003; Cerin et al. 2007]. Quality dimensions: residential density, land use mix, proximity to parks, street connectivity aesthetics, safety from crime. Assessment on a scale from 1 to 4.	Physical data was found to be affected by residential density, land use mix, street layout, street connectivity, aesthetics, safety from crime and proximity to parks

Table 2 – cont.

Year of publication	Subject of assessment – forms of physical activity	Methods/tools used for assessing physical activity	Methods/tools used for assessing the quality of the recreational offering	Attributes/dimensions of the quality of the recreational offering that have a statistically significant impact on physical activity
2005 [Hoehner et al. 2005]	Different forms of physical activity undertaken in cities	The long version of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire. Transport and recreation activity was measured separately, since each one is affected by different groups of factors.	The assessment involved parks, walking and bike routes, indoor recreational facilities. Telephone poll and audit (quantitative, objective study). Quality dimensions: land use, recreational facilities, transportation environment. aesthetics, social environment.	Inhabitants' physical data was found to be affected by the distance from recreational facilities and their objective attractiveness.
2014 [Beenackers et al. 2014]	Leisure-time walking	Short Questionnaire to Assess Health Enhancing Physical Activity. A validated Dutch questionnaire for measuring a number of forms of physical activity, including leisure-time walking.	The audit was based on the observation of accessibility, safety, comfort, pleasurability.	The urban environment was not found to have a direct impact on people's willingness to take walks, which is affected by psycho-social factors and their combination with urban environment factors. The urban environment was found to be relevant in the case of people with a less positive attitude to physical activity and those who experienced a positive social influence to engage in physical activity.
2016 [Cohen et al. 2016]	Different forms of physical activity undertaken in parks	National Study of Neighbourhood Parks (observation)	The assessment in parks focused on streets and sidewalks, walking loops, park size, facilities, population density.	Physical activity in parks depends on the presence of walking loops. Parks with walking loops had 80% more users and levels of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity were 90% higher.

2015 [Johnson-Lawrence et al. 2015]	Different forms of physical activity undertaken in cities	International Physical Activity Questionnaire	The study investigated the problem of environment safety: "neighbourhood physical challenges, including poor housing, sidewalk condition, vacant lots, heavy traffic, lack of safety and social challenges in the neighbourhood, including the presence of gang activity, prostitution, loitering, drug dealing, vandalism, adults fighting, along with crime such as robbery and theft"	Lower physical activity was associated with poor housing, sidewalk condition, vacant lots, heavy traffic, lack of safety.
2012 [Giehl et al. 2012]	Different forms of physical activity undertaken in cities	The long version of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire	A modified version of the Neighbourhood Environment Walkability Scale. Environment perception was assessed using 22 questions related to the individuals "perception of the physical and environmental structures located close to the respondent's home, such as the presence and quality of sidewalks; presence of green areas, parks, squares; safety in traffic and safety in the neighbourhood". Other aspects included "opportunities for the practice of physical activities, like the presence of bike lanes, trails, walking paths, sports courts, and the occurrence of sports events and guided walks in the neighbourhood, as well as the social support for the practice of physical activities and weather aspects."	The presence of sidewalks, bike lanes, walking paths and trails in the neighbourhood resulted in a higher level of physical activity on the part of elderly individuals. "Social support offered by friends and neighbours increased the prevalence of the practice of leisure-time physical activity".
2011 [Hankey, Marshall, Brauer 2011]	Walking	Self-report travel diaries, where respondents recorded the location and type of physical activity	Walkability was measured in terms of population density, intersection density, land use mix.	"Population health benefits from increased physical activity in high-walkability neighbourhoods may be offset by adverse effects of air pollution exposure".

Source: Zhang et al. 2015; Forsyth et al. 2008; Gómez et al. 2010; Sugiyama et al. 2014; Hoehner et al. 2005; Beenackers et al. 2014; Cohen et al. 2016; Johnson-Lawrence et al. 2015; Giehl et al. 2012; Hankey, Marshall, Brauer 2011.

Another common conclusion is that the findings should be used for preparing and changing public policies concerning mass sport and recreation.

The literature review also reveals the lack of a comprehensive approach to the study of correlations between the quality of the city's recreational offering and the level of physical activity of its inhabitants. Studies in this area focus on the impact of infrastructural factors on the level of physical activity of its inhabitants, while other aspects tend to be overlooked (e.g. the scope and quality of recreational services, the quality of staff, marketing efforts associated with the implementation of social policies aimed at promoting physical activity). There are some studies indicating the statistically significant impact of these factors on the assessment of the quality of services, but without reference to the level of physical activity<sup>1</sup>. The existing research and publication gap provided the motivation for the pilot survey aimed at developing and testing the theoretical basis for the assessment of the relationship between the quality of the city's recreational infrastructure and the physical activity of its inhabitants. The authors took an integrated approach to defining the city's recreational offering, which includes the infrastructure, services, staff and marketing and various forms of physical activity.

### 3. Data and methods

The pilot survey was conducted in 2016 and involved 180 inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała (including 68% of women and 32% of men). Respondents were a convenience sample selected from among users of 15 recreational facilities maintained by the Centre for Sports and Recreation in Bielsko-Biała, which is a budget entity of the city council. Bielsko-Biała is a city surrounded by the Little Beskids and Silesian Beskids mountain ranges, located on the Biała river. It is also the capital of the tourism region, featuring various tourism and recreational areas, including tourist trails, bike trails, ski lifts, skating rinks, tennis courts, a toboggan run, etc.

Given the considerable variation in the age of respondents, they were divided into three age groups: below 30, 31-50, and 51 and over. The questionnaire was designed to collect information about the level of physical activity undertaken by inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała, the assessment of the recreational infrastructure, service staff, marketing efforts made by recreational institutions and the organisation of recreational events in the city.

Responses were collected during direct interviews based on the survey questionnaire consisting of two parts. The first one concerned the self-assessment of the level of physical activity and included questions from the short version of the

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<sup>1</sup> A broad analysis of this problem can be found in Maciąg 2018.

International Physical Activity Questionnaire. Based on the frequency of physical exercise, its intensity and daily duration, an average weekly amount of physical activity was calculated for each respondent, which was then used to classify them into three categories: highly active, sufficiently active and insufficiently active [Bauman et al. 2009]. Respondents were also asked to provide information about their height and weight, which was used to calculate the body mass index (BMI: weight [kg]/height [m]<sup>2</sup>).

The second part of the questionnaire was designed to assess Bielsko-Biala's recreational offering. Given the results of the literature review, the authors prepared their own set of questions, which referred to selected elements of the city's recreational offering, i.e.:

a) recreational infrastructure – technical condition of buildings/facilities and sports equipment, cleanliness and hygiene, safety, the centre's location, accessibility for disabled persons,

b) service staff – competences and qualifications, quality and reliability of information and advice given to customers, kindness and understanding of customer needs, appearance, a sense of duty and diligence,

c) marketing aspects – the offering of recreational services, the offering of additional services, quality-price ratio, discounts, opening hours, the centre's response to needs articulated by customers and the use of promotion techniques to inform customers about available recreational centres and their offerings,

d) organisation of recreational events.

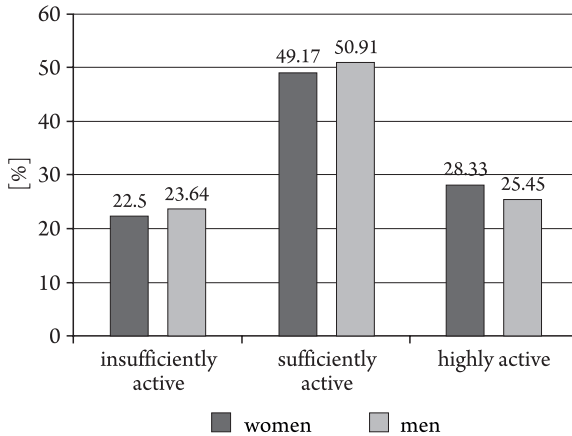
Individual elements were assessed on a scale from 1 to 5 (with one denoting a very low rating, and 5 – a very high rating). Mean values were calculated for each response variable. Since most data were ordinal, the correlation analysis was conducted using Spearman's  $s$  rank correlation coefficient. In addition, Tukey's range test was also performed in order to indicate the existence of statistically significant differences between subgroups of interactions.

## 4. Study results

Figure 1 shows the results concerning the level of physical activity of Bielsko-Biala inhabitants.

Based on the criteria set out in the reporting manual for the IPAQ, the majority of the respondents, regardless of sex, can be classified as sufficiently active. The most preferred forms of recreation for inhabitants of Bielsko-Biala include Nordic walking and fast walks (30%), cycling (16%), jogging (17%), fitness training (15%), swimming (11%), team sports (8%) and others.

Fig. 1. The percentage of respondents reporting different levels of physical activity (%)



Source: own research.

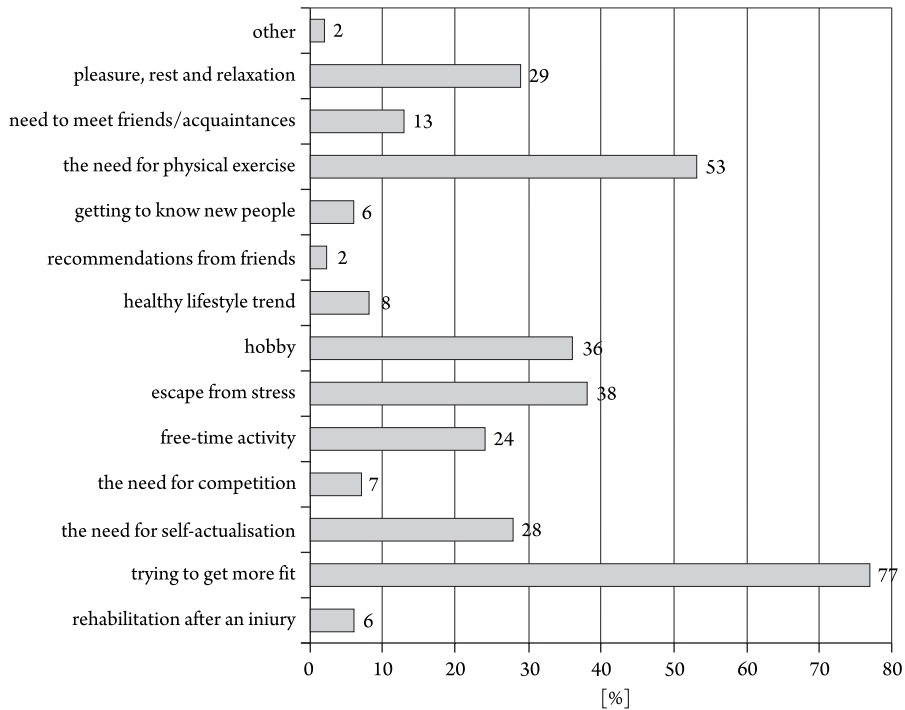
Figure 2 presents results concerning respondents' motivations for undertaking physical recreation. As can be seen, most respondents take up physical activity to improve their fitness and to get more exercise. Physical activity is also seen as a way to handle stress, as a hobby, as a source of pleasure, as a form of rest and relaxation and in order to satisfy the need for self-actualisation.

The following question concerned the assessment of selected elements of the city's recreational offering. Respondents were asked to evaluate the service staff, recreational infrastructure, recreational events and marketing efforts undertaken by different entities involved in the provision of recreational services. The results are presented in Figure 3. Among the most highly evaluated elements are the organisation of recreational events (mean rating of 4.2), the recreational infrastructure (mean rating of 4.0), service staff (mean rating of 4.0), while marketing activities concerning recreational products received the lowest rating (mean rating of 3.6).

After averaging mean assessments of the four elements of the recreational offering (i.e. service staff, recreational infrastructure, recreational events, marketing activities), the overall mean assessment was equal to 3.95. Statistically significant differences in the assessment were found after accounting for the age of respondents (Fig. 4).

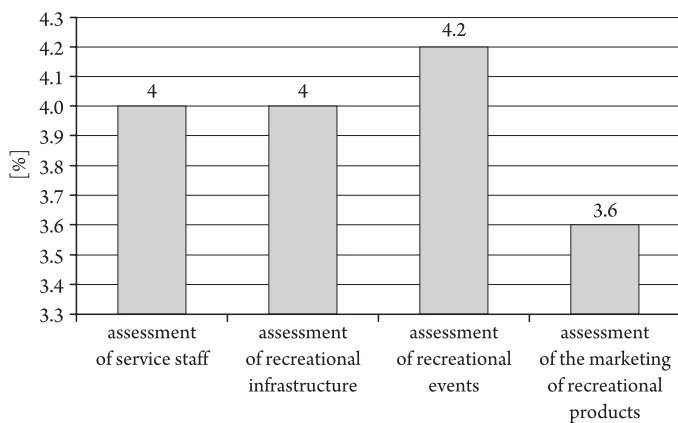
It was found that the older a person was, the more positive their assessment of the recreational offering. There are statistically significant differences between the three age groups, which is indicated by the results of Tukey's honestly significant difference test (HSD). Asked whether the authorities of Bielsko-Biała fulfilled their task of „meeting inhabitant's needs concerning recreational areas

Fig. 2. Respondents' motivations for undertaking physical recreation



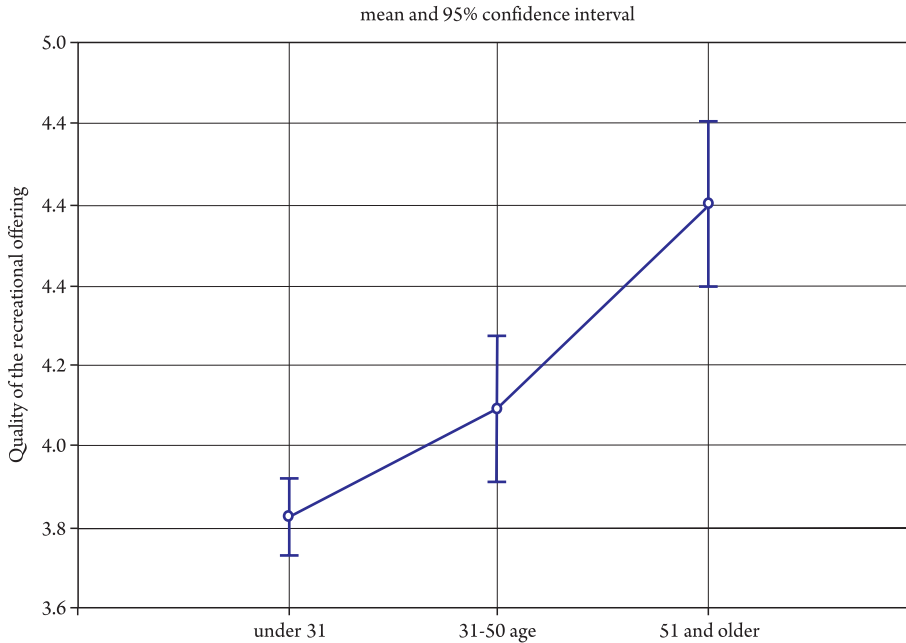
Source: own research.

Fig. 3. Mean assessment of selected elements of the city's recreational offering



Source: own research.

Fig. 4. Assessment of the quality of the recreational offering depending on the age group of respondents



Source: own research.

and sports facilities”, 9% of respondents answered that they did so “very well”, 47% answered “well”, 36% – “satisfactorily”, 6% – “poorly”, and 2% – “very poorly”. The respondents also indicated ways in which the city’s recreational offering could be improved.

Another aspect considered in the correlation analysis was the relationship between how respondents assessed various dimensions of the quality of the city’s recreational offering (service staff, infrastructure, events, marketing efforts) and the level of their physical activity (LPA). Table 3 presents the results of correlation between respondents’ assessment of staff conducting recreational activities and their sex, age, BMI and LPA.

As can be seen, the overall assessment was positive. The highest ratings were given by respondents aged 50 and older, who particularly valued the quality and reliability of information and advice given to customers (4.7), the staff’s sense of duty and diligence (4.7), competence and qualifications (4.8) and kindness and understanding of customer needs (4.8). The overall mean rating was 4.0. There are statistically significant differences in the assessment of the staff depending on the respondents’ age. Tukey’s HSD test indicates considerable differences be-



Table 3. Correlation between respondents' assessment of staff conducting recreational activities and their sex, age, BMI and LPA

Dimensions of quality	Respondents grouped by										
	Sex		Age			BMI			Level of physical activity (LPA)		
	F (women) N = 121	M (men) N = 56	< 30 N = 119	31- 50 N = 48	> 50 N = 10	underweight N = 24	normal N = 113	overweight N = 25	insufficient N = 41	sufficient N = 87	high N = 49
Competence and qualifications	4.1	3.8	3.9	4.2	<b>4.8</b>	3.9	4.0	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.0
Quality and reliability of information and advice given to customers	4.0	3.7	3.8	4.0	<b>4.7</b>	3.7	3.9	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.8
Kindness and understanding of customer needs	4.0	3.7	3.9	4.0	<b>4.8</b>	3.8	3.9	4.0	4.0	4.0	3.8
Appearance	4.0	3.7	3.9	4.0	4.4	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.9
A sense of duty and diligence	4.0	3.6	3.8	3.9	<b>4.7</b>	4.0	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.8
Overall mean rating	4.0										

Source: own research.

tween assessments made by the oldest and youngest group. Respondents aged 50 and older tend to evaluate the staff more positively than those under 30. There were also some differences in assessments depending on respondents' BMI, but they were not found to be statistically significant. Similarly, no statistically significant correlation was found between the assessment of staff and respondents' sex and LPA.

Results of correlation analysis concerning the city's recreational infrastructure are shown in Table 4. The results indicate that respondents have a positive assessment of the city's recreational infrastructure. The highest ratings were observed among respondents aged 50 and older, with each of the four components receiving nearly the same average rating (4.7 or 4.8). The lowest assessment was given by underweight respondents, who indicated the poor adjustment of the infrastructure to the needs of people with disabilities (3.2). It can be assumed that these answers were given by people afflicted by some illnesses, as evidence by their low body weight, and possibly confined to wheelchairs, as indicated by the low ratings on the question about accessibility for disabled persons. No statisti-

Table 4. Correlation respondents' assessment of the city's recreational infrastructure and their sex, age, BMI and LPA

Dimensions of quality	Respondents grouped by										
	Sex		Age			BMI			Level of physical activity (LPA)		
	F (women) N = 121	M (men) N = 56	< 30 N = 119	31-50 N = 48	> 50 N = 10	underweight N = 24	normal N = 113	overweight N = 25	insufficient N = 41	sufficient N = 87	high N = 49
Technical condition of buildings / facilities	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.6	3.9	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.1
Technical condition of sports equipment	4.9	4.0	3.9	4.1	4.5	3.8	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Cleanliness and hygiene	3.9	4.0	3.8	4.1	<b>4.7</b>	3.6	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.9
Safety	4.2	4.2	3.9	4.3	<b>4.7</b>	3.8	4.1	4.1	4.0	4.1	4.0
The centre's location	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.1	<b>4.8</b>	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.2
Accessibility for disabled persons,	3.5	3.7	3.4	3.9	<b>4.8</b>	<b>3.2</b>	3.6	4.0	3.6	3.5	3.5
Overall mean rating	4.0										

Source: own research.

cally significant differences were found between respondents' assessments of the city's recreational infrastructure and their sex, BMI and LPA.

The results of correlation analysis between respondents' assessments of recreational events in Bielsko-Biała and their sex, age, BMI and LPA are shown in Table 5. The highest ratings were observed in the group of respondents over 50 (4.8). The mean overall rating for this component is 4.2. No statistically significant differences were found between respondents' assessments of this component and their sex, BMI and LPA.

Table 6 shows correlation results for marketing efforts undertaken by the Centre for Sports and Recreation in Bielsko-Biała. Marketing efforts received the lowest overall mean rating (3.6) of the four components of the city's recreational offering. The most positively assessed dimension of quality were opening hours (4.8), while the lowest ratings were given for discounts (regardless of the group), and for additional services among respondents under 30 and those with below-normal BMI. Underweight respondents also had a low assessment of the Centre's

Table 5. Correlation respondents' assessment of recreational events and their sex, age, BMI and LPA

Dimensions of quality	Respondents grouped by										
	Sex		Age			BMI			Level of physical activity (LPA)		
	F (women) N = 121	M (men) N = 56	< 30 N = 119	31-50 N = 48	> 50 N = 10	underweight N = 24	normal N = 113	overweight N = 25	insufficient N = 41	sufficient N = 87	high N = 49
Organisation of recreational events	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.5	<b>4.8</b>	3.6	4.4	4.3	4.1	4.3	4.4
Overall mean rating	4.2										

Source: own research.

Table 6. Correlation respondents' assessment of marketing efforts undertaken by the Centre for Sports and Recreation and their sex, age, BMI and LPA

Dimensions of quality	Respondents grouped by										
	Sex		Age			BMI			Level of physical activity (LPA)		
	F (women) N = 121	M (men) N = 56	< 30 N = 119	31-50 N = 48	> 50 N = 10	underweight N = 24	normal N = 113	overweight N = 25	insufficient N = 41	sufficient N = 87	high N = 49
The offering of recreational services	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.8	4.2	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.7
The offering of additional services	3.4	3.5	<b>3.3</b>	3.7	3.8	<b>3.2</b>	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.4	3.5
Quality-price ratio	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.5	4.6	3.6	3.6	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.5
Discounts	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	4.0	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	3.3	3.3	3.1	3.3
Opening hours	4.2	4.0	4.1	4.1	<b>4.8</b>	4.0	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.2
Centre's response to needs articulated by customers	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.8	4.0	<b>3.3</b>	3.5	3.7	3.7	3.4	3.6
Overall mean rating	3.6										

Source: own research.

response to needs articulated by customers. These low assessments made by respondents with below-normal BMI seem to confirm the previous interpretation that this group may include disabled persons, who notice the most weak aspects of the way recreational activities are managed in the city. No statistically signifi-

cant differences were found between respondents' assessments of marketing efforts and their sex, BMI and LPA.

As regards respondents' familiarity with the marketing offering of recreational centres in Bielsko-Biała, 52% of respondents reported they knew it, while 47% admitted they did not.

The statistical analysis presented above indicates that although there is evidence of some correlation between the quality of the city's recreational offering and respondents' level of physical activity, it is not statistically significant.

The following section is devoted to a discussion of the results and their limitations.

## 5. Discussion

At the beginning, the authors want to emphasize limitations of their study and possible ways of interpreting them in the light of the existing literature on the subject. The literature review carried out in the first part suggest that there are different approaches, methods and tools used for assessing quality and measuring the physical activity of urban dwellers. Consequently, results of various studies may not be comparable, and their interpretation in the context of other results may be limited. Reviewed authors also point out that the selected assessment method (self-assessment or objective assessment) may affect the results (especially when it comes to people who objectively display a low level of physical activity and live in areas with lower walkability ratings [Dewulf et al. 2012]). Another important limitation results from the fact that the study described in this article was a pilot survey based on a convenience sample, which may have affected the correlations of interest. It can also be assumed that the results of the study may have been affected by recreational patterns of the respondents, manifested in their preferred forms and places of physical activity, i.e. outdoor activities. One can argue that inhabitants of this region, featuring various tourism and recreational attractions, rely on their own ideas when it comes to choosing forms and places of physical activities, taking advantage of existing outdoor areas (parks, forests or bike trails). This is confirmed by a considerable number of questionnaires did not have answers concerning the quality of the recreational offering as a result of respondents' lack of familiarity with the recreational offering.

The majority of respondents can be classified as sufficiently active. However, it is difficult to determine the sufficient daily level of physical activity in quantitative and qualitative terms. While it is commonly accepted that systematic sports and recreational activity is essential for maintaining or improving one's health, the required level of such activity is very individual and depends on many factors,

such as age, sex, health, lifestyle etc. Given the unquestionable prophylactic effect of physical activity, according to the WHO guidelines of, the UE and its member states recommend at least 60 minutes of daily physical activity of moderate intensity for children and teenagers and at least 30 minutes of daily physical activity of moderate intensity for adults, including elderly persons [*EU Physical Activity Guidelines... 2008*].

According to the survey, the preferred forms of physical activities chosen by inhabitants of Bielsko-Biała are Nordic walking and fast walks. This is in line with other studies, which confirm that light forms of physical activity, such as walking, are the most popular ones with city dwellers [Zhang et al. 2015].

According to the survey, there were no statistically significant differences between respondents' assessment of service staff and their level of physical activity. There are other studies that do report the existence of correlation between the assessment of service staff and the assessment of the quality of services provided by sports clubs and centres. Alexandris, Zahariadis, Tsorbatzoudis and Grouios [2004] indicate that customer expectations are more focused on the relationship with instructors, their ability to implement training plans rather than on the range of the offering [Alexandris et al. 2004]. This area certainly requires further research taking into account the complexity of the city's recreational offering.

The pilot study did not reveal any statistically significant differences between respondents' assessment of the recreational infrastructure and their level of physical activity. This aspect also needs to be investigated in more depth since numerous studies indicate that such correlations tend to exist. Many authors report a positive correlation between the amount of time spent engaging in physical exercise and the location of sports facilities [Roux et al. 2007]. This finding is confirmed by studies about parks [Gómez et al. 2010; Hamilton, Crompton, More 1991] and green areas [Zhang et al. 2015]. Another factor that fosters physical activity is accessibility of the infrastructure and its design and the existence of recreational facilities [Hoehner et al. 2005; Forsyth et al. 2008; Gómez et al. 2010].

No statistically significant differences were found between assessments of the organization of recreational events and respondents' sex, BMI and LPA. The literature review indicates that this subject had not been studied previously, which implies the existence of another research gap in this area. Similarly, no statistically significant differences were observed between the assessment of marketing efforts and respondents' sex, BMI and LPA. However, many authors emphasize the importance of public service announcements as a marketing instrument used to promote knowledge about the benefits of physical activity and their impact on the level of physical activity [Gordon et al. 2006; Matsudo et al. 2002]. In the study by Hoehner C.M et al. [2005], among factors that influence the level

of physical activity the authors mention promotion, defined as the number of announcements made on TV and radio, in newspapers and on billboards [Brennan Ramirez et al. 2006]. This is, then, yet another area that needs to be explored further.

The statistical analysis revealed that the quality of the city's recreational offering does not affect the intensity of respondents' physical activity. This finding is at odds with the results obtained by some authors, but is confirmed by others. For example, the review article by Van Cauwenberg et al. mention similar results with respect to elderly persons [Van Cauwenberg et al. 2011].

## 6. Conclusions

The literature review presented in the first part has provided the theoretical basis for the pilot study described in the second part. However, its results cannot be easily interpreted, owing to the study's limitations.

It can be concluded that in studies of correlations between the quality of the city's recreational offering and the physical activity of its inhabitants, the recreational offering should be assessed as the comprehensive product created by the city. The quality is assessed by taking into account all elements that make up the city's recreational offering and interactions between them. Under this approach, quality dimensions of the city's recreational offering should include attributes associated with the assessment of natural assets and their accessibility (mountain and lowland trails, tourism trails for bike tours, Nordic walking, promenades, outdoor gyms, etc.), sports facilities, transport accessibility, state of the natural environment, road and technical infrastructure, as well as other aspects, such as safety of inhabitants, recreants or tourists in the city, range of available services (bike and sports equipment rentals), conditions of economic development in the area, aesthetic-emotional, social, organisational aspects, the quality of relations between entities forming the network and its leader, i.e. the local government unit (characteristics associated with mutual referrals, information, recommendations, the wide range of offered services, service packaging and the development of a common market offering). In other words, the recreational offering needs to be assessed holistically as an integrated complex of elements that encompass the entire user experience at the interface between the recreational product and organisations that provide it. Thus, the assessment model has to be adapted to the context of a given city. Given the threats posed by epidemics of diseases of civilization and obesity, research in this area is becoming increasingly relevant, especially for local public policies pursued by local governments.

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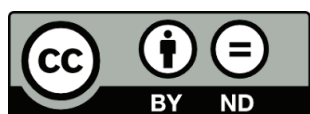
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## Związek między jakością produktu rekreacyjnego miasta a aktywnością fizyczną jego mieszkańców – wyniki badań pilotażowych w Bielsku-Białej

**Streszczenie.** Celem artykułu jest zarysowanie ramy teoretycznej dla badania zależności między jakością produktu rekreacyjnego miasta tworzego przez lokalny samorząd a aktywnością fizyczną jego mieszkańców. W badaniach wykorzystano metodę systematycznej analizy literatury przedmiotu uzupełnioną danymi z pilotażowego badania ankietowego. Badanie pilotażowe zostało przeprowadzone w 2016 r. i objęło 180 mieszkańców Bielska-Białej. Odpowiedzi zebrano podczas bezpośrednich wywiadów na podstawie kwestionariusza ankiety składającego się z dwóch części: Międzynarodowego Kwestionariusza Aktywności Fizycznej (wersja skrócona) oraz kwestionariusza oceny ofert rekreacyjnych zaproponowanego przez autorów. Przeprowadzona analiza literatury pozwoliła na wskazanie luki badawczej i publikacyjnej – brakuje kompleksowego podejścia do badania zależności między jakością produktu rekreacyjnego miasta a poziomem aktywności fizycznej jego mieszkańców, a wyniki dotychczasowych badań różnią się w zależności od miejsca, którego dotyczyły (co potwierdziło również badanie pilotażowe opisane w artykule).

Jak wynika z badań pilotażowych autorów, do preferowanych przez respondentów form aktywności fizycznej należały aktywności outdoorowe (Nordic Walking i szybkie spacery). Przeważającą część respondentów można uznać za wystarczająco aktywną fizycznie. Wyniki badania wskazują, że nie występują istotne statystycznie różnice pomiędzy oceną kadry, oceną infrastruktury a poziomem aktywności fizycznej badanych mieszkańców Bielska-Białej. Nowatorstwo opracowania polega na wypracowaniu i przetestowaniu w badaniach pilotażowych nowej ramy teoretycznej do badania zależności między jakością produktu rekreacyjnego miasta a aktywnością fizyczną jego mieszkańców. Autorki proponują, aby rozszerzyć dotychczasowe podejścia, skupione głównie na ocenie wymiaru materialnego, o wymiar marketingowy, kadrowy i organizacyjny. Wymaga to prowadzenia badań o charakterze interdyscyplinarnym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** aktywność fizyczna, produkt rekreacyjny, miasto, czynniki wpływające



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MARZENA MAKOWSKA-ISKIERKA\*

## Suburban zones as recreation and tourism reception areas for inhabitants of Polish metropolises

**Abstract.** The aim of the article is to characterise suburban zones, particularly as area performing recreational and tourist functions for inhabitants of large cities (metropolises). The study presents goals and motivations, frequency and duration of recreational and tourist activity undertaken in suburban areas based on information collected from a representative group of Polish urban dwellers. The study is based on a review of the literature, the author's observations and survey results. Essential quantitative data were obtained from a survey conducted on a representative sample of the Polish population carried out on the end of 2014 using the standardized questionnaire survey method as part of the Omnibus Express service (CATI). Most respondents contacted in the survey undertook tourist and recreational activity in the suburban zone every day or almost every day, usually accompanied by other family members. Their main intention was to rest and enjoy some recreational activities, visit relatives or friends and stay on summer holiday plots. The choice of the suburban zone was to a greater extent motivated by its tourist assets and familiarity with the area than its proximity to the place of permanent residence. Many respondents used some form of accommodation during those stays, including their own (private) summer houses, or relatives' / friends' flats, or hotel accommodation. The monitoring of tourist and recreational activity in Poland should be continued and should also focus on spaces used for these purposes. More extensive research would make it possible to identify patterns and trends, also at regional level. Consequently, this kind of research would facilitate a more effective planning and organization of tourism and recreation, which would bring measurable social, economic and spatial effects.

**Keywords:** suburban zone, metropolises, recreation, tourism, tourism reception area, tourist recreation

**JEL Codes:** L83, Z31, Z32

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## 1. Introduction

Because of their proximity, suburban areas, which form the outer zone of metropolitan areas, are conveniently linked to the centre. They are usually attractive areas, both as regards their natural conditions (access to forest complexes and water reservoirs) and anthropogenic assets. They offer vast open spaces, tranquillity and direct contact with nature, as well as an opportunity to explore local cultural heritage. In addition, their recreation and tourism infrastructure has been systematically improving, encouraging people to spend their leisure time in attractive and varied ways. Thanks to their proximity and accessibility, suburban areas and their local assets can easily be explored at weekdays and during holidays. For this reason they are potentially attractive tourism reception areas, especially for inhabitants of large agglomerations, tired with the hustle and bustle of a large city and the stressful pace of life. City dwellers miss peace and quiet and contact with nature, where they could satisfy their recreational needs. The aim of this article is to verify this assumption, based on a review of the literature, the author's own observation and a survey. Since the study focuses on the demand and not the supply side, no quantitative or spatial analysis was conducted. Instead, a qualitative description of the characteristic features of suburban areas<sup>1</sup> is provided, together with an explanation of their relevance for tourism and recreation activity of inhabitants of Polish metropolises.

## 2. The characteristics of suburban zones<sup>2</sup>

A suburban zone (the key term in this article) is the area surrounding the central city, strongly connected with it through a number of functions (e.g. being the breadbasket of the area, with housing and tourist-recreational functions). Since the mid-1900s, foreign and Polish literature has explored many interesting topics devoted to these problems [e.g. Dobrowolska 1964; Beaujeu-Garnier, Chabot 1971; Kielczewska-Zaleska 1972; Straszewicz 1980, 1985; Koter 1985; Maik 1985, 1992; Dziewoński 1987]. Different authors have analysed the suburban zone as the city's agricultural base [Straszewicz 1954; Kosiński 1954], the area and range of the city's influence [Suliborski 1985]; they have also discussed transformations and processes occurring in the suburbs [Dziewoński 1987;

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<sup>1</sup> A comparison between metropolitan areas of Krakow and Łódź with respect to tourism can also be found in another article by the author [Makowska-Iskierka 2015a].

<sup>2</sup> A review of the literature concerning suburban zones and a list of sources cited after M. Makowska-Iskierka [2011].

Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 1995a], as well as their functions [e.g. Kosiński 1954; Maik 1985; Liszewski 1987a]. Other authors have formulated theories regarding the creation and growth of suburban zones [e.g. Christaller 1963; Korcelli 1969]. However, one issue that is still the subject of discussion is how to delimit suburban zones and based on what criteria [Dobrowolska 1964; Jelonek 1985; Liszewski 1985; Straszewicz 1985; Suliborski 1985]. Despite numerous attempts to address the problem theoretically [e.g. Dobrowolska 1964; Beaujeu-Garnier. Chabot 1971; Kielczewska-Zaleska 1972; Straszewicz 1980, 1985; Koter 1985; Maik 1985], researchers specializing in different sciences are still in disagreement about how to perceive suburban zones. The publication entitled “Pojęcia i metody badań strefy podmiejskiej”<sup>3</sup> [Straszewicz (ed.) 1985] presents a geographical approach to the understanding of the character of this particular type of space in Poland and other European countries. Other interesting works include those by Stanisław Liszewski and Jolanta Gryszkiewicz [Liszewski 1987b, Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 1998].

In general, suburban zones are defined as areas surrounding or adjacent to a city and linked to it through a system of functions. However, they should not be viewed merely as neighbouring areas [Dziwoński 1987; Maik 1992], as they offer a specific mix of urban and rural living conditions [Chabot 1948]. In areas where such a mixture occurs there is a variety of direct and multilateral relationships but the influence of the city is the predominant force [Kielczewska-Zaleska 1972; Koter 1985]. According to Ludwik Straszewicz, suburban zones are linked with the city – together, they form one system and are an integral part of the urban organism; they develop thanks to the influence of the city (they depend on its economic growth, history, size, socio-economic importance); on the other hand, they perform certain functions which ensure the development and existence of the central city; suburban zones include towns and satellite housing estates, inhabited by people working and studying in the city [Straszewicz 1985].

A suburban zone is an area situated between the mother city and traditional rural areas, complementary to the city and transformed under its influence. It is characterised by the mode and intensity of land exploitation, the character and styling of its buildings, or the number and density of population [Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 1998]. According to Roman Szkup, this part of geographical space changes over time (under the influence of the city) and in space (as a result of transport accessibility) and is shaped by the coexistence and interpenetration of urban and rural influences [Szkup 2003].

The urban zone is influenced by the mother city, whose specific features influence the way the suburban zone develops. The longer the city has existed, the more developed and the more distinctive its suburban zone becomes [Kielczewska-

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<sup>3</sup> Terminology and research methods in the study of suburban zones.

Zaleska 1972]. However, functions of the latter also influence the former, making the city, to some extent, dependent on its suburban zone [Straszewicz 1985]. Suburban zones can perform various functions [Harasimowicz 2018] connected with transportation, food supply, housing, industry, health care and recreation, public utilities and sanitation services, sports, research, spa treatments. It is these functions that determine the individual character of the zone rather than its spatial form [Liszewski 1987b].

As mentioned earlier, suburban zones are areas undergoing dynamic urbanization processes and functional, morphological, demographic and social transformations [e.g. Dąbrowska 1996; Jażdżewska 2005; Zimnicka, Czernik 2007]. Their development results in the creation of an urban-rural continuum [e.g. Benet 1963], where the differences between the suburban countryside and the city gradually disappear. The suburban zone has also been perceived as the manifestation of countryside urbanization [Beaujeu-Garnier, Chabot 1971] or as a tug of war between the city and the surrounding countryside. Along with the growth of the city, the suburban zone becomes another urbanized district and expands at the cost of the former middle part of the supply zone, which moves further and further away [Kielczewska-Zaleska 1972]. Transformations of this type are often caused by the development of tourism; in the literature, these processes are referred to as tourism urbanization [Dziegieć 1987, 1988, 1995; Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 1995b, 1998; Makowska-Iskierka 2004, 2005, 2011].

To sum up, the suburban zone is the space of interpenetration between the city and the countryside, modernity and cultural tradition, industry and agriculture, workplace and home, different lifestyles, architectural styles and forms. It is an area where one can observe the flow of people and services, the interweaving of roles, relationships and functions.

In this article, the suburban zone is analysed in the context of metropolitan areas, defined in terms of its functional integration and on the basis of continuous urban development<sup>4</sup>. Rather than focusing on the problem of delimiting the suburban zone, the emphasis is on its character and functions. In accordance with the concept of a tourist metropolitan region or metropolitan tourist-recreational region, which is a multifunctional area comprising the central city and its functional zone, the suburbs are defined as areas situated in the outer zone of the city (the metropolis), performing tourist and recreational functions. They serve as a tourism reception area, mainly for city residents, who usually visit them at weekends, but also on weekdays and during holidays, mostly for recreational purposes. The metropolitan city, as the centre of the region, is the final or stop-over

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<sup>4</sup> This is the result of the expansion of residential areas around the city and the pushing out of tourist (summer holiday) settlements further away from the city (a stage in the urbanization of suburban areas [Makowska-Iskierka 2011]).

destination of trips made for business, educational or cultural purposes [Liszewski 2005].

Given the topic of this article, one should start by considering tourism and recreational functions of suburban zones. The recreational function is connected with the practice of building summer holiday facilities near large cities in the 19th century, which contributed to the gradual development of suburban zones [e.g. Liszewski 1987a; Faracik 2007; Mantey 2017]. Since the 1960s, Polish researchers have been investigating problems associated with the spatial organization of weekend recreation in suburban zones of large cities, paying special attention to natural conditions and forms of tourism development [e.g. Król 1981; Matczak 1981]. Since the 1970s, they have been particularly interested in the phenomenon of “second homes” [cf. Wępa 1974; Kowalczyk 1994]. Tourism and recreation near large cities were the topic of a conference organised by the IGU<sup>5</sup> Tourism and Recreation Geography Commission in 1986. At that time, researchers conducted interesting studies regarding tourism in suburban zones of major European cities, which were presented in the Commission’s report [*Tourism et loisirs ...* 1983], and in *Folia Geographica* No. 5 from 1985, and in *Turyzm* vol. 2, from 1992. One should also mention studies conducted at universities in Warsaw, Cracow, Poznań, Wrocław, and Łódź. A detailed review of the literature devoted to suburban zones and results of research on the development of tourism and its effects in areas surrounding major Polish cities can be found in a few publications based on doctoral dissertations [Matczak 1982; Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 1998; Faracik 2006; Makowska-Iskierka 2011].

The bibliography related to the use of suburban zones for recreational and tourism purposes, particularly by inhabitants of large cities, is rather limited. In Poland, these issues have been addressed by Elżbieta Dziegieć and Stanisław Liszewski [Dziegieć, Liszewski 1984, 1985], and, indirectly, at the regional level, by a number of other authors [e.g. Kostrzewa 1991; Wiluś 1991; Latosińska 1997; Włodarczyk 1999; Faracik 2011; Liszewski 2015; Makowska-Iskierka 2015b, as well as Sołtysik 2013; Sołtysik et al. 2016; Mantey 2016, 2017; Zamelska, Kaczor 2017]. The special character of weekend recreational tourism has been described based on information about the suburban zone of Wrocław [Sołtysik 2013], and partly in articles concerning Warsaw, Krakow, Poznań and Łódź. Review publications on tourism practiced by Poles [e.g. Luberda 2014; Makowska-Iskierka 2014; Berbeka 2016; Jarosz 2016; Niemczyk 2016] mention only weekend trips, categorised as domestic, short-term tourist trips, which are the most popular form of travelling, frequently to suburban areas. Unfortunately, there is a lack of studies on short-term recreation, including one-day trips. Analyses regarding recreational activities of various socio-demographic groups are usually based on

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<sup>5</sup> International Geographical Union.

information from small samples, refer to local conditions and can hardly serve as the basis for generalizations. This evident research gap has prompted the author to conduct a representative survey in order to study how dwellers of Polish metropolitan areas use suburban areas.

### 3. The specific nature of suburban recreation and tourism reception areas

In the literature, a tourism reception area or tourism concentration area is defined as a place, destination or its part, a group of localities, a region or a country, which attracts tourist traffic by virtue of its tourism assets [e.g. Hendel 2018]. Michał Żemła emphasizes that the term can refer to any area which is a place of intensive tourism and its socio-economic and natural outcomes, which has assets and tourism infrastructure that can be perceived by tourists as a separate and homogeneous whole. From the perspective of a tourist looking for a tourism product, such an area is an alternative to other areas (brands) [Żemła 2010: 29].

A tourism reception area can be identified and assessed in terms of factors that are relevant for tourism consumption, i.e. transport accessibility, tourism assets (which can be turned into tourist attractions after being adjusted to tourists' needs), services provided by operating equipment and using the general infrastructure [Dziedzic 1998].

Suburban zones of large cities often hold large tourism potential, i.e. a set of tourism (natural and anthropogenic) assets (attractions), which may be of interest to tourists. When the existing tourism potential is enriched by the accommodation and gastronomic infrastructure, transport, tourist information, etc., it can become an attractive tourist product. The same area can offer several products intended for different groups of users. A tourism reception product is usually a conglomerate of many products with various links and relationships, generated by different entities, which pursue different, sometimes contradictory aims [Żemła 2011a: 1073].

In order to take advantage of the resources provided by the city's surroundings, various forms of activity are undertaken. The most popular and most frequently observed in suburban areas include active recreation (e.g. jogging, going for walks, Nordic walking, cycling, mushroom picking, fishing, horse riding), staying on a recreational plot, or in a "second home" or at a holiday facility, often combined with passive recreation (e.g. reading, sunbathing), sightseeing and recreational visits (usually short), visiting family or friends, as well as participating in a one-time or regular event, taking part in some classes (e.g. on an educational farm or in a thematic village) or coordinating events (e.g. family



celebrations, such as wedding parties, jubilees, tem-building parties). How the suburban space is used depends on individual preferences and on the current offering available for a given group of users. These are usually private individuals, mainly families with children or couples, elderly people, disabled people, or social groups (including organized groups of club or union members, company workers). They may share an aim and interests, e.g. nature lovers, people interested in active recreation.

Recreational or tourist stays in suburban areas are usually short (weekends are popular) and take place during short and medium periods of leisure time, not far from the place of permanent residence; they do not require special planning or specialist programming; they are mostly organized individually (organized group trips are rare), do not require much organization or financing, involve a variety of activities, which provide a quick regeneration of physical and mental powers.

Suburban zones can be used for recreational and tourist purposes. This division depends primarily on the amount of time spent on a single occasion and on the character of stay. Following Bogdan Włodarczyk's way of thinking, the leisure time space includes tourism space and recreation space. The latter is also an element of the home (family) space. Recreation space is a part of geographical space, which has qualities favourable for different forms of recreation, involving significant social and spatial recreational processes [Włodarczyk 2009, 2014]. On the other hand, tourism space is the part of geographical space where tourist traffic occurs; it is functionally distinct, comprises natural elements (natural environment), permanent outcomes of human activity in this environment (cultural and economic), as well as human environment in the social sense [Liszewski 1995]. Different authors also use the concept of recreational-tourist space [Baczwarow, Liszewski 1998].

Broadly speaking, recreation is any activity which helps the body to regenerate and regain strength, usually by resting and engaging in fun activities, possibly involving physical activity, creativity and effort; it is voluntary and is undertaken in free time; it is determined by personal preferences and interests and does not have to involve travelling. According to Małgorzata Durydiwka, recreation is synonymous with rest [Durydiwka 2012]. On the other hand, tourism is a form of recreation, which, apart from a change of activity, also involves a change of surroundings. It can be defined as a spatial phenomenon involving trips outside the place of permanent residence and the use and transformation of the geographical environment for the purposes of tourist traffic [Rogalewski 1974]. It is a temporary, voluntary change of the place of stay (the environment and the rhythm of life), as well as staying away from the place of residence for educational, recreational and health-related purposes. Tourism can be viewed as a form of active recreation (tourist recreation) through the consumption of travel and tourism services.

According to Marin Bachvarov and Elżbieta Dziegieć, in the English language literature, tourism is a narrower concept, understood as a form of recreation involving both physical and educational activities [Bachvarov, Dziegieć 2005: 88]. It involves trips away from the place of residence for recreational purposes and to celebrate holidays, including at least one overnight stay. Recreation also takes place away from home, but it lasts shorter – less than 24 hours. This is the meaning scope of both concepts that is adopted in this article. People who participate in recreational activities during their leisure time are called “recreants” [after Dewailly, Flament 1993], and when these activities are performed away from their place of residence and are part of tourism, they are referred to as “trip makers” or “visitors” (the World Tourism Organization definition).

Recreation and tourism activities may be considerably different but they are linked by some spatial relationships. Consequently, it is possible to talk about tourist recreation, which combines the features of both phenomena, including the perspectives of participants, economic agents and the physical space [Bachvarov, Dziegieć 2005: 91]. This combined concept seems to be adequate to describe activities undertaken by inhabitants of metropolises in suburban areas.

#### 4. Research methodology

The principal features of tourism and recreation practiced in Poland, in the zones surrounding cities (i.e. outside the centre, in the outer area) are described in the article by Marzena Makowska-Iskierka, which indicates that the special character of the metropolitan area is mostly determined by city inhabitants, who are its main users [Makowska-Iskierka 2015b]. The main goal of the present study is to provide a detailed analysis of activities undertaken by inhabitants of Polish metropolises in suburban areas. The aims, motivations, frequency and duration of stays in suburban areas during recreational and tourist activities are analysed using information collected in a survey of a representative group of Poles.

Essential quantitative data were obtained from a survey conducted on a representative sample of the Polish population. At the author’s request, the Homo Homini Public Opinion Research Institute carried out the task towards the end of 2014 using the standardized questionnaire survey method, as part of the Omnibus Express service (a study on a representative population sample). The technique used was CATI, i.e. the computer-aided telephone interview. Random and quota sampling method was adopted (N<sub>min.</sub>=1067; margin of error – 3%, confidence level – 0.95), based on demographic data about the Polish population provided by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) and guaranteeing representativeness of the study. The sampling frame consisted of the widely available, updated

and complete list of addresses and telephone numbers, supplemented with a random dialling list, created from randomly chosen cell phone numbers, generated on the basis of prefixes allocated to individual operators within the Telephone Numbers System in the public land mobile network (PLMN T2). The numbers were generated proportionally to the market share of individual cell phone operators. The survey was conducted among inhabitants of Poland, of both sexes, who were 15 or older on the survey day. The sample reflected the distribution of socio-geographical features across the population, and sampling variation was counterbalanced by using stratification based on population density and distribution in different size classes of localities. The demographic variables included sex, age, education, income and seven categories of the place of residence (villages, towns up to 49,000, 50,000-99,000, 100,000-199,000, 200,000-400,000 and cities above 500,000, as well as Warsaw; the size classes were established for individual provinces.

For the purposes of this article, metropolises are defined as cities inhabited by over 500,000 people, namely the cities of Warsaw, Cracow, Łódź, Wrocław and Poznań. It should be emphasized that of the information collected during the CATI survey, only data concerning this group of respondents were analysed.

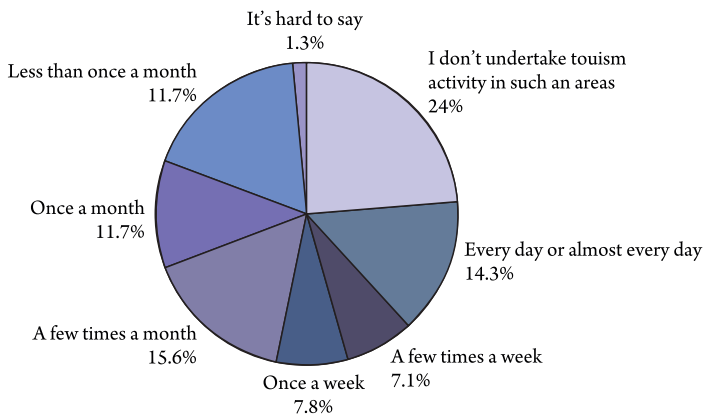
## **5. Inhabitants of Polish metropolises as users of suburban zones – survey results**

The aim of the poll was to study the character of recreation and tourism activity undertaken in suburban areas, particularly by people living in metropolises. To obtain the necessary information, respondents were asked questions about how often and when they visit suburban zones of large cities (Figs. 1 and 2), what type of accommodation they usually use (Fig. 3), purposes of their stays (Fig. 4), reasons for choosing suburban zones (Fig. 5) and who they usually go with (Fig. 6).

Figure 1 shows information about the frequency of recreation and tourism activity undertaken by metropolis dwellers in suburban zones of large cities. Three fourths of respondents in this group said they used the suburban space for this purpose, though with different regularity: nearly 30% visited such areas every day or at least once a week, 26.3% - a few times a week, and 18.2% - less frequently. 14.3% of metropolis inhabitants took advantage of areas surrounding the city in their leisure time every day or almost every day, which constituted the largest share among all five categories of the place of residence. It should probably be linked to the vogue for healthy lifestyle or to the particular lifestyle of metropolis inhabitants, who appreciate and engage in activity (especially physical) in their free time. Respondents in this group are usually young, well-educated employees,

who understand that regular physical activity is the key to good health and a form of prevention against chronic or civilizational diseases [cf. Biernat 2011; Piotrowska 2017]. This interpretation is supported by the findings of the GUS report on the participation in sports and physical recreation [GUS 2017], which indicates that many young people regularly engage in such activities and that their frequency tends to change with age and is correlated with the career cycle.

Fig. 1. Frequency of tourist and recreational activities undertaken by inhabitants of Polish metropolises in the suburban zone of a large city\*



\* Original wording of the question: “Jak często / z jaką regularnością podejmuje Pan/i aktywność turystyczną i rekreacyjną w strefie podmiejskiej dużego miasta (in. w okolicy dużego miasta)?”

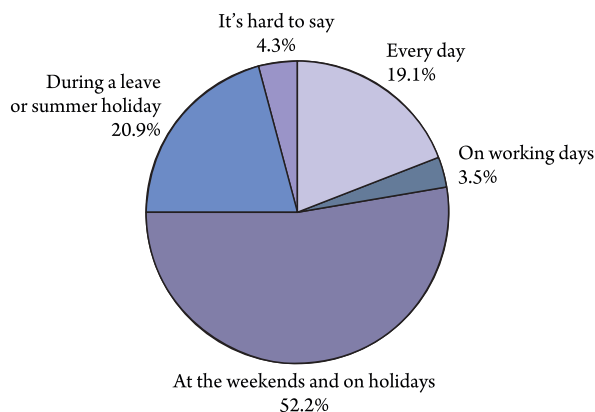
Source: based on data collected the survey commissioned by the author.

Interestingly, nearly a quarter of the respondents in this group reported that they did not undertake recreational or tourist activity in suburban zones at all. Interestingly, it was the largest percentage among the five groups of respondents classified by the category of the place of residence. This could be due to their preference to rest near their homes, within the limits of the city, i.e. in the centre of the metropolitan region rather than in its outer zone. In another study by Piotrowska [2017] it was found that inhabitants of Polish largest cities were the most physically active and the most likely to exercise together with their relatives. Lack of physical activity was reported by only 14% of respondents living in metropolitan areas, while the practice of exercising with family members – by nearly half of all respondents. This situation probably has to do with the most frequently chosen forms of recreation and easily accessible, good quality and varied recreation infrastructure available in the city. These observations are consistent with the results of the social diagnosis published by the Polish Ministry of Sports and Tourism [MSiT 2016], which revealed a growing demand for freely avail-

able infrastructure enabling city dwellers to be engage in physical activity and participate in popular, informal, pleasure and relaxation-oriented sports, without the need to be competitive.

The second question asked during the interview concerned typical periods when respondents undertake tourist and recreational activity in suburban zones of large cities (Fig. 2). The purpose of the question was to indirectly determine the duration of such visits. The collected data indicate that most respondents chose weekends and non-working days, which made up over half of responses, followed by leaves and holidays (over a fifth of all responses). Such choices enable longer stays in suburban areas, mainly for recreational purposes, thanks to the suitable tourist infrastructure, especially accommodation facilities, which will be discussed later on.

Fig. 2. Periods when inhabitants of Polish metropolises undertake tourist and recreational activity in the suburban zone of a large city\*



\* Original wording of the question: "Kiedy podejmuje Pan/i aktywność turystyczną i rekreacyjną w strefie podmiejskiej dużego miasta?".

Source: based on data collected in the survey commissioned by the author.

According to a study conducted by the Institute of Tourism in Warsaw, weekend tourism is becoming increasingly popular among Poles and has a regional character, i.e. people usually visit areas located relatively close to their place of residence for short-term trips. A 2-3-day stay every week is a good opportunity to rest and regenerate the body, usually in the company of other family members, enjoying the landscape and spending time in an active way [prnews.pl, 2008]. It was observed that short, weekend stays, not far from home, are popular with families with children and elderly inhabitants, i.e. among less affluent people, who choose these areas also for sentimental reasons.

Participating in short domestic trips largely depends on the financial situation, the level of education, age and socio-occupational status. Studies by Berbeka [2016], Niemczyk [2016] indicate that the level of participation in this form of tourism is positively correlated with the education level and the economic situation. More affluent residents of large cities clearly are more likely to choose not only short trips more regularly but also more expensive and longer trips (including trips abroad) [Berbeka 2016; Niemczyk 2016], as alternatives to taking a longer holiday. This is also confirmed by a 2018 survey conducted by *IBRIS Market and Social Research Institute*, which showed the frequency of weekend travel for tourist/recreational purposes [Słomski 2018]. According to the survey, as many as 24.1% of respondents claimed that they did not travel at all; only 8.5% of respondents earning over PLN 7000 responded positively. Over a fifth of respondents admitted going on a trip once in three months on average, and 17.4% - once in six months, 5.4% did so regularly, nearly every weekend, and 17.6% - once a month on average.

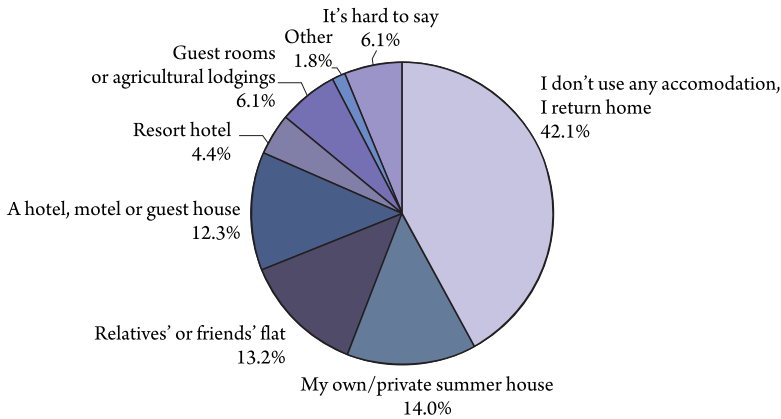
As regards the survey described in this article, of all groups of respondents defined by the class size of their place of residence, the largest percentage of those making daily visits to suburban areas was found in the group of city dwellers (19.1%). This finding suggests short, recreational stays, during which people tend to choose different forms of outdoor physical activity, since green open spaces in cities are limited and the quality of air is also very poor.

This result is consistent with the relatively large percentage of respondents (42%) who did not use accommodation facilities during their stays in suburban zones. It can be assumed that many agglomeration inhabitants return to their own homes, situated in relative proximity. Such a solution is reasonable as it eliminates additional costs and simplifies trip organization, while providing comfort, safety and greater intimacy. It is also indicative of the recreational nature of shorter stays in relative proximity to the city. Nevertheless, over half of all respondents did report using various forms of accommodation available in the suburban zone (Fig. 3). 27% stayed in their own private houses or flats or those belonging to their friends or relatives, 23% used collective, commercial accommodation facilities. The first option may reflect the thriftiness of metropolis dwellers, the second – their increasing affluence and growing demands as regards the comfort of an overnight stay.

The author's observations and other studies conducted in suburban zones surrounding large Polish cities indicate the existence of a large number of private recreation plots, with summer houses and so called "second homes", – mostly owned by city dwellers. 14% of metropolis respondents in the commissioned survey reported staying in such homes. Owning a house with a garden at an attractive location is a dream come true for many and is regarded as a good investment. Staying in one's own summer house provides tranquil and comfortable

leisure time, and a private plot of land allows the owner to arrange the space immediately surrounding them. Summer homes are also a welcome change from the permanent place of living<sup>6</sup>, usually on a periodical basis, but in some case, especially after retiring, even permanently. People who do not own plots of land or recreation houses in suburban zones take advantage of a wide range of hotel facilities, usually star-rated (12.28%), as well as agritourist farms (6.14%) (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Types of accommodation typically used by inhabitants of Polish metropolises while staying in suburban areas\*



\* Original wording of the question: "Z jakiego zakwaterowania korzysta Pan/i (najczęściej) podczas pobytu turystycznego lub rekreacyjnego na terenach podmiejskich?"

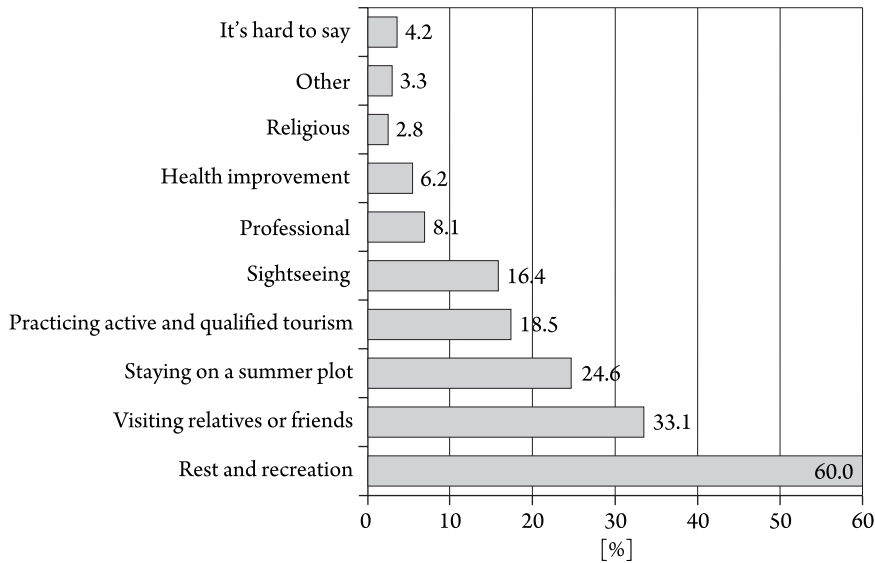
Source: based on data collected in the survey commissioned by the author.

Inhabitants of Polish metropolises were also asked about the purpose of going to suburban areas. They usually gave more than one reason (Fig. 4). Obviously, the most important one was rest and recreation (60% of all responses). A stay on a recreational plot proved to be very popular (nearly a quarter of all responses among metropolis dwellers; the second most popular answer in the whole sample). Other reasons are related to this primary goal (undertaking various activities, including adventure tourism – 18.5%, sightseeing and visiting places – 16.4%, or health considerations – 6.2%). The second most popular reason was to visit friends and relatives, which is consistent with answers regarding accommodation used while staying in the suburban zone (see Fig. 3). Participation in social meetings or family occasions is a good reason to leave the city and spend

<sup>6</sup> According to official statistics, housing conditions in Poland are systematically improving, with apartments and houses in rural areas being, on average, 28.9 m<sup>2</sup> larger than those in cities [GUS 2019].

at least one night away from it. It also provides an opportunity to take advantage of assets and attractions available in suburban areas. Other reasons for visiting suburban locations, include job-related and business matters, which additionally highlights the significance of these areas.

Fig. 4. The main reasons for trips to suburban areas made by inhabitants of Polish metropolises\*



\* Original wording of the question: "Jakie są główne cele Pana/i wyjazdu na tereny podmiejskie?"

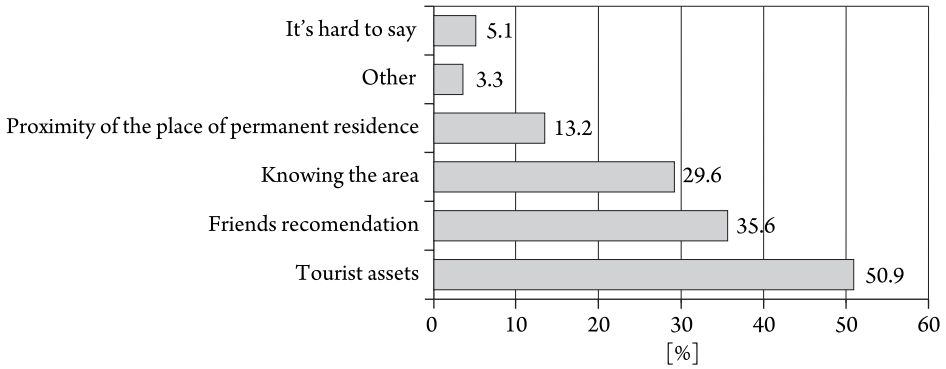
Source: based on data collected in the survey commissioned by the author.

The poll conducted among inhabitants of five largest Polish cities did not include a question about details of activities undertaken in suburban zones. This information, however, can be inferred from responses concerning reasons for trips provided during the interview, from observations and from the literature and reports on similar topics [e.g. Lubowiecki-Vikuk, Paczyńska-Jędrycka 2010; Mantey 2016; GUS 2017]. Examples of activities that can be undertaken in suburban areas are presented in the first part of the article devoted to the literature review and the description of the special character of suburban areas of recreation and tourism reception.

Figure 5 shows factors determining the choice of suburban zones as destinations for tourism and recreation. Over half of all metropolis dwellers (the highest percentage of all groups defined by the class size of the place of residence) emphasized the importance of tourist assets, which includes the area itself and its natural resources that determine its attractiveness for tourists.



Fig. 5. Factors that motivate inhabitants of Polish metropolises to choose suburban zones as destinations for tourism and recreation\*



\* Original wording of the question: "Co decyduje o Pana/i wyborze strefy podmiejskiej na obszar przyjazdu w celach turystycznych i rekreacyjnych?".

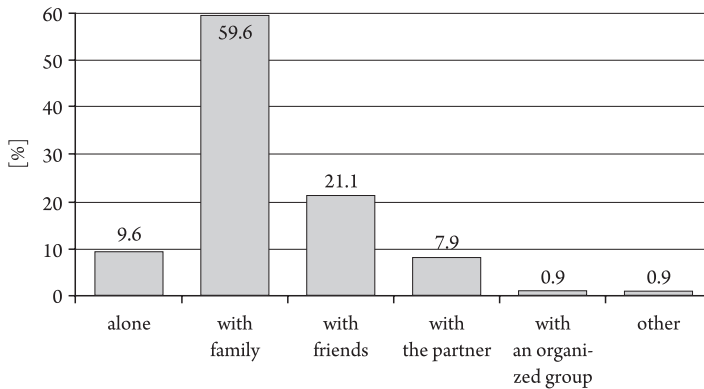
Source: based on data collected in the survey commissioned by the author.

Familiarity with the suburban zone and its proximity to their place of permanent residence was nearly equally significant for city inhabitants (42.8% of responses). For a relatively small percentage (13.2% – the smallest share among the five groups included in the study), the distance played an important role, which is understandable, as suburban areas are most easily accessible by transport, meaning less time and money spent on travelling.

Over a third of respondents in this group (most probably those who did not know well the offering, attractions and infrastructure of suburban areas) valued recommendations of their friends. They may not have had many opportunities to explore them, because, for instance, in their family there had not been a tradition of spending leisure time in the suburban zone. Judging from the author's personal observations, stays and ways of spending free time, especially on suburban recreational plots, are passed on from generation to generation and are mostly based on the sentimental attachment to the place.

Familiar home space or space close to home makes people feel secure. Any longer journey to new, unfamiliar territories means leaving this familiar space and discovering the unknown, which involves an element of risk [Stasiak 2017]. Currently, the importance of safety is growing, which has an effect on decisions concerning tourist trips. Some people do not feel the urge to experience the thrill of adventure and prefer to stay close to home. It is particularly convenient in suburban zones, where it is easy to quickly return to the city and use its services and amenities. The infrastructure around metropolises is constantly developing, providing comfort for its users. Such conditions improve

Fig. 6. Types of company usually chosen by inhabitants of Polish metropolises during tourist and recreational activity in the suburban zone of a large city\*



\* Original wording of the question: “Z kim (przeważnie) podejmuje Pan/i aktywność turystyczną w strefie podmiejskiej?”

Source: based on data collected in the survey commissioned by the author.

the standard of recreation in suburban zones, especially for families with children and elderly people.

Suburban zones are typically visited by two or three-generational families, as can be seen in Figure 6, which is the option selected by as many as 60% of metropolis dwellers, the highest percentage among all groups of respondents identified by the class size of their place of residence. The least popular option (nearly 8% – half the mean value for the whole sample) was “with my partner”. Over 21% of large city dwellers opted for the company of friends. Travelling and staying outside the city together, during leisure time, helps people to keep up good social relationships and to maintain and strengthen family ties. Such trips can also be a good outdoor lesson, especially for the youngest. Interestingly, only 1% of respondents reported the option of visiting suburban area with an organized group. Offers of this kind are not popular yet, or they are insufficiently advertised, which is why potential users are not aware of them.

## 6. Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to describe suburban zones as areas which perform significant recreational functions and are attractive places of tourism reception, particularly for inhabitants of metropolises. The author also discussed the unique character of activities undertaken in these zones, which confirms the sig-

nificance of suburban areas in this respect and provides support for the author's main hypothesis.

The study has demonstrated that suburban zones of large cities or metropolitan areas surrounding the central city<sup>7</sup> offer a number of possibilities of spending free time in an interesting way, enabling people to enjoy rest and recreation in close touch with nature, practice various forms of active and educational tourism, thus supplementing options available in the city. Thanks to their tourist assets, attractive location, good transport accessibility and appropriate infrastructure, suburban zones are attractive tourism and recreation areas. Therefore, they are popular and highly valued, especially by metropolis inhabitants. Lidia Poniży adds that recreational areas in suburban zones are particularly suitable for daily and weekend recreation of city dwellers and inhabitants of metropolitan areas [Poniży 2010].

The results of the survey commissioned by the author indicate that inhabitants of Polish metropolises (i.e. cities inhabited by over 500,000 people) tend to make regular and frequent (daily or almost daily) recreational and tourist visits to suburban zones. The main reasons for such trips, usually in the company of family members or friends, include rest and recreation (mostly physical), visiting relatives and friends, and a stay on a recreational plot. Most respondents chose suburban areas mainly for their natural assets; the proximity of accommodation, including their own summer houses and hotels, played a much less significant role.

Similar studies should be conducted on a regular basis, in order to track potential changes or trends. It would be useful to increase the number of questions to gain information about the duration of one-time stays in suburban zones, typical seasons, the most frequently undertaken forms of activity, or the evaluation of the infrastructure. With a larger sample size, it would be possible to analyse personal variables and their correlation with responses. Patterns of tourist and recreational behaviours of city inhabitants could also be observed. A comparative study could be interesting from the scientific and practical point of view as it might reveal some regularities in different parts of the country. This, in turn, could help tailor the offering and tourist and recreational infrastructure to the needs and expectations of visitors and in this way bring measurable social and economic benefits. A harmonious development of recreational and tourist functions in suburban zones, supported by rational planning, creates great opportunities for the development of these spaces as attractive and competitive reception areas [cf. Żemła 2011b], not only for agglomeration inhabitants.

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<sup>7</sup> The metropolitan area is often referred as the suburban zone [e.g. Faracik 2006, 2011].

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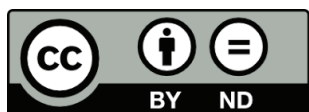
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## Strefy podmiejskie jako obszary rekreacji i recepcji turystycznej dla mieszkańców polskich metropolii

**Streszczenie.** Artykuł ma na celu przedstawienie specyfiki strefy podmiejskiej, w szczególności jako obszaru pełniącego funkcje rekreacyjno-turystyczne, głównie dla mieszkańców dużych miast (metropolii). Na podstawie badań własnych, przeprowadzonych na reprezentatywnej grupie Polaków – mieszkańców metropolii, ukazane zostały m.in. cele i motywy, częstotliwość i czas podejmowania przez nich aktywności rekreacyjnych i turystycznych na terenach podmiejskich. Na potrzeby opracowania zastosowano następujące metody badawcze: kwerendę literatury, obserwację własną, badanie sondażowe opinii publicznej Polaków. Niezbędne dane ilościowe uzyskano z badania przeprowadzonego na reprezentatywnej próbie populacji Polski pod koniec 2014 r., przy użyciu standaryzowanych wywiadów kwestionariuszowych, w ramach usługi Omnibus Express (CATI). Ankietowani mieszkańcy metropolii polskich podejmowali aktywność turystyczną i rekreacyjną w strefie podmiejskiej najczęściej codziennie lub prawie codziennie, przeważnie w gronie rodziny. Ich głównym celem był wypoczynek i rekreacja, odwiedziny krewnych lub znajomych, a także pobyt na działce letniskowej. Walory turystyczne i znajomość obszaru były istotniejszym czynnikiem decydującym o wyborze strefy podmiejskiej niż jej niewielka odległość od miejsca zamieszkania. Mieszkańcy dużych miast często korzystali z zakwaterowania podczas tych pobytów, w tym z własnego (prywatnego) domu letniskowego albo z mieszkania u krewnych lub znajomych, a także z noclegów świadczonych przez różne obiekty hotelarskie. Wskazane jest bieżące monitorowanie aktywności turystycznej i rekreacyjnej Polaków, również w odniesieniu do wykorzystywanych przez nich w tych celach przestrzeni. Poszerzone badania pozwoliłyby wskazać prawidłowości i tendencje, także w skali regionalnej, a tym samym lepiej planować oraz organizować ofertę rekreacyjną i turystyczną, przynosząc w konsekwencji wymierne skutki społeczne, ekonomiczne i przestrzenne.

**Słowa kluczowe:** strefa podmiejska, metropolie, rekreacja, turystyka, obszar recepcji turystycznej, rekreacja turystyczna



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## A comparison of the tourism sector in Poland and the Czech Republic

**Abstract.** The aim of the article is to assess the condition of the tourism sector in Poland and in the Czech Republic. Statistical data from various institutions operating in the area of travel and tourism were compared. These statistics were supplemented with data contained in industry reports. In addition, official tourism statistics from both countries were also used. The analysis shows that the Polish tourism industry does not fully use its potential for development and performs worse than Western European countries. The Czech Republic, despite a smaller population, has a higher indicator of infrastructural equipment, which, given the country's geographical location, is the key determinant of the development potential of the tourism sector. The Polish tourism industry needs to continue investing in its infrastructure, which, given the country's geographical location and conditions for tourism, is one of the key factors that affect tourism and drive its development. Online promotion and advertising should also be intensified in order to reach potential tourists and show them the full range of tourism services. Poland and the Czech Republic are not generally perceived as very popular tourist destinations, so people's awareness of their attractiveness for tourism must be raised. The Internet is a particularly well-suited tool for this purpose, as it can, at a relatively low cost, show that countries like Poland and the Czech Republic can also provide services that satisfy the needs of various tourists.

**Keywords:** tourism sector, tourism multiplier, direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP

**JEL Codes:** L83, Z32

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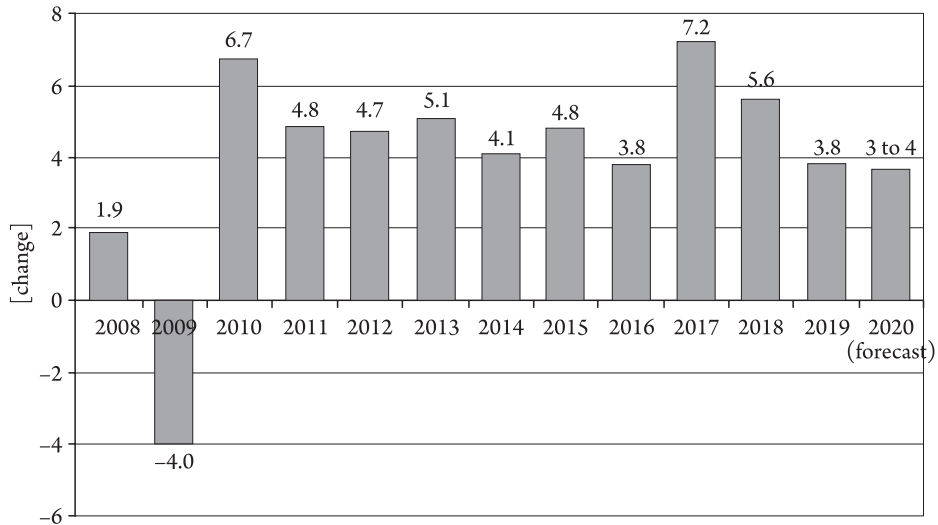
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## 1. Introduction

Tourism and related industries are of great importance in generating GDP in European countries, although their contribution is also significant elsewhere in the world [Gburova Matusikova, Benkova 2015]. According to a report by the World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC 2019a], covering 185 countries, tourism in 2017 accounted for 10.4 percent of global GDP, provided employment for nearly 330 million people worldwide (9.9% of total employment) [UNWTO World Tourism Barometer... 2020; *Travel & Tourism Benchmarking Research Trends* 2019]. The travel and tourism sector in Europe has a similar share in supporting jobs for 33.5 million people with a 9.3% share in GDP creation, which exceeds EUR 1.6 trillion. At the same time, it is the fastest growing sector in the world and, as expected, its value in the European economy in 2025 is to amount to EUR 2.1 trillion creating almost a tenth of the European GDP with employment reaching 38 million people. The growth dynamics of the tourist services sector in the world remains at the level of approx. 4% annually [WTTC 2019c]. In addition, according to WTTC estimates, the travel and tourism sector will grow in the following years at an even rate, and often even faster than the total economy [Governing National Tourism Policy 2020]. In Poland, the tourism sector generates approx. 6% of the country's GDP with the involvement of over 700,000 people. It is therefore a very important sector in many countries, especially those affected by socio-economic crises, such as the one in 2007-08, and tourism may prove to be crucial in overcoming its effects [Kruczek, Mazanek 2019: 25-41]. However, in order to reap the benefits from tourism and enable its growth, a well-developed infrastructure is necessary. Countries with tourism facilities of poor quality and making inadequate or ineffective investments may expect weaker GDP contributions from this sector in the future and see fewer potential benefits in the area of employment. To maintain its growth and meet projected targets, the sector will require constant innovation. However, analyses contained in the WTTC Report [2019b] indicate that not all countries will take advantage of the emerging opportunities. The report lists Poland as one of the countries that have little chances of achieving the effects forecast for this sector regarding the value of its products or participation in employment. Poland ranks low in terms of global competitiveness because of its poor and limited infrastructure, which in turn is due to underinvestment.

The aim of the article is to compare the condition of the tourism sector in Poland with its counterpart in the Czech Republic. Statistical data from various institutions operating in the area of travel and tourism were compared, such as the Institute of Tourism, the World Travel and Tourism Council or the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The statistics were supplemented with data

Fig. 1. International Tourist Arrivals, World (% change)



Source: based on data from the World Tourism Organization, Yearbook of Tourism Statistics <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL>; UNWTO World Tourism Barometer and Statistical Annex, January 2020.

from industry reports, such as Discover Central Europe, World Economic Forum (WEF). Official tourism statistics from both countries were also used, including those published by Statistics Poland, the Czech Statistical Office and the National Bank of Poland.

The global tourism sector is developing faster than that in Poland. The number of international arrivals, apart from a slight decrease in 2003 and 2009, grew faster than the entire global economy and in the last decade its annual growth rate fluctuated between 3.8 and 7.2 (Fig. 1).

## 2. A comparative approach to assessing attractions and capacity of the tourism sector

Although the climatic conditions for the development of tourism in Poland and the Czech Republic are not as favorable as those in southern European countries, both countries have many attractions that could be interesting for tourists [Panasiuk 2019: 13-25]. *The Discover Central Europe 2016. Facts & Figures* report [2017: 8-9] lists many tourist attractions that Poland can boast of, among them:

- 15 UNESCO sites, 4 of which are whole city complexes (Old towns of Warsaw, Cracow, Torun, and Zamość);

- 426 castles – some of them are museums, and some have been converted into hotels and congress centres;
  - 926 museums (private and public), many of which house interactive, modern exhibits;
  - 23 national parks located in all parts of Poland and 108 protected landscape parks;
  - the last primeval forest in Europe – Białowiecki National Park (a UNESCO site);
  - several animal and plant species which are extinct or rare elsewhere in the world;
  - a diversity of landscapes: sea coastline, lake regions, lowlands, highlands, several mountain ranges;
  - the biggest lake region (with over 1,000 lakes) in Europe after Finland, many rivers and canals, and a 700-km long sandy Baltic Sea coastline, which makes Poland a perfect destination for water sports enthusiasts, with plentiful opportunities for kayaking, yachting, kitesurfing, etc.;
  - great conditions for active sport enthusiasts: 49,200 km of walking/hiking trails, 18,500 km of cycling routes, 1,100 km of kayaking routes, 400 km of skiing trails, and opportunities for fans of horse riding, golfing and alpinism, 70,000 km of tourist trails;
  - over 240 SPA resorts in 40 health centres;
  - 16 airports serving 25 airlines
  - many large shopping centres, some of which are world award winners, located in each major city;
  - trendy pubs and restaurants serving dishes representing cuisines from the whole world
  - a long list of well-known international music festivals and cultural festivals.
- With respect to the Czech Republic, the report lists the following assets:
- it is the 6th safest destination out of 163 countries in the world;
  - 12 historical monuments included in the UNESCO Heritage List
  - 5 traditions (Slovácko Verbuňk, Shrovetide, Falconry, Kings' Ride, puppetry) listed by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage;
  - 6 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves;
  - over 200 castles, chateaux and monuments;
  - More than 40 protected historical towns;
  - 33 spas;
  - 104 golf courses;
  - 4 national parks and 26 protected landscape areas;
  - 12 mountain ranges higher than 1,000 metres;
  - 40,782 km of walking trails;
  - 44,000 km of cycling routes;

- 480 km of ski slopes;
- 3,540 km of cross-country ski trails;
- 1,800 km of horse riding routes.

The importance of these assets is reflected by figures showing the efficiency and tourist reception of both markets, which are presented in Table 1.

Tourist arrivals in collective accommodation establishments were almost twice as high in Poland as the number recorded in the Czech Republic in 2011 (Table 1). This advantage decreased to nearly 60% in 2016. However, the share

Table 1. Summary statistics

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Arrivals of tourists in collective accommodation establishments</b>						
<b>Poland</b>						
Total	21,476,616	22,011,602	23,401,138	25,083,978	26,942,056	28,920,878
Domestic	17,067,066	17,032,308	18,158,166	19,613,643	1,252,486	22,812,679
International	4,409,550	4,979,294	5,242,972	5,470,335	5,689,570	6,108,199
<b>Czech Republic</b>						
Total	12,898,712	15,098,817	15,407,671	15,587,076	17,195,550	18,388,853
Domestic	6,183,645	7,451,773	7,555,806	7,491,191	8,488,637	9,067,413
International	6,715,067	7,647,044	7,851,865	8,095,885	8,706,913	9,321,448
<b>Bednights of tourists in collective accommodation establishments</b>						
<b>Poland</b>						
Total	57,148,253	62,014,890	62,959,452	66,579,589	71,234,421	76,763,269
Domestic	46,527,989	50,138,291	50,488,184	53,587,348	57,476,764	61,776,379
International	10,620,264	11,876,599	12,471,268	12,992,241	13,757,657	14,986,890
<b>Czech Republic</b>						
Total	38,235,088	43,278,457	43,308,279	42,946,929	47,093,906	49,696,957
Domestic	18,810,249	21,484,472	21,163,383	20,836,817	23,807,391	25,428,808
International	19,424,839	21,793,985	22,144,896	22,110,112	23,286,515	24,268,149
<b>Average length of stay (in nights)</b>						
<b>Poland</b>						
Total	2.66	2.82	2.70	2.65	2.64	2.65
Domestic	2.73	2.94	2.78	2.73	2.70	2.71
International	2.41	2.39	2.38	2.38	2.42	2.45
<b>Czech Republic</b>						
Total	2.96	2.87	2.81	2.83	2.76	2.70
Domestic	3.04	2.88	2.80	2.84	2.78	2.80
International	2.89	2.85	2.82	2.83	2.73	2.60

Source: based on data from Statistics Poland, the Czech Statistical Office and *Discover Central Europe 2015. Facts & Figures* [2016].

of international arrivals in total tourist arrivals in the Czech Republic remained at the level of about 50% throughout the period in question. By contrast, in Poland, international arrivals accounted for only a fifth of total arrivals.

The overall capacity of public accommodation establishments measured by the total number of units is comparable in Poland and the Czech Republic (Table 2). However, there are differences as regards the structure. Other hotels and boarding houses are the most numerous category in the Czech Republic, while in Poland they account for about a third of all units, while entities classified as “other” make up the largest share. Comparisons made for other categories, i.e. rooms and bed-places, reveal similar relations.

Table 2. Capacity of public accommodation establishments in 2015 and 2016

Category	Units		Rooms		Bed-places	
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016
Poland						
Total	10,024	10,509	146,114	151,236	710,274	749,191
5-star hotels	57	61	7,429	7,617	14,027	14,532
4-star hotels	321	349	32,311	34,365	65,094	69,198
Other hotels and boarding houses	3,345	3,555	106,374	109,254	222,434	228,751
Tourist campsites	132	135	n/a	n/a	20,161	23,405
Holiday dwellings and hostels	552	604	n/a	n/a	34,974	35,879
Other	5,617	5,805	n/a	n/a	353,584	377,426
Czech Republic						
Total	9,163	9,168	206,258	207,309	529,250	535,507
5-star hotels	58	60	6,417	6,693	12,561	13,146
4-star hotels	601	621	37,764	38,650	75,921	78,054
Other hotels and boarding houses	5,333	5,341	91,845	91,749	225,728	226,556
Tourist campsites	516	510	8,884	8,938	32,406	33,042
Holiday dwellings and hostels	995	1,013	17,983	18,110	63,110	63,902
Other	1,660	1,623	43,365	43,169	119,524	118,807

Source: based on data from Statistics Poland, Tourism in 2018; *Turystyka w Unii Europejskiej – dane za 2018 r.* and *Discover Central Europe 2015. Facts & Figures* [2016].

Table 3. International tourism receipts and expenditure 2011-2016

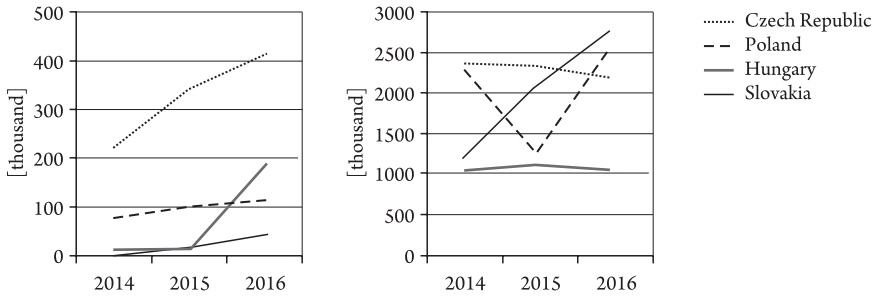
Receipts and expenditure	Country	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Receipts (million EUR)	Poland	7,647	9,600	9,400	10,800	12,900	13,200
	Czech Republic	5,299	5,397	5,096	5,242	5,501	5,149
Expenditure (million EUR)	Poland	6,058	5,100	6,544	6,700	7,200	7,200
	Czech Republic	3,120	3,238	3,356	3,946	4,426	3,876
Balance (million EUR)	Poland	3,272	4,500	2,856	4,100	5,700	6,000
	Czech Republic	2,179	2,159	1,741	1,769	1,274	1,273
Direct Contribution of T&T to GDP in %	Poland	2.2	2.3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Czech Republic	2.7	2.7	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.5

Source: based on data from the Institute of Tourism, Warsaw; National Bank of Poland; UNWTO.

In terms of international receipts and expenditure, in the reference period the Polish tourism industry did slightly better than its Czech counterpart (Table 3). In the period 2011-2016, Poland saw a gradual increase in revenues and expenditures. However, the overall change in revenues was much higher than in expenditures (by nearly 73% and by less than 19%, respectively). In the Czech Republic, revenues in the subsequent years fluctuated but remained above EUR 5000 million. The largest increase relative to 2011 was recorded in 2015 and amounted to less than 4%. Compared to 2011, revenues in 2016 were lower by 3%, while expenditures grew by over 24% (the growth rate in 2015 relative to 2011 was 42%). This is reflected by the balance of revenues and expenditures (in nominal values), which in 2016 was five times higher in Poland than in the Czech Republic. By contrast, in 2011 the balance for Poland was bigger only by 50%. In the following years the difference continued to grow.

Realizing the development potential of the tourism sector, the four members of the Visegrad Group have created a joint initiative to promote tourism in their respective countries. Despite the awareness of the growing role of tourism, it does not receive enough support, which results in a relatively low interest on the part of foreign tourists. According to World Economy Forum experts who prepare the biannual Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, Poland ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> out of 140 countries evaluated in its last edition, while the Czech Republic came in 38<sup>th</sup> place [*The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019*: 13]. Countries with attractive natural resources have a clear competitive advantage as tourist destinations. At the same time, there is little a country can do in this respect, since this kind of attractiveness results from the country's location, climate, abundance of

Fig. 2. Number of Facebook fans and website visitors in V4 countries in 2014-2016



Source: based on data from *Discover Central Europe*, 2014, 2015, 2016.

UNESCO World Heritage sites, fauna and flora, wealth, etc. In terms of these components, Poland and the Czech Republic are somewhere in the middle of the ranking of European and Eurasian countries. Therefore, there is an urgent need to focus on and develop other factors of attractiveness for tourists. Unfortunately, apart from statistics indicating the effects of promoting Poland abroad, as evidenced by the number of tourists, little is done to generate interest in such an important medium as the Internet is today [Muhoho-Minni, Lubbe 2017: 58-79]. Figure 2 shows differences between V4 countries in the number of fans registered on each country's official Facebook tourism profiles and the number of people visiting websites of national tourism organisations. Relative to its population, the results for Poland are rather poor, with a slight trend of improvement.

### 3. Direct, indirect and induced benefits and the tourism multiplier effect

Economic impacts of tourism are important for:

- state, regional, local and community planning,
- social-economic development (policy making),
- marketing and management decisions [Kryczka 2019: 43-61].

That is why it is important to make local communities aware of the importance of tourism in stimulating economic activity and the socio-economic development of the region. Attention should also be paid to multiplier effects generated by tourism [Gasparino et al. 2008]. They can be direct, indirect and induced. The first category refers to initial expenses made by tourists in specific areas directly related to the tourism industry (lodging, restaurants, amusements, retail trade, transportation). Part of the revenues generated in this way is used to stimu-



late an indirect demand for goods and services in other industries. The remaining part will be spent to purchase production factors (labour force, land and capital), will flow to the central and local budgets in the form of taxes, or will be retained to increase future consumption (savings). Even if some of the earned profits find their way to entities outside the local economy, some of them will remain and will improve the well-being of the local community, generating new jobs in the tourism industry, stimulating wage increases to attract potential of tourism.

In addition, a growth in employment causes an increase in the total income of local inhabitants. Some of this income is saved, and some is spent on the consumption of goods. “This in turn generates additional demand, which, as before, translates into additional production and employment” and the process repeats. This is the mechanism of induced effects. Indirect and induced effects are also called secondary effects [Gasparino et al. 2008: 3]. The three kinds of effects of tourism are illustrated in Fig. 3.

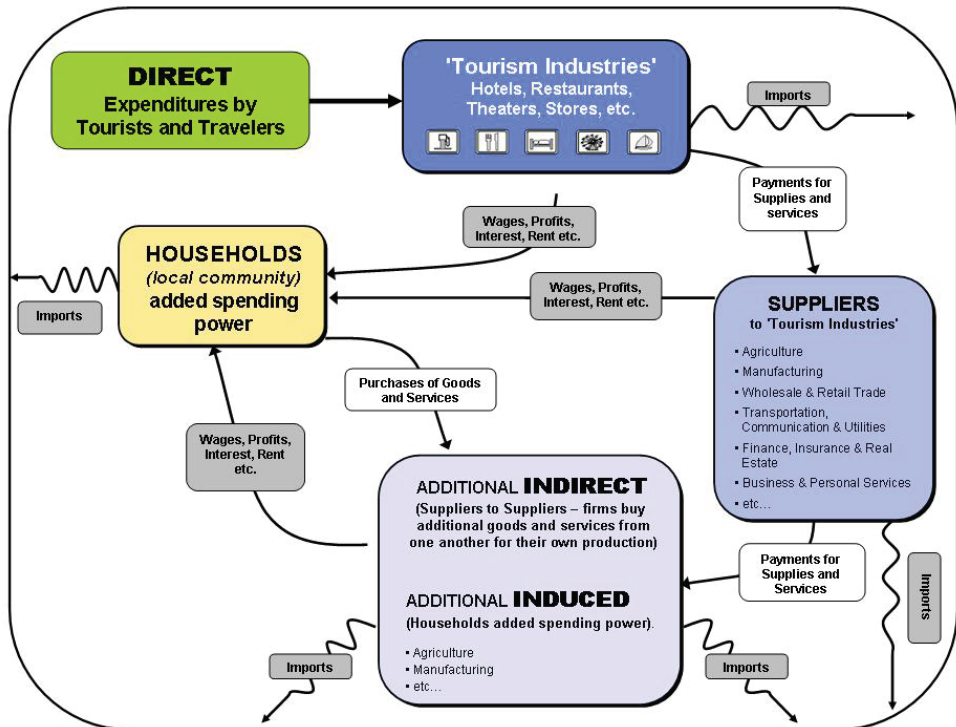


Fig. 3. Direct, indirect and induced benefits and effects on the economy triggered by tourist spending

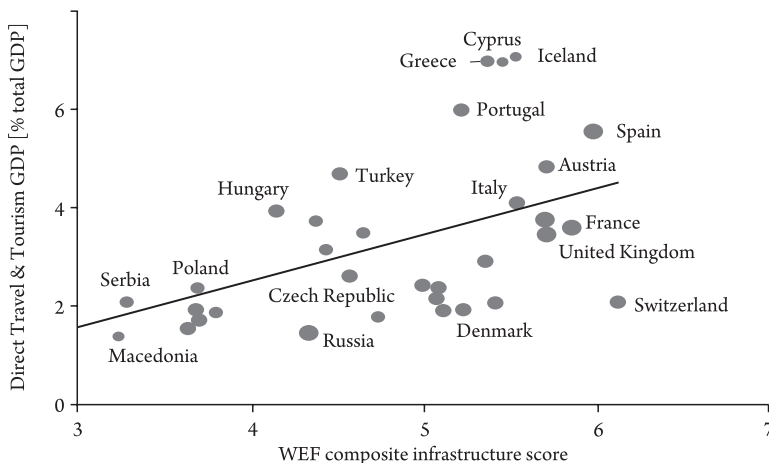
Source: Gasparino et al. [2008: 4].

As estimated by Ewa Bąk-Filipek, Sharon C. Cobb and Katarzyna Podhoro-decka [2019: 13-20], the tourism industry in Europe generated 3.8% of GDP in 2010-2018, and after accounting for multiplier effects, 8.8%, or even as much as 10%, if induced effects are included in the calculations. Given the impact of the tourism industry on the economy, it makes sense to use a wide range of instruments that foster the development of this sector, as potential benefits will be increased thanks to multiplier effects. It should also be remembered that the tourist industry is very sensitive to various types of threats, economic [Panasiuk 2019: 13-25] and cultural crises, warfare or epidemics.

Tourist activity would be not possible, or at least would be very limited, without the support of a broadly understood infrastructure. There is therefore a strong relationship between the quality and efficiency of the country's tourism infrastructure and the success of its travel and tourism sector, as measured by its economic contribution [Panasiuk 2007: 212-215]. Figure 4 shows how this relationship looks for different Eastern European countries, based on the results of the WEF analysis contained in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report and WTTC estimates of the tourism sector's direct contribution to GDP.

Figure 4 shows the line of best fit between the country's infrastructure score and the size of direct GDP contributions from the tourism sector. One can see, for example, a large dependence of the Spanish economy on the tourism indus-

Fig. 4. The relationship between WEF composite Travel & Tourism infrastructure score and the sector's direct contribution to GDP in 2014

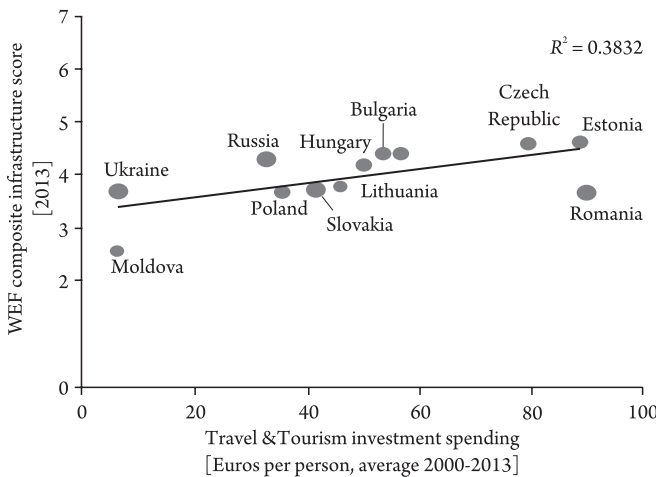


Note: Albania, Croatia, Malta and Montenegro are excluded from this analysis due to their distorting effect. These nations benefit from exceptionally high direct Travel and Tourism contribution despite having relatively poor infrastructure.

Source: WTTC 2015: 15.

try (5.6% of the country’s GDP compared to the European average of 3.4%) and the high composite infrastructure score (6 points out of 7). The Czech Republic scored 4.6 points for its tourism infrastructure, but the tourism sector contributed only 2.6% to the country’s GDP. The results of the Polish economy (3.7%) were less than average. Despite certain improvements in the area of aviation infrastructure, indicated in *The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report* [2019], Poland still lags behind the Czech Republic in the area of ground & port infrastructure and tourist service infrastructure. It should be noted, however, that improvements in the quality of the infrastructure will not automatically become a stimulus for tourism, which is also affected by other factors, such as climate, architecture or tourist attractions. As noted in the WTTC Report [2015], it does not make sense for Switzerland to improve its already good infrastructure to compete with Spain, which has an obvious advantage in terms of the natural climate. For this reason, Switzerland relies on industries that are not dependent on the weather. Although the relationship between infrastructural improvements and direct contributions of the tourism sector to GDP is not always straightforward, in countries such as Poland and the Czech Republic, there is still a lot that can be gained in this respect from improving the relatively poor infrastructure. This can only be achieved through adequate investment. However, as can be seen in Figure 5, the correlation between average investments in the tourism industry in Eastern European countries in 2000-2013 (measured per foreign guest and domestic resident) and their WEF composite infrastructure scores was rather weak ( $R^2 = 0.3832$ ). By contrast,

Fig. 5. The relationship between average per capita investment in Travel & Tourism and WEF composite Travel & Tourism infrastructure score in Eastern Europe



Source: WTTC 2015: 16.

the corresponding correlation coefficient for countries of Southern Europe was much higher ( $R^2 = 0.7313$ ). So while the effectiveness of tourism spending in Poland and the Czech Republic is not as high as one could wish for, infrastructural investments are certainly worth continuing and should be increased, especially in the case of Poland, where the average per capita spending in the reference period was approximately half of the amount spent in the Czech Republic.

## 4. Summary

It can therefore be concluded that Poland has still not fully taken advantage of the development potential hidden in the tourist industry. The Polish tourism sector performs worse not only in relation to Western European countries, but also when it is compared to countries of the Visegrad Group, which are at a similar stage of economic development. This indicates an inadequate use of opportunities inherent in the tourism sector. Despite having fewer natural and cultural assets than other European countries, Poland and the Czech Republic can still present themselves as attractive destinations if they intensify their online promotion efforts to reach potential tourists and show them the full range of their offering. Poland and the Czech Republic are not generally perceived as very popular tourist destinations, so people's awareness of their attractiveness for tourism must be raised. The Internet is a particularly well-suited tool for this purpose, as it can, at a relatively low cost, show that countries like Poland and the Czech Republic can also provide services that satisfy the needs of various tourists. The infrastructure is another important and indispensable factor in the development of tourism that the Polish and Czech economy could improve. As shown in the article, Poland in particular needs to intensify its activities in this area. The Czech Republic, despite a smaller population, has a higher indicator of infrastructural equipment, which, given the country's geographical location, is the key determinant of the development potential of the tourism sector. The analysis of the tourism sector in both countries indicates that in 2011-2016 Poland had a positive balance of international tourism revenues and expenditures with an upward trend. However, the Polish tourism industry needs further infrastructural investments to achieve its full potential.

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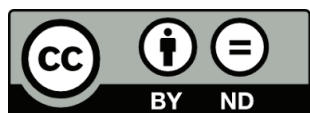
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## Sektor turystyczny w Polsce i Czechach w ujęciu komparatywnym

**Streszczenie.** Celem artykułu jest ocena kondycji sektora turystyki w Polsce i Czechach. Do porównania wykorzystano dane statystyczne różnych instytucji działających w obszarze Travel&Tourism. Statystykę uzupełniono danymi pochodzącymi z raportów analizujących branżę turystyczną. Posiłkowano się także danymi zaczerpniętymi ze statystyki publicznej. Przeprowadzona analiza wskazuje, że Polska nie wykorzystuje potencjału rozwojowego, jaki tkwi w branży turystycznej i osiąga gorsze wyniki w ujęciu komparatywnym nie tylko w odniesieniu do krajów Europy Zachodniej. Czechy, mimo mniejszej liczbie populacji, mają wyższy wskaźnik wyposażenia w infrastrukturę, która jest kluczową determinantą rozwoju sektorów turystycznych. Polska potrzebuje kolejnych inwestycji w infrastrukturę, która przy danych uwarunkowaniach w tej szerokości geograficznej i przy danych warunkach dla funkcjonowania turystyki (atrakcje, klimat) jest jednym z kluczowych czynników kształtujących turystykę i generujących jej rozwój. Należy również zintensyfikować promocję w rzeczywistości wirtualnej, aby dotrzeć do potencjalnych turystów i wskazać im pełen wachlarz możliwości. W ogólnej świadomości Polska i Czechy nie są kojarzone z wiodącymi kierunkami wyjazdów turystycznych, zatem tę świadomość trzeba ukształtować na nowo. Internet jest do tego narzędziem odpowiednim. Dzięki niemu można pokazać, relatywnie niskim kosztem, że takie kraje jak Polska i Czechy również mogą dostarczyć dóbr i usług poszukiwanych przez turystów i stać się miejscem zaspokajania potrzeb turystycznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** sektor turystyczny, mnożnik turystyczny, wkład turystyki w PKB



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HÜSEYİN GÜMÜŞ\*, ÜLFET ERBAŞ\*\*

## The relationship between leisure activity types selected by older adults and their income

**Abstract.** This study focused on investigating the relationship between leisure activity types selected by individuals aged 65 and older and their income. The target population included inhabitants of Mersin Province aged 65 and older. A purposive sample of 228 individuals was recruited to participate in the study. The questionnaire consisted of a demographic information form and the “Leisure participation scale”, including six different activity types for which the respondents were asked to determine the frequency of participation. The collected data were analysed for normality, and by applying the independent T-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). In order to discover the cause of the inter-group differences (e.g. education level), Fisher’s LSD test was used. Significance was set at 0.05. The respondents’ participation in cultural activities was found to be positively correlated with their income level. Individuals in the low income group preferred “volunteering activities”, while individuals in the high income group preferred “cultural activities such as watching TV, going to cinema, concerts, museums”. Individuals in the moderate income group usually opted for “hobbies and indoor activities such as painting, reading, playing musical instruments”. Elderly people with moderate incomes, who tend to prefer indoor activities, should be encouraged to engage in outdoor activities that are more beneficial for their mental, physiological and psychological health. This results of the study can be used as recommendations concerning leisure activity types for private elderly care centers, ministries responsible for the health of elderly people, local authorities and other institutions that plan leisure activities for this social group.

**Keywords:** recreation, leisure, older adults, income

**JEL Codes:** I31, J11, J14

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## 1. Introduction

With technological advances in medicine and their widespread use, birth and death rates have decreased, causing an increase in average lifespan and in the size of the elderly population, not only in absolute terms but also in proportion to the general population. The growing number of elderly people is associated with economic, social and health problems that the society is not ready for and exposes the society to old age problems [Amuk, Oğuzhanoglu 2003]. In order to minimize the loss of physical strength, functional decline and difficulties of adapting to the changing body structure as a result of old age, it is necessary to take preventive measures. Negative experiences faced by elderly people may lead to psychological breakdowns, causing them withdraw into themselves. Given the physical, psychological and social changes experienced by elderly people, it is essential to understand factors that determine life satisfaction so that they can lead a healthy life [Çabuk 2019].

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, life expectancy for men and women in the USA was 46.3 and 48.3 years, respectively, while in 2000 it rose to 73.5 and 80.4 years. In the USA, during 1900s only 4.1% of the whole population lived beyond the age of 65 but by 2000 this share had risen to 12.8% [Amuk, Oğuzhanoglu 2003]. In 2014 the elderly population in Turkey was around 6 million but within the next four years, it increased by 16%, exceeding 7 million. The share of the elderly population was 8% in 2014, which rose to 8.8% in 2018. According to population projections, the elderly population is estimated to account for 10.2% in 2023, 12.9% in 2030, 16.3% in 2040, 21% in 2050 and 28% in 2075 [Turkish Statistical Institute 2013].

According to statistical data, elderly populations are growing faster in developed countries [Shrestha 2000]. Therefore; efforts to keep the elderly population in these countries socially active and healthy are not a privilege but a necessity. With each day increasing stress, inactive and unhealthy lifestyles promoted by modern technology are increasing the demand for health facilities. Consequently, the effect of leisure activity type on health and welfare has attracted growing interest among researchers in different countries and in different fields. Many authors have linked leisure activities to health and concluded that leisure activities are a source of fun and entertainment [Brooks, Magnusson 2007; Güngör, Kurtipek, Yenel 2018; Heo, Lee 2010]. Theoretical considerations and empirical studies indicate that leisure activities are not transient and do not increase the quality of life only momentarily but influence a person's emotional state for a long time [Mannell 1999].

The gradually increasing life expectancy raises the question about how to maximize the length and quality of healthy years. Many countries, particularly



developed ones, have taken steps in this area and designed policies to provide for healthy aging. This goal is described as the protection and improvement of health and physical, social, psychological wellbeing, as the ability to live independently as well as to improve the quality of life and as permanent optimization of sources in order to obtain successful transitions from one life period to another [Aydın 2006].

Lifestyle plays a key role since it influences large masses in achieving healthy aging objectives and involves elements that can be changed. These include nutrition, physical activities, smoking and alcohol use, participation in social activities and leisure activity. Studies have shown that elderly adults' participation in leisure activities affects their wellbeing [Chang, Wray, Lin 2014; Köse, Uzun 2019; Lampinen et al. 2006; Menec 2003]. Many empirical studies suggest that elderly adults who engage in leisure activities experience numerous positive psychological effects. Additionally, personal participation in leisure activities that are important to individuals may positively affect their wellbeing and healthy aging [Çetin, Kara, Kitiş 2014; Toptaş Demirci 2019; Dupuis 2008; Kelly 1993; Lalarni, Kushartanti 2019]. In other words; participating in leisure activities plays a key role in the lives of elderly people. Although the literature provides evidence to support the claim that some leisure activities contribute to wellbeing and healthy aging of elderly people, the number of studies on certain types of activities is very limited [Paillard-Borg et al. 2009]. New insights about the correlation between income and leisure activity types in old age could be useful for private and public institutions that organise leisure activities for elderly individuals. The study described in this article identifies leisure activity preferences of elderly persons and factors which could increase their participation in these activities. It can be expected that by increasing their participation in leisure activities, elderly people will get more involved in social life, which in turn will improve their overall life satisfaction, strengthen their relations with family and friends and increase their psychological wellbeing.

## 2. Methodology

The survey questionnaire consisted of basic demographic questions (about age, sex, income) and the "Leisure Participation Scale". The literature provides various instruments to measure participation in leisure activity. The most widely accepted version is the "Leisure Participation Scale" developed by Chun et al. [2012], which is a modified version of the scale used by Ragheb [1980]. The scale measures the level of participation in different leisure activity types [Ryu, Heo 2018]. This version has been used in many international studies [Iso-Aho-

la, Jackson, Dunn 1994; Kimball, Freysinger 2003]. The activity types include: 1) outdoor activities, such as walking, cycling and fishing; 2) physical activities, such as doing sports and exercise; 3) hobbies and indoor activities, such as painting, reading, playing a musical instrument; 4) cultural activities, such as watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts, visiting museums; 5) home-based and social activities, such as socializing with friends, eating out, and/or family time; and 6) volunteering activities. Participation in each type of activity is measure on a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 10 (almost every day).

**Study group:** The questionnaires were filled during face-to-face interviews made by the author at shopping-malls, old people's homes, parks, recreation areas and public education center courses. After the survey was completed, 34 forms were rejected owing to incorrect, missing or unsuitable information and were not included in the analysis. The final sample consisted of 228 respondents.

**Data analysis:** The coefficients of kurtosis and skewness were between  $-1.5$  and  $+1.5$ , which are considered to be acceptable for normally distributed data [Tabachnick, Fidell 2013]. In order to find the differences in terms of income; one way ANOVA was used for the comparison of more than two group. In order to check which group was significantly different the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was used.

### 3. Results

In this part of the study, the analysis results and comments of the quantitative data obtained are included.

When Table 1 was examined, it was observed 55.26 % ( $f = 126$ ) of the participants were male and 47.74 % ( $f = 102$ ) were female. In age distributions, it was seen that 38.60 % were 65-71 years, 37.73 % were 72-78 and 23.68 % were older than 79 years. When the distributions were analyzed in term of educational status, it was determined that 81 % were primary school, 65 % lower secondary school, 45% upper secondary school and 38% university graduates. It is determined that 65.35% of the elderly have income below 1000 dollars. In addition 57.89% of participant were single and 42.11% were married.

Table 2 shows mean frequency ratings of respondents' participation in leisure activities. The most preferred activities were home-based social activities ( $\bar{x} = 6.35$ ), followed by cultural activities, such as watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts, visiting museums, and hobbies and indoor activities. The least frequently undertaken activities included physical activities ( $\bar{x} = 3.83$ ) and volunteering activities ( $\bar{x} = 3.53$ ).

Table 3 shows the popularity of different types of cultural activities depending on the respondents' income. The most popular activity in the lowest in-

Table 1. Demographic information about the respondents

Variables		<i>n</i>	%
Sex	female	102	44.74
	male	126	55.26
Age	65-71	88	38.60
	72-78	86	37.72
	≥ 79	54	23.68
Education level	primary school	81	35.53
	lower secondary school	64	28.07
	upper secondary school	45	19.74
	university	38	16.67
Average monthly income	≤ 500\$	66	28.95
	501-1000\$	83	36.40
	≥ 1001\$	79	34.65
Marital Status	married	96	42.11
	single	132	57.89
Total		228	100.00

Source: author’s own research.

Table 2. Frequency of respondents’ participation in leisure activity types

Leisure activity types	Mean rating ( $\bar{x}$ )	Standard deviation
Home-based and social activities, such as socializing with friends, eating out, and/or family time	6.35	2.21
Cultural activities, such as watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts, visiting museums	5.38	2.22
Outdoor activities, such as walking, cycling and fishing	4.01	2.21
Hobbies and indoor activities, such as painting, reading, playing a musical instrument	3.90	2.28
Physical activities, such as doing sports and exercises	3.83	2.33
Volunteering activities	3.53	2.16

Source: author’s own research.

come group were volunteering activities, while those with in the highest income grouped showed a preference for cultural activities, such as watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts, visiting museums. The majority of respondents with moderate incomes opted for hobbies and indoor activities, such as painting, reading, playing a musical instrument.

Table 3. Respondents' preferences for leisure activity types by income

Leisure activity types ≤ 0\$		Income			Total
		≤ 0\$	501-1000\$	≥ 1001\$	
Outdoor activities, such as walking, cycling and fishing	<i>n</i>	15	15	20	50
Physical activities, such as doing sports and exercises	<i>n</i>	9	14	7	30
Hobbies and indoor activities, such as painting, reading, playing a musical instrument	<i>n</i>	4	21	5	30
Cultural activities, such as watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts, visiting museums	<i>n</i>	8	10	23	41
Mome-based and social activities such as socializing with friends, eating out, and/or family time	<i>n</i>	14	17	14	45
Volunteering activities	<i>n</i>	16	6	10	32
Total	<i>n</i>	66	83	79	228
	%	29	36.4	34.6	100.0

Source: author's own research.

Table 4. Respondents' preferences for leisure activity types by sex

Variable		<i>n</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>ss</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Sex	male	126	4.35	0.88	224	1.02	0.325
	female	102	4.29	0.91			

Source: author's own research.

When participants' average scores were examined in terms of sex it wasn't found that there were significant differences (Table 4).

Table 5. Respondents' preferences for leisure activity types by education level

Variable		<i>n</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>ss</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Education level	primary school	81	3.95	0.85	2.06	0.861
	lower secondary school	64	0.398	0.82		
	upper secondary school	45	4.02	0.92		
	university	38	4.07	0.96		

Source: author's own research.

When participants' average scores were examined in terms of educational level it wasn't found that there were significant differences (Table 5).

## 4. Conclusion

It was found that individuals aged 65 and older showed a preference for home-based activities, such as visiting friends, spending time with family, and for volunteering activities. Activities like watching TV, going to the cinema, concerts or visiting museums were also relatively popular in contrast to volunteering activities, which turned out to be the least preferred option. This is in line with findings reported in other studies. For example; a study done in China concluded that for elderly Chinese people the preferred leisure activity was watching TV or listening to the radio, followed by reading books or magazines, while playing card games was the least popular option [Chou, Chow, Chi 2004]. In another study, it was reported that people in western countries preferred watching TV or listening to the radio [Ayyıldız Durhan 2019; Strain et al. 2002]. There are many studies concluding that recreational physical activities are not very popular with the elderly, who generally opt for passive activities that do not involve mobility [Brown, Frankel, Fennell 1991; Peppers 1976; Ragheb, Griffith 1982; Zuzanek, Box 1988]. A study of elderly people in Malaysia found that the most popular leisure activities were resting, watching TV and reading while doing sports and playing a musical instrument were the least preferred ones [Minhat, Amin 2012]. The fact that the changing world encourages people to lead immobile lifestyles and discourages them from socializing may be one of the causes of many physical and psychological disorders [Çabuk 2019]. Therefore, we believe it is important to promote leisure activities that will enhance the quality of life of the elderly.

Leisure activities are generally believed to have beneficial effects but these effects differ depending on the type of leisure activity [Ryu, Heo 2018]. Certain leisure activities may have a more positive impact on their physiological and psychological condition. For example, a study conducted in Taiwan investigated the effects of leisure activity types upon mental health and found that walking, gardening, etc. affected respondents' mental health the most [Weng, Chiang 2014]. Our study demonstrated respondents' different preferences for leisure activities depending on their income. This information can be used to encourage certain groups of elderly to take up different and more useful activities. For example, there are many studies emphasizing that outdoor activities are more helpful for people than indoor activities [Bath, Morgan 1999; Gümüş, Özgül 2017; Ryu, Heo 2018; Huston et al. 2003; Pasanen et al. 2018; Weng, Chiang 2014]. Therefore, elderly people with moderate incomes should be encouraged to choose outdoor activities instead of indoor activities, which will be more useful for their mental, physiological and psychological health.

“Leisure plays a key role in the quality of life as people face important transitions, such as retirement, empty nests, and widowhood” [Nimrod, Janke 2012, after Liechty, Genoe 2013]. “Therefore, leisure researchers have called for increased exploration of the leisure experiences of older adults including their perceptions of aging, their definitions of leisure, and their activity participation” [Gibson 2006; McGuire 2000, after Liechty, Genoe 2013]. It can be said that individuals with above average monthly income have more possibilities of accessing social and cultural activities.

Elderly people who do not experience economic limitations can engage in more leisure activities [Cerin, Leslie 2008; Ragheb 1980]. The independent effect of income on the engagement in physical activity can be explained by analogy with educational attainment. The main difference between these two factors consists in the fact that a person’s income level largely determines their access to health care resources, recreational facilities and opportunities [McNeill, Kreuter, Subramanian 2006]. “Individuals with higher discretionary income can choose to live in environments that are more conducive to an active lifestyle as well as more readily obtain social and material resources that help to maintain an active lifestyle even in adverse conditions (e.g., lack of family support; lack of facilities in the neighborhood). In contrast, the effects of educational attainment on physical activity are likely to be, by and large, channeled through psychological and social pathways” [Winkleby et al. 1992, after Cerin, Leslie 2008].

In the present study respondents’ sex and education level were not found to be significantly correlated with the level of participation in leisure activities. This finding can be due to the average age of the respondents. Activities that older people can get engaged tend to be limited by their limited mobility. They prefer passive and non-challenging activities, regardless of their sex. This means that it is accessibility rather than sex or education level that has an impact on activity preferences [Gümüş, Alay, Karakılıç 2017; Karakullukçu, Karaküçük 2017; Köse et al. 2020].

Insights from the present study can be used as recommendations concerning leisure activities for private elderly care centers, ministries responsible for the health of elderly people, local authorities and other institutions that plan leisure activities for this social group.

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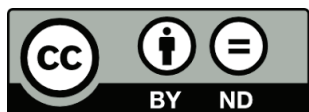
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## Związek między rodzajami aktywności rekreacyjnych wybieranymi przez osoby starsze a wysokością ich dochodów

**Streszczenie.** Celem badania było ustalenie związku między rodzajami aktywności rekreacyjnych, jakie wybierają osoby w wieku od 65 lat wwyż, a wysokością ich dochodów. Badania populacja obejmowała mieszkańców tureckiej prowincji Mersin, z której została wybrana próba celowa licząca 228 osób. Kwestionariusz badania, oprócz informacji demograficznych respondentów,

zawierał pytania służące do oceny stopnia wykorzystania czasu wolnego, w tym sześciu różnych rodzajów aktywności, odnośnie do których respondenci mieli określić częstotliwości uczestnictwa. Po sprawdzeniu, czy zebrane dane miały rozkład normalny, zastosowano test t-Studenta dla prób niezależnych oraz analizę wariancji (ANOVA). Aby odkryć przyczynę różnic między grupami (np. ze względu na poziom wykształcenia), zastosowano test LSD Fishera. Przyjęto poziom istotności wynoszący 0,05. Stwierdzono, że udział respondentów w działaniach rekreacyjnych jest pozytywnie skorelowany z poziomem ich dochodów. Osoby z grupy o niskich dochodach preferowały udział w działaniach o charakterze wolontariackim, podczas gdy osoby z grupy o wysokich dochodach preferowały aktywność kulturalną, np. oglądanie telewizji, chodzenie do kina, na koncerty lub do muzeum. Osoby z grupy o umiarkowanych dochodach zwykle wybierały zajęcia hobbystyczne realizowane w domu, takie jak: malowanie, czytanie, gra na instrumentach muzycznych. Osoby starsze o umiarkowanych dochodach, które preferują aktywności rekreacyjne w domu, powinny być zachęcane do aktywności na świeżym powietrzu, która jest bardziej korzystna dla ich zdrowia psychicznego, fizjologicznego i psychicznego. Wyniki badań można potraktować jako zalecenia w kwestii wyboru aktywności rekreacyjnych dla prywatnych ośrodków opieki nad osobami starszymi, ministerstw odpowiedzialnych za zdrowie osób starszych, lokalnych władz i innych instytucji planujących aktywności rekreacyjne dla tej grupy społecznej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rekreacja, czas wolny, osoby starsze, dochód



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## Characteristics of selected aspects of activities of agritourism farms in the Bug valley in the province of Lubelskie

**Abstract.** The article presents characteristics of selected aspects of activities undertaken by agritourism farms, including forms of recreation in rural communes situated along the Bug River in the province of Lubelskie, with special emphasis on what farm owners regard as barriers to and enablers of agritourism and eco-tourism. Information used in the study was collected in a survey carried out in 2018 in communes located in the Bug River valley in three provinces: Lubelskie, Podlaskie and Mazowieckie, which involved 99 owners of agritourism farms, classified either as conventional or organic, or undergoing conversion from conventional to organic production. It was found that hiking, cycling and walking were the most frequently chosen forms of leisure activities. According to the respondents, the development of agritourism in the Bug River Valley is most enabled by the region's natural values, especially the peace and quiet provided by the area, while the fear of investing and the lack of financial resources are the biggest barriers to such development. The results of the study reveal differences and similarities in the perception of agritourism and ecotourism by owners of farms in the Bug valley in Lubelskie Province compared to the whole sample including two other provinces. The development of rural tourism in Lubelskie Province is hampered by the seasonality of the offering, no habit of weekend recreation and, generally, the low popularity of this form of recreation.

**Keywords:** agritourism, agritourism farms, Lubelskie province, Bug valley

**JEL Codes:** Q1, P12, Q26, Z32

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## 1. Introduction

Agritourism, which is a form of spending free time on farms, is becoming increasingly popular with tourists [Zawadka 2015; Jalinik 2016; Sikora 2016]. As a form of rural tourism, agritourism appeared in Poland much later than in Western Europe, namely only in the early 1990s. It was initiated institutionally to create a professional, paid and lifestyle alternative for farmers and their families in a situation of agricultural exclusion [Wojciechowska 2010]. An agritourism farm is a farm located in rural areas, actively engaged in agricultural activity, with accommodation for tourists, where guests can observe and participate in the daily life of the hosts [Surdacka 2017]. Agritourism activity is not limited to providing tourist accommodation but includes many services and various forms of leisure and recreational activities [Mikulska 2008]. Agritourism is also associated with the availability of natural values, which make these additional services much more attractive. These include high quality natural environment, clean water, unusual landscapes, as well as peace and quiet, which enables rest and relaxation [Sokół, Boruch 2011; Ciepiela, Balińska 2014]. Many authors [Sikorska-Wolak 2006; Cichowska 2008; Cichowska 2011; Ciepiela, Balińska 2014] report that the development of agritourism is strongly correlated with the area's natural attractiveness.

Many city dwellers perceive the countryside as a safe haven with solid values, open spaces, and the beauty of nature. It is a place where everyone is treated with respect and in a friendly way [Gaworecki 2010].

Undoubtedly, agritourism offers different forms of recreation, addressed mainly to individual tourists, families or small tourist groups. No additional accommodation facilities or food supplies are required; one can exploit existing farm housing resources, unused livestock buildings and recreational space within the farm [Sokół 2012].

The Bug River Valley, with its unregulated, meandering riverbed, is one of the best preserved lowland rivers in Europe and a valuable natural area [Ciepiela 2011; Jurkiewicz-Karnkowska 2016]. Tourists, especially inhabitants of noisy agglomerations, more and more often choose to spend their leisure time on agritourism farms because they appreciate the possibility of resting in a quiet, peaceful place where they can relax in close contact with nature [Zawadka, Pietrzak-Zawadka 2016]. Such stays, in addition to giving tourists a taste of local traditions and rural culture, are often enriched by bicycle tours, horseback riding, bonfires, sleigh rides, hunting or workshops on regional themes, which are also part of agritourism [Mikulska 2008].

Eco-agritourism is a variety of agritourism, where the emphasis is on the use of organic methods in the production of plants and/or animals on the farm (which is confirmed by the “Ekoland” certification<sup>1</sup>) [Zaręba 2000; Jalinik 2015]. Because of the constantly growing interest in the “ecological lifestyle”, reflected by the increasing consumption of organic food, there is also a growing demand for places where people can relax away from the hustle and bustle of the city, taking advantage of the benefits of eco-agritourism [Sokół, Kołozsko-Chomentowska 2010; Ciepela, Balińska 2014].

Food has an important role in the development of agritourism. Food produced by organic farms is an important asset, which can be used to attract more customers. Not only can tourists observe the production process but they can also be sure that the food is of natural origin and is organic [Sokół, Kołozsko-Chomentowska 2010]. The offering of eco-agritourism farms can make holiday stays in rural areas more attractive and satisfy the needs of tourists who value products (of plant and animal origin) produced in a natural way. In eco-agritourism farms, these products often bear a eco-certificate, which guarantees their high quality. Eco-agritourism farms are located in areas of natural value, but also, in response to the needs of tourists, away from tourist centres [Ziółkowski 2006]. In areas with fewer natural assets, tourists can actively spend time on the farm by observing the farming methods or participating in the work of an organic farm. For this reasons, some farm owners keep farm animals (e.g. horses) or breed exotic animals (e.g. alpacas or ostriches), which are an attraction for guests and add more variety to their stay [Ziółkowski 2006; Sokół, Boruch 2011].

Agrotourism and ecotourism are forms of rural tourism that share many features. Both are a form of active recreation in areas of exceptional natural and cultural values. The difference between them lies primarily in the purpose of travel [Zaręba 2008]. In addition to its natural assets, the Bug River valley (especially in the border section) has unprecedented cultural value, as a region located at the crossroads of three cultures: Polish, Russian and Jewish. Characteristics of these cultures can be seen in the landscape. In a relatively small area, one can admire well-preserved religious buildings, such as a Catholic sanctuary, an Orthodox monastery, a Neo-Russian parish, a Jewish synagogue and a Muslim cemetery. The area also features architectural monuments, palace-park and manor-park complexes, historical and military buildings, all of which are connected with the area’s tragic history. Roadside shrines and Latin and Orthodox crosses [Bernat 2014] are also quite common, especially in rural areas.

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<sup>1</sup> A certificate awarded by the Association of Ecological Food Producers “Ekoland”, founded in 1989. More information about award criteria can be found on its website at [www.ekolandpolska.pl](http://www.ekolandpolska.pl).

## 2. Research purpose

The main objective of the study was to characterise selected aspects of activities undertaken by agritourism farms and to collect farm owners' opinions about forms of recreation in rural areas of the Bug River valley in Lubelskie Province, especially as regards factors conducive to the development of rural tourism in the region.

It can be observed that activities of agritourism and ecotourism farms, to a large extent, meet the needs of tourists for alternative forms of recreation, both during family and individual stays. Tourists' expectations are largely limited to enjoying the natural assets. Therefore, they do not attach so much importance to high standards of service and comfortable hotel facilities, but prefer the unique atmosphere of the surroundings, the silence, the beauty of nature in all its forms and enjoy fresh and healthy food. Agritourism also provides tourists with an opportunity for a creative use of time to suit their needs. This is confirmed by the availability and use of simple infrastructure to provide unique experiences. Such places are of particular interest to artists seeking creative inspiration and wishing to learn about the harmony of life.

## 3. Research methodology

The empirical study was carried out in 2018 in 34 communes located in the vicinity of the Bug River valley, which are part of 12 districts belonging to three provinces (Lubelskie, Podlaskie, Mazowieckie). The article focuses on data collected from Lubelskie Province.

A survey of 99 owners of agritourism farms (33 in Lubelskie province) in was conducted using a structured interview. The purposive sample was selected to in-

Table 1. Number of holdings participating in the survey by type

Province	Type of farm			
	ecological farms		conventional farms	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Lubelskie	9	27.3	24	72.7
Podlaskie	8	26.7	22	73.3
Mazowieckie	6	16.7	30	83.3

Source: personal collection.

clude farms classified as conventional or organic, or in the process of conversion from conventional to organic production. The data were analysed using statistical methods using the STATISTICA package.

Respondents were ensured that their identity would be kept confidential and their data would only be used for scientific purposes.

The survey was conducted among 99 owners of agritourism farms, including 33 owners from Lubelskie (Table 1). 27.3% were organic farms, with the remaining 72.7% accounting for conventional farms. The proportion was similar to that found in the two other provinces of the Bug valley.

#### 4. Results of the study

In the survey in conducted in Lubelskie Province, 51.5% of interviewed farmers were men and 48.5% – women (Table 2). The most numerous groups of respondents were aged between 41 and 50 or over 50 (36.4% in both respects) and with higher education (48.5%).

As regards types of agritourism farms surveyed in Lubelskie (Table 3), the most numerous were farms up to 5 ha (51.5%), followed by farms with an area of between 11 and 20 ha (24.3%). The majority of respondents benefited from sub-

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of owners of agritourism farms participating in the survey

Specification	In Lubelskie		In all provinces	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Gender of responding farmers:				
• men	17	51.5	46	46.5
• women	16	48.5	53	53.5
• total	33	100.0	99	100.0
Age:				
• up to 30	0	0.0	10	10.1
• 31-40	9	27.3	25	25.3
• 41-50	12	36.4	21	21.2
• over 50	12	36.4	43	43.4
Education:				
• vocational	5	15.1	10	10.1
• secondary	12	36.4	35	35.4
• higher	16	48.5	54	54.5

Source: personal collection.

Table 3. Characteristics of agritourism farms analysed in the survey

Specification	In Lubelskie		In all provinces	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Farm size:				
• up to 5 ha	17	51.5	41	41.4
• 6-10 ha	5	16.2	22	22.2
• 11-20 ha	8	24.3	22	22.2
• 21-50 ha	0	0.0	8	8.1
• over 50 ha	3	9.0	6	6.1
Use of subsidies:				
• yes	20	60.6	65	65.7
• no	13	39.4	34	34.3
Type of agricultural production:				
• crops	21	63.7	53	53.5
• animals	8	24.2	12	12.1
• mixed	4	12.1	34	34.3
Purpose of agricultural production:				
• mainly for the (commodity) market	19	46.3	49	39.2
• mainly for own use	17	41.5	56	44.8
• mainly for tourists	5	12.2	20	16.0

Source: personal collection.

sidies for their activity (60.6%), which is similar to the proportion in the entire sample. Most farms specialized in crop production (63.7%), which was intended either mainly for sale (46.3%) or mainly for own needs (41.5%).

When it comes to motives for running a business (Table 4), a large group of respondents (48.5%) indicated the possibility of improving the household budget by earning extra profit, and the pursuit of hobbies, realization of one's own needs in the field of tourism (39.4%).

The vast majority of respondents positively assessed th, with over 60% of farmers being in business for between 4 to 7 years. In most farms, there were not more than 10 beds for guests (72.7%). The most frequent category of guests were individual tourists (43.4%) and families with children (27.6%). Tourists often had the possibility of buying home-grown products, most frequently made from fruits and vegetables (53.1%), fresh fruit and vegetables (51.5%), eggs (33.3%) and milk and other dairy produce (30.3%).

Tourists' decision to stay on a farm in a rural area often depends on the area's attractiveness and on the availability of recreation equipment, which is why the survey was also aimed at assessing the use of equipment on the farms (Table 5). Nearly all farms had designated places for campfires or barbecue (96.9%). In



Table 4. Characteristics of agritourism activity conducted by surveyed farms in the Bug valley of Lubelskie province

Specification	In Lubelskie		In all provinces	
	n	%	n	%
Motives for agritourism:				
• the possibilities of improving the household budget by earning extra profit	16	48.5	40	40.4
• exploitation of existing accommodation facilities	0	0.0	12	12.1
• low farm profitability	2	6.1	2	2.0
• additional desire to sell agricultural products	2	6.1	9	9.1
• pursuit of hobbies, realization of own needs in the field of tourism	13	39.4	36	36.4
Assessment of conditions for the development of agritourism in the place of residence:				
• favourable	29	87.8	87	87.9
• unfavourable	4	12.1	12	12.1
Number of beds on the farm:				
< 10	24	72.7	59	59.6
11-20	7	21.2	28	28.3
21-30	2	6.1	9	9.1
> 31	0	0.0	3	3.0
All-year-round operation:				
• yes	14	42.4	55	55.6
• no	19	57.6	44	44.4
Category of guests received:				
• green schools and summer camp groups	0	0.0	12	7.7
• individual tourists	33	43.4	90	33.2
• families with children	21	27.6	67	24.7
• professional groups (training, integration trips, occasional trips)	7	9.3	68	25.1
• foreign tourists	15	19.7	34	12.55
Period of operation (in years):				
• 1-3	2	6.1	9	9.1
• 4-7	20	60.6	32	32.3
• over 7	11	33.3	58	58.6
Possibility of buying products produced on the farm:				
• fruits and vegetables	17	51.5	61	61.6
• processed fruit and vegetable products	18	53.1	56	57.1
• milk and milk products	10	30.3	21	21.4
• eggs	11	33.3	33	33.7
• bread	8	25.0	35	35.7
• meat products	5	15.6	11	11.2
• fish	7	21.2	11	11.2
• other	7	21.2	20	20.2

Source: personal collection.

Table 5. Types of attractions available to guests

Types of attractions	In Lubelskie		In all provinces	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Bicycles	21	63.6	63	63.6
Floating equipment	13	39.4	27	27.3
Horse or carriage rides	8	24.2	31	31.3
Horseback riding lessons	4	12.1	18	18.2
Sleigh rides	8	24.2	28	28.3
Campfire/barbecue	32	96.9	98	98.9
Participation in game hunts	4	12.1	10	10.1
Mushrooming	21	63.6	78	78.8
Participation in economic activities	16	48.5	52	52.5
Participation in housework (e.g. learning about the production of own food products)	16	48.5	34	34.3
Sculpting / painting / handicraft	1	3.0	12	12.1
Regional workshops (e.g. learning about and tasting regional cuisine)	8	24.2	37	37.4
Wickerwork workshops	1	3.0	5	5.1
Chatting	12	36.4	36	36.4
Sauna / banya	3	9.1	11	11.1

Source: personal collection.

Table 6. Types of leisure activities by chosen by tourists staying in agritourism farms

Tourist and leisure activities	In Lubelskie		In all provinces	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Hiking	28	84.8	83	94.3
Cycling	27	81.8	80	80.1
Kayaking	9	27.3	54	54.5
Equestrian tourism	6	18.2	23	23.2
Participation in regional events	18	54.5	41	41.4
Nature observation	20	60.6	70	70.7
Walks	27	81.8	83	83.8
Visiting monuments and memorial sites	16	48.5	67	67.7
Visiting places of worship	21	63.6	72	72.7
Engaging in farm work (e.g. Hay harvesting, gardening and orchard work, animal feeding and care)	9	27.3	17	17.2
Fishing	20	60.6	63	64.3
Forestry	16	50.0	56	57.1
Leisure	18	54.5	61	61.6

Source: personal collection.

many cases, there were possibilities of picking mushrooms and other forest produce (63.6%) and using bicycles (63.6%). Less than half of all surveyed farms offered opportunities to participate in housework (48.5%).

Table 6 shows the most frequent types of activity undertaken by tourists visiting agritourism farms. The most popular activities included hiking (84.8%), cycling (81.8%), walking (81.8%), visiting places of religious worship (63.6%), nature observation (60.6%) and fishing (60.6%).

Information about the activity of organic farms is presented in Table 7. As already noted, organic farms accounted for 27.3% of all farms surveyed in Lubelskie, all of which specialized in crop production. At the time of the survey (2018), most of those farms had been in business for between 4 and 7 years. Only 22.2% of respondents reported having a certificate of organic production. All interviewed farmers reported tourists' willingness to use home-grown organic products. Only 22.2% of farms owners reported using subsidies for organic production, a much lower percentage than the average in the entire sample.

Table 7. Characteristics of eco-agritourism activities conducted by surveyed farms in the Bug valley of Lubelskie province

Specification	Lubelskie		Farms in total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Organic production:				
• yes	9	27.3	23	23.2
• no	24	72.7	76	76.8
Type of organic production:				
• organic crop production	9	100.0	19	82.6
• organic animal production	0	0.0	1	4.3
• organic crop and animal production	0	0.0	3	13.1
Period of organic production (in years):				
• 1-3	0	0.0	1	4.3
• 4-7	7	77.8	8	34.8
• over 7	2	22.2	14	60.9
Certification:				
• yes	2	22.2	10	43.5
• in the process of switching to organic farming methods	0	0.0	1	4.3
• no	7	77.8	12	52.2
Use of organic products by tourists:				
• yes, with great eagerness	9	100.0	16	69.6
• yes, but only occasionally	0	0.0	4	17.4
• not used at all	0	0.0	3	13.0
Use of subsidies for organic production				
• yes	2	22.2	10	43.5
• no	7	77.8	13	56.5

Source: personal collection.

Table 8. Benefits derived from ecological activity and barriers faced by farms operating in the Bug River valley of Lubelskie Province

Specification	In Lubelskie		In all provinces	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Benefits of ecological activities:				
• improving the quality of food	9	100.0	21	91.3
• higher product prices	5	55.5	13	56.5
• environmental protection	9	100.0	21	91.3
• possibility of obtaining subsidies	0	0.0	8	34.8
• higher attractiveness of agritourism offering	7	77.7	19	82.6
Evaluation of agritourism activities based on ecological production methods:				
• definitely positive	5	15.1	30	30.0
• partially positive	19	57.6	46	46.5
• rather negative	9	27.3	23	23.2
• definitely negative	0	0.0	0	0.0
Reasons for not increasing the greening level of agritourism farms:				
• lack of knowledge in this area	14	42.4	41	41.4
• lack of funding	10	31.2	26	26.5
• fear of failure	17	53.1	40	40.8
• low profitability, large financial outlays	18	54.5	39	39.4
• excessive preparatory and control activities	21	63.6	62	62.6
• little interest from tourists	8	25.8	27	27.8
• more workload	23	69.7	57	57.6

Source: personal collection.

Over 15% of responding owners of agritourism farms had very positive assessment of activities based on ecological production methods, with 57.6% of respondents giving a partially positive evaluation (Table 8).

Chief reasons for not increasing farms' greening efforts included the extra workload (69.7%), excessive preparatory and control activities (63.6%) and low profitability combined with high financial outlays (54.5%).

Among the benefits derived from ecological production, all respondents indicated the improvement of food quality and care and protection of the environment (100%).

As for factors that affect the development of agritourism (Table 9), most respondents indicated the natural values of the Bug River valley (90.9%), peace and quiet (78.8%) and the maintenance of existing tourist trails and the creation of new ones (78.8%).

When listing measures that can contribute to increasing the popularity of tourism in the region (Table 10), most farm owners often mentioned the need

Table 9. Factors affecting the development of agritourism, according to farm owners

Factors affecting the development of agritourism	In Lubelskie		In all provinces	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Natural assets	30	90.9	91	91.9
Cultural assets	19	57.6	55	55.5
Peace and quite	26	78.8	80	80.8
River with a bathing site	10	30.3	49	49.5
Hiking trails	26	78.8	70	70.7
Cultural events	13	39.4	45	45.5
The desire to learn about culture, traditions, customs	17	51.5	58	58.6
Attractiveness and high standard of service	13	39.4	41	41.4
Use of organic products	12	36.4	25	25.2

Source: personal collection.

Table 10. Activities contributing to increasing the popularity of tourism in the region, according to farm owners

Type of action	In Lubelskie		In all provinces	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Modernisation and lighting of roads	10	30.3	38	38.4
Improving access to the internet	7	21.2	36	36.4
Development of services, trade, catering	11	33.3	42	42.4
Relevant tourist information	30	93.7	87	91.6
Change in the mentality of residents	12	36.4	46	46.4
High standard and attractiveness of service	13	39.4	53	54.1
Publication of albums, catalogues and other advertising materials	22	70.9	56	57.7

Source: personal collection.

for good tourist information (93.7%), publication of albums, catalogues and other advertising materials (70.9%), maintaining a high standard and attractiveness of services offered by farms (39.4%) and the need for other residents of tourist areas to change their attitude to tourists (36.4%).

The most frequently listed barriers to the development of eco-agritourism activity (Table 11) included the lack of financial resources (69.7%), the lack of ideas and willingness to do business (63.6%) and the fear of making bad investments (60.6%). The least commonly mentioned barrier was the availability of adequately educated staff in the tourism industry (6.1%).

The final aspect analysed in the study concerned constraints on the development of rural tourism in the Bug valley, which adversely affect the development of agritourism activities (Table 12). The most frequent reasons for the low

Table 11. Barriers to agritourism activities, according to farm owners

Barriers	In Lubelskie		In all provinces	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Lack of own financial resources	23	69.7	59	59.6
Difficult access to aid	13	39.4	43	43.4
Difficult access to bank credit	6	18.2	22	22.2
No idea and no desire for business	21	63.6	40	40.4
Fear of investment	20	60.6	58	58.6
Lack of educated staff in the tourism industry and difficulties in hiring them	2	6.1	14	14.3
Low level of cooperation between farms	14	42.4	40	40.4
Lack of good advice and training	19	57.6	44	44.4

Source: personal collection.

Table 12. Main constraints on the development of rural tourism

Type of restriction	In Lubelskie		In all provinces	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
No habit of weekend rest	21	63.6	64	64.6
No organized weekend leisure activities	14	42.4	39	39.4
Seasonality of the offering	25	75.8	62	62.6
Lack of adequate infrastructure	14	42.4	40	40.4
Low popularity of this form of recreation	20	60.6	62	62.6
Poor information and publicity	17	53.1	52	52.5
Low attractiveness of the offering	17	51.5	34	34.3

Source: personal collection.

participation in various forms of rural tourism were the seasonality of recreation offering (75.8%), no habit of weekend recreation (63.6%), and in the low popularity of this form of recreation (60.6%).

## 5. Conclusions

The results of the study reveal differences and similarities in the perception of agritourism and ecotourism by owners of farms in the Bug valley in Lubelskie Province compared to the whole sample including two other provinces (Podlaskie and Mazowieckie Province).

Based on the analysis of the data, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The majority of agritourism farm owners are over the age of 41, with higher education.

2. Nearly half of the farms were smaller than 5 ha, and their production was focused on crop production for sale.

3. The main motivation for conducting agritourism activity earning extra profit to improve the household budget.

4. The majority of farms had been in business for a period of 4-7 years and offered up to 10 beds for guests. Most farms operated seasonally.

5. Individual tourists and families with children were most frequent category of guests. Guests were often able to buy home-grown products and usually opted for fruits and vegetables and fruit and vegetable-based products.

6. The most frequent attraction offered by surveyed farms was the possibility of having a bonfire or barbecue, using bikes and taking part in household work. Tourists staying at farms most often chose hiking, walking and cycling. Other activities included visiting religious places of worship and participating in various events.

7. A small percentage of farms specialized in organic crop production. The majority of such farms had been in business for a period of 4 to 7 years. Most did not have the Eco-Certificate and did not receive any subsidies. All respondents reported that tourists willingly use organic products.

8. The responding farmers were partially positive about activities based on ecological production methods, but because of the greater amount of work required and excessive of preparatory and control activities, farmers have little motivation to step up their greening efforts.

9. The development of rural tourism in the region is mostly affected by its natural values, the peace and quiet in the area and existing tourist routes. However, the respondents believe it is necessary to improve tourist information and introduce additional forms of advertising.

According to respondents, the biggest limitation to agritourism activity is the lack of sufficient funding, lack of business ideas and willingness to engage in this type of activity and the fear of investment. The development of rural tourism is also hampered by the seasonality of the offering, no habit of weekend recreation and, generally, the low popularity of this form of recreation.

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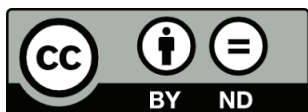
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## Charakterystyka wybranych aspektów działalności gospodarstw agroturystycznych w dolinie Bugu województwa lubelskiego

**Streszczenie.** W artykule przedstawiono charakterystykę wybranych aspektów działalności gospodarstw agroturystycznych, w tym form wypoczynku w gminach wiejskich położonych nad Bugiem w województwie lubelskim, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem tego, co właściciele gospodarstw uważają za bariery i czynniki sprzyjające agroturystyce i ekoturystyce. Informacje wykorzystane w badaniu zostały zebrane w ankiecie przeprowadzonej w 2018 r. w gminach położonych w dolinie Bugu w trzech województwach: lubelskim, podlaskim i mazowieckim. W badaniu uczestniczyło 99 właścicieli gospodarstw agroturystycznych, zaklasyfikowanych jako konwencjonalne lub ekologiczne bądź będących w trakcie przechodzenia od produkcji konwencjonalnej do ekologicznej. Stwierdzono, że turystyka piesza, rowerowa i piesza są najczęściej wybieranymi formami spędzania wolnego czasu. Według respondentów rozwój agroturystyki w Dolinie Bugu jest najbardziej możliwy dzięki walorom przyrodniczym regionu, zwłaszcza ciszy i spokoju, jakie zapewnia ten teren, podczas gdy strach przed inwestowaniem i brak środków finansowych są największymi barierami takiego rozwoju. Wyniki badań wskazują na różnice i podobieństwa w postrzeganiu agroturystyki i ekoturystyki przez właścicieli gospodarstw w dolinie Bugu w województwie lubelskim w porównaniu z całą próbą obejmującą dwie inne województwa. Rozwój turystyki wiejskiej w województwie lubelskim hamuje sezonowość oferty, brak nawyku rekreacji weekendowej oraz ogólnie mała popularność tej formy wypoczynku.

**Słowa kluczowe:** agroturystyka, gospodarstwa agroturystyczne, województwo lubelskie, dolina Bugu



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AGATA BALIŃSKA\*

## Data collection methods in rural tourism in the eyes of respondents

**Abstract.** The aim of this study was to verify the reliability and user-friendliness of some of the most popular ways of collecting information from respondents. The article provides a synthetic review of the use of various research methods and techniques, which is supplemented by results of the author's own survey of 280 people who visited guest farms in rural areas of Mazowieckie province in 2019. The respondents found online and paper-based surveys the most user-friendly method while they rated telephone interviews as the least user-friendly. Asked to assess the reliability of data collection techniques, the respondents considered covert observation and mystery shopping to be the most reliable, while the telephone interview was regarded as the least trustworthy. The assessment of the user-friendliness and reliability of different data collection methods and techniques varied by gender, age and the level of education. It can be expected that insights from the study can help to improve the methodology of rural tourism research.

**Keywords:** research, research methodology, rural tourism, research results, reliability

**JEL Codes:** A1, D9, R2

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## 1. Introduction

*In empirical sciences, research methods are typical and reproducible methods of collecting, processing, analysing and interpreting empirical data, which are used to obtain the maximally (or optimally) justified answers to the research questions [Nowak 2012: 22].*

Rural tourism is a popular research area studied from the perspective of various scientific disciplines. Like other types of tourism, rural tourism is an multifaceted phenomenon, which poses a challenge for scientists conducting research. The problem of researching rural tourism is not only associated with the ambiguous nature of the phenomenon itself but also from the multitude of interpretations of the term. As S. Nowak notes, when formulating a research problem, new concepts should be created using appropriate rules [Nowak 2012: 22]. The significance of concepts and definitions in science has also been stressed by Ch. Frankfort-Nachmias and D. Nachmias [Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias 2001: 42-50]. Based on the research experience of the author of this article, the following observations can be made regarding the use of the term “rural tourism”. Firstly, it is quite freely applied by entrepreneurs and is often used interchangeably with the term “agritourism”, which is also a significant problem for researchers exploring this phenomenon. Secondly, even among researchers there is often a great deal of liberty regarding the definition of the term, which is adjusted to meet the needs of specific research areas and objectives. The existing literature provides numerous overviews of definitions of rural tourism. For the purpose of this article, the author assumes that the proper definition of rural tourism should integrate the perspectives of supply and demand in tourism. Consequently, from the perspective of tourism supply, rural tourism is a form of activity undertaken by the local community, which aims at the rational use of natural, cultural and housing resources as well as the human capital in order to create an original and comprehensive offering of recreational services for tourists and visitors [Balińska 2016: 102]. Seen from the demand side, rural tourism is a form of spending leisure time in rural areas with an agricultural function, either individually or in small groups, while showing respect for the natural and cultural assets of the area [Balińska 2016: 102].

The aim of the study described in the following part was to verify the user-friendliness of selected research methods and techniques in the area of rural tourism. The following research questions were formulated:

1. Which research methods and techniques did respondents consider the most user- friendly and which the most reliable?
2. What were the reasons for not participating in empirical research?

The following research hypothesis was adopted: the most reliable method of obtaining information about tourists' satisfaction with the use of rural tourism facilities is a direct interview while the most user-friendly one is an online survey.

The empirical study was conducted using a paper-based questionnaire. The survey involved a purposive sample of 280 tourists taking rural holidays in Mazowieckie province in the summer season 2019. Every fifth tourist of family of tourists arriving at particular agrotourism farms was selected for the sample.

The survey questionnaire consisted of 7 main questions (two open-ended questions, three multiple-choice questions and two with a 7-point Likert scale) and the demographic part. The Likert scale was used in the question regarding the user-friendliness of individual research methods and techniques (i.e. how comfortable respondents participating in the study) and in the question regarding their credibility (i.e. to what extent is the information obtained in a given way true of respondents' natural behaviour).

The author was motivated to conduct the survey after many years of research experience. While collecting information in various research projects, responding tourists indicated that they were too often asked to complete a survey or take part in an interview. They complained that it often took too much time, interfered with their leisure, that the questions were hard to understand, too personal, etc. Unlike travel agencies and hotels, rural tourism facilities do not operate as part of one booking system. Owners of these facilities rarely even have a database of their guests' contact details, which makes it difficult to obtain information from tourists. Moreover, data should be collected so as not to disturb the other guests while trying to ensure their maximum reliability.

The collected data were subjected to qualitative and quantitative analysis. The existence of correlations between selected variables was checked using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, Man-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test.

## **2. Research methods in rural tourism**

The adopted definition and research perspective also affect the selection of research methods. W. Aleziak argues that the lack of universal methods, techniques and measures, makes it difficult to measure and scientifically verify many tourism phenomena [Aleziak 2003: 234]. This also applies to rural tourism. The most popular research method in this field is the diagnostic survey method involving questionnaires, interviews and (usually participant) observation. Nowadays, survey studies are increasingly supported by the Internet, including online survey templates available on various platforms. Similarly, interviews are increasingly often conducted indirectly, by phone, via e-mail or on commu-

nication platforms. Both techniques (called methods by some researchers) are very popular and widely analysed in literature [Jemielniak (ed.) 2012; Konecki 2000; Mazurek-Łopacińska (ed.) 2005; Kolny, Kucia, Stolecka 2011; Anuszevska 2011]. Observation is a method of gathering primary data, involving intentional perception and conducted according to a predetermined plan [Mazurek-Łopacińska 2005: 143]. Although, as observed by Ch. Frankfort-Nachmias and D. Nachmias [2001: 223], social sciences grow out of observation”, it is still used as an additional technique that provides supplementary data to those collected through interviews and questionnaires. It is also a good instrument for collecting data needed to create a research tool for interviews or questionnaires [Angroino 2010]. Many researchers use this technique as the main source of information, e.g. K. Szymańska [Szymańska 2017: 27-40; Glabiński 2016: 47-64]. Observation can be conducted in an overt or covert way, but its usefulness is undoubtedly greater when it is structured rather than when it is unstructured.

There are also other methods that can be applied in studies focusing on rural tourism, such as mystery shopping or focus group interviews. Mystery shopping is a fairly popular way of checking customer service standards in chain outlets (hotels, restaurants, cafes, etc.). Although it is mainly used in the business context, it is becoming increasingly popular with scientists [Kruczek, Cieszkowska 2017: 47-60; Mazurkiewicz-Pizło, Pizło 2018: 112-125]. Focus group interviews also have been adapted for scientific purposes. A focus group interview is a research technique in which researchers collect information in the process of cooperation and interaction between participants in a group [Lisek-Michalska 2013: 16]. A focus group typically consists of 5 to 12 people. The method is used primarily in market research to collect information about consumer products.

As more and more research services are available online, customer satisfaction surveys are also, to a greater or lesser extent, supported by the Internet. Its role in research has grown so much that is now often referred to as ‘netnography’ [Kozinets 2012].

After analysing existing studies on rural tourism, the following strands of research can be identified:

1. Tourism supply and conditions for its development.
2. Tourism attractiveness of villages and rural areas (also investigated at different levels of administrative division, e.g. communes<sup>1</sup>).
3. Tourism demand (real and potential) and its determinants.

The aforementioned areas are explored by means of various research methods. Table 1 presents selected examples of the most popular research methods. The most popular research technique is a questionnaire survey. Its popularity is

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<sup>1</sup> A commune (Pol. *gmina*) represents the lower level of Local Administrative Units (formerly NUTS 5 level).

Table 1. Research methods and techniques used in the field of rural tourism – selected examples of applications

Research area	Research methods	Selected studies
Supply	Questionnaire	M. Dębniwska, M. Tkaczuk [1997], A. Brelik [2015], A. Balińska [2016], L. Przezbórska-Sokobiej [2015]
	Analysis of secondary data	J. Sikora [2012, 2014], J. Wojciechowska [2009], J. Kosmaczewska [2013], O. Smoleńska [2014], F. groi, E. Donia A. M. Mineo [2018]
	Interview	A.M. Dudoń [2018], P. Christoua, R. Sharpley [2019]
	Case study	M. De Rosa, G. Mc Elwee, R. Smith [2019]
Attractiveness	Questionnaire	S. Bernat [2012]
	Analysis of secondary data	M. Drzewiecki [1992], J. Poczta [2012], He S. et al. [2019]
Demand	Questionnaire	M. Czerwińska-Jaśkiewicz [2012], A. Balińska [2017], J. Zawadka [2010], A.M. Dudoń [2018], C. Lewis, S. D'Alessandro [2019], U. Kaczmarek [2015]
	Analysis of secondary data	A.M. Campón-Cerroa José, M. Hernández-Mogollóna, H. Alves [2017]

Source: own research.

justified primarily by the speed of data collection, ease of saving and analysing data, and its relatively low cost. Researchers often use Internet platforms, which offer interesting solutions for the construction of questionnaires and tools for data analysis (e.g. Survio, Profitest). Some studies are based on official statistics, although this source is rather limited regarding rural tourism.

### 3. Research results

In the survey conducted for the purpose of this study, respondents were classified by sex, age and education. Women accounted for 58.5% of the sample; five age groups were distinguished: 18-25 years – 10.0%, 26-35 – 26.4%, 36-45 – 23.2%, 46-55 – 21.8% and 56+ – 18.6%. The majority of respondents had higher education (63.9%), with the rest of the sample represented by people with secondary (22.5%) and primary or vocational education (13.6%). All respondents in the sample had previous experience of using rural tourism services. Only 16.1% of

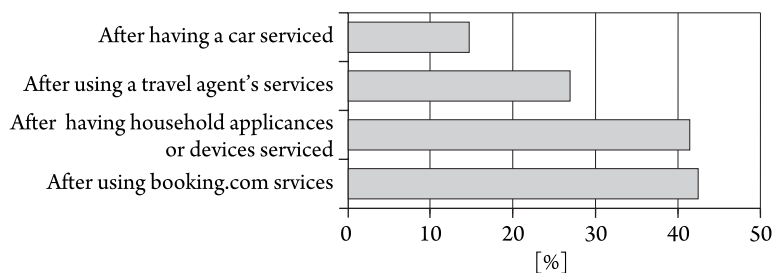
them reported having taken a countryside holiday only once. The largest group (48.9%) had taken rural holidays three times, 27.1% – twice, and 7.9% – four times or more.

The questionnaire also included a question about the frequency of respondents' participation in empirical research. 37.9% indicated they took part in such surveys several times a year, 22.1% – once every few years, 15.7% – at least once a month. The remaining respondents had never participated in a study, either because they had refused to take part (12.5%) or because they had never been approached with such a request (11.8%).

It turned out that women's frequency of participation significantly higher than that of men (Mann-Whitney U statistic = 2.57314,  $p = 0.00589$ ). There was no statistically significant correlation between age or education and the frequency of participation in empirical research.

Figure 1 shows respondents' answers to the question about situation in which they were most often asked to take part in a survey. The biggest group (42.5%) reported receiving such requests after using booking.com online service and after using a household appliances repair service. The purpose of those surveys was to measure customer satisfaction. No respondent indicated being asked to participate while staying at an agritourism farm or in other tourism accommodation, which could mean either that they had indeed never received such a request or that they had not realized that they had participated in one, which is possible in the case of covert observation or an unstructured interview. The latter possibility is supported by the fact that as many as 58.6% of respondents admitted that at end of their stay in agritourism accommodation, the hosts asked about their satisfaction. Such conversations were not, however, interpreted as a measurement of customer satisfaction. In addition, 10.7% of respondents admitted they had been asked to complete a questionnaire when visiting an agritourism farm but those

Fig. 1. Situations in which respondents were asked to take part in empirical research

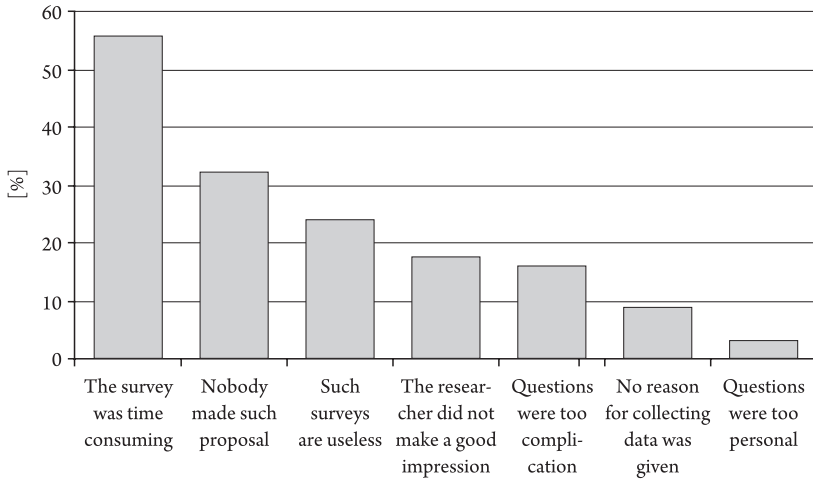


$N = 212$ , respondents could indicate more than one answer

Source: own empirical research.



Fig. 2. Reasons why respondents refuse to participate in surveys



$N = 68$ . Respondents could indicate more than one answer.

Source: own empirical research.

surveys were conducted by university students cooperating with farm owners in order to do research for their dissertations.

The following question addressed the reasons why respondents declined to participate in empirical research (Fig. 2). Most of the respondents refused to take part in surveys because they thought they were too time-consuming. Interestingly, this reason was given significantly more often by women (Mann-Whitney  $U = 2.35741$ ,  $p = 0.004698$ ).

Table 2 shows the results obtained in response to the question about the user-friendliness and reliability of different research methods in the context of their possible application in the area of rural tourism.

The respondents considered online surveys to be the most user-friendly, followed by paper-based surveys. Telephone interviews were found to be the least user-friendly. In the opinion of respondents, the most reliable research methods included covert observation and mystery shopping. Telephone interviews were considered the least reliable way of obtaining information from customers.

Based on the values of Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, the frequency of participation was found to be positively correlated with the user-friendliness rating of online surveys (Spearman's  $Rho = 0.28317$ ,  $p = 0.03617$ ) and mystery shopping (Spearman's  $Rho = 0.34015$ ,  $p = 0.03080$ ) and with the reliability of direct interviews (Spearman's  $Rho = 0.16985$ ,  $p = 0.02470$ ).

There were statistically significant differences between the following socio-demographic variables and respondents' assessment of user-friendliness of the

Table 2. Respondents' assessment of research methods in terms of their user-friendliness and reliability

Research methods	Comfort/ User-friendliness			Reliability		
	Mean	Median	Mode	Mean	Median	Mode
Online survey	5.35	6	7	4.26	4	3
Paper-based survey	4.73	5	5	4.32	4	4
Direct interview	3.90	4	3	4.93	5	5
Telephone interview	2.89	3	1	3.50	4	4
Focus group interview	3.12	3	4	3.72	4	4
Overt observation of clients/employees	3.54	4	4	3.87	4	3
Covert observation of clients/employees (e.g. using a camera)	3.50	3	3	5.37	6	7
Mystery shopping	4.11	4	4	5.35	6	7

Answers were given on a 7-point Likert scale, with 7 representing the highest rating.

Source: own empirical research.

following research methods in the context of their possible application in rural tourism:

- Women rated the friendliness of paper-based surveys significantly higher than men (Mann-Whitney U test = 2.98761,  $p = 0.004803$ ), while men rated the friendliness of online survey significantly higher than women (Mann-Whitney U test = 2.78166,  $p = 0.04344$ ).

- Better educated respondents rated online surveys significantly higher than less educated ones (Kruskal-Wallis H test = 16.21102,  $p = 0.0310$ ).

- Younger respondents rated online surveys (Kruskal-Wallis H test = 6.015082,  $p = 0.0494$ ) and focus group interviews (Kruskal-Wallis H test = 4.02458,  $p = 0.04496$ ) higher than older people.

A statistically significant difference was also found between some socio-demographic variables and the assessment of the reliability of the analysed research methods:

- Women rated the reliability of mystery shopping (Mann-Whitney U test = 2.59699,  $p = 0.0317$ ) and covert observation (Mann-Whitney U test = 2.68200,  $p = 0.03803$ ) higher than men.

- Men rated the reliability of online surveys higher than women did (Mann-Whitney U test Z = 2.75712,  $p = 0.0498$ ).

- Better educated respondents considered online surveys to be more reliable compared to those with lower education level (Kruskal-Wallis H test = 4.10502,

$p = 0.0483$ ) and the difference in ratings was similar for focus group interviews (Kruskal-Wallis H test = 2.587594,  $p = 0.0459$ ).

– Younger people assessed online surveys (Kruskal-Wallis H test = 3.02474,  $p = 0.04664$ ), and mystery shopping as more reliable compared to older respondents, while the reverse was true for direct interviews (Kruskal-Wallis H test = -2.2018,  $p = 0.04138$ ).

## 4. Discussion and conclusions

Rural tourism is a field where researchers primarily rely on survey data. Some survey techniques, such as certain types of observation or interviews, are so discrete that respondents may not realize that they are participating in a study. The research hypothesis put forward at the start was partially confirmed. The respondents considered paper-based surveys (mostly women) and online survey (especially men, better educated and younger respondents) to be the most user-friendly research technique. Covert observation and mysterious shopping were found to be the most reliable ways of obtaining information (the latter was more often indicated by women). Glabiński [2016] also draws attention to the high reliability of information obtained through observation. His study shows that observation provides information that quantitative methods cannot provide. The credibility of information obtained through mystery shopping is reported by Kruczek [2017], who emphasizes the speed and relatively low costs of using this method.

Some variation was also seen in the assessment of the reliability of online surveys, mystery shopping, direct interviews and focus groups interviews. The credibility of surveys is also highlighted by Krok, who notes that surveys should be prepared very carefully in order to ensure that the collected information is reliable [Krok 2015].

Another thing to consider are factors that discourage people from participating in surveys. The author's findings in this respect are consistent with the reasons given by other authors [Nowak 2012; Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias 2001; Jemielniak 2012]. The most important causes of such reluctance are the time required to complete questionnaires and the belief that surveys are useless. The last reason is a call for reflection, as is a very high dispersion and fragmentary nature of research conducted in the field of rural tourism. This situation could change if there is more genuine collaboration between scientists from various research centres and more cooperation between research institutions and business practitioners.

The following recommendations can be formulated on the basis of the study:

1. Studies should be conducted using several research methods should rely on the experience of entrepreneurs (e.g. the mystery shopping method).

2. The choice of research methods should be made taking into account respondents' sex or age. Use of different data collection methods with women and men or young and old respondents can improve the response rate.

3. Researchers should choose methods that are not too time-consuming, because long surveys discourage potential respondents.

4. Research methods that do not involve the conscious participation of respondents (mystery shopping, covert observation) are a valuable source of information. They can be treated as additional (accompanying) techniques.

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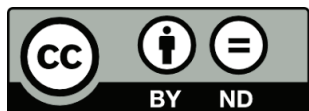
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## Metody gromadzenia danych w turystyce wiejskiej w opinii respondentów

**Streszczenie.** Celem badań było zweryfikowanie wiarygodności i przyjazności wybranych, najbardziej popularnych sposobów pozyskiwania informacji od respondentów. Dokonano syntetycznego przeglądu zastosowania różnych metod i technik badawczych. Zaprezentowano też wyniki własnych badań sondażowych zrealizowanych na próbie 280 osób wypoczywających 2019 r. w obiektach turystyki wiejskiej w woj. mazowieckim. Badania wykazały, że najbardziej przyjazna w ocenie respondentów była ankieta internetowa i papierowa, a najmniej przyjazny – wywiad indywidualny przeprowadzony przez telefon. Za najbardziej wiarygodną respondenci uznali obserwację ukrytą i tajemniczego klienta, a za najmniej wiarygodną – wywiad telefoniczny. Płeć, wiek i poziom wykształcenia były zmienną różnicującą ocenę przyjazności i wiarygodności poszczególnych metod i technik badawczych. Uwzględnienie w badaniach nad turystyką wiejską wiarygodności i przyjazności stosowanych metod i technik powinno przyczynić się do doskonalenia warsztatu badawczego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** badania, metodyka badań, turystyka wiejska, wyniki badań, rzetelność



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## Innovations in the Polish tourism sector in the eyes of consumers – selected examples

**Abstract.** The purpose of the article is to analyse selected aspects of innovation in the Polish tourism sector from the perspective of consumers and to highlight those areas where innovative solutions should be implemented. The author uses empirical data to verify the following hypothesis: consumers' perception of innovations concerning tourism products in the Polish market varies considerably and depends on respondents' characteristics. The study was based on information collected from 407 respondents using the computer-assisted web interview method (CAWI), which constituted a country-wide quota sample, representative of the Polish population aged 18 or over, in terms of age, sex, education, the size of the place of residence. The results of the study indicate that consumers are mostly in favour of innovation in the tourism sector, notice emerging developments in this field and are very optimistic about the country's innovation capacity. Differences in opinions about innovative tourist products were depended on the professional status of the respondents. Consumer awareness may be one of the key elements in the development of the sector. The development of innovative tourism services in Poland should be a continuous process, especially in less developed areas, which depend heavily on tourism. The development in this area is facilitated by favourable attitudes of consumers towards innovation in the tourism sector, especially in niche markets, and specialised local resources could help to intensify innovation activities.

**Keywords:** innovations, tourism, consumers, Poland

**JEL Codes:** O12, D01

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## 1. Introduction

Some believe that in the long-term tourism will be the most robust sector of the world economy, encompassing not only environmental protection (which currently is the focus of considerable attention) but also the promotion of the tourist potential (cultural, historical, ethnographic, architectural, etc.) of countries that take a positive approach towards the benefits of tourist traffic [Şuşu, Bârsan 2009: 74].

Given the ongoing globalisation process, increasing competition and technological advances, which have been taking place at an unprecedented pace in recent years, innovation is an imperative [Tajeddini, Trueman 2008]. Innovation activities are currently a subject of intensive research [Yuan, Tseng, Ho 2019; Bigné, Decrop 2019; Hall, Williams 2019].

Research on innovation in the tourism sector intensified in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, when the tourism sector started to recognise the significant role of innovation, encompassing both the technological aspects of business operations and the elements of a marketing approach and product strategies.

The aim of this article is to analyse selected aspects of innovation in the Polish tourism sector from the perspective of consumers and to highlight those areas where innovative solutions should be implemented. The main research objective of the study was to investigate how present-day consumers perceive innovations and to identify dilemmas that may stimulate innovative solutions in the tourism sector.

Empirical data collected in the survey were used to verify the following hypothesis: consumers' perception of innovations relating to the Polish tourism product varies significantly depending on respondents' characteristics.

The article consists of a review of the literature on innovation in the tourism sector, the methodological description of the study, the analysis of the results and conclusions from the interpretation of the empirical material.

Tourism market developments resulting from a wide variety of factors – health-related, economic, sociocultural, political – should be subject to continuous analysis. Innovation in the tourism sector is becoming almost a necessity, allowing companies and regions to maintain a foothold in the market. This is all the more important in the current global situation, where health threats are present in almost all the countries that send and receive tourists.

## 2. Innovation in tourism – overview

Joseph Alois Schumpeter, who adopted an extensive approach to the issue of innovation, defined it as “developing new product functionalities [...] or opening new markets for a product” [Nagy 2010: 16]. Such an understanding of inno-



vation activities in the tourism sector reflects the most common way in which they are manifested, which covers changes in the structure of tourism products (broadly understood – places or events), intentional adjustment of the internal organisational structure of businesses and changes in the approach to marketing rules associated with sales procedures [Orengo Serra, Picón Garcia 2013: 2].

The main classification criteria for innovation are consistent with the approach proposed by Schumpeter and cover elements relating to:

1. Products, namely the design and marketing of new, improved offers/products or services attracting the attention of consumers. Their effectiveness is determined by whether they are noticed by manufacturers, suppliers and consumers.

2. Processes, which shape changes in the internal structure of businesses and help improve their operational effectiveness, including the use of non-traditional technologies and replacement of ineffective production lines with new lines that streamline manufacturing processes. In the tourism sector, process innovations are most often encountered in the form of e-tourism and increasing digitisation. Their practical applications are used by hotel chains, transport booking systems, local government authorities that promote regional tourist attractions and universities that provide education to staff managing tourist traffic.

However, innovation does not always have an impact on the achievement of goals set by potential beneficiaries. Sometimes the praxeological result of the action taken is not effective, beneficial or cost-efficient and needs to be adjusted accordingly.

Anne Marie Hjalager [2002] identified three categories of innovation: management, logistics and institutional. The first category covers significant changes to management practices of businesses, including the development of specific occupational profiles of employees, and the establishment of new organisational structures and hierarchical systems, which often manage new projects, products and outlets. Logistics innovation pertains to changes in the distribution chain, involving the strategies, channels and development of online marketing, which accelerates the process of reaching target markets with a product. The last category identified by Hjalager [2002] is institutional innovation, which affects an organisation in an exogenous manner. The legal standards for business operation in the tourism economy may strongly redirect the approach of entrepreneurs to the market and enhance, more or less successfully, the efficiency of their activities.

Consumer preferences also need to be taken into account in innovation processes as consumers play a significant role in transferring knowledge to tourism companies [Eggink 2013: 5]. Information provided by tourists may be a source of new ideas and solutions for the development of the tourism sector.

Innovation in tourism is closely related to service activities, which were first included in research analyses by Richard Barras [1986]. He proposed a theoretical model of process innovation in the service sector based on the theory of

a reverse product cycle [Barras 1986: 161-162]. Slightly different approaches to service innovations were proposed by, among others, Gadrey, Gallouj, Weinstein [1995], Gallouj, Weinstein [1997], Sundbo [1997], Tether, Hipp, Miles [2001], Miozzo, Soete [2001], Djellal, Gallouj [2001], Gallouj, Savona [2009] and López-Fernández, Serrano, Gómez López [2011].

Rohit Verma et al. [2008] also reached important conclusions for the service sector in the context of innovation, formulating specific guiding principles. These authors emphasised three issues: customer orientation, concentration of processes and their continuous improvement, which amount to keeping up with trends in the sector, carrying out ongoing analyses and monitoring customer experience.

Analyses and studies carried out after 2005 clearly indicate that the most beneficial innovations in the tourism sector relate to technological concepts [Sundbo, Orfila-Sintes, Sørensen 2007; Orfila-Sintes, Mattsson 2009; Aldebert, Dang, Longhi 2011; Meneses, Teixeira 2011]. This confirms the results of a study on service sector companies conducted in 2003, which showed that over 40% of service companies in Europe had implemented such innovations in their commercial practice [Evangelista, Savona 2003: 456].

In the early 2000s, Henry Chesbrough [2003] formulated the concept of 'open innovations', which have become a source of competitive advantage [Łobejko 2010: 14]. The developments in computer technology and their impact on social and economic behaviour made it possible to incorporate exogenous intellectual resources into the innovation process. This concept is based on the assumption that some parts of the innovation process (e.g. at the level of product development or implementation) may be outsourced; however, a company may also draw and then develop ideas from its environment [Dziedzic et al. 2016]. The concept of *User-Driven Innovation* (UDI) implies an analysis of consumer behaviour, which should be taken into account when developing innovation strategies for businesses [Roehrich 2004]. It is consumers who have a growing influence on commercial offers and play a role in creating products and services they purchase.

The UDI concept briefly described above fits well with the premise of this article, which focuses on consumers' subjective assessment of selected aspects of the innovative capacity of the Polish tourism sector. Two approaches identifying consumers' position in the innovation process can be distinguished under this concept [Rosted 2005]:

- user observations, i.e. identifying the needs of consumers and using their feedback to improve existing products/services on the market,
- user initiative, i.e. developing new ideas that come from consumers.

The importance of how a tourism product is perceived by consumers should also be highlighted. Consumers' perception of the image of a destination, prior

to and after the visit, may affect their level of satisfaction and have an impact on whether they will revisit it [Önder, Marchiori 2017].

The literature on innovation in the tourism sector is quite extensive. This subject is comprehensively reviewed by e.g. Gomezelj [2019], Durán-Sánchez et al. [2019], Marasco et al. [2018] as well as Teixeira and Ferreira [2018]. References included in these articles are evidence of the increasing number publications and citations on this subject in recent years.

### 3. Data and methods

The article focuses on innovation in the Polish tourism market. The following analyses are part of a study<sup>1</sup> carried out between 2015 and 2018<sup>2</sup>.

The information for the study was collected from 407 respondents using the CAWI method. The respondents were selected as a country-wide quota sample representative of the Polish population aged 18 and over, with age, sex, education and the size of the place of residence as independent variables (Table 1) and professional status (Fig. 1). As access to tourism services is currently universal, it was assumed that each adult Polish citizen had been a tourist at some point in their lives (regardless of travel purpose). Thus, the respondents were assumed to represent the group of interest that can provide relevant information about the subject of empirical analyses related to the issues addressed in the paper.

One limitation of the method used in the study was the geographically diversified level of household Internet access (the so-called Internet penetration rate) and the resulting coverage error. However, according to Statistics Poland, Internet access and market saturation with devices enabling online communication are steadily increasing. Therefore, the limitation is becoming less relevant. Thanks to e-mail, the researcher could easily get in touch and interact with the respondents. However, it must be underlined that in the case of online surveys, one can never be entirely sure who actually completes the questionnaire. In addition

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<sup>1</sup> The study entitled “The role of tourism in the contemporary consumption model. Controversies in the Polish tourism sector” used a wide range of research methods and techniques (desk research, mystery shopping, individual in-depth interviews, CAWI, expert panel) that enabled an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon in question, including the analysis of real demand and the identification of factors affecting the consumption of controversial tourism services. Owing to the limited scope, it is not possible to present all the results in one article. It should also be mentioned that the issue of innovation in the tourism market was not the main focus of that research project.

<sup>2</sup> A specialised commercial market analysis company was commissioned to conduct the entire process, including sample selection, (the company’s details can be obtained from the author upon request). Therefore, it was assumed that the sample was representative and no pilot studies were carried out.

Table 1. Characteristics of the respondents in the sample

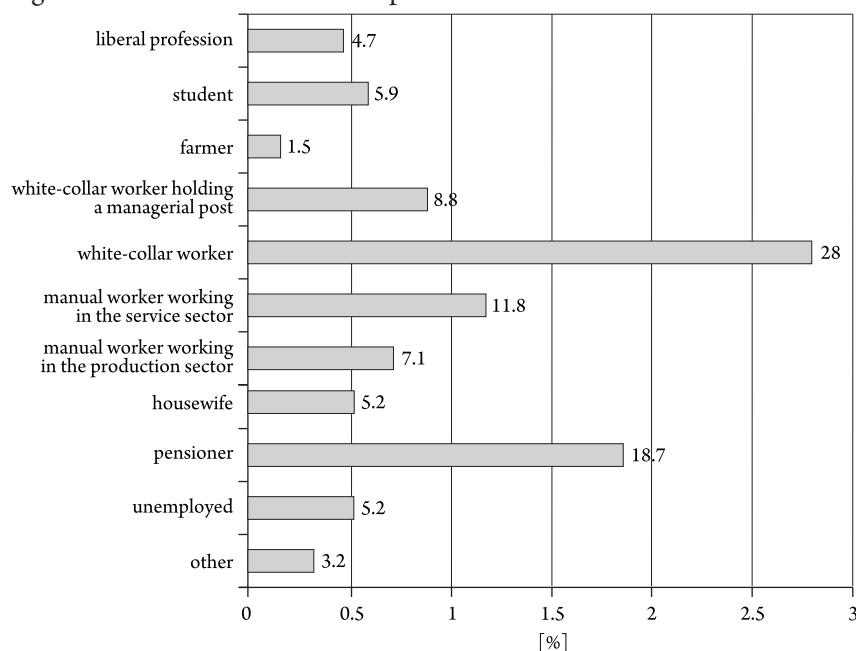
Categories	Number	Percentage
<b>Place of residence</b>		
Metropolitan city (over 500 thousand inhabitants)	52	12.8
Large city (between 100 and 500 thousand inhabitants)	74	18.2
Medium-sized city (between 20 and 99 thousand inhabitants)	80	19.7
Small city (up to 20 thousand inhabitants)	52	12.8
Rural area	149	36.5
Total	407	100.0
<b>Education</b>		
Primary/lower-secondary education	9	2.2
Basic vocational education	36	8.9
Secondary education	131	32.2
Post-secondary education	64	15.7
Bachelor's degree	34	8.4
Master's degree	133	32.6
Total	407	100.0
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	206	50.6
Male	201	49.4
Total	407	100.0
<b>Age (years)</b>		
18-24	53	13.0
25-34	81	19.9
35-44	65	15.9
45-54	79	19.4
55 and over	129	31.8
Total	407	100.0

Source: own study.

to sociodemographic questions, the questionnaire included four main questions that the study participants were asked to answer<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> The questions were as follows: 1. What is your opinion about innovative tourism products?; 2. What innovations in Polish tourism products have you noticed in the 5 past years?; 3. Do you think that Poland has a potential for developing innovative tourism products?; 4. In your opinion, what factors determine the development of innovative tourism products?

Fig. 1. Professional status of the respondents



Source: own study.

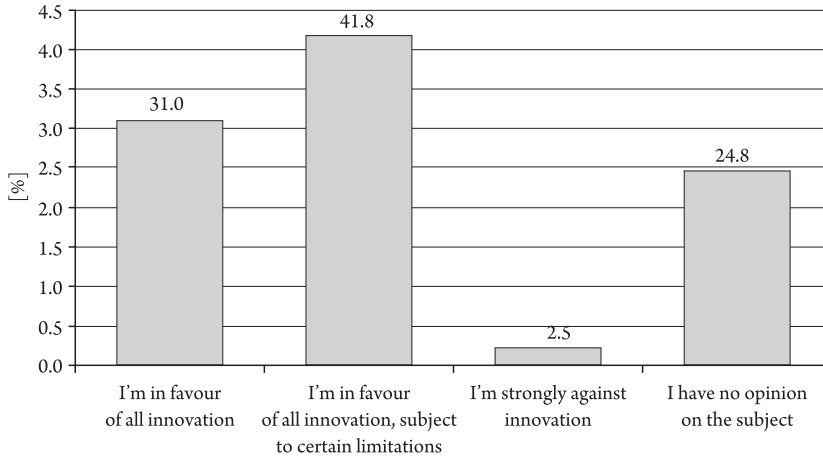
## 4. Results

### 4.1. Innovative tourism offers – respondents' opinions

Over two-fifths of the respondents stated that they were in favour of innovation in the tourism offer, subject to certain limitations. Approximately three out of ten respondents were in favour of all innovation in the tourism sector and 2.5% of the respondents stated that they were strongly against innovation. Almost a quarter of the respondents were unable to give a clear answer on the subject (Fig. 2).

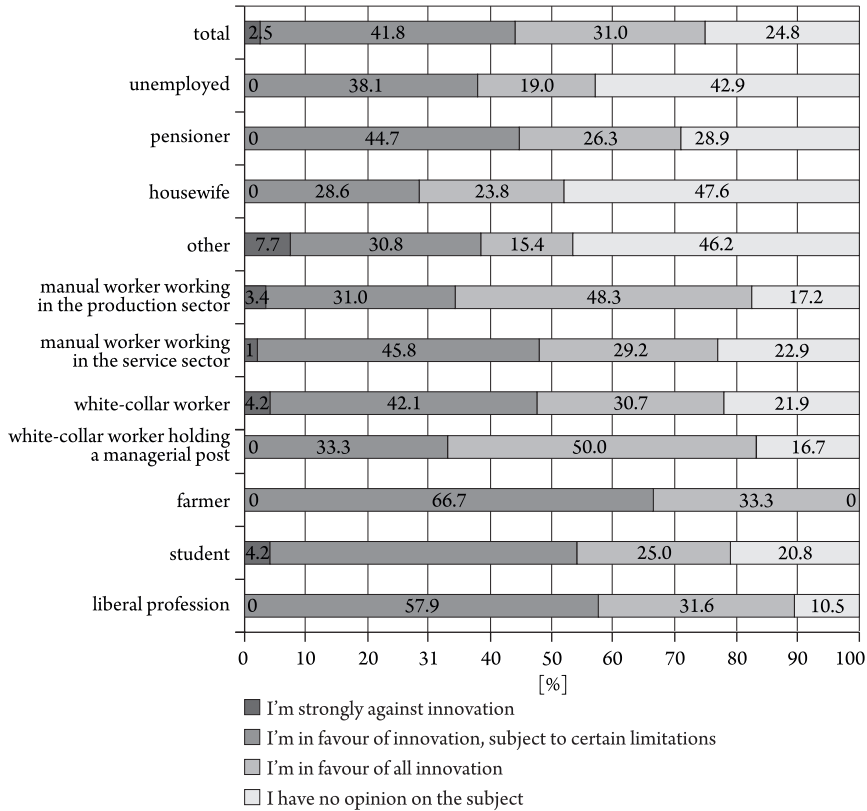
None of those who classified themselves as unemployed, pensioners, housewives, white-collar workers holding a managerial post, farmers and persons engaged in a liberal profession declared that they were strongly against innovation in the tourism sector. In turn, those who described their professional status as 'other' were the largest group of respondents who indicated that they were strongly against all innovation in tourism offers (7.7%). Farmers (66.7%) and individuals practising a liberal profession (57.9%) were the largest groups of respondents in favour of innovation, subject to certain limitations. The largest groups of respondents in favour of all innovation were found among those hold-

Fig. 2. Respondents' attitudes to innovation in the tourism sector



Source: own study.

Fig. 3. Respondents' opinions on innovative tourism offers



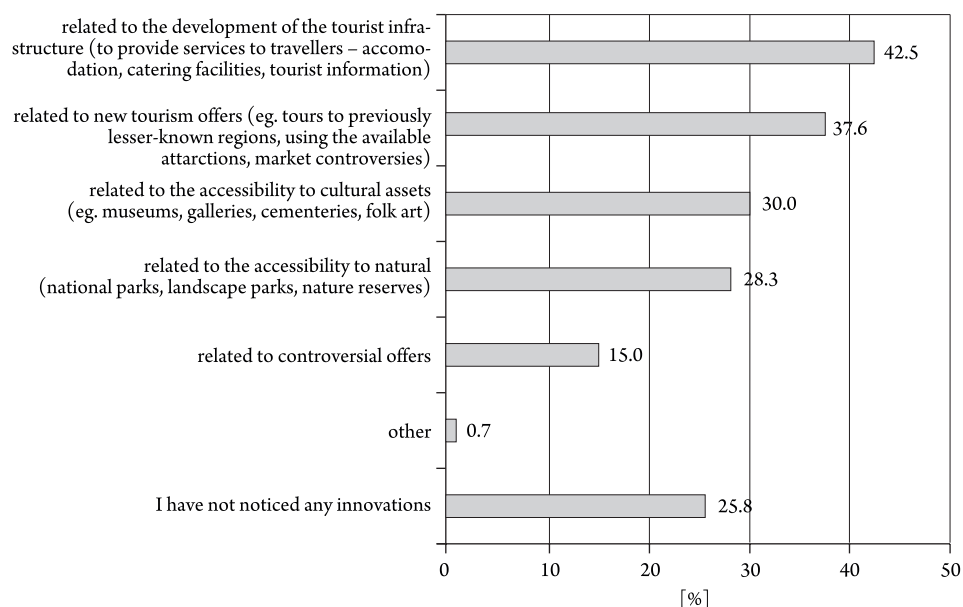
Source: own study.

ing managerial posts (50.0%) and manual workers working in the production sector (48.3%). The largest groups of respondents who did not express a clear opinion on the subject were housewives (47.6%), those in the 'other' category (46.2%) and the unemployed (42.9%) (Fig. 3).

## 4.2. Innovations relating to the Polish tourism product

The respondents were asked to list innovations relating to the Polish tourism product that they had noticed over the past five years. The largest proportion of the respondents (42.5%) had noticed changes in the development of the tourist infrastructure, i.e. accommodation, catering facilities, travel agents and tourist information centres. A slightly smaller proportion had noticed changes regarding new tourism offers, e.g. tours to previously lesser-known regions. 30% of respondents stated that over the past five years they had noticed innovations with respect to the accessibility to cultural assets and over a quarter indicated changes in the accessibility to natural assets. 15% of the respondents had noticed innovations relating to controversial offers (e.g. sex tourism, recreational drug tourism, slum or ghetto tourism, disaster tourism). Respondents who selected 'other', listed the following: 'trips to conflict-stricken regions (racial, cultural, armed)' ( $N = 1$ ), 'promotion of a regional, local product' ( $N = 1$ ) and 'online offers' ( $N = 1$ ) (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Innovations relating to Polish tourism products noticed over the past five years



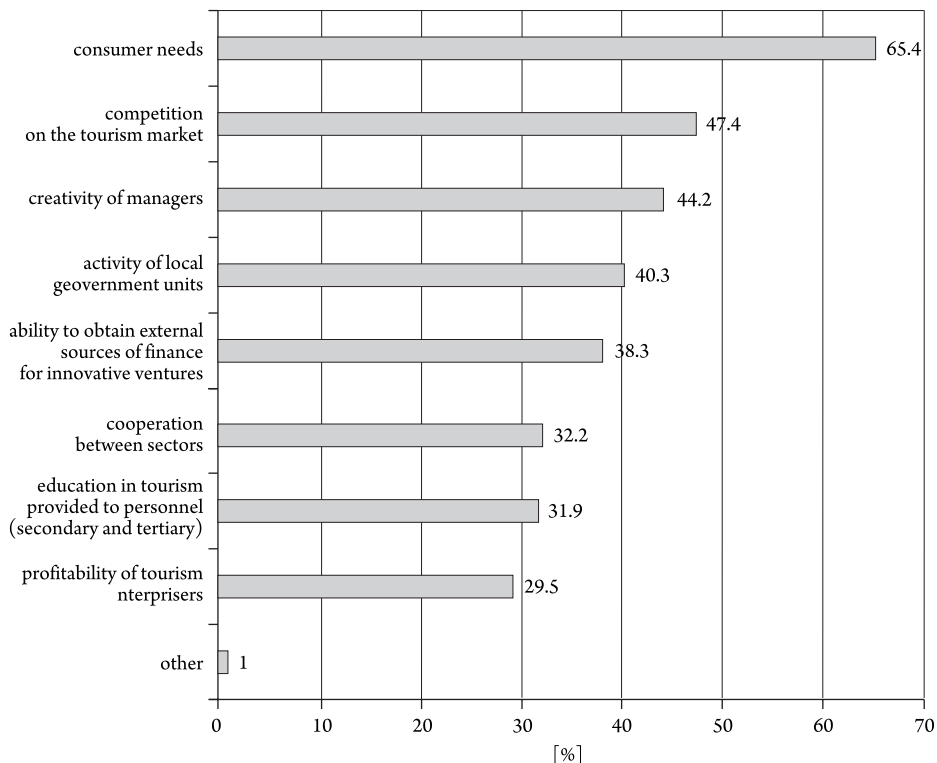
Source: own study.

A little over 25% of the respondents had not noticed any innovations relating to the Polish tourism product over the past five years.

Four-fifths of the respondents stated that Poland has potential for the development of innovative tourism offers, whereas every twentieth respondent was of the opposite view. 14% of the respondents were unable to give a clear answer to this question.

As regards factors affecting the development of innovative tourism offers, almost two-thirds of the respondents listed consumer needs. The second most frequently given answer was 'competition on the tourism market' (47.4%), followed by 'creativity of managers' (44.2%). Two-fifths of the respondents believed that innovation in the tourism sector depends on the activity of local government units. The least frequently given answer was 'profitability of tourism enterprises' (29.5%). Respondents who selected 'other' listed the following: 'lack of consent for the admission of Muslims' ( $N = 1$ ), 'red tape' ( $N = 1$ ) and 'I have no opinion on the subject' ( $N = 2$ ) (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5. Crucial factors for the development of innovative tourism offers



Source: own study.



As can be seen, according to the respondents, innovation in the tourism sector can be facilitated by identifying consumers' needs and using this information to improve competitiveness of enterprises, such as e.g. segmentation processes, attempts to successfully access target markets and position offerings that are distinctive and attractive to potential customers. Interestingly, according to respondents, this does not always have to be accompanied by greater profitability of tourism enterprises. Nonetheless, economic activity is mainly driven by customer needs and profitability.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

The study results described above provide an insight into issues related to innovation in the tourism sector. Given the volatility of factors which affect demand and supply, it is difficult to determine directions for future research of this area.

Currently, technology is the key driver of innovation in the tourism sector [Wan 2019: 1]. In this context, Hjalager [2015] also emphasises tourism experience of consumers and supply-side aspects – services and technological systems – which allow enterprises to achieve implementation targets for a given product (communication, booking systems). Thus, a major effect of innovation is the enrichment of the experience of visitors, who have a significant impact on changes in tourism offerings. Their curiosity, needs and requirements motivate enterprises to increase productivity and create novel tourism products. The results of the study confirm this thesis. Consumers' perspective is particularly relevant and should be taken into account in production processes.

The modern technology accompanying production and consumption has the potential of enhancing user experience and improving the productivity of the tourism sector [Gretzel et al. 2015]. These changes make it more feasible to develop procedures for co-creating experiences [Pralhad, Ramaswamy 2004] and designing them [Sanders, Stappers 2008; Desmet, Hassenzahl 2012] and to jointly create services that stimulate them [Stickdorn, Schwarzenberger 2016]. Creative approaches to design thinking [Fesenmaier, Xiang 2017], commonly used in the economy, also play an important role in this regard.

According to the Oslo Manual [2005], which is a benchmark for analysing the quality of innovation processes, only those changes that have a positive and measurable impact on the performance of an enterprise (e.g. increase in sales) can be considered innovations. The Manual also lists factors which affect innovation processes, external, i.e. coming from the environment and internal, resulting from the structure of an organisation. The latter factors are referred to as an innovation dynamo. The general factors listed in the Manual include conditions

and institutions, the research base as well as social and cultural aspects [Dziedzic et al. 2016].

The multiplicity of perspectives listed above makes it difficult to collect and analyse empirical data. This study described above was an attempt to analyse consumer opinions, including those on innovative tourism offers, changes in Polish tourism products, the sector's development capacity and the key factors which affect the development of innovative tourism offers. The hypothesis formulated in the introduction was partly confirmed. As regards the demographic characteristics of respondents. Respondents' occupational status, which is largely disregarded in other analyses in favour of such variables as age, sex, education or the place of residence, was found to play a crucial role and provides a premise for further research into occupational activity of consumers. It is clearly related to a person's level of education, which should correspond with their occupation. However, this was not confirmed unequivocally in the study.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the study:

1. Service innovations represent the main category of market adaptation activities, at both micro and macro levels, and may involve e.g. tourism service incubators and demonstration projects.

2. The development in the tourism sector is fostered by a favourable attitude of consumers towards innovation, especially in niche markets (tourism for senior citizens, cultural tourism, ecotourism, etc.), and specialised local resources could help to intensify innovation activities (e.g. as part of asset management and accessibility).

3. Innovation in the Polish tourism sector should be geared towards industry clustering, which makes it possible to diversify regional and trans-regional products, including those types of tourism that are Poland's trademark feature.

4. Increasing awareness of the transformative potential of innovation in the service sector (among entrepreneurs, decision-makers and consumers) is one of the key elements in the development of the tourism sector.

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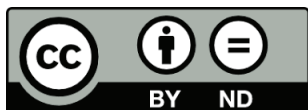
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## Innowacje w turystyce w percepcji konsumentów – wybrane zagadnienia. Przykład Polski

**Streszczenie.** Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą analizy wybranych aspektów problematyki innowacyjności w sektorze turystyki w Polsce, ujętej z perspektywy konsumentów, oraz wskazania tych obszarów, do których rozwiązania innowacyjne powinny zmierzać. Hipoteza, którą postawiono w kontekście dokonywanych analiz empirycznych brzmi: Istnieje istotne zróżnicowanie sposobów postrzegania przez konsumentów innowacji w produkcie turystycznym Polski, szczególnie w kontekście zmiennych niezależnych charakteryzujących respondentów. W badaniu metodą CAWI „Computer Assisted Web Interview” respondenci wypełniali kwestionariusz wywiadu drogą internetową. Wzięło w nim udział 407 osób. Pomiar prowadzono na losowo-kwotowej ogólnopolskiej próbie według reprezentacji w populacji Polaków w wieku od 18 lat wżwyż dla płci, wieku, wykształcenia oraz wielkości miejscowości zamieszkania. Wyniki badań wskazują, że respondenci są w większości zwolennikami innowacji w sektorze turystycznym, dostrzegają pojawiające się w tej sferze zmiany i bardzo optymistycznie oceniają innowacyjny potencjał Polski. Ich świadomość stanowić może jeden z najważniejszych elementów rozwojowych dla branży. **WNIOSKI:** rozwój innowacyjnych usług turystycznych w Polsce powinien postępować w sposób ciągły, szczególnie na obszarach słabiej rozwiniętych i silnie zależnych od sektora turystyki. Przychylne podejście konsumentów do innowacji w turystyce sprzyja rozwojowi tego sektora, zwłaszcza na rynkach niszowych, a wzmoczenie działań innowacyjnych może być wsparte specjalistycznymi zasobami lokalnymi.

**Słowa kluczowe:** innowacje, turystyka, konsumenci, Polska



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# Editorial requirements

**I. Size of manuscript** – up to 40 000 characters (roughly 22 pages, 1800 characters per page) including tables and figures. The size of one attachment cannot be larger than 20 MB.

## II. Required files

**1. Files with the main part of the manuscript** (without authors' data, format \*.doc):

- title of the article in English and Polish
- concise and factual abstract in English and Polish, from 150 to 300 words, prepared according to structure:
  - purpose
  - methods
  - results
  - conclusions
- keywords in English and Polish (up to 8 words)
- JEL codes: code 1; code 2; code 3 (maximal 3 codes, according to the website of American Economic Association: <https://www.aeaweb.org/econlit/jelCodes.php>)
- introduction
- body text – organized into chapters/sections, each with a unique title
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- bibliography – complete list of referenced sources

**2. Files with the title page including authors' data** (format \*.doc):

- author's first and last name
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## 3. Tables

- numbered consecutively and consistently using Arabic numerals
- include a caption and a reference to the data source (e.g. *own research*)
- tables should be referenced in the text by their number rather than expressions such as "above" or "below" (e.g. *cf. Table 1*, not: *see table above/below*)
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## 4. Figures, photos and graphics

- editable (formats: \*.jpg, \*.tif or \*.xls)
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- all figures should be numbered consecutively using Arabic numerals
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  - apply no lettering in white against black background, whether in bold or italics, and no black fills or excess frames
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  - provide explanations of any abbreviations used

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- margins: 2.5 cm each
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- placed within the text and enclosed in square brackets: author's/ editor's last name, publication year [colon], page or page range, e.g. [Meyer 2010: 31-40] or [Dubisz (ed.) 2003: vol. 3, 104]

- when there are more than three authors, give the name of the first (primary) author only, followed by the phrase *et al.*: [Kaczmarek et al. 2005: 56-67]
- when no author/ editor is indicated, three to five initial words of the title (of a published work) should be provided instead: [The Norton Anthology 2012]
- if reports or studies are referenced, the name of the sponsoring institution and the year of publication should be given: [Eurostat 2014] or [GUS 2015]
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- when simultaneously referencing more than one source, quote these in chronological order, separating them with semicolons: [Mansfeld 1987: 101-123; Jagusiewicz 2001: 40-73; Meyer 2010: 89-101]
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## Other references and footnotes:

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- **journal articles** – author's last name and first name initial, publication year, title of article [no italics], *name of periodical [italicized]*, volume/issue [colon], page range:
  - Spenner P., Freeman K., 2012, To keep your customers, keep it simple, *Harvard Business Review*, 90(5): 108-114.
- **books** – the author/editor's last name and first name initial, publication year, *title of the book [italicized]*, place of publication [colon], publisher:
  - Lane W. R., King K. W., Reichert T., 2011, *Kleppner's Advertising Procedure*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- **chapters in edited books** – last name and first name initial of chapter author, publication year, title of chapter [not italicized], in: first name initial(s) and last name(s) of editor(s) (ed. or eds.), *title of edited book [italicized]*, place of publication [colon], publisher, page range:
  - Cornwall W., 1991, The Rise and Fall of Productivity Growth, in: J. Cornwall (ed.), *The Capitalist Economies: Prospects for the 1990s*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 40-62.
- **legislation**
  - Council Directive 90/365/EEC of 28 June 1990 on the right of residence for employees and self-employed persons who have ceased their occupational activity.
  - Act of 4 February 1994 on Copyright and Related Rights, Journal of Laws No. 24, item 83, as later amended.
- **studies and reports**
  - World Energy Council, 2013, *World Energy Resources: 2013 Survey*, London.
- **online sources** [in square brackets, indicate when website was last accessed]
  - [www.manpowergroup.com](http://www.manpowergroup.com) [accessed: 28.05.2015]

## VI. Mathematical formulas

- processed using Microsoft Equation 3.0
- special attention should be given to correct placement of any sub- or super-scripts
- variables – in *italics*; numbers and digits – in normal font style
- use "·" or "×" only as the multiplication sign (rather than e.g. asterisk or letter X)
- quantities should be represented in SI units only
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**I. Objętość manuskryptu** – do 1 arkusza wydawniczego wraz z rysunkami i tabelami (40 tys. znaków ze spacjami, tj. ok. 20 stron). Rozmiar jednego załącznika nie może być większy niż 20 MB.

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- skróty użyte w tabeli – objaśnione pod nią

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- numeracja stron – ciągła, u dołu strony
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- odstęp między wierszami – 1,5 wiersza
- wyróżnienia – pismem półgrubym
- słowa obcojęzyczne – kursywą
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[por. Hadzik 2009: 38] lub: [cyt. za Szromek 2010: 52]

• jeśli odwołanie dotyczy więcej niż jednej publikacji, należy je wymienić w kolejności chronologicznej:

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[Nowak 2014a, 2014b]

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Borek M., 2000, Rola technik sekurytyzacyjnych, *Bank*, nr 12: 53-55.

• **pozycja książkowa** – nazwisko autora/redaktora, inicjał imienia, tytuł książki (*kursywą*), miejsce wydania: wydawnictwo:

Janowska Z., 2002, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi*, Warszawa: PWE.

• **rozdział pracy zbiorowej** – nazwisko autora rozdziału, inicjał imienia, rok, tytuł rozdziału (prosto), w.; inicjał imienia, nazwisko redaktora + (red.), *tytuł pracy zbiorowej* (*kursywą*), miejsce wydania: wydawnictwo, zakres stron:

Michalewicz A., 2001, Systemy informacyjne wspomagające logistykę dystrybucji, w: K. Rutkowski (red.), *Logistyka dystrybucji*, Warszawa: Difin, 102-123.

• **akt prawny**

Ustawa z dnia 8 marca 1990 r. o samorządzie gminnym, t.j. Dz.U. 2001, nr 142, poz. 1591.

Ustawa z dnia 19 listopada 1999 r. Prawo działalności gospodarczej, Dz.U. nr 101, poz. 1178 z późn. zm.

Dyrektywa Rady 2004/67/WE z dnia 26 kwietnia 2004 r. dotycząca środków zapewnających bezpieczeństwo dostaw gazu ziemnego, Dz. Urz. UE L 127 z 29.04.2004.

• **raporty, analizy**

GUS, 2015, *Pomorskie w liczbach 2014*, Gdańsk.

• **źródło z Internetu** (w nawiasie pełna data korzystania ze strony WWW):

[www.manpowergroup.com](http://www.manpowergroup.com) [dostęp: 28.05.2015].

## VI. Wzory matematyczne

- przygotowane w programie Microsoft Equation 3.0
- poprawnie zapisane potęgi i indeksy
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- znak mnożenia to: · lub × (nie gwiazdka czy „iks”)
- pisownia jednostek – według układu SI
- symbole objaśnione pod wzorem