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ACTIVE SPORT TOURISM IN POLAND: ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AND MOTIVATIONAL ASPECTS

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Abstract

Active sport tourism has been identified, along with event sport tourism and nostalgia sport tourism, as a category of sport tourism. Active sport tourists travel to participate in sport – being physically active is the main purpose of their travels. Each decision regarding a holiday, weekend or one-day trip is driven by several types of motivation of different intensity and is related to the choice of a destination with desirable environmental conditions. The aim of the study was to analyze the influence of the natural geographical environment variables and motivational forces on the phenomenon of active sport tourism in Poland. The investigations on motivation to participate in active sport tourism were carried out with different fractions of the population of tourists. The analysis of the environmental determinants of active tourism in Poland, such as terrain, climate, air quality and a hydrographic network allow to conclude that the conditions are conducive to different types of active tourism, especially hiking (both lowland and mountain) biking, inland waterway sailing and canoeing. The need to be physically active was the predominant motivation to participate in active sport tourism while ambition was the least important of all motivational dispositions.

Keywords: *Poland, tourist attractions, motivation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Active sport tourism (AST) has been identified, along with event sport tourism and nostalgia sport tourism, as a category of sport tourism. Active sport tourists travel to participate in sport – being physically active is the main purpose of their travels. While defining this type of tourism, several authors emphasize that active sport tourists are individuals who participate in

sport activities while on holiday (De Knop, 1990; Gibson, 1998; Hinch, Higham, 2011). Active sport tourism involves travelling in order to participate in different sports; its primary aim is to become engaged in physical activity (Gibson, 1998). We posit that the term 'active sport tourism' relates to two-day or multi-day trips, in which the main goal is physical activity – practising the various forms of movement recreation. The difference between active sport tourism and physical recreation lies in a need of leaving a place of residence and in interaction with the natural environment and its special values. The most popular forms of AST are: hiking, climbing, skiing, cycling, horsemanship, canoeing, sailing, windsurfing, kitesurfing, diving.

Poland is the biggest country in the Central Europe, the ninth largest country in Europe, with total land area 312,7 km^2 and population over 38 million people. Poland is a member state of NATO (since 1999), the European Union (since the 1st of May 2004) and a part of Schengen zone. The variety of geographical regions in Poland is of the most importance for different forms of active sport tourism. Poland is situated between the Baltic Sea in the north and two mountain ranges (the Sudetes and Carpathian Mountains Chains) in the south. Poland's territory extends across several geographical regions:

- the Baltic seacoast with coastal lakes and dunes;
- the hilly districts of moraines and moraine-dammed lakes: the Pomeranian Lake District, the Greater Polish Lake District, the Kashubian Lake District, and the Masurian Lake District;
- the regions of Lusatia, Silesia and Masovia, which are located in the broad river valleys;
- the heterogeneous mountain region, including the Sudetes, the Polish Jurassic Highland, the Holy Cross Mountains, and the Carpathian Mountains with the Beskids and the Tatra Mountains, the highest part of the Carpathians.

The study was based on a bibliography referring to geography of Poland, own experiences and the results of empirical research on motivation to active sport tourism. The aim of the study was to analyze the influence of the natural geographical environment variables and the motivational forces on a phenomenon of active sport tourism in Poland. The main questions were:

1. How do the natural geographical features in Poland (landform, a sea, rivers, lakes, climate, the richness of nature) affect the different forms of active sport tourism?
2. Which recreation-related motivational forces are predominant while making the decisions to participate in active sport tourism?

2. THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS OF ACTIVE SPORT TOURISM

Tourist attractions are of the most importance for active sport tourism as for all other kinds of tourism. The development of cultural tourism would be difficult without the monuments and the museums; attributes and quality of the natural environment are of similar importance for active sport tourism. Attributes of the natural environment, such as weather and climate, landform, hydrosphere, vegetation and animals, allow for realization of the plans relating to active recreation. The features of the natural environment are particularly important, especially those which allow to practice the various forms of active tourism. The various studies of the suitability for tourism of the natural environment in Poland, which have been carried out for the tens of years, confirm that they are moderately good or even very good. This study was related to the suitability for the different forms of tourism, including leisure tourism, both passive and active (Mileska, 1963; Wyrzykowski, 1986; Kożuchowski, 2005).

The assessments of the tourist attractiveness were made (Wyrzykowski, 1991) and the most useful areas for the specific forms of tourism were indicated (e.g. Doroz-Tomasik, 2016).

The usefulness of the specific features and elements of the natural environment for active sport tourism has been often evaluated (e.g. Mazurek et al., 1984; Sieńko-Awierianów, 2011; Miszuk et al., 2012; Koźmiński, 2012; Błażejczyk, 2004; Pelech, 2012). Favorable and unfavorable features of the natural environment, affecting the development of such and other forms of tourism (Duda-Seifert et al., 2012, Cetner, Dyguś, 2011; Krąż, Balon 2012; Bernat 2010; Warda, Stamirowska-Krzaczek, 2009), were established. Various researches about the local conditions were also carried out, usually in order to determine the possibilities of tourism development in micro- and mesoregions or administrative units (Obrębska-Starklowa et al., 1991; Rinke, 1984; Brzezińska-Wójcik, Świeca, 2010). Researchers have wondered what conditions are necessary for development of the specific forms of active tourism (Józefczyk, 2014; Marek, Lewandowski, 2011).

The studies, various publications and discussions at scientific conferences enable us to describe the environmental conditions of active tourism in Poland in more detail.

Terrain of Poland is distinctive; the term 'zonality' is often used to describe it. The north and the central terrains include lowlands. Farther south a belt of the uplands and the foothills extends until the Sudetes and the Carpathian Mountains Chains. Poland's highest point is the north-western summit of Rysy in the High Tatras (2499 meters ASL). Overall, the difference in height is of about 2500 m, while for the majority of Polish territory relative height does not exceed 200 meters. The predominantly lowland character and flat landscape can be found only in central Poland. Lowlands in the northern part of Poland are cut by bands of the moraine hills, high even for 300 meters above sea level (Wieżyca 329 meters ASL, the Dylewska Mountain 312 meters ASL, the Szeska Mountain 309 meters ASL). Thus, each region exhibits a varied and picturesque scenery, which is even emphasized in their names, such as the Kashubian Switzerland or the ‘Hunchbacked’ Masuria (Mazury Garbate). Further in the south, the landscape gets even more varied, like in the area of the highlands (the Polish Jurassic Highland, the Holy Cross Mountains, the Roztocze range) or in the mountains (the Tatra Mountains, the Pieniny Mountains, the Bieszczady Mountains, the Table Mountains, the Giant Mountains, the Śnieżnik Massif, etc.). Specificity of the terrain in the southern Poland is defined by diversity of the origins of the mountain formations. The Holy Cross Mountains, one of the oldest mountain ranges in Europe, is heavily eroded in contrast with the young Tatra Mountains. Peaks are built mainly from limestone (the Pieniny Mountains), sandstone (the Table Mountains), the Carpathian flysch (the Beskids) and granite in the Eastern Tatras. The locally occurring rocks, particularly in the Polish Jurassic Highland, the Sudetes and the Carpathians, create good conditions for climbing tourism. Natural caves offer additional opportunities for practicing the activity; they are available in three regions: in the Tatra Mountains, the Sudetes and the Polish Jurassic Highland. However, none of the known Polish caves exceed 900 meters in depths (Figure 1).

Source. http://naszregion-nysa.blogspot.com/2016/01/konkurs-mapa-europy-i-polski-etap-v.html?view=mosaic

Figure 1. Map of Poland

The diversity of Polish terrain – dominated by plains – provides perfect conditions for many forms of active tourism. Both mountain and lowland hiking are possible throughout the country, and both have been popular in Poland for over 100 years. The activity is mainly available in the south part of the country, where different levels of difficulty and diverse landscapes (the Carpathians, the Sudetes) are offered. Prevailing plains create the ideal conditions for cycling tourism. A dense network of cycling trails was created, including the six pieces of the international EuroVelo routes or the Greenways trails. A huge project called the Eastern Trail Bicycle Green Velo was carried out in recent years in eastern Poland. There are also, in upland or mountain areas, conditions for more extreme uses of a bicycle, including mountain biking and downhill mountain biking. The most of the terrain in Poland are suitable for the horseback active tourism which developed significantly over the past two decades (Jankowski 2008). New horse riding trails were formed in the Polish Jurassic Highland, the Holy Cross Mountains, the Sudetes, the Beskids and the Bieszczady Mountains and, finally, in the central part of Poland – the Łódź Horse Trail, touted as the longest in Europe (2100 km). Landform in Poland is suitable for skiing tourism, both downhill and cross country skiing. Skiing is limited to winter months and depends on snow precipitation.

The climate in Poland is mostly temperate throughout the country. The climate is oceanic in the north and west and becomes gradually more continental towards the south and east. Poland is in the temperate latitudes, where maritime air from the North Atlantic and continental air from the east converge, causing frequent day-to-day and year-to-year variability in the weather patterns. The average annual temperature in Poland is about 8°C

and varies for the regions of Poland depending on height above sea level and distance from the Baltic Sea. In the summer, for instance, temperatures are lower in northern Poland because of the Baltic Sea. Temperatures are the lowest in the mountains and the highest in western and central Poland. Summers are warm, with average temperatures between 15-21°C depending on a region. Winters are cold, with average temperatures between 3°C in the northwest and -6 °C in the northeast. Average annual precipitation for the whole country is 600 millimeters, but isolated mountain locations receive as much as 1,300 millimeters per year. The total is slightly higher in the southern uplands than in the central plains. The highest precipitation is in the mountains and uplands and the lowest occurs in the central, lowland areas of Poland. On the average, precipitation in summer is twice that in winter. Spring arrives slowly in April, bringing mainly sunny days after a period of alternating winter and spring-like conditions. In the summer months of June, July and August, showers alternate with dry, sunny weather and the temperature averages about 18°C; the maximum summer temperature is 40°C. Early autumn is generally sunny and warm before a period of rainy, colder weather in November begins the transition into winter. Winter, which may last one to three months, is cold and cloudy and brings frequent snowstorms but relatively low total precipitation. The average temperature in January is about -4°C but it can fall as low as -35°C.

Clean air is very important for tourism activity. The quality of air in Poland is good or very good and continues to improve along with changes in the Polish industry. The best conditions are in the north-east Poland and this area is called "the green lungs of Poland".

Poland has a dense hydrographic network, including lakes, artificial lakes, ponds, swamps and rivers, almost all belonging to the Baltic Sea catchment area. The purity of the waters has definitely been improving in recent years but remains unsatisfactory. Although the three largest rivers in Poland (the Vistula, the Oder, the Warta) and the coastal waters of the Baltic Sea are locally polluted, one of the most famous regions, Masuria in northern Poland, is known for its 2,000 lakes of pure water. Masuria and the Masurian Lake District are known in Poland as "land of a thousand lakes". The terrain is rather hilly, with connected lakes, rivers and streams. Forests account for about 30% of the area. The northern part of Masuria is covered mostly by the broadleaved forest, while the southern part is dominated by pine and mixed forests. Conditions for diving in Poland are not the best because of the impurity and temperature of water, as well as the size and the depth of the water reservoirs. The lake with the greatest depth of more than 100 meters is Lake Hańcza in the east part of Masuria. Diving usually takes place in some lakes (e.g. Lake Hańcza, Lake Drawsko, Lake Powidzkie, Lake Miedwie, Lake Mamry), in the flooded mines and quarries, and selected places on the shores of the Baltic Sea (e.g. around the Hel Peninsula and Łeba). Windsurfing and kitesurfing are very popular forms of active sport tourism in Poland because of splendid conditions on the numerous lakes and the coastal waters of the Baltic Sea, especially on the Hel Peninsula. Conditions for canoeing and kayaking are excellent in Poland because of a large number of lakes, particularly in the aforementioned lake districts. The dense river network, including the large rivers (the Vistula, the Oder, the Warta, the Bug, the Noteć, the Narew) and a huge number of smaller tributaries is also very important for canoeing. Smaller rivers, combined with picturesque natural landscape, create the highest grade conditions for canoeing, rarely found in Europe. Small rivers are wild, unregulated, with the natural vegetation on the banks. The unique hydro-technical facilities, such as the Augustów Canal, the Elbląg Canal (the height difference reaching over 100 meters), the Gliwice Channel, the Bydgoszcz Canal and others, make the travel by canoe more attractive. Besides canoeing, local conditions are conducive to rafting. Some stretches of major rivers, some larger lakes, both natural and artificial, the coastal waters of the Baltic, including the Pomeranian Bay, Gulf of Gdansk, the Vistula Lagoon and the Szczecin Lagoon, create good conditions for yachting. The lakes

most popular amongst the sailors include: Lake Jeziorak, Lake Iławskie (Czarnecki, Lewandowska-Czarnecka, 2008), Lake Solina, Lake Otmuchowskie, Lake Nyskie, Lake Turawskie, the Great Masurian Lakes and the Reservoir Rybnicki, which never freezes. All these bays and lakes allow various water based activities like windsurfing, kitesurfing and waterskiing. The sailing season in Poland is quite short; it lasts only 5-6 months.

Conclusion: The analysis of the environmental determinants of active sport tourism in Poland, such as terrain, climate, a hydrographic network and the air quality, allowed to conclude that the conditions are conducive to different types of active sport tourism, especially hiking (both lowland and mountain), biking, the inland waterway sailing and canoeing.

3. SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF ACTIVE SPORT TOURISM

Each decision regarding holiday, weekend or one-day tour is associated with several motives of different intensity; it is the interaction between individual motivations that generates behaviours (Bowen, Clarke, 2009). Motivation is defined as a process of stimulating people to act, the inner drive or pressure to take action in order to accomplish some goals (Mullen, Johnson, 1990).

According to Winiarski (1991), active recreation behaviour is driven by seven motivational forces including: activity, catharsis, health, emotion, society, ambition, knowledge. Another frequently cited theory regarding leisure and travel motivation is Iso-Ahola's Social Psychological Model of Tourism Motivation (SPMTM) (Iso-Ahola, 1982). It is based on the concept of 'push and pull' factors, leading people to travel (Dann 1977, Crompton 1979). The 'push' factors are the internal forces (intrinsic motivation) which predispose to travel, while the 'pull' factors are the external forces which attract to chosen destinations. Iso-Ahola suggests that motivation is an internal force, which modifies the behaviour of an individual similarly to 'pull' factors. People participate in tourism to reach satisfaction through striving for something or through avoiding something. Four motivational categories are defined: seeking personal rewards; seeking interpersonal rewards; escaping interpersonal environments; escaping personal environments (Wolfe, Hsu, 2004).

In the present study a questionnaire was used. The sample selection was purposeful. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. The surveys were carried out in Poland in 2014-2015 among:

- 375 tourists on the mountain trails (hikers) in the summer who stayed in the five mountain hostels in the Beskids (Silesian and Żywiec),
- 177 participants of the summer windsurfing camps (windsurfers) in Jastarnia on the Hel Peninsula at the Polish seaside,
- 126 participants of the summer sailing camps (sailors) at the Masurian Lake District,
- 193 downhill skiers (skiers) in the winter weekends on the ski slopes in the Beskids (Silesian and Żywiec).

Statistical analysis included 871 correctly completed questionnaires. The examined sample was not representative, so conclusions can only be drawn regarding this particular study population.

The investigations were carried out in the form of a diagnostic survey. The research tool was a questionnaire consisting of 49 statements concerning the motives for participation in active sport tourism. The respondents evaluated each item of the questionnaire using the 5-point Likert scale, selecting the best comment representing their views among the following: "absolutely yes" (5 points in statistical calculations),"rather yes" (4 points), "I don't know" (3

points), “rather not” (2 points) and “absolutely not” (1 point).

Based on the comments, descriptive statistics like arithmetic means ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviations (*SD*) were calculated for each of the seven forces of motivation, according to the concept of Winiarski (1991). Each of the seven motivational forces were studied basing on the seven questionnaire statements.

The internal consistency (the reliability) of the questionnaire was positively assessed. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the reliability was 0.76. A repeated measures ANOVA and post-hoc tests were used to determine significance of the differences between the means of the seven motivational forces for the participation in active sport tourism. The assumed significance level was $\alpha < 0.05$.

The study is a trial to determine the importance of motivational forces underlying the decisions to participate in active sport tourism. The analysis revealed some differentiation with respect to motivational dispositions affecting the decision to participate in tourism. 'Activity' seems to be the main force behind the decision connected with tourism because of the highest mean in almost all groups of the respondents, except sailors (mean values: total 3.49, skiers 3.72, hikers 3.65, windsurfers 3.63). Sailors recognized ‘society’ (the highest mean 3.61) and ‘catharsis’ (the second in order mean value 3.57) as the most important motivational forces. The post-hoc tests revealed that these differences are statistically non-significant ($p > 0.05$). The mean values for ‘ambition’ were the only significantly different in the all groups of respondents ($p < 0.05$). ‘Ambition’ proved the least important with the lowest mean (total 3.00, skiers 2.95, hikers 2.99, sailors 3.01, windsurfers 3.12) among all other motivational forces, irrespective of the type of leisure activity (Table 1).

Table 1. Motivational forces – mean, standard deviation and *p*-value

Motivational force	Total (n=871)		Hikers (n=375)		Windsurfers (n=177)		Sailors (n=126)		Skiers (n=193)	
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
Activity	3.64	0.47	3.65	0.55	3.63	0.51	3.49	0.48	3.72	0.55
Catharsis	3.33	0.80	3.32	0.53	3.30	0.83	3.57	0.65	3.36	0.48
Health	3.50	0.54	3.50	0.96	3.56	0.90	3.46	0.64	3.48	0.44
Society	3.52	0.41	3.48	1.20	3.50	0.81	3.61	0.72	3.49	0.51
Emotions	3.52	0.64	3.50	0.87	3.49	0.86	3.51	0.55	3.55	0.40
Ambition	3.00*	0.39	2.99*	0.79	3.12*	0.63	3.01*	0.54	2.95*	0.49
Knowledge	3.33	0.50	3.30	0.85	3.27	0.77	3.49	0.58	3.31	0.56
Index variability	F=8.473 p<0.011*		F=12.905 p<0.001*		F=6.490 p<0.001*		F=9.130 p<0.001*		F=14.021 p=0.032*	

* statistically significant

Knowledge on motivation which influence decisions concerning holiday trips might enhance the effectiveness of marketing campaigns promoting both tourist products and tourist values of places of destinations. If we would like to shape, intensify and satisfy the needs, they should be determined and investigated first. Motivation, which stimulates and gives direction to human actions results from unsatisfied needs which are strong motivators. Products related with active sport tourism, might constitute an offer both for the inhabitants of a particular region (especially its urban areas) interested in one-day or weekend trips and for those from out of the region.

Health prophylactics is strong motivation to practise sport as a form of leisure activity. Dynamic development of active sport tourism should be promoted and supported, as it is a health-related form of movement recreation. Motivational force 'health' was also one of the

most important for our questionnaire respondents.

4. CONCLUSION

The need to be physically active ('activity') was the predominant motive to participate in active sport tourism while the 'ambition' was the least important for the respondents from all motivational dispositions, but was the only one that reached the assumed level of significance.

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