

Tourism space of the students of Geography of Tourism and Tourism and Recreation at Polish universities

The **main goal** of presented thesis is to identify tourism space of the students of Geography of Tourism and Tourism and Recreation at Polish universities and to determine the relation between this space and the demographic characteristics of respondents, their place of study (city, university), program of studies, as well as their place of origin and permanent residence. In order to achieve that objective **three hypotheses** were formulated:

1. Tourism space of surveyed students is diverse and highly dependent on the university, at which they study. This is influenced by geographic location of university and by programme of studies conducted there.
2. Places and regions known from obligatory field trips included in study programmes are more often visited by students during their tourist trips and better rated than other regions.
3. The perception of the city, in which respondents study depends on their place of origin and permanent residence. People who study in their hometown have lesser knowledge of its tourism space than incomers.

The **subject** of this research were students of the last year of second degree studies (both full-time and part-time) of Geography of Tourism or Tourism and Recreation, conducted in 16 selected Polish universities: 9 classical universities, 3 universities of physical education (AWFs), 3 pedagogical universities and 1 university of economics. Those universities were located in 11 cities – Bydgoszcz, Kraków, Kielce, Lublin, Łódź, Poznań, Słupsk, Szczecin, Warszawa, Wrocław. Above-mentioned universities were deliberately chosen in order to determine whether there is a differentiation between various types of schools in terms of students' tourism space and profiles of education.

The main **research methods** were based on questionnaires and analysis of source materials (e.g. programmes of studies offered in surveyed universities). As a result it was found that, as for the models of tourism, among surveyed students of Geography of Tourism and Tourism and Recreation from various types of universities there were significant differences. Furthermore, study programmes were different, which resulted from, *inter alia*, the location of the studies in the organizational structure of universities, as well as from historical factors. Hence it can be stated that – despite conducting similar courses of study – various types of universities offer diverse approach to the field of tourism.

The respondents were generally actively involved in tourism (both domestic and foreign). They organized their trips on their own, but in terms of reception places and form of tourism activities, their journeys did not go beyond the standard offers of travel agencies. The most active in terms of tourism were students from classical universities and university of economics, to a lesser extent – those from universities of physical education; the least active were respondents from pedagogical universities.

Regarding the perception of tourism space of Poland, in students' opinion the most attractive regions were: Baltic coast (especially Gdańsk Bay), lake districts (especially Masurian Lake District) and in southern parts of the country: the Sudetes, the Cracow-Silesian Upland, the Tatras, Pieniny and Bieszczady Mountains.

It was also found that certain regions of Poland can be defined as non-touristic in terms of students' trips and their perception of tourism space, as they represent *terra incognita* of respondents' tourism space. This problem affected in particular three provinces: Łódź, Masovian and Opole voivodeships.

The results of empirical studies allowed to confirm hypotheses 1st and 2nd, regarding the differentiation of respondents' tourism space and the factors of such differentiation. Hence it can be stated that the universities that conduct studies in the field of geography of tourism/tourism and recreation are the creators of their students' tourism space, both direct (places of obligatory field trips) and non-direct – as they influence students' perception of tourism space as well as their choices of tourist destinations. The third hypothesis can be confirmed only partially. Studies have shown that the perception of urban tourism space indeed depends on the place of origin. However, the relationship is opposite than assumed – people who study in their hometown have a better knowledge of its tourism space and have a better opinion about it than incomers.

The conducted research allowed to achieve the main goal of the thesis, which was to identify tourism space of students and to determine the relation between this space and the demographic characteristics of respondents, their place of study (city, university), program of studies, as well as their place of origin and permanent residence.

In author's opinion the differences between certain types of universities (regarding study programmes as well as students' tourism space) should be considered as positive situation and may be used by the universities as their trump card e.g. in the context of establishing a cooperation with tourist industry or during the recruitment process.