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ECOTOURISM IN POLAND

SUMMARY

Development of the tourist industry often has negative effects on wildlife and local communities, and so for these values which are most valuable in attracting tourists to a particular place. Low tourist culture of travelling persons can result in a situation in which tourism may threaten the foundations of its existence. The responsible tourism and ecotourism seems to be an answer to this problem by focusing on fostering the sense of responsibility of a traveler towards the visited place. The purpose of this article is to present the concept of ecotourism in theory, and present the results of authors' survey on the awareness of ecotourism in Poland.

The methodology of the research includes review of the relevant literature allowing to present the relationship between sustainable tourism and ecotourism, and to discuss the principles of ecotourism. The awareness of Polish citizens in that sphere was analyzed through the questionnaire survey conducted in 2016. The sampling method used in the survey was a purposeful selection.

It becomes a necessity to strive for responsible and sustainable development of the tourism industry and the tourists – to ensure such a development so that we can satisfy a need to travel without picking up future generation such possibility. To achieve this, some actions are needed to preserve natural resources and support local communities – both their economy and culture. Creation of another protected areas and their networks are of far more excitement, conflicts and criticism than innovation and satisfaction resulting from owning nature peculiarities of European importance. Surveys of tourists – although they were not extensive – brought together a fresh look at how to stimulate the sustainable development of tourism by proper eco-politics.

Keywords: sustainability (Q560), tourism (O 18).

Introduction

Tourism is one of that branches of the national economies which is growing very rapidly. For some regions, it is one of the most important sector of economic activity, which provides measures to revive the local economy. Tourism economy, linked with other sectors of local economy can serve as activating factor the entire region.

Tourism contributes to development of new types of services, including commercial, transport, leisure and entertainment ones. It may also contribute to the launch of industrial production which serves both tourists and the local population. Tourism development reflects in growth of investment activity, creation of new jobs and increase incomes of local budgets and the budgets of private enterprises operating in the sector of tourism services.

However, besides the positive effects of tourism activities, some negative elements occur, including among others the increased environmental pollution, destruction of unique natural and cultural values or increased population density in the regions attractive for tourists.

The efforts to eliminate the negative effects of tourism development on a massive scale – adopted in the second half of the twentieth century – resulted in the foundation of sustainable development concept. One of the first definition of that concept, which is known as one of the most important challenges of the modern, global world, appeared in 1983. The essence of that concept, affecting environmental, economic and social aspects, involves meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations.

1. Tourism in the concept of sustainable development

The legitimacy of sustainable development concept assumptions had been settled during the second Earth Summit debate held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro,. The most important document adopted during the summit was called Agenda 21. This document has settled a program of actions to be taken in the twenty-first century in the fields of environment and development. It pays a particular attention to the need of protecting the natural resources and their rational management to ensure sustainable development. Agenda 21 is divided into 40 chapters that have been grouped into 4 sections, discussing the following elements of the modern economy:

- Section I: Social and Economic Dimensions;
- Section II: Conservation and Management of Resources for Development;
- Section III: Strengthening the Role of Major Groups in realization of Agenda 21 recommendations;
- Section IV: Means of Implementation of particular recommendations.

The renewal of the provisions settled during the Summit in 1992, along with further development of its achievements, was made in Johannesburg 10 years later. The second document, which is intimately linked to sustainable development, was the Millennium Declaration, adopted in 2000 by the leaders of 189 countries during the UN summit. The so called Eight Millennium Development Goals constitute a commitment to achieve the following results by 2015 [GUS, 2011]:

- To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
- To achieve universal primary education.
- To promote gender equality and empower women.
- To reduce child mortality.
- To improve maternal health.
- To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
- To ensure environmental sustainability.
- To develop a global partnership for development.

The need for action to restore the ecological balance and to prevent climate crisis is highlighted in one of the latest OECD strategy – Strategy for Green Growth. “Green growth” in this case is understood as action towards achieving economic growth while preventing environmental degradation, preserving biodiversity and exploitation of natural resources in a way that does not violate ecological balance [<http://www.access.zgwrp.org.pl/materialy/dokumenty...>].

Sustainability is also discussed in the European Union documents. According to the Treaty on European Union, the EU institutions work for the sustainable development of Europe which is based on the balanced economic growth, price stability and on a market economy of high competitiveness that aims at full employment and social progress, and on a high level of environment protection and quality [Dz. U. 2004.90.864/30].

The specific EU action to achieve a fully sustainable development are defined in a long-term EU Sustainable Development Strategy of 2001.

The main goal of the EU document is to “identify and develop actions to enable the EU to achieve a steady increase of the quality of life for current and future generations by creating a community based on the principles of sustainable development, i.e. the community efficiently managing and using the resources, using the potential of the economy in terms of ecological and social innovation, and ensuring prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion”[GUS, 2011].

The main objectives of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy included the following four components: environmental protection, social equity and cohesion, economic prosperity and the implementation of EU commitments on the international scale [Śleszyński, 2010].

In addition to this document, a sustainable development was one of the leading areas of the Lisbon Strategy, and its components can be found in the document entitled The Strategy “Europe 2020”. The main objectives of this document focus on smart growth, and sustainable development. In practice, this means supporting innovation and development of knowledge, efficient use of resources,

competitiveness and environmental protection and promotion of employment, social and territorial cohesion.

The close relationship between tourism and the concept of sustainable development, seen in the above discussion, underlines the need to take such actions which are in line with this concept, and at the same time lead to the development of the tourism industry.

2. Ecotourism – green tourism with sustainable development principles

Mass tourism, despite the generated profits for the tourism industry, often have a negative impact on the environment and the local community. Many tour operators have noted that this unregulated mass tourism development may soon lead to the destruction of unique natural and cultural values, on which tourism itself could ever arise.

The response to the rapid growth of mass tourism consists in the concept of ecotourism, with origins back to the 70s of the twentieth century. The idea of ecotourism is based on the following three pillars:

- sustainable use of the environment,
- maintenance and development of local cultural traditions,
- a positive impact on local communities.

Ecotourism is also treated as a tourism compatible with sustainable development, what is evident in the above definition: For purposes of determining the national or local rules or criteria, you can also take the following definitions of ecotourism:

- from the point of view of a tourist (the definition adopted by the International Ecotourism Society) – ecotourism is a responsible travel to natural areas that preserves and protects the environment and improves the living conditions of local residents;
- from the point of view of entrepreneurs offering tourist services (definition proposed by the Norwegian Certification System) – ecotourism consists in enriching experience of nature and culture organized by responsible tourism entrepreneurs who care about their guests, the environment and the local community of which they are part.

Practically from the very beginning, ecotourism quickly become the industry ruled by its own right. Ecotourism principles and new ideas have being promoted by newly established institutions and organizations. In the early 90s, the International Ecotourism Society was established in the USA, playing an important role in the development of this branch of tourism. The United Nations declared a 2002 year became the “International Year of Ecotourism,” which was another step towards the recognition of eco-tourism as one of the key areas of business tourism in the world.

Sustainable development, and in its context – the green tourism has led to the emergence of many question: what are the costs of such tourism, what

expenditures should be incurred in order to achieve concrete results in the development of eco-tourism – and finally does such expenditures result in increasing number of guests visiting particular site? The answer to these questions seems to be difficult, somehow to the fact that it can never be guaranteed that a certain number of tourists arrive. Their behavior can be affected by many others factors which are not directly related to tourism.

Many recent research shows, however, that tourism related to nature and culture is the fastest growing branch of tourism industry. There are many reasons for this. One of them is the fact that more and more tourists look for places with unusual natural beauty, where they can either rest in a friendly atmosphere or explore the local history and culture.

In short, a return to the sources of tourism, to the sustainable site of travel, can attract more tourists. Eco-tourists are also a specific, very demanding group. Its members combine a desire to rest with desire to know the places they visit [Weeden, 2013].

It is assumed that eco-tourists are rich and educated. Planning their travels, they expect the natural environment and cultural attractions combined with a clean and friendly environment. They want to learn as much as possible about the places they visit. This requires a good and educated guides and detailed information about all attractions and visited places. Although they care about nature and make conscious choices related to environmentally friendly actions, it does not always mean that they want to sleep in a tent. They expect a good standard of accommodation services either in a small guest house, on a farm, and in the bungalow.

3. Poland – a country with ecotourism potential

In 1997, the concept of sustainable development has been recognized in Poland as a constitutional principle. The Article 5 of the Basic Law states that “The Republic of Poland shall safeguard the independence and integrity of its territory and ensure the freedoms and rights of man and citizen and the security of citizens, safeguard the national heritage and ensure protection of the environment, guided by the principle of sustainable development” [Konstytucja RP, 1997].

The idea of sustainability is also visible in many Polish laws, including the Environment Protection Law of April 27th, 2001, the Law on Spatial Planning and Development of March 23rd, 2003 and the Act on principles of development policy of December 6th, 2006. Sustainability policy is implemented on the basis of the national development strategy, through the operational programs, which specify the tools for achieving the set objectives.

Poland has undoubtedly plenty of resources to develop ecotourism or nature tourism’s products. However, we observe a lack of a coherent presentation of the advantages flowing from ecotourism and a lack of promotion of the most

interesting places, which could become a showcase presenting how a sustainable, green tourism could be adapted [Gaworecki, 1998].

In Poland, the ecotourism precursor was the European Centre for Ecological Agriculture and Agro-touristic- Poland (ECEAT). ECEAT is a nongovernmental organization working since 1993 to protect the environment and preserve the traditions and culture of the Polish countryside. Its task is to promotion of organic farming and environmental education on farms.

On the Polish market, a several travel agencies are already specialized in ecotourism. Their offers are dedicated primarily to foreign tourist, but Polish citizens are also a potential target group. C. Likhtarovich from the Partnership Fund, the Association "Polish Greenways", notes with as much as 19% of Polish tourists belong to the group of so-called discoverers – people who are looking for something more than the "all inclusive" holidays [<http://biokurier.pl/aktualnosci/3146-czy-ekoturystyka-ma-szansę-relacja-z-iii-konferencji...>]. R. Kurczewski, researcher and enthusiast of nature tourism, stressed, however, that eco-tourism should be developed in a way that do not waste a potential of Polish nature. He believes that sometimes it's better to look around and get to know the nearest beauty of nature instead of organizing special trips to observe endangered or rare wildlife species. The nature, which is around us is just as undiscovered and unknown as the remote one. It seems that the further development of eco-tourism in Poland requires cooperation, appropriate pricing policy (towards quality rather than cheapness ...) and a necessity to combine the natural, cultural, culinary elements in the eko-t, how best to capture the climate of the region.

4. Ecotourism awareness in Poland – results of survey

The concept of ecotourism involves the need to determine the factors of greatest impact on this kind of tourism, the factors related to the sustainable use of the environment, to maintenance and development of local culture and with positive impact on the local environment. In the survey, the authors of the paper focused their attention on the factors influencing behavior of Polish tourists, analyzing their awareness in this area and the responsible actions taken by them in the environmental sphere.

The main objective of the survey was to determine the level of ecotourism awareness and behavior of Polish tourists in that field. The survey results have been helpful in establishing the level of ecotourism awareness and in determining those activities that have most significant impact on the eco-tourism in Poland.

The sampling method used in the survey was a purposeful selection. The survey was conducted among students of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Gdansk, studying Economics and International Economic Relations at the graduate and undergraduate levels. To achieve the objective of the study, a quantitative method with a standardized questionnaire was used. 360 correctly

completed questionnaires were received. The survey was conducted in 2016, from January 19th till January 21st.

Characteristics of respondents by gender indicates dominant participation of women in the survey (64.19%). In contrast, men constituted a slightly smaller group (35.81%). 73.28% of the respondents live in the Pomeranian province, 13.77% in Warmia and Mazury, 2.75% in Mazowieckie, 5.79% in Kujawsko-Pomorskie, 0.83% in West Pomerania, 0.55% in Lower Silesia, Wielkopolskie and Lubuskie, 0.28% in Lubelskie and Opolskie.

The survey results indicate a low awareness of Polish tourists about the concept of ecotourism (62.26% of respondents had never heard about the ecotourism term) which may occur due to the fact that this concept is still relatively young and unknown in Poland. Yet, another reason for such a low awareness of the responsible tourism concept may be the young age of the respondents (20–25).

In future, the authors plan to analyze ecotourism awareness of a more age-diverse group of respondents, which would aim to answer the question whether the increasing age of the respondents reflects in greater awareness of ecotourism.

When asked what the ecotourism term means for them, 77.41% of respondents pointed the minimization of the impact on the local environment, community and economy. It was the largest percentage of responses. The other ecotourism features were also: positive impact on preservation of cultural and natural heritage and the preservation of diversity in both areas (65.29%), providing tourists a better experience through a deeper understanding of local culture, society and the environment and through more valuable contact with the local community (42.70%), being culturally sensitive (e.g. development of respect between tourists and hosts, supporting local patriotism and awareness of their own values – 20.66%), benefits for the local community – not only profits, but also better working conditions, access to knowledge and technologies (17.08%), involving representatives of the local communities in decisions making process that affect their lives and life opportunities (14.33%).

Respondents who hear about the concept of ecotourism and know what it is (37.74%) ticked its main characteristics as (table 1): joining representatives of local communities in decisions that affect their lives and life opportunities (42.31%) and providing tourists a better experience through a deeper understanding of local culture, society and the environment, as well as more valuable contact with the local community (42.58%). According to this group of respondents, the least important features of ecotourism are: minimizing their impact on the local environment, community and economy (36.30%), and benefits for the local community – not only profits, but also better working conditions, access to knowledge and technologies (38.71%).

In contrast, a group of respondents who had never met with the ecotourism concept, concluded that its most important feature should be minimization of impact on the local environment, community and economy (63.70%), and bringing benefits to the local community – not only profits, but also better working conditions, access to knowledge and technology (61.29%).

The least important features are: providing a better experience for tourists through a deeper understanding of local culture, society and the environment, as well as through more valuable contact with the local community (57.42%) and the inclusion of representatives of local communities in decisions making process that affect their lives (57.69%).

Tables 1. Awareness of the ecotourism concept and its characteristics

Have you heard about the concept of ecotourism?	What do you understand by the concept of ecotourism? [%]						
	minimizing the impact on the local environment, community and economy	bringing benefits for the local community – not only profits, but also better working conditions, access to knowledge and technology	inclusion of representatives of local communities in decisions making process that affect their lives	positive influence on the preservation of cultural and natural heritage and the preservation of diversity in both areas	providing tourists a better experience through a deeper understanding of local culture, society and the environment, as well as through more valuable contact with the local community	being culturally sensitive, ie. develop respect between tourists and hosts, promote local patriotism and awareness of their own values	other
YES	36,30	38,71	42,31	39,24	42,58	40,00	52,63
NO	63,70	61,29	57,69	60,76	57,42	60,00	47,37

Source: Calculations on the basis of the survey.

Respondents were also asked whether they have heard about Natura 2000 program. More than half of them (56.20%) answered that yes, while 43.80% did not. Respondents associate this program with areas where certain habitat's types and species of plants and animals are protected (50.41%), with areas where the EU campaign on ecology is being run (35.54%), with certification granted to municipalities which conducted environmental policies (31.40%), with a specially designated tourist areas (30.85%).

At the same time, 60.06% of respondents believe that the creation of a protected area has a positive impact on the development of tourism in the region such an area is formed. This influence, according to the respondents, strengthens the natural resources of the region and increase the tourist attractiveness of the area. Only 4.13% respondents believe that the establishment of a protected area will have a negative impact on regional development and 11.29% claim that it will have no significance for the development of tourism in the region. On the other hand, 24.52% of the respondents had no opinion in that matter. Only 18.46% of respondents believe that needs of nature preservation are taking into account

while planning development of regions in Poland. 66.67% of respondents think that such situation exists only in certain regions, 6.89% are sure there regional development do not take them into account, while 7.99% had no opinion in that matter.

Protection of the environment is one of the most important tasks facing the man in the twenty-first century. Emissions of harmful chemicals into the atmosphere, soil and water, had severely limited the Earth's natural resources. The progressive degradation of the environment has forced increasing interest in environmental protection matters. According to the respondents of the survey, the biggest threat to the natural environment in tourist areas (table 2) is water pollution (69.15%), followed by heavy traffic (57.30%) and the development of industry (52.89%). A similar % of respondents pointed three aspects of natural environment exploitation: they marked the overexploitation of forests (48.76%), overexploitation of attractive natural areas through massive tourist traffic (40.50%), industry/road investments on areas with attractive landscapes. The smallest threat, according to respondents, is intensive agriculture (11.29%).

Tables 2. Factors that pose the greatest threat to the natural environment in tourist areas [%]

No.	Factor	%
1.	Water pollution	69,15
2.	Inadequate environmental policy	31,13
3.	overexploitation of attractive natural areas through massive tourist traffic	47,11
4.	Industrial development	52,89
5.	Intensive car traffic	57,30
6.	industry/road investments on areas with attractive landscapes	40,50
7.	Natural disasters (droughts, floods, hurricanes, fires)	25,34
8.	overexploitation of forests	48,76
9.	The effects of global warming / changing climate	16,80
10.	intensive agriculture	11,29
11.	Others	6,06
12.	I don't know	1,38

Source: Calculations on the basis of the survey.

It can be concluded that along with growing touristic experience, the awareness of Polish tourists in the area of ecotourism undergoes evolution. Since this experience is acquired while organizing tourist trips, therefore a question was asked about the factors which the respondents take into account when organizing trips for tourism purposes (table 3).

Tables 3. Awareness of the ecotourism concept and forms of nature protection taken into account when choosing a place of rest [%]

Have you heard about the concept of ecotourism?	Forms of nature protection taken into account when choosing a place of rest [%]						
	National parks	Wildlife areas	Protected landscapes	Monuments of nature	Documentation sites	Ecological lands	Nature and landscape complexes
Yes	48,35	56,92	58,70	48,72	40,00	56,25	50,82
No	51,65	43,08	41,30	51,28	60,00	43,75	49,18

Source: Calculations on the basis of the survey.

As shown in Table 3, respondents who heard about the ecotourism concept, organize their trips taking into account the areas of protected landscape (58.70%), wildlife areas (56.92%), ecological areas (56.25%), nature and landscape complexes (50.82%). Respondents who did not hear about the concept of ecotourism frequently include documentation sites (60%), national parks (51.65%) and natural monuments (51.28%) when choosing a place of rest.

On a question of whether taking into account the Natura 2000 program when choosing a place of rest, up to 90.36% of respondents said no, while only 9.64% did it. For 39.89% of respondents more important are the objects of nature protection existing for a long time, for 5.32% a new objects, and for 54.79% of the respondents it is irrelevant.

When asked about the environmental actions taken by the owners of accommodation facilities, more than half of the respondents (58.40%) – observed waste segregation, 45.73% – promotion of regional cuisine, 36.64% – use of energy-saving light bulbs, 35.54% – lighting systems with motion sensor, 24.52% – saving water, 15.43% – offering information on recreational programs promoting nature or providing such programs, 14.33% – serving organic products, 19.83% – did not observed such actions.

Organization of tourists' trips is affected by age and income level of the respondents. As mentioned previously, the largest group of respondents was people of 20-25 age old. In this age group, during that las holiday the highest percentage of responses (48.48%) chose hotel accommodations, 47.38% chose apartment of their relatives or friends. This two most popular places of accommodation was followed by resorts (34.44%), tent (21.76%) and agro-touristic (15.70%). The relationship between the form of nature protection taken into consideration when choosing a place of rest and accommodation place is shown in table 4.

Tables 4. A place of accommodation and forms of nature protection taken into account when choosing a place of rest [%]

Accommodation	Forms of nature protection taken into account when choosing a place of rest [%]						
	National parks	Wildlife areas	Protected landscapes	Monuments of nature	Documentation sites	Ecological lands	Nature and landscape complexes
Tent	31,65	22,78	21,52	16,46	0,00	6,33	20,25
Agro-tourism	43,86	33,33	21,05	17,54	3,51	7,02	28,07
Resorts	26,40	18,40	16,80	14,40	0,80	7,20	20,00
Hotel	22,16	15,91	11,36	6,82	1,70	4,55	15,34
House of relatives or friends	27,91	19,77	11,63	12,21	1,74	3,49	16,86
I stay at home	20,00	16,67	6,67	10,00	0,00	0,00	20,00

Source: Calculations on the basis of the survey

Table 4 shows that when choosing a rest destination, respondents who spend their holidays in a tent or chose agro-tourism accommodation have taken into account national parks (31.65%, 43.86%), wildlife areas (22.78%, 33.33%), protected landscapes (21.52%, 21.05%). Therefore, it can be concluded that various forms of active small tourism, including nature tourism, are gaining more and more interest. Such forms are more environmentally friendly and local communities realize that a clean environment and attractive natural and landscape values become a necessary condition for attracting tourist traffic.

The respondents have been also asked to assess the importance of another group of factors relevant when organizing holidays (table 5).

Tables 5. Impact of factors relevant when organizing holidays [%]

Factors/ Impact importance	Very important	Important	Secondary meaning	Little importance	Small mean- ing	Irrelevant	I have no opinion
Getting to know local traditions and culture	26,72	41,32	20,39	5,79	4,13	0,55	1,10
The presence of eco-trails or nature trails in the rest area	4,96	17,91	33,61	22,04	10,74	7,44	3,31
Active recreation	26,45	40,50	23,97	4,96	2,20	0,83	1,10
Possibility to eat traditional dishes	23,69	36,91	25,07	10,47	1,93	1,38	0,55

cd tab. 5

Services of a guide who knows the nature	2,48	6,06	27,00	24,79	17,63	18,18	3,86
Eating organic food	4,41	13,22	23,42	20,94	12,67	23,69	1,65
The apartment with eco-certificate	1,65	3,31	17,91	19,01	14,60	37,19	6,34

Source: Calculations on the basis of the survey.

Table 5 shows that the respondents believe that the desire to explore local tradition and culture has a very large impact on the organization of leisure (26.72%). Almost the same group of respondents treat with major importance active recreation (26.45%) and possibility to eat traditional dishes (23.69%). Among the factors of little importance, the respondents pointed the hiring a guide who knows the nature (24.79%), followed by such factors as eating organic food (20.94%) and presence of eco-trails, nature trails in the place of leave (22.04%). The largest group (37.19%) considered that living in a facility with eco-certificates has no impact on the organization of rest.

Ecotourism concept aims at increasing positive and reduce the negative impacts of tourism on the area and the local community. In order to know the opinion of the respondents as to the validity of the factors that affect the protection of natural values in tourist regions in Poland (table 6), respondents were asked to rank each criterion according to the assessment of their importance for the respondents. Respondents admitted points on a scale of 1 (most important) to 8 (least important), whereby two or more criteria cannot be given the same number of points.

Tables 6. Factors that affect the protection of natural values in the tourist regions in Poland

	Rank								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
The activities of local authorities / government	Number	109	77	78	50	34	7	7	1
	%	30,03	21,21	21,49	13,77	9,37	1,93	1,93	0,28
Behavior of the inhabitants of the region	Number	64	83	84	49	38	24	21	0
	%	17,63	22,87	23,14	13,50	10,47	6,61	5,79	0,0
Behavior of tourist visiting the region	Number	82	91	41	51	39	35	22	2
	%	22,59	25,07	11,29	14,05	10,74	9,64	6,06	0,55

cd tab. 6

Policy of Polish government	Number	31	38	42	63	48	86	54	1
	%	8,54	10,47	11,57	17,36	13,22	23,69	14,88	0,28
The activities of non-governmental environmental organizations	Number	20	23	44	62	105	64	42	3
	%	5,51	6,34	12,12	17,08	28,93	17,63	11,57	0,83
Activities of the local tourism industry	Number	20	24	45	59	67	103	44	1
	%	5,51	6,61	12,40	16,25	18,46	28,37	12,12	0,28
Policy of EU institutions	Number	31	26	29	27	32	42	168	8
	%	8,54	7,16	7,99	7,44	8,82	11,57	46,28	2,20

Source: Calculations on the basis of the survey.

In that ranking the first position was given to activities of local authorities / local government (30.3%), followed by behavior of tourists visiting the region (25.07%) and behavior of the inhabitants of the region (23.14%). The highest importance of these factors may result from the fact that both hosts areas, residents and tourists declare their concern for the environment, but the declarations are not always covered by their attitudes and actions. The least important to respondents was a policy of the European Union (7th place – 46.28%).

Conclusions

Ecotourism is still a new trend in Poland. Education on the responsible tourism is particularly important, especially when having in mind that tourists are often attracted by “otherness” of the region which they choose. The results of the survey and their in-depth analysis provide many new details on the environmental awareness of adult Poles vacationing in the regions of valuable nature, and also enable the diagnosis of adult Poles relation to the latest problems of nature conservation in Poland. The necessity of such research arose from the need to balance the relation between tourism development and the functioning of the European Ecological Network” Nature 2000”.

The development of sustainable tourism requires to take a variety of activities both at the state and regional levels. One of them is the support of green tourism’s goals with overall, coherent strategy for the entire region. It should include all the components of ecotourism products, which include:

- pro-ecological firms, ie. those that offer high quality services or goods with a low environmental impact;
- a wide range of activities organized for visitors which promote and respect nature and culture;

- trained employees who understand the importance of local natural and cultural values, and are able to communicate it to the visitors
- officials and decision makers with relevant knowledge about the environment who can make the right environmental decisions and present them to tourists and local partners;
- marketing materials and information that meet the needs of the visitor – the client (information about the nature) as well as the needs of municipalities and local entrepreneurs (information raising knowledge of local conditions);
- sustainable / ecological profile of the region embedded in local realities.

Only after fulfilling this condition, it will be possible to frame the development of eco-tourism, which will bring the expected results, both financial (on national and regional levels) area code), and social (for organizers and eco-tourists).

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EKOTURYSTYKA W POLSCE

STRESZCZENIE

Pomimo generowanych zysków dla przemysłu turystycznego masowa turystyka często miała negatywny wpływ na środowisko i na społeczność lokalną. Wielu organizatorów turystyki zauważyło, że nieuregulowany rozwój turystyki masowej może wkrótce doprowadzić do zniszczenia wyjątkowych walorów przyrodniczych i kulturowych, dzięki którym turystyka się mogła w ogóle pojawić. Odpowiedzią na gwałtowny rozwój turystyki masowej stała się ekoturystyka.

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie koncepcji ekoturystyki oraz wyników badań autorów na temat świadomości ekoturystyki w Polsce. Z pojęciem ekoturystyki wiąże się konieczność wyodrębnienia czynników, które w największym stopniu na nią wpływają,

a związane są ze zrównoważonym korzystaniem ze środowiska naturalnego, utrzymaniem i rozwojem lokalnych tendencji kulturowych oraz pozytywnym wpływem na środowisko lokalne. Autorzy artykułu, prowadząc badania ankietowe, skupili swoją uwagę na czynnikach wpływających na zachowanie polskich turystów poprzez odpowiedzialne działania podejmowane przez nich w sferze środowiska naturalnego oraz świadomości w tym zakresie.

Słowa kluczowe: zrównoważony rozwój, turystyka.