

MANAGEMENT OF SENIOR CITIZENS LEISURE TIME AS THE CHALLENGE OF MODERN CITIES ILLUSTRATED BY THE EXAMPLE OF SZCZECIN

AGNIESZKA SAWIŃSKA

University of Szczecin, Faculty of Management and Economics of Services, POLAND
e-mail: agnieszka.sawinska@wzieu.pl

RECEIVED	20 April 2018
ACCEPTED	12 July 2018
JEL CLASSIFICATION	H41, I12, J11, L83
KEYWORDS	recreation, senior, leisure time, city
ABSTRACT	Improving the quality of life of residents is one of the priority objectives of the policy pursued in cities. An important role in this area is played by the recreational function of cities, especially by the creation of suitable conditions for recreation by residents. The article assumes that in the face of demographic and the lifestyle changes taking place in the society, the undertakings of cities aimed at leisure time management of residents should, in particular, focus on the needs of the elderly. The theoretical part of the article presents the reasons for treating seniors as important participants of recreation. The practical part is based on the results of surveys conducted among seniors - city dwellers and on the analysis of activities undertaken by the city of Szczecin in the field of activation of seniors' recreation. The considerations taken up in the article focus on issues concerning recreation in public space.

Introduction

Cities simultaneously perform multiple functions such as economic, social, administrative, housing and cultural, which determine the development of land planning in a city. Other factors, relevant in the light of city's development, are recreational functions that are combined with the tourist function, as cities constitute an important area of tourist and recreational activities for both residents and tourists. A challenge faced by today's cities comes

down to meeting the changing needs of an increasingly growing group of residents, i.e. the elderly. Senior citizens are more and more often becoming the recipients of a recreational product, and therefore should no longer be stereotypically perceived as people who are not very active and uninterested in active forms of leisure activities. Moreover, an important task faced by cities is the improvement of the residents' life quality, which is undoubtedly influenced by forms of leisure activities.

The thesis adopted in the article stipulates that cities constitute an important area of recreational activities for the elderly.

The article consists of two parts. The first part presents theoretical issues regarding recreational functions of cities in the light of changes in demography and the lifestyle of the society. The second part presents selected research results concerning recreational activity of senior citizens in cities, indicating the main forms of recreation chosen by them and the motives for undertaking such activities. Examples of the activities adopted by the city of Szczecin, which support recreational activity of senior citizens, were also presented.

A city as a recreational activity area for the seniors

When identifying urban areas as important places of recreational activities for residents and tourists, as well as indicating the main premises for considering the elderly important recipients of recreation facility development of the city, in the first place attention should be given to demographic processes and changes in the lifestyle of contemporary senior citizens.

Demographic projections for Europe indicate a more advanced aging process of society than for other continents. People aged over 65 constituted 17.6% of Europe's population in 2016, and in 2050 their number is to increase by 10 percentage points, i.e., to 27.6%. On the other hand, in 2016, people over 65 constituted 16% of the population of Poland, and by 2030 this number is to increase to 23%, whereas by 2050 it is to reach about 33% (Gierańczyk, 2016). The pace of the aging process will differ in terms of both sex and place of residence. By 2020, the median will increase by 2.8 years (2.9 for men and 2.7 for women). At the end of the forecast period, every other man who lives in the city will be over 51 years old, while every other woman will be over 56 years old (median value of 56.6). The age of people living in rural areas will be a couple years younger – every other man will reach the age of 49, and woman 52.6 (GUS, 2014). Narrowing the considerations to the age structure of inhabitants of large Polish cities, in 2016, people aged over 65 constituted as much as 26% of the total population of these cities. The aging process of city dwellers is diversified, and despite the fact that Szczecin's residents do not age as fast as inhabitants in other big Polish cities, this trend is increasing. In 2010, people aged over 65 constituted 15% of Szczecin's residents, and in 2016 that number reached 19% (GUS, 2017; Local Data Bank).

In this context, it is worth mentioning that senior citizens may perform various forms of leisure activities by actively participating in professional, social, cultural, educational, recreational and other events in accordance with the activity theory, or being excluded from them, which is referred to in the literature as the disengagement theory. This theory, also known as theory of exclusion, assumes that the elderly have decreased interaction with the world around them due to reduced body abilities, the loss of a life partner and friends, or retirement. The concept contradicting the disengagement theory is the activity theory, which assumes the correlation between the degree of activity and satisfaction with life. Being active is supposed to result in a more positive self-image and better adaptation abilities. According to the activity theory, the elderly exhibit the same social needs as middle-aged people, and therefore social withdrawal in old age is contrary to the individual needs. It is presumed that social

isolation or the impossibility to perform previously played roles may result in a loss of identity and well-being, low self-esteem, sense of shame or isolation (Zgliczyński, 2012; Pędzwiatr, 2015).

Both theories may be juxtaposed with the problem of leisure and tourism activities performed by the elderly. On the one hand, the determinants of senior citizens' behaviour in the tourism market (in particular those regarding economy and health) indicate barriers/problems faced by the elderly, which exclude them from participation in tourism and recreation activities, whereas determinants related to lifestyle change, growing awareness of the importance of recreational activity to improve the quality of life, and the increase availability of free time resources make senior citizens an important group of recipients of recreational services. The necessity to change the stereotypical perception of the elderly and treat them as important segments of the tourism (recreational) market has also been noticed by other authors (Bombol, Slaby 2011; Kociszewski, 2014; Niezgoda, Jerzyk, 2013).

Another argument for inclusion of programmes that support the development of infrastructure, and recreational services which are addressed to senior citizens, in the city's policy is the positive impact of tourist and recreational activities on health and quality of life, which has been noticed and proven by scientist. It has been proven that regular physical activity improves general well-being, physical and mental health; helps to lead an independent life and perform basic life activities independently; helps control specific conditions and diseases (e.g. stress, obesity, diabetes); minimizes the effects of certain disabilities; helps during the treatment of pain; allows to spend large amounts of free time in a valuable and enjoyable way. Recreation is therefore a factor that prevents aging through physical activity (Posłuszny, Lapina, 2011). Moreover, it may be supported by appropriate provisions, which set directions of urban development, included in strategic documents of cities, as well as regulations concerning recreational and tourist activities of senior citizens presented in senior policy. Unfortunately, the Polish senior policy does not directly refer to seniors' recreational and tourist activities. The main aim of senior policy in the sphere of educational, social and cultural activates, is supporting the idea of senior citizen education and activating them to civic and social activities. Development of the educational offer for the elderly includes the three most common educational areas: pro-health, civic and new technology education. Furthermore, development and support of social activity of the elderly aims at increasing the involvement of older people in the life of local communities and internal affairs of the country; increasing the role of senior citizens in solving social problems; as well as managing the valuable potential of older people – their knowledge, skills, professional and life experience and willingness to work for others (volunteering). Senior policy also recognizes the need to increase the participation of older people in culture, both as its recipients and creators (*Długofalowa polityka...*, 2013).

The answer to the problems concerning the aging of society and the changing needs of senior citizens in terms of leisure activity management may be the development of cities in regards to recreational and tourist space, which will be supported by properly conducted policy of local authorities. While the recommendations regarding activation of senior citizens concern primarily the educational, professional and health spheres, with tourism and recreation being marginal matters, there can be observed activities carried out by cities that indirectly favour recreational activation of senior citizens.

As indicated by P. Zmyślony, the tourist function, which is connected with the recreational function, is currently treated as one of the basic functions of cities (Zmyślony, 2015). In addition, it should be noted that the recreational function of the city is endogenous and regards satisfying the recreational needs of residents, which, at the same time, can also be realized by tourists based on the same attributes (Panasiuk, 2011). Cities provide recreational services that allow residents to rejuvenate physical and mental strength. Furthermore, urban areas possess useful

intangible properties, which meet the recreational needs of residents. Some elements of recreation infrastructure, which are enjoyed by the residents, also constitute a part of the tourism product of the city, which, in turn, is used by tourists. It is therefore difficult to separate tourist activity from the forms and ways the facilities and space are used by the residents. Tourists and residents of the city meet in one, yet diverse, space, where they make use of many common equipment and services. (Meyer, Gardzińska, Sawińska, 2016).

Recreational activities of the elderly in a city

Recreational activities of senior citizens may be divided into two basic and generally accepted categories, i.e., passive and active recreation. Passive recreation is characterised by undertakings that do not require the participants to act consciously, e.g. listening to the radio. Whereas, active recreation is characterized by activities that are aimed at achieving goals, and require a specific mental and physical effort, such as playing chess, solving crosswords, playing board games, and performing physical exercises such as running, swimming, fitness, etc.

As already mentioned, cities are areas where recreational and tourist activities may be performed simultaneously. The infrastructure and services provided in the field of recreation are of key importance for the implementation of recreational activity – apart from the conditioning resulting from the resources of the natural environment. Infrastructure, first and foremost, consists of specialized elements dedicated to a specific form of recreation¹ which include, among others:

- elements of physical recreation infrastructure, including: stadiums, playing fields, sports halls, gyms, recreational areas with equipment for physical recreation (e.g. “open gyms”), rope courses, swimming pools, bathing beaches, tennis courts, harbours and marinas, marinas for kayaks, artificial ice rinks, shooting ranges, sports circuits, skate parks, sports airports, bowling alleys, artificial climbing walls, health paths, water, walking and cycling trails, walking routes;
- elements of natural environment landscape feature development and display, including forests, parks, green areas, and zoological gardens;
- elements of cultural infrastructure, including: cinemas, theatres, concert halls, art galleries and rooms;
- elements of cultural and historical infrastructure, including museums, historical objects and architectural complexes, cultural heritage objects (sculptures and memorial monuments);
- elements of entertainment infrastructure, including amusement parks, funfairs (statutory 2013).

Services related to physical activity include, among others (Panasiuk, 2011):

- services provided by gyms and fitness clubs (yoga, aerobics, Nordic walking, etc.),
- services provided by other sports facilities (swimming pools, bathing beaches, aqua parks, cable cars, ice rinks, tourist trails, stadiums, etc.),
- services provided by dance schools,
- services provided by rentals of recreational equipment,
- services provided by SPA facilities,
- services provided by entities dealing with the organization of recreational events, such as survival courses, kayaking trips, rallies, camps, etc.

¹ A part of the infrastructure is non-specialized objects and equipment of general infrastructure of a given area with separate places for music, art, and reading rooms, fitness clubs and gyms.

Although recreational infrastructure is often universal and addresses a wide range of recipients, it is possible to distinguish elements that are of particular interest to older people. For example, the research carried out² in 2014 on a representative sample of the residents of Szczecin (390 people) showed the differences between forms of activity occurring between different age groups. The most popular places associated with sports or active recreation of Szczecin's residents aged over 50 are city trails and cycle routes, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Locations chosen as part of activities related to sport or active recreation of Szczecin's residents by age groups (%)

	Up to 18 years old	18–25 years old	26–30 years old	31–40 years old	41–50 years old	50+
Tennis courts	22.22	66.67	11.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
G-karts	16.67	54.17	12.50	12.50	4.17	0.00
Playing fields	13.79	51.72	27.59	3.45	3.45	0.00
Stadiums	3.92	49.02	21.57	9.80	5.88	14.29
Ice rinks	10.34	48.28	20.69	17.24	0.00	2.86
Skate parks	0.00	53.85	23.08	15.38	0.00	2.86
Rope courses	16.67	44.44	22.22	16.67	0.00	0.00
Recreational glades	7.69	41.03	15.38	20.51	2.56	14.29
City trails	5.38	33.33	12.90	19.35	13.98	40.00
Cycle routes	6.17	40.74	12.35	18.52	11.11	25.71
Bridle paths	21.43	50.00	21.43	7.14	0.00	0.00
Bowling alleys	4.65	53.49	11.63	18.60	6.98	5.71
Spa/Wellness	10.71	28.57	21.43	28.57	0.00	8.57

Values do not add up to 100% due to the possibility of multiple choice in the question.

Source: Sawińska (2016).

In case of people aged over 50 years, only 60% use facilities intended for sports and recreation, whereas the remaining 40% respondents do not use any. Among the reasons for not using the services of sports and recreation facilities, respondents aged 50+ mentioned the lack of free time, excessive prices, lack of facilities in the area of residence and health reasons. However, it should be noted that the percentage of responses regarding lack of free time was lower compared to responses of younger surveyees, and in turn the percentage of responses related to health and lack of facilities in the area of residence was higher than in case of responses made by people under 50 (Table 2).

Moreover, the above-mentioned research indicated that among the main motives of using sports and recreation facilities chosen by people in the 50+ group were health (over 80%), leisure (almost 43%) and relaxation (over 38%) followed by appearance (over 32%) and sports (approx. 33%).

Despite the fact that the group of senior respondents was not big, the results of the study are consistent with other studies conducted in 2015 among senior residents and residents of Rzeszów (Rzepko, Drozd, Drozd, Bajorek, Kunysz, 2017). The research carried out among the senior citizens of Rzeszów showed that the most common reasons for practicing in physical recreation are relaxation close to nature (40%), health (39%), experience of joy and relief, peace (36%) active leisure activities (34%), regeneration of *psychophysical strength* (25%), socializing

² Research "The city as an area of tourist and recreational activity, on the example of Szczecin" carried out by the Tourism Economy and Spa Management Department of the Department of Tourism Management.

(22%), escape from everyday life (21%), interests and hobbies (18%), doing sports, improving physical condition (17%), experiencing an adventure (16%), overcoming own weaknesses (14%), shaping a slim body (13%), developing discipline and willpower (12%), strengthening self-esteem (12%), showing own inventiveness and courage (10%), participation in sports events (3%). Furthermore, the senior citizens indicated physical activities which are performed by them often, namely outdoor camping, picnic, mushroom picking, berry harvest (53%), walking (52%), work in the garden or on the plot (28%), hiking (25%), exercising at home or club (21%), cycling (20%), dancing (14%).

Table 2. The main reasons for dismissing sports and recreation facilities (by age) (%)

Reason	18–25 years old	26–30 years old	31–40 years old	41–50 years old	50+
No interesting offer	8.20	8.86	6.92	4.17	2.86
No facility in the area of residence	9.84	3.80	7.69	8.33	11.43
No free time	32.79	49.37	45.38	33.33	28.57
Other	4.10	2.53	5.38	4.17	8.57
Health problems	4.92	6.33	5.38	8.33	11.43
Inconvenient access	2.46	1.27	0.00	4.17	5.71
Excessive prices	37.70	27.85	29.23	37.50	31.43

Source: Sawińska (2016).

This leads to the conclusion that leisure time management of senior citizens in a city should be based on a widely accessible recreational infrastructure. Therefore, an important role in this respect will be played by city authorities, who may implement investments favouring the objectives set out in the city's strategic documents.

The city's vision 2025 presented in the Strategy for the City of Szczecin 2025, i.e., "Szczecin – a city with considerable resources of greenery and water, safe, friendly and attractive to residents, investors and tourists, offering rich cultural and quality living and recreation", refers to the key aspects of recreation activities of its citizens. Moreover, *Szczecin 2020* programme indicates that, apart from job and education, every inhabitant highly values the area in which their live. The area may be improved by provision of a wide access to various types of goods, services and facilities that create better conditions and improve the quality of life. Quality of life is also related to the use of natural assets of Szczecin and the continuous improvement of the quality of public space, so that the city would be a good place to live.

An analysis of undertakings carried out by the authorities of Szczecin in the scope of tourism and recreational management development 2012–2017, together with the investment plans for 2018–2023, lead to a conclusion that the city has been accomplishing the goals set out in the planning documents, and its recreational function has been important for the authorities. Nevertheless, it could be observed that most investments are universal or also aimed at families with children. An example of activities addressed to senior citizens is the "Revitalization of Brodowski Pond" project implemented within the framework of Szczecin Civic Budget for 2014–2015. The scope of investments covered, among others, works in the scope of landscaping for green areas, creation of a new fountain, reconstruction of alleys and park paths, creation of a playground for children and a senior citizen zone. Furthermore, physical activity areas for senior citizens, where the scope of investment comes down to the creation of sets of outdoor exercise equipment, i.e., the so-called "gyms in the open-air", are created in Szczecin. In 2015 alone, as many as 10 such gyms were created. The goal of an outdoor gym is to allow the elderly access to

a very effective form of outdoor physical activity, regardless of their fitness and skills. Creating this type of publicly available and easy to use sets of equipment allows the elderly to undertake physical exercises and motivates them to lead a healthier lifestyle. The use of outdoor gym equipment positively affects health and the cardiovascular system, as well as strengthens physical condition and motor coordination. Gyms are free and generally available, and thus popular among residents (*Szczecin...*, 2016).

Senior citizens may also make use of bicycle paths as a part of active recreational activities. Their length in the city has increased significantly in recent years. According to the Central Statistical Office data, the length of bicycle paths in Szczecin in 2011 amounted to 83 km, whereas in 2016 it was already 120 km. Having in mind recreational cycling, it is necessary to mention the city's activities in the area of constructing unattended city bike rental service. Bike_S System – Szczecin City Bike was launched in August 2014, also as a part of Szczecin Civic Budget. In the first year of operation, over 23 thousand users registered in the system, while in 2017 the number already amounted to around 30,000. Initially, Bike_S had 32 base stations, and in 2017 this number increased to 84. There are further plans to build additional stations (Stępień-Słodkowska, Ustianowski, Krajewska-Pędzik, 2017).

Furthermore, forest areas of Szczecin offer recreational glades, which are popular among senior citizens. These places very often include covered picnic areas, benches and designated outdoor bonfire sites, and sometimes infrastructure for active recreation: playing fields, chess board tables, table tennis and parking spaces. There are 15 recreational glades in Szczecin forests, where it is possible to have a bonfire.

When presenting undertakings aimed at mobilizing the elderly by stimulating their recreational activity, one must mention “Szczecin Senior Citizen Card”, implemented by the City of Szczecin, that entitles its inhabitants to use the system of discounts and reductions in many public institutions, non-governmental organizations and private partners (among them can be found fitness clubs, bicycle shops, restaurants, museums and the Arkonka Recreation Complex). It should be noted that the number of partners of the city of Szczecin who provide recreational, cultural and sport services is increasing. Worth noting is also the fact that the city, in order to increase the availability of senior citizens' cards, has concluded a contract with a photographic company operating in the city of Szczecin, thanks to which senior citizens can obtain a photo required for this card for PLN 1. The new undertaking proposed by the city is also granting to entrepreneurs and institutions the “A place friendly to senior citizens” certificate. Until April 2018, such certificates have been granted to 12 entities, 9 of which are entities providing recreational services.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it should be noted that although the policy regarding senior citizens, which is an important reference point for activities carried out by local government units, focuses on spheres of senior citizens' activity other than recreation (i.e., professional, social and cultural) in order to mobilize the elderly, it may indirectly include activities favouring recreational activation of senior citizens. For example, provisions regarding pro-health education may refer to promoting active ways of spending free time as attitudes conducive to improving health. The senior citizens' societal engagement may take the form of participation in Community Councils or the City Council of Senior Citizens, which, in turn, may affect the initiatives for the development of the city's recreational offer while taking into account the needs of senior citizens. Moreover, participation in recreational activities strengthens social bonds and improves the quality of senior citizens' lives, which is in line with the goals of Poland's senior policy, and furthermore, helps shape a positive image of cities.

The universal character of most undertakings regarding recreation carried out in Szczecin may be, on the one hand, the result of the necessity to take into account the interests of a diverse group of residents and, on the other, indicative of the still inadequate perception of senior citizens as recipients of a recreational product of the city. Nevertheless, the presented examples point to the anticipation of problems related to the aging of city residents, while changing the lifestyle of modern senior citizens.

References

- Bombol, M., Słaby, T. (2011). *Konsument 55+ wyzwaniem dla rynku*. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Szkoły Głównej Handlowej w Warszawie.
- Długofalowa polityka senioralna na lata 2014–2020 w zarysie (2013). Retrieved from: <https://das.mpips.gov.pl/source/Dlugofalowa%20Polityka%20Senioralna%20w%20Polsce%20na%20lata%202014-2020%20w%20zarysie.pdf>.
- Gierańczyk, W. (2016). Turystyka i wypoczynek osób starszych w Polsce i Unii Europejskiej. In: Gierańczyk, W. (ed), *Starzenie się jako wyzwanie XXI wieku*. Toruń.
- GUS (2014). *Prognoza ludności na lata 2017–2050*. Retrieved from: <http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/prognoza-ludnosci/prognoza-ludnosci-na-lata-2014-2050-opracowana-2014-r-1,5.html>.
- GUS (2017). *Rocznik Demograficzny 2016*. Warszawa.
- Kociszewski, P. (2014). Oferta turystyczna dla seniorów jako odpowiedź na potrzeby konsumentów. In: B. Walas, J. Sobczuk (eds.), *Ewolucja popytu i podaży w turystyce*. Sucha Beskidzka: Wyższa Szkoła Turystyki i Ekologii.
- Meyer, B., Gardzińska, A., Sawińska, A. (2016). Miasto jak o obszar aktywności turystycznej i rekreacyjnej na przykładzie Szczecina. *Ekonomiczne Problemy Turystyki*, 3 (35), 85–95.
- Nieżgoda, A., Jerzyk, E. (2013). Seniorzy w przyszłości na przykładzie rynku turystycznego. *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego*, 777. *Problemy Zarządzania, Finansów i Marketingu*, 32.
- Panasiuk, A. (ed) (2011). *Ekonomika turystyki i rekreacji*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Pędziwiatr, K. (2015). Aktywizacja społeczna osób starszych w Polsce. *Space – Society – Economy*, 14, 123–136. DOI: 10.18778/1733-3180.14.07.
- Posłuszny, M., Lapina, S. (2011). Zapobieganie starzeniu się przez rekreację. *Studia Periegetica. Zeszyty Naukowe Wielkopolskiej Wyższej Szkoły Turystyki i Zarządzania w Poznaniu*, 6.
- Rzepko, M., Drozd, M., Drozd, S., Bajorek, W., Kunysz, P. (2017). Uczestnictwo w turystyce i rekreacji ruchowej osób starszych – mieszkańców Rzeszowa. *Handel Wewnętrzny*, 4 (369/2), 206–219.
- Stępień-Słodkowska, M., Ustianowski, P., Krajewska-Pędzik, (2017). „Bike S Szczeciński Rower Miejski” jako przedsięwzięcie prowadzące do wzrostu jakości życia mieszkańców. *Handel Wewnętrzny*, 4 (369/2), 233–242.
- Strategia Rozwoju Województwa Zachodniopomorskiego do roku 2020. Retrieved from: <http://bip.rbip.wzp.pl/artukul/strategia-rozwoju-wojewodztwa-zachodniopomorskiego-do-roku-2020-0>.
- Szczecin 2016. Raport o stanie miasta (2016). Retrieved from: http://bip.um.szczecin.pl/UMSzczecinFiles/file/Raport_o_stanie_miasta_Szczecin2016.pdf.
- Zgliczyński, W. (2012). Aktywność społeczna osób starych w Polsce w ramach wolontariatu i uniwersytetów trzeciego wieku. *Studia BAS*, 2 (30).

Cite this article as: Sawińska, A. (2018). Management of senior citizens leisure time as the challenge of modern cities illustrated by the example of Szczecin. *European Journal of Service Management*, 3 (27/1), 255–262. DOI: 10.18276/ejism.2018.27/1-32.