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Tourist Space and its Role in the Activities of Tourism Enterprises

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Summary. The tourist space is very diverse. It is shaped by both natural and anthropogenic factors. For many entities, it is of key importance in operations. Tourism is a spatial phenomenon – its essence is based on moving people in space and using assets and infrastructure. It requires a special reference to individual elements of space. Tourism enterprises base their activities on spatial conditions, but also affect the changes taking place in the environment themselves. The aim of this study is to show the key role of spatial aspects in the operation of tourism enterprises. The work consists of two parts – literature analysis of the problem and presenting the empirical study. In the second part, an attempt was made to present entrepreneurs' opinions on the role of space in their activities. The survey was carried out by means of a diagnostic survey among tourist service providers (owners of hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, carriers). The research was carried out in 2018 on a sample of a total of 34 respondents from the Pomorskie Voivodeship. The results show that space is a key element of the business conditions of the surveyed enterprises. The surveyed entrepreneurs undertake to a large extent activities favoring the geographical environment, being aware of its impact on the results of their activities.

Introduction

The aim of this study is to show the key role of spatial aspects in the operation of tourism enterprises. The literature analysis method and the diagnostic survey method were used to achieve the goal.

Literature analysis clearly emphasizes the key importance of space in the development of tourism, and thus tourism enterprises. The specificity of tourist enterprises' operations is mainly based on servicing tourist traffic in a given space. This space is the basic element of the company's environment. No enterprise can exist in isolation from its surroundings. Therefore, it is essential for tourists that the elements of the surroundings related to space, such as value, attraction, infrastructure or tourist accessibility, should find a suitable place. In literature, many authors emphasize this fact and give space an important place in the company's activity.

The primary study carried out by means of a diagnostic survey was made in the form of a standardized survey carried out among participants of the Gdynia Maritime Economy Forum in 2018, participants of the seminar "Tourism from the Sea". 36 entities expressed their willingness to take part in the survey, the results of two forms were rejected due to the lack of answers to most questions. The research is incomplete – the results cannot be generalized, but nevertheless they signal the basic problems concerning the role of space in the activities of touristic enterprises by expressing opinions by the surveyed entities.

From the study, it can be concluded that spatial factors are the most important factors for the group of entrepreneurs under study. The respondents are also very aware of the tourism space as the main factor shaping the opinion of tourists. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the respondents take a number of actions that positively affect the geographical environment of their activities, and thus the entire destination.

Tourist space – its types, characteristics and interaction with the functioning of tourism enterprises

Tourist space is a complex concept (Liszewski, 2006; Włodarczyk, 2011, pp. 15–28). S. Liszewski defined it as a functionally distinguished part of geographical space, which is a product of human activity that uses geographical and social environment for tourist purposes (Liszewski, 1995). Many factors affect its functioning. Among others, these are natural, historical, economic, social, infrastructural and other factors that are subject to exploitation and shaping by tourist business (Pender, Sharpley, 2008, pp. 31–88). Tourist space is not homogeneous, which has been noticed by numerous authors (e.g. Meyer, 2004, p. 436; Liszewski, Baczwarow, 1998, pp. 37–67; Liszewski, 1995, pp. 87–103; Liszewski, 2006, pp. 7–20; Stachowski, 1993, pp. 171–180; Oppermann, 1993,

pp. 536–556; Miossec, 1976, p. 62). Tourist space has its own structure and internal organization composed of primary (starting) elements and secondary ones – conditioning and facilitating the implementation of tourist needs. Tourist space is a functionally distinctive part (subspace) of the geographic space understood *sensu largo*, i.e. as a space that consists of natural elements of the earth's shell (natural environment), permanent effects of human activity (economic environment), as well as the human environment in social meaning (Kurek, 2008, p. 38). Space understood in this way is a functionally distinct subspace of geographical space, it is a product of man who uses a geographical environment for tourism purposes, and the motive for its creation is meeting the needs of tourists (Kurek, 2008, p. 39).

From the economic point of view, space is a scarce good, i.e. it is consumable and cannot be increased by production (Domański, 2006, pp. 20–24). Therefore, aspects of the use of space by tourists and tourism enterprises should be particularly analyzed (Wanagos, Studzieniecki, 2018, pp. 262–268). The basic features of tourist space include (Włodarczyk, 2007):

1. Relative character – cannot exist without an entity, which is a human being. There are three basic types of geographic space that relate to tourism activity. These are:
 - tourist eco-tourism – this is the part of geographic (tourism) space, which is used for tourist purposes throughout the year. It is characterized by the continuity of the phenomenon of tourist traffic,
 - tourist sub-eco-tourism – this is the part of the geographical (tourist) space that is used for tourist purposes seasonally or incidentally. It is characterized by seasonality, discontinuity or occasional tourist traffic,
 - tourist anoecumene – is the part of geographical space that is not used for tourist purposes (non-tourism space). It is characterized by the lack of tourist traffic.
2. It is global – there are few places where tourists do not reach. The areas of exploration and tourist penetration are high mountains, glaciers, ocean depths, etc.
3. It is limited – due to the natural, ecological, political and cultural conditions or the level of technological development. Restrictions of tourism space can be of a formal nature (e.g. national borders, sanctions), as well as informal (e.g. cultural, technological).
4. It is dynamic – it changes its character over time. New tourist spaces are created, the old ones cease to be tourist spaces.
5. It is used seasonally and its operation is subject to economic cycles.
6. It is a space that is constantly expanding due to the permanent appropriation of new areas for the needs of tourists.

7. It is a functionally diverse area – there are several types differing in the intensity and nature of tourism processes.

The conditions of tourism space generate very significant effects of tourists' decisions regarding the place of travel and its inhabitants (Włodarczyk, 2009, p. 131). Familiarity with them is necessary both from the point of view of companies offering a tourist product as well as the travelers themselves. The tourism product development (among others, infrastructure investments, service organization) as well as the method and intensity of promotion will depend to a large extent on the importance of tourism (natural and anthropogenic). The dilemmas of shaping space can be an element of pro-ecological policy based on sustainable development and competitiveness of the area (Małachowski, 2015, pp. 225–235).

Each area has its own specific conditions and requires an individual approach by tourism enterprises. For example, areas with a high tourist rank tend to be conducive to high tourist traffic, which causes additional organizational problems (especially related to environmental aspects), but does not require such intensive promotional activities. The promotion of enterprises is focused on showing the attractiveness of their offer in relation to (probably quite large) competition. Another example may be areas that have high-ranking tourist values, but tourist penetration is still very limited. Then, promotional activities mainly concern information on values, and many enterprises shaping a tourist product are focused on infrastructure investments. Promotional activities are also undertaken by self-governments, which significantly affect communication between entities (Smalec, 2011, pp. 489–502). The development of space depends on the concept and policy of tourism entities focused on a given area (Alejziak, 2001, pp. 43–53, Marciszewska, 2017, pp. 319–334).

Tourist space is the dominating factor affecting the manner and scope of operation of tourism enterprises. On the other hand, tourism entrepreneurs shape and change tourism space (Szostak, 2008, p. 210). Bearing in mind this interaction of space and tourism enterprises, attention should be paid to the parameters that are important for the optimal development of tourism and the preservation of spatial order in tourist areas (Jędrzejczyk, 1995, pp. 18–50). They are mainly:

1. Types and patterns of behavior of participants in tourism, determined inter alia by factors recognized as, for example, social and psychological profiles of the consumer.
2. Technical and organizational parameters of tourism development.
3. Natural parameters of environmental resistance, e.g. the absorbency of the area.

In the impact of space for tourist activity of enterprises one should bear in mind above all:

- a) the resistance of natural elements to the impact of tourism (its size and intensity over time) (Krzymowska-Kostrowicka 1999);

- b) the efficiency of adaptation mechanisms – the ability of companies to adapt to the conditions of space (from the point of view of individual elements of the geographical environment, as well as entire complex systems, i.e. the system's adaptability).

In the impact of tourism enterprises on space one should bear in mind above all:

- a) the ability to change the rank of tourist values (e.g. through promotional activities raising the rank of values), and thus changes in tourists' behavior;
- b) changes in tourism infrastructure – this is a continuous process, resulting from the constantly changing needs and requirements of tourists;
- c) organizational and spatial changes, including conscious control of tourist streams moving in the tourism space, coordination of the dates and lengths of stays of a given number of people in a given place.

The geographical and spatial system enforces some adjustments and changes in tourist enterprises (Rapacz, 1998, pp. 58–70). Spatial factors may change and, consequently, entrepreneurs must adapt to these changes. At the same time as the development of tourism in a given area new infrastructure is being created, there are also facilities for accessibility to various attractions, and competition is also being created. The possibility of these changes means that space is an element of a dynamic environment. Enterprises operating in this space are constantly forced to verify their activities.

Method and results of empirical testing

The aim of the study was to get to know the opinions of tourism enterprises on the role of tourism space in their activities. The main problem was whether the opinion of entrepreneurs coincides with the point of view of many authors of literature (geographers, economists, specialists in marketing and management, or ecologists), who unequivocally consider aspects of tourism space as a leading place among determinants of tourism enterprises.

The primary study carried out by means of a diagnostic survey was made in the form of a standardized survey carried out among participants of the Gdynia Maritime Forum in 2018 during a seminar on “Tourism from the Sea”. 36 entities expressed a willingness to take part in the survey, the results of two respondents were rejected due to the lack of answers to most questions. Finally, the results of 34 respondents were used for the analysis. The research is incomplete – the results cannot be generalized, but they signal the basic problems concerning the role of space in the activities of tourist enterprises by expressing opinions by the examined entities.

The questionnaire contained a set of four questions. It was addressed to a group of respondents who conduct business activity in the field of tourism: hotel

industry, gastronomy, travel agencies and passenger transport. 63% of hotel enterprises, 17% of gastronomic enterprises, 6% of travel agencies and 4% of transport enterprises took part in the survey.

In the first question, the respondents were to assign weight to particular groups of conditions of their activity (spatial, technical, economic, social communication and organizational), where the sum of the assigned weights was to amount to 100. The results are shown in Figure 1.

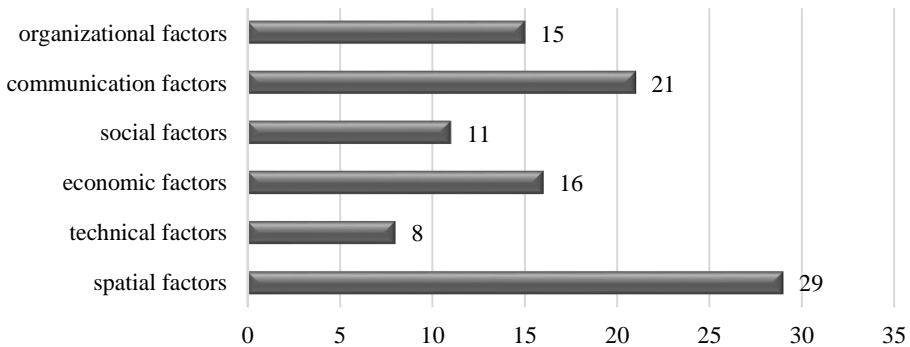


Figure 1. Weight assigned to particular groups of conditions of their activity (the sum of weights is 100)

Source: own research.

The average sum of weights assigned to spatial conditions was as high as 29. The assigned weights for the remaining factors were: for communication factors 21, for economic 16, for organizational 15, social 11, technical 8. This means that spatial and communication conditions (indirectly related to spatial) constitute the most important group of factors according to the studied group of entrepreneurs.

The respondents in the next question assigned the score (on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 was the lowest and 10 the highest) to the individual tourist destination characteristics that they think would affect the tourists' satisfaction. A list of features has been proposed. The list included: the condition of road infrastructure, transport accessibility of tourist attractions, a variety of nocturnal services, high standard of accommodation services, a large selection of gastronomy services, a high degree of tourist events, clean air, tourist aesthetics, promotional activities of enterprises, promotional activity of a tourist town, integrated offer of subjects in a tourist town, others (what?) - respondents could add other factors proposed by them and assign them a weight according to the same scale, but they did not take advantage of it. The results are illustrated in Figure 2.

Respondents attributed the highest score to the following features: aesthetics of the tourist town, clean air, transport accessibility to tourist attractions. The smallest impact on satisfaction according to the respondents has: diversity and high standard of accommodation services as well as promotional activities of enterprises.

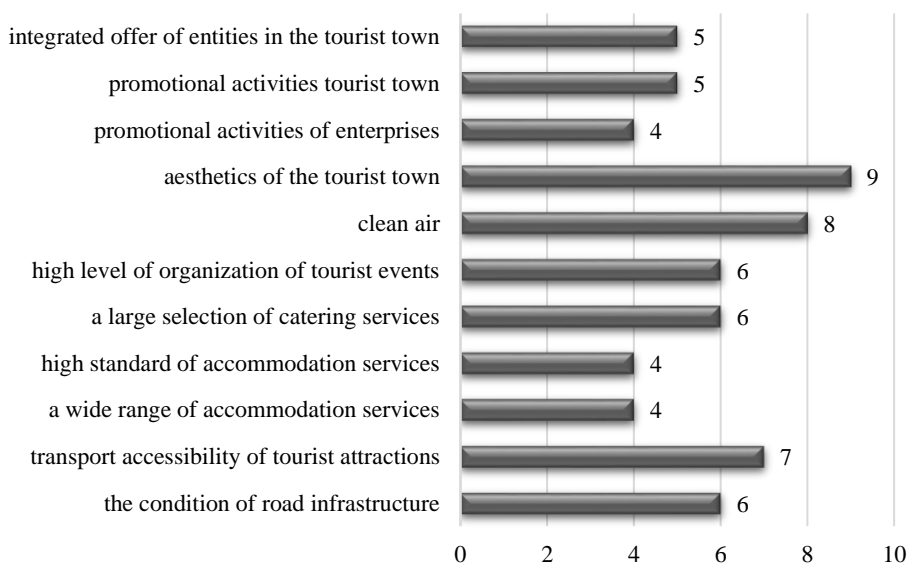


Figure 2. Assessment of the characteristics of tourist destination that affect the satisfaction of tourists

Source: own research.

Then, the respondents were asked to indicate whether the features of the space in which they conduct tourist activities had a decisive impact on the company's business performance (if not, what else?). Respondents in 87% responded "Yes", only 13% of the respondents reported a different condition (including the connection with their permanent place of residence, the location of previously conducted activities, or good cooperation with local entities). The results are illustrated in Figure 3.

In the last, fourth question, the respondents commented on their attitude towards shaping elements of the space in which they operate in the field of tourism. They were asked if they are involved in the shaping of tourism space, and if so, what positive actions are taken. A list of proposed actions was given, from which they could indicate any number of answers (introduction of technologies that do not pollute the air – sources of energy, water filters, fuel type for cars, etc.), shaping of infrastructure that interacts visually with the surroundings (refers to specificity and function of the environment), cooperation with other entities in the field

of environmental protection (e.g. organization of events with environmental slogans, etc.), shaping own tourist products based on the principles of sustainable development, shaping of network products based on securities of space (routes, network attractions, etc.), financing of pro-ecological activities (permanent financing of non-profit ecological organizations, participation in occasional actions, others). The results are illustrated in Figure 4.

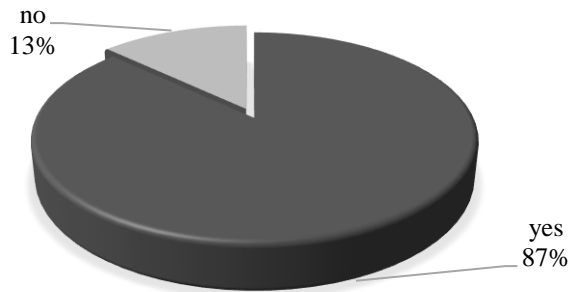


Figure 3. Do the features of the space in which they conduct a tourist activity have a decisive impact on the company's performance?

Source: own research.

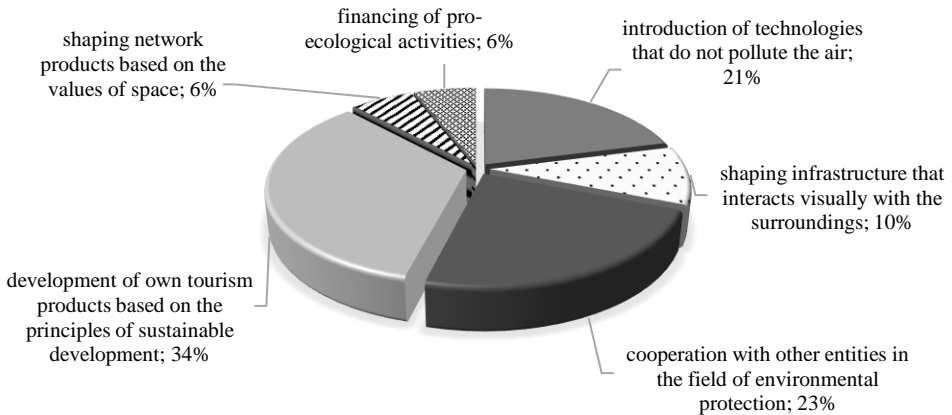


Figure 4. Respondents' actions on the scope of positive shaping of the geographical environment

Source: own research.

It turns out that the surveyed entrepreneurs take a number of positive actions for the geographical environment. Most respondents indicated “shaping their own

tourism products based on the principles of sustainable development” – up to 34% of responses, “cooperation with other entities in the field of environmental protection” – 23% of responses. It is also important that respondents undertake activities related to the introduction of technologies that do not pollute the air – 21% of responses.

Conclusion

This study presents an attempt to show the significant impact of tourism space on the activities of enterprises in this industry. Literature research unambiguously indicates that space is a basic factor in the development of tourism. Enterprises and their effects are often determined by the characteristics of the natural and anthropogenic environment. This applies to every degree of transformation and adaptation to tourism. Values are often a starting point, an inspiration to travel, and entrepreneurs adapt the space accordingly to the needs, so that on one hand, it satisfies tourists, and on the other hand gives them adequate profits.

In their own research carried out by means of a diagnostic survey, respondents indicated spatial factors as the most important factors of their activity. The respondents are also very aware of the tourism space as the main factor shaping the opinion of tourists. Destination, which has high-ranking assets, but also a well-organized offer is becoming more attractive for tourists, and for entrepreneurs it will translate into economic effects.

According to the survey, entrepreneurs care about the environment and undertake important activities that positively affect the tourism space. It should be remembered, however, that the research undertaken covers a rather small group of respondents and should be expanded in the future.

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Przestrzeń turystyczna i jej rola w działalności przedsiębiorstw turystycznych

Słowa kluczowe: przestrzeń turystyczna, przedsiębiorstwo turystyczne, otoczenie biznesu

Streszczenie. Przestrzeń turystyczna jest bardzo zróżnicowana. Jest kształtowana przez czynniki naturalne i antropogeniczne. Dla wielu podmiotów ma to kluczowe znaczenie w działalności. Turystyka jest fenomenem przestrzennym – jej istota polega na przemieszczaniu ludzi w przestrzeni i wykorzystaniu zasobów i infrastruktury. Wymaga specjalnego odniesienia do poszczególnych elementów przestrzeni. Przedsiębiorstwa turystyczne opierają swoje działania na warunkach przestrzennych, ale także wpływają na zmiany zachodzące w samym środowisku. Celem artykułu jest ukazanie kluczowej roli aspektów przestrzennych w funkcjonowaniu przedsiębiorstw turystycznych. Artykuł składa się z dwóch części – analizy literatury dotyczącej poruszanego problemu i omówieniu badań empirycznych. W drugiej części podjęto próbę przedstawienia opinii przedsiębiorców na temat roli przestrzeni w ich działaniach. Przeprowadzono badanie diagnostyczne wśród usługodawców turystycznych (właściciele hoteli, restauracji, biur podróży, przewoźników). Zrealizowano je w 2018 roku na próbie łącznie 34 respondentów z województwa pomorskiego. Wyniki pokazują, że przestrzeń jest kluczowym elementem wa-

runków biznesowych badanych przedsiębiorstw. Badani przedsiębiorcy podejmują w dużej mierze działania sprzyjające środowisku geograficznemu, mając świadomość jego wpływu na wyniki swojej działalności.

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