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THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFETY IN CONTEMPORARY CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE TOURISM MARKET

Abstract: Until recently, the tourism industry was treated as the most dynamically developing sector of the economy. Tourism affects the national economies of many countries in the world by creating new jobs and stimulating GDP. However, the tourism sector has been hit hard by restrictions on the movement of tourists in the wake of the COVID-19 health crisis. The coronavirus outbreak has negatively impacted the travel industry around the world. Another phenomenon that weakens the tourism industry, mainly in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, is Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which causes concern among consumers of the tourism market. Already in the first days of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, tourists from Western Europe and the USA were looking for information on security in Poland. In addition, the war in Ukraine may also lead to a decline in demand for tourism services in the country. Fear wins, and the tourism industry is threatened with a crisis, now when it was just beginning to recover from its COVID debts. The aim of the article is to analyze the role of safety in contemporary consumer behaviour in the tourism market. The work is both theoretical and practical.

Keywords: consumer behaviour; determinants of tourist behaviour; travel safety; tourism sector.

Introduction

It should be emphasized that the tourism sector has been struggling with numerous crises for years: terrorist attacks in popular and attractive tourist destinations, which often led to changes in the direction of travel among tourists, then the coronavirus epidemic that completely froze the tourism sector and made tourist travel impossible, and currently Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which will have negative consequences for the tourism sector, particularly for the countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

The lack of a sense of security is related to uncertainty, which is defined as the lack of information about the future course of events and the possibility of predicting the consequences of choices made and actions taken¹. Providing information on the possibilities of satisfying the needs of a tourist participant will contribute to determining (assessing) the risk of purchasing a product by the customer, and thus allow to estimate the level of safety.

This article focuses on the analysis of the role of security in the decision-making process of a tourist travel on the contemporary tourism market. The theoretical part of the work presents issues related to tourist behaviour. In the further part of the work, the key factors influencing the safety of tourists while

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¹ **Zgólkowa, H. (red.).** *Praktyczny słownik współczesnej polszczyzny*. Wydawnictwo „Kurpisz”, Poznań, 2002, s. 456.

traveling are analyzed. The last part of the work concerns the analysis of the results of a survey conducted in 2020 among Polish seniors regarding the role of safety in their tourist behaviour.

1. Consumer Behaviour on the Tourist Market

We call the actions taken by consumers in the market as consumer behaviour. In the literature on the subject, this issue also occurs under terms like consumer behaviour and purchasing behaviour of consumers².

The subject of consumer behaviour is of interest to scholars from various fields of science, especially sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists who study different aspects of the decision-making process for the purchase and consumption of goods and services. In the field of psychology, scholars consider the behaviour of the individual and his/her needs conditioned by psychological factors that lead to the achievement of specific goals and development of the individual. From the sociological perspective, consumer research focuses on the needs and the way they are satisfied, as well as on the influence of social relations on the behaviour of the individual. Anthropology assesses a person as an individual in a changing environment, considering socio-economic and cultural conditions. On the other hand, economics is related to the consumption process; it studies the mechanism of resource management and its use to meet human needs³.

The problem of consumption behaviour concerns virtually all areas of human life, including tourist activity, which allows for the specification of the category of consumer behaviour on the tourist market, i.e. tourist behaviour. According to A. Niemczyk⁴, tourist behaviour is “all actions and activities undertaken by consumers representing specific psychophysical predispositions, related to making choices in the process of satisfying tourism needs in certain economic, social, demographic, political, geographical conditions, etc.”. According to the author of this study, tourist behaviour is a series of activities undertaken by consumers, related to the purchase of a tourist product, and caused by the stimulus to meet the emerging needs.

Consumer behaviour in the tourism market is an integral part of the decision-making process by consumers, which focuses on choices, purchases and use, but also rejects goods, services and ideas in order to satisfy their needs and desires⁵. The entire process is shaped by many different factors. In the face of contemporary challenges, the decisions of consumers of the tourism market are significantly influenced by safety, the analysis of which is carried out in the next part of the work.

2. Safety as a Key Determinant of Consumer Behaviour in the Tourism Market

The world is changing more and more dynamically, and at the same time it becomes more unstable and unpredictable, full of various conflicts and tensions. Every day, the media reports on successive political and economic crises, wars, riots, terrorist attacks, communication disasters, natural disasters, attacks, and murders. This intensifies the feeling of omnipresent fear, tangible threat and risk related to our safety.

Security is often called the highest natural good of man. This is reflected, inter alia, in A. H. Maslow's famous pyramid (1943) presenting the theory of the hierarchy of human needs. The needs of security have been included in the general needs, typical of the Kazakh man, and together with the physiological needs they form the basis of the pyramid. This underlines their fundamental importance: without satisfying them, we cannot speak of meeting higher-order needs. Therefore, for consumers of the

² **Solomon, M. R.** *Zachowania i zwyczaje konsumentów*. Wydanie IV, Onepress, Gliwice, 2006, pobrano z http://www.super-booki.pl/pdf/Zachowania_i_zwyczaje_konsumentow_Wydanie_VI_konsum.pdf (01.06.2019 r.), s. 25.

³ **Mazurek-Kusiak, A. K.** *Model zachowań konsumentów na rynku turystycznym*. Instytut Naukowo-Wydawniczego „Spatium”, Radom, 2019, pobrano z <http://han.uek.krakow.pl/han/pwn/https/libra.ibuk.pl/book/204291>, (03.02.2020 r.), s. 9.

⁴ **Niemczyk, A.** *Zachowania konsumentów na rynku turystycznym*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego, Kraków, 2010, s. 15.

⁵ **Żelazna, K., Kowalczyk, I., & Mikuta, B.** *Ekonomika konsumpcji. Elementy teorii*. Wydawnictwo Szkoły Głównej Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego, Warszawa, 2002, s. 27–33.

tourist market, safety during a tourist travel is one of the key factors in making a decision about a tourist travel and choosing a tourist destination.

The travel safety risks most often faced by tourists include⁶:

- armed conflicts, i.e. wars, civil wars, coups, etc.;
- religious conflicts, mainly in areas inhabited by fighting believers of different religions;
- terrorist attacks where tourists are accidental or deliberate victims;
- natural disasters: floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, fires, hurricanes, etc.;
- communication disasters: aeroplane, rail, sea, etc.;
- “traditional” crimes: homicides, assaults, robberies, thefts, extortion, etc.;
- economic crises: economic collapse, hyperinflation, strikes, etc.;
- health risks: epidemics, tropical diseases, injuries, animal bites, etc.

The behaviour of the contemporary consumer in the tourism market is shaped by political events.

The political situation in the world or in a certain region has an impact on participation in tourism. The lack of social tensions and war threats stimulates tourist traffic, while any manifestations of threats result in limiting tourist travel to endangered regions. The tourism sector changed significantly after the 9/11 attacks as tourists began to pay more attention to safety when choosing a destination. Considering security, the key element in making a decision about choosing a tourist destination is the risk of the region being exposed to terrorist attacks. Terrorism is not a new phenomenon, but it is a changeable and dynamic event. In recent years, there have been changes in the forms, means and goals of the bombers' actions. The phenomenon of terrorism is influenced by civilization development and scientific and technical progress, especially new means of communication, mass media, and advanced communication techniques⁷.

In 2017, there were three terrorist attacks in France. Similarly, in 2015, three attacks were carried out, in which 240 people were killed in total and over 500 were injured. As a result of the attacks carried out in 2015, the number of tourists dropped from 84,500,000 up to 82,600,000 in 2016. The terrorism threat index increased to 5.96 in 2016. In contrast, revenues from tourism decreased from \$45, 918.63 million in 2015 to \$42,454.36 million, or a decrease of 2.2% (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017). Similarly, in 2016, three terrorist attacks were carried out in Germany, in which 75 people lost their lives and 14 were injured, along with the perpetrators of the attacks. In 2016, the terrorism index increased to 4.92 as a result of targeted threats by terrorist groups about planned attacks. The number of tourists visiting in the year after the attacks decreased by 2% (<https://tradingeconomics.com/france/terrorism-index>).

North African countries are the countries most exposed to terrorist attacks. In 2001–2017, bombers carried out 11 terrorist attacks in Egypt. In 2016, an attack was carried out in the Church of St. Paul and Peter in Cairo where 29 people were killed and 47 were injured. Egypt remains an attractive tourist destination, but the number of tourists is steadily declining, and tourism revenues are also falling. In 2016, there was a decrease in tourist arrivals to Egypt by 42.5% (<https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/egypt/visitor-arrivals-growth>). In turn, Tunisia is a country largely dependent on international tourism. In 2010 and 2015, bombers organized terrorist attacks directly targeting tourists. As a result of the attacks, many tourists departed from the country, and revenues from the tourist sector dropped. In 2015, there was a 50.5% decrease in arrivals to Tunisia (<https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/tunisia/visitor-arrivals-growth>).

Another health security crisis in the last three years was a consequence of the spread of the infectious disease COVID-19 around the world. World institutions present data on the losses of the tourist sector because of the prevailing epidemic. The Travel & Tourism sector suffered a loss of almost US \$4.5 trillion to reach US \$4.7 trillion in 2020, with the contribution to GDP dropping by a staggering 49.1% compared to 2019; relative to a 3.7% GDP decline of the global economy in 2020. In 2019, the Travel &

⁶ Stasiak, A. *Bezpieczeństwo – niebezpieczeństwo w turystyce (kilka refleksji wprowadzających w zagadnienie)*, 2017. W: Stasiak, A., & Śledzińska, J. (red.). *Między swobodą a zakazem, czyli o bezpiecznym korzystaniu z przestrzeni turystycznej*. Wydawnictwo „PTTK Kraj”, Warszawa, 2017, s. 14.

⁷ Nowicki, G., & Krysiuk, C. Nowe trendy współczesnego terroryzmu, 1912, s. 7902. W: *Logistyka* 6/2014. Wydawca Instytut Logistyki i Magazynowania, Instytut Badawczy, Poznań, 2014, s. 7903.

Tourism sector contributed 10.4% to global GDP: a share which decreased to 5.5% in 2020 due to ongoing restrictions to mobility. In 2020, 62 million jobs were lost, representing a drop of 18.5%, leaving just 272 million employed across the sector globally, compared to 334 million in 2019. The threat of job losses persists as many jobs are currently supported by government retention schemes and reduced hours, which could be lost without a full recovery of Travel & Tourism. Domestic visitor spending decreased by 45%, while international visitor spending declined by an unprecedented 69.4% (<https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact>).

Currently, the tourist sector is facing another challenge: information related to safety in Poland has become popular information sought among tourists from Western Europe and the USA. Many people travelling to Central and Eastern European countries ask themselves whether Russia can attack a NATO country. The war is supposed to be fought in the central-eastern part of Ukraine, but the missiles can fall several kilometers from the EU border. Because Poland, with its anti-Russian attitude and willingness to help refugees, is in Putin's throat today.

The first doubts appeared shortly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. According to the information of James Ferrara, president of the Internet travel agency InteleTravel, the war prompts Americans to rethink their travel to the vicinity of Ukraine – to Poland, but also to the Czech Republic, and even to Croatia. These destinations have largely disappeared from the booking data. The American perspective, however, is specific. When viewed from across the ocean, even Berlin, Paris and Amsterdam seem to be located right next to the war zone; not to mention Warsaw where, according to US residents, you can hear bombing from a distance. This makes anxiety win over geography. Foreign websites that publish texts explaining to readers that a travel to the Vistula River is safe do not always help. Moreover, individual ministries of foreign affairs recommend that travels to Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania should be avoided. According to the president of InteleTravel, tourists are primarily afraid of the vision of a nuclear war. Every piece of news about fighting in the vicinity of a nuclear power plant brings them to their feet, as well as every report about an increase in the level of radiation. Not to mention the direct use of nuclear weapons that Putin threatened NATO with shortly after his invasion of Ukraine. Out of concern for their own health and safety, tourists decide to travel to countries with a stable political situation⁸. The last part of the work presents the results of a survey on the role of safety in the decision-making process of consumers in the tourism market.

3. The Role of Security in the Decision-Making Process of a Tourist Travel

The consumer decides to choose a piece of goods or service in the conditions of available options. Consumer behaviour and the nature of purchasing decisions vary. Consumer behaviour is influenced both by internal factors relating to the nature and needs of consumers and by external factors beyond the direct influence of tourists.

The results of a research conducted in the period from January to September 2020 among people aged 60 and more are presented below. The analysis covered a sample of N = 781 respondents who participated in tourism over the last three years. The aim of the study was to identify safety during a tourist travel due to demographic characteristics.

Given the age group, a significant percentage was represented by people aged 65–69 (37.32%), while the least numerous was the group of people aged 75 and more (11.20%). Among them, the professionally inactive predominated (82.76%), which corresponds to the specificity of a senior. Considering gender, women dominated in the study group (82.76%). Most respondents lived in small towns (up to 100,000 inhabitants) – 36.11%, while the least in medium-sized towns (from 100,000 to 500,000 inhabitants) – 18.88%. Among the surveyed seniors, over 42% had secondary education, while a slightly lower

⁸ Sala, J. Stabilizacja gospodarczo-polityczna a turystyka. *International Journal of Management and Economics*, 35, 2012, pp. 9–20, pobrano z https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/files/International_Journal_of_Management_and_Economics/International_Journal_of_Management_and_Economics-r2012-t35/International_Journal_of_Management_and_Economics-r2012-t35-s9-20/International_Journal_of_Management_and_Economics-r2012-t35-s9-20.pdf (18.12.2019 r.).

percentage were with higher education (over 36%). On the other hand, the lowest number of respondents had primary education (3.29%).

Over 44% of the surveyed seniors were members of two-person households, and over 31% run an independent household. The third place was taken by respondents from three-person households (11.86%). The smallest group were seniors creating households of five (over 3%).

The research proved that safety is an important factor determining a tourist travel among all analyzed age groups. People aged 60–64 pay most attention to safety in the decision-making process of a tourist travel.

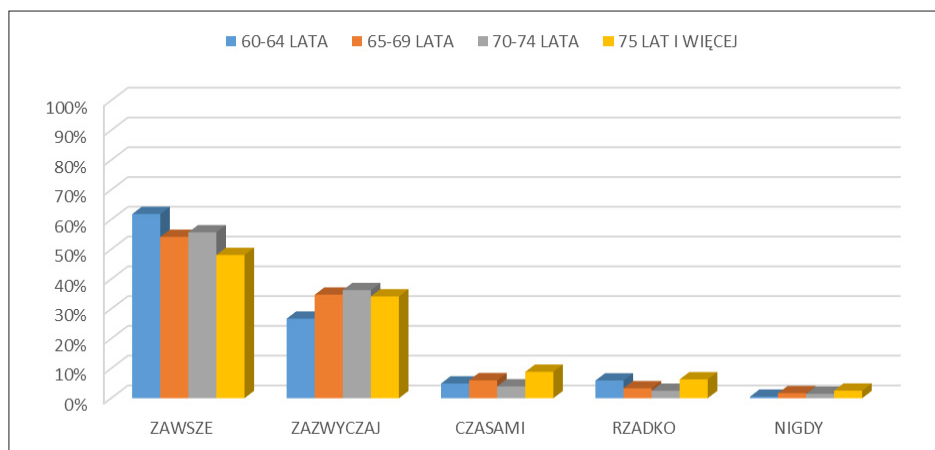


Fig. 1. Safety during tourist travel by age (%);
Source: own study based on the results of the survey

The safety of the travel is equally important for the elderly, regardless of the level of education. Over 60% of the respondents with primary education are always guided by safety during a tourist travel, while 6.25% never consider safety during such a travel. On the other hand, 49.59% of the respondents with higher education always consider safety when traveling, and only 1.63% never do that.

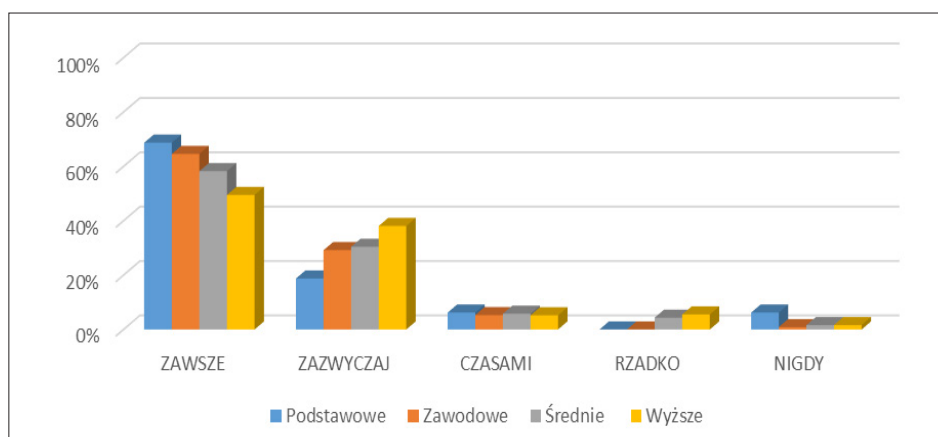


Fig. 2. Safety during tourist travel by education (%);
Source: own study based on the results of the survey

Based on the data presented in Fig. 3, the importance of security during tourist travel increases with the size of respondents' households. 70.97% of the respondents with more than six people in their household always take safety into account when travelling, while in single-person households 53.94%.

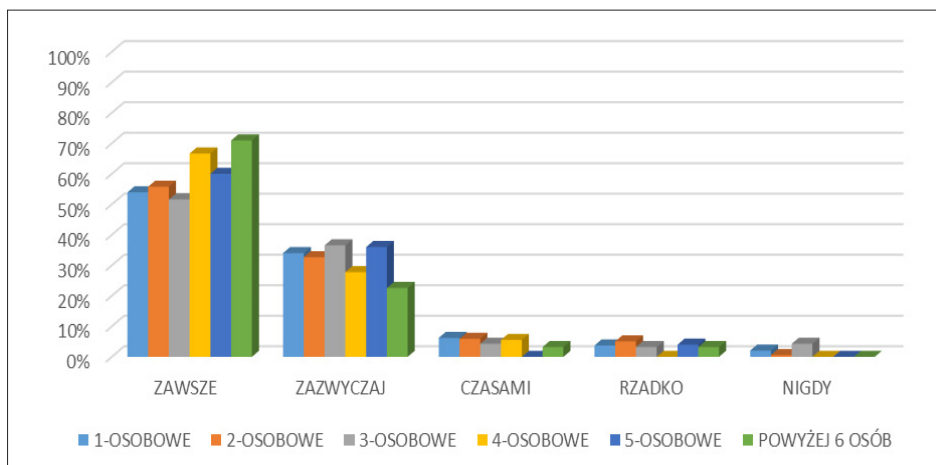


Fig. 3. Safety during tourist travel by household size (%);
Source: own study based on the results of the survey

Regardless of the demographic characteristics of respondents, safety is an important factor during a tourist travel. The issue of safety as an essential need in the decision-making process of a tourist travel seems to be the main challenge of the modern tourism sector for a modern client.

Summary

This work certainly does not fully exhaust the topic. There is one constitutive conclusion: safety in tourism is an important determinant of tourist travel, and its importance in the decision-making process will increase in connection with the tourism sector, which functions in an increasingly unstable reality.

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