

ILLEGAL DOMESTIC TOURISM OF POLES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC – INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Motives: Tourism is one of the most affected industries by the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions introduced by the Polish government, dictated by the rapidly increasing number of positive cases in the country, led to severe restrictions or complete cessation of the accommodation, catering and tourist services. These restrictions resulted in greater interest in the “little homeland” tourist offer, the dispersion of tourist traffic and the development of so called “grey zone” through unofficial functioning of accommodation facilities.

Aim: The purpose of this paper is to characterize the profile of tourists who paid for the accommodation services in Poland during the second wave of the pandemic, lasting from 7th November 2020 to 11th February 2021. The research methodology included a diagnostic survey conducted through the use of a digital questionnaire circulated in social media. In total 100 responses were subjected to qualitative analysis. On the basis of the obtained results, the authors analyzed the following criteria: the number, time, place, length and method of organization of trips; type of accommodation with the costs estimate and the method of obtaining information about the functioning of the chosen facility; means of transportation to the destination, main and secondary travel motives. The study also presents the changes declared by the respondents in the frequency of organizing a one-day trip and several-day-long trips away from the place of their daily residence, as well as the assessment of the quality of the services provided against the price.

Results: Almost 70% of the respondents paid for the accommodation services in the given time frame at least once, mainly booking private lodging using Booking.com portal. The organized trips were usually short-term and lasted 3 days. Only every 5th trip was planned in advance, before the restrictions were introduced. The main motive for the trip was the desire to change the environment, understood as escaping the city and relaxing outdoors. The vast majority of respondents did not suffer from COVID-19 before the trip, and every fourth respondent considered the applicable restrictions as too severe.

Keywords: pandemic, COVID-19, tourist behavior, domestic tourism, Poland

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INTRODUCTION

The pandemic COVID-19 has been recognized as one of the most influential events of the 21st century (Zenker & Kock, 2020). Among the many spheres of human life, the tourism industry was particularly hit due to the global lockdown (Dongoh et al., 2021). Tourism has a significant economic impact on society's income, wealth and employment on the chosen geographic area. In many places tourism is the basic mean of economic growth (Bashir & Shahzad, 2020). On a global scale, the tourism economy oscillates around 10%, while in Poland the share of broadly understood tourism services in the GDP structure is estimated at around 6% (www.unwto.org, 2020). During the years directly preceding 2020, the tourist activity rate in domestic and foreign tourist trips of Poles increased. The number of domestic tourist trips amounted to approx. 48 million, and the tourist expenses of Poles were estimated to reach 31 billion PLN (Panasiuk, 2020).

All the volumes of inbound tourist traffic to Poland and intra-domestic, as well as revenues from tourism, showed a high growth dynamics at the average annual level of 6–7% (MKDNiS, 2020). The tourism economy was thus steadily developing in terms of quantity, value and quality until COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic reached Poland on March 4th, 2020, when the first case of infection was recorded. The first restrictions were introduced on March 10th – mass events were cancelled and the number of people allowed to attend events was reduced. On March 20th the government introduced the „epidemic state”, thus travel and public space use restrictions came into life. Restaurants were officially closed for business and only allowed to deliver take-away food. From March 31st accommodation services were prohibited both for long-and short-term stays. The summer period was characterized by easing the restrictions which, however, returned again in the fall. On 23rd October 2020, significant restrictions were reintroduced after

the government announced the whole country a “red zone” in relation to the high rate of infected people. On 2nd December, during the II wave of pandemic, the number of infected people reached 1 million cases. As a result, from 29th December 2020 till 17th January 2021 the government introduced a national quarantine. Recalling the words of Burleigh (2020), on the one hand organized trips may mean spreading the coronavirus to poorly prepared places, on the other their absence may aggravate existing economic problems. Due to the spread of COVID-19 and imposed restrictions on international travel, the popularity of domestic tourism has been increasing worldwide.

The risk is an inherent element of any decision-making process and also applies to issues related to the organization and management of tourism (Quintal et al., 2010). For some tourists the ability to manage the risks to some extent makes their travel experiences more stimulating and memorable (Karl et al., 2020; Quintal et al., 2010). The risk that arises from COVID-19 is related to endangering one's own and others' health, and not with the excitement associated with the experienced travel. Despite this, many people voluntarily and consciously decide to break the applicable standards and restrictions by organizing tourist trips at times when they should not take place.

The goal of this article is to characterize the profile of Polish tourists who used the paid accommodation services in the country during the second wave of the pandemic, lasting from 7th November 2020 to 11th February 2021. It should be emphasized, that the selected time period partly includes the date of introducing the national quarantine. An extensive survey was conducted to determine the preferences and attitudes of tourists towards travelling through COVID-19. The survey was carried out on a carefully selected group of respondents. The data was collected using an online questionnaire with a total of 100 respondents aged 18 and over. The diagnostic survey consisted of 29 questions, mostly closed, concerning the widely understood way of organizing a trip.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The dynamic development of the global tourism market is conditioned to a large extent by the existence of various threats that cause quantitative or qualitative changes in its structure. The phenomena that constitute these threats may be periodic or permanent. Regardless of the duration, they affect the state of tourism development, and above all, the level of tourist offer and the state of meeting the needs of tourists in tourists destinations (Panasiuk, 2013). Threats of varying intensity may affect the interest offer, thus reducing tourist mobility and travel to tourist destinations affected by these phenomena. Additionally, they can influence decisions regarding tourist trips in general to neighboring destinations and regions, countries or even other continents (Panasiuk, 2020). In extreme cases, they cause an almost complete limitation of global tourism mobility. In practice, however, the COVID-19 pandemic is the first time in the history of modern tourism when this actually happened.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused severe disruption to the economy and business operations. The current pandemic situation in the literature is referred to the theory of the “black swan” (Mączyńska, 2020; Mielech, 2020) or supply and demand shocks (Beck & Janus, 2016). According to the “black swan” theory, things that were thought impossible before may actually happen. In line with this theory, the majority of companies from the tourism sector have been adversely affected by the pandemic. The most noticeable effects include the suspension of operations, a drop in revenues, and other problems that none was prepared for. The appearance of pandemic, and the associated risk of a high level disease, caused a reaction of public authorities in many countries, leading to the closing of boarders, limiting the mobility of inhabitants and freezing the functioning of industries, including tourism. The tourism economy has become one of the most affected areas by the restrictions. It will probably take the longest time, among all other industries, for tourism to recover from it. The government’s activity during the pandemic

involved taking appropriate steps regarding public health policy. Due to the fact, that the restriction resulting from the sanitary regime particularly affected the tourism economy, it is also necessary to reorganize the tourism policy, which is highly presented by Bosiacki and Panasiuk (2017).

COVID-19 has created conditions that affect the lives of all people around the world, forcing political, economic and socio-behavioral changes in societies on an arguably unprecedented scale in the modern area. Baum and Hai (2020) considered some of the key areas where COVID-19 has affected the rights of consumption and access to hospitality and tourism at both international and local level. In fact, national boarders in Europe, North and South America have been closed to most travelers, for both leisure and business purposes. In some cases, this has involved the reintroduction of border controls that were lifted many years ago (e.g. the Schengen zone in Europe). Many countries, including Australia, China and New Zealand, have closed their boarders completely to foreigners and non-residents (Chinazzi et al., 2020). Many airlines have kept both domestic and international services to a minimum and in extreme cases stopped providing services altogether. Rail and bus service providers have also scaled back their services in response to both falling demand and government restrictions on “unnecessary travel”. As a consequence, the global pandemic has affected our lifestyle, including our right to personal mobility by limiting access to travel both locally and beyond, which used to be taken for granted in many societies.

Until two years ago, before the current state of emergency, restriction on physical mobility would have been unthinkable in most countries. On the social level, the concept of “social distance” entered the common lexicon (Long, 2020), a concept that is a complete opposite of our expectations related to hospitality and tourism. COVID-19 challenged this assumption in a very short time and placed many of us in a temporary blockage, limited by boarders’ controls and lack of means of transportation that reduced our geographic and social mobility (Baum & Hai, 2020). As Sheller stated (2020), “all human movements were

suddenly stopped”. In many places, the main reasons for visiting destinations by tourists have been removed by the closure of cultural venues such as theaters and museums, postponement of sporting events (including the Tokyo Olympics), restricted access to beaches and national parks, and the closure of retail outlets and gastronomic. Emergency legislation has been introduced in many countries in Europe and around the world, which effectively locks citizens in their own homes, further restricting travel, even within the nearest cities. These special regulations were also enforced through financial sanctions and further criminal sanctions. In the UK, police have used drones to identify visitors at tourist viewpoints. Special checkpoints were created to prevent entry to national parks (Baum & Hai, 2020). In Poland, a temporary ban on accessing the forest spaces and parks has been introduced. The restrictions also applied to visiting friends and family and it was recommended to spend Christmas with the closest family members.

One of the most difficult issues to predict is the consumption behavior in terms of tourism demand during and immediately after the pandemic. According to the first studies, the desire to travel by plane in Europe and both Americas dropped by ca. 30%, by 50% in Asia, while the intention to travel fell by an additional 10–20% (Gallego & Font, 2020). Although the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on economy is dynamically changing, the available literature offers scientific analysis of the situation, with particular reference to current tourism trends and forecast changes. The priority will be to provide tourists with a sense of security. Entities of the tourism market must take into account the guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), which include i.e. the compliance with appropriate health safety standards regarding the guest service at the hotel. It is crucial to develop appropriate management and control strategies for introduced changes. Škare, Soriano and Porada-Rochoń (2021) point out, that the possibility of reviving tourism industry around the world will depend on cooperation between individual entities, which should replace mutual competition in order to reduce the costs of the pandemic’s effects.

Mass tourism in the post-covid era will cease to be a free-for-all service, through a gradual shift from quantitative to quality tourism (Nepal, 2020). According to Romagosa (2020), the areas with a qualitative diversified offer are in a better economic situation than those that have focused so far on growth instead of development. Among the post-pandemic trends, Wachyuni and Kusumaningrum (2020) paid attention to the development of nature-focused and short-term tourism, organized taking into account the health issues of the reception area.

According to Królak (2021), “there is an opportunity for Poland to promote the unique phenomenon located on the Vistula river, unknown to the world, meaning the *spa* tourism. This is particularly important in the content of the aging societies, but also in the context of the pandemic”. By developing *spa* tourism globally, tourism industry could support the health care sector in fulfilling its mission. Therefore in the future, planning a tourist trip may require taking *wellness* aspect into account by promoting health elements, including both physical activity and spiritual balance.

The changes in tourist behavior will be of a long-term nature. It should be assumed that in the post-pandemic period, the structure of tourism demand will change significantly, especially in the short term (up to 1 year after the end of the pandemic and sanitary restrictions), in favor of domestic tourism (Panasiuk, 2020). Such behavior is already observed in many countries or regions, where fewer restrictions apply to travel within the country, as long as individuals adhere to government health protocols. Relatively minimal restrictions on domestic travel, combined with a strict ban on international tourism in Poland, contributed to a significant increase in domestic travel, although there are also opposing voices pointing to the draining of Polish domestic tourism with further restrictions (Jęczmyk & Kasprzak, 2020). Domestic tourism is becoming the only viable option for those seeking an escape or refuge from everyday life (Bradley, 2020). Romagosa (2020) defines this phenomenon as “tourism regionalization”, which focuses on exploring the immediate surroundings. In this context, there

is also a noticeable increase in trips to the so-called second homes, which as indicated by Seraphin and Dosquet (2020), constitute a kind of travel services placebo. In fact, they do not cover the range of services that tourists would use during their regular stays. The described domestic tourism boom has become a global phenomenon (Barbour & Jasper, 2020; Bull, 2020). Some authors emphasize the shift towards domestic travel in the U.S. and China caused by restrictions and bans on global and domestic travel (Barua, 2020). European domestic tourism is not that strong (Dušek & Sagapova, 2021), however, it is emphasized that the global COVID-19 crisis may provide an opportunity to transform European tourism into a more social one, in which the rights and interest of local communities count more. However, this does not mean displacing the popular model of mass tourism, which will continue to dominate, despite the change in the way it functions (Nepal, 2020).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to achieve the purpose of the study and provide an answer to the research questions, an analysis of statistical data was carried out along with the data from the reports. The conducted own research was of a pilot- and demonstrative nature. For the sake of the study a proprietary questionnaire was used, which contained five metric questions (i.e. about gender and age) and 24 questions related to the posed research questions. The questionnaire was located on the Google Drive and the link was distributed electronically to various thematic groups, mainly on Facebook. It should be noted that the undertaken research was strictly limited due to the restrictions prohibiting overnight stays and the use of hotel and catering services in Poland. The analyzed time horizon coincides with the occurrence of the so-called second wave of the pandemic, which peaked in the second half of November 2020 (Chart 1).

New cases and deaths
From [JHU CSSE COVID-19 Data](#) · Last updated: 2 days ago



Chart 1. The number of positive cases of SARS-CoV-2 in Poland
Source: <https://github.com/CSSEGISandData/COVID-19> (24.05.2021).

RESULTS

A total of 100 correctly completed questionnaires were obtained (69 by female and 31 by male respondents). The majority of the respondents were representatives of the Y and Z generations, i.e. people in the 19–32 age range, located both in big cities (above 500,000 inhabitants) and smaller towns and villages. More than half of the respondents described their financial situation as good (52%), and nearly every third respondent as average (34%). In terms of professional activity, the participants were dominated by the students' group (42%), IT experts (11%), academics (7%), financial sector (7%) and commerce employees (6%).

Most of the respondents (68%) made one trip in the indicated period, which was planned by 79% only when the restrictions were in force. About 32% of tourists decided for more spontaneous trips, out of which the biggest group included people travelling at least twice (Chart 2).

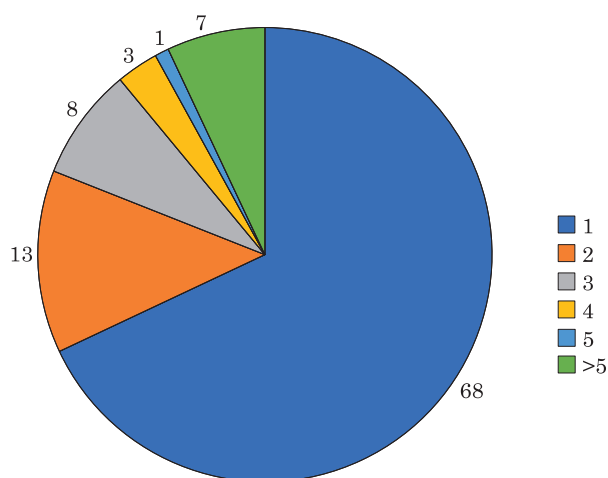


Chart 2. Number of trips organized during the COVID pandemic restrictions, between 7.11.2020 and 11.02.2021 (n = 100)

Source: own preparation.

The most popular trips were organized by the end of the year, in December (33%) and January (28%). They were mostly short-term trips, with a predominance of 3-day travels (28%), followed by 4-day (14%)

and 2-day travels (13%), planned mostly around statutory holidays. In November, despite the long weekend associated with the anniversary of regaining independence (November 11th), only 15% of travels were recorded, while in February – 24%.

The time of increased inspections and additional introduced restrictions in the country did not stop the study group from travelling. However, the enforced regulations might have influenced the selection of transport from the place of residence to the place of accommodation. The most frequently chosen means of transport was a car (79%) and a train (14%). Only six respondents took a coach bus and only one an airplane. For most of the respondents, the main purpose of their trip was the need to change the everyday living environment (25%). Every fifth respondent described him or herself as an active tourist, motivated to try trekking during holiday. The remaining travelers were motivated by the desire to spend time with their loved ones (18%), recreate (17%) and to do sports, like skiing (10%). Among the remaining main travel purposes individual tourists mentioned i.e. medical consultation, religion, shopping, culture and education. Determining the full profile of tourists is possible thanks to the secondary goals of trips, among which the most frequently indicated was recreation (49%), the need to change the daily living environment (33%), the desire to spend time with loved ones (21%), active tourism related to trekking (12%) and skiing (7%). Among the remaining secondary goals, tourists indicated, i.e. winter swimming and learning about animate and inanimate natural values (Chart 3).

Based on the tourist attractions and destinations indicated by the respondents, five main reception areas can be distinguished: the high mountain area – Tatra Mountains (30%), the lower mountains – Karkonosze and Jizera Mountains (30%), Baltic Sea coast (6%), biggest cities, i.e. Cracow, Warsaw, Wroclaw (22%) and the lake district (3%). The average distance between the place of residence and the reception area was around 337 km. Every third respondent chose a destination located 200–300 km from the place of everyday life, 18% within the 300–400 km distance, 13% at a distance of 100–200 km and 500–600 km.

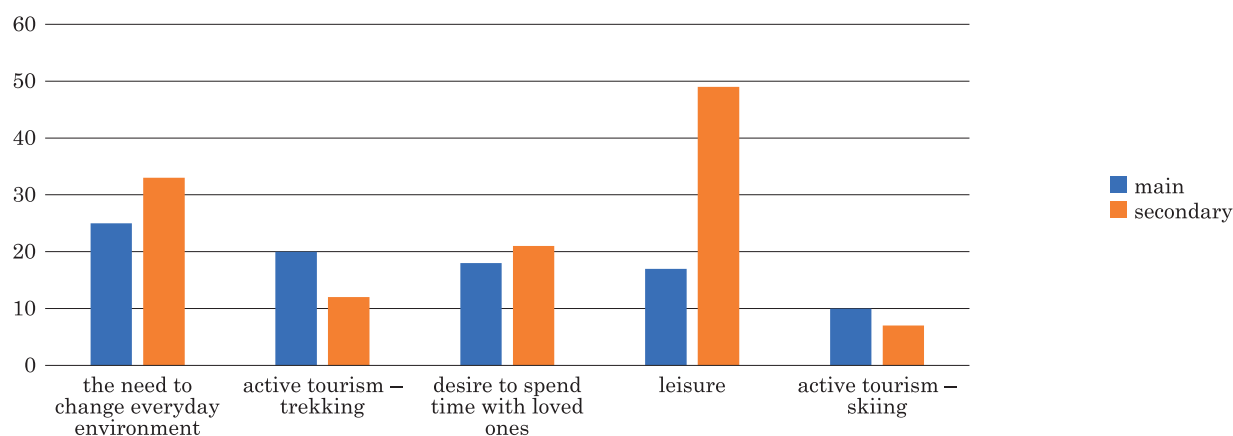


Chart 3. The main and secondary reasons for travelling during the COVID pandemic between 7.11.2020 and 11.02.2021 (n = 100)
 Source: own preparation.

The lowest percentage of respondents was recorded for places located within 100 km from the place of residence (8%) and further than 600–700 km (3%) and 700 km (3%).

When asked about whether they planned to come back to the visited place after the COVID-19 pandemic was over, 81% of respondents answered “I don’t know”. These answers were thoroughly analyzed and compared with the destination place and the length of stay. The authors made a conclusion, that the majority of respondents visited well-known destinations as indicated in the reception areas – 29% tourists visit them regularly, and 49% sporadically.

The respondents organized mostly short trips (2–3 days long), during which they visited historical buildings in the main cities, like Wrocław, Szczecin, and Gdansk. Additionally, they highlighted such activities like local hikes and walking on the beach. Only 22% of respondents decided to visit a completely new place during the pandemic restrictions.

Tourists most often traveled in a group of friends (39%) and a partner (38%), what definitely contrasts with the number of family and individual trips (Chart 4).

The most popular choice of accommodation was private lodging which was booked by nearly half

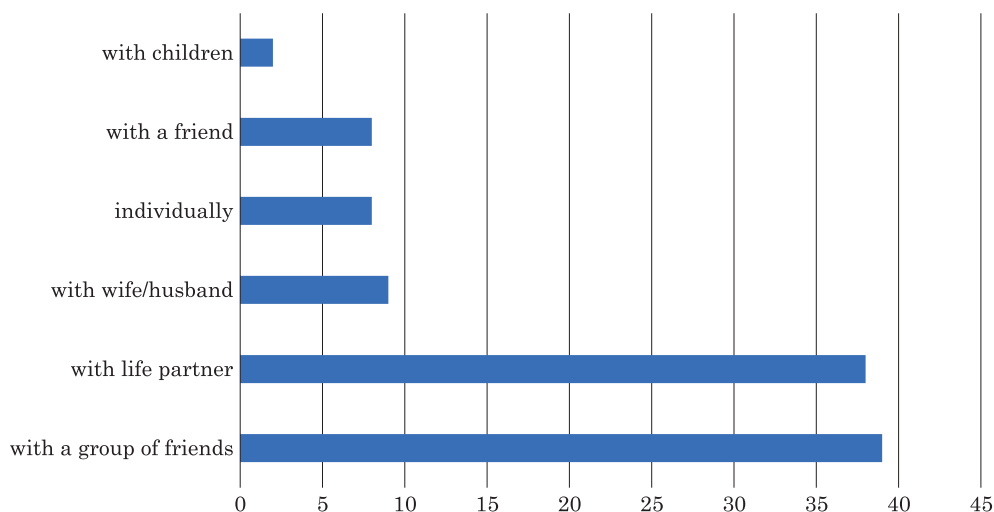


Chart 4. Methods of travelling during the COVID pandemic between 7.11.2020 and 11.02.2021 (n=100)
 Source: own preparation.

of the respondents (49%). The remaining categories of hotel facilities (11%) and short-term holiday homes (8%) were much less popular. Despite the applicable restrictions, slightly more than 3/4 of establishments published their offer online. The main source of information about the hotels activity was Booking.com and private recommendations (Chart 5).

Among the ways of circumventing the restrictions, only 3 tourists mentioned such solutions, as “renting a parking space with a shared apartment for free” (1%), “renting a ski storage room with an apartment for free” (1%), “providing accommodation services for business travelers” (1%), “long-term rental with contract termination immediately after signing” (1%). In other cases, the accommodation service was advertised simply.

Some of the respondents contacted the facilities’ owners by phone (15%) or spoke directly with the owner on the facility premises (17%), using their previous experience of staying in a chosen place. In general, most of the respondents learned about the available accommodation via Booking.com (45%), from personal referrals (19%) or other portals, like: Facebook (8%), Airbnb (6%), OLX (3%).

Accommodation prices varied depending on the tourist destination and the category of the accommodation facility. The largest group (23%) included tourists who spent approx. 40–50 PLN per person per night. The following price ranges covered a similar number of respondents: 50–60 PLN (12%), 60–70 PLN (11%), 70–80 PLN (11%), 80–90 PLN (8%), 90–100 PLN (10%), above 100 PLN (8%). By comparing the two most frequently declared travel motives with the expenditure, it can be easily noticed that tourists whose desire was to change the everyday surrounding incurred higher expenses than those interested in active tourism (Chart 6).

The majority of respondents positively assessed the price-quality ratio of the accommodation services offered, reporting it was either very good (56%) or good (35%). It is worth mentioning, that despite some critical opinions, none unequivocally declared never to return to the place he or she visited (Chart 7).

Due to the significant limitations in the operation of catering facilities (limited to take-away meals only), many restaurants temporarily suspended their activities. This situation forced tourists to arrange meals, which took many forms. 71% of respondents

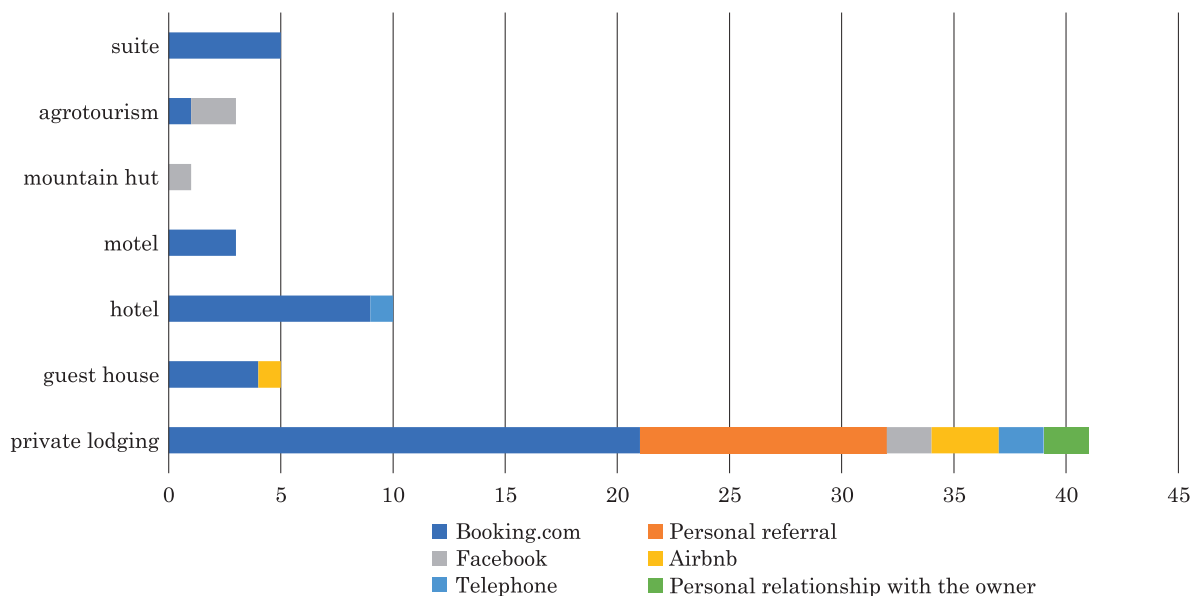


Chart 5. Main sources of information about officially available accommodation facilities (n=68)

Source: own preparation.

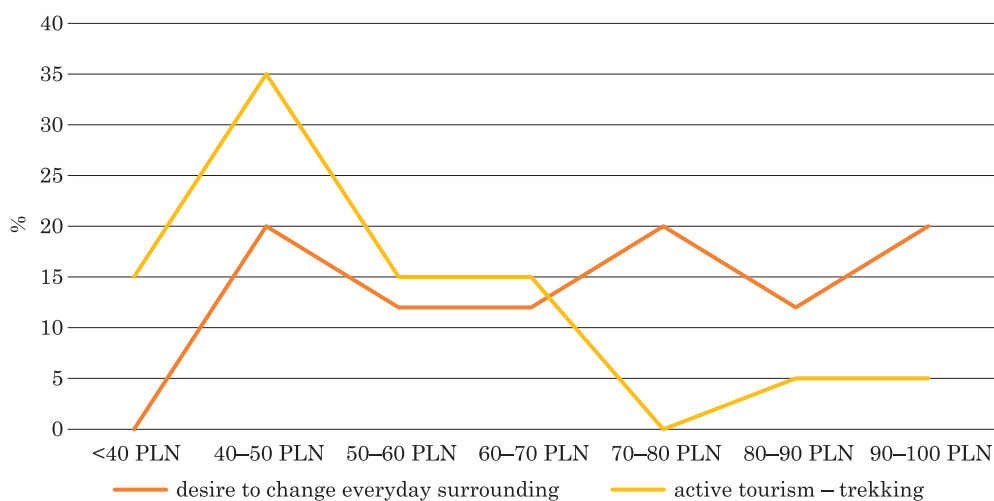


Chart 6. Accommodation price (per person per night) according to the travel motives (n=45)
Source: own preparation.

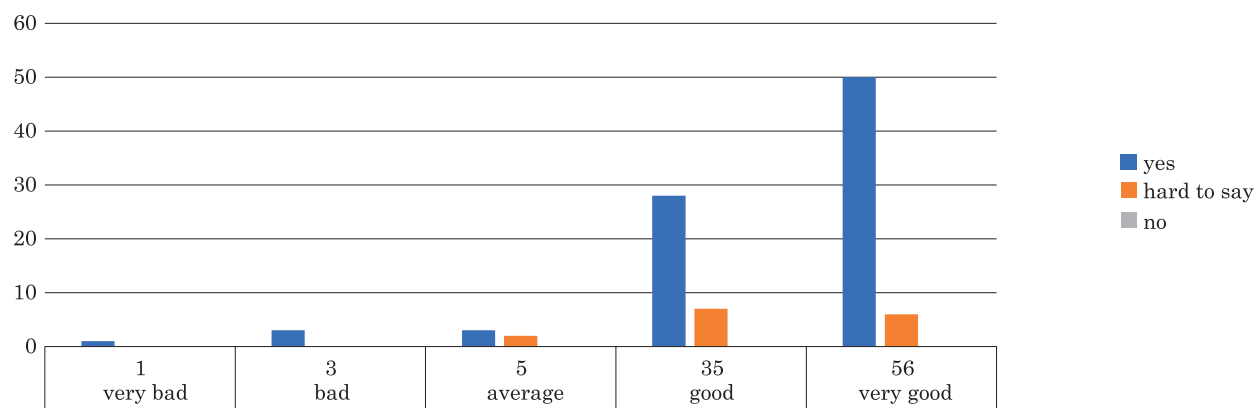


Chart 7. Assessment of the price-quality ratio of the provided accommodation services and the declared willingness to return to the same place (n=100)
Source: own preparation.

decided to prepare their own meals, while 46% took advantage of the local takeaway offer, while 2 respondents admitted to visit illegally open restaurants in the reception area, which regularly served customers. A popular choice was to order meals by phone or mobile applications which was used by 20% of respondents. Some of the accommodation facilities guaranteed half board (10%) or full board (5%).

The COVID-19 pandemic, with all its risk related of a high level disease, caused a reaction of public authorities which introduced further restrictions limiting the possibility to travel. The respondents were asked whether the above-mentioned limitations

had any impact on the frequency of undertaken trips. The results are presented in Table 1 where the most frequent answers indicate a decrease in both one-day and several-day trips.

Table 1. The frequency of trips undertaken during the COVID pandemic (n = 100)

One-day trips	Number of responses	Several days trips	Number of responses
increased	22	increased	13
decreased	40	decreased	55
no change	38	no change	32

Source: own preparation.

The decisions to restrict mobility may be associated with the fear of falling ill, because as indicated by the study results, the majority of respondents was not sick before the trip (85%). The authors also obtained information, that directly after their departure 4 respondents turned out positive with SARS-CoV-2. For the 73% respondents the epidemiological restrictions in the country related to tourism were inappropriately severe. For 7% of the respondents the adopted solutions were just, while 4% of tourists considered it to be too gentle. The rest of respondents were not able to unambiguously answer the question.

CONCLUSIONS

It is no exaggeration to say, that COVID-19 dominated and changed every aspect of human life in 2020 (Lew et al., 2020). Individual countries take different measures to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic. The World Travel Council (WTTC, 2020) recommends the implementation of postulates aimed at reviving tourist regions. The most important among them is the adequate crisis management, which should encourage active tourism promotion combined with rebuilding trust among potential visitors. This is where the question arises – can the actions of entrepreneurs actually attract tourists if they are against the government guidelines, although supported by expert opinions? The conducted research does not allow to provide an unambiguous answer, as it was carried out only among respondents who willingly decided to travel during the restrictions. In this context, it is necessary to refer to a broader perspective on the issue of organizing free time, which can be spent in the place of one's own residence, without the need to use accommodation services.

According to the studies by Kugiejko (2021), during COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 the average leisure time resources increased. The form of work has also changed as many employers introduced remote work, home office or a hybrid system. This way it became possible to work remotely from any place in the world. The analyzed reports (Minkwitz,

2021) presented that the respondents travelled mostly for recreational purposes during pandemic. Despite the restrictions and isolation, many people spent vacation or summer holiday away from home. They went mostly on short, one-day trips to various places in Poland. Some mentioned they missed the possibility to participate in organized trips: "(...) participation in trips organized by travel agencies or Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society (PTTK) gave me a feeling of connection to other human beings and allowed to explore the region better (...)". Similar behaviors were observed in the studied group of respondents (n = 100) where the change in nature of daily work or its temporary absence resulted in a greater number of departures among young people (during the restrictions); most of them lasted during the weekend.

As we can see, tourism and trips have become a permanent part of people's lives. They are no longer available only to a selected group of respondents but to anyone who has the will and the opportunity. During the restrictions, tourists seem to be less demanding and their expectations regarding the reception area are not that high. Being aware of the enforced restrictions, they often chose well-known places that they can rediscover in line with their own plan. Sightseeing, however, becomes a secondary factor in relations to the crucial desire to change the everyday surroundings. This developing trend may consequently lead to the development of cultural and ethnographic tourism, described by the slogans "4H", in which people pay special attention to habitat, heritage, history and handicrafts. As a result, the closest homeland raises greater interest as well as the idea of local touring. This way the tourists can discover a specific *genius loci* and use the natural and cultural conditions of the geographic environment for leisure. As a consequence, we can talk about the intensification of the "staycation" phenomenon, which is more and more quoted in the literature in the context of pandemic and post-pandemic developing trends in regional tourism (cf. Knežević & Ogorevc, 2020, Knežević et al., 2021) The interest in the tourist values of the place of everyday life may be of particular

important in case of inhabitants of the largest cities in Poland, as they are the epicenters of tourist traffic.

When analyzing the collected data, it is worth mentioning the study about developing trends in Poland before and during the COVID-19 pandemic (cf. Juszczak, 2020). There is a noticeable similarity in the obtained data in terms of the predominant short-term trips and the lowest domestic tourist traffic in November. However, the pandemic influenced the purpose of these trips, which were previously primarily recreational. During the second wave of covid infections and associated restrictions, the need to change the daily living environment became the main goal of the trips, followed by leisure as indicated by the largest group of respondents as a secondary goal. Similarly like pre-pandemic, tourists concentrated mostly on the Baltic Sea coast and mountain resorts, associated mostly with active tourism (trekking and skiing). Special attention should be also paid to the diversification of tourist services, enabling tourists to choose the preferred form of departure, tailored to their own expectations and capabilities.

The restrictions regarding the possibility of organizing trips and the factors indicated as reasons for resigning from tourist trips resulted in the fact that the number of activities, such as sightseeing, slightly decreased in favor of active recreation. The selected regions that dominated in the tourist trips during pandemic are also worth analyzing. As previously discussed, it was four regions of the country dominated by the mountain area (60%), followed by large urban areas (22%). The choice of mountain areas (including the Tatra National Park and the Jazira Mountains) could be related to the desire to spend free time actively out in the wild, where it wasn't obligatory to wear face masks. This assumption may be confirmed by the data from the monitoring of tourist traffic, which has been carried out for several years in the area of Tatra National Park. According to the published data, the number of tourists in 2020 was lower in annual terms, but during the summer holiday (from July to end of August) record numbers were recorded. The authors put special attention to the voluntary

dispersion of tourist traffic which was confirmed by a significant increase in the number of tourists visiting the previously less popular areas of the park (from 25% to 223%). This can be interpreted as a precaution to maintain greater social distance and rest away from the crowded tourist routes. On the other hand, the tourists' preference to spend free time in the large urban centers (i.e. Wrocław, Gdańsk) provided respondents with access to tourist infrastructure or attractions (incl. the Long Market in Gdańsk, the Centennial Hall in Wrocław), especially the one that did not require service of additional people. Despite the applicable restrictions, most trips were organized during Christmas and New Year periods, which is connected with longer day off work or comes from the tradition of travelling at that time. Based on the research, the fact of travelling did not affect the number of SARS-CoV-2 infections, however, this might be related to the sanitary rules obedience and social distancing by travelers and a significantly lower number of visitors in those regions.

This study presents issues connected with the research about tourist behavior during COVID-19 pandemic and introduced restrictions. The identified groups of issues included mobility restrictions and using accommodation during lockdown. The individual parts of the article present general issues related to the changes in the tourist traffic, and threats resulting from the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. The authors also mentioned the scope of public policy in counteracting and limiting the negative effects of the pandemic, resulting from reduced tourist traffic and freezing the functioning of the tourist economy.

During the initial period of the pandemic, the public activities generally ignored the state of the functioning of tourism economy. The worsening crisis in the functioning of tourism enterprises, related to the inability to run the business as usual, did not affect the authorities' decision. Thus, officially, it was not possible to undertake activities related to the management of tourist traffic by hotel, restaurants and tourist carriers. The temporary suspension of hotel activities did not affect the difficulty in finding

accommodation. The majority of analyzed cases related to the “illegal” provision of tourist services. The full analysis of the scale of this phenomenon would enable the estimation of budget losses of individual communes due to non-payment of the due climate tax. However, it will be extremely difficult due to the activities of administrators and tourists outside the applicable law, which limits the possibility of obtaining reliable and credible data.

The undertaken research is an introduction to further analysis of the phenomenon of illegal domestic tourism during the pandemic. It will require the comparison of the obtained results with the available reports and indicators describing tourist traffic during the COVID-19 pandemic on a local, regional and national level. In the future, it is worth conducting a comparative analysis that allows determining the changes that have occurred in the way Poles travel in recent years (pre- and post-pandemic) and enables presenting the forecasts in this area. The upcoming trips will be organized in a different reality, in which vaccination may become the passport to legal travelling. As a consequence, it will contribute to the development of a new model of tourism, commonly described as “3xV” (Visit, Vaccination, Vacation) where the main problem of illegal trips may already be a thing of the past.

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