

Tourist activity of the elderly of Podlaskie voivodeship. Contribution to the study

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Abstract

The article analyzes data from a pilot study conducted among people above 55 years of age living in Podlaskie Voivodeship. The results suggest that seniors from the Podlaskie voivodeship mostly prefer sightseeing trips (26%) and recreation (26%), most carrying them out in the company of family (46%). They are willing to go on both short-term (35%) and long term visits (29%). As a means of transport the respondents mainly indicated the car (33%). Most frequently they independently organize their trips (51%), and in the 75% of cases they finance them with their own funds. On the basis of a comparative analysis of the obtained results with the results of research conducted by the Pretendent Research Corporation on behalf of the Minister of Sport and Tourism in 2010, it should be noted that despite the many differences in other spheres of life, seniors from the Podlaskie have quite similar, but not identical needs of and experiences in the field of tourism activity, as the remaining part of the Polish population above 55 years of age.

Keywords

elderly, tourism, tourist activity

Introduction

Modern societies, especially in highly developed countries are now facing the fact of demographic changes involving aging, occurring at an accelerating pace. This process makes the seniors a very important segment of the European market for goods and services. The growing number of older people, representing an expanding market segment, arouses growing interest also of the tourism industry.

The analysis of the socio-demographic situation of the European countries shows a gradual process of demographic aging. In 2011, the population of the European Union amounted to approximately 502 million, of which more than 123 million people were aged between 55 and 80 years, which accounted for almost 25% of the population (IM, 2012), while in 2010 it was 90 million - 19% (IM, 2010).

The study *The 2012 Ageing Report: Underlying Assumptions and Projection Methodologies*, published by the European Commission in April 2011, shows that the population over 65 years of age will increase significantly in the coming years. This population may double within the European Union, from 87.5 million in 2010 to 152.6 million in 2060. Forecasts predict an even greater increase for the segment of the population over the age of 80 years. The size of this age group from 23.7 million in 2010 is to rise to 62.4 million in 2060 (IM, 2012).

While in Poland in 2000, the number of people aged over 50 years was 10.5 million, and increased significantly in 2011 to 13.5 million, representing overall growth in the population structure from 27% to 35% (CSO, 2012). The largest group in this case are people aged over 70 years - about 3.7 million and 50-54 years - about 3 million. In addition, it is estimated that the elderly are the least active sector of the tourism market. In 2010, only 33% of seniors over the age of 55 participated in tourist trips (PKB, 2011).

The increasing number of older people is a huge challenge, not only for the economic and social policies of the states, but also for the tourism market. Seniors from year to year will constitute an increasingly important segment of the market, expressing the need for an offer of leisure, sightseeing, active and health tourism, as well as covering various forms of recreation.

Although senior citizens are considered to be less affluent, they have relatively fixed incomes, and their needs are increasingly going beyond the shopping related to everyday life and include services related to the organization of leisure time, where tourism plays an important role. The undeniable fact, confirmed by numerous studies, is that that tourist activity has a positive impact on the health and well-being of older people (Napierała, 2002; Chabior, 2005; Śniadek, 2007; Fabiś, 2008; Bąk, 2012).

The purpose of this article is to provide a basis for the preliminary analysis of tourist activity of the Podlaskie region residents over 55 years of age. The pilot study, followed by the appropriate study, carried out (in the future) on a representative sample of respondents will be able to constitute a source of knowledge useful in the design of tourist offers, targeted at older people from across the Podlaskie region, taking into account their needs and financial conditions.

1. Literature review

Tourist activity of the elderly is extremely important and is a big challenge for the tourism organizers, due to the separate characteristics and needs of this group of people (Spychała at al., 2011). Senior's involvement in tourism, as an environment constituting a significant proportion of the population, is an opportunity for themselves and may also positively influence the process of minimizing the seasonal nature of tourism (Mokras-Grabowska, 2010; Górska, 2010). The conducted analyses also indicate that in the case of Poland, older people require significant activation (Grzelak-Kostulska at al., 2010). A good example of such activity are the social tourism programs, such as Calypso, or being its part the Europe Senior Tourism (Górska, 2010; Mokras-Grabowska, 2010; Śledzińska, 2010; Grabowski, 2011).

Experts in the subject believe that improving the effectiveness of actions in the field of activation of seniors requires, first of all, carrying out thorough research on their involvement in the practice of tourism (Grzelak-Kostulska at al., 2011). In the available literature, the problem of tourist activities of the elderly is in fact discussed in quite a small number of studies. The document forming the structure of knowledge on the subject is the report from 2010 concerning the research on the preferences of older people on tourist trips, carried out on a representative group of Polish citizens from all voivodeships, commissioned by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism (PKB, 2011). In 2010, research was also conducted on the level of activity of Polish seniors and their problems in the context of factors limiting both the actual implementation of tourist trips, but also responsible for the negative attitude towards practicing this activity (Grzelak-Kostulska at al., 2011). There are also results of analyses of patterns in shaping tourist behavior of seniors and relationships between the variable determining the occurrence of a tourist trip and the economic and socio-demographic variables characterizing households of seniors in Poland (Bąk, 2012).

Theoretical aspects of the activities, including tourist activity of older people are also presented in the context of social tourism. In their publications, the this subject is analyzed by, among others: Andrzej Stasiak, (Stasiak, 2010), Bogdan Włodarczyk

(Włodarczyk, 2010), Julia Wojciechowska-Solis (Wojciechowska-Solis, 2011), Wacław Idziak (Idziak, 2011), Ewa Górska (Górska, 2011).

2. Research methods

The purpose of this article is to provide a basis for the preliminary analysis of tourist activity of the residents of the Podlaskie voivodeship over 55 years of age. Pilot studies were carried out on a group of 70 people from the region of the Podlaskie voivodeship in the period from February to April 2012. The authors have completed the article with the help of the students of Tourism and Recreation from the Department of Management at the University of Białystok.

The adopted research method was the diagnostic survey carried out with the use of the survey technique. The questionnaire consisted of 18 items, which included open and closed questions with a single and multiple choice limited and a section on gender, age, education, housing, labor, health and material well-being (Stupnicki, 2003). The data analysis involved descriptive statistics methods.

3. Characteristics of the respondents

The study was conducted on a group of 70 people from the region of the Podlaskie voivodeship. 34% of respondents lived in rural areas. The others were residents of cities up to 10 thousand residents - 17%, from 10 to 50 thousand - 20%, from 50 to 100 thousand - 7%, more than 100 thousand - 22%. Structure of respondents in terms of gender fell in favor of women, who constituted 61% of the people who took part in carrying out the survey. Men in the study group of the respondents comprised 39%. Among the respondents the largest group of people were in the age group 55-60 years - 44% and at the age of 61-65 years - 30%. Respondents aged 66-70 years accounted for 16%, 71-75 years - 7%, while a group of people over 76 years old - a mere 3%.

Analyzing the respondents in terms of education the largest group of people were those with secondary education - 36% and vocational - 31%. Respondents with higher education accounted for 17% of respondents, and the primary - 16%.

Given the economic activity of the respondents the largest group were retirees and pensioners - 51.5% and workers - 37%. The study was also attended by unemployed persons, which accounted for 11.5%.

41% of the respondents assessed their health condition as good and 29% as average. Only 16% felt that they enjoy very good health. The smallest group were people evaluating their health as poor (11%) or very bad (3%).

The dominant group of respondents identified their economic situation as satisfactory (39%) and good (33%). Only 7% of respondents recognized being in a very good financial situation. On the other hand, 21% said they have financial difficulties.

4. Research results

The study shows that 60% of respondents declare tourist activity. While 40% of respondents are not involved in tourist trips. These people (not participating on tourist trips) usually indicate lack of funds (46%) and lack of subjective need to travel (19%) as the cause of the lack of tourist activity. The obstacle is also poor health (11%), in many cases, impeding the movement outside the place of residence, and the performance of domestic and family responsibilities (11%). The detailed distribution of responses is presented in Fig. 1.

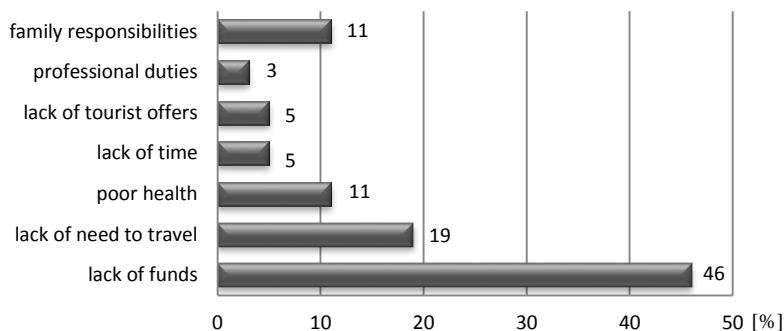


Fig. 1. Reasons for the lack of tourist activity of the respondents [%]

Source: own study based on the survey.

Respondents who declared participation in tourism¹, asked for directions of tourist trips most often, in 62% of cases, stated that they travel abroad. The areas of tourist reception located in the Poland attracted smaller interest (20%), and the region of the Podlaskie voivodeship (18%), (Fig. 2).

¹ In the remainder of this article the results obtained from the questionnaires filled out by respondents declaring the participation in tourism will be presented (N=42; 60%).

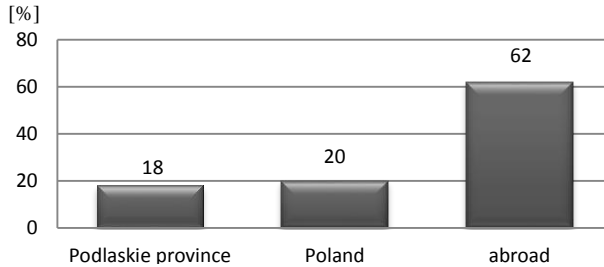


Fig. 2. The territorial scope of the respondents journeys [%]

Source: own study based on the survey.

Respondents asked about the objectives of their journeys in the past three years stated that the most frequently they traveled for sightseeing (26%) and for leisure (26%). A little less - 17% of respondents indicated visiting relatives or friends as the destination, and 14% - improving health. Not often did the elderly people from the Podlaskie region provide visiting religious sites (3%) and business trips (5%) as a destination of their travels. However, none of the respondents indicated practicing physical recreation nor educational purposes (Fig. 3).

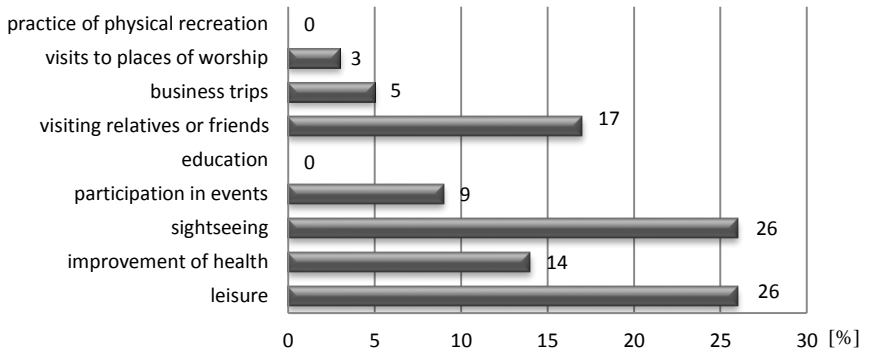


Fig. 3. Destinations of the respondents in the last three years [%]

Source: own study based on the survey.

During the tourist trips the respondents were usually accompanied by family (46%). This trend, is probably due to the desire to devote more time to those nearest (to parents) who in their everyday professional life are very often pushed away into the background. The tourist trip is then treated as compensation and also the opportunity to improve family relations. Senior citizens also quite often traveled independently - 30%, and with tourist groups - 17% (Fig. 4).

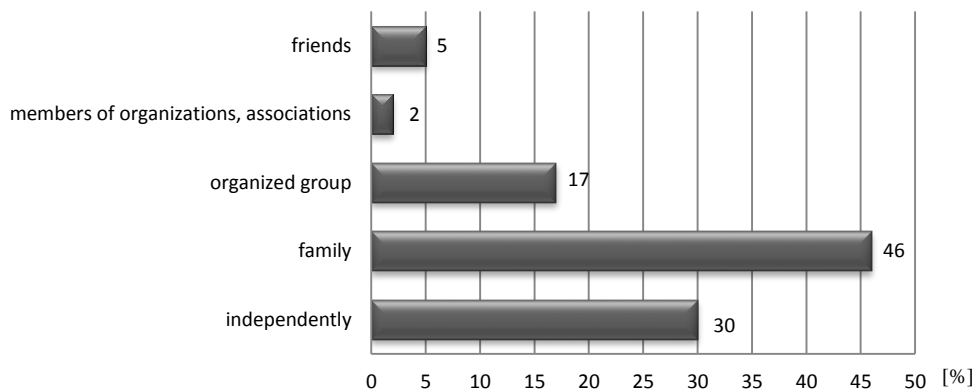


Fig. 4. People accompanying the respondents during tourist trips [%]

Source: own study based on the survey.

Respondents, asked about the length of their journey, in 35% declared that they usually lasted from 1-3 days. Long-term trips lasting 4-7 days, enjoyed a quite a comparable interest - 29%. The least frequent tourist trips were in excess of 15 days - 6% (Fig. 5), (compare Gierałowska at al., 2013).

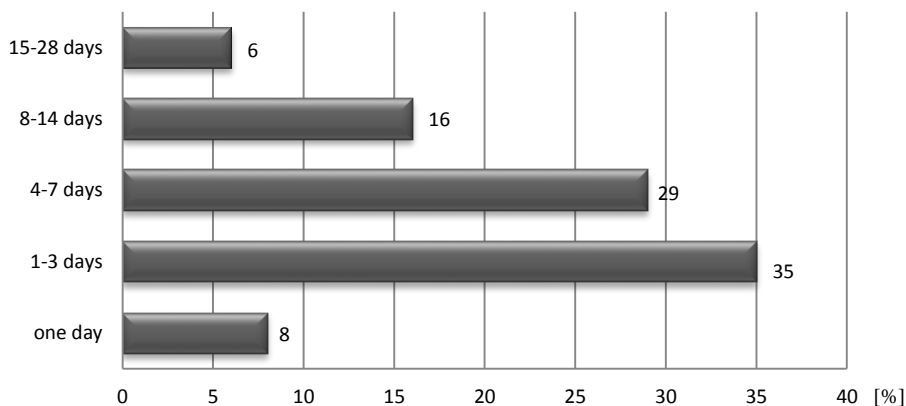


Fig. 5. Length of the trip of the respondents [%]

Source: own study based on the survey.

Senior citizens from the Podlaskie voivodeship usually organized their trips themselves, as evidenced by statements of 51% of the respondents. The organization of the trip was also dealt with very often by the family or friends of the respondents

- 13%. It was connected with the ability to better adapt the program to the individual, often sophisticated needs. When arranging a tourist trip the respondents (11%) often used the services of travel agencies. In turn they least likely took advantage of the opportunities offered by social organizations (2%) and the church (6%), (Fig. 6). The reason for this could be the lack of knowledge about the social organizations, as well as simply the lack of such proposals.

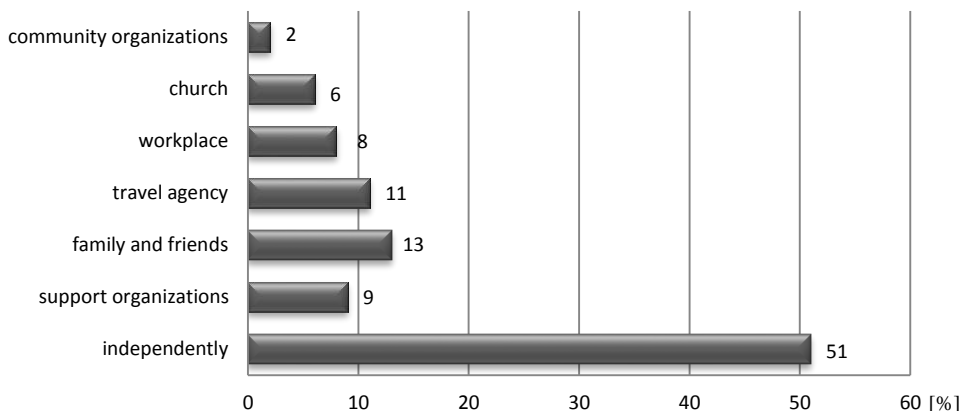


Fig. 6. Organizer of the respondents' journeys [%]

Source: own study based on the survey.

Usually - in 75% of cases the respondents, funded the trips of their own funds. A small proportion of respondents (15%) tried to raise funds from other sources - institutions and organizations including the activities connected with the support of the elderly in their profile. However, only 4% of the respondents declared that their tourist trips were fully funded by the supporting institutions and organizations (Fig. 7). Among the organizations subsidizing trips most often mentioned were - the Social Insurance Institution and PFRON. Respondents also indicated workplaces. Subsidized trips were related to the improvement of health and rehabilitation carried out in sanatoriums.

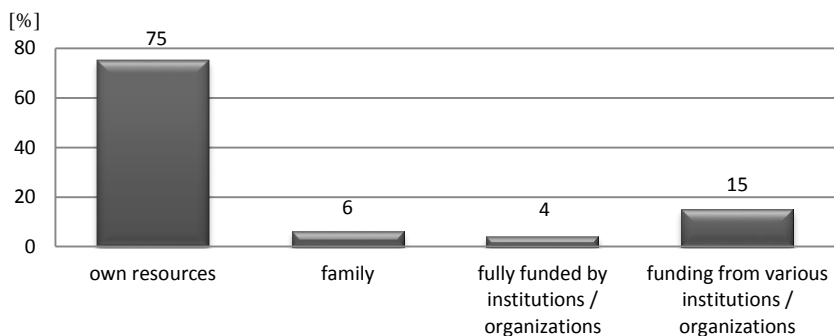


Fig. 7. Source of funding of the respondents' tourist trips [%]

Source: own study based on the survey.

In the case of questions regarding accommodation facilities used during stays longer than one day most respondents indicated a hotel and accommodation at family and friends - 26% respectively. Quite a popular and cheaper alternative included travel lodges and holiday centers (16%). The least frequently respondents indicated agritourism quarters (2%) and campsites (1%). The detailed distribution of responses is presented in Fig. 8.

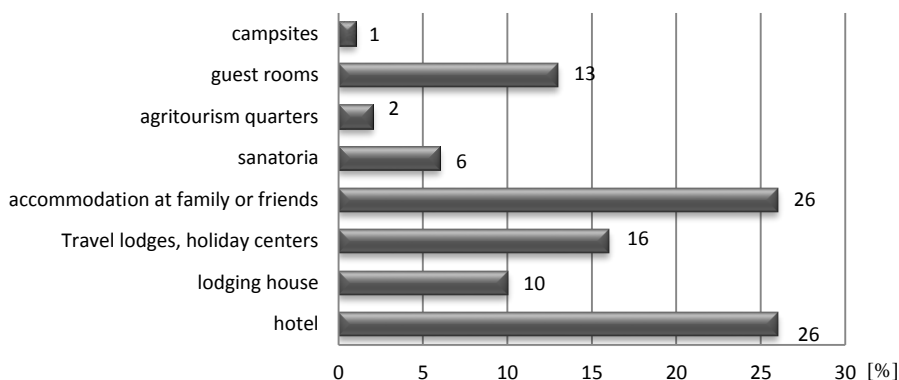


Fig. 8. Accommodation facilities used by respondents during tourist trips [%]

Source: own study based on the survey.

33% of the respondents in selecting the means of transport preferred car. A large proportion of respondents also chose to travel by train (19%), bus (18%) or air (16%). The least popular was the ship or ferry (4%), (Fig. 9).

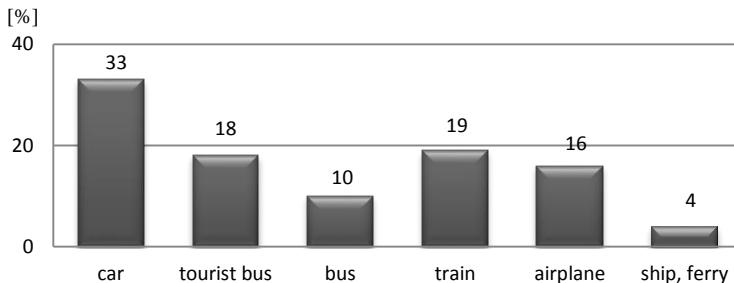


Fig. 9. The means of transport used by the respondents during the trip [%]

Source: own study based on the survey.

Most often, because in 32% of cases, the respondents allocated for their tourist activity from PLN 501 to 1000 per year. Accordingly, 20% of respondents also indicated the amount of PLN 1001 - 2000 and PLN 2001 – 3000 (Fig. 10). Whereas, 14% of the respondents declared that they spent on tourist trips an amount of up to PLN 500. The presented distribution of responses can result from not the best financial situation of the Polish seniors.

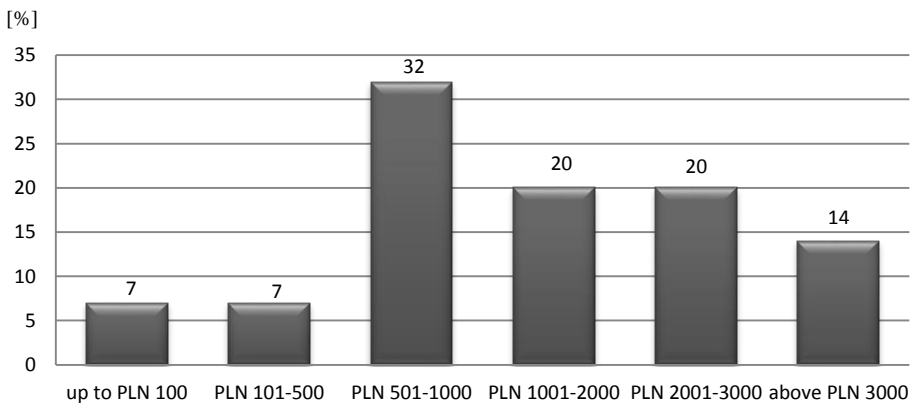


Fig. 10. Respondents' expenditures on tourism during the year [%]

Source: own study based on the survey.

5. Discussion of the results

The analysis of issues related to the frequency and motives of the elderly people to tourist activity conducted on the basis of pilot studies indicates that the inhabitants of the Podlaskie province over 55 years of age in 60% are involved in tourist trips. Among the 40% of respondents not participating in tourism, as reasons for the lack of tourist activity most often mentioned were the following: lack of financial resources (46%), no need to travel (19%) and family responsibilities (11%) as well as poor health (11%). The results of the study conducted by the Claimant Research Corporation by order of the Minister of Sport and Tourism in 2010 suggest that in relation to the residents of Poland who were over 55 years of age, 67% of respondents did not participate in tourist trips, and the main cause of this were health problems (40%), lack of financial resources (38%) and lack of time (20%), (PKB, 2011).

The main purpose of the respondents' trips was sightseeing and recreation (52%), visiting friends and relatives (17%) and improvement of health (14%). Significantly fewer elder people from the Podlaskie region determined visiting religious sites (3%) and business trips (5%) as aims of their trip. The results of the survey among the community of Polish senior citizens above 55 years of age, which indicate that the main objective of the respondents were tourist and recreational trips (77%) are similarly shaped. On the other hand, visiting relatives and friends was the aim of travel of 9% of the respondents, health - 8%, and religious - 3% (PKB, 2011).

A study conducted among elderly people over 50 years of age, living in the Podlaskie province, indicates that during tourist trips almost half of the respondents are accompanied by family (46%). This stemmed from a desire to devote more time to the loved ones. While 30% of the respondents traveled alone. In the case of the general population of Poland above 55 years of age, the results follow the same line, because the respondents in 2010 were preferably going with their families (partner - 41%, with children - 23%), while unaccompanied in 25% of cases (PKB, 2011).

Most often, the respondents organized their travel on their own (51%). They often used the services of travel agencies (11%) and the support of friends and family (13%). The least frequently the respondents used the opportunities offered by community organizations (2%), and the church (6%). In the comparison, it should be noted that the results of the surveys carried out, for example, among seniors from Poznan had quite a different outcome. In this case, the elderly were most often going on trips organized primarily by the University of the Third Age (31%) and nursing homes and senior clubs. While 25% of the respondents enjoyed the offer of travel

agents. It should be also noted that 44% of the respondents organized their trips by themselves (Zmysłony, 2012).

Seniors of Podlaskie province preferred short trips - 1-3 days (35%). Long-term trips attracted similar interest - 29% of respondents declared their participation in trips of 4-7 days. The tendency among the general Polish population to benefit from short-term trips peaked in 2006-2007 (23%), while it was at the lowest level in 2008, and in subsequent years increased by one percentage point per year, reaching 22% in 2010 (Łaciak, 2011).

Respondents most often, because in 75% of cases, financed the travel from their own funds. A few seniors from the Podlaskie province (15%) were trying to raise funds from other sources. Among this type of institutions respondents named social security institutions, PFRON and workplaces. With regard to the surveyed seniors from Poznan results differ even more, because nine out of ten respondents said they paid for their own trips themselves. Only 5% of respondents admitted that they used the programs financially supporting participation of the elderly in tourism, and as many as 60% of them did not use it, whereas, every third respondent had not even heard about it (Zmysłony, 2012). In the case of all Polish seniors who in 2010 went on a tourist trip - 16% used their subsidizing. Half of which used the Employee benefit Fund and the rest other forms of subsidies (PKB, 2011).

The choice of the mode of transport used during a journey is usually dictated by the need for convenience and speed of travel, and therefore most respondents chose the car (33%), train (19%), bus (18%) and aircraft (16%). A ferry or ship (8%) and line bus (10%) were the least frequently used the respondents. The accommodation type preferred by seniors included hotel (26%), accommodation with family or friends (26%), guest rooms (13%) and travel lodges (16%). With regard to the general population of the Polish seniors the results were quite different. The preferred mode of transport was a bus/coach (26%), followed by an airplane (23%) and a car (20%). For $\frac{1}{5}$ of the respondents the type of transport did not matter. Type of accommodation that seniors preferred when traveling included mainly lodging house, guest rooms, then agritourism quarters and 1-3 star hotels (PKB, 2011).

In the majority (32%) the seniors from the Podlaskie province indicated the expenditures on tourism to be at the level of PLN 501-1000. Whereas, 14% of the respondents declared that they spent on tourist trips an amount of up to PLN 500 per year (of which 7% - PLN 100 and 7% from PLN 101-500). This distribution of responses is mainly due to the bad financial situation of the elderly in Poland. It needs to be recalled that from March 1, 2013, the lowest retirements and pensions are as follows: for total incapacity to work and survivor's pension – PLN 831.15, due to partial disability – PLN 637.92, pre-retirement benefit – PLN 975,78 (ZUS, 2013).

Conclusions

The tested seniors from the Podlaskie province have quite similar, but not identical, needs and experiences in terms of the tourist activity, as the remaining part of the Polish population above 55 years of age. They mostly prefer trips of a cognitive-recreation nature, with their families. They are willing to go on short-term and long-term trips, with the use of such means of transport as car, bus, train and plane. Respondents mostly organize their travel on their own, while at the same time in three-quarters of cases they fund them with their own resources.

Understanding the preferences of seniors, is important and has a significant impact on the preparation of an adequate tourist offer that meets their requirements and satisfies their needs. Currently, the offer is relatively modest, despite the fact that they constitute an increasingly large, and therefore more intense in terms of purchasing potential, consumer group. In comparison to western European seniors, as well as other age groups, Polish seniors show a relatively low level of tourism consumption. The main reason for this situation is especially weak purchasing power of Polish seniors, as well as the professed system of values in which tourism still occupies fairly low positions (Śniadek, 2007).

The results of the pilot study presented in the paper may provide a basis for further research on a representative sample of people over 55 years of age. The actual test results may be useful in the preparation of offers of travel agencies and social organizations, addressed directly to seniors living in the Podlaskie province. They can also provide information that is important from the point of view of entrepreneurs and institutions as well as organizations that manage tourism in the region. Thanks to them, these entities will be able to adapt the tourism products to the needs of elder people who, to a large extent, are traveling also in the region and it is here that they spend their money. Therefore, we should be aware of their needs and should make efforts to build an offer corresponding to their material conditions, as in the near future the senior citizens will constitute a significant segment of the market.

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Aktywność turystyczna osób starszych z województwa podlaskiego. Przyczynki do badań

Streszczenie

W artykule przeanalizowano dane uzyskane z badania pilotażowego przeprowadzonego wśród mieszkańców powyżej 55 roku życia zamieszkujących województwo podlaskie. Uzyskane wyniki sugerują, że seniorzy z województwa podlaskiego preferują w głównej mierze wyjazdy, mające na celu zwiedzanie (26%) i wypoczynek (26%), najczęściej realizując je w towarzystwie rodziny (46%). Są skłonni do odbywania zarówno wyjazdów krótkoterminowych (35%), jak i długoterminowych (29%). Jako środek transportu badani wskazują głównie samochód (33%). Najczęściej samodzielnie organizują swoje podróże (51%), jednocześnie w 75% przypadków finansując je ze środków własnych.

Na podstawie dokonanej analizy porównawczej otrzymanych wyników z rezultatami badań prowadzonych przez Pretendent Korporację Badawczą na zlecenie ministra sportu i turystyki w 2010 roku, należy zauważyć, że pomimo wielu różnic w innych sferach życia, seniorzy z województwa podlaskiego mają dość podobne, lecz nie identyczne, potrzeby i doświadczenia w zakresie aktywności turystycznej, co pozostała część polskiego społeczeństwa powyżej 55 roku życia.

Słowa kluczowe

osoby starsze, turystyka, aktywność turystyczna