

## Impacts of Globalization on Tourist Preferences and Activity

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### Abstract

Mass tourism is widely regarded as one of the visible manifestations of globalization. Tourism development can be considered in every dimension of these processes: economic, social, cultural and even political. The high importance of tourism in the present global economy makes it a very popular research field, especially in the scope of economic dependence between tourism and globalization at the global or regional levels. Fully appreciating the achievements of research in this domain, the authors of this paper wish to refer to the scale of the unit and indicate how globalization impacts the individual purchasing decisions. The analysis is based on empirical studies within Polish tourist activity preferences. On the basis of these results the authors attempt to answer the following questions: (1) which tourists' attitudes may reveal the impact of globalization on their preferences and purchasing behaviors; (2) which 'mega-trends' of current tourism are visible in the attitude of Polish tourists; (3) are there differences in the model of tourist activity with reference to the socio-demographic features; (4) what is the spatial scope of preferred tourist destinations (i.e. is the compression of space as readily absorbed in the consciousness of the older population as in the younger?).

**Key words:** globalization, tourism, global tendencies in tourism, tourist preferences and activity, Poland

### Introduction

This paper seeks to establish how globalization affects tourist preferences and activity in Poland. Although a consistent theory of globalization or at least its comprehensive description has not been created, it is certain that globalization not only influences economic, social and political systems, or culture on a worldwide scale, but also exerts person-specific impacts (Bauman 2000, Golka 1999). Naturally, identifying all relationships between globalization and the behavior and attitudes of individual people would be difficult. Therefore, the authors of this paper will try to demonstrate the impact of globalization on human behavior and attitudes in one field of activity – tourism.

Among the major indicators of globalization we find the increasing spatial mobility of people, one sign of which is the growing frequency of foreign travel (Burns and Novelli

2008). This development is the result of both of more intensive business contacts as well as more frequent trips taken for tourist purposes. With the growing frequency of trips, their spatial scope also grows larger. The most important factor behind this development is the advancement of telecommunications and transport (Wahab and Cooper 2001). Falling air fares, decreasing travel times, expanding wealth of developed societies, and common access to information cause that foreign travel to be more frequently viewed as an alternative to domestic travel.

In describing the determinants of foreign tourism development in Poland the unique character of tourism in the former socialist countries should be taken into account. Two historical factors seem particularly important in this context: the serious economic and political impediments to the international movement of people and its limited spatial scope. A significant change in the intensity a spatial scope of tourism took place after the communist bloc collapsed and the free movement of people became possible again.

With the above in mind, it was assumed that also Poles decide to travel abroad more and more often. Improving affordability of air travel increases both the frequency and the spatial scope of tourist trips (because of time and space compression). It was additionally assumed that social groups have different chances to travel abroad (particularly to the more distant regions). Because one needs skills to overcome the financial, administrative, legal as well as mental barriers, younger people, economically active and educated, are most likely to benefit from such trips. Young people are also the group that is most active in this field. As the knowledge of foreign languages, modern technical devices and information systems is common among them, most of them view foreign trips as something normal and undertake them notwithstanding financial constraints. It was assumed that when asked to indicate their preferred tourist destinations this age group would show the weakest "resistance to space".

Foreign trips can be viewed not only as a product of globalization, but also as a force driving it. With migrating populations, incomes and other material as well as immaterial goods travel to other regions of the world (Bauman 2011). It is also individuals that disseminate and absorb new cultural models (Burns and Novelli 2006, Hall and Lew 2009: 141-185).

Another phenomenon that the globalization of ideas brings about is improving environmental awareness and the popularization of the concept of sustainable development (Hall and Lew 1998). The scale of adversary and irreversible changes that human activity causes in the environment is a source of worldwide anxiety. This necessitates seeking ways to restore balance between human needs and the environment. The concept of sustainable development is implemented in the tourist industry, as well, and the awareness of the risks that may arise from a heavy flow of tourists strengthens the determination to ensure symmetry between tourists' needs, the environment and local communities (Wahab and Pigram 1997).

This rising environmental awareness leads to new patterns of tourist behavior, as exemplified by the development of alternative tourism, in opposition to mass tourism. Its essence represents a completely new approach to the meaning of travel and ways of spending free time. As a result, new destinations become popular. The trend is additionally strengthened by the polarization of individual needs and motivations for travelling (Middleton, Fyall, Morgan and Ranchhod 2009). New patterns of tourism can be expected to come to Poland, too. The characteristics of Poles' tourist activity have been used in the study to find out which of the megatrends present in world tourism are also present in Poland.

Another manifestation of globalization that has a strong effect on tourism is fashion. Fashion is frequently a transient phenomenon that makes some regions very popular among tourists. Information is a factor that both forms and disseminates fashion; young people who have ready access to information systems and knowing how to use them can be expected to be the most susceptible to fashion trends.

## **Methodology**

Tourist preferences and activities of the population were collected during a questionnaire survey using the PAPI - Paper and Pencil Interview - technique. The questionnaire interviews were conducted in several towns of different sizes and in the rural areas. The purposive non-random sample was composed of persons at different ages: high-school youth (last years of secondary schools), university students, economically active people, retirees, and disability pensioners. The sample was assumed to exceed 1500 questionnaires, with the margin of error and confidence levels being 5% and 90%, respectively. The questionnaires had a classical structure, including mostly close-ended questions with a dichotomous nominal scale and the modified Likert scale. The survey was conducted from April to June 2010. Following their verification, 1440 questionnaires were used to build a database with the PASW Statistics package, the contents of which were then processed statistically.

## **Increasing the significance of foreign tourism as a component of tourist activity in Poland**

Growing spatial mobility of populations and physical distance losing its importance as a major travel-discouraging factor are among the major manifestations of globalization. They boost tourist activity, making outbound trips more frequent. Therefore, in describing the globalization impacts on Poles' tourist behaviors an attempt was made to examine their propensity to travel abroad.

According to the survey data on over 1440 respondents, almost 26% of them answered that they "engage in foreign tourism". The distribution of responses by age showed that the most active (over 34%) were the respondents at the mobile working age (18-44 years); those at the non-mobile working age (45-60/65 years) accounted for 30%, high-school youth for 27% and students for 21%. Foreign tourism was the least popular among seniors – only 6% travelled abroad for tourist purposes. Further analysis of the frequency of foreign trips showed that the proportion of those who had really travelled outside Poland (however with different frequency, from "once every several years" to "several times a year") was much higher than indicated. The difference stems from the fact that many people understand "foreign tourism" very narrowly, so they tend to omit trips they undertake to meet their families or friends or business strips.

Education is an important factor producing variations in tourist activity, including people's propensity to travel abroad. This study has confirmed the opinion. While almost 40% of the respondents with tertiary education engaged in foreign tourism, among those with secondary education the rate was ca. 24%, and only 10% among the respondents with basic vocational education.

As far as the duration and frequency of trips are concerned, the students and those economically active (aged 18-44 years) were the most frequent to undertake short foreign trips (several times a year, to 3 days). The latter category of the respondents undertook most short, low-frequency foreign trips ("once every several years"). In the older age groups the frequency of the trips was clearly lower.

Similar patterns were found in the case of longer foreign trips, in excess of 4 days. The young people were the most active in this field again. Over 70% of the students went abroad at least "once every several years", with every fourth doing so "once, twice a year", and ca. 7% "several times a year". In the next age group (active people to 44 years) the shares of the respondents undertaking foreign trips and the frequencies of the trips were very similar, but the rate of those who did not travel abroad at all grew there to 35%. The older age groups showed the same pattern; in the non-mobile working age group those not leaving the country constituted over 50% and more than 86% of the seniors aged 65 years and older. The

proportion of the respondents who had frequently travelled abroad (several times a year) also declined with age.

An additional confirmation of higher tourist activity among Poles, including their more frequent outbound trips, comes from the Central Statistical Office data collected during household surveys that were carried out in 2005 and 2009 (Turystyka... 2010). Although the survey being presented used a different methodology, which prevents simple comparisons between the surveys' findings (numerical data), it is important that the conclusions they offer are the same:

- Poles are increasingly active in undertaking foreign trips as tourists;
- tourist activity in Poland clearly declines with age;
- tourist activity and the propensity to undertake foreign trips correlates positively with education and income.

### **The spatial scope of tourist trips and destinations preferred for the future**

Other survey questions allowed investigating the spatial scope of tourist destinations, both visited and preferred for the future. In order to identify the scope, countries were divided among three categories: 1. countries adjacent to Poland; 2. European and Mediterranean countries; 3. non-European countries. According to the data, most respondents had travelled abroad (although some of them did not consider this to be "foreign tourism", see above). Naturally, the numbers of countries visited and their geographical locations were very diverse. The most active were young people: almost 80% of those who had already travelled abroad were high-school youth, students and those economically active (to 44 years), but the distances they had travelled were of different length. Young people were more frequent to visit countries adjacent to Poland, whereas the older age groups had larger shares of those who had travelled long distances. The distance was strongly correlated with the tourist's incomes.

In the next age groups (economically active respondents aged 45-60/65 years and those older than 60/65 years), the shares of the respondents who had never travelled outside the country were clearly higher (38 and 53%, respectively). The shares of the respondents travelling long distances also decreased with age.

To test the assumption that progressing globalization widens the spatial scope of tourist destinations, the respondents were asked to indicate the places that they wanted to see in the future. The countries that the respondents indicated were grouped according to the geographical rule presented above. The results confirmed that young, well-educated people in good financial situation prefer the most distant tourist destinations. Even a cursory analysis of the data shows that past experiences amplify people's wishes to see new places, while presenting trips to new, frequently distant regions of the world as less risky. This conclusion is confirmed by the spatial scope of the tourist destinations that the respondents wanted to see in the future, which for over 90% were more remote than those already visited. The students and high-school youth were the most frequent to choose trips outside the European continent. The percentage of people wishing to travel to more distant places than they had already been to was found to decline with age. As expected, seniors were the most cautious in this respect.

Interesting results were obtained when the respondents who had not travelled abroad were asked to indicate their favourable foreign destinations for the future. The non-European destinations were the most frequently indicated by the youngest age group (45%), whereas in the next age groups, i.e. 18-44 years, 45-60/65 years and older than 60/65 years, the rates were lower, declining to 33%, 18% and 14%, respectively. The rates of the respondents who were unable to say where they would like to go in the future were rising with age; they were ca. 17% (the high-school youth), ca. 20% (the economically active, aged 18-44 years), over 32% (the non-mobile working age respondents, aged (45-60/65 years)) and almost 40% in the

oldest age group. Respondents' problems with answering this question can be interpreted as a lack of sufficiently strong motivations for travelling. The age-specific weight of the phenomenon may prove that mature/older people and young people have different perception of the problems arising from being a tourist, as well as having different determination and skills of solving them.

### **New trends in the choices of Polish tourists**

The study assumed that new trends found in the tourist activity may point to changing patterns of their behaviour and indirectly to the impacts of globalization (Middleton, Fyall, Morgan and Ranchhod 2009). The analysis of the activity of Poles started with establishing the types of tourism, which were chosen by them. According to the survey data, recreational tourism is the most popular regardless of respondent's age. It was chosen by almost 80% of the young people and over 70% of those economically active. It was also the predominant type in the oldest age group (60%). The next most popular type is heritage tourism; however the interest in it clearly declines with age. Heritage tourism was the most popular among the students (62%), then the economically active at mobile working age (ca. 50%) and the high-school youth (44%). In the non-mobile working age group it was chosen by 35% of the respondents, but only 10% of all seniors pointed to it. The reasons behind decreasing popularity of heritage tourism that quite naturally involves more arduous touring trips should be sought in the generally lower activity and physical fitness decreasing with age.

Other types of tourism considered in the survey (qualified, medical, religious, business, agritourism) were much less popular. Only from several to less than twenty per cent of the respondents in particular age groups actively engaged in them. The preferences were also clearly different depending on the respondent's socio-demographic characteristics. For instance, qualified tourism was chosen definitely more often by the young people, both students (11%) and those economically active (7%). On the other hand, medical tourism and religious tourism had greater significance for the older population (where they accounted for 16% and 13%, respectively). Business trips were undertaken by the economically active groups, much more often by people at mobile working age (6%) than those at non-mobile working age (2%). Agritourism was preferred by families with children (regardless of their age); hence a higher share of this type of tourism was found among the young people and the working-age (both mobile and non-mobile) respondents.

A notable feature is the polarization of younger generations' interests in various types of tourism and seniors' activity distinctly reduced to several basic types of tourism. This pattern is a joint effect of many factors that influence the general tourist activity. However, it can be also attributed to a larger diversity of tourist needs and many different motivations for travelling induced by modernization and globalization. The younger generations, more impressionable and ready to modify their choices and behavior, are more easily influenced by the processes.

In addition to age, other important factors determining the attractiveness of various types of tourism are the levels of education and income. Because they are quite strongly correlated, the distribution of the responses followed the same pattern as above. With increasing education and income, the frequency of the less popular passive recreational tourism among the respondents decreased and was replaced by more active types (e.g. heritage tourism and touring trips). The variety of the preferred types of tourism also increases, which indicates that education amplifies the impacts of modernization and globalization.

As well as varying tourists' needs and motivations, new trends in tourism also change the frequency and duration of trips. According to the conception of Hard&Soft Tourism (Krippendorf 1983), the traditional model with mostly one trip undertaken in the holiday season will be replaced in the future by a number of shorter trips carried out throughout the

year. To find the symptoms of such changes the types of trips undertaken by the respondents were investigated (taking account of their duration), as well as their frequencies. The survey data confirmed that the younger groups engage in short trips much more often. The students definitely showed the highest spatial mobility that most commonly took the form of weekday trips (after work or school) and weekend trips (with or without overnight stay), as well as of longer trips (1-2 weeks or longer). Tourist activity expressed by frequent trips, particularly on weekdays, weekend trips with overnight stay and short trips (to 4 days) clearly declines with age. While on average every third university student and high-school student in the sample undertook weekend trips including overnight stay, in the group of seniors the rate was only 5%. The differences were less clear in the case of weekend trips without overnight stay (used by 22-24% of the respondents in the younger age groups and by 18% of the seniors), which indicates that in addition to other factors (health status, having an own vehicle, etc.) financial issues also have a strong effect on the general tourist activity of older persons.

The popularity of the long trips presents a somewhat different picture. Those lasting 1-2 weeks were undertaken by similar shares of the young people (both high-school youth and students) and of the economically active to 44 years (mainly families with children). As regards trips of duration longer than two weeks, the young people and the seniors accounted for larger shares. The first group undertakes longer trips to allow their children to rest after hard work at school. The relatively large proportion of the seniors (being generally less active) should be attributed to their stronger interest in medical tourism.

The proportion of the short trips in their general structure is clearly correlated with education and incomes. While less than 10% of those with primary education undertook them, in the higher categories of education the rate was gradually increasing to reach over 32% among the respondents with higher education. The correlation between incomes and the structure of trips is even stronger. The wealthy engage in long tourist trips four times as frequently as those with the lowest incomes.

An important indicator of changing tourist activity that refers to the new trends is who organizes a trip. If the tourist wants that their specific needs be met, in many cases they must make the necessary arrangements by themselves. In the Polish circumstances, however, there seems to be another important factor that makes individual trips so popular – financial constraints. Because Poland is relatively less wealthy than Western European countries, many people cannot afford to buy services that are readily available in the market. The economic factors continue to significantly affect consumers' purchasing decisions.

In the course of the study a distinct correlation between who organizes a trip and tourist's age has not been found. In all groups analysed, individual trips represented the definite majority (from 70% among the economically active aged 45-60/65 years to over 82% in the case of the students). The students and the mobile working age group (18-44 years) organized their trips by themselves slightly more often. Organized tourism was the most frequently used by the respondents at non-mobile working age. The interpretation of the results is easier on account of the earlier characterisation of tourist activity by age group. The characterisation shows that the organizational forms of tourism that each group chose were determined by different sets of variables. The great variety of aims and motivations for travelling in the younger age groups suggests that they make travel arrangements by themselves to make sure that the travelling parameters meet their personal needs. The prerequisites for this approach are a relatively large amount of free time and the knowledge of how to find the necessary information. Regarding the oldest age group, the central reason why these people decide to organize their trips by themselves is financial (limited affordability of usually more expensive services provided by travel agents).

The frequent use of organized tourism by the older, economically active people (aged 45-60/65 years) should be attributed to the larger share of foreign trips in their overall structure.

The last variable determining tourist preferences to be analysed in this paper is human propensity to follow fashion. To evaluate this phenomenon, the most popular tourist destinations among Poles were established in the survey (the following questions were asked: "what tourist destinations do you prefer?: a). fashionable, popular, vibrant, or b). quiet, peaceful, less frequented). The analysis that followed demonstrated that preferences clearly change with age. The fashionable and popular places were mentioned the most frequently by the younger respondents (58% of the high-school youth). The rates of respondents who valued such places were gradually falling with age to 20% in the group of the seniors. In other words, the percentage of people choosing quiet, peaceful and less popular places was growing in the older age groups.

### **Conclusion**

Because of its complex and multifaceted structure, globalization shapes many contemporary factors determining the development of tourism. Bringing about economic, social, political and even cultural changes it drives the expansion of a unified global market that greatly facilitates the movement of capital, goods and people. Globalization also has its immeasurable dimension that fosters a free flow of ideas, thus creating new attitudes and behaviors of individuals. The measurable dimension and the immeasurable dimension of globalization generally transform the tourist activity, but their scopes and impacts are very person-specific.

Among the major indicators of globalization there is the growing mobility of population, one manifestation of which is the thriving foreign tourism. The paper has shown that also Poles travel abroad more and more often. As younger people are clearly more active in this field, the trend is likely to continue into the future. After the destinations of foreign trips undertaken in the past and of those chosen for the future were compared, the young people were found to show much higher mental absorption of the time and space compression than the seniors.

According to the study, the tourist activity models greatly differ between particular groups of population, for instance with respect to the preferred types of tourism, travelling aims and motivations, frequency and duration of trips and who provides them. After analysis, the variables revealed most new trends in the tourist choices and behaviors of the younger population, better educated and earning higher incomes.

As shown by the study, the contemporary globalization processes have had the weakest effect on the tourist choices of the oldest generation of Poles. This group participates in foreign tourism much more rarely than the other groups. The tourist activity of Polish seniors is limited to several basic types of tourism and that short trips are rather unpopular among them. Fashion has a very limited influence on the purchasing decisions they make. The most important factor constraining their activity as tourists is low incomes.

The tourist behavior of the economically active people shows many more signs of their being influenced by globalization, such as the highest frequency of foreign trips (among all surveyed groups), a relatively high share of individuals choosing active tourism, a great variety of travelling aims and motivations. Moreover, their tourist activity includes both long trips and short trips (including weekend trips) undertaken outside the tourist season. Their interest in what is fashionable and popular is clearly the greater, the higher the levels of education and income.

Most new trends characterising contemporary tourism can definitely be found in the choices made by young people. The great variety of their needs and interests polarizes their aims and motivations for travelling. As a result, they engage in very diverse types of active tourism and frequently travel abroad. Young people are also more susceptible to fashion trends. In the survey, they indicated them as one of the major factors that make them choose

particular foreign destinations. Having a great amount of free time and being able to use it freely makes spontaneous decision-making easier. An extremely important factor determining high tourist activity among young people is their special perception of the travelling constraints and their determination and skills of overcoming them.

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