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*TOURISM AS A FORM OF NON-AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY
IN THE OPINION OF THE SELECTED RURAL COMMUNITIES
INHABITANTS*

**TURYSTYKA JAKO FORMA POZAROLNICZEJ DZIAŁALNOŚCI
W OPINII MIESZKAŃCÓW WYBRANYCH GMIN WIEJSKICH**

Key words: tourism, non-agricultural activity

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka, działalność pozarolnicza

Abstract. The paper tries to present the results of the research which was conducted among 650 inhabitants of agricultural communes in the eastern borderland. The information about tourist development opportunities in this area was the purpose of this research. Tourism is the considered (sometimes expected) development direction.

Introduction

Rural areas are developing various forms of non-agricultural activity. One of these is tourism, which has been departing from the „3s” model towards alternative forms over the last decades. Agricultural areas dominated by small family farms have substantial tourism resources, which have increasingly often been the object of tourists’ interest and gained the value of tourist attractions. One should undoubtedly include in these attractions the nature and wildlife as well the quality of air, material culture (e.g. farm buildings, ecclesiastical architecture) living culture (customs and traditions). Wealth of tourism resources has remained in the communes on the eastern border of Poland. Because of poorly developed economy and quite low agricultural value they are perceived as peripheral or problematic communes.

The movement towards development of those areas is also recommended by the European Union, which is reflected in the Polish Strategy of the Development of Tourism of 2007-2013.

Communes of Poland’s eastern borderland are perceived as „backward” or „problematic areas” [Rosner 1999], which results from poorly developed economy as well as technological and social infrastructure. At the same time many authors who analyze the issues of multifunctional development of rural areas stress an important role of tourism in the socio-economic revival of those regions [Majewski 2003, Jalinik 2005, Gołembski 2002].

Aim, method and procedure of research

The aim of the research was, among others, to get to know the opinion of the inhabitants of rural areas about the role of tourism in the development of the area where they lived. The research was carried out in 2006 in the areas of the eastern border of Poland. These included three provinces: podlaskie (Giby, Szypiszki, Płaska, Krynki, Dubicze Cerkiewne, Mielnik), lubelskie (Wola Uhruska, Dorohusk, Horodło, Lubycza Królewska, Hrubieszów) and podkarpackie (Horyniec, Radymno).

The research tool was a survey. After the gathered material was verified, 650 surveys were qualified for analysis.

Profile of respondents

Women comprised 58.6% of the surveyed group, i.e. the majority of the respondents. The average age of the respondents was 38.8. The level of education of the respondents was mainly secondary, though there was a substantial amount of those with higher or vocational level of education.

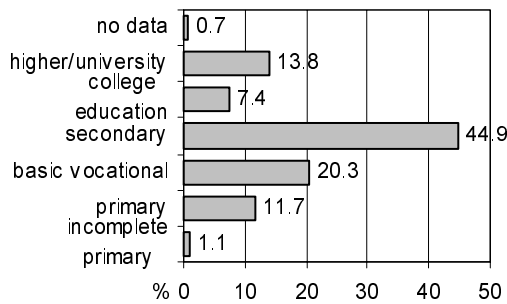


Figure 1. The level of education among the respondents (percentage)

Source: own research.

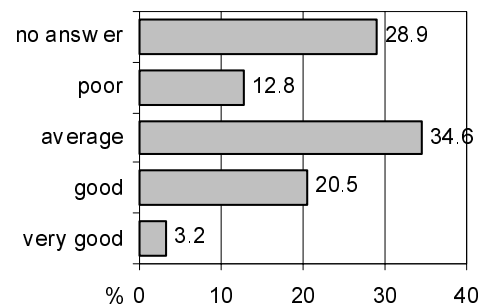


Figure 2. The opinion of respondents about the position of their farm on the background of their commune (percentage)

Source: own research.

21.4% had agricultural education, and 64.3% non-agricultural. There were substantial differences in the size of households. The surveyed sample included persons living alone (5.7%) and households consisting of 10 people. Households of 3-4 people formed the most numerous group (the former 16.6% and the latter 20.3%).

One in four persons does not own a farm. The remaining 75% own 3759.2 ha of farmlands (thus the average area of a farm was 7.73 ha). Only 39.2% engaged in both plant and livestock production, the rest only plant production. 34.9% of the surveyed produced for their own purposes, and 12.3% mostly for the market.

The surveyed were asked to evaluate the position of their farm on the background of their commune. Most of them perceived their farm as average.

Although 75% of the surveyed declared ownership of a farm, only 54% made profit on agricultural production. Other sources of income included hired jobs (50.6%), social benefits (44%) non-agricultural self-employment (17.1%), working abroad (6.9%), seasonal work and border trade (1.8%). Thus, the majority of respondents gained income from other sources.

Only one-third of the surveyed thought it possible to improve their financial situation through¹:

- a better job in Poland (24 respondents),
- starting tourist or agro tourist activity (28 respondents),
- starting non-tourism self-employment (20 respondents),
- expansion and development of a farm (14 respondents),
- starting work abroad (10 respondents),
- stronger support from the European Union (3 respondents).

Some persons saw the possibility for improvement of their financial situation through the improvement of the country's situation, development of education in schools and on courses and free border trade.

Tourist activity in the opinion of respondents

The inhabitants of communes were asked to point out which tourist attractions they regard as the most important.

The respondents valued nature with clean air as well as peace and quiet the most. 22 respondents (3.4%) presented their own suggestions of tourist attractions (eg. regional culture and tradition, hospitality of people or certain attractions from their area).

¹ The question was open.

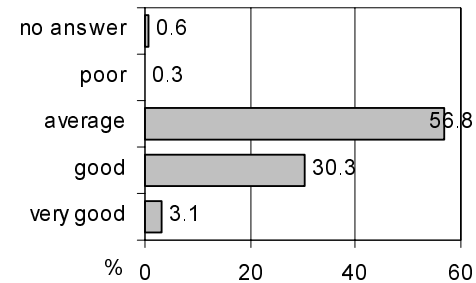


Figure 3. Financial situation of the family in the opinion of respondents (percentage)

Source: own research.

When asked if it is worth developing tourism in their commune, most respondents gave a positive answer (61.8% answered „yes”, 29.5% – „rather yes”). Only 2.2% gave negative answers. The rest did not have an opinion.

Tourism can bring various consequences for the local community. They can be positive or negative. The respondents’ task was to point out the advantages and drawbacks which the development of tourism can bring.

The responses are placed at a similar level. In the „other” category the respondents listed among others: introduction of new technologies, creating interpersonal relations, increasing the popularity of the region, decreasing the migration from villages to towns.

Only one in three respondents claimed that the development of tourism can bring negative effects such as:

- increasing environmental pollution (bigger amount of litter and car fumes), 27.1% of respondents,
- adopting wrong patterns of behaviour (especially among young people), 17.7% of respondents,
- higher prices – 16.8% of respondents,
- other (eg. noise, fires, crime) 1.2% of respondents.

In the opinion of respondents local government authorities should mostly be responsible for the development of tourism, and later other institutions.

The factor which is the most attractive for tourist in the opinion of respondents is nature, which corresponds with the answers to the question about the leading tourist attractions (figure 4).

According to inhabitants of the communes, the most discouraging factor for tourist is poorly developed catering network, and the least discouraging is the borderland location².

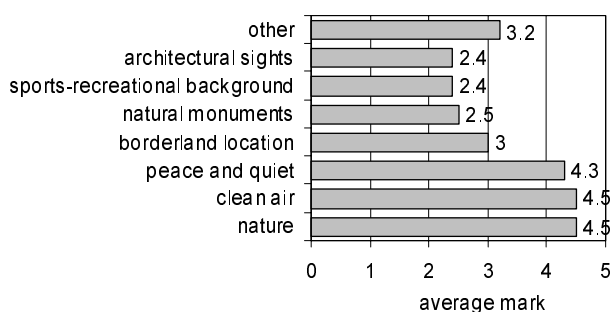


Figure 4. The biggest tourist attraction of the commune in the opinion of respondents

Source: own research. The respondents gave each item a mark from 0 to 5, where 5 was the highest mark and 0 was the lowest.

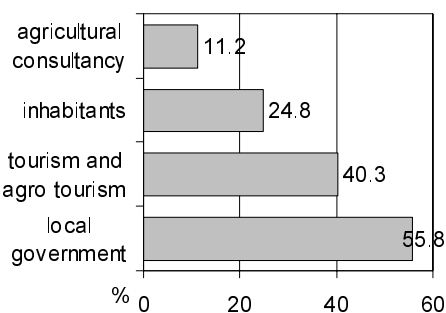


Figure 5. Entities responsible for the development of tourism in a commune in the opinion of respondents (percentage)

Source: own research. Respondents could choose more than one answer.

Table 1. Benefits of development of tourism in the opinion of respondents

Specification	Average mark
Creation of new jobs	3.9
Improvement of rural aesthetics	3.9
Increase of the population's income	3.8
Meeting new people and learning their culture	3.8
Elevating the importance of the commune in the region	3.7
Improving the living standard of the commune's inhabitants	3.7
Creation or development of entities related to tourism	3.6
Increasing the income in the commune's budget	3.5
Other	2.8

The respondents gave each item a mark from 0 to 5, where 5 meant great benefits and 0 meant no benefits.

Source: own research.

² This does not correspond with the results of the survey conducted among tourists, who mostly expect better arrangement of leisure or raising the standard of accommodation.

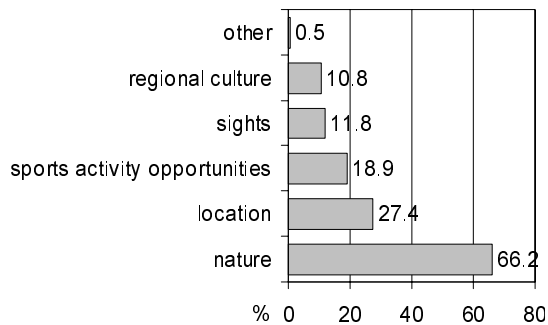


Figure 6. Factors which attract tourists to a commune in the opinion of respondents
Source: own research.

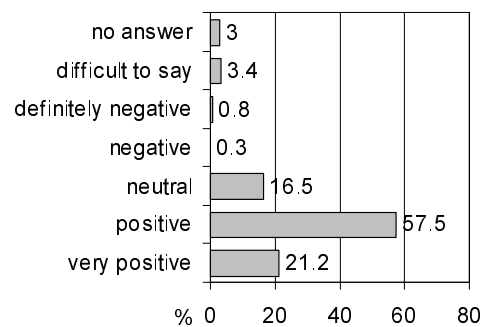


Figure 7. Attitude of country dwellers towards tourists in the opinion of respondents (percentage)
Source: own research.

The attitude of country dwellers towards tourists is positive in the opinion of large majority of respondents, which is also reflected in the results of the survey among tourists.

The researchers were also interested in the opinion of the inhabitants about the commune's future. Most of the respondents wanted it to develop tourism.

62.6% of the respondents suggested that new tourist facilities should be created in the commune. The most often mentioned were:

- accommodation facilities (90 respondents),
- catering facilities (62 respondents),
- agro tourism farms (41 respondents),
- sports equipment rentals (18 respondents),
- spas and health resorts (13 respondents),
- tourist information points (8 respondents),
- entertainment facilities (7 respondents),
- horse farms (4 respondents).

63.7% of the surveyed approved of the decision of farmers to get involved in tourist services. Almost one in three respondents (34.7%) did not have an opinion and only 1.4% disapproved of such a decision.

Also the presence of tourists and their behaviour were perceived as positive by the surveyed (44%). 1.1% of the respondents perceived them as rather negative and 0.15% as negative. 14.8% perceived them as neutral and 39.5% did not have an opinion.

Table 2. Factors discouraging tourists from recreation in the surveyed communes in the opinion of respondents

Specification	Average mark
Poorly developed catering network	3.2
Difficulty finding accommodation	3.1
Poorly developed communication network	2.9
Lack of interesting pastime activities	2.3
Lack of publications (guidebooks, leaflets) about the commune	1.9
Lack of safety	1.3
Polluted rivers and lakes	1.2
Borderland location	1.1
Other	1.7

The respondents gave each item a mark from 0 to 5, where 5 meant the most discouraging factor and 0 meant neutral factor.
Source: own research.

Table 3. The best direction of development of the commune in the opinion of respondents (percentage)

Specification	%
Touristic commune with large sports-recreational background and Well-developed infrastructure	52.3
Commune with well-developed trade and industry	13.7
Touristic commune preserving its traditions	38.0
No major changes in the commune	8.9
Other	0.5

Source: own research. Respondents could choose more than one answer.

The respondents were asked if they considered starting tourist activity themselves.

The respondents who did not consider starting tourist activity said that the reasons were lack of time, working in a different vocation, lack of accommodation, small interest among tourists, inadequate age (too young or too aged persons). 29.7% considered the decision to start tourist activity. The ideas were:

- an agro tourism farm (13.2% of the respondents),
- a guest room (8.2% of the respondents),
- a catering facility (4% of the respondents)
- a guest house (3.8% of the respondents),
- a sports equipment rental and organising sports events (2.3% each).

The reasons for not starting such activity were mostly:

- financial problems (13% of the respondents),
- lack of time (2.2% of the respondents),
- inadequate age (too young, too aged) (1.7% of the respondents),
- lack of tourists (1.1% of the respondents).

Individual persons also gave reasons like the lack of proper infrastructure, lack of consultancy, lack of information about running such an activity, opposition from other members of the family.

The greatest obstacle in starting tourist activity was lack of funds. Almost half of the surveyed also never heard of financial support resources for tourist activity. However, only 4.5% of the respondents would start tourist activity if they obtained such support.

The interest of the research was also evaluation of the commune's borderland location by the respondents. Such location can be an asset but also an impediment in the development of tourism. In the opinion of almost half of the respondents (48.8%), the borderland location brings the commune benefits in the form of border trade and increases the feeling of security because of the presence of border guard. However, borderland location also carries some risks. The respondents pointed at smuggling (9.8% of the respondents), noise from increased traffic (6.5%), illegal immigrants (5.2%), traffic accidents (5.1%), pollution of environment (4.2%), crime (2.3%), alcoholism and drug abuse (1.5%). One fourth of the surveyed never crossed the country's border, the others did that more or less frequently. The most numerous group (19.7%) crossed the border 1-3 times a year. The respondents presented the following purposes of visits: tourism (18.5% of the respondents), shopping and trade (18.6%), visiting family and friends (2.2%).

Conclusions

The research conducted allows to draw the conclusion that tourism may be an opportunity for development for the surveyed communes. The development of tourism is determined not only by the presence of natural and anthropogenic factors but also by the involvement of inhabitants, local government and branch institutions. Support in the form of training courses, consultancy, promotion and obtaining financial resources from the European Union seems necessary.

According to respondents' opinion, tourism may bring measurable benefits in form of new jobs or increase of incomes. They also pointed at non-measurable benefits such as improvement of rural aesthetics, meeting new people and their culture. Tourist potential of the researched communes is based mostly on nature. However, well developed communication and catering infrastructure is needed to fully exploit this potential. It is also worth emphasizing that more than half of the respondents point at tourism as the desired direction of their commune's development.

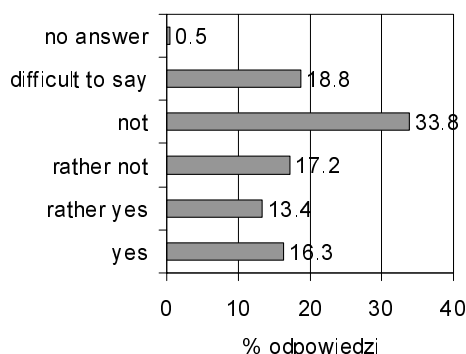


Figure 8. Consideration of starting tourist activity by the respondents (percentage)

source: own research.

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Streszczenie

Zaprezentowano wyniki badań dotyczące postrzegania turystyki jako formy działalności pozarolniczej na obszarach wiejskich. Badania przeprowadzono na terenie wybranych gmin wiejskich wschodniego pogranicza Polski. Objęto nimi grupę 650 osób. Potencjał turystyczny badanego obszaru bazuje na walorach turystycznych, których pełne wykorzystanie wymaga rozbudowy infrastruktury turystycznej. Respondenci wskazali największe korzyści (materialne i niematerialne) z rozwoju turystyki oraz szkody, jakie może ona powodować.

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