



Hiking in the Bieszczady National Park in the opinion of tourists

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A - Study Design; **B** - Data collection;
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Abstract:	<p>One of the most popular forms of qualified tourism is hiking, which can be divided into mountain and lowland hiking. This type of activity can be practiced by any person, regardless of age, gender, origin or level of wealth. Hiking allows tourists to reach even the farthest corners of the world. Thanks to the proper organization of tourist traffic and infrastructure in protected areas, tourists have the opportunity to practice various forms of tourism m.in.: in all national parks in Poland. The aim of the research was to get to know the opinions of tourists on hiking and tourist development of the Bieszczady National Park.</p> <p>The work used the diagnostic survey method, while the research tool was an original questionnaire in the form of a web form. The survey contained a total of 21 questions. They concerned the study group, the frequency of visiting the park, the motives of tourists, the most frequently chosen places and the assessment of tourist development.</p> <p>The study was conducted in October 2021, and involved 555 people from all over Polish. Most people visit the park in summer and autumn, on average once a year or less often. The motivation factor is beautiful landscapes, the opportunity to see unusual species of plants and animals and cultural values. The most popular places according to respondents are: Połonina Wetlińska, Tarnica, as well as Połonina Caryńska. The respondents assess the tourist development of the park well and show satisfaction with the organization of tourism in the BdPN.</p>			
Keywords:	tourism, hiking, Bieszczady National Park			

Introduction

The first mention of tourism comes from antiquity. Egyptians participated in religious festivals and also traveled to admire magnificent buildings and works of art. The main destination of the Greeks was the Olympic Games organized every four years. However, we owe the most to the Romans, who were the first to formulate legal regulations on the operation and safety of travel [Kurek 2007]. The term "tourism" comes from the Latin word "tournus", which means rotational movement, referring to the change of residence of individuals. The word "tour", which over time has evolved into "tourisme" derived from the French language, means a trip, a circular ride [Łobożewicz et al. 2001]. Tourism as a subject of scientific research is interdisciplinary, which is associated with an attempt to define it by many representatives of various fields. Therefore, a lot of definitions were created, formulated mainly by naturalists, geographers, economists, sociologists, statisticians, psychologists and lawyers. The authors highlighted various elements related to their research interests [Jędrzejczyk 2000]. According to the recommendations for statistical purposes prepared by the World Tourism Organization at the United Nations, "tourism includes all the activities of persons who travel and stay for leisure, business or other purposes for no more than one year without interruption outside their daily surroundings" [Górnicka 1995]. Kaspar [1995], for its part, considers that 'tourism encompasses all the links and phenomena which arise as a result of a change of place and in connection with the consequent stay of persons, the new place of residence being neither a permanent residence nor a place of work for those persons'. Due to the complexity of tourist traffic, its unambiguous classification has not been developed. The most common

criterion for dividing this phenomenon is the motive of the trip resulting from a specific need and purpose of travel [Liszewski 2013]. According to this criterion, types of tourist traffic are distinguished, such as: leisure tourism (recreational), cognitive tourism, religious tourism, business tourism, health tourism and qualified (specialized) tourism. [Korba et al. 2012].

For the first time, the term "qualified tourism" in the 50s of the twentieth century was introduced by the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society. According to their assumptions, cognitive goals are an important element next to physical fitness [Matusiak – Gordon 2009]. According to Łobożewicz [1983], qualified tourism is the highest form of tourist specialization, it can be practiced by both individuals as well as organized or informal groups.

Gaworecki [1982] presented tourism qualified as "temporary, voluntary, requiring fitness and professional-tourist preparation, frequent change of place in space, combined with physical effort and communing with another social, natural and cultural environment and satisfying information and cognitive needs". Hiking was widely regarded as the basis of qualified tourism [Preisler 2011]. Later, other forms were distinguished and a division was made into tourism: hiking (lowland and mountain), water (canoeing, motorboating, sailing and underwater), skiing, cycling, motor, as well as speological [Gaworecki 2003].

Lowland and mountain hiking is very popular all over the world, thanks to which tourists have the opportunity to get to know the natural and cultural environment of a given region. Hiking is undoubtedly the most popular form of hiking. One of the biggest advantages is the possibility of choosing routes away from overcrowded tourist centers or mass tourism routes [Kurek 2007]. Both lowland and mountain hiking are available to a wide range of recipients for financial and health reasons. By far the biggest advantages of this type of tourism are low costs, accessibility, the ability to walk around almost the whole world, as well as independence from age or gender [Czarny et al. 2011].

Hiking is often undertaken in protected areas. This topic is described quite extensively in the literature. This phenomenon is analyzed on many levels: economic, social, economic. Appropriate organization of tourist traffic and infrastructure is responsible for the proper protection of the resources of national parks. One of the elements of infrastructure are hiking trails [Bajda – Gołębiewska 2011]. A difficult issue for people working in and related to protected areas is to reconcile two important issues: the protection of the environment and natural resources and making them available to humans. Therefore, plans and strategies for the protection and development of various types of protected areas are developed.

Tourism in protected areas has many positive and negative effects. The increased activity of tourists in these areas contributes to taking protective measures m.in: creating zones where tourists can stay and designating those places where they are not allowed to be, because what is most valuable is protected there. A huge advantage related to the socio-economic effects is the increase in the tourist attractiveness of a given place. Tourists during visits to protected areas notice the beauty of the world around us, awaken in them respect and sensitivity to nature, as well as see the possibility of using various forms of tourism [Dudek et al. 2003]. One of the most dangerous disadvantages of increased traffic in protected areas is interference in the natural environment, disturbing the existence of animals and plants through noise or littering, destroying the flora of a given area [Miazek 2019], as well as trampling on the ground [Biały 2009].

Currently, there are 23 national parks in Poland, which are relatively evenly distributed throughout the country and present the main physical-geographical regions of the Polish (Fig. 1).

All national parks in Poland provide their area for various forms of tourism and recreation. For example, in the Bieszczady National Park it is allowed to go hiking, cycling, horse riding and skiing [Kobyłka et al. 2014].

The Bieszczady Mountains are one of the most popular tourist regions of our country, not only because of the natural and landscape values, but also because of the cultural

tourist attractions [Herbert et al. 2014]. In the Bieszczady Mountains there is the largest mountain national park: Bieszczady National Park, which was established in 1973 [Luboński 2012]. Its area is 29201.06 ha, forest ecosystems 25019.68 ha, meadows 1821.41 ha, non-forest ecosystems 2115.18 ha, land under water (rivers and streams) 78.01 ha, while built-up land, roads and others 166.77 ha [12].

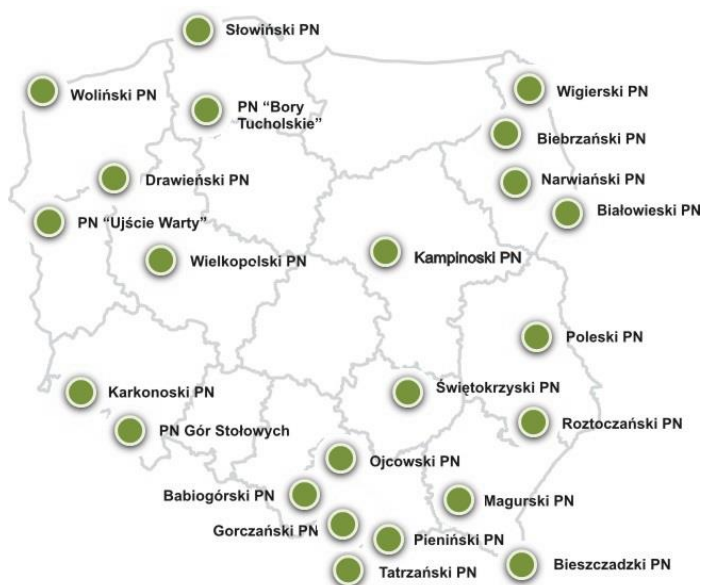


Figure 1.

Distribution of National Parks in Poland.

Source: <https://www.ekoportal.gov.pl/dane-o-srodowisku/polskie-parki-narodowe> (Accessed: 01 March 2022)

The most recognizable feature of the landscape of this park are meadows – "long ranges of mountain meadows stretching over the upper border of the forest". The highest peak in the Polish Bieszczady Mountains is Tarnica (1346 m above sea level), on the top there is a 7-meter metal cross, similar to the one located on Giewont in the Tatras. This park protects large mammals (brown bear, wolf, lynx, wildcat, bison) as well as is a refuge for rare species such as the golden eagle and eagle owl [Mazek 2017]. The headquarters of the park management is located in Ustrzyki Górne, while the Museum of the Bieszczady National Park in Ustrzyki Dolne (outside the protected area) [10]. Hiking trails are about 130 km long, which gives ideal conditions for contact with nature while exploring this area [Krukar 2007]. Tourists visiting BPN, in addition to tourist trails, are obliged to wander along natural, natural and historical paths and public roads [11].

The subject of research in the work is hiking in the Bieszczady National Park, the motives for undertaking it, as well as the tourist development of the park. The main goal was to get to know the opinions of tourists visiting the aforementioned park about the possibility of practicing this form of activity. This form of tourism is one of the most frequently chosen forms of activity in protected areas.

The research problem is formulated in the following questions:

1. How often do tourists visit the Bieszczady National Park?
2. What tourists are guided by when choosing the destination of their hikes?
3. What places tourists most often choose when visiting the Bieszczady National Park?
4. Are tourists satisfied with the development of the tourist park and which elements they use most often?

Material and methods

In this work, the diagnostic survey method was used, and the research tool was a survey questionnaire created in the form of a web form. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first of them is the so-called imprint containing 5 questions that helped characterize the research group. The second part consisted of 10 relevant questions. The

questionnaire was fully anonymous, had no time limit and participation in the study was voluntary. The research was conducted in electronic form via an online social media platform in October 2021. The link to the questionnaire of the survey was made available individually, as well as through the Forum of Internets associating tourists and lovers of the Bieszczady Mountains, i.e.: "Bieszczadomaniacy", "Magical Bieszczady" and "Club of Hiking Enthusiasts".

555 people took part in the study: 432 women, which accounted for 78% of the respondents, and 123 men – 22%.

Respondents were of different ages, the youngest was 16 and the oldest was 80. The author determined four age groups: 16-25 years – 29% of respondents, 26-50 years – 60%, 51-60 years – 7% and people aged 60+, who were 4%.

In the question concerning the education of the respondents, the vast majority answered that they have a higher education – 60%. Secondary education is held by 36% of respondents, vocational – 3%, and basic 1%.

Question 4 concerned the professional situation of the respondents. A significant part of them were working people – 73%, students accounted for 18%, unemployed people – 5%, pensioners 3%, the smallest group were students – 1% of respondents.

Respondents living in the countryside accounted for 38% of the respondents, in a city with less than 20,000 inhabitants – 15%, in a city between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants – 19%, and in a city with more than 100,000 inhabitants – 28%.

Results

Analyzing the frequency of visiting the Bieszczady National Park by respondents, the following answers were obtained: the most people visit the park "once a year" – 53%, once a month – 7%, the least people visit the Park 2-3 times a month – 4% of respondents (Fig.2).

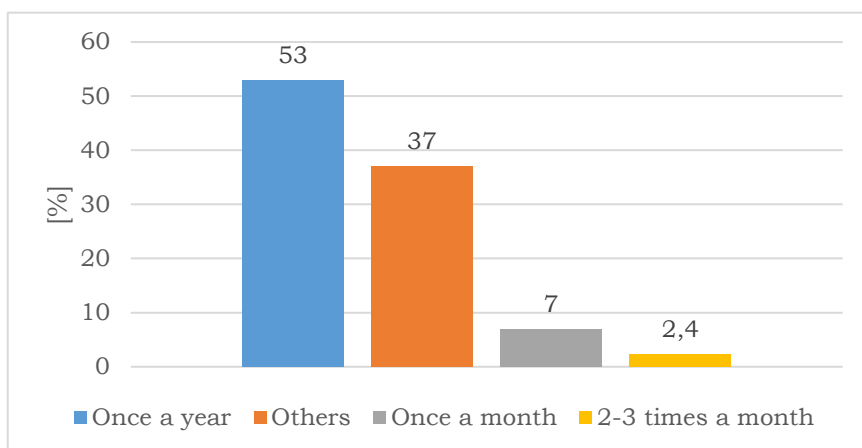


Figure 2.
Frequency of visiting the Bieszczady National Park by tourists
Source: Own research

The next question was a multiple choice question and concerned the time of year in which tourists most often visit the park. 899 responses were received, of which 40% of the answers were "summer", 36% - autumn, 16% - spring and 8% - winter (Fig.3.).

In question 8, tourists were asked with whom they most often wander in the Bieszczady National Park, they could choose several answers, in total 708 of them were obtained. Most people marked the answer "with family" – 37%, the second most frequently chosen answer was "with friends" – 32%. The least number of respondents chooses to hike in organized groups – 4% of responses.

Answering the next question, respondents could choose several factors that motivate them to choose this form of tourism in the Bieszczady National Park.

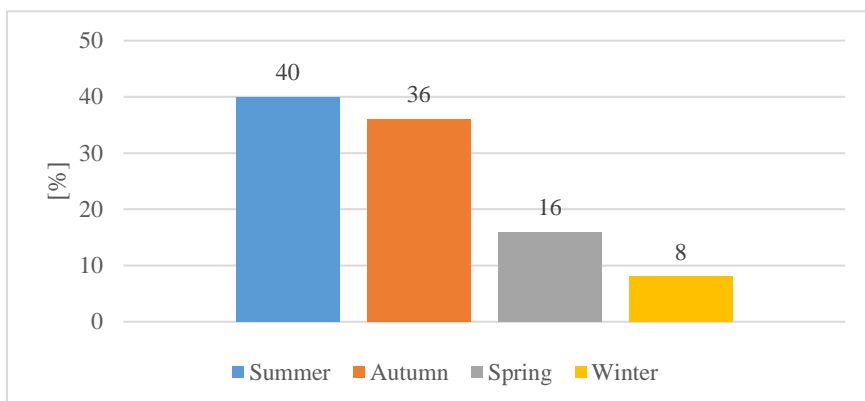


Figure 3.
The time of year when tourists visit the park most often.
Source: Own research

The following question received 1378 answers. For most tourists, the motivation is beautiful landscapes, this answer accounted for 38% of all responses. For many people, an important factor is also the atmosphere – 24% and natural values, i.e. unprecedented species of flora and fauna – 18%. The least number of tourists is guided by the low price of accommodation – 2%.

In the question concerning the most frequently chosen places while wandering in the Bieszczady National Park, 1738 answers were obtained. Among all the answers, the most popular were: Połonina Wetlińska – 22%, Tarnica – 20% and Połonina Caryńska 18%. A large number of votes were also received by Bukowe Berdo – 14%, as well as Mała and Wielka Rawka – 13% (Fig. 4).

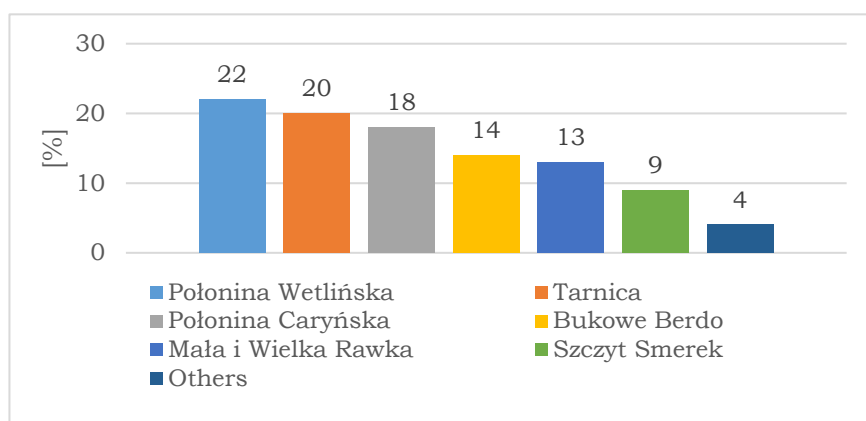


Figure 4.
The most frequently chosen places during hiking in the Bieszczady National Park
Source: Own research

Then, the respondents assessed the condition of tourist trails in the Bieszczady National Park. The majority of tourists (78%) believe that the trails are well maintained and marked, 11% believe that the trails are excessively trampled, 3% of respondents believe that the trails are littered. Question No. 12 concerned the assessment of the development of the Bieszczady National Park in terms of hiking. Respondents could choose answers from 1 to 5, where 1 meant very poorly, 5 – very good. 53% of respondents rated a good one, 24% of people believe that the development is average, while 21% assess it very well. The average assessment of development in terms of hiking is 3.92 (Fig.5.).

The next question was a multiple-choice question and concerned the development facilities that tourists use most often, 882 answers were received. The most commonly used object are rest shelters – 47%, slightly less often tourists choose benches – 24%. The least popular development object among respondents are wooden sanitary facilities – 8%.

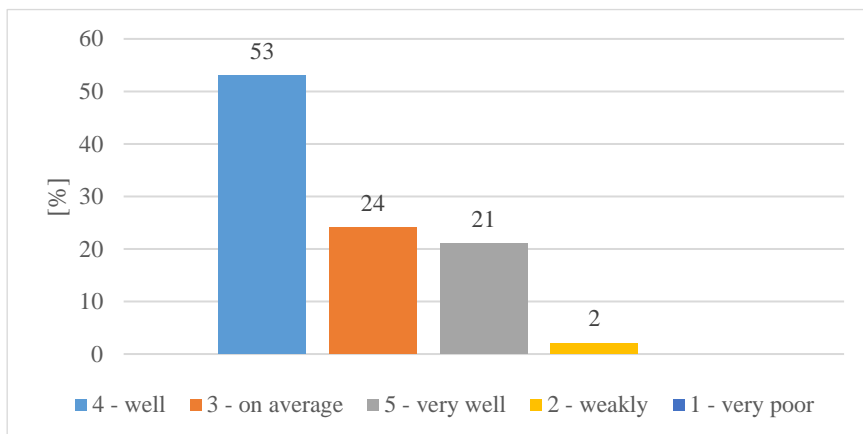


Figure 5.
Assessment of the development of the Bieszczady National Park in terms of hiking
Source: own research

Then the respondents were asked whether they thought that the Bieszczady National Park lacked elements of development. A significant part – 80% – is of the opinion that there are enough development elements in the park, and 20% of tourists believe that there are not enough of them.

Respondents who marked "yes" in the above question were asked to enter those elements that they believe are missing in the park. 110 responses were obtained, among which two elements appeared most often: toilets and trash cans. Most people, 40%, believe that the main element that is missing are toilets, especially on longer routes. Slightly less, but also a large number of tourists – 37% are of the opinion that there should be more trash cans on the trails. The remaining 23% of respondents gave other elements of the m.in: benches on longer routes, shelters, too few rain shelters.

Discussion

The aim of the study is to get to know the opinions of tourists about hiking in the Bieszczady National Park, the motives for undertaking it and the assessment of the tourist development of the park. In order to correctly interpret the obtained results, the research of other authors who also took up the topic of tourism in national parks was cited.

The first part of the questionnaire allowed to characterize the socio-demographic structure of respondents. Analyzing the sex of the studied group, the majority were women, as much as 78%, while men 22%. In most of the analyzed studies, these results differed, because the number of women and men studied was approximate. Only in the studies carried out by Herbert and Prukop [2014] can a significant difference be noticed, men – 39%, women – 61%. Taking into account the age of respondents in this work, people aged 26-50 predominated, this group accounted for 60% of respondents, 29% were people aged 16-25. Tourists aged 50+ were only 11%. In the research conducted by Mokras-Grabowska [2016] in the Tatra National Park, the age structure was very similar, because the age groups dominated: 25-35 years and 36-45 years. Probably such an age structure results from the fact that these studies were carried out in mountain parks, and thus hiking there requires greater physical effort and condition.

In the question about the time of year in which tourists most often visit the Bieszczady National Park, we can notice a significant advantage of summer – 40% and autumn – 36%. The results presented by Rogowski [2017] also show that respondents are most likely to visit the park in summer – 68%, the second most frequent season was spring – 37%, and autumn was chosen by 17% of respondents.

Analyzing the results of research on mountain hiking in the Stołowe Mountains National Park, we can see that in relation to tourists in organized groups, individual tourists dominate – 87%. The most numerous group are families with children – 44%,

followed by tourists with spouses or partners and groups of friends [Rogowski 2017]. In the already mentioned work Herbert and Prukop [2014], the vast majority are also people wandering with family or friends – 93%. This research has also shown that the most frequent visitors are individual tourists – 96%, organized groups are only 4%.

As the main motivation to choose hiking in the Bieszczady National Park, respondents indicated beautiful landscapes – 38% of responses and atmosphere – 24%. At a similar level, there were natural values, i.e.: unprecedented species of plants and animals, as well as cultural values. Analyzing the results of Mokras – Grabowska [2016], we note that respondents cite a cathartic-motivational disposition as the main motive, which includes the desire to escape from everyday life and a sense of freedom and independence. The next motivations were health-motivational, cognitive-motivational disposition, as well as activity-motivational disposition.

Herbert and Prukop [2014] asking students about the most frequently chosen routes received very similar answers as the author of the work. To be more precise, the main routes mentioned by the respondents were those that led to: Tarnica, Połonina Caryńska, Połonina Wetlińska, slightly fewer people indicated Mała and Wielka Rawka and Smerek. In this work, the respondents equally unanimously considered połonina Wetlińska, Tarnica and Połonina Caryńska to be the most popular places, respectively: 22% of responses, 20% and 18%. There is no doubt that the above-mentioned places are the most popular in the Bieszczady National Park, which means that most tourists wandering in this part of the country choose trails leading there.

The analysis of research shows that the most tourists in the Bieszczady National Park use rest shelters and benches. Other development facilities such as rain shelters, focal shelters or sanitary facilities are used by a slightly smaller number of people. According to 80% of respondents, there is no shortage of development elements in the park, while tourists who have a different opinion were asked to list those elements that in their opinion are missing on tourist routes. A similar number of respondents stated that the main shortcomings in the Bieszczady National Park are the lack of toilets – 40% and the lack of trash cans – 37%. People who mentioned the lack of trash cans do not consider this the biggest problem, because they are aware that every tourist should take their garbage with them and there is no need to leave it in the park, but they agree on the shortage of toilets, especially on longer routes. In the aforementioned work by Prószyńska – Bordas [2013], over 15% of respondents also noticed the lack of sufficient trash cans, less than 10% mentioned the deficit of toilets.

After analyzing the following research and the above-mentioned works, it can be concluded that tourists have a good opinion about the development of the Bieszczady National Park, willingly visit it and spend their free time in its area.

Conclusion

The research carried out for the needs of the work was aimed at getting to know the opinions of tourists about hiking in the Bieszczady National Park. Before the research was carried out, research questions were constructed to help formulate conclusions.

1. The results of the study showed that most tourists visit the park once a year or less often most often in the summer and autumn. This is probably due to the holiday season and the most favorable weather conditions at these times of the year.
2. In response to another research question, it can be concluded that the greatest motivation for tourists are beautiful landscapes and the atmosphere that prevails in this part of the Polish. Of great value for people choosing BdPN as the goal of their wanderings were also natural values, i.e. unprecedented peculiarities of flora and fauna and cultural values.
3. Respondents considered Tarnica to be one of the three most popular places in BdPN, but Połonina Wetlińska took the first place, while just behind Tarnica tourists

choose Połonina Caryńska. These are undoubtedly the dominant points on the lists of tourists.

4. Tourists show satisfaction and assess the organization of tourism in the Bieszczady National Park well. The respondents answered that during hiking they most often use rest shelters and benches. It probably depends on the length of the routes chosen by tourists.

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