

HITCHHIKING AS A FORM OF TRAVELING FOR TOURIST PURPOSES

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Abstract:

Hitchhiking is a popular form of transport. Most people choose this form of travel because it is very profitable when it comes to financial issues. The aim of the work was to present hitchhiking as a means of traveling for tourists and to learn about opinions on hitchhiking among travelers.

INTRODUCTION

The British Society says that "Tourism includes all activities related to the temporary, short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, and stay in those places." [Middleton 1996].

J. Warszńska defines it as "all relations and phenomena related to tourism" [Kurek 2007]. Referring to the definition described by J. Warszńska, it is worth getting acquainted with the concept of tourism, which defines "temporary migration of people outside their permanent residence resulting from social conditioned needs, determined by various types of motivation" [Kurek 2007].

Considering the tourist travel motivation groups, six main types of tourist traffic can be distinguished:

- Religious tourism, otherwise pilgrimage,
- Business tourism,
- Qualified tourism defined as specialist tourism,
- cognitive tourism,
- Leisure tourism,
- Health tourism.

Based on the tourist's physical activity, we can distinguish the following types of tourism:

- mass tourism,
- alternative tourism,
- qualified tourism,

- active tourism,
- extreme and adventure tourism.

The word "hitchhiking" is defined by the popular Polish language dictionary as a way of traveling free of charge with stopped vehicles that travel more or less towards the destination planned by the tourist [Kozdęba 2016].

Traveling by hitchhiking is the cheapest means of travel, thanks to which we are able to move from a specific place to another destination. Thanks to this form of travel, we are able to meet and make new contacts with people with whom we travel. Hitchhiking is a form of transport in which you need to demonstrate knowledge on this topic to get it quickly.

"Some tips for hitchhikers:

- you should never trust the driver you travel with,
- always wear reflective clothes in the evening and at night so that other drivers will notice us,
- it is best to have two batteries for your mobile phone and a charger,
- pepper gas must be bought before hitchhiking due to your own safety,
- remember that stopping vehicles, e.g. in the US, is illegal,
- the most important tip is to inform your friends as well as your family, a group of loved ones about your intention to travel by hitchhiking." [http://poradydlapodroznikow.blogspot.com/...].

According to R. Padula, the best places for "catching a foot" are:

- places where you pay for motorway journeys, i.e. at motorway gates. It's easiest to stop the driver then because he is stuck in traffic jams at the motorway gates to pay for the trip,
- in smaller parking lots, because usually such parking lots are used by people who want to rest before continuing their journey,
- near motorway services, usually a driver whose vehicle breaks down uses such a service,
- in car parks, which are located near interesting tourist facilities. Most drivers stop in an interesting place, e.g. to take a commemorative photo,
- on exits to the highway. On highways, there is no possibility of unjustified stopping of vehicles, so it is better to do it at motorway exits,
- at the state borders, sometimes drivers are forced to undergo border guard control, then it is also best to ask for a ride [Żyliński 2015].

Hitchhiking travel history

John T. Schlebecker [1958] defined the period of World War I as the beginning of this form of travel and believes that this is an American invention. At that time, the era of motorization was beginning and people started asking the drivers for a ride. Before the invention of cars, people also used other forms of hitchhiking, such as jumping into moving train wagons as well as asking for a ride on a wagon. The biggest climax of choosing this form of travel were periods of breakdowns and economic crises, strikes. The first people who used hitchhiking were women and children as well as artists who could draw new inspiration

by getting places previously unavailable to them. Hitchhiking was also the beginning of the first sightseeing tours for tourists who did not have this mode of transport or because of savings. The history of hitchhiking teaches us the alternation of interest in this form of travel, which is why a positive approach to hitchhiking and hitchhikers is necessary on a daily basis.

The breakthrough of hitchhiking was the time of World War II. Compared to earlier periods at this time, not only the lowest social classes but all of them used this form of travel. Among the drivers, taking a hitchhiker with them was a duty, it was not allowed to drive a car with free places.

The inhabitants of Bristol in 1941 left their homes as much as possible to escape from the firing line, they came back later to assess the losses. Roads and important transport routes were damaged by bombing, which is why the crisis began, thanks to which most of the society selflessly helped each other [Żyliński 2014]. Drivers who helped hitchhikers received free fuel thanks to the decision of the Ministry of Transport in Great Britain. Due to poor public opinion, the distribution of fuels was abandoned to rebuild public transport [Szlichciński 2002]. Due to the great interest in hitchhiking in the period from 1940 to 1941, hitchhikers and drivers decided to improve this type of transport by marking themselves with pinned the geranium symbol [Żyliński 2014].

Hitchhiking lost its popularity at the end of the war, as destroyed public transport was rebuilt, and people began to perceive this form of travel as limiting their possibilities and luxury. The date when hitchhiking appeared in Poland is not exactly known. A hitchhiking book was introduced, which had the form of a small notebook. During the Hitchhiking Action, tourists wishing to use this form of travel were forced to have a hitchhiking book. Some drivers took tourists to the RUCH kiosk where they could buy a book and then took them to the nearest PTTK point for a stamp. The hitch-hiking books were very similar in appearance to all the known militia lollipops and thanks to that more drivers stopped immediately thinking that they would undergo militia checks. In 1989, the cost of buying the book was PLN 9,500 and it also contained information about the current insurance of a hitchhiker against unfortunate events. In addition, every hitchhiker who bought a booklet received coupons for 1980 km, the latest Polish road map as well as a letter to drivers. In addition, the hitchhiker had a number of privileges that gave them the priority of accommodation in PTTK shelters. In 1992, the Hitchhiking Foundation printed only 5000 books and the purchase price was PLN 25,000. In 1993, it was called the "hitchhiking card" and could be purchased for PLN 40,000. Due to the small number of people who were interested in buying this booklet, it was found that their printout is not profitable. The year 1995 was the last period in which hitchhikers had the opportunity to buy a book at a price of PLN 4 in a branch of PTTK.

Methodology

The main purpose of the research was to learn opinions and broaden information on hitchhiking.

The following research questions were posed in the article:

1. Why in the respondents' opinion is it worth traveling by hitchhiking?
2. Is hitchhiking safe in your opinion?
3. Who is mainly interested in hitchhiking?

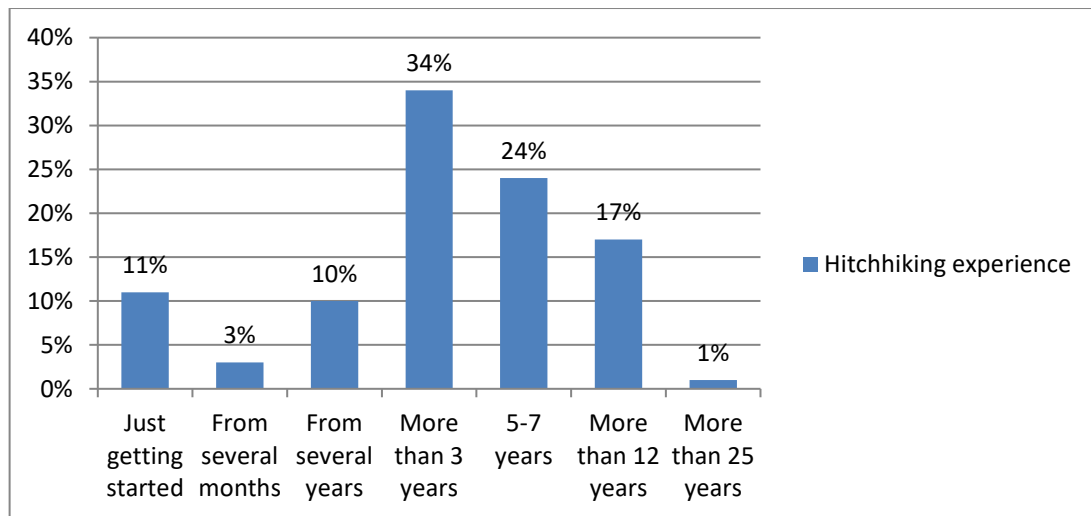
4. What guides the public when choosing a means of transport in tourism?
5. Who travels hitchhiking more often women or men?
6. In which country is hitchhiking preferred as a form of transport?

Methods, techniques and research tools

For the needs of the study, a questionnaire was prepared consisting of 25 questions, which served to draw public opinion regarding the assessment of traveling by hitchhiking, the frequency of choosing this mode of transport and places where people using hitchhiking are going. The study was conducted on a population of 100 people hitchhiking in Poland. The population consisted of 50 women and 50 men, and a survey was used to obtain this study. It consisted of 25 questions preceded by a metric.

Findings

A total of 100 people, i.e. 50 women and 50 men aged 18-25 (62%) and 26-60 years (38%) took part in the survey. All people taking part in the survey had contact with hitchhiking in their lives. 72% of respondents travel by this means of transport mainly due to savings.



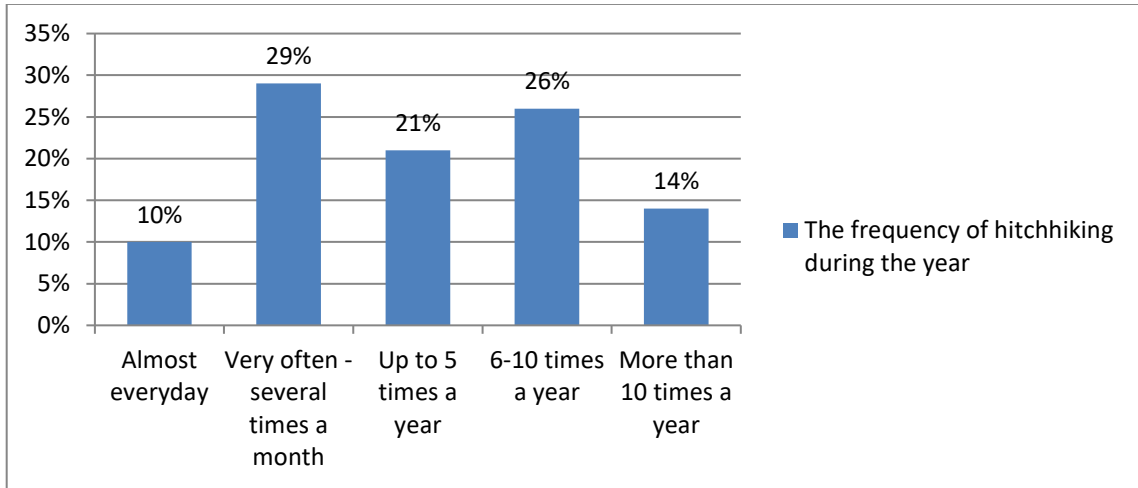
Graph 1 - Hitchhiking experience

Source: Own research, 2017.

The authors concluded that young people travel the most. People up to 18 years of age had the least contact with hitchhiking because their internship lasted several months or several years. Young people aged 19-25 living in the villages had a longer period of experience than young people living in cities. Most often, the answers were over 3 years, as well as the respondents declared using this type of transport from 5 to 7 years.

Over half of the respondents in the 26-35 age group replied that they were just starting to travel by hitchhiking. Several people took into account the answer over 3 years.

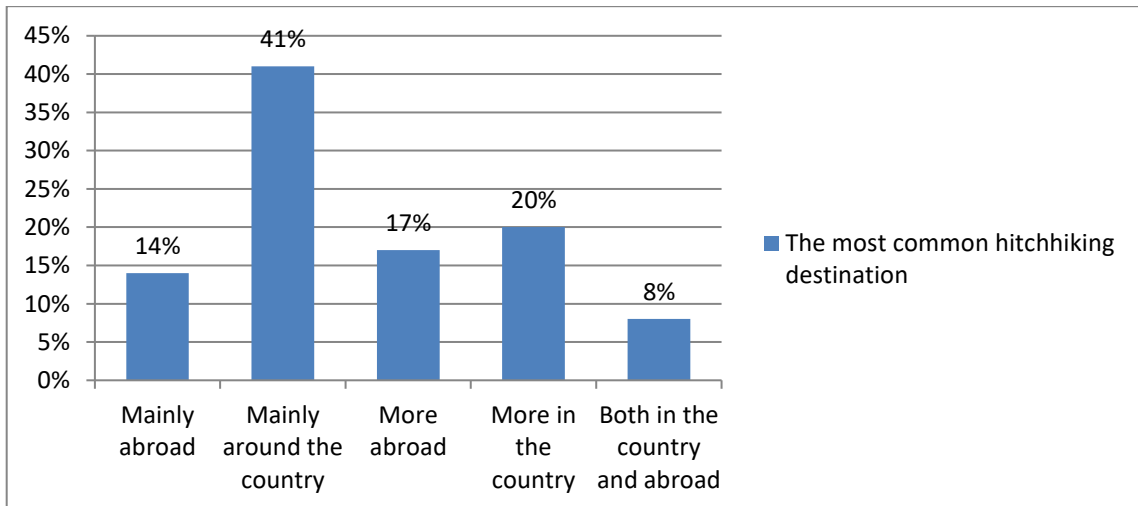
In the age group 36-45 years and 46-60 years the length of hitchhiking for all people was the highest in comparison with other age groups, because people had already traveled over 12 years. Only 1 person over the age of 60 declared his/her experience for over 25 years.



Graph 2 - Frequency of using hitchhiking during the year

Source: Own research, 2017.

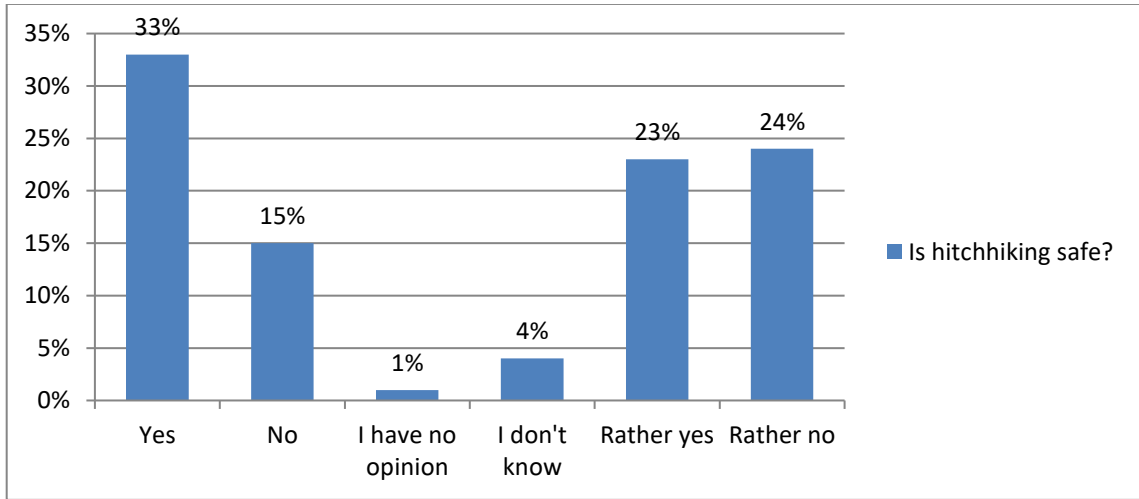
29% of respondents said that they use hitchhiking several times a month. 26% hitchhike 6-10 times a year and up to 5 times a year. As many as 10% use hitchhiking almost every day.



Graph 3 - Most frequent hitchhiking destination

Source: Own research, 2017.

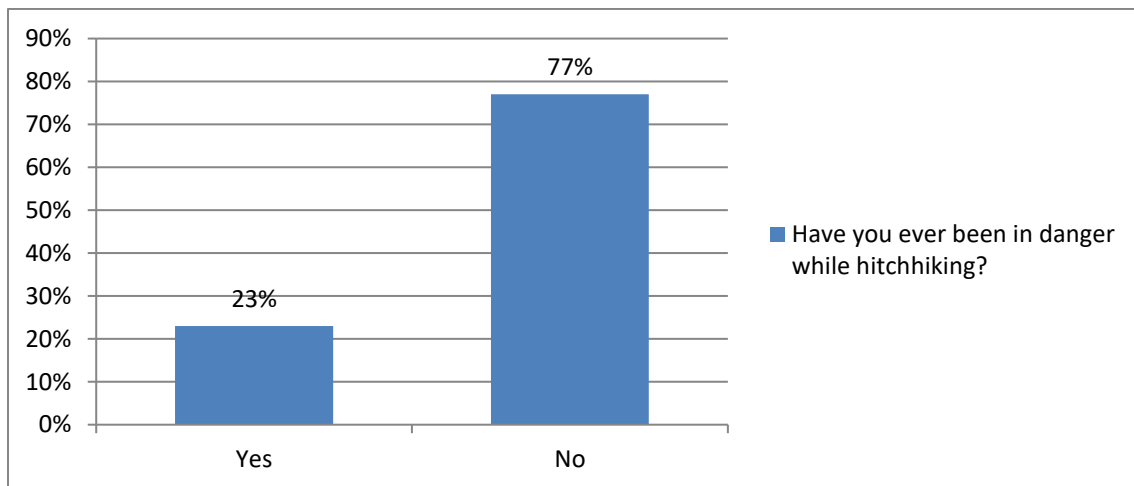
Most often the destination was in the country (41%). The respondents travel more in the country (20%) than abroad (17%). However (8%) of the respondents chose the answer that their journey takes place both at home and abroad.



Graph 4 - Traveling by hitchhiking safety

Source: Own research, 2017.

In most cases (33% of respondents) they answered that it is a safe form of travel or rather yes (23%). People who are not convinced about the safety of travel with this type of transport responded that it is rather not a safe form (24%) or completely not (15%). 1% of respondents did not have an opinion on this topic. The number of respondents who did not know if hitchhiking was a safe form of travel was 4%.

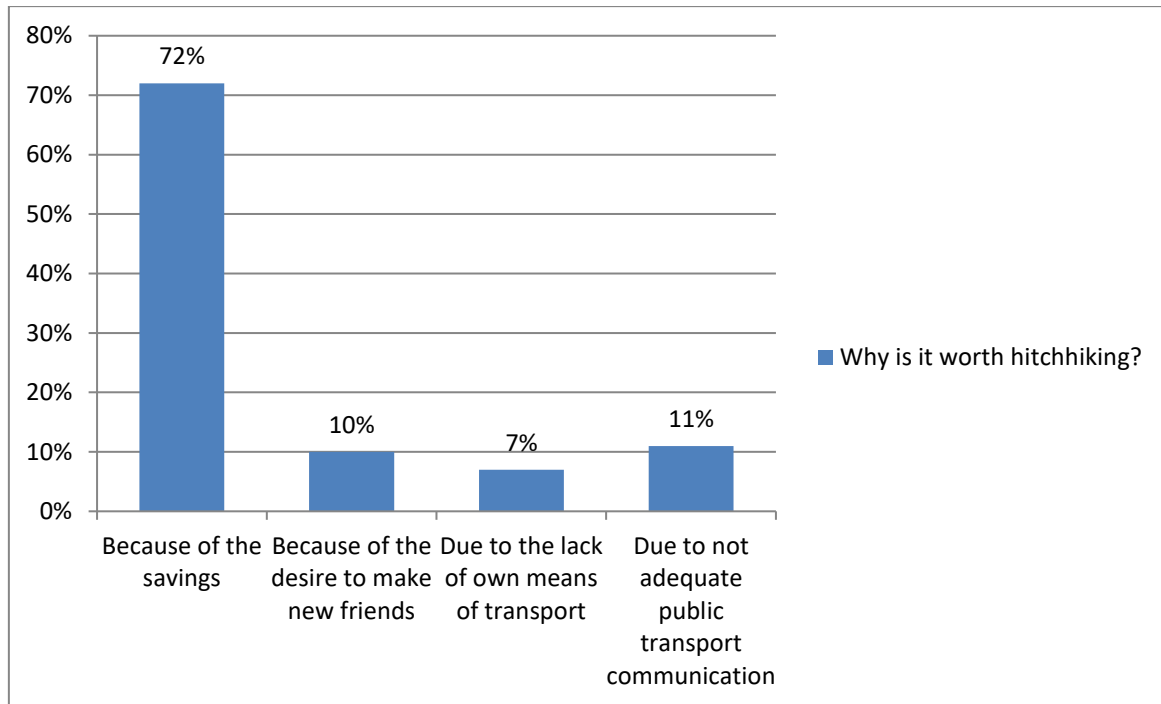


Graph 5 - Dangers of traveling by hitchhiking

Source: Own research, 2017.

Over $\frac{3}{4}$ (77%) did not experience any danger while traveling. The vast majority (23%) had real contact with the danger mainly caused by the driver. Respondents explained that they had the most problems with young drivers who did not comply with traffic rules. Other

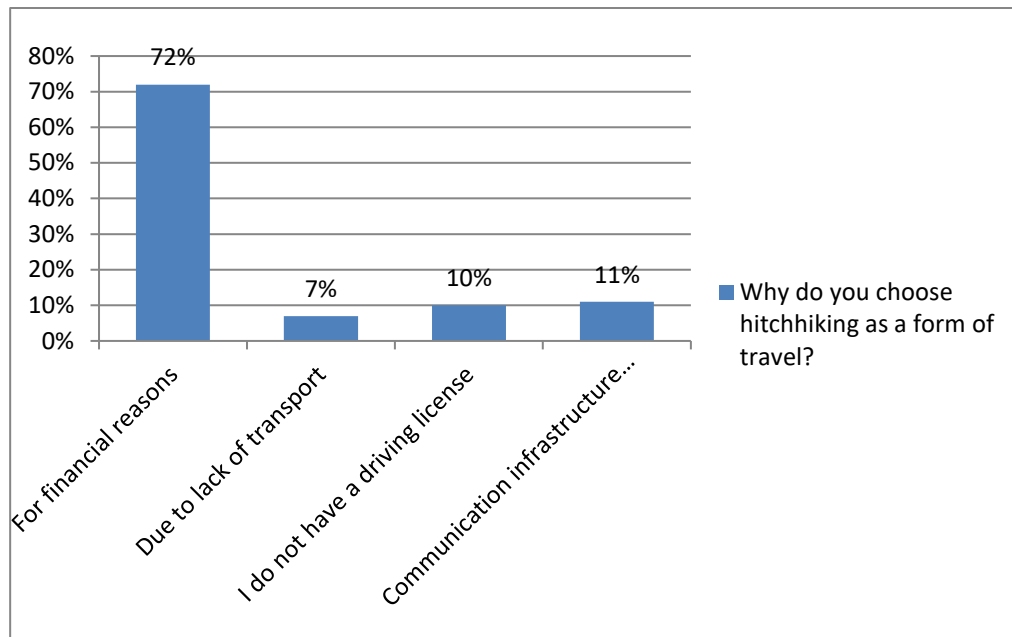
dangers were caused by erotic suggestions for the hitchhiker. Dishonest drivers used robbery tools to hitchhikers to achieve financial benefits.



Graph 6 - Advantages of hitchhiking

Source: Own research, 2017.

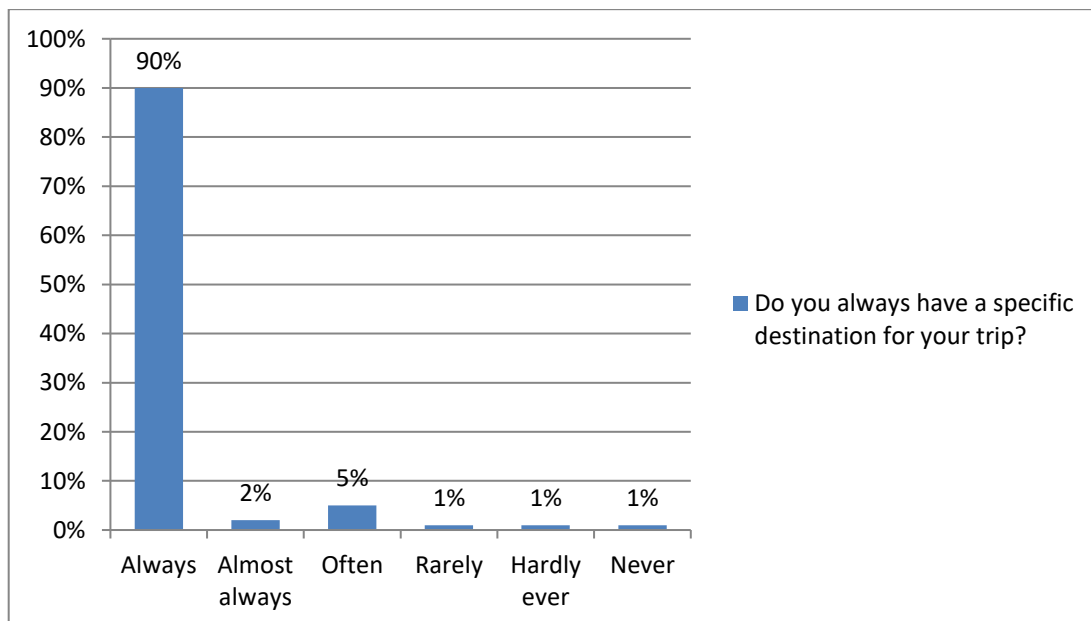
The main advantage of this form of travel is the reduced financial outlay associated with moving from one place to the destination. As many as 72% of people answered that they chose hitchhiking because of savings. Other responses were due to not adequate public transport communication (11%), due to the desire to make new acquaintances (10%). Respondents choose hitchhiking because of the lack of their own means of transport (7%).



Graph 7 - Choosing hitchhiking as a form of travel

Source: Own research, 2017.

72% of people choose this form of travel for financial reasons. 11% of respondents have a problem with the communication infrastructure in Poland, which doesn't allow them to travel on their own terms. Hitchhiking is chosen because of a lack of driving license (10%) as well as because of a lack of transport (7%).

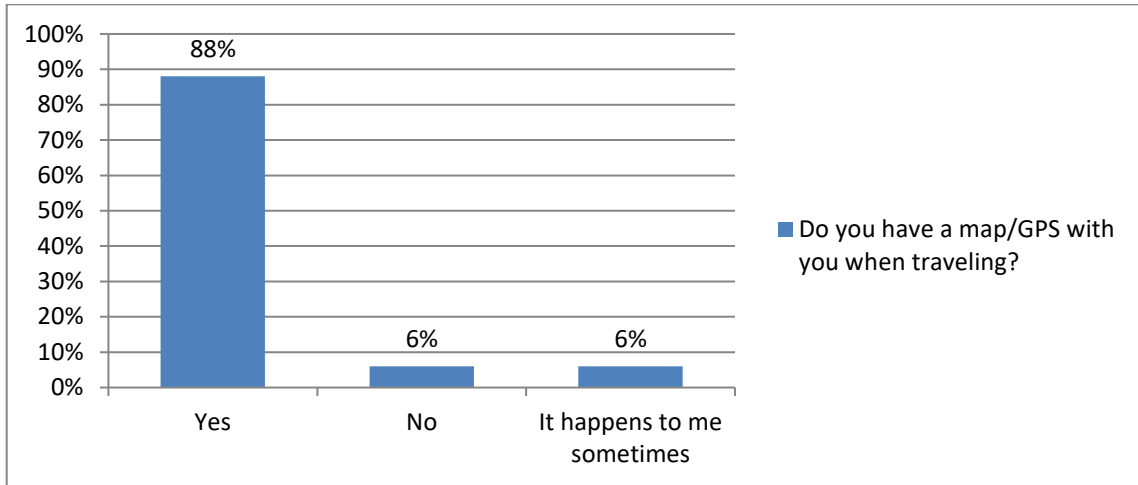


Graph 8 - Determining the destination

Source: Own research, 2017.

Most people (90%) answered that their destination was always defined and could not imagine a spontaneous journey. There are people (5%) who don't always know where they

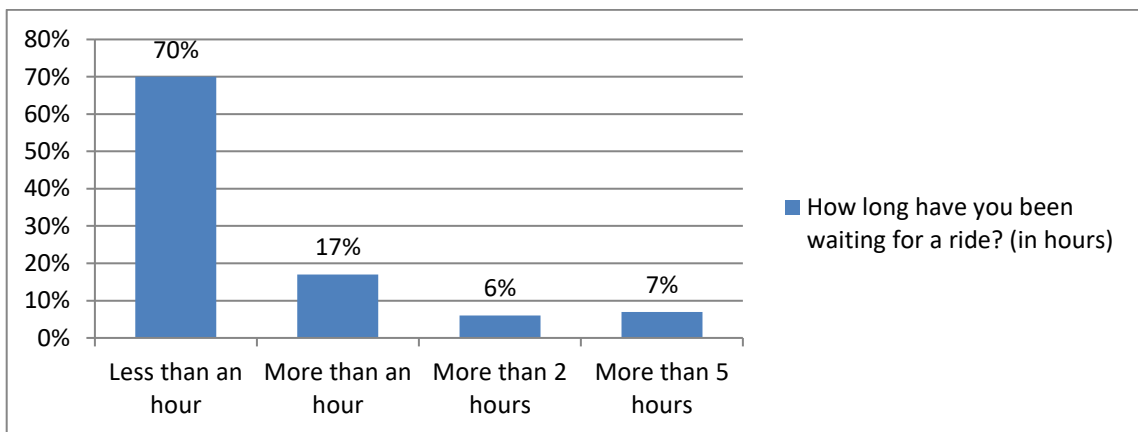
want to go. The least numerous group (2%) have their destination almost always chosen. Among the respondents were people who never (1%) and almost never (1%) or rarely (1%) had a specific destination before starting a hitchhiking.



Graph 9 - Hitchhiking with map/GPS

Source: Own research, 2017.

88% of respondents have a map or GPS with them. Most people use a paper map due to battery saving in navigation devices.



Graph 10 - Hitchhikers' waiting time for drivers (in hours)

Source: Own research, 2017.

Respondents indicated that the waiting period for a driver who stops in 70% lasted no more than an hour. Quite a large number of people (17%) have to wait more than an hour for a ride. Fortunately, only a few have to wait over 2 hours (6%). There are 7% people who need to stand over 5 hours of time to get to another place.

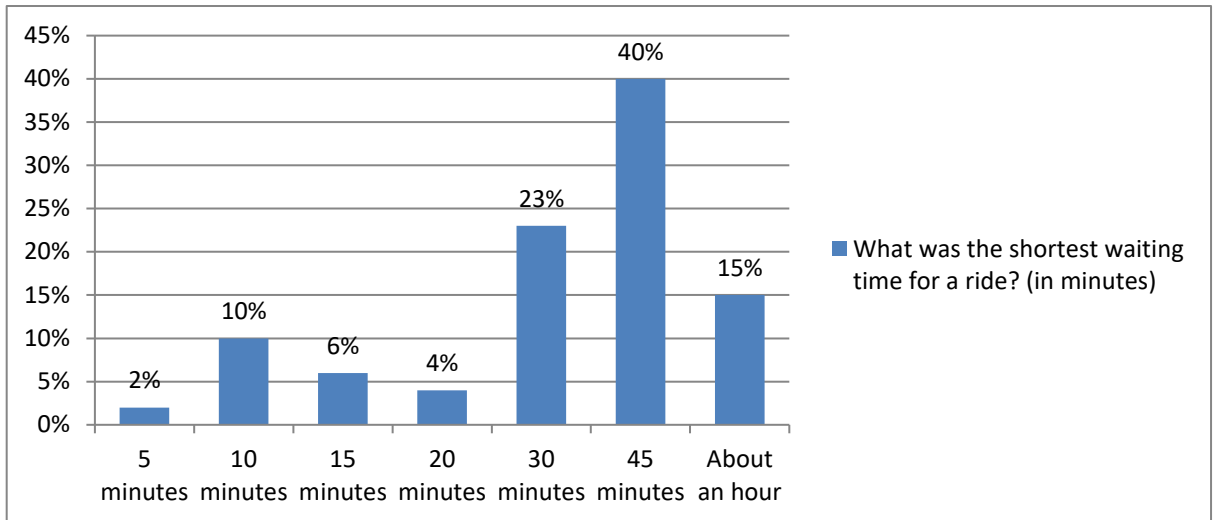
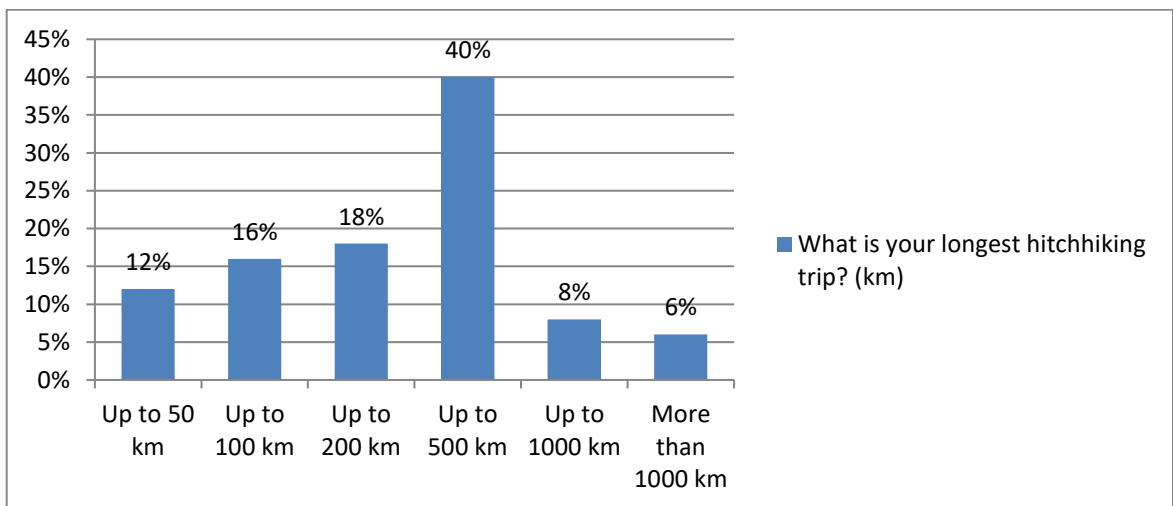


Figure 11 - Hitchhikers' waiting time for drivers (in minutes)

Source: Own research, 2017.

The shortest waiting time for a lift in 2% of cases was 5 minutes. The next result was a time of 10 minutes, which was declared by 10% of respondents. The answer that obtained the largest number of votes was a period of 45 minutes and it was declared by 40% of respondents.



Graph 12 - The longest trip by hitchhiking

Source: Own research, 2017.

The smallest distance traveled by hitchhiking is a distance of up to 50 km (12%). A group of 40% of respondents defined their longest trip by hitchhiking up to 500 km. There is also a group of 8% of people whose longest route was over 1000 km.

Summary and final conclusions

Research results have shown that respondents are eager to travel by hitchhiking and promote this mode of transport for reasons of cost savings. A small group of people think that hitchhiking is a great equivalent of public transport that does not meet their expectations. A smaller number of people praise "catching the foot" because of the great form of making new contacts. The least numerous group of people do not have their own means of transport, and therefore they think it is worth using this form of travel.

Most respondents feel safe when using this form of travel. A smaller proportion of respondents did not always know the level of security, because their answers were "I don't know" or "I have no opinion". The smallest part said that hitchhiking is not safe or rather not.

Drawing conclusions from the conducted research, the main group that is interested in traveling by hitchhiking are students or people over 25 years of age. In contrast, people over 35 years of age are the least numerous group of people traveling in this way.

The choice of means of transport usually depends on the available public and private communication. People who do not have their own means of transport depend on public transport, which, as it turns out, does not always meet the needs of traveling respondents.

When analyzing countries in terms of interest in hitchhiking, the majority of respondents pointed to the native country in which they are located. Most of the respondents indicated their country (Poland) as the main place of preferring hitchhiking as a form of transport.

The study clearly showed that people who chose this mode of transport would be guided by low travel costs. The respondents replied that in most cases their travel was PLN 0 or a few symbolic zlotys. According to people living in Poland, hitchhiking is more popular than abroad. The increase in popularity of this form of travel is associated with the increasing level of security that the current government provides.

The period and frequency of traveling with this form of transport has a big impact on efficiency. Hitchhikers have nowhere available tips that they have gained through many years of improving "catching the foot". The acquired knowledge that a novice hitchhiker does not have allows for quick and efficient acquisition of transport in any place where there is transport. The extensive experience that has been gained in travel has a significant impact on the safety of travelers.

Hitchhiking is more often chosen by the male environment due to the lower incidence of risks associated with this form of travel. Most respondents believe that women give up hitchhiking because they are afraid of intrusive drivers.

Hitchhikers more often choose hitchhiking as a means of transport because of the low cost. Hitchhiking is gaining popularity as a means of transport in Poland. The efficiency of traveling by hitchhiking is related to the acquired knowledge and experience of travelers. Hitchhiking is more often used by men.

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