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Developing Method for Evaluating Attractiveness, Accessibility and Safety of Visiting Historical Recreational and Tourist Sites

Abstract: The main purpose of the article is to present a method for assessing the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreational and tourist places, including facilities related to military tourism and dark tourism. The paper seeks to introduce the issues of the above-mentioned forms of tourism and – based on a survey – identify factors that make recreational and tourist space accessible and safe. The authors present and analyze the indicators and measures of the assessment, as well as demonstrate the procedure of evaluation. On the basis of surveys conducted on a group of one hundred experts in the field of tourism and recreation, the ten most important elements of space were selected. Subsequently, using weight values, we proceeded to indicate the strength of impact imposed by individual elements of space on the attractiveness and accessibility of facilities and the safety of visitors. Furthermore, determining the weight values allowed for the use of the weighted sum method during the assessment. Surveys were conducted from June to September 2017. The method was verified against one of the historical recreational places located in Poland – the Wolf’s Lair in Gierłoż. The developed method allowed us to assess the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreational and tourist facilities. The results of evaluation of the Wolf’s Lair in Gierłoż proved instrumental in identifying elements that have a positive impact on the level of tourism development, and those that are either missing or may be inadequate.

Keywords: tourism, military tourism, public space, security, point method

1. Introduction

The evaluation of tourist assets is a significant element of the planning process in tourism development. Nowadays, as technology develops and tourists gain access to various tourist attractions, it is extremely important to develop a method of assessment that accounts for attractiveness, accessibility and safety of tourist destinations. It is connected with practicing tourism in groups of healthy people as well as those with diseases and at different ages: young people, adults and the elderly.

Tourism developed rapidly in the 20th century, which was the time of socio-economic transformations that had considerable impact on different spheres of life: cultural, psychological, spatial, social and economic” (Podciborski and Zienkiewicz 2017, p. 125). Towards

the end of that period, a Polish geographer and geomorphologist, Janusz Czerwiński (2015, p. 23) believed that tourism is merely a form and manner of spending free time, thus recreation fully fits into the definition of leisure, whereas tourism constitutes in part recreation and a category of leisure time. The concept of tourism was described in greater detail by, Liszewski (1995), Naumowicz (1998) and Kowalczyk (2001).

Thus, it can be concluded that “the concepts of tourism development essentially fit into the main conceptual trends concerning economic development based on alternative development.” (Kozak 2008, p. 39). It is also indisputable that tourism is an economic activity which

often generates high revenues for the commune (*gmina*).

Stable economic development requires the presence of specific natural and anthropogenic elements as well as proper technical infrastructure, allowing potential tourists that visit historical sites to gain a wide range of positive experiences. It should be noted that, apart from numerous attractions, site administrators' priority should be to ensure a comfortable way of moving around for the disabled and elderly people (site accessibility), as well as safety for all visitors. The solution to this problem is closely connected with the development of the "accessible tourism" trend, which is a form of tourism that requires cooperation among the stakeholders in order to ensure that people with different needs (related to impaired mobility, eye sight, sense of hearing and the cognitive dimension) can function by themselves and with dignity. As a result of the stakeholders' activity, tourists must be provided with a universally designed tourist product and services as well as unlimited and unobstructed access to public space (Buhalis and Darcy, 2011).

Publications on the problem of assessing tourist attractiveness, as well as accessibility of facilities to various social groups have been considered by many authors world wide. The subject was touched upon by, among others, Amanti et al. (1996), Formica (2000), Iatu and Bulai (2011). Interesting studies were also conducted by Goeldner and Ritchie (2003), Hall and Page (2004), Mazilu (2010).

According to Duda-Seifert (2015), majority of authors tackling the problem of tourism assessment in Poland focus on the evaluation of the geographical environment to satisfy the needs of recreational tourism. The most notable works include Mileska (1963), Kostrowicki (1970), Bartkowski (1971) and Wyrzykowski (1986).

Some of the few publications regarding tourist destinations were authored by Warszńska

(1970), Przybyszewska-Gudelis et al. (1979), as well as Mikos von Rohrscheidt (2008, 2010).

Methods of studying tourist attractions were compiled and discussed by, for example, Nowacki (2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2007, 2009) and Kruczek (2011).

The Polish literature on tourism geography presents several methods of evaluating architectural sites for tourism purposes, which make use of the point-based evaluation technique. The most important studies include those by Mikułowski (1976a, 1976b, 1978) and Grabiszewski (2007).

Analysis of the abovementioned publications allows us to draw a conclusion that the evaluation of the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreational and tourist sites has not yet been discussed in a comprehensive way that would comprise a wide variety of architecture types or suggestions made by representatives of other sciences. Thus, the issue requires further studies, including the opinions and views of tourists themselves (Duda-Seifert, 2015).

Considering the fact that tourism is the most dynamic sector of economy in developed countries, and its growth directly enhances the growth of regions, cities and individual localities, the main aim of the article is to present a method of evaluating the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreational and tourist sites. Secondary aims include: introducing the concept of military tourism and dark tourism; identifying, on the basis of a survey, factors that render recreational and tourist space accessible and safe. The survey was conducted among a group of experts in the field of tourism and recreation in the period from June to September 2017. Further on, the authors presented and analyzed evaluation indexes and measures, as well as discussed the principles of evaluation procedure. The method was verified using the Wilczy Szaniec (Wolf's Lair) stronghold in Gierłoż as an example.

2. Military tourism and black tourism

Military tourism is considered an unconventional way of spending leisure time, and was defined by Jędrysiak and Mikos von Rohrscheidt (2011) as military cultural tour-

ism, war tourism, battlefield tourism or military equipment tourism. It is a wide-ranging term, because it encompasses structures, fortification lines and areas, museums, military exhibitions

and collections, routes of military expeditions and other cultural trails, as well as sites of various military operations, places where weapons were manufactured, military training fields, biographical sites and military cemeteries. Lawin and Stasiak (2009, p. 129) distinguish individual military attractions grouped into the following categories: defensive structures, battlefields, military museums or other museums containing large military collections, monuments commemorating historical events, sites associated with distinguished army leaders, graves and cemeteries of soldiers who died in battle.

Both astonishing and terrifying type of tourism that is currently flourishing is dark tourism. Its idea is based on unveiling the taboo, causes of death and its “twilight” aura. This particular

form of tourist activity includes travelling to places which radically and very literally demonstrate what has been happening to people throughout the ages. Other extremely popular themes are esotericism and all the spheres of life which involve secrets and refer to the past, mystery and death. The development of this kind of tourism proves that tension and the need to witness pain and hysteria have become a necessary element of life for the young generation. An example of an “exciting extreme expedition” of today is a trip to Chernobyl. Going to the deserted “city of death” enables tourists to visit a place where the mystery and traces of human tragedy are omnipresent, striking them with terror and fear. Unfortunately, while gaining large profits, the organizers of this sort of attractions put the tourists in extreme danger.

3. Public space in the aspect of the accessibility and safety of public utility buildings

The accessibility of tourism space, viewed from the geographical perspective, refers first of all to the physical-functional features. Thus, it can be defined as “the degree to which a given person may freely and individually make use of buildings and other sites, as well as open spaces, not needing to depend on special help” (Estcott, 2004, p. 7).

Jałowiecki and Szczepański (2006, p. 314) define traditional public space as a “freedom zone where each of its users may feel unconstrained”. According to Gehl (2009) public spaces should provide an opportunity for real existence, spatial urban development and public activity. Szatan (2012) claims that public space should be open and accessible to all individuals willing to use it, and it is meant to be authentic, which means that it should meet social expectations and preferences. Moreover, it is to be socially accepted and provide a sense of security. Lorens and Martyniuk-Pęczek (2010) define public space as a place to fulfil the need of direct contact among the participants of public life, which corresponds to the right of use.

Geographers have been addressing the needs of the disabled since 1930 (Faris and Dunham, 1939). Currently, free access to public space is guaranteed in the Polish law by the

provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland (Ustawa z 2 kwietnia 1997 roku Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej) and the Disabled People’s Charter of Rights (Uchwała Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z 1 sierpnia 1997 roku). Both legal acts refer directly to the discrimination against the disabled by limiting their access to public life. Another legal act referring directly to the same problem is the Construction Law (Ustawa z 7 lipca 1994 roku Prawo budowlane), whose Article 5 point 4 stipulates that persons with disabilities must be provided with the means necessary to use all utilities. Having analyzed the above acts of law, it can be concluded that as regards urban planning solutions, “the infrastructure accessible to the disabled people should become an essential symbol of modernity” (Pearn, 2011, p. 201).

The Construction Act (Ustawa z 7 lipca 1994 roku Prawo budowlane) quoted above stipulates that every building should have the necessary amenities, especially for people confined to a wheelchair. As regards the safety of using public utility buildings, the Act obliges all property owners and administrators to maintain the state in accordance to the requirements. This means that it is necessary to take constant care of technical condition of every building, regardless of whether it is under

construction or already in use. Building must undergo periodical inspection once every five years. However, at least once a year, it is necessary to check the condition of the building in

order to prevent any danger to human life. The technical state check involves evaluating building's adaptation to the surroundings.

4. Factors and elements of space development which influence the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreation and tourism sites

In order to make a list of ten indicators for evaluating the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreation and tourism sites, a survey was conducted among a group of 100 experts on recreation, including tourism. The questionnaire prepared by the authors of this article consisted of 30 questions formulated at the early stage of the study. The respondents' task was to express their opinion about the significance of 30 individual elements of space development in relation to general level of attractiveness, accessibility and safety of recreation and tourism sites. Based on the analysis of the study results, ten most significant elements of space were selected. Subsequently, in the form of weights, the researchers defined the impact of individual elements of space on the attractiveness and accessibility of buildings and the safety of visitors. Establishing weight values allowed them to use the weighted sum method for the purpose of the evaluation.

Further in the article the selected elements are referred to as evaluation criteria. They are listed below together with their weight:

1. The number and variety of sites open to visitors – 0.112
2. Availability of museum objects – 0.109
3. Technical state of a site – 0.107
4. Designation and technical condition of access roads leading to a historical site – 0.104
5. Possibility to use services of a guide, coach or instructor – 0.098
6. Safety of traffic routes – 0.096
7. Distance from the car park to the historical site – 0.095
8. Impact of natural and anthropogenic conditions on visitors' safety (e.g. radiation level) – 0.094
9. Adjusting passageways to the needs of the disabled and elderly persons – 0.093
10. Availability of toilets for the disabled persons – 0.092.

5. Measures of evaluating the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreation and tourism sites

In order to evaluate the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreation and tourism sites, the authors used a point scale method. "The method makes it possible to consolidate all individually evaluated features of space development elements into one number, which jointly expresses general quality of the evaluated site" (Babicz-Zielińska et al., 2018, p. 56). "Point scales combine the advantages of verbal and numerical scales. Every point on the scale is ascribed a number and a name" (Jędryka and Kozłowski, 1986, p. 32). The precision of results depends on correctly defined individual levels of quality and this is the first condition that must be fulfilled to obtain viable results. The second condition involves training

the members of the evaluation team to ensure they understand the definitions of individual site features in the same way.

A correctly constructed point scale should meet the following four criteria:

- each level on the scale should correspond to a level of quality perceivable to the evaluator;
- each point on the scale (i.e. each level of quality) should correspond to a clear-cut definition of quality;
- the number of points on the scale should be limited and should not exceed three ranges;
- all features should be evaluated on a scale with the same number of points.

Establishing measures was necessary to create a model which was used to evaluate the

attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreational and tourist sites.

In order to establish the level of the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of any historical recreational and tourist site, the authors

created a simplified evaluation sheet including the criteria, evaluation measures and weights. The model of the simplified evaluation sheet is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Simplified evaluation sheet (Authors' own study)

No.	Criterion	Measure	Scale	Points	Weight	Scale + Weight
1	Number and variety of sites available to visitors	the facility performed different functions in the past (the number of buildings exceeds 10)	2		0.112	
		the facility performed one function in the past (the number of buildings is 10 or fewer)	1			
		the facility performed one function in the past	0			
2	Museum objects found in the facility	renovated museum objects	2		0.109	
		not renovated museum objects	1			
		lack of museum objects	0			
3	Technical state of facilities	renovated facilities – their technical state ensures safety to visitors	2		0.107	
		not renovated facilities – their technical state ensures safety to visitors	1			
		not renovated facilities – their technical state threatens visitors' safety	1			
4	Designation and condition of the access road to a historical site	the site is directly accessed by a designated road	2		0.104	
		the site is directly accessed by an undesignated road	1			
		lack of direct access road to the site	0			
5	The possibility to use the services of a guide, coach or instructor	possibility to use services of a guide, coach or instructor throughout the year	2		0.098	
		possibility to use services of a guide, coach or instructor seasonally	1			
		no possibility to use services of a guide, coach or instructor	0			
6	Safety of traffic routes	passageways secured with railings placed along the entire tourist route	2		0.096	
		passageways secured with railings along selected parts of the tourist route	1			
		passageways not secured with railings along any parts of the tourist route	0			
7	Distance from the car park to the historical site	car park directly next to the historical site	2		0.095	
		car park up to 1 km from the main entrance to the historical site	1			
		lack of a car park within 2 km from the main entrance to the historical site	0			
8	Influence of natural and anthropogenic conditions on the visitors' safety	the entire area of the historical site is safe for the visitors	2		0.094	
		selected parts of the historical site are safe for the visitors (e.g. danger of mined areas)	1			
		the entire area of the historical site is dangerous for the visitors (e.g. radiation)	0			

9	Adjusting passageways to the needs of the disabled and elderly persons	all parts of passageways are equipped with elements helping the elderly and disabled persons to move around	2	0.093
		selected parts of passageways are equipped with elements helping the elderly and disabled persons to move around	1	
		lack of passageways equipped with elements helping the elderly and disabled persons to move around	0	
10	Availability of toilets for disabled persons	all available toilets are adjusted to the needs of disabled persons	2	0.092
		selected toilets are adjusted to the needs of disabled persons	1	
		Lack of toilets adjusted to the needs of disabled persons	0	
class I	$1.5000 \leq x \leq 2.000$	class III	$0.500 \leq x < 1.000$	Total points
class II	$1.000 \leq x < 1.500$	class IV	$0.000 \leq x < 0.500$	Obtained evaluation class:

6. Description of the research object

The leader of the Third Reich had several headquarters built in Germany and the part of Europe under German occupation. Most of them were hidden in large forests, surrounded with natural barriers, such as lakes or marshes. One of Adolf Hitler's headquarters was built in East Prussia, near the village of Gierłoż. The location of the Wolf's Lair, as it was called, was determined by many factors, such as the close proximity of the forest, short distance from the border with the Soviet Union (the "Barbarossa" plan assumed attacking the USSR), the division of the Third Reich into defensive sectors (one of the best fortified was sector 1 – East Prussia, featuring a number of strongholds: Giżycko, Toruń, Kłajpeda, Piława), location far from transport routes, in an old mixed forest provid-

ing a natural cover for the whole year, and the presence of Great Mazurian Lakes and marshes spreading to the east, which were a natural obstacle for land troops.

The site constitutes the most famous fortified headquarters in Europe. It was a fully masked military settlement, which consisted of 200 different buildings, including bunkers, bunkhouses, shelters, shacks, two landing fields, a powerhouse, a railway station, a water supply system, a heating plant and two teleprinter stations.

At present, the area of the former stronghold features ruins of several bunkers and shelters. There is also a designated tourist trail. Visitors may use services of a guide, a car park and a restaurant.

7. Research findings – evaluation results

In order to evaluate the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreational and tourist sites used for tourism purposes, the site described above was assessed by filling in a simplified evaluation sheet during a field interview (Table 1). In order to present the findings, a cumulative evaluation sheet was prepared (Table 2).

The Wolf's Lair stronghold was included in the group of highly attractive tourist sites. Unfortunately, the facility lacks passageways adjusted to the needs of the disabled and elderly persons. General condition of the buildings should encourage tourists to visit this exceptional place.

Table 2. Cumulative evaluation sheet (Authors' own study)

No	Wolf's Lair Stronghold		
	A	B	C
	Weight	Measure value	Value A * B
1	0.112	2	0.224
2	0.109	2	0.218
3	0.107	1	0.107
4	0.104	1	0.104
5	0.098	2	0.196
6	0.096	0	0.000
7	0.095	2	0.190
8	0.094	2	0.188
9	0.093	0	0.000
10	0.092	1	0.092
Achieved evaluation class: II high			Σ 1.319
Location:		Evaluation Class	Value
Province	Warmińsko-mazurskie	I – very high	$1.500 \leq x \leq 2.000$
<i>Powiat</i> (district)	Kętrzyński	II – high	$1.000 \leq x < 1.500$
<i>Gmina</i> (commune)	Kętrzyn	III – medium	$0.500 \leq x < 1.000$
Street:	-	IV – low	$0.000 \leq x < 0.500$

8. Conclusions

Tourism space is a unique type of space. “It involves the presence of particular landscape assets and anthropological elements of space development most desired by people” (Podciborski 2016, p. 22).

Based on the study, the authors developed a method for the evaluation of attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreational and tourist sites. The method was verified against the selected study object, which allowed the following conclusions to be drawn: the Wolf's Lair facility in Gierłoż was included in the group of facilities representing high tourist attractiveness. Unfortunately, it lacks designated communication routes adapted to the needs of the disabled and the elderly. The history associated with the presented place and general condition of the facilities should, however, attract tourist in spite of the aforementioned issues.

In addition to the above-mentioned findings, the conclusions of the work on the development of the discussed assessment method include:

- Well-developed tourism space featuring unique anthropogenic elements should enhance the growth of tourism;
- Every public space should be accessible to all social groups, regardless of the cause and severity of disability;
- Public spaces may impose no limitations to any people;
- People staying in a public space should feel safe, and this sense of security should result from the space administrators' actions;
- The method allows for evaluating the attractiveness, accessibility and safety of historical recreational and tourist sites;
- Based on the evaluation results, it is possible to indicate the elements of space that exert positive influence on tourism development, as well as those which are missing or appear inadequate;
- The method can be used to evaluate any museum facility, regardless of its location.

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