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Tourism research and education in Poland. History and contemporary issues

Abstract: The article identifies socio-economic changes in Poland after 1989 and their influence on the improvement of macroeconomic indicators and competitiveness. It also evaluates the impact of macroeconomic effects on the tourism market in Poland. Against this background the author considers the relationship between scientific research and tourism education arguing that quantitative changes in the development of tourism higher education have not resulted in the increase in both quantity and quality of research in the field. The article identifies drivers of tourism research that have expanded knowledge and were of practical use. The issues discussed include statistical capture and analysis of tourism-related phenomena, regional studies on sustainable development and the tourism function of regions as well as microeconomic problems such as quality of services, innovativeness and entrepreneurship. Examples are given of the use of research findings in didactic processes. Finally the article presents a review of research collaboration and student exchange programmes. **Keywords:** transformation processes, scientific research, education, science and education drivers.

JEL codes: A2, A3, R1, R5, A23, A30.

Introduction

In 1989 Poland was the initiator and the driving force of rapid political and economic change in Central Europe which led to a transformation of former Warsaw Pact countries into democratic states and market economies. In the political sense the changes in Poland began in 1980 with the emergence of the “Solidarity” movement, the first free and independent trade union in the eastern bloc which in the period between 1980 and 1981 had over 10 million members. The imposition of martial law by the communist authorities on 13 December 1981 provided a temporary setback to democratization processes in Poland, but the demise of totalitarian

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regimes in Europe became only a matter of time. The final stage on the way towards democratic changes in Poland began in early 1989 with the round-table negotiations between the democratic opposition and the Polish communist government, culminating in partially free parliamentary elections held on 4 June 1989 (one-third of the seats in the parliament were still guaranteed to the communist party). The first non-communist government in post-war Poland, led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki, was constituted soon after the elections. The Polish people finally began to have real influence on the country's political and economic decisions. It has to be strongly emphasized that the events in Poland set in motion the whole process of democratic change in Central and Eastern Europe. The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, by some regarded as the beginning of the democratic revolution in this part of Europe, came more than six months after the round table negotiations in Poland.

With democratically elected MP's having a clear majority in the parliament, the new government in a very short time managed to pass through fundamental political and economic reforms (such as local government reform), replacing the centrally controlled system with a free market economy. The core of the economic transition was the so-called "Balcerowicz Plan" which contained a revolutionary packet of reforms having no precedence in the world. In a first-of-its-kind economic experiment a socialist economy was transformed into a capitalist economy in a very short time through the democratic process. In the first step of the reform prices were freed from state control, causing an initial "price shock", and wages were practically frozen by the imposition of high tax on excessive pay increases. At the same time a legal framework for accelerated privatization was put in place. Those actions soon enabled a full convertibility of the Polish currency.

The effect was almost instant. A free market for goods and services and steep price rises motivated producers to increase production and liberated the entrepreneurial spirit hitherto suppressed by the centrally planned economy. In the first two years of economic transformation as many as 600,000 new private enterprises were established and soon the private sector – small and medium-sized enterprises in particular – became the main source of economic growth [www.exporter.pl/forum]. Inflation quickly decelerated from a hyper rate of 585% in 1989, to 70.3% a year later, 14.5% in 1997, and a mere 0.8% in 2003 [www.stat.gov.pl/gus]. The liberated competition dealt a severe blow to large, inefficient state-owned enterprises and obsolescent industries hitherto held above water by protectionist policies of the state. A wave of bankruptcies followed, leading to large structural unemployment. In 1990, the first year of transformation, when inefficient state enterprises (particularly in the agricultural sector) still existed, unemployment rate was 6.5%. In 2002 the rate of unemployment rose to 18% causing serious social problems. In the following years, owing to increased foreign direct investments [Oniszczyk 2009], accelerated expansion of domestic capital, and large scale infrastructure projects co-financed from European funds, the rate of unemployment gradually declined to

a level of 11.8% in 2011. The successes of the economic reform in Poland restored foreign creditors' confidence in the Polish economy allowing a significant reduction of Poland's foreign debt. In 1990 this public debt amounted to 48.5 billion US dollars. It was reduced by creditors to USD 42.2 billion in 1994, and USD 31.3 billion in 1999 [Government Centre for Strategic Studies 2002].

As a result of fast-track privatisation, foreign direct investments and improved macroeconomic indicators, competitiveness of the Polish economy improved very quickly. Poland enjoyed a long period of steady GDP growth, both total and per capita, reflected in continuously accelerating domestic demand. Measured by purchasing power parity, Poland's GDP per capita growth of 216% in ten years from 1992 to 2002 (from USD 4,994 to USD 10,800) was among the highest in the world [www.polskinetwork.org]. In 2009 Poland's GDP per capita stood at USD 18,072 [MFW 2010], which was 61% of the EU average [Eurostat 2010].

Transformation processes and their macroeconomic effects had a great impact on the tourism market in Poland, both in terms of demand and supply. One of the immediate benefits of Poland joining the family of democratic countries was a visa waiver for Polish citizens in almost all territories of the European continent. Following accession to the European Union in 2004, Poland was also accepted into the borderless Schengen Area. In a short time the number of foreign visitors to Poland rose dramatically. In 1992 there were 66 million registered arrivals of foreign visitors to Poland, of which 15 million were tourists (those staying overnight for at least one night). After a visa requirement for citizens of Poland's eastern neighbours was instituted and when price differentials between Poland and West European countries narrowed, visitor numbers declined to some extent. In 2010 the number of registered arrivals amounted to 58.3 million, including 12.5 million tourists [www.intur.com]. Nevertheless, income from inbound tourism has been growing quite substantially in recent years owing not so much to increased visitor numbers but to a substantially higher expenditure per tourist. In 2002 total visitor expenditure in Poland amounted to USD 1.85 billion (USD 132 per capita), while in 2010 tourists left behind USD 4.87 billion, with per capita expenditure rising to USD 390 (www.msport.gov.pl). This is also a reflection of a better adjustment of tourist supply to the needs of demand.

Tourist supply in Poland relies just as heavily on domestic travel. Though the number of both short (1–4 days) and long (over 4 days) travel has declined somewhat in recent years, it is still maintained at a high level: in 2005 there were 21.2 million short domestic trips and 14.7 million long domestic trips, whilst in 2010 these figures were 20.2 million and 13.7 million respectively. In 2010 total expenditure attributed to domestic tourism was estimated at 6.3 billion US dollars [www.intur.com.pl].

The last decade also saw a dynamic growth in air travel to and from Poland, with only a short break in the trend in 2009. In just three years following Poland's acces-

sion to the EU, the number of departures from Polish airports rose from 8.8 million in 2004 to 19.1 million in 2007, i.e. by 116.7%. After a momentary decline in the crisis year of 2009, the growth resumed in 2010, with departures reaching 20.5 million passengers [www.ulc.gov.pl]. The Polish people began to travel abroad much more frequently than before taking advantage of open borders, lower travel costs relative to income, and growing personal wealth. The number of outbound trips reached 8.4 million in 2002, declining briefly to 6.3 million in 2009, with further growth in 2010 to reach 7.1 million. The expenditure of Polish tourists abroad is also rising and is now estimated at USD 850 per tourist. Hence, it follows that last year Polish tourists spent over six billion US dollars abroad.

The transformation of the Polish economy had a great impact on the supply of tourism services. The whole mentality of tourism supply had to change from social to market-oriented. The former was symbolised by holiday facilities operated by state enterprises which offered heavily subsidised vacations for their employees. In the 1970's the number of places offered in such establishments approached 600,000. The economic reform exposed gross inefficiencies in the functioning of such facilities. Forced to raise prices for their services, and faced with severe competition from less expensive and often more attractive offerings available in the market (agritourism farms, private boarding houses), many operators of state holiday facilities had to sell them off or declare bankruptcy. In the year 2000, ten years after the economic reforms began, the number of places available in state-run holiday facilities fell to 195,000 in 2,079 establishments. By 2009 this number declined further to stand at 130,000 places in 1,199 facilities [www.intur.com.pl]. The ones that survived had done so only by adjusting their operations to the market economy.

The emblematic industry of market-oriented changes in Poland's tourism is the hospitality sector. Over the last two decades the hotel industry in Poland has enjoyed unprecedented growth. In the period from 1991 to 2009 the number of hotels (and beds) grew by an average 8.5% per annum. The number of hotels increased from 515 facilities in 1991 to 1,796 in 2010, and beds from 50,000 in 1991 to over 180,000 in 2010 [www.intur.com.pl].

This investment boom was due to both Polish investors and international hotel chains. Currently there are as many as 19 international chains operating in Poland, including such brands as Accor, Hilton, Sheraton Radisson SAS, and many more [Markiewicz 2008]. Their presence in Poland has forced radical changes in hotel management (such as the introduction of control and supervisory systems, standardisation of services, outsourcing, etc.), resulting in increased efficiency and competitiveness of hotel services.

The transformation of the Polish economy also led to profound changes in the travel agency sector. The dynamic growth in tourist numbers and tourist expenditure sparked a boom in travel agencies, but in the early years of economic reform the growth was mainly quantitative. In the beginning of the twenty-first century

there were more than 3,500 travel agents in Poland, of which 90% could be classed as micro-enterprises. The industry's fragmentation made it relatively easy for large international tour operators, such as TUI, Neckermann, Scan Holiday and others, to enter the Polish market. Some of the small agencies did not survive competition and were shut down. In 2009 the number of registered travel agents fell to 2,957 [www.turystyka.crz.mg.gov.pl]. But at the same time a number of domestic travel agencies, such as Triada, Ecco Holiday, or Rainbow Tours, managed to successfully compete with the international giants. A characteristic feature of Polish travel agencies, which makes them less efficient than their foreign counterparts, is versatility, with most agents trying to combine the function of travel agency with the function of tour operator. The Polish market, however, has very interesting prospects as it about to undergo deep structural changes in response to a falling demand for traditional holidays in favour of active tourism.

An important effect of the political and economic transformation in Poland is the decentralisation of power. Regional and local governments at all levels (province, county, municipality, and city) have gained significant powers and competences to govern and represent their regions. Tourism is often perceived as a driving force of regional development. Owing to information technology advances, inter-regional competition for tourists and investors is now played out in the global arena. Local governments' motivation to develop tourism in their areas has been strengthened by the availability of European structural funds for financing regional investments as part of the social and economic cohesion policy. Poland is a beneficiary of EU programmes, expecting to receive 60 billion euros in the period 2007–2013. The money is allocated mainly to environmental projects, construction of roads and motorways, cultural development and promotion initiatives, provision of recreational infrastructures, regional promotion, personnel training and other projects and initiatives intended to make a region more attractive to investors, local communities and tourists alike [Butowski 2009]. Policy makers in Poland now understand that to be successful in the competitive struggle regions must have a clear vision for the future, set in development strategies. This vision is put into practice through the creation of new, attractive offers (products) in cooperation with all stakeholders and service providers.

1. The relationship between scientific research and tourism education

The framework for the relationship between tourism research and education is defined by the requirements specified for higher education in tourism and recreation, and the organisational structure of higher education in Poland implemented in the nineteen-nineties.

In Poland until recently tourism education at the higher level could only be provided within the “Tourism and Recreation” degree programme. Higher education institutions wishing to provide tourism education outside this degree programme could only create specialisations within other majors such as, for example, International Economic Relations. The “Tourism and Recreation” degree programme emphasises the social role of tourism. This is reflected in the educational profile of a graduate: the holder of degree in “Tourism and Recreation” should possess humanistic knowledge which allows a person to appreciate human needs and understand social processes reflected in tourism and recreation, and should equally have knowledge of natural sciences all of which provide the basis for understanding the system of interrelations between man and the environment. The Tourism and Recreation programme has strong ties with sports and physical education, placing great emphasis on fitness, human physical performance, and the paradigm of health in contemporary physical recreation. Economic and geographic issues are less prominent in the syllabus both in terms of the availability of courses and the the number of hours. This limits the possibility of incorporating multidisciplinary scientific research in economy, geography and spatial planning into the didactic process. The precursors and main beneficiaries of this teaching programme in Poland were Academies of Physical Education (now: University Schools of Physical Education). The greatest contributor to the development of the didactic process in this degree programme was Krakow’s University School of Physical Education. Academics at this institution published a series of works on the prospects of leisure education in Poland, developed a professional profile of the tourism and recreation graduate and integrated tourism research with the didactic process [Winiarski 1993, 2001; Alejziak & Winiarski 2003].

From the 2011/2012 academic year, higher education institutions in Poland can offer a new degree programme under the heading Tourism Economy, leading to the degree of *licencjat* (equivalent to a bachelor’s degree) or *magister* (equivalent of master’s degree). So far the programme is offered at the University of Economics in Poznań (both *bachelor* and *master* degrees), and the University of Economics in Katowice (*bachelor* only). The educational profile describes the graduate as a person possessing advanced knowledge in the theory and practice of the tourism economy and skills in the management of tourist enterprises. The graduate should also have the ability to make profound analyses of processes influencing tourism economy in both micro and macro-scale and be well versed in the issues of marketing, finance, international economic relations and relevant law. Additionally, it is essential for the graduate to possess knowledge about the way in which the European Union and its markets function.

The relationship between scientific research and tourism and recreation teaching reflects also the current organisation of higher education in Poland. Almost all research in this field is conducted either by the Institute of Tourism or state aca-

ademic centres of long-standing reputation in tourism research and teaching. All these academic centres had conducted tourism research long before the political and economic transformation in Poland began. Their studies focused on economic, geographic, social, and sociological issues. Amongst the most prominent academic centres conducting tourism research are such universities as the Warsaw School of Economics (WSE) with its Department of Tourism established in 1959, and the Universities of Economics in Poznań (Department of Tourism since 1973), Wrocław, Katowice and Krakow. Tourism geography is studied at such renowned academic centres as Warsaw University, University of Łódź, and the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. Social and sociological issues are researched mainly at University Schools of Physical Education (commonly known as AWFs) in Krakow (Department of Tourism and Recreation since 1976), and in Poznań. All universities use results of academic research in the didactic process.

A consequence of the socio-economic transformation was the reform of the higher education system in Poland. Among its main objectives the reform specified the accelerated education of society and the achievement of a greater percentage of citizens with an academic degree. The reform enabled the establishment of private higher education institutions and State Vocational Higher Education Schools (with the overwhelming majority of such schools offering first-cycle undergraduate courses leading to a bachelor's degree). The reform also officially established the Tourism and Recreation degree programme which posed no problems in terms of staff or syllabus when it started.

With the dynamic development of tourism in the 1990's came a greater demand for qualified staff in the tourism sector. Tourism and Recreation became a fashionable academic subject. Many private higher education institutions, State Vocational Higher Education Schools and some strong academic centres which hitherto had not conducted tourism research or taught tourism, began offering Tourism and Recreation degree courses as it was not overly complicated to organise and provide such programmes. Unfortunately, greater quantity meant lower quality teaching and poorer academic standards. The reasons were as follows:

- Very serious staff shortages. In most newly opened higher education institutions the staff consisted of persons for whom it was a second job or whose career had little to do with tourism (e.g. geographers, transport specialists, or natural science specialists).
- In newly established degree programmes, particularly those provided by private higher education institutions, scientific research was and still is marginal, or its quality leaves a lot to be desired. Performance of the staff is assessed mainly with respect to the fulfilment of teaching contractual obligations.

With an inadequate supply of qualified specialists the negative trend is continuing. The shortage of teachers and researchers of high academic stature and with expert knowledge in tourism has clear consequences in teaching curricula. Syllabuses,

though meeting minimum programme criteria, often reflect the personal interests of teachers and may be biased towards geography, natural sciences, or sociological aspects.

Admittedly, some interesting studies have been undertaken and attempts made to improve the educational process and adapt it to the dynamic changes in the political, economic, social and technological environments. However, our argument is that despite colossal quantitative expansion of tourism higher education in Poland, a vast majority of research is still conducted at the “old”, renowned universities with generations of experience in tourism research, or by people who have originated from these centres. The same can be said about the educational offer.

2. Science and education drivers contributing to the development of tourism and recreation

A vast amount of research has been conducted to build up knowledge which has found many practical applications in travel and tourism. The research areas that could be described as drivers of science and education were often inspired by necessity of the moment. Selection of examples for the purpose of this article is, however, subjective and may reflect personal preferences of the author.

The most prominent research has been conducted in the areas of macro economy, regional studies, and the tourism market with special focus on the supply side.

Macroeconomic research

From the very beginning of the economic transformation in Poland a key issue was to develop a method of statistical registration of tourism phenomena at national, regional and company levels. A pioneering research on measuring tourism flows was conducted at the University of Łódź [Liszewski 1991; Matczak 1992]. The biggest contributions to studies on statistical measurement of tourism come from the Institute of Tourism in Warsaw and the Warsaw School of Economics. These scientific centres undertake regular studies of foreign visitor expenditure [Skalska 2008], measurement of the economic effects of tourism [Dziedzic 2005, 2008], and tourism market development (hotel industry, travel agencies, air travel). The studies are conducted mainly by research groups under the management of K. Łopaciński [Byszewska-Korbel, Dziedzic & Łopaciński 2004; Dziedzic et al. 2004; Dziedzic & Łopaciński 2004]. A very interesting synthesis of theoretical background and methods employed in the measuring of tourism activity is provided in the studies made by Krakow's University School of Physical Education [Alejziak 2008, 2009,

2010]. Statistical studies of tourism are complemented with diagnoses of economic cycles. This is a speciality of the University School of Physical Education in Poznań [Bosiacki & Konys 2001; Bosiacki & Guzik 2009].

A compilation of tourism and tourism-related statistical data is provided in the form of tourism satellite accounts (TSA), produced at both national and regional level. The issues of satellite accounts have been studied since the year 1998 by Warsaw research centres: WSE and the Institute of Tourism. Specifically, worthy of attention are methodological studies by E. Dziedzic [Dziedzic 2003, and later]. A national TSA for the year 2006 was compiled by the Institute of Tourism [Skalska et al. 2009]. Works on regional TSA's are currently in progress [Skalska & Dziedzic 2009].

Regional issues

Within a broad spectrum of issues in this area the most frequently explored subjects include sustainable development, creation of new regions and strategies for their development, measurement of tourism in regions, life-cycle of products, the role of local government and stakeholder collaboration and finally regional and company competitiveness.

The issues of sustainable development have been studied since the mid-1990's [Marciszewska 1998]. Research in this field is ongoing at the Universities of Economics in Poznań, Wrocław and Katowice, and also at the Warsaw University and other research centres. An example of the Poznań scientific community's involvement in the exploration of sustainable development issues is the series of studies by A. Niezgodą on sustainable development of tourism destinations and local development strategies. [Niezgodą 2004, 2006]. The issue of sustainable development of spas was explored by Krasieński [2004]. The concept of sustainable tourism and the issue of participation of local communities in the implementation of sustainable practices were researched at the University of Economics in Wrocław [Gryszel, Jaremen & Rapacz 2008; Jaremen & Turakiewicz 2010]. The Katowice University of Economics completed research on partnership networks in the context of sustainable tourism development in the region [Żabińska 2007], and cultural determinants of sustainable development [Szubert-Zarzczyński 2008]. Very intensive studies on sustainable regional development were conducted by geographers, such as Warszzyńska [2006] and Kowalczyk [2010].

A very interesting research field is the measurement of a tourism area's attractiveness with a pre-defined set of indicators and the creation of new tourist destinations on the basis of such measurement. This issue is particularly important in countries which have undergone comprehensive economic transformation and have experienced a fast growth in domestic and international tourism flows. Methodological studies in this area were conducted in the early 1990's at Warsaw University and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań [Krzyszowska-Kostrowicka 1992; Sołowiej

1993]. Geographers at the Warsaw University and University of Łódź made valuable contributions to the studies on tourism space and new tourism areas [Liszewski 1995, 2006; Włodarczyk 2009]. Identification of potential tourism areas and studies on tourist destinations in the context of globalisation were conducted at Warsaw University [Duridiwka 2003; Kulczyk 2007]. Studies in this area were taken up by economists from the Poznań University of Economics. Their research focused on the methods of identifying potential tourism areas [Gołembski 1999b, 2002], and location of tourism investments [Gołembski et al. 2010]. The issue of the spatial and functional development of regions through tourism was examined by the Szczecin academic community [Mayer 2008].

After Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, the issue that gained practical significance was a formulation and implementation of tourism development strategies. Such strategies, incorporated in the broad context of socio-economic issues, provided a basis for detailed action plans and procurement of EU funds. Amongst numerous studies on development strategies, of particular interest are early works on tourism strategies in regional spatial planning [Drzewiecki 1993], and on spatial development strategies [Nawrocka 1998]. Of special value are strategy studies conducted in Poznań by academics of both the University School of Physical Education and the University of Economics. Tourism development strategies for urban areas (particularly the city of Poznań), and development paths for tourism in Poland were presented in the studies by Bosiacki [Bosiacki & Sikora 1997; Bosiacki 2000, 2006]. Development strategies for the Wielkopolska Region and Wielkopolski National Park were proposed by UEP teams [Czernek et al. 2006]. Quality in the development of tourism product strategies was investigated by Gołembski [2004a].

Tourism development can be ascertained by the level and intensity of an area's tourist function and the related measure of the product life cycle. In this context interesting studies of mountain tourist destinations were carried out at the Warsaw University and the Jagiellonian University in Krakow [Kurek 2005]. In turn, the University of Łódź studied the tourist function of cities [Jażdżewska 2008]. The issues of tourist function development were also explored in the studies undertaken by academics at the Poznań University of Economics. A very interesting methodological work by Majewska [2008] focused on financial aspects of introducing tourism into a local area, while Zmyślony [2011] analysed tourism strategic planning in urban areas. The work of a team of UEP economists resulted in a publication on the life cycle of an urban destination based on the example of the city of Poznań [Gołembski 2011].

A very important outcome of the political reform in Poland was the decentralisation of power and emancipation of local government. As a result the role of local authorities in tourism development increased significantly. At the same time it became apparent that in order to create attractive offers for tourists, all stakeholders involved in the development of the local tourism product must cooperate.

Collaboration of stakeholders, such as local governments, entrepreneurs, residents, and environmentalists, is often constrained by a variety of economic, social and cultural factors. Studies on these issues were conducted primarily in Poznań and Krakow research centres and focused on the role of the public sector in the development of local strategies for tourism products and in the stimulation of investment activity in tourism areas [Golembki 2004b; Nawrot & Zmyślony 2004]. Some interesting doctoral dissertations concerning this issue were presented at the Poznań University of Economics, including the studies on the role of leadership [Zmyślony 2004] and local government [Majewska 2009] in the development of tourist destinations. Both dissertations were methodological, at the same time presenting very interesting case studies. In a thought-provoking qualitative study Czernek [2007, 2010] explored endogenous and exogenous determinants of collaboration in a tourist destination. Quite recently the University School of Physical Education in Poznań presented results of a study on the role of local government in the development of business tourism in the city of Poznań – a centre for conventions and trade fairs [Bosiacki & Śniadek 2011]. In Krakow, studies on the role of local government in tourism development were conducted mainly at the Jagiellonian University. The research focused on methodological questions [Derek 2007], and collaboration of local governments in tourism development [Pawlusiński 2002, 2005]. Very interesting and important studies on cross border collaboration between local governments and entrepreneurs, and on the integration of euroregions, were made at the Wrocław University of Economics [Rapacz 2004, 2006].

Collaboration leads to greater competitiveness of regions and companies in attracting investors and tourists. However, in an increasingly globalised economy and with advances in information technology, countries, regions and companies compete in a borderless, global market. Studies on competitiveness were made mainly by economists. Worthy of attention are studies which were undertaken at the Poznań University of Economics on direct competitiveness and its measurement, and indirect competitiveness [Nawrot 2006a, b]. Studies on the international competitiveness of a tourism region were undertaken by Ł. Nawrot [2008], and Nawrot and Zmyślony [2009]. Results of research on rural areas' competitiveness were presented at a conference in Calcutta [Nawrot & Nawrot 2010]. Studies were also conducted about the impact of sustainable development practices on the competitive advantage of a tourist destination [Niezgoda 2008]. A collection of papers on competitiveness of regions in the age of globalisation was published by the Poznań University of Economics in 2008 [Golembki 2008a]. Very interesting studies were made by Warsaw researchers (Institute of Tourism and Warsaw School of Economics) who, for example, examined the impact of the issue of municipal bonds on the competitiveness of regions [Kachniewska 2008]. Other interesting studies focussed on the price competitiveness of Polish tourism products, and competitiveness of "city break products" in selected European countries [Skalska 2006, 2010a, b]. Also worth mentioning are

studies of EU policies aimed at the improvement of tourist firms' competitiveness [Zawistowska 2005], and studies undertaken in Katowice on the impact of marketing on the competitiveness of tourist regions [Żabińska 2006].

Microeconomic issues

Among the most interesting microeconomic issues are questions of service quality, innovativeness, entrepreneurship and impact of multinational corporations on the management of tourist enterprises. These are key issues for emerging free-market economies which need to improve efficiencies.

Studies on tourism product quality were undertaken already at the end of the 1990's [Gołębski 1998, 1999]. Of particular interest are studies on service quality management. Very interesting results were reported in the studies published by Kachniewska [2002, 2004, 2006]. In early years of the twenty-first century, research on quality determinants in the hotel industry was undertaken by Wrocław economists [Jaremen 2001, 2004]. Around that time Żabińska [2004] investigated the quantification of service quality for management purposes, and Kosmaczewska [2004] worked on a quality system for rural tourist accommodation. Determinants of tourism product quality were also the subject of interesting doctoral dissertations [Wąsowicz 2003]. Quite recently Poznań economists undertook intensive studies on a methodology for evaluating service quality in the hotel industry. Amongst the investigated methods of tourism quality assessment was the "critical events" model [Olszewski 2004, 2007b, 2008]. A generalisation of these studies is provided in the work on knowledge management in the process of competing through quality in the hospitality industry [Olszewski 2011]. Studies on quality measurement of hotel services were also undertaken in Wrocław [Jedlińska & Jaremen 2008], and on tourist air and sea transport quality in Szczecin [Milewski 2008]. In Poznań a research was conducted on the possibilities of implementing IQP in the region [Zmyślony 2008]. Lately, the quality issues have been taken up by geographers. The studies focused on the relationship between the quality of the geographic environment and that of tourism [Liszewski 2009].

Worth noting are the rare studies on risk management in tourism business activity. Bednarska [2004, 2005] carried out intensive studies on demand risk in hotel operations, risk management with special focus on cooperation agreements, the criteria in choosing risk management methods and, recently, hotel risk measurement [Bednarska & Białowas 2008].

As has been stated, studies on innovativeness and entrepreneurship are particularly valuable for emerging free-market economies. Such studies with respect to the tourism sector were undertaken by research centres in Poznań and Wrocław. [Gołębski 2005a, b, 2008b] investigated methods of entrepreneurship appraisal in the Polish tourism sector. Around the same time Majewska [2006] conducted studies

on stimulation of tourism entrepreneurship by local authorities. Zmysłony [2008] investigated entrepreneurship in relation to business leadership. Entrepreneurship in the Polish tourism sector, based on a case study, was investigated by Gołębski and Olszewski [2010] as part of a broader international research project. Lately, a study on innovativeness in tourism was completed by Wrocław researchers [Rapacz 2008], including a special focus on spa tourism [Januszewska 2009, 2010]. In Szczecin, researchers studied service innovations in the hotel industry [Szostak 2008], and – lately – innovativeness in all types of Polish tourism firms [Szymańska 2009].

A characteristic feature of the tourism sector and the hotel industry in particular, is the expansion of multinational corporations into local markets. These companies bring proven management systems and their proprietary corporate culture. Their presence has great impact on domestic firms which, in order not to be left behind, have to copy the best practices of the multinational giants. This phenomenon was thoroughly investigated by researchers at the University School of Physical Education in Krakow [Alejziak & Marciniak 2003]. Expansion of international hotel chains in Poland was also studied by Wrocław economists [Jedlińska 2006; Nawrocka 2008]. Similar studies were conducted with respect to tour operators [Konieczna-Domańska 2008a]. In Poznań, Średzińska-Markiewicz [2001] investigated foreign takeovers of Polish hotel enterprises which were privatised and floated on the stock exchange. The same author carried out studies on a global hotel product based on the example of multinational corporations operating in Poland [Markiewicz 2008]. Finally, studies were completed on the impact of modern management methods on a hotel's economic performance [Gołębski 2007], and on methods of measuring efficiencies in tourism enterprises [Bednarska 2007].

3. Using research results in teaching tourism

Tourism research methodologies and results are widely used in the didactic process both in the Tourism and Recreation and Tourism Economy degree programmes. Reference to research studies is particularly useful in teaching subjects such as Management of Tourism Enterprises, Local Government's Role in the Tourism Economy, Planning and Appraisal of Tourism Investments, or Quality Management in the Hotel Industry and Travel Agencies. Apart from research methodologies and results, a very important teaching resource are monographic publications, of which there have been many in recent years. Some of the examples include: Fundamentals of Recreation [Winiarski 1989], Tourism Geography and Regional Studies [Lijewski, Mikułowski & Wyrzykowski 2009; Kruczek 2009], Fundamentals of Tourism [Kurek 2007; Gaworecki 2010], and also The Basics of Hospitality and Tourism Law [Zawistowska 1999].

Many monographic publications can be used in teaching tourism economics and spatial issues. These are mainly publications on tourism economy and tourism economics [Panasiuk 2006, 2008], the tourism enterprise [Rapacz 2007; Bednarska et al. 2007], marketing in tourism and catering [Panasiuk 2005; Sala 2011], buyer behaviour [Niezgoda & Zmysłony 2006], tourism infrastructure [Kowalczyk & Derek 2010], and tourism product [Kaczmarek, Stasiak & Włodarczyk 2010]. Gołembski [2009] published a compendium of tourism in which economic, sociological and spatial issues are presented in macro, mezzo and micro scale.

4. International collaboration in tourism research and education

The most important forms of collaboration include joint research, exchange of scientific thought at conferences and through publications in journals, student exchange, and lectures delivered by visiting professors and business practitioners (regular or one-off events). In a big country such as Poland, where tourism is taught at many state and private universities, an exhaustive analysis of this issue is difficult if not impossible to make. Nevertheless, a conclusion we draw is that the level of collaboration does not adequately reflect the scientific and research potential represented by Polish institutions.

Joint research

Good examples of international collaboration in research can be found in the field of geography. In the period 2005–2008 the Jagiellonian University in Krakow with its partners from the Czech Republic and Hungary participated in a UN Global Environment Facility project under the heading “Protection and sustainable use of biological diversity through sensible development of tourism in biospheric reserves of Central and Eastern Europe”. Within the scope of a long term collaboration agreement, the Jagiellonian University and Blasé Pascal University in Clermont-Ferrand have been studying functional transformations of tourist destinations and regions in the Carpathians, Alps and Massif Central. A new joint project with universities in Ostrava (Czech Republic), Presov (Slovakia) and Žilina (Slovakia) investigates tourism changes in cross-border regions of the Polish and Slovakian Carpathian Mountains.

A joint project of the University of Łódź and Manchester Metropolitan University led to a publication in 1997 of “A comparative study of Łódź and Manchester”.

In the field of economic sciences the University of Wrocław engaged in joint projects with partners from Germany and the Czech Republic to establish a framework

of cooperation and integration in tourism in the Nysa macro-region in the run-up to Poland's accession to the European Union.

For the last ten years the Poznań University of Economics and University of Innsbruck have collaborated continuously on joint projects in tourism within the scientific and technological cooperation framework. Joint studies concerned such topics as Development of Tourism and Tourism Destination Management (2002–2003), Entrepreneurship in Tourism – a Comparative Study of Poland and Austria (2005–2006), and Destination Rejuvenation Strategies – Policies and Measures (2008–2009). The collaboration has borne fruit in the form of joint English language publications in the Poznań University of Economics Review, and the book “Entrepreneurship and Quality in Tourism in Light of Polish and International Research” (2007). Numerous joint workshops have been held.

Participation in scientific conferences

In this area there seems to be some dissatisfaction amongst the tourism research community in Poland. The reasons why Polish researchers may be under-represented at major scientific conferences are many, including financial constraints, sometimes language barriers, or an insufficient number of studies made with the use of the latest methodologies. Lack of wider contacts makes it difficult for the Polish academic community to integrate with European and global science. This has a particularly negative impact on the development of a young generation of researchers. Without doubt Polish researchers have more intensive contacts with their counterparts in Central and Eastern European countries, in particular in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia, or Ukraine. Major conferences are held in Liberec (Czech Republic), Opatija (Croatia), Lviv (Ukraine), Presov and Bratislava (Slovakia), or Belgrade (Serbia). Historically, a very important venue for tourism conferences is the School of Economics at Banska Bystrica in Slovakia.

Polish academics have clearly fewer contacts with research centres in Western Europe. Membership of prestigious international organisations or scientific forums is marginal and so are Polish presentations at major international conferences in Western Europe. Worth noting is membership of the Łódź University's Institute of Tourism Geography in the prestigious Association of Tourism and Leisure Studies (ATLAS). Worth noting are also emerging international contacts of Polish tourism statistics researchers (participation in the Lisbon International Forum on Tourism Statistics in 2010). The Krakow's University School of Physical Education has organised a major international conference on the development of tourism research. The writer of these words has been a member of AIEST since 1987 (conferences in Breda, Berlin, Cha Am, Hangzhou, Athens and Macao), and Tourist Research Center (TRC) since 2004 (conferences in Brugge, Kiel, Tours, Bolzano, Poznań, Vienna and Bodrum).

Student exchange

Student exchange schemes have expanded considerably after Poland's accession to the European Union. Particularly successful is the Erasmus student exchange programme: large higher education institutions in Poland have signed agreements with dozens of universities abroad. Although many students of tourism have benefited from the scheme, new initiatives enabling closer contacts between universities offering tourism degree courses are needed. In this context we welcome the efforts that have been made to unify the curricula of tourism degree programmes during one selected semester at several European universities to enable students to continue the study at any of the institutions participating in the scheme. This initiative has been proposed by the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt and taken up by universities from Scandinavia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, Hungary and Poland.

Amongst the variety of student exchange possibilities there are student apprenticeship programmes. These have also been very successful. Alas, this form of exchange is mostly unilateral: many Polish students travel abroad to work in the tourist sector, usually in Mediterranean countries, while hardly any foreign students come for an apprenticeship in Poland.

Lectures delivered at Polish universities by visiting foreign lecturers

Such lectures are delivered both by academics and practitioners. In the didactic process the importance of a first-hand contact between students and foreign lecturers cannot be overestimated as it allows students to learn about the latest achievements and innovations in tourism theory and practice. The lectures and discussions are conducted in English, providing students with an excellent opportunity to practice and improve their language skills.

Alas, these events are rare. Foreign lecturers are more frequently invited by private institutions (usually desperate for the highest quality staff) than state universities which often cannot afford such programmes. This is one of the greatest weaknesses of tourism and leisure education in Poland, depriving students of valuable international exposure.

Budgetary constraints in this area can be overcome by securing external co-financing. This is exactly the way chosen by the University of Economics in Poznań which managed to finance the establishment of the Tourism Economy degree programme with money obtained from an EU sponsored programme Workforce for the Economy. External funding has enabled the school to arrange several lectures per semester delivered by outstanding European scholars and practitioners.

Of great value are lectures and classes conducted by foreign academics and practitioners on a regular basis. Examples of such initiatives include lectures on hotel

management by a German manager of Sheraton Hotel, or regular lectures conducted by an English business practitioner at the University of Economics in Poznań.

Summary

Several general conclusions can be drawn from the above discussion. The systemic transformations in Poland have led to unprecedented quantitative and qualitative changes in the tourism sector. On the demand side we have seen a dynamic growth in tourist numbers and increased expectations regarding the structure and quality of supply. On the supply side, the market economy and globalisation processes have led to greatly increased competitiveness amongst Polish service providers. All these developments have posed serious challenges for the tourism and leisure education system.

The Polish education system itself has undergone significant transformations over the last twenty years to adapt to the changing environment. Assessment of the outcomes is not, however, unequivocally positive. What deserves a very positive rating is the development of tourism and leisure research. The research, particularly in the fields of tourism statistics, regional development, investment policy, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, quality or company management is strictly connected with teaching programmes and is used in the didactic process. Teaching programmes are progressively changed and adjusted to the needs of practice and the labour market. This concerns also the skills which are highly valued by employers, such as languages, management abilities, familiarity with relevant legal issues, ability to use computerised booking systems, etc.

A major negative of the Polish science and education in the field of tourism and leisure is an uneven quality of both research and education. This is primarily a result of the quality not keeping pace with the quantity. Certain tourism degree courses offered by both private and public higher education institutions were established without adequate teaching resources.

Another major negative are insufficient relations with foreign institutions both in research and education. While Polish universities have wider contacts with Central and Eastern European partners (ease of communication, similar experiences from the past), their collaboration with West European research and education centres is inadequate. It concerns equally joint research projects, publications and teaching (visiting professors).

It has to be said, however, that the potential of Polish research and higher education in the field of tourism and leisure is enormous and qualitative differences between institutions should in time disappear owing to personnel development at new schools and greater competition which will eliminate weaker institutions. Therefore, a conclusion is justified that Polish tourism and leisure research and education are

ready for another qualitative leap which will inevitably result in a much greater participation in the mainstream of European research and education in the field.

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