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Micro-travel as a tourism trend among the residents of the Siedlce Poviát, Mazowieckie Voivodeship

Abstract: The study reported here aimed at determining the degree of interest in micro-scale trips among residents of the Siedlce Poviát and the city of Siedlce participating in broadly-defined tourism. It was attempted to identify preferences related to micro-tourism, who accompanies travellers on such trips, as well as the sources from which tourists gather information about places to visit. Importance was ascribed to determining the motivations and objectives associated with micro-travelling. The study here involved the method of diagnostic survey whose research tool was the authors' own questionnaire. It was demonstrated that trips in the surrounding area are an interesting form of activity, being fairly popular among, and eagerly undertaken by tourists. This is evidenced by the significant number of respondents who participated in this survey, thus confirming they undertake such trips. From the material collected in the course of the research, and the detailed analysis conducted, it can be inferred that micro-trips occupy an important place in the lives of tourism-oriented residents of the city of Siedlce and the Siedlce Poviát.

Keywords: tourism, micro-scale travelling, motives, trends in tourism

1. Introduction

Tourism in the 21st century is a significant and dynamically developing sector of the global market economy (Bosiacki and Panasiuk 2017). It plays an important role in people's lives as it provides the opportunity to become better acquainted with a country or region of the world by appreciating its customs, culture, religion, as well as cultural and natural heritage resources. Tourism has become an integral part of daily life, promoting the regeneration of physical and mental strength and ensuring human comfort. Also, tourism significantly contributes to effective relaxation and detachment from everyday worries, providing unforgettable moments, experiences, and memories (Anciaes and Metcalfe 2023).

In recent years, significant changes have occurred in the global trends of the tourism

industry development, leading to shifts in the current trends in the tourism market. There is a noticeable interest in the natural environment, active forms of spending leisure time, and a shift from group travel to more individualised experiences (Niezgoda 2013). For tourists selecting destinations, environmental pollution issues and respect for regional traditions are becoming increasingly important (Burmecha-Olszowy 2014).

Micro-travel, also known as local travel, is one of the newer, current tourism trends allowing for exploration of both less popular and well-known local places, as well as deeper immersing in the region's history. It is an intriguing, unconventional, and dynamically developing approach to exploring

the surroundings close to one's place of residence.

Micro-scale travelling includes tourist trips on a local scale, usually or several dozen minutes to a few hours, or one to several days long, with minimum preparation, aimed at exploring the immediate surroundings in one's place of residence. Micro-travelling is a relatively new concept, often encountered on various travel-themed blogs on the Internet. The phenomenon of micro-scale tourism was probably already known in the previous century and such trips were taken to some extent. This trend in tourism has gained significance since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. Micro-scale trips fall into the niche category which includes promising forms of tourism, with significant potential for development. They are also referred to as 'off-the-beaten-path' journeys whose remarkable property is the exploration of non-mainstream places. Zawisło (2018) refers to micro-travelling as 'all-round wanderings.' The precursor of the micro-adventure concept and the populariser of micro-expedition ideas is considered to be Alastair Humphreys, an English world wanderer, adventurer and nature lover (Humphreys 2024), who was named National Geographic's Adventurer of the Year in 2012. According to him, micro-adventures are 'small, local trips that start and end within arm's reach,' aimed at breaking down elitism in adventure (Cahall 2011). Humphreys (2024) also emphasises the fact that although these are simple, local, inexpensive, short trips, they are fun, demanding, refreshing, satisfying, and exciting (Nowakowska 2021). A Polish advocate of micro-travelling is Łukasz Długowski, a fan of unfashionable destinations situated off the beaten tract (Długowska and Długowski 2024), an avid traveller, journalist, author of a travel blog, and host of travel-themed TV shows, who believes that 'adventure is absolutely everywhere: outside the city, in the city, in the forest, by the river'. For Długowski, nature and its values play a major role while travelling, and in practice, he

mainly focuses on active and specialised tourism with natural elements. The traveller promotes ecological attitudes, ensuring that micro-trips provide macro-experiences. According to Długowski, micro-travelling includes trips that offer everything that large-scale expeditions do, including emotions, adrenaline, unexpected wandering, and adventure, all of this without incurring negative personal, financial, and risk-associated costs which are limited to minimum during micro-travels (Długowski 2016).

Another commonly encountered form of micro-travelling is weekend getaways which are highly popular among tourists, especially residents of larger cities. A micro-trip can involve a picnic in a nearby park, an evening stroll around the neighbourhood, visiting old cemeteries, searching for forgotten graves, or having a campfire in the countryside. An important component of micro-travelling is the natural and cultural values that enhance the experience.

The current economic situation and political instability worldwide have led to a growing preference among Poles for domestic travel which accounted 79,4% in 2023 (Zadrozny and Borek 2023). A positive aspect is that domestic trips are becoming increasingly desired by tourists, and it can be assumed that their participation in micro-travelling will also rise. The latest study by the World Economic Forum published in 2021 shows a significant rise in Poland's rank as its Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) moved up from the 42nd to 30th place, thus further emphasising Poland's importance as a tourist destination on the international arena (Upping 2022). It is a fact that micro-scale travelling has already been partly carried out for a long time, but with little intensity and lack of awareness of participation in this form of tourism. The growing importance of travel on a smaller scale is also emphasised by Anna Wieconkowska, Head of Travel Insurance at Colonnade Insurance S.A. (Smolińska 2019). In 2022, as many as 42% of Poles spent their holidays in Poland, which was the third-best

result in Europe, right after France (55%) and Spain (48%) (Mądry 2024). This is a significant achievement for domestic tourism, and consequently, for local tourism as well. The micro-travel trend is particularly popular with young people who want to travel, experience, and enjoy life, reflecting a gradual change in tourists' mentality and models of travelling. The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic has motivated researchers to conduct studies aimed at examining the intensity of local tourism traffic.

The study reported here aimed at determining the degree of interest in micro-

scale trips among residents of the Siedlce Poviát and the city of Siedlce participating in broadly-defined tourism. It was attempted to identify preferences related to micro-tourism, who accompanies travellers on such trips, as well as the sources from which tourists gather information about places to visit. Importance was ascribed to determining the motivations and objectives associated with micro-travelling. Hypothetically, it was assumed that travelling within the immediate vicinity is an interesting form of activity, enjoying considerable popularity and willingly undertaken by tourists.

2. Research area and methods

2.1. Research area

When calculating the sample size, a confidence level of 0.95, an estimated fraction size of 0.50, and a maximum error of 0.05 were assumed. A sample of 383 persons was calculated from the adult population of the Siedlce Poviát and the city of Siedlce using a calculator which determines the required number of people in the sample. The sample was taken from a total number of 156 115 residents of the Siedlce Poviát and the city of Siedlce (GUS 2022), in which the number of women was 79 988 (51.2%), and men 76 127 (48.8%). Women accounted for 51.17% of the respondents (196 surveys), while men accounted for 48.83% (187 surveys). More than half of the respondents were city residents (54.6%), while

45.4% were rural inhabitants. Slightly more than half of the respondents were white-collar workers, accounting for 50.9%. Adults up to 25 years old accounted for 36.4% of the total respondents (mostly pupils and university students). In this study, the share of people aged 26-65 was 60% (working persons), and those over 65 accounted for only 3.60% (pensioners).

The study conforms to the code of ethics of the World Medical Association and the standards for research involving human subjects set out in the Declaration of Helsinki. The protocol was approved by the local university ethics committee.

2.2. Data collection

In the study, the diagnostic survey method was employed, using a questionnaire as the research technique. An author-designed survey questionnaire was used as a research tool. The research was conducted online using a Google Form questionnaire in January 2023, and the target study group consisted of persons who were eager participants of micro-trips. The questionnaire was sent to respondents via

university email and through a link shared on social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram). The survey was made up of a total of 5 closed-ended questions with multiple-choice options, employing a 5-point Likert scale. Gender was the main determinant of dividing the participants in the study. Responses which the respondents considered

to be of little importance were not included in

the created discriminant function models.

2.3. Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis, conducted by means of STATISTICA 13 PL (TIBCO Software, Palo Alto, CA, USA) software, made use of discriminant function. This statistical procedure is used to examine differences between three groups (such as in the study reported here) by a simultaneous analysis of several variables to find out which variables are the greatest contributors to group discrimination. Classification of cases is one of the main goals behind an application of discriminant analysis. The applied classification function is based on a linear combination of discriminant variables. There were two functions, the same number as the number of groups. They are used to determine to which group a given case belongs.

Multidimensional normality was examined before testing, checking each variable for normality of distribution. The Kolmogorow-Smirnow test was applied to check the hypothesis that two samples were taken from different populations. Due to a large number of individuals in each group, slight deviations were of little importance (Tabachnick 1996). It was assumed that the variances of the variables were homogeneous in particular groups. The variance matrix was not taken into account due to the large numbers of respondents in individual groups. Statistical significance was defined as those differences for which the probability of randomness was less than $p \leq 0.05$.

3. Results and Discussion

With the emergence of new trends in tourism, a noticeable shift from group to individual travel experiences has taken place (Niezgoda 2013, Leask et al., 2014), as confirmed by findings of the present study. Respondents revealed the greatest preference for self-organised tourist trips allowing them to manage their time independently. This preference was significantly higher for men than women (at $p=0.042$), as indicated by the values of the classification function. In the

created discriminant function, a high position was taken by trips organised through a travel agency, as well as using tourist guides or Tourist Information Centres. The values of the classification function in both gender groups of respondents were similar, revealing no significant differences. It should be noted that the created model excluded the following forms of organising trips: family or friends, workplaces, schools, and similar institutions (tab. 1).

Table 1. Preferred methods of organising micro-scale tourist trips (based on the Authors' own study)

Organisation of tourist trips	Wilks' lambda: 0.406 F = 7.932 $p < 0.001^*$			Classification function	
	Wilks' lambda	F value	P level	Women	Men
Independently	0.494	3.936	0,042*	3.213	4.107
Through a travel agency	0.485	2.652	0.087	2.116	2.353
With the help of a tourist guide or Tourist Information Centre	0.487	1.7218	0.212	1.217	1.298
Constant				9.745	12.021

*– level of significance of differences at $p \leq 0.05$

Most frequently, random persons accompanied the respondents on micro-trips, as indicated by the values of the classification function. At $p=0.040$, significantly higher values were obtained for men than women. For female participants, a higher value of the classification function, significant at $p=0.027$, was achieved when friends were indicated as companions on micro-trips. Men chose to travel on their own significantly more often than women, at $p<0.001$. According to Balińska (2019), women are the least likely to

travel alone, which the author believes is most probably due to socio-cultural and personal constraints. Also, men significantly more often than women, at $p=0.021$, chose to travel as part of an organised group (tab. 2), although such company was the least popular choice. These results are confirmed by the research reported by Szpilko et al. (2013). Neither partners nor family members were included in the created discriminant function model, which is quite puzzling and indicates the need for further research to explain the cause.

Table 2. Travel companions in micro-trips (based on Authors' own study)

Travel companions	Wilks' lambda: 0.487 F = 6.976 $p<0.001^*$			Classification function	
	Wilks' lambda	F value	P level	Women	Men
Random persons	0.512	4.234	0.040*	2.928	2.553
Friends	0.462	4.917	0.027*	1.926	1.743
Alone	0.516	22.865	0.001*	0.588	1.034
As part of an organised group	0.494	9.487	0.021*	0.413	0.687
Constant				6.435	8.029

*– level of significance of differences at $p\leq 0.05$

Tourist information is essential for making decisions about organising a tourist trip at every stage of its planning. The created model of the discriminant function indicated that the most popular source of information when selecting a tourist destination included brochures, leaflets, or guidebooks. Significantly more often, at $p<0.001$, men used such a source of information compared to women. The research by Sikora and Wartecka-Ważyńska (2019) revealed that women more frequently use word of mouth and the Internet

when organising tourist trips, while men use guidebooks, brochures, leaflets, and the Internet. Less popular, although still significantly higher choices, at $p<0.001$, made by male participants were family and friends, as well as the Local Tourist Organisation and local newspapers, as the major sources of information about the destination. Significantly more often, at $p=0.037$, women declared choosing local television and radio stations as a useful source of information (tab. 3).

Table 3. Sources of information used when choosing the destination (based on Authors' own study)

Information sources	Wilks' lambda: 0.597 F = 9.169 $p<0.001^*$			Classification function	
	Wilks' lambda	F value	P level	Women	Men
Brochures, leaflets and guidebooks	0.616	26.297	0.001*	2.314	2.799
Family and friends	0.592	11.596	0.001*	2.300	2.641
Local Tourist Organisation Office	0.564	22.524	0.001*	1.572	2.363
Local newspapers	0.625	15.517	0.001*	1.041	1.551
Local television and radio stations	0.574	4.330	0.037*	1.537	1.117
Constant				11.786	15.407

*– level of significance of differences at $p\leq 0.05$

Tourist choices are influenced by many variables of economic, emotional, social, situational, internal, and external nature (Rapacz and Jaremen 2011). The study reported here showed that the main determinant encouraging micro-travel is the lower traffic intensity on the roads leading to the destination. Significantly more attention was paid to this factor by male compared to female respondents, at $p < 0.001$. Men also emphasised the knowledge of the area, which was more important for them, at $p < 0.001$, than it was for women. Spontaneity attached to such trips was significantly more important for women, at $p < 0.001$. According to the national tourism market study Report (Raport z ..., 2014), 35% of domestic tourists more often than several times a year make one-day trips without overnight stays, indicating the spontaneity of such trips. As indicated by the values of the classification function, similar attention was paid by both groups to more

rapid physical and mental recovery during trips. The discriminant function model also included the following factors: the possibility of leisurely exploration of the visited areas without crowds of visitors, and leaving the place of residence for a short period. At $p = 0.001$ and $p = 0.035$, respectively, these factors were of more importance for men compared with women. For female participants, at $p = 0.010$, significantly more important was the motive of minimising the risk of a road accident during short trips (tab. 4). Gender is one of the demographic characteristics affecting tourist demand (Cooper et al., 2008). According to research conducted by McIntosh (1996), women are also much more likely than men to fear inconveniences associated with travelling (McIntosh et al. 1996). Other studies also show that safety is the most important factor influencing the choice of travel destination (Dębski et al., 2019).

Table 4. Factors affecting the choice of micro-scale tourist trips (based on Authors' own study)

Type of factor	Wilks' lambda: 0.494 F = 8.169 $p < 0.001^*$			Classification function	
	Wilks' lambda	F value	P level	Women	Men
Lower traffic on access roads to tourist attractions	0.513	13.221	0.001*	2.208	2.587
Spontaneity opportunity	0.497	22.462	0.001*	1.687	1.201
Familiarity with the area	0.535	38.012	0.001*	0.506	1.116
Faster physical and mental recovery	0.538	3.459	0.063	0.852	0.666
Peaceful exploration of the area without tourist crowds	0.491	6.486	0.011*	0.490	0.841
Leaving the place of residence for a short period of time	0.474	4.458	0.035*	0.622	0.787
Minimal risk of a traffic accident	0.496	6.675	0.010*	0.363	0.094
Constant				8.815	8.701

* – level of significance of differences at $p \leq 0.05$

Motives for undertaking tourist activities determine tourists' behaviour and have been the topic of many studies (Gajić et al., 2023). The choice of a tourist destination is the product of many considerations, and

motivations can change dynamically (Kwilecki 2011) depending on external factors such as the political situation, epidemiological conditions, living conditions, or previous experiences. The need people feel to relax and

rejuvenate their mental and physical strength, the drive to explore, religious needs, the desire for change, or business trips are the main motives for tourist trips (Gołembski 2002). One of the main criteria for identifying target segments alongside motives is gender of travellers.

In the study reported here, both groups of respondents identified the need for relaxation and recreation as the main motive for their trips, it being significantly more important for men, at $p < 0.001$. According to the research by Rita et al. (2018), 'the desire to relax' is also the most important motive for young people undertaking tourist trips. In turn, Balińska (2019) and Sowa (2012) report that the main

reason for women travelling is also relaxation and exploratory goals. It should be noted that, in the study discussed here, 96.4% of the respondents were pupils, university students, and working people. In the order of importance, an educational motive and health orientation occupied the same place in both groups. Shopping was significantly more important for women than men, at $p = 0.036$, while visiting family or friends and religion-related motives were significantly more important for men, at $p = 0.037$ and $p = 0.030$, respectively. In both groups, motives related to business and professional trips were identified as similarly important (tab.5).

Table 5. Main motives for tourists undertaking trips (based on Authors' own study)

Motives for trips	Wilks' lambda: 0.494 F = 11.279 p<0.001 *			Classification function	
	Wilks' lambda	F value	P level	Women	Men
Relaxation and recreation	0.416	10.751	0.001*	3.191	3.545
Educational purposes	0.498	3.004	0.083	1.147	1.019
Health improvement	0.504	2.698	0.101	1.118	0.997
Shopping	0.493	4.416	0.036*	1.091	0.808
Business and professional reasons	0.472	2.478	0.115	0.504	0.649
Visiting family and friends	0.478	4.342	0.037*	0.514	0.691
Religious motives	0.487	4.729	0.030*	0.260	0.460
Constant				13.817	16.336

*– level of significance of differences at $p \leq 0.05$

4. Conclusions

The assumed research hypothesis was fully confirmed based on the analysis of the study results. It was demonstrated that trips in the surrounding area are an interesting form of activity, being fairly popular among, and eagerly undertaken by micro-travelling tourists. This is evidenced by the significant number of respondents who participated in this survey, thus confirming they undertake such trips.

From the material collected in the course of the research, and the detailed analysis conducted, it can be inferred that micro-trips occupy an important place in the lives of tourism-oriented residents of the city of Siedlce and the Siedlce Poviát. The survey findings indicate that the main motivation for such tourist trips was relaxation and recreation, them being slightly more important for men. Other motivations for micro-travel included

education, health, and shopping, all of these being more significant for women. The need for such trips to visit family or friends and for professional or work related purposes was more frequently mentioned by men. Religious needs tended to be the least significant motivation for micro-travel among all respondents. Undoubtedly, this fact may translate into an even greater number of enthusiasts of this activity in the future, as well as a better understanding of the region's history and familiarity with tourist attractions. Local tourism can also contribute to the discovery of valuable cultural and environmental resources, the exploration of which undoubtedly can have an impact on the image of individual regions and towns in all aspects of their functioning. Tourists from the city of Siedlce and the Siedlce Poviát have great opportunities to

undertake such trips. The locality they inhabit as well as the immediate surrounding and further areas are extremely rich in historical, environmental, and tourist terms, making it an ideal space for such trips. Further research into the trend of micro-travel is justified, as well as the popularisation of attractive tourist destinations on a larger scale, for example through greater promotion of the region, placing informational and educational boards directing visitors to places worth visiting, updating guidebooks and websites, or more tourist signs to attractions to effectively assist in and facilitate tourists' micro-travel.

So far, the present work has been one of few studies dedicated to the topic of micro-travel, and the results reported in it can also serve as inspiration for further research in this field.

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