

# FOREIGN TOURIST ACTIVITY AND THE NEED FOR RECREATION/REST OF ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF FROM SELECTED UNIVERSITIES (AS EXEMPLIFIED BY WEST POMERANIAN VOIVODSHIP)

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this article is to show the need for recreation in the context of foreign leisure trips of administrative staff of selected universities in zachodniopomorskie (West Pomeranian) voivodship. It is an essential element of health behavior of each individual.

This work shows the awareness of people in relation to the organization of the rest – taking into account both the destination, means of transport, as well as hotel animations. With regard to the aspect of health, attention should be paid to proper preparation for the trip.

**Key words:** tourist activity, recreation/rest, health

## Introduction

Tourist activity is one of the forms of leisure more and more desirable by man. The factors that certainly contributed to this are the socio-economic development, greater freedom to travel in the country and beyond its borders, and a greater amount of free time at the macro scale (Lubowiecki-Vikuk 2010; Kielbasiewicz-Drozdowska 2001). Man has traveled since time immemorial. The first trips began as early as in ancient Egypt (Kurek 2008; Meyer 2007; Kowalczyk 2002). It is commonly known that the forms of travelling undergo constant changes. Trips are no longer expeditions only for pilgrimage or for the Olympic Games, but they are also traveling for leisure, entertainment or of cognitive nature. Depending on the man, his interests and needs, the motives of trips are different, and the market of tourist services is constantly adapting to them. The undeniable fact is that each completed trip is related to the widely understood rest: not always physical, but certainly mental, even that associated with the change of environment. Due to the biological determinants of human health, each of us feels the need to rest.

“Tourism understood as a way of meeting the needs for changing natural and cultural environment, is a social fact and mental experience. As a mass phenomenon, it takes place in specific geographical, cultural, technical, communication, etc. conditions. It is (...) a method of shaping personality, a way of exploring the world, the regeneration of physical and mental strength, the development of creative abilities of man” (Kurek and Mika 2008). The above definition points to the necessity of undertaking tourist activity, due to the needs of the human body. On the one hand, it makes a man richer by means of the so-called added values. On the other hand, it shapes so important these days social competences and life skills which are an essential element in maintaining mental health (Borzucka-Sitkiewicz 2009). Additionally, it creates the opportunities of regeneration and renewal of psycho-physical strengths of our body. It is commonly known that people who are tired have weaker immune system, work less efficiently which results in lowering their effectiveness and slowing down the economy.

The need to rest, according to Maslow’s pyramid of needs, is recognized as a basic level need, included into the group of the so-called physiological needs. In relation to recreation and tourism activity it involves, inter alia, refreshing of the body as well as relieving psychic tension (Gracz and Sankowski 2001). Winiarski and Zdebski (2008) also point to the fact that “tourism can be a form of meeting human needs.”

Satisfying the needs rest leisure by the tourist activity is also associated with many hazards. Hence it is vital to prepare properly for the trip. Firstly, the choice of the direction of travel should be suitably adapted to the individual capacity of the body. Choosing a destination and means of transport, health condition should be taken into account. Making use of the offers of more exotic trips, it is worthwhile to get equipped with the necessary knowledge on the health risks occurring on a given direction, and thus preventive health care (Eider and Paczyńska-Jędrycka 2013; Korzeniewski 2012; Paczyńska-Jędrycka 2012; Wroczyńska and Kuna 2006) Proper preparation for travel is a key element in the context of satisfying the need for tourism activity and its health dimension.

## Methods

The purpose of this article is to show tourist activity of administrative staff of universities in relation to the rest which is necessary for the proper functioning of the body.

The research was conducted on the administrative staff of two arbitrarily selected higher education institutions of zachodniopomorskie voivodship, namely: Szczecin University and State Higher Vocational School in Walcz. The study used the method of diagnostic survey. The technique used was the questionnaire (Pilch and Baumann 2010; Siwiński 2006). This paper discusses the second part of the questionnaire entitled tourist activity. The remaining ones have been used in earlier articles. In case of some questions the respondents were allowed to give more than one answer, hence the sum of answers may be greater than 100%. There may also be deviations in the rounding of percentage values  $\pm 0.1\%$ .

The study was conducted on 61 employees, 45 of whom were women (73.8%), and the rest – 16 – men (26.2%). Respondents were at the age 25–66 years, which gives an average age of 40.1 years. Due to the fact that 3 people did not reveal their age, eventually 58 respondents were classified for the results analysis, which automatically will be a 100%, including 42 women (72.4%). The number of men – 16 (27.6%) did not change.

Most of the respondents have higher education – 45 people, which makes 73.8% of the total. The rest of them have secondary education – 14 people (23%) and vocational – 2 persons (3.2%). Z. Sawicki (2010) notes that people with higher education definitely more often undertake tourist activity than others.

The majority of respondents – 41 (70.7%) remain in bonds of marriage, 16 (27.6%) are bachelors, spinsters or singles. 1 person (1.7%) is a widow. 43 respondents have children. Both marital status and having children can affect the tourist needs and their implementation. This is related to such factors as, for example, the economic factor.

### Results

According to the Polish legislation, every employee (employed under an employment contract) is entitled to a continuous, uninterrupted holiday leave. One of parts, in accordance with the Labour Code, should be a minimum of 14 calendar days (Labour Code). This is by all means justified. A fourteen-day vacation is a period when the employee, leaving anywhere, is able (subtracting the time needed for acclimatization) to rest. This is absolutely impossible in the case of holidays lasting 7-day or less, especially foreign ones, which are often connected with climate change and, sometimes also the change of time zone. The first and the last day are intended for transport (reaching the accommodation and return home). The second day is a day of acclimatization, which, depending on the individual, can last for one day or longer. The sixth day is the day of preparation to return home. So, in fact, there are only three full days of rest (Figure 1).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
departure	acclimatization	REST			preparation to leave	departure

Figure 1. Model of rest during a seven-day holiday abroad

Source: own development.

So are we able to rest within three days? What happens to our body then?

The awareness of employees concerning the appropriate length of holiday is quite large. After having worked for a year, everybody looks forward to having some rest. Among the administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship, half of the respondents – 29 responses (50%) spent their 14-day vacation at the Polish seaside. The second place is occupied by trips abroad – 25 responses (43.1%). The third place went to VFR – visiting friends and relatives in another city in our country – 13 responses (22.4%) (Table 1).

Table 1. Ways of spending a min. 14-day vacation by administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship

Ways of spending a min. 14-day vacation in 2012	N	%
At the Polish seaside	29	50.0
Abroad	25	43.1
With relatives/friends In another city	13	22.4
In the garden plot	9	15.5
With relatives/friends In some other country	8	13.8
At home	8	13.8
On the Polish lake	7	12.1
In the Polish mountains	5	8.6

Source: own development based on the conducted study (due to the possibility of choosing more than one answer, the sum % is bigger than 100%).

The above results are reflected in the report of the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, which shows that definitely far more Poles spent their holiday in Poland. These studies also show that in the year 2012 compared to previous years (2010 and 2011) an upward trend concerning the trips of Poles was observed, which is satisfactory from a health policy perspective (Domestic and foreign trips of Poles in 2012).

Just over half of the respondents – 30 people (51.8%) are involved in foreign trips (not only during the 14-day holiday leaves). Most frequently, these people leave once a year (Table 2)

**Table 2.** Frequency of foreign trips of administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship during a year

Frequency of foreign trips during a year	N	%
0	28	48.3
1	17	29.3
2	8	13.8
3	3	5.2
4 and more	2	3.5

Source: own development based on the conducted study (in the table occur deviations in the rounding of percentage values  $\pm 0.1\%$ ).

Among the most frequently visited countries were: Germany – 18 responses (60%), Italy – 5 answers (16.7%), Spain – 4 responses (13.3%), France – 4 responses (13.3%), Greece – 4 responses (13.3%), Croatia – 4 responses (13.3%), Tunisia – 1 response (3.3%) (Table 3)

**Table 3.** Tourist destinations visited by administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship in the year 2012

Tourist destinations	N	%
Germany	18	60.0
Italy	5	16.7
Spain	4	13.3
France	4	13.3
Greece	4	13.3
Croatia	4	13.3
Great Britain	3	10.0
Bulgaria	1	3.3
Tunesia	1	3.3
Cuba	1	3.3
The Dominican Republic	1	3.3
Others (Egypt, Malta, Holland, Ireland, Norway, The Ukraine, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, China)	17	57.0

Source: own development based on the conducted study (due to the possibility of choosing more than one answer, the sum % is bigger than 100%).

From the above information, it appears that 18 people (60%) travels to the Mediterranean countries. Hence, they have to take into account a change of the climate zone, as well as, in the case of some countries, of the time

zone. The perceptibility of such a change depends on an individual. The same applies to people who travel to Bulgaria, Egypt, or the more remote corners of the world, such as Cuba, Dominican Republic, China.

For most of the employees the purpose of foreign travel was rest – 22 responses (73,3%). Half of the respondents – 15 (50%) visited their relatives or friends (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Purpose of foreign travel of administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship in the year 2012

Purpose of foreign travel	N	%
Rest	22	73.3
VFR	15	50.0
Language course	2	6.7
Business trip	1	3.3
Others (shopping)	1	3.3

Source: own development based on the conducted study (due to the possibility of choosing more than one answer, the sum % is bigger than 100%).

Satisfactory is the fact that for most people travelling overseas holiday is the main purpose for travel. Therefore, it can be concluded that these people are fully aware of the health aspects of tourist activity.

The vast majority of trips – 16 (64%) was organized individually by the staff members. On the one hand it was connected with broadening of the existing knowledge on the selected destinations. Surely these people spent quite a lot of time to adequately prepare for the trip. Only 9 persons (36%) benefited from ready tourism products: 8 people (32%) – from travel agencies, one person (4%) participated in the trip organized by friends (Table 5):

**Table 5.** Forms of organization of foreign holiday of administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship

Form of organization of foreign holiday	N	%
Individual	16	64
Travel agency	8	32
Other – friends	1	4

Source: own development based on the conducted study.

The majority of respondents travelled abroad for leisure purposes – 21 responses (84%), for some of them it was 7 days – 15 responses (60%), for the remaining ones it was 14 days – 6 responses (24%). 4 of the respondents (16%) travelled for a couple of days during their holiday leave to places such as a spa, or to do some sightseeing. By far fewer people participated in the typical touring trips – only 2 responses (8%). Such trips are attractive and certainly sharpen the aesthetic experiences allowing, among others, to get to know a new culture, places, customs, but they also lead to physical fatigue of the body. Their participants often individual cover thousands kilometers by coach in a few days. They experience continuous climate changes: an air-conditioned coach and the outside temperature around 40°C. Such temperature fluctuations do not have a positive impact on human health. There were also 2 responses (8%) concerning the so-called 7+7, i.e. rest and a touring trip (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Type of foreign holiday rest of administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship

Type of foreign holiday rest	N	%
7-day holiday	15	60
14-day holiday	6	24
14-day holiday + tour (7 + 7)	2	8
7-day tour	1	4
14-day tour	1	4
Another response	4	16

Source: own development based on the conducted study (due to the possibility of choosing more than one answer, the sum % is bigger than 100%).

This is definitely a good solution for people who want to visit a new place, but an important question is how such a trip is organized. Obviously good are trips which begin with a 7-day sightseeing tour and then there is an equal number of days devoted to rest. Such a solution seems to be relevant from the point of view of the regeneration of human strengths. Unfortunately, there also happen such solutions where a tourist starts with rest and then proceeds with sightseeing and finally returns exhausted to his native country where he has to get back to work. There is also a third alternative in which we take a rest for several first days after the arrival, then we go sightseeing and next we again have some days of rest. Such are, for example, the programmes of the Nile cruises. This is probably one of the worst solutions possible, because there is no chance to relax fully.

Attention should also be paid to the frequency of overnight trips abroad, attended by 18 people (31%) (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Participation of administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship in overnight trips abroad

Participation in overnight trips abroad	N	%
Yes	18	31
No	40	69

Source: own development based on the conducted study.

For the majority of respondents the purpose of such a trip was sightseeing – 11 responses (61.1%) or shopping – 11 responses (61.1%) (Table 8). One of the most frequently visited countries is Germany. This is due to the proximity of location and convenient transport (Table 8).

**Table 8.** Purpose of overnight foreign trips of administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship

Purpose of overnight foreign trips	N	%
Sightseeing	11	61.1
Shopping	11	61.1
Visiting friends/relatives	4	22.2
Sports and recreation activity	1	5.6

Source: own development based on the conducted study (due to the possibility of choosing more than one answer, the sum % is bigger than 100%).

Such trips will surely help to break away from the daily duties, but, it should be noted that they overburden the body physically.

During the holidays most people used air transport – 18 responses (72%). As it was shown in previous studies conducted by Eider and Paczyńska-Jędrycka (2013) on the same group, „most respondents believe that the plane is the safest means of transport.” However, the negative impact of air travel on the human body should be taken into account (Sobolak 2013; Korzeniewski 2012; Wroczyńska 2012).

In second place is own transport – 7 responses (28%), bus and ferry equally – 2 responses (7%). Only one person (4%) during trips abroad used rail services (Table 9).

**Table 9.** Type of transport used during foreign trips of administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship

Type of transport	N	%
Air transport	18	72
Own transport	7	28
Coach	2	8
Ferry/ship	2	8
Rail transport	1	4

Source: own development based on the conducted study (due to the possibility of choosing more than one answer, the sum % is bigger than 100%).

The most frequently chosen type of accommodation was a hotel – 17 responses (68%). The remaining people – 13 responses (52%) were staying with friends or relatives, as well as benefited from accommodation in hostels. None of the respondents chose accommodation in a tent, although the Mediterranean countries (e.g. Italy, Spain) put at the disposal of tourists the camping sites which provide a high standard of service. Staying under the tent of our body is constantly oxygenated, due to the fact that we stay in the fresh air all the time. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to consider the choice of just such a form of accommodation (Table 10).

**Table 10.** Form of accommodation during foreign trips of administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship

Accommodation	N	%
Hotel	17	68
Friends/relatives	11	44
Another response (hostel)	2	8
Tent	0	0

Source: own development based on the conducted study (due to the possibility of choosing more than one answer, the sum % is bigger than 100%).

The vast majority of hotels in which the respondents were staying – 11 responses (64,7%) organized sports and recreational animations (Table 11).

**Table 11.** Organization of leisure time animation by hotels in which stayed the administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship

Organization of leisure time animation by a hotel	N	%
Yes	11	64,7
No	6	35,3

Source: own development based on the conducted study.

The animations were attended by eight people, which is 72.7%. Only 3 persons (27.3%) were not interested in participating (Table 12).

**Table 12.** Participation of administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship in hotel animations

Participation in animations	N	%
Yes	8	72,7
No	3	27,3

Source: own development based on the conducted study.

More and more frequently hotels, in addition to basic services, offer their guests leisure time animations. They try to actively develop the leisure time of tourists staying in the resorts. The animations are shared into children and adults activities. Therefore, there are day-time animations (children – mini-clubs, adults – sporting and recreational animation) and evening animations (children – mini-disco, adults – cultural animation). Often this is the only possibility to participate in leisure time activities. “Nothing is able to motivate us better to work (...), than rested body. This will be helped by (...) effectively spent holidays during which we can get away from it all. It is also a chance to form a habit of doing regular physical activity” (Paczyńska 2009).

For most respondents, trips abroad are associated with the opportunity to see new places, visit historical monuments – 24 responses (80%), with the ability to know a new culture – 17 responses (56.7%). The ability to meet new people came in on a par with the guarantee of good weather. Each response received 11 votes (36.7%). Only one person (3.3%) noted that foreign trips can serve foreign language learning (Table 13).

**Table 13.** Values from foreign trips for administrative staff of selected universities of zachodniopomorskie voivodship

Values from foreign trips	N	%
Seeing new places, monuments	24	80.0
Learning about new cultures	17	56.7
Meeting new people	11	36.7
The sun – guarantee of good weather	11	36.7
Opportunity to visit friends/relatives	8	26.7
Learning the cuisine of a given region	5	16.7
Experiencing some adventure	3	10.0
Opportunity to do shopping	3	10.0
Another response (learning a foreign language)	1	3.3

Source: own development based on the conducted study (due to the possibility of choosing more than one answer, the sum % is bigger than 100%).

## Discussion and conclusions

Foreign tourist activity is still not affordable for everyone. This is due to the economic situation, as well as individual needs and health condition of an individual. Satisfactory is the fact that the main reason for going abroad was the holiday rest. This indicates people's awareness in the context of health behaviors. As emphasized by Lubowiecki-Vikuk and Paczyńska-Jędrycka (2010): "Today's consumer of recreation and tourism services is increasingly becoming an individual who is conscious of their needs, seeking new forms which will give him firstly – satisfaction, secondly – relaxation, respite from the stresses of everyday life, and thirdly – will help in self-fulfillment."

Another fact confirming tourists' awareness is the individual organization of holiday trips. It is related, among others, to appropriate planning of routes and stopovers (in the event of own transport), knowing the chosen direction, as well as features which make it different (climate, time zone, health risks and prevention, hygienic conditions, habits, customs) in comparison to the country where we live.

Unfortunately, the domination of foreign 7-day trips is not satisfactory. The same situation is when it comes to overnight trips abroad. These types of trips are unfortunately associated with physical tiredness.

As far as air travels are concerned, everyone should get acquainted with the health hazards that they may encounter. This situation can also occur during coach trips or ferry cruises (e.g., kinetosis – motion sickness).

A positive aspect of the conducted study is participation of the majority of people in the hotel animations. Thanks to a dose of motion they receive during the activity, they can contribute to the formation of a motor habit, and thereby to improving their health condition. Regular physical activity is still one of the factors affecting human health. As pointed by Osiński (2011): "Participation in various forms of tourism is an element of entertainment and provides the opportunity for active recreation and also to meet the needs of active rest."

According to the foregoing considerations, tourist activity should become one of the most significant human needs. If properly prepared, it will contribute to maintaining or improving (e.g. spa tourism) your health.

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