ATTRACTIVENESS OF POLAND AS A TOURIST DESTINATION IN THE EYES OF EMPLOYEES OF TRAVEL AGENCIES LOCATED IN PRAGUE

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ABSTRACT

The article summarizes the results of a study conducted among travel agencies located in Prague. The study had two main goals: to identify the importance of the offer of trips to Poland as well as to prepare an analysis of perception of Poland as a tourist destination in the eyes of employees of travel agencies located in Prague. The study is a part of a larger work dealing about the attractiveness of Poland as a tourist destination for the people of the Czech Republic.

The article is based on a two stage field research which took place during the spring and summer of 2008. At the first stage, the author did 65 structured interviews with the representatives of travel agencies (85% of all visited agencies) located in Prague 1 and 2.

The second stage had a form of a "mystery shopping". An employee of an existing company, under the supervision of the author, contacted seven agencies that claimed that they offer tailor made trips to Poland, with a request for a preparation of an offer of a four day trip.

The result of the above mentioned studies is a notion that despite the fact that an important part of agencies offer trips to Poland (21%), their employees are in reality not able to recommend this destination due to the lack of information and promotional materials. Generally, the respondents assess the primary offer to Poland in a better way than the secondary one. The ratings were more favorable by those people who have visited Poland in the past.

The author hopes that the results of the analysis will serve as an inspiration for preparation of future promotional activities of Poland as a tourist destination within the Czech market.

Key words: tourism, travel agencies, analysis of perception, tourist attractiveness, tourist potential of Poland, tourism offer

1. Introduction

Geography of tourism is one of the newest disciplines of geography, which still looks for its methodological identity. Given its interdisciplinary character and connection with many other disciplines such as geography (e.g. behavioral geography, geography of services, cartography) and other scientific disciplines (economics, marketing, psychology and sociology), geography of tourism utilizes a great number of scientific approaches.

In the past, the focus of scientists in terms of tourism gradually progressed.

At the beginning, the center of the interest of geographers was touristic destinations and their description. The research dealt mostly with the Alps and was conducted mainly in France, Italy and Switzerland. The scientists studied mostly the impact of the development of tourism on the rural areas.

After World War II, the most important development of the geography of tourism was concentrated in France and the United States. The authors intensively studied the analysis of the touristic multiplicators (Šíp, Klufová 2003), which is a method still used for assessment of the impact of tourism on regions.

Starting in around 1970, tourism became the center of interests of scientists in many other countries, especially in Europe (predominantly in France, West Germany, Austria, Great Britain, Poland), in the USA and Canada, Australia and Asia (Japan, Soviet Union).

Gradually, geographers started analyzing many other parts of tourism which is nicely described by Warszyńska and Jackowski (1978), A. Kowalczyk (2002), and also A. Matczak (1989).

In connection with the emergence of behavioral approach in geography, important point of interests of geographers became the perception of tourism space, motivation for tourist trips, behavioral paths and directions of trips. This problematic was studied by D. Mercer, H. Aldskogius, J.-M. Miossec and others. The scientists started studding the needs and preferences of tourists together with the factors that influence these.

Another important theme that started appearing in publications dealing with tourism is its connection with politics and economy taking into account the most recent economic theories. Among the most important representatives of this approach Kowalczyk (2002) mentions D. Ioannides, R. Britton, R. W. Butler, S. L. J. Smith, S. Britton, M. Oppermann and others.

Currently, hand in hand with overall globalization, the connection among the geography of tourism and other fields of science, e.g. marketing and sociology (decision making processes), ecology (terms like sustainable development of tourism, touristification, "green tourism") and others becomes more and more visible.

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This study has the ambition to be an applied research. It tries to connect the approach of geography of tourism and the approach of behavioral geography with the aim to discover the perception of space by individuals and a group of people. In our case, this is realized by a well chosen group of employees of travel agencies whose opinion can influence the behavior of other people involved in tourism.

The decision on the targeted group was inspired by the work of Włodarczyk (2006) who describes four groups of actors that have direct or indirect influence upon tourism space:

Entrepreneurs – are economically motivated to develop tourism supportive activities and therefore influence the form of the tourism product and organization of the tourism itself.

Tourist as an exogenous element of a tourism space. Their preferences and activities directly affect the space they occupy.

Inhabitants – who as part of the tourism space have the most influence over it even if they are not directly engaged in organization of tourism, but because of the fact that they live in this territory.

Authorities – that have indirect influence of the organization of tourism space.

This study focuses on the group of entrepreneurs who are represented by the employees of travel agencies located in Prague.

The selection of the targeted group was motivated by the fact that for the organization of trips abroad, Czechs often use the services of travel agencies. For example in the year 2008, the agencies organized 2,409,000 longer trips, which was 25.5% of all trips. The employees of the agencies can therefore significantly influence their clients during the decision making process regarding the tourist destination, especially in case of longer trips. It was therefore natural to focus a part of the larger research dealing with the attractiveness of Poland as a tourist destination for the people of the Czech Republic right there.

The employees of travel agencies were identified by the author as one of the most important actors within the tourism industry. There are two main reasons behind this decision. Both are based on the definition of travel agency, which is in the Czech Republic specified by the Act nr. 159/1999 on several conditions of doing business in tourism. The law states that the main business of the travel agency is to organize, offer and sell trips within its license. As is common within the free economic environment, every demand is met by supply. That means that the current offer of (or lack of) trips to Poland reflects the demand for such services on the Czech market. On the other hand, the employees of the travel agencies, who are by definition better informed about this problematic, have their qualified opinion that can substantially influence their customers in terms of choosing the right destination. This is confirmed by the research done in 2009 for Polish Touristic Organization that shows that the travel agencies together with own experience, personal recommendations and the Internet are one of the most important factors that influence the decision of their customers about the choice of the destination (Rynek turystyczny Czech, 2010).

The field research among the agencies targeted the answers to the two basic set of questions:

– What is the importance of Poland within the offer of destinations of the travel agencies?
– How is the attractiveness of Poland as a tourist destination assessed by the employees of travel agencies?

It's important to note that the aim was not to receive an official statement of the agency but more to understand the personal opinion of the employees or other people that directly communicate with the client and are part of their decision making process (further mentioned as employees of travel agencies).

The second part of the research (mystery shopping) helped the author to find answers to more specific questions about the perception of Poland as a tourist destination, namely:

– What Polish cities and attractions are considered the most attractive among the Czech travel agencies?
– What is the price range of the trips to Poland?
– What specific attractions are offered by the agencies?

In this article, the author describes the results of the search revealing the current offer of trips to Poland as well as the opinion of employees of the agencies on attractiveness of Poland as a tourist destination.

2. Basic research information

The research throughout the travel agencies was done between May and June 2008 within Prague 1 and Prague 2. The research composed itself from two main parts: the first was done using structured interviews in travel agencies based within Prague 1 and 2, the second part then as a mystery shopping throughout those agencies which declared organizing "tailor made" trips to Poland. The research was done in a following manner.

2.1 Structured interviews

Given the expected low number of submitted answers in case that the research was done electronically, the author decided to narrow the sample and conduct personal and structured interviews. The bias that could be caused by involving several interviewers was diminished by the fact that all discussions were performed by the author between May 19 and 23, 2008 and June 16 and 17, 2008.

The research was done among all travel agencies that are based in Prague 1 and 2. The agencies were selected and localized based on a valid list of agencies that are insured against bankruptcy according to the Act 159/1999 Sb., which is a necessary precondition for operating a travel agency. The list was accessible on the web page http://pojisteni.ck.cz/ and was periodically reviewed by five insurance companies that offer this type of insurance.

The author visited 91 travel agencies. 65 agencies participated in the survey (71% of visited agencies, 85% of agencies that still existed on given address) and 5 refused (5.5%). Fourteen agencies moved their premises (15%) without stating the new address or ceased to exist and therefore naturally did not participate in the survey.

Seven agencies (7.7%) asked for an electronic version of the survey. Despite several follow-ups (repeated sending of the questionnaire together with accompanying text), none of the agencies who received the questionnaire via email answered.

The above stated fact confirmed the expectation of the author that a thorough survey of a relatively small part of the market (approx. 9.44% of all agencies that conduct the business in the Czech Republic) would have a better information value added given its high participation rate (reaching up to 85%), than a broad survey of the whole population of employees of travel agencies done by e-mail. The later would be very likely affected by a systemic mistake caused by a dramatic reduction of the sample which is characteristic for this way of making research.

The participation was anonymous as requested by the majority of employees of travel agencies. The resulting data were summarized and analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods.

2.2 Mystery shopping

Early analysis of the questionnaires lead to a conclusion that a complete picture of the offer of trips to Poland as part of the overall offer of the agencies will not be possible without a subsequent analysis of "tailor made" trips. The author therefore decided to modify her first plan and expanded the research. It was decided to utilize a technique called Mystery Shopping commonly used in marketing and sales in order to assess the quality of service provided to customers or to gain knowledge of products offered by a competition.

The research itself was managed accordingly:

On May 30, 2008, seven travel agencies that are located in Prague and stated that they offer tailor made trips to Poland were contacted. To increase the trustworthiness, the requests were sent from an email address of an existing company – Salve Group CZ. The communication was performed by the Office Manager of this company under a strict supervision of the author. The agencies were contacted by a telephone first and subsequently by an email with the following request:

> We would like to ask you for a preparation of a four day business trip for the owner of our company. The owner will fly from the UK to Prague on July 31, 2008 and will stay in Prague at least till Sunday morning. Then, he will move to Poland where he has business meetings in Warsaw on August 4 at 2:00 pm and another one on August 7 at 3:00 pm. The owner would like to spend his time between the meetings to visit and get to know as much as possible about Poland as he has never been there.
> The owner (originally from England – 38 years old) is used to utilize his time to the fullest, likes sports and action and would like to get to know Poland as it really is.
> At the moment, now service is booked (accommodation, meals, transportation).
> Thank you very much for creating the offer.

Throughout the above stated structure of the request, the author wanted to provide a wide space for the agencies to include all elements of the natural and historical – cultural attractiveness of Poland without any limitations. For this reason, the client was supposed to be a businessman – that could suggest an offer of city tourism and also as a "person used to utilize his time to the fullest, enjoying sporting activities and very adventurous", which was to motivate agencies for providing very blunt and wide offer which would include also the elements of natural attractiveness of Poland.

The statement "he would like to get to know Poland as it really is" was to emphasize the need to get to know true Poland, not only the touristic places. There was purposely not included any information on the desired costs of the trip.

Warsaw, located in center of Poland, was chosen as the venue of business meetings which was supposed to create opportunities to prepare trips to any part of Poland.

The aim of the author was to gain knowledge of what offer can one expect from the agencies that declare the ability to provide tailor made trips that are fully to match the needs and expectations of the potential customer.

3. The characteristics of explored travel agencies

3.1 Location of agencies

Among the 65 agencies that participated on the structured interview, 32 (49%) were located in Prague 1, the remaining in Prague 2. The author decided to do the research exactly in this area due to the high concentration of travel agencies there. In 2008, 9.44% of all agencies from the whole country were located here.

3.2 Year of creation of agencies

All of these travel agencies were created after 1989, most of them – 28 (43%) – were created after 1993. The number of travel agencies that were created in the various years is shown in the Figure 1.

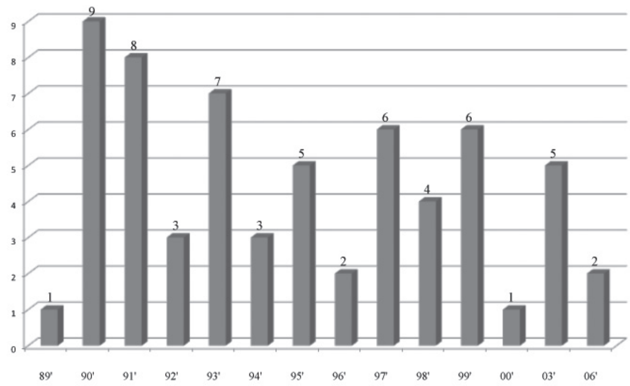

Fig. 1 The year of creation of travel agencies. Source: own data

3.3 Size of the agencies

Majority – 35 (53%) – of the agencies were medium sized and employed between 6 and 50 employees. 35% of agencies were small with no more than 5 employees and the remaining agencies were large with the number of employees exceeding 50 people.

3.4 Annual number of serviced clients

When asking this question, the author put special emphasis on the fact that answering this question is voluntary. It was to make the counterparties understand that the aim is not to acquire their goodwill but to understand their opinion. The possibility of not answering was chosen by 29% of agencies, basically for two reasons: part of them did not want to reveal these data (as they are not publicly available) and the rest of them did not know even rough estimates. Approximate number of serviced clients is shown in Table 1.

Tab. 1 Number of serviced clients

No. of clients	*No. of agencies*	*% of answers*	*% of agencies with the relevant number of clients*
did not answer	19	29	X
up to 1,000	11	17	24
1,001–5,000	13	20	28
5,000–50,000	18	28	39
> 50,000	4	6	9

Source: own data

Majority of the visited agencies were small and medium sized enterprises that service up to 5,000 clients a year (52% of agencies). 39% of agencies were medium sized that service 5,000 to 50,000 clients. Only around 9% of the agencies that stated the number of clients belong to the category of large tour operators having more than 50,000 clients. The largest agencies serve more than 1 million tourists a year.

3.5 Specialization of travel agencies

The employees of the agencies were to select any number of answers that describe the subject of business of their employer. There were 112 answers altogether. An average agency specializes itself in 1.7 different types of tourism. 58% of questioned agencies specialize in one single aspect of tourism. In 87% cases, these are outgoing tourism.

56 out of 65 agencies (86.2%) stated the outgoing tourism as their major activity. Other popular subjects are incoming tourism, domestic tourism (stated by 27.7% of companies). Additional information is described by the Table 2.

Tab. 2 Specialization of the travel agencies

Specialization	*% of travel agencies*
Outgoing tourism	86.2
Incoming tourism	27.7
Domestic tourism	27.7
Congress tourism	18.5
Other	12.3

Source: own data

3.6 The position that the respondent holds in his travel agency

Majority (57%) of interviews were done with regular employees of an agency or with managers of a branch (17%). Detailed information can be found in Table 3.

Tab. 3 Position of the respondents

Position of respondents	*No. of persons*	*% of persons*
Owner	7	11
Branch supervisor	11	17
Executive manager	4	6
Salesman	37	57
General manager	5	8
Co-worker (change was applied)	1	2

Source: own data

4. Trips to Poland as part of the offer of Czech travel agencies

4.1 The significance of Poland as a destination in the offer of travel agencies

14 travel agencies, which are 21% of the visited agencies, offered trips to Poland; out of these, eight were located in Prague 1 and six in Prague 2.

None of the agencies specialized itself purely on organization of trips to this destination. In five cases, the agencies organized tours to the whole world; the others focus on different regions. The most frequently offered destinations are Croatia, Greece, Italy and Austria.

None of the agencies contemplated increasing the offer of tours to Poland; conversely, the interviewed persons often mentioned that there is often very little or even no interest from their customer and contemplate not offering this destination any longer.

In most of the cases (10 agencies – 71%), trips to Poland were added to the offer in year 2000 or sooner.

With one exception, the employees of the agencies stated that the demand for trips to Poland meets the supply. One employee stated that given the lack of information on Poland, it's very difficult or even impossible to sell any trip there because the sales people are not able to recommend this destination anyhow.

4.2 Polish destinations offered by travel agencies

Within the standard offer, Krakow and its surroundings are the most popular. Among the one day trips, the most frequent ones were the shopping trips to Kudowa. Other repeating destination is Warszawa. Occasionally, the agencies offer trips to Poznań, Malbork and to Upper and Lower Silesia.

Most often (7 times), the agencies offered the possibility of "tailor made" trips to utilize the needs of a specific group of customers.

With the aim to learn the opinion of the employees of travel agencies on the most attractive elements of the offer, the author decided to ask the agencies for preparation of a tailor made trip using the method mystery shopping. The method of the research is described in the methodological part of the study. The mystery shopping was set up to allow the employees wide space to form the offer of the trip.

All offers included a visit of the historical quarter of Warszawa, mostly often the King's palace, Łazienki Park and Wilanów. The second most frequent destination was Kraków together with the castle and the cathedral of Wawel and also the Jewish quarter called Kazimierz or a nearby Wieliczka.

Other parts of the offer depended on the region that was chosen by the travel agencies. In two cases, this was the south-east of Poland including the visit of Kazimierz Dolny, or alternatively Żelazowa Wola, Arkadia, Nieborów and Łowicz. In other two cases, the agencies decided to recommend north – eastern direction and the visit of either Białowieski Park Narodowy (Białowieża National Park) or Mazurskie jeziora (Masuria) including Czarna Hańcza. One travel agency offered the possibility to visit the north of the country including the three cities of Gdańsk – Gdynia – Sopot.

Tab. 4 Trips to Poland as offered during the mystery shopping

Agency	*Proposed trip*
Agency 1	Kraków, Wieliczka, Pieskowa Skała, Tyniec, Warszawa, Łazienki Park, Wilanów, Nieborów, Żelazowa Wola
Agency 2	Warszawa, Łazienki Park, Suwałki, Czarna Hańcza
Agency 3	Warszawa, Kraków
Agency 4	Kraków, Wieliczka, Warszawa, Białowieski Park Narodowy (Białowieża National Park)
Agency 5	Warszawa, Kraków (alternatively: Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot, Kazimierz Dolny) (as an alternative: Żelazowa Wola, Arkadia, Nieborów, Łowicz)

Source: own data

Based on the analysis of the suggested trips, their depth and diversity, it could be said that the employees of those travel agencies who offer tailor made trips have much wider knowledge of natural, historical and cultural attractiveness of Poland than the employees of the remaining agencies.

4.3 Tenor and seasonality of the offered and sold trips to Poland

Majority of trips take place during spring and autumn. One agency organizes trips solely in summer, two only in spring and one only in the autumn. The rest of the agencies have their offer spread out throughout the year.

The length of the trip varies depending on the agency and the destinations that they offer. The most important factor is the distance to the destination: the shopping trips are for one day, the trips to Kraków (which is in the southern part of the country) are for one or two days. Longer trips are usually the tailor made ones.

4.4 Prices of the services

In case of the standard trips, the cheapest ones are to Kudowa (shopping destination) which cost between CZK 320 and 360 depending on the agency. The price of the remaining trips to Poland depended on the length and the standard of the stay and usually followed the prices of similar trips to Slovakia and could be characterized as usual.

The situation about the tailor made trips is different.

Despite the fact that every agency offered a different proposal for the trip, all offers had some similar price related characteristics:

- The price of five to seven day trip varied between CZK 52,900 and 76,800 depending on the operator excluding food and air travel. Based on an assumption that the price level in Poland is comparable to the Czech Republic, it's possible to say that all offers are quite expensive. None of the agencies prepared an offer with a more acceptable price.

- In all cases, the structure of the offer in price terms is quite complicated. Depending on the agency, the price does not include the combinations of: air travel, accommodation, food, entrance to attractions or the fee to the guide. In one case, the offer states only preliminary prices and a description of a commission – the customer needs to calculate the price by himself which is rather difficult.
- The accommodation is always in 4 and 5 star hotels.

It's interesting that even though the agencies have been approached with the same request, three prepared an offer of a five-day trip, two prepared a four-day trip and one even an eight-day trip. Even though the prices seem to be unbelievably high, they are correct. Price policies corresponds to the strategies of travel agencies regarding the tailor made trips that are supposed to target rich clients who can afford such high expenditures for correspondingly high standard of services.

4.5 Attractiveness of Poland as a tourist destination in the eyes of employees of travel agencies located in Prague

This part of the study deals with assessment of the quality of Poland as a tourist destination in the eyes of employees of travel agencies. They were asked about their personal opinion on the primary and secondary offer of tourism in Poland which they possibly present to their clients. The Figure 2 represents the comparison of the assessment of the primary and secondary offer done by the well informed employees of the agencies who either offer trips to Poland or have visited Poland personally.

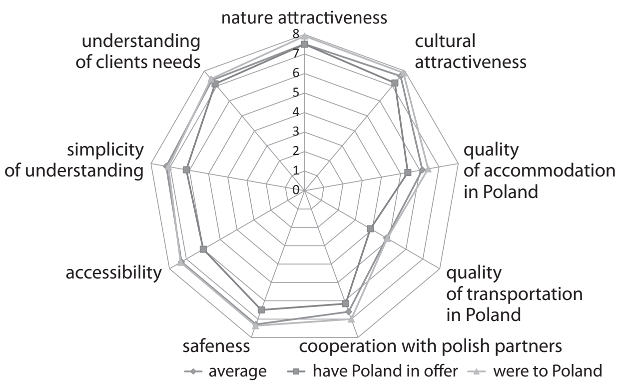

Fig. 2 Assessment of the quality of Poland as a tourist destination in the eyes of employees of travel agencies
Source: own data

4.6 The assessment of the primary offer of tourism

Based on "Marketing destinace cestovního ruchu" by A. Králová (2003): the primary offer encompasses the basic features of the product, which are natural, cultural – historical and cultural – social potential of destinations. The author was interested mainly in two most easily identified elements of the offer: natural, historical and cultural attractiveness of Poland.

In case of the **attractiveness of nature** (see, lakes, mountains), the average ranking among the interviewed group of people reached 7.51 points. It's important to note that 45% of the questioned persons had the opinion that they lack sufficient information or experience to assess the attractiveness of polish nature.

Important aspect influencing the answers is a fact whether the questioned person has visited Poland personally. The assessment by people who have visited Poland is on average by 19.65% better than by those who have never been there. The average grade in the first group is 7.92 points against 6.36 points in the second group. The assessment did not show almost any correlation with the fact whether the agency offers trips to Poland or not.

Second studied element of the primary offer was **historical and cultural attractiveness of Poland** (cities, historical sites, concerts, museums etc.). Similarly as in the case of assessing nature, 42% of the interviewed persons did not want or did not feel comfortable to express their opinion on the quality of historical and cultural prerequisites of Poland because they lacked adequate information.

The average rating of the historical and cultural attractiveness of Poland reached 7.66 points and was slightly better than the rating of nature. At the same time, it was the highest score within all elements of the primary and secondary offer. Persons who have visited Poland rated the historical and cultural attractiveness of Poland on average by 8.23% better than those who have never visited Poland. It's interesting to note that the attractiveness of Poland was assessed worse by the representatives of the agencies who offer trips to Poland (average score 7.2 points), compared to those who don't offer such trips (average score 7.79 points).

4.7 The assessment of the secondary offer of tourism

By secondary offer, we understand the means that are to enable tourists to fulfill their expectations about the trip. Given their diversity of the means, the author decided to study seven different elements of the secondary offer.

The **quality of accommodation** was assessed as the first element. The average grade reached 6.13 points. The result varied by 15.67% depending on the fact if the person visited Poland or not. The ones who have visited Poland rated the element better than the rest. Important factor to note is a fact that the rate was lower by 17.7% in case of the representatives of travel agencies who offer trips to Poland and reached only 5.37 points.

Similar to the above mentioned case, many employees of travel agencies (58) did not want to discuss the quality of the **transportation infrastructure.** The average rating was much lower than in the case of the primary offer and reached 4.85 points. Somehow better rating was assigned by people who have been to Poland (4.89). The lowest rating of the transportation infrastructure (3.9) was assigned by employees of travel agencies that offer trips to Poland.

The transportation infrastructure was the worst rated element of the primary and secondary offer. During the interviews, the people often mentioned that this is one of the reasons why they believe that Poland is not an attractive destination.

Another measured element of the secondary offer was the **quality of cooperation with the partners from Poland**. Only 35% of the interviewed persons were willing to answer this question.

The average rating of the quality of cooperation was quite high at 6.6 points. The best opinion had the people who have personally visited Poland (7). The ratings by the people who have not been there were on average lower by 16%. Worrisome is a fact that the quality of cooperation was assessed worse by people who offer trips to Poland (by 8%).

One of the most important factors that can influence the decision on the right destination is its **safety**. The interviewed persons were supposed to rate Poland as a tourist destination in terms of safety (financial, physical and mental).

The most frequently occurring ratings lied between 7 and 8. The average rating reached 7.02. The persons that have been to Poland assess the safety by 12% better than those who have not been there (6.02). Similarly to the case of cooperation with Polish partners, the persons whose agencies offer trips to Poland assess the safety worse than the rest of the group.

The **accessibility of the destination** is one of the critical elements of the secondary offer. In many cases, it's the factor that influences most the decision where to travel. The average rating reached 7.28. The most optimistic was the group of employees of agencies that don't offer trips to Poland (7.7), and those who have visited Poland (7.34). The accessibility is rated the worst by the representatives of agencies who have trips to Poland in their offer (6). The persons that have been to Poland assess the accessibility by 2.14% better than those who have not been there.

Very interesting were the responses to questions about the **ease of communication**. Polish and Czech languages belong to the same group of languages so the author expected that this element of the secondary offer would be assessed better than the others. This expectation remained unfulfilled.

The opinion on the ease of communication expressed 75% of the interviewed persons which is the largest share. It's interesting that the people that have not been to Poland assess the ease of communication better than those who have personal experience with the communication. The highest grades (7.54) were assigned by those representatives of travel agencies that don't offer trips to Poland. The lowest grades were then assigned by the employees of those agencies who offer trips to Poland (6.17).

Only 48% of respondents decided to answer the question on how they assess the **approach of Poles to customers and understanding the customer needs**. It is the best rated element of the secondary offer of tourism with an average rate of 7.39. Even better is this element assessed by the group of people who have been to Poland (7.48) whereas the people who have not been there assess this element by 7.2. As usual, the lowest ratings were assigned by those persons that work for travel agencies that offer trips to Poland.

5. Conclusions

In 2010, the Polish borders were crosses by 58.34 million foreigners; tourists comprised 21.37% of these (12.47 million). Among the visitors, 9.2 million people came from the Czech Republic which is around 15.8% of the overall number of visitors, whereas the number of tourists was only 175,000. That means that only 1.4% of all tourists visiting Poland are Czechs. This is pity as given the geographical proximity the Czech Republic should be a natural source of tourists.

Therefore a surprisingly positive result of the research was a finding that relatively large part of the participating travel agencies (21%) offers trips to Poland. In more than 70% of case, the destination started to be offered in 2000 or earlier. Poland is not however considered by the employees of travel agencies as a key destination and at the time of the research, Poland was not considered as perspective. On the other hand, this destination is stably offered by the agencies, which is an opportunity that could be further utilized in future.

A visible obstacle for the development of Czech tourism to Poland organized by travel agencies and very often mention by them is the lack of information on the advantages of Poland as a tourist destination. The employees of agencies mentioned the lack of marketing materials as well as any form of PR. As a counter example was mentioned Slovakia and Croatia who, according to the agencies, not only distribute brochures and try to start cooperation but are often and positively presented in media, especially before the vacation season.

Also the second part of the study that is dedicated to the quality of various parts of the primary and secondary offer leads to interesting conclusions:

- It confirms once again the fact that the availability of information about Poland is very limited. Very few employees of travel agencies had any opinion on quality of Poland as a tourist destination. The above stated is also true for the travel agencies that offer trips to Poland.

– The employees of travel agencies assess better the primary offer of tourism with an average mark of 7.59 than the secondary offer which is rated with 6.64 points on average. It's possible to say that they view Poland as an attractive destination that can significantly improve its tourism related services.
– The employees of agencies that offer trips to Poland assessed all elements of the primary and secondary offer worse than employees of agencies who don't offer trips to Poland. The lowest grade received infrastructure with average rating of 3.9.
– With the exception of ease of communication, the average assessment by people who have been to Poland is always better than by those who have not (a mistake was not found).

The research done in 2008 within the travel agencies put light on the way of perception of Poland as a tourist destination. It highlights the deficiencies (e.g. in terms of infrastructure) but also the advantages (highly rated primary touristic offer). At the first place, it reveals that there exists long term tradition of organizing trips to Poland and therefore one can assume that there is a will for a cooperation that needs to be utilized. The intention of Poland should be of course to widen the number of offered destinations, increase diversification of the ways and forms of tourism and create many other modifications of existing offer. That requires a lot of work to be done, especially in the field of sharing information, but at the same time it creates significant opportunities. The transformation of the large number of Czech visitors that come every year to Poland to tourists who spend at least one night in Poland could create significant revenues and strengthen the cooperation of both countries.

The author hopes that this study will at least somehow contribute to preparation of marketing events in the Czech Republic and serve as an inspiration for young scholars that can follow with other studies on similar topics.

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SUMMARY

The study relating to trips to Poland as a part of the offer of Czech travel agencies and the perception of the attractiveness of Poland as a tourist destination by their employees was based on primary data collection. The research took place in the spring and summer of 2008 and consisted of two parts: the first one was realized in the form of structured interviews, the second one as a mystery shopping.

The article contains six sections. In the first part, called Introduction, the author tries to put some light on the development of the scientific research of tourism and consequently to describe the reason for doing the research within the travel agencies. Here, the author sets the questions that need to be answered in the following parts of the work. The next chapter, called Basic Research Information, author describes the process of the analysis. The third part is dedicated to characteristics of the explored travel agencies, their location, size, date of inception, specialization and the position of the interviewed persons within their companies. The next section of the paper discusses the trips to Poland as a part of the overall offer of Czech Travel agencies. First, it attempts to outline the importance of Poland as a touristic

destination within the whole offer of the travel agencies and specifies the concrete Polish destinations offered by the agencies. Then it presents the results of the research among other things relating to the seasonality and the prices of trips to Poland. The fifth chapter discusses the attractiveness of Poland as a tourist destination from the perspective of the employees of travel agencies, taking into account the primary and secondary offer of tourism. The last part aims at summarizing the most important findings of the study. Among these, one should emphasize that a large part of the employees of travel agencies including those who offer the trips to Poland emphasized lack of information and basically no marketing materials available about this destination. This, according to their opinion, significantly reduces the potential to offer this destination to customers. The primary offer of tourism was generally assessed better than the secondary one. Worrying is the fact that the employees of agencies that offer trips to Poland assess its quality worse than the representatives of the remaining agencies.

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