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ANALYSIS OF VISITOR ATTENDANCE AT POLISH TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

Abstract: Tourism attractions are an important segment of the tourism market; they play an immense role in shaping the geography of the tourism movement. In spite of that studies devoted to tourism attractions are undertaken relatively rarely. In the present article, the author presents the results of research devoted to attendance at various types of tourism attraction in Poland, along with an attempt to identify the factors determining their popularity which is measured by the number of visitors. Among others, the author distinguishes the so-called flagship attractions which are of importance for the identity and general image of individual regions.

Key words: tourism attractions, attendance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism attractions are a key element of the tourism economy as they stimulate an interest in travelling to a given tourism destination and they ensure satisfaction to those who visit these places. They are a magnet which attracts tourists to a given region and at the same time, they stimulate a demand for other tourism services. Tourism attractions play an immense role in shaping the geography of the tourism movement; they enable identification of places and regions; they define their identity and public image.

No complex evaluation of tourism attractions has as yet been carried out in Poland. Therefore, an urgent research task which confronts us today is to carry out a stock-taking of tourism attractions in Poland for the purpose of assessing the full potential of the tourism sector¹. The aim of the analysis carried out by the author is to establish attendance figures in the Polish tourism attractions.

In the article, the author presents the results of research on tourism attendance in various types of attractions together with an attempt to identify the individual factors determining their popularity, measured by the number of visitors. In order to carry out the research in question, it was necessary to compile a base of tourism attractions. The author made use of a list of attractions which constitutes

a component element of the Web Based System of Tourism Information (ISIT), which can be located at the following web address: polska.travel.pl. The database of tourism attractions had been verified and updated on the basis of a review of web sites associated with tourism attractions as well as on the basis of opinions of the regional tourism organizations and local government. Regional catalogues of tourism attractions and catalogues of tourism products had also served as a source of information.

In the study the author has made use of the secondary data concerning attendance at tourism attractions, gathered in the course of the so-called desk research. The main sources of information here included publications released by Statistical Offices, reports based on research studies on tourism conducted in individual provinces, reports from the activity of tourism venues, interviews with managers of specific attractions and attendance estimates in the case of a lack of credible data in the existing sources. The biggest difficulty proved to be an attempt to obtain specific information from Statistical Offices concerning attendance, in all likelihood due to data protection legislation. In such instances, information concerning attendance had been gathered *via* e-mail and telephone. Yet the effectiveness of this method

proves to be limited, as merely around 30% of the addressees respond to requests to send the required data. The managers of amusement parks, thematic parks, ropes courses as well as water parks, generally refuse to provide information concerning attendance, quoting an argument that this type of information constitutes a trade secret.

Tourism attractions are a fundamental element of the tourism product. In the present paper, the author has adopted a product-based definition of a tourism attraction and has suggested a classification which takes into consideration the needs of the tourism market. A ranking of attractions, based on the degree of attracting tourists in respective thematic groups, has been carried out.

The study also takes into consideration the regional aspect, by pointing to the saturation rate of individual regions with tourism attractions, as well as to the tourism generated by them. The author draws attention to the so called flagship attractions which are important from the point of view of creating an image of the region, as well as those which have a large potential for development.

2. PRODUCT APPROACH TO TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

The term "tourism attraction" is difficult to define for a number of reasons, for example until now, the number of visitors that are necessary to be able to regard a given venue or place as a tourism attraction, has not been precisely defined. Due to the rather complex character of the entire sector of attractions, the principles of typifying and classifying attractions are complicated.

The term "tourism attraction" had first been introduced into specialist literature by E. COHEN (1972). In his sociological treatise entitled *Towards a Sociology of International Tourism* he declares that the main goal of mass foreign tourism is visiting tourism attractions. He divides attractions into real ones, which are able to attract tourists due to their specific features, and artificial ones which have been specially "created" for tourists. Initially, tourism attractions were defined as 'anything that might interest the tourists' (LUNDBERG 1985) or as 'characteristic and often unique places, such as e.g. natural environment or a historical monument, or else events such as festivals or sports competitions' (GOODALL 1990). Other authors (LEW 1974, DAVIDSON 1996, LEIPER 1990, RICHARDS 2002), defined tourism attractions in much the same way. N. LEIPER (1990), on the other hand, introduces into his conception the notion of markers which motivate tourists to undertake a particular journey.

A sociological interpretation of the term is suggested by D. MCCANNELL (1996), who is of the opinion that a modern society itself creates attractions that correspond to its specific needs. Similarly P.L. PEARCE (1998), as well as J. URRY (2007) suggest that 'attractions are nothing else but places and people that are of interest to tourists'. In English language sources, tourism attractions are often referred to as *visitor attractions* – or attractions for visitors (SWARBROOKE 1995), which suggests that attractions are being addressed not only to tourists, but also to the local community.

Tourism attractions are a complex phenomenon which is defined in various and diverse ways in the literature. Without claiming to have come up with a universal definition, it seems that on the basis of the terminological overview, it is only sensible to refer the concept of attractions to their function. In the light of the above, one may conclude that tourism attractions are (KRUCZEK 2011):

all constituent elements of the tourism product (positive features of the place, as well as events, venues and authentic products of higher culture) designated as unique and having the ability to attract tourists and making them choose a particular area, rather than a different one. Combined with the tourism services, the attractions jointly make up what is known as a tourism product.

The above definition renders both the very nature of attractions understood as unique and valuable venues, distinguished by the addition of a designate and attracting tourists in accordance with the etymology, and emphasizes the ability of the attractions to create a tourism product.

Generally, in the literature the attractions are divided into four major groups as proposed by J. SWARBROOKE (1995):

- 1) **natural tourism attractions** whose value is associated with the physical characteristics of the natural environment, e.g. beaches, mountains, caves, lakes, rivers and forests;
- 2) **works created by man**, but for a purpose other than attracting tourists which over time became tourism attractions in themselves, e.g. pre-historic sites, buildings associated with famous people, palace and garden complexes, industrial sites, sacred buildings;
- 3) **places designed as tourism attractions and built from scratch**, e.g. amusement parks, casinos, spas, safari parks;
- 4) **cultural events**, sports contests, religious events, festivals, Olympic games etc.

What is also interesting from the point of view of research devoted to the issue of attendance in tourism attractions is the division into paid and free attractions (YALE 1990). For the records revealing the numbers of tickets sold or else free entrance passes enable one to

define quite precisely the attendance volume in these attractions.

In the classification of tourism products, some researchers (KACZMAREK, STASIAK & WŁODARCZYK 2005) distinguish such products as an event, venue, trail and area. The latter categories have their counterparts in the classification of tourism attractions (SWARBROOKE 1995), thus following the way of thinking represented by the above-mentioned, we may treat the above products as "products – tourism attractions². As an example of a "product-attraction", J. SWARBROOKE (1995) quotes an amusement park, where one deals with concrete facilities (such as e.g. a roller coaster) and emotions which accompany the rides. One may also treat this "product-attraction" as an experience which includes the phases of planning, travel, participation and finally recollection.

3. ATTENDANCE AT POLISH TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

During research conducted in 2014, information obtained from the managers of as many as 364 attractions, were analyzed (or else estimates had been made on the basis of the available sources). The time-span for gathering the information was limited to 2011-13. By far the biggest number of attractions were classified as belonging to group II, i.e. cultural heritage venues; the latter had originally served other purposes, but had subsequently changed their function (85%); the above group also included museums (216). In second place, there were natural sites (9.5%) – chiefly national parks, and third – events (around 4%). The smallest part was made up of amusement parks which in the majority of cases refused to provide information concerning visitor attendance figures (2%).

3.1. NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

Out of a total of 33 natural attractions, the majority were located in the Małopolska (Lesser Poland), Dolnośląskie (Lower Silesia) and Podlaskie provinces. Among them, one can find numerous national parks, nature reserves and monuments of nature.

The Polish national parks are visited by more than 10 million tourists annually. The highest was in the Tatra National Park which is visited by nearly 3 million tourists each year; then Karkonoski National Park – visited by 2 million; in third place is Woliński national park which is visited by around 1.5 million. 60 % of all visitors to national parks pay a visit to one of these three parks. On the other hand, the lowest attendance rates are in the Narwiański (25 000) and

Poleski (28 000) National Parks. Among the factors which exert a big influence on the tourism attractiveness of national parks, above all their recreational, specialist, as well as scenic value ought to be mentioned; their geographical situation in relation to the centers generating tourism (big urban agglomerations), should also be taken into consideration.

The biggest problem associated with taking advantage of many of the national parks for tourism purposes is the excessive attendance of visitors. Excessive numbers concentrated within the area of delineated visitor trails, poses a threat to the natural environment (noise, pollution, anthropogenic impact on the environment etc.). It is the small national parks with an established position and renown, situated in the vicinity of big urban agglomerations that are in the worst situation. The highest attendance figures occur in the Karkonoski National Park (over 35 000/km²), the Pieniński NP (over 32 000/km²) and in the Ojcowski NP (18 300/km²). The vast masses of people moving across the tourism trails of these parks create numerous problems within an area of environment protection. An equally serious, though slightly lesser problem of excessive attendance can be found in the Tatra NP (a sanctuary of Polish mountain environment) and the Wielkopolski NP (the latter one operates in fact as a suburban park for the city of Poznań), both of which have a slightly different character. The Bison Enclosure in the Woliński NP is also characterized by an excessively high number of visitors (over 100 000).

Another group of frequently visited natural attractions are caves. Among the latter, the highest attendance figures are to Łokietek Cave in Ojców (over 92 000), the Bear Cave in Kletno (over 80 000) and the Dark Cave in Ojców (58 000).

3.2. ATTRACTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH CULTURAL HERITAGE

Nearly 300 venues have been classified as belonging to this category of attraction; among them, there are monuments of architecture, technology, archeology, as well as military buildings and fortifications. In this group one finds both castles (used as museums or hotels, or else in a state of permanent ruin), as well as palaces and manor houses. Within this group, are monuments on the UNESCO world heritage list (14 entries, 28 venues). The latter include, among others, the urban town plans of Krakow, Torun, Zamość, Warsaw, fortifications (Malbork), sacred buildings (wooden Orthodox churches and Catholic churches in the Carpathians, churches of Peace in Lower Silesia), one landscape park on the Polish-German border and a landscape-pilgrimage park in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. A sizable group is also made up of sanctuaries

and shrines; unfortunately the Main Statistical Office and the Church Statistical Institute only provide attendance rates for the shrines of the Catholic Church.

In the category of "castles", the biggest attendance rates have been recorded in the case of the Wawel castle; the branches of the State Art Collections on Wawel Hill were visited by 1.25 million people in 2013. However many tourists visiting Wawel limit themselves to a walk round the castle courtyard and surveying the city panorama, as well as a visit to Wawel cathedral. Without carrying out field studies, it is impossible to give a precise estimate of the total number of visitors to such attractions as castles, where admission is ticketed to only some of the venues.

At the same time, the Royal Castle in Warsaw was visited by 600 000 people, i.e. 50% less than the Wawel Castle. The castle in Malbork was in third place (418 000) followed by the castle in Książ (244 000), Niedzica (224 000), Ogrodzieniec (128 000), Chęciny (118 000) and Kórnik (62 000).

Greater attendance is definitely recorded in the case of park and palace complexes, chiefly due to the fact that the management of these venues incorporates into total number of visitors also those persons who decide exclusively to take a stroll in the park. An absolute leader in this category is the Palace in Wilanów with its gardens and the accompanying venues (e.g. Poster Museum), where attendance exceeds 2.8 million people. The park and palace complex in Łazienki in Warsaw, with its 2.1 million visitors, is not far behind. Attendance figures in the case of the remaining palaces – Łańcut (319 000), Pszczyna (171 000), Nieborów (81 000) or Kurozwęki (93 000) – are much more modest.

Among monuments of technology, it is the Salt Mine in Wieliczka, with its underground Tourism Trail that takes the lead, with the attendance of 1.2 million visitors in 2013. The Salt Mine in Bochnia is far behind with its attendance of 150 000, in the comparable period. Both these venues share the same entry on the UNESCO list of world heritage monuments obtained in 2013. The Museum of Mining and Metallurgy in Złoty Stok, together with the local Gold Mine – attract jointly 175 000 tourists annually. Whereas the Guido Mine, together with the mining museum "Królowa Luiza" /Queen Louise/ declares visitor attendance of 120 000. Next is the Historic Silver Mine and the Museum of Steam Engines in Tarnowskie Góry (61 000), followed by the underground tourism trail and museum in Nowa Ruda (36 000). The recently opened Mediaeval Technology Park in Złoty Stok has attracted 45 000 visitors. The unique Striped Flint Mine – Krzemionki was visited by 35 000 tourists, the Salt Mine in Kłodawa records 27 000, whereas the Chełm Chalk Mine around 20 000.

In the inventory of attractions, we find far fewer archeological venues. The most attractive in this category is Biskupin. The local archeological reserve is visited by over 166 000 tourists annually and the cyclical event known as the Archeological Festival records attendance at the level of 30-50 000 spectators and participants. The archeological site in Trzcinica, known as Karpacka Troja /Carpathian Troy/, has lower attendance figures than Biskupin (between 40 and 60 000). The archeological reserve, Kamienne Kręgi /Stone Circles/ in Odry and Węsiory, attracts only 7 000 visitors.

The lighthouses situated along the Baltic coast enjoy considerable popularity. They make the holiday by the sea more varied and diversified, particularly in cases of bad weather. The lighthouse in Rozewie (102 000) is definitely the leader in this category, outdistancing considerably the lighthouses on the Hel peninsula (54 000), in Krynica Morska (43 000) and Gąski (30 000).

Shrines are another category subdivided in respect of their range and impact into international, national and supra-regional. The leading six which attract pilgrims in Poland are Częstochowa (4 million), Kraków-Łagiewniki (2 million), Zakopane-Krzepotówki (2 million), Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (1.2 million) and Licheń (1.1 million). The shrines in Niepokalanów and Piekary Śląskie also attract over 0.5 million pilgrims annually.

Without a doubt, the most numerous group of attractions are the museums; data concerning visitor attendance rates at 212 museum venues (including museum branches, often regarded as separate tourism attractions; e.g. the Schindler's Factory Museum is a branch of the Krakow Historical Museum) had been gathered.

From the generally accessible data published by GUS³ (Main Statistical Office), it can be learnt that visitor attendance rates at Polish museums have been systematically growing in recent years. Following a crisis which occurred in the years 1989-92, when visitor numbers in Polish museums dropped to the lowest level in decades, a systematic increase in visitor numbers is being found. Yet it was only in the 2011 that a record attendance level from before the transformation of 1989 was reached; in the course of this year, Polish museums were visited by nearly 25 million people.

The relative proportions between the number of visitors to Polish museums and the number of museums are similar. The largest number of museums are in Malopolska and Mazowieckie provinces, the smallest number in Opolskie and Lubuskie provinces. In 2012, altogether 26.7 million people visited museums in Poland (7.2% more than in the previous year); within this number, 11.3 million visited free of

charge. Organized groups of school pupils constituted 19.6% of the total number of visitors (in 2011 – 23.3%). Similar to the previous year, it was museums representing an artistic and historical profile that enjoyed the greatest popularity among visitors; they were visited respectively by 8.2 and 4.3 million people. A good opportunity to become acquainted with the Polish national heritage for free is the annually organized “Museum Night”. Around 950 000 people have taken advantage of this type of museum visit (3.2% less than in 2011), whereas 1.5 million people took advantage of other forms of special museum events (*Kultura...* 2013).

The highest visitor attendance figures are recorded by the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum (1.5 million in 2013); it is an un-ticketed, free attraction⁴, which records precisely the number of its visitors. In the second and third place, one finds two Krakow museums together with their branches. In the year 2013, the Historical Museum of Krakow was visited by 0.94 million people; within this number, the Rynek Underground was visited by 440 000, while Schindler’s Factory by 270 000. In the same year, the National Museum of Krakow recorded visitor attendance at a level of 726 000, including 224 000 who visited the Painting Gallery in Sukiennice /Cloth Hall/. In fourth place, is found the Warsaw Uprising Museum (490 000); the National Museum in Wrocław is not far behind with its visitor attendance of 466 000, including visitors to the Raclawice Panorama branch (260 000) and the Municipal Aquarium in Gdynia (366 000). Attendance figures exceeding the 200 000 mark have been recorded by the Podlasie Museum in Białystok (260 000) and the Lublin Museum (220 000).

A separate category of museum venues are referred to as “skansens” or open-air museums. At the present moment, there are more than 50 such venues in Poland; they are divided into railway, archeological and ethnographic museums. Studies have revealed visitor attendance figures in a few of them; the biggest number of visitors has been recorded in the largest venue of this type, namely – the Museum of Civil Engineering in Sanok (130 000 visitors) which the Museum of the Kielce Village in Tokarnia (127 000) and the Ethnographic Park in Olsztynek (86 000). Other venues of this type include the Museum of Lublin Village (66 000), open-air museum in Pstrązna near Kudowa (49 000), Museum of the Opole Village in Bierkowice (around 40 000), Museum of Folk Culture in Kolbuszowa (37 000), the Ethnographic Open Air Museum in Ochla near Zielona Góra (33 000), the Kurpiowski Open-Air Museum in Nowogród (22 000).

3.3. ATTRACTIONS CREATED SPECIALLY FOR TOURISTS

The above group includes venues which have been specially created for tourists, such as amusement parks (the latter include thematic parks, dinosaur parks, fun fairs, Wild West Cities, ropes courses and water parks), cable-cars, safari parks and zoological gardens. These venues are in most cases created by private investors who are generally unwilling to provide information concerning visitor attendance figures. In the majority of cases, they make excuses quoting the argument of trade secrets, or else they do not answer any questions. The biggest attendance among dinosaur parks has been recorded by the Jura Park in Bałtów (320 000 visitors in 2013) above Jura Park in Krasiejow (210 000) and the Dinosaur in Nowiny Wielkie (35 000) in Lubuskie province. The biggest and most frequently visited Malopolska dinosaur park in Zator, refuses to give information concerning visitor attendance. The same management is also in charge of the biggest mini Jurassic park located in nearby Inwałd. In the latter category of attractions, we have only been able to obtain data from the Mini Jurassic Park in Ogrodzieniec (between 45 and 80 000 visitors).

The water parks in Tarnów and Zakopane are visited by over 300 000 people annually, while the Zoological Garden in Opole by nearly 250 000. Yet these are by no means the biggest and most representative venues. A much higher attendance is recorded in the modern Bania baths in Białka Tatrzańska (around 600-700 000 visitors annually), which matches the attendance figures of the Maltese Baths, in the large city of Poznań (around 700 000 visitors). High attendance figures are also recorded in the case of Bukovina Baths in Bukowina Tatrzańska (around 450 000 visitors) and the Uniejów Baths (200 000). The data relating to the use of geothermal facilities for tourism and recreational purposes concerns 2011.

Only a single management of a gondola lift has supplied us with data concerning visitor attendance figures; in accordance with this data, attendance at the Jaworzyna Krynicka gondola lift is estimated to be at a level of 500 000 people annually. In the case of the latter type of facility, it is data referring to the summer season that turns out to be more precise, as the use of ski passes during the winter season requires a special re-calculation of visitor attendance figures.

3.4. SHOWS AND EVENTS

The last group of attractions includes special events and shows, such as festivals, picnics, folk rituals, fairs, games and sports events as well as battle reenactments. In this category, data and estimates from only 15 organizers have been obtained. With this type of attraction, there is no precise information concerning visitor attendance, as the events in question often involve non-ticketed open-air cultural shows. The estimates provided by the organizers and journalists often differ from each other and are sometimes exaggerated (e.g. the City Council in Gdańsk stated that as many as 7 million visitors attended the Dominican Fair in this city).

The event known as 'Przystanek Woodstock' /Woodstock Station/ in Kostrzyń on the Oder was estimated to have attracted half a million participants. High attendance figures were recorded in the case of the Dni Morza /Days of the Sea/ event in Szczecin (around 100 000), and combined with such a yachting events as the Tall Ships, it produced a record attendance of 2.6 million. Events which are much more intimate as regards attendance are the festivals of Jewish Culture in Krakow (around 30 000) and the Dialogue of Four Cultures Festival in Łódź (around 40 000). The Malta Festival in Poznań, on the other hand, attracts between 20 and 80 000 participants (depending on the year, program and weather). The New Year crib competition in Krakow attracts 15 000 spectators who view the award-winning cribs. At this point, one should add that events taking place in big cities attract more local citizens than tourists (e.g. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the visitors to the Dialogue of Four Cultures Festival were inhabitants of Łódź).

The annual reenactment of the battle of Grunwald attracts between 60 and 80 000 knights and spectators. It is the biggest event of this type in Poland, and maybe even in Europe. The cross-country ski run 'Bieg Piastów' in Jakuszyce attracts 5 000 participants.

4. FLAGSHIP AND MAXIMUM VISITOR ATTENDANCE ATTRACTIONS IN THE REGIONS

The ability to differentiate between the impact and significance of tourism attractions is very important for the process of planning and further development of individual tourism regions. Thus, the so-called flagship attractions are usually treated as instruments of economic growth or as catalysts of revitalization which may trigger processes of social transformation and economic rebranding exerting an impact on the

quality of life of the local inhabitants. Their impact on the local economy is often referred to in the professional jargon as an "effect" (e.g. "the Guggenheim Effect" in Bilbao, PLAZA 2008). It may also happen that attractions which had originally been designed as flagships, lead to a degradation or deterioration of the quality of life in the target area, leading to an exodus of tourists who begin to look for alternative attractions elsewhere. Sometimes flagship attractions turn out to be unprofitable and public funds have to be engaged in order to maintain them (for instance in Poland, the majority of water parks have turned out to be unprofitable and consequently need to be subsidized from local budgets).

The problem lies in not being able to distinguish precisely between these two different types of attraction (LEASK & FYALL 2006). The two terms are often used interchangeably. The term 'flagship attraction' is understood as the "best and most important attraction". It is associated with such features as uniqueness of location, international importance, considerable size and economic effects (e.g. Euro Disneyland in France and Legoland in Denmark).

Cult attractions, also known as icons, are venues which are regarded as most prestigious and worthy of admiration; they constitute a symbol of culture. In tourism it is thought that they are authentic elements and that their perception allows one to create an image of an attraction icon. Among the icons one finds such attractions as Mount Fuji, the Eiffel Tower, the Great Wall of China and Taj Mahal. The icons are identified as universally recognized symbols and that is how they are perceived both by tourists and the local community (JENKINS 2003). They are often treated as "branded" attractions and consequently they contribute to the creation of new, often branded tourism products. Attractions which are being promoted as tourism icons are of service in the process of creating a ranking of tourism products.

The difference between flagship attractions and icons exerts an influence on the process of management of attractions. Flagship attractions have the ability to generate the required economic growth effects through attracting considerable numbers of visitors, while cult attractions /icons/, do not have to meet this requirement. For example, the London Eye is the most frequently visited paid attraction in London; it attracts 3.7 million visitors annually, compared to nearly 1 million tourists who visit the Houses of Parliament. London Eye is regarded as a flagship attraction, while the Houses of Parliament are regarded as a cult attraction or icon, similarly as the Opera House in Sydney, whose image is often taken advantage of in Australia for marketing purposes. The division into flagship attractions and icons is imprecise and subject to change. Cult attractions are

Table 1. Tourism attractions with the highest visitor attendance figures and the greatest potential (flagship venues), according to region

Province	Highest visitor attendance	Flagship attractions
[1]	[2]	[3]
Dolnośląskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Karkonoski National Park 2. National Museum in Wrocław 3. Stołowe Mountains NP 4. Książ Castle in Wałbrzych 5. Gold Mine in Złoty Stok 6. Wang Temple in Karpacz 7. Papermaking Museum in Duszniki 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Old Town in Wrocław 2. Raclawice Panorama 3. Karkonosze Mountains 4. Stołowe /Table/ Mountains 5. Książ Castle 6. Wang Temple 7. Gold Mine in Złoty Stok
Kujawsko-pomorskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Archeological Reserve in Biskupin 2. Jurassic Park in Solec 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biskupin – reserve and picnic 2. Toruń – Old Town UNESCO 3. Graduation towers in Ciechocinek
Lubelskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Old Town in Zamość 2. Lublin Museum 3. Museum in Kozłówka 4. Roztocze NP 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Zamość – UNESCO, 2. Lublin – Old Town 3. Kazimierz Dolny – historical monuments 3. Kozłówka – museum 4. Roztocze – NP
Lubuskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Woodstock Station 2. Międzyrzecz Fortification Region 3. Warta Mouth NP 4. Dinosaur Park 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MRU /Międzyrzecz Fortification Region/ 2. Warta Mouth NP 3. Łagów – castle and lakes 4. Mużakowski Park UNESCO
Łódzkie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Palace in Nieborów 2. Textile Museum in Łódź 3. Festival of Dialogue of 4 Cultures 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manufaktura Center in Łódź 2. Piotrkowska Street 3. Nieborów and Arkadia 4. Uniejów Baths
Małopolskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tatra NP 2. Auschwitz-Birkenau 3. Salt Mine in Wieliczka 4. State Art Collection in Wawel Castle 5. Historical Museum of Krakow 6. Krakow National Museum 7. Pieniny NP 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kraków – Old Town 2. Wawel 3. Museums of Krakowa 4. Wieliczka Salt Mine 5. Auschwitz-Birkenau 6. Pieniny Mountains 7. UNESCO Trail (wooden churches and Orthodox temples) 8. Shrine in Łagiewniki
Mazowieckie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Palace in Wilanow 2. Palace in Łazienki 3. Royal Castle in Warsaw 4. Kampinoski NP 5. Museum of Warsaw Uprising 6. National Museum WAW 7. Museum of Technology and Industry NOT 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wilanów 2. Łazienki 3. Old Town with castle and cathedral (UNESCO) 4. Kampinoski NP 5. Science Center Copernicus 6. National Stadium
Opolskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. St Anne’s Mountain 2. Jura Park in Krasiejów 3. Zoo in Opole 4. Museum of Śląsk Opolski 5. Castle in Brzeg 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opole – monuments, amphitheater 2. Jura Park in Krasiejów 3. Castle in Brzeg 4. St Anne’s Mount – Historic Monument 5. Paczków – Polish “Carcassonne” 6. Palace in Moszna
Podkarpackie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bieszczady NP 2. ‘Skansen’ Open-Air Museum in Sanok 3. Carpathian Troy – ‘skansen’ 4. District Museum in Rzeszow 5. Museum of Przemyśl Land 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bieszczady Mountain Range 2. Lakes on the San river 3. Łancut – castle, park, carriage-house 4. Wooden churches and Orthodox temples (UNESCO) 4. Palaces in Krasieczyn and Baranow Sandomierski 5. Carpathian Troy
Podlaskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Podlasie Museum in Białystok 2. Białowiecki NP 3. Wigierski NP 4. ‘Skansen’ in Nowogród 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Białowiecki NP (UNESCO) 2. Augustowski Canal 3. Wigierski and Biebrzański NP 4. Palace in Białystok 5. Museum in Supraśl

[1]	[2]	[3]
Pomorskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Castle in Malbork 2. Słowiński NP 3. National Museum in Gdańsk 4. Municipal Aquarium in Gdynia 5. Rozewie Lighthouse 6. 'Dar Pomorza' Ship-Museum 7. Dominican Picnic 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Castle in Malbork 2. The Pier in Sopot 3. Aquarium in Gdynia and Seals Shelter on Hel Peninsula 5. Monuments and museums of Gdańsk 6. Kaszuby – open-air heritage park, museums, landscape 7. Słowiński NP
Śląskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Museum of Silesia in Katowice 2. Palace in Pszczyna 3. Castle in Ogrodzieniec 4. Guido Mine and 'Królowa Luiza' skansen in Zabrze 5. Museum of Żywiec Brewery 6. Czarny Pstrąg /Black Trout/ Gallery in Tarnowskie Góry 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Castle in Pszczyna 2. Guido Mine and Queen Louise open air heritage park 3. Ogrodzieniec and castles along the Eagles' Nests Trail 4. Silver Mine in Tarnowskie Góry together with the Black Trout Gallery Pstrąga 5. Park of Culture and Recreation in Chorzów 6. Breweries in Żywiec and Tychy
Świętokrzyskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Świętokrzyski NP 2. JuraPark in Bałtów 3. Museum of Kielce Village 4. Ruins of the castle in Chęciny 5. Palace in Kurozwęki 6. Castle in Sandomierz 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Świętokrzyskie Mountain Range 2. Bishops' Palace National Museum in Kielce 3. Kadzielnia Reserve 4. JuraPark in Bałtów 5. Open Air Heritage Park of the Kielce Village in Tokarnia 6. Sandomierz – monuments and Father Matthew's Trail
Warmińsko-mazurskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Copernicus Museum in Frombork 2. Ethnographic Park in Olsztynek 3. Reenactment of the battle of Grunwald 4. Museum of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elbląsko-Ostródzki Canal 2. Frombork – castle hill complex with cathedral and Copernicus Museum 3. Wolf's Lair in Gierłoż 4. Grunwald Battle Field 5. Mazury Lakes 6. Trail of Teutonic Castles
Wielkopolskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wielkopolska NP 2. Museum of the First Piasts in Lednica 3. National Museum of Agriculture in Szreniawa 4. Museum of the Origina of the Polish State in Gniezno 5. Castle in Kórnik 6. Malta Festival in Poznań 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Poznań – Old Town and Museums 2. Gniezno – monuments and museums 3. The Piast Trail 4. Malta Sports and Recreation Complex in Poznań 5. The Kórnik Complex – castle, museum and arboretum
Zachodnio-pomorskie	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wolinski NP 2. Museum of Polish Arms in Kołobrzeg 3. Bison Enclosure in Woliński NP 4. National Museum in Szczecin 5. Days of the Sea in Szczecin 6. Lighthouse in Gąski 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Szczecin – museums and monuments 2. Woliński NP including the Turquoise Lake 3. Lighthouse Trail 4. Ruins of the church in Trzęsacz 5. Cathedral in Kamień Pomorski 6. Pier and Stars' Alley in Międzyzdroje 7. Borne Sulinowo – post-Soviet mementoes. 8. Drawieński NP

Source: own research.

likely to lose their cult value, for instance through environmental pollution (WEAVER & LAWTON, 2007) or competition created by new venues representing similar attributes.

On the basis of the analysis of visitor attendance figures as well as an analysis of the distribution of attractions in individual regions, a list of attractions with the highest attendance has been drawn up and

a number of attractions have been selected which due to the greatest potential for attracting tourism, may be treated as flagships (Table 1). The lists do not take into consideration visitor attendance figures in religious shrines, due to the specific character of this form of tourism and a lack of product indications with regard to pilgrimages. Yet the ticketed sacred venues have been taken into consideration.

5. AN ATTEMPT TO IDENTIFY THE FACTORS DETERMINING VISITOR ATTENDANCE AT TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

The research conducted, as well as an analysis of source materials, allowed a number of factors to be distinguished which determine visitor attendance at tourism attractions. The above factors can be divided into two major groups:

1. Endogenic factors (associated with the attraction itself as well as with its character):
 - a) size of the venue;
 - b) type of attraction (authenticity, uniqueness);
 - c) function of attraction (iconic, flagship);
 - d) links with hotel, gastronomic, travel guide services, sale of souvenirs etc.;
 - e) price of entrance tickets;
 - f) attraction program, use of new multimedia techniques and interpretations;
 - g) creative and professional staff;
 - h) introduction of innovations;
 - i) promotion of attractions.
2. Exogenous factors (associated with the surroundings of the attractions):
 - a) distance from source areas of tourism;
 - b) location in the vicinity of a big city ensuring a constant flow of visitors;
 - c) support of tourism attractions and their development by local authorities;
 - d) networking tourism attractions with other venues;
 - e) world trends in tourism.

In absolute numbers, the highest values of visitor attendance in ticketed attractions are found in renowned national parks situated in the most attractive tourism regions (the Tatra NP, Karkonosze NP, Wolin NP) or else in the vicinity of large agglomerations (Wielkopolski NP and Kampinoski NP).

In the case of cultural attractions, the highest figures for visitor attendance are in iconic attractions in cities which are regarded as international centers of tourism (Warsaw, Kraków) or else in their vicinity. The latter group is largely made up of park and palace complexes, such as Wilanów and Łazienki, the Royal Wawel Castle, the unique Salt Mine in Wieliczka as well as museum venues; within the latter category, it is the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, the Historical Museum of Kraków and the National Museums in Kraków and Wrocław, that come to the foreground.

Within the group of attractions which have been created especially for tourists, the highest visitor

attendance has been recorded in modern thermal springs on the Poznań Malta, in Białka Tatrzańska and Bukowina Tatrzańska, all of which are in areas which are attractive for tourists, or else are situated within the limits of a city agglomeration. High visitor attendance is also recorded by the gondola lifts, e.g. in Zakopane, Krynica etc. which are in the most popular tourism resorts. The refusal to provide information relating to visitor attendance figures by the biggest amusement parks makes it virtually impossible to successfully compare the rank and status of this category of attractions with the others.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Bearing in mind the existing information gaps as well as certain limitations in obtaining access to information concerning visitor attendance in attractions, there is an urgent need to conduct basic research within the attractions themselves. The research in question should be complex in character and it should concern selected examples from all groups of attractions. Establishing the visitor attendance levels in non-ticketed venues will allow one to estimate the number of visitors in similar attractions. In the first instance, one should conduct such studies in selected amusement parks (theme parks, dinosaur parks, water parks, funfairs, Wild West cities).

Apart from amusement parks, basic research should also be conducted on theme tourism trails, with regard to which there is virtually no statistical data concerning visitor attendance; similar studies should also be conducted in the case of more important pedestrian trails, such as e.g. the Orla Perć trail in the Tatra Mountains.

Bearing in mind the difficulties in estimating visitor attendance rates in venues such as ruins of castles, isolated historical monuments, as well as shows and events, it is advisable to initiate quantitative and qualitative studies with regard to sample attractions representing the above categories. Apart from obtaining information concerning visitor attendance, such studies should also focus on the quality of the services in the attractions, the range of their impact, methods of management, employed personnel, profitability, seasonality, the impact of the location of a given attraction on the economy of the region. Information concerning attractions is necessary for the creators of tourism products – organizers of tourism, attraction managers as well as local governments. Thus there is an urgent need to carry out such research taking advantage of a variety of available instruments. For instance, to examine the quality of the attractions,

one could take advantage of the method of diagnostic survey (questionnaire techniques, interviews), marketing methods, virtual ethnography methods and the method of mystery shopping.

FOOTNOTES

¹ In the article, the author makes reference to the results of his research project conducted for the Polish Tourism Organization, within the commissioned task "Visitor Attendance at Tourism Attractions". See a report on the research: <http://www.pot.gov.pl/dzialania/p/do-pobrania/badania-i-analzy>.

² As examples of the product-attractions, J. KACZMAREK, A. STASIAK & B. WŁODARCZYK (2005, pp. 79-89), the authors of the publication *Produkt turystyczny /Tourism Product/*, describe the Świętokrzyskie Smelting Furnaces, the International Championships in Gold-Panning in Złotoryja, the International Bread Fair in Jawor, the "Świnoujście" Sea Fortress, the Trail of Wooden Architecture, the Mazury Eden - Galindia and the Jurassic Park in Bałtów.

³ Culture in 2012. Year-book of the Main Statistical Office /GUS/, Warsaw 2013.

⁴ The management of this museum requests that, due to the specificity of the place and its collection, the term attraction should not be used with reference to it.

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