



## **VILLAGE AS A TOURIST AREA ATTRACTIVE FOR ACADEMIC YOUTH**

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### ***Abstract***

The survey which was supposed to provide information on popularity of rural holiday destinations among the academic youth has revealed that rural areas are most willingly visited by students who come from cities (49.3%). The locations most frequently chosen by the respondents included: the Baltic coast, Helski Peninsula, Kujawy and Kaszuby Region. It was also observed that male students are more willing than female students to spend holidays outside towns (54.6%). The recreational activities indicated by the respondents who chose to spend their free time in the village were mainly cycling and hiking (34.3% vs 28.4%). Another form of activity was sightseeing (32.3%), and kayaking (30.4%). People who declared to have spent their holiday time in the country were more often involved in sailing (mainly men – 66.6%) and rowing (mainly women – 54.5%) sunbathing and diving (7.8%) than those who chose to go to the city. Students are regarded to be an active and important group of tourists who tend to visit the village even two times a year and stay there for longer periods of time (even 8 – 14 days). It is likely that trips to regions characterized by peace, quietness and clean air will increase among the analyzed group of tourists.

**Key words:** village, academic youth, rural tourism, rural recreational activities

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the course of time rural areas have become a holiday destination for tourists who seek a quiet place to relax. This is connected with willingness to

visit places where they grew up and longitudes for traditional values, natural environment and clean nature. Values of rural areas encourage tourists to enjoy alternative forms of spending leisure time (Siekierski, Popławski 2009). According to Denek (2014) visiting the village allows to provide the young generation of Poles with an appropriate model of spending leisure time as compared to the activities offered by different forms of modern entertainment. This model involves: sightseeing, tourism, recreation, and sport. Involvement in such forms of activities provides young people with many opportunities to follow the rules connected with active spending free time, taking care of health or developing fitness habits. According to Lubowiecki-Vikuk and Podgórski (2013), tourist activities have become an important element of leisure time management affecting the level and quality of people's lives. They add that the academic youth constitutes (due to their age) a homogenous socio-demographic group which is considered to be the vanguard of each society, therefore it seems to be advisable to define tourist preferences of this specific social group. The aim of this research is to check whether rural areas are regions attractive for students in terms of tourism. It has been studied whether the recreation model of people who come from the village is similar to the model represented by the academic youth who live in cities. First of all, it has been explored what kinds of recreational activities are preferred by young people and what they take into consideration when choosing a tourist offer in rural areas.

This research is based on the assumption that in 2015 students encouraged by the currently promoted 'ecological lifestyle', chose to visit rural areas which provided them with the possibility to relax on the lap of nature, taste the traditional cuisine with different culinary specialties as well as access the cultural heritage. It was also assumed that the typical recipient of these offers was a city dweller rather than a villager, and that students who come from rural areas were less willing to take trips to environments so well known for them.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

A survey involving a representative group of students who came from cities and villages was performed at the turn of 2015-2016, from October to February. Anonymous questionnaires were distributed among students in lecture halls. After having been completed the questionnaires were returned directly to the pollster. The questionnaire was prepared in such a way that the respondents could complete it on their own and easily answer 15 detailed questions. The purpose of the survey was evaluation and identification of: rural destinations which enjoy the biggest popularity among the academic youth, providing frequency and length of holiday trips; trip organization forms; choice of accommodation (with or without board); preferred forms of spending leisure time; overall va-

cation costs in 2015, and vacation plans of students for the following year. For a number of reasons 250 questionnaires were analyzed out of 214. Some questionnaires were incomplete (5.6%), and the remaining ones were not completed at all (4.8%) or were not returned (4%). The results of the surveys have been analyzed according to the division into people who chose to have vacation in rural areas or in the city. It was also considered whether the responses differed in terms of respondents' sex and origin. After appropriate classification the survey results were extended with methods of analysis and description, based on graphic and tabular presentations. The paper contains special abbreviations (see: table 2), including three capital letters (e.g. WCC, MVC). The first letter denotes gender of the respondents (W – women or M – men), the second letter denotes their place of residence (C – city or V – village), and the third is connected with holiday destinations of students (C – city or V – village). Application of such abbreviations enabled more detailed classification of the respondents' answers in terms of location, facilities significant in respect of holiday quality and preference for active recreation forms.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As many as 214 respondents participated in the survey, 53.7% (115) of whom were men. 32.7% of the surveyed students originated from rural areas (mostly women – 61.4%) and they represented a group below 24 years and 24 years. Those who came from the city were mainly men (61.1%) (tab. 1). The carried out surveys have proved that vacation in the village was most willingly chosen by young people, though statistically the choices to spend holidays in the city were more frequent (47.7% vs 52.3%). The initial hypothesis of this study has been confirmed. Young people, who grew up in cities were more willing to choose their holiday destination in rural areas than those who were born in the country (49,3% vs 44,3%). Nevertheless, for both groups the most attractive holiday locations were in Pomorskie Province (Baltic coast, Helski Peninsula). Other regions popular among students were: Małopolskie Province (for students living in cities) and Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province (for students who grew up in villages). In 2015 students from cities visited more often the Tatra Mountains and the Podhale Region as well as the region of Warmia and Mazury. In turn, country dwellers were more keen to spend their leisure time in the region of Kujawy and Kaszuby, which is probably connected not only with the place of permanent residence (mainly of Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province), but also with preference to visit known and previously visited locations. In this case the economic factor did not play any important role as students from the country and cities spent similar amounts of money ranging from 501 to 1000 PLN (35% v 30%). It should be mentioned that both women and men who grew up in rural

areas and choosing the same environment for holiday destinations accounted for 14.4 % of all the respondents and 44.2% of all country dwellers. It can be supposed that this is caused by family traditions and attachment to the homeland or the desire to get away from the city where they study.

**Table 1.** Percentage of persons (according to gender and place of residence), whose holiday destinations were either city or a village

Place of permanent residence 214 respondents (in % of total)							
VILLAGE – 32,7				CITY – 67,3			
Women – 61,4		Men – 38,6		Women – 38,9		Men – 61,1	
The holiday destination of young people in 2015 (V-village C-city)							
V	C	V	C	V	C	V	C
48,8	51,2	37,0	63,0	41,1	58,9	54,6	45,4

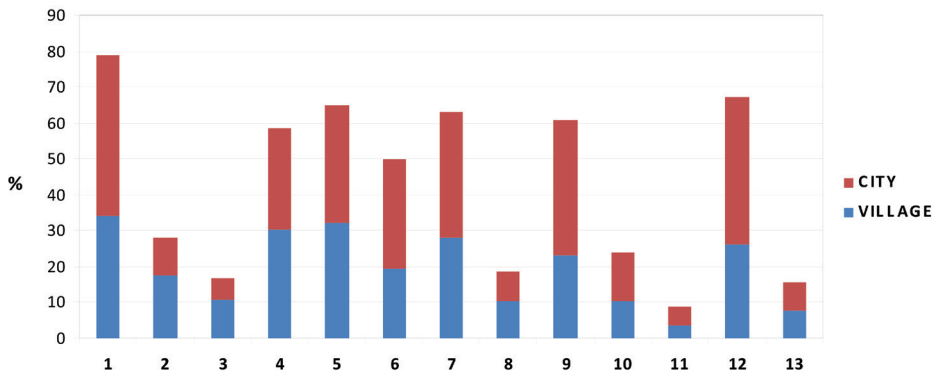
Source: own study

The survey carried out by Karbowskiak (2006), ten years earlier, revealed similar tendencies in holiday trips as according to the author’s own research the country dwellers indicated towns, especially those at the seaside, as the holiday destinations. City dwellers also chose to travel to the seaside but both groups were more reluctant to go to the lake, which in turn, is different from the results of the author’s own research (fig.1).

In 2015 during summer vacation the respondents went on trips to rural areas one time (41.2%) or two times (33.3%) and mainly for 4-7 days (34.3%). 15 day trips and more were rare (2.9%). However, it must be emphasized that 8-14 day long trips to the country were more frequent than to the city. No person who would like to relax in the city for 15 days or longer was recorded.

The surveys revealed that an active rest in the village is mainly connected with bike trips (34.3%) and water activities in particular kayaking (30.4%). These preferences are partly confirmed by Górnicka et al. (2015) in her research, who writes that cycling is the most popular form of physical activity, more than swimming. In turn, the research of Kamińska and Mularczyk (2015) indicates that students often choose dedicated tourism (hiking, water activities, cycling). A significant group of respondents were involved in sightseeing of local monuments of culture (32.3%) and used hiking routes to visit the surroundings (28.4%). People who declared to have spent their holiday time in the country were more often involved in sailing (mainly men – 66.6%) and rowing (mainly

women – 54.5%) sunbathing and diving (7.8%) than those who chose to go to the city. Spending leisure time in the city included mainly bike trips (44.6%), participation in outdoor events (41%) as well as using swimming pools (37.5%) (fig.1). Other leisure time activities indicated as being available in the village included: sunbathing, swimming, diving, (mainly women) using fitness club as well as proximity of the sea (responses given by men) (7.8%).



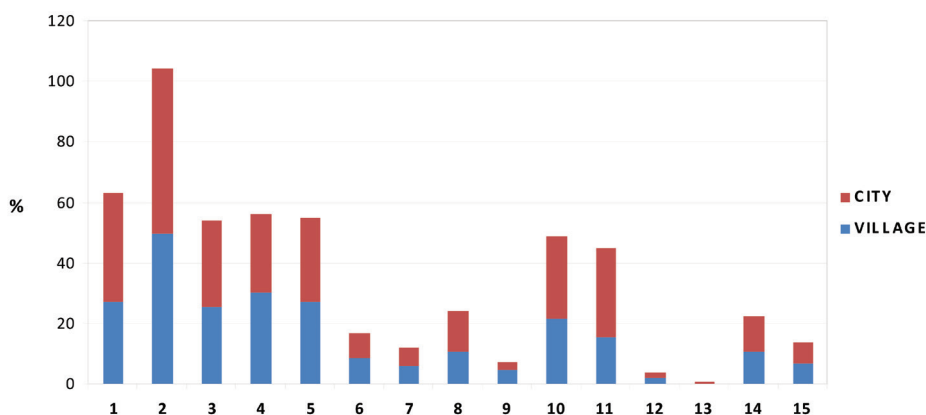
Source: own study

1-tour cycling,2-sailing,3-rowing,4-kayaking,5-sightseeing historical monuments,6-feasting by the fire, 7-hiking trails,8-bike trails,9-pool,10-court for team games,11-horse riding,12-outdoor events,13-other

**Figure 1.** A comparison of recreation activities chosen by students who spend vacation in a city and in a village.

For students, who chose rural areas for their holiday destinations it was more important to have access to: river, lake (50%) or possibly a swimming pool (27.4%), neighborhood of forest resources (25.5%) and necessarily historical objects (27.4%) (fig.2). Whereas, people who chose the city did not give priority to access to forest areas, and proximity of water (river, lake – 54.4%, swimming pool 35.7%) and bars (29.4%). According to Nawrot and Szymański (2009) the importance of forest areas for students who prefer vacation in the village can come from the fact that such regions are inseparably connected with tourism due to their attractiveness which, as Mandziuk and Janeczko (2009) emphasized, are characterized by healthy atmosphere, bio-therapeutic values and provide other benefits. Similarly, water reservoirs which can be used not only for typical recreation (bath, water sports, fishing) but also for dedicated tourism designed for discovering values of the natural environment (ecotourism) (Wagner 2005). Certainly, the respondents were aware of the fact that proximity of a forest or water reservoir would have a positive influence on the quality of their relax. There-

fore, these factors were given priority when planning a vacation. According to Ziarkowski (2012) historical objects and museums also play an important role for students in choosing their holiday destinations. The author highlights that they will be more and more appreciated by tourists and according to the survey the respondents are keen on discovering cultural attractions of the village, thus reaching for its roots and exploring different cultures. This form of spending free time is considered to be very beneficial in the era of contemporary media, especially social ones (distracting young people from active forms of rest). Among the facilities, buildings and places of interest the respondents could indicate by themselves, there were: mountains, the sea and mountain trails (6.8%).



Source: own study

1-pool,2-river, lake,3-forest,4-national park, nature park,5-historical monuments,6-museums and chambers museum,7-horse riding,8-court for team games,9-tennis courts,10-grocery store,11-bar,12-medical services,-13-post office,14-discotheque,15-other

**Figure 2.** Places, facilities and bulidings indicated by students as significant for them in terms of quality

Table 2 includes interesting observations concerning the respondents' answers. The responses have been ordered according to gender, origin, (village, city) and destination of holiday trips (village, city). The numbers in the columns show the significance of the individual factors (eg. pool, river and lake) according to specified groups of respondents (eg. WVV, MVV), where 1 is the most important factor, which is indicated by the greatest number of respondents, and 1 – the smallest number, while 0 – the factor was not indicated by any respondent. It can be seen that regardless of the used criteria, for most of the surveyed students it was the proximity of water (river or lake) and the possibility of riding a bike which played the most important role, and although cycling and water

activities are not sophisticated forms of spending free time, it is the involvement itself, according to Alejziak (2011), that improves overall wellbeing and helps to restore psycho-physical balance. Each young person needs relax in order to function normally, work efficiently and play their social roles. The youth who do not take the trouble to spend their vacation time effectively are overtired, frustrated and tend to engage in conflicts with others and even with themselves.

**Table 2.** Presentation of students' answers ordered according to significance of locations, facilities, buildings, and recreation activities (according to their gender, place of residence and holiday destination)

<b>Equipment, Buildings, Place</b>	<b>WVV</b>	<b>MVV</b>	<b>WCV</b>	<b>MCV</b>	<b>WVC</b>	<b>MVC</b>	<b>WCC</b>	<b>MCC</b>
Pool	2	4	3	4	3	2	2	2
river, lake	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	1
Forest	6	2	5	2	2	3	6	5
national park, nature park	3	4	2	2	5	5	5	2
historical monuments	5	4	2	3	2	4	3	6
museums and chambers museum	7	0	3	9	6	6	7	9
horse riding	9	0	5	8	6	0	10	10
court for team games	9	3	0	6	6	4	0	7
tennis courts	8	0	0	8	0	0	0	10
grocery store	4	5	4	5	1	0	4	4
Bar	4	4	3	8	4	3	5	3
medical services	0	0	6	0	0	0	9	0
post office	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	0
Disotheque	7	5	4	7	0	0	8	7
Other	7	5	5	9	7	0	9	8
<b>The possibility of active leisure</b>	<b>WVV</b>	<b>MVV</b>	<b>WCV</b>	<b>MCV</b>	<b>WVC</b>	<b>MVC</b>	<b>WCC</b>	<b>MCC</b>
tour cycling	1	1	1	4	1	3	1	4
Sailig	5	3	7	6	6	8	0	7
Rowing	7	5	5	8	7	0	9	9
Kayaking	4	1	3	3	5	5	6	4
sightseeing historical monuments	4	4	1	2	2	4	5	5
feasting by the fire	7	2	2	7	3	2	5	6
hiking trails	7	0	4	1	3	4	4	3
bike trails	6	5	6	8	7	7	0	8
Pool	3	5	4	4	4	6	2	1
court for team games	0	5	7	6	8	4	9	7

The possibility of active leisure	WVV	MVV	WCV	MCV	WVC	MVC	WCC	MCC
horse riding	8	0	6	10	8	0	8	10
outdoor events	2	4	3	5	3	1	3	2
Other	8	4	6	9	0	7	7	9

Source: own study

W-women M-men V-village C-city

WVV and MVV – women (W) and men (M) coming from the country (V) and choosing to spend holiday in the village (V)

WCV and MCV-women (W) and men (M) coming from town (C) and choosing to spend holiday in the village (V)

WVC and MVC-women (W) and men (M) coming from the country (V) and choosing to spend holiday in the city (C)

WCC and MCC-women (W) and men (M) coming from town (C) and choosing to spend holiday in the city (C)

As young people appreciate comfort and convenience so if they spend their vacation in the village they choose accommodation in hotel (29.4%), holiday center (23.5%), or a guesthouse (13.7%). Merely 7.8% of the respondents stayed overnight in agritourist farms and in rooms offered by local inhabitants. Some of them chose to stay with family or at friends' places (11.7%), or at a camp site (4.9%). This is an interesting observation which leads to a supposition that students search for rather comfortable accommodation with additional attractions and full service. However, they are more interested in purchasing only the accommodation (51%) than accommodation with full board (23.5%), which may be costs related. This can be reflected by the sums declared to be spent on vacation though it should be observed that the respondents who chose to spend vacation in the village were more willing to pay from 1001 to 1500 PLN (55.3%), and even more than three thousand PLN (60%). Both cases applied mainly to women (70%). Students said that they usually tried to obtain money for vacation in the village on their own. Some of them took up a permanent job during studies (27.4%) as well as a temporary one (14.7%). Malicki (2013) observes that, decisions to earn money by themselves are caused by different factors and are conditioned by different circumstances. Nevertheless, the actions that students take to obtain money for their trips provide the opportunity to increase their own financial resources. Perhaps, the financial resources earned by students are spent not only on the needs connected with vacation trips but also on other needs. Most respondents who declared employment were men (65% of all employed students). Studying youth (taking holidays in the village) came from cities (69.6%), and usually from towns with population larger than 151 thousand (50.7%) and smaller than 21 thousand inhabitants (15.5%). For the most part they were from regions: Kujawsko-Pomorskie Province (60), Mazowieckie Province (6), Warmińsko-Mazurskie Province (3), Pomorskie Province (1) and Wielkopolskie Province (1).



Holiday in the village was usually self-arranged (74%) or respondents had it arranged by family or friends (16%). A travel agent was used by those who chose to spend their leisure time in the city. As far as food is concerned, respondents who chose the village preferred meals of different cuisines (49.5%), or the traditional Polish dishes (29.3%). Regional dishes satisfied only 15.1% of the respondents, especially men (53.3%). Only 1 person (man) chose ecological products and 5 (including 4 women) had dietetic meals. These tendencies appear to have been confirmed by surveys carried out by Makala (2013), who focuses attention on popularity of convenience food in tourism due to its easy and simple preparation. This kind of food is used by definitely the biggest number of young people because, according to 37.2% of respondents, the proximity of a bar and a grocery store is very important. Culinary heritage is rather characteristic of agritourist farms, and less frequently holiday centers and guest houses in the country, which were chosen by students to be their accommodation places. Therefore, so few students happened to taste regional or ecological dishes and though, according to Jęczmyk et al. (2013), contemporary tourism is characterized by an increasing number of culinary trips, this survey has not confirmed this trend. This could also be caused by economic factors as only enthusiasts are willing to spend a sizeable part of their budget on regional meals and products (Jęczmyk et al. 2013).

As many as 70 persons out of those who chose to have vacation in the country knew where exactly they would go on holiday in 2016. As many as 55.7% have chosen to stay in Poland, especially at the seaside (including Międzyzdroje, Hel Peninsula) and in the mountains (mainly the Tatra and Sudety Mountains), thus similarly as in 2015. The regions of Kaszuby and Bory Tucholskie were indicated as tourist regions. Towns where students would like to spend some time include: Wrocław, Kraków, Tricity and Kołobrzeg. Trips to European countries were declared by 37.1% of the respondents including Spain, Croatia, Italy and Great Britain, whereas 7.1% of the respondents would like to leave the continent mainly for the United States, Mexico and Brazil.

Summing up, it needs to be emphasized that along with the development of tourism industry in Poland there appear new consumer goods but on the other hand the consumers are becoming more and more demanding in search of good quality services but at reasonable prices.

If the rural areas are to generate tourism of young people as a significant social group then apart from offering beautiful landscapes, clean and friendly environment, peace and quiet atmosphere they need come up with products that would meet their lifestyles and expectations.

## CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions have been formulated on the basis of the carried out surveys:

1. According to the survey, rural destinations are more popular among city dwellers, as this kind of vacation was chosen by 71 respondents, that is, 49.3% of all. It was observed that male students from cities (54.6%) reported willingness to spend vacation in the village more often than female students (41.5%). At the same time the survey showed that people who had grown up in the village tended to choose places familiar for them (48.8% of women and 37% of all men who came from the village), but they took up such destinations relatively less frequently (44.3% vs 55.7%).
2. Students are willing to go on holiday to the village (47.7%), choosing places interesting in terms of culture (the regions of Kaszuby, Kujawy, Bory Tucholskie), and tourist attractions. Popular holiday locations are mainly at the seaside and in the mountains as well as in regions situated in the vicinity of the place of their residence.
3. The respondents know perfectly well what to expect from the holiday location and how they want to spend their time. They pay attention to elements of the natural landscape, cultural and historical places of interest. This should become a signal for service providers how to construct their offer to attract this particular group of consumers.
4. Academic youth are not very demanding clients in terms of physical activities to be offered by rural areas (they are satisfied with bike trips and water sports), however they attach more importance to accommodation forms which are supposed to provide them with comfort and quality (hotel, holiday center or guesthouse).
5. Agritourist objects of typical rural character do not enjoy big popularity among young people, though like hotels, guest houses or motels they offer comfortable accommodation and many other services and attractions. Lack of interest in this kind of offer maybe connected with little or even no information on what services are provided by agritourist farms and rooms for rent in the village. It can also be caused by reluctance to contact with typical rural lifestyle and engage in the life of farmers and their families.
6. The lifestyle of young people and the way they spend leisure time is now completely different from what it used to be in the past. Thus, a campsite is not the form of accommodation to be chosen by student as currently they appreciate higher comfort. Nevertheless, they cannot afford to stay overnight with full board or buy regional, ecological

products. Therefore, agritourist farms could come up with offers more suitable for students, and try to provide them with comfort, interesting possibilities of time at reasonable prices.

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