

## **VISITORS IN THE PODKARPACKIE VOIVODESHIP – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INBOUND TOURIST TRAFFIC**

Anna NIZIOL

*Faculty of Physical Education, University of Rzeszów*

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### **Keywords:**

- demand for tourism,
- inbound tourism,
- Podkarpacki region,
- research,
- tourist traffic.

### **Abstract:**

Nowadays it is much more difficult to satisfy the increasingly demanding and conscious clients whose expectations often differ from the current standards. As a consequence, it is necessary for many entrepreneurs to strive for the high satisfaction of consumers by creating a high-quality customised offer which will meet their expectations and conceptions. Therefore, the adjustment of a product to its recipients requires general gradual research on the market demand on the part of potential customers in order to facilitate the process of offer adjustment to their preferences.

The aim of the study is to present the results of the latest research on inbound tourist traffic in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship (Province) from 2015 and to compare them with selected results of similar research conducted in 2009 and 2011.

This article puts forward the hypothesis that despite the passage of many years there have been no major differences in the structure of inbound tourist traffic, especially with respect to the characteristics describing the participants of this traffic and their preferences.

The presented results are the outcome of preliminary (explorative) research concerning inbound tourist traffic in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship conducted in 2015, for the first time by Podkarpacka Regional Tourism Organisation (PROT). The main assumption of the study was to determine the tourist preferences of people visiting this region with reference to the offered services and visited places.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

When undertaking any projects, consumers and their needs are the point of departure in any market-related activities. Generally speaking, human activity results from the emergence of needs and their satisfaction. Nowadays it is much more difficult to satisfy the increasingly demanding and conscious clients whose expectations often differ from the current standards. As a consequence, it is necessary for many entrepreneurs to strive for the high satisfaction of consumers by creating a high-quality customised offer which will meet their expectations and conceptions. This requirement is typical especially for activities on the tourist market. Therefore, the adjustment of a product to its recipients requires general gradual research on the market demand on the part of potential customers in order to facilitate the process of offer adjustment to their preferences.

In tourism customers' behaviour is conditioned by many factors which can be subject to research and analysis. As Marcinkiewicz states [Marcinkiewicz 2010] (as cited in [Kramer 1994]), the research concerning customers' behaviour concerns what follows:

- Consumer needs and preferences
- Symptoms of specific behaviours and their determinants

- Opinions, attitudes
- Motives of behaviour
- Plans, intentions, shopping, etc.

As a result, the companies' drive towards having an impact on the demand requires not only the determination of needs but their anticipation and even their creation [Mazurek-Łopacińska 1997]. The understanding of the importance of human needs and desires in the process of shaping the demand as a basic part of the market is a crucial issue by virtue of the customer's key role in a market economy. Demand combines the desire to have specific products with the possibility and readiness to purchase them. A decision about tourist consumption is, however, conditioned by a whole range of factors shaping tourist demand in a quantitative and qualitative way [Kachniewska et. al. 2012].

In the literature dedicated to economic tourist issues, it is possible to find many approaches to the problem of factors shaping the volume and structure of demand for tourism. Some scholars consider historic factors of tourism development as a socio-economic phenomenon; others focus on the social-demographic structure and specificity of effective tourist demand of a society in a given country or a region at a given moment; others again build a consumer's decision-making algorithm in order to measure the expenses on tourist travels. Regardless of the fact which type of analysis is chosen: a historical analysis of tourism-shaping trends or an economic or sociological one, these attitudes do not differ from each other in terms of factors determining demand for tourism and their only differences concern the force and the way of influence of a given factor. Taking all the differences into consideration, demand for tourism can be defined as a result of specific decisions taken by consumers as a consequence of personal, socio-economic and historical factors and conditions [Konieczna-Domańska 2012].

The definition of demand for tourism defined as the total of tourist products and services which tourists are willing to purchase at a given price level and at a given period [Niezgoda, Zmysłony 2006] is not considerably different from the classic explanation of demand for other products and services. The difference here is the nature of acquired products and services, which result from the participation in tourist traffic, treated as a socio-economic phenomenon, the essence of which is constituted by travelling to achieve recreational, cognitive and other aims.

Tourists' typical behaviour on the market reflects the foundations of classic economic theory according to which human beings act in a rational way and take such decisions which maximise their satisfaction. These foundations, however, do not explain many different behaviours of tourists who purposefully decide to do shopping in a flamboyant and impulsive way, rationally unjustified, treating it as a form of recovery from the stress of everyday life or as a way to impress other people. People buy products not because they are useful but also because products are symbolic of something [Witek 2011]. A good example might be a stay at an agritourism farm in order to manifest personal views, be it ecological or minimalist ones. Such a conduct results from, among other things, the differentiation of tourist traffic participants in terms of their social functions which influence their purchasing choices.

The differentiation of the needs of potential demand for tourism, its changeability, expectations of high-standard services and the familiarity with the tourist market facilitate the development of various forms of tourism. Therefore, the changing needs and expectations of tourists have an impact on the diversity of tourist offers, which, in turn, contributes to the growth of market competitiveness, and, consequently, to the development of the tourist market. In this light the management of entities in the tourist economy sector, including tourist attractions, indicates the need to conduct systematic tourist traffic research. The results of such research could help in market segmentation, the choice and implementation of a

proper marketing strategy, the shaping of proper tourist products or in the preparation and direction of promotional activities.

### **THE AIM AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to present the results of the latest research on inbound tourist traffic in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship from 2015 and to compare them with selected results of similar research conducted in 2009 and 2011.

This article puts forward the hypothesis that despite the passage of many years there have been no major differences in the structure of inbound tourist traffic, especially with respect to the characteristics describing the participants of this traffic and their preferences.

The presented results are the outcome of preliminary (explorative) research concerning inbound tourist traffic in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship conducted in 2015 for the first time by Podkarpacka Regional Tourism Organisation (PROT). The main assumption of the study was to determine the tourist preferences of people visiting this region with reference to the offered services and visited places.

In particular, the study focuses on the following areas:

1. The general characteristic of domestic and foreign tourists visiting the Podkarpacki region
2. The duration and the purpose of the visit in the Podkarpacki region
3. the most popular sources of information about the Podkarpackie Voivodeship
4. attractive places of interest for tourists
5. estimated expenses incurred by tourists visiting the Podkarpacki region
6. individual opinions about the quality of tourist information in the region.

Questionnaires were distributed in several dozen locations within the voivodeship (in 27 cities and other), including selected tourist information points and centres, cultural entities (museums, museum villages, municipal cultural centres) and accommodation facilities – in total in 37 locations in various parts of the region.

The research was conducted by means of a diagnostic opinion poll with the use of a 14-question questionnaire as the research tool (11 closed questions including age and other relevant personal data, 3 open questions). The applied technique was a questionnaire in three languages: English, Polish and Ukrainian. The opinion poll was conducted during the summer tourist season from June to September in 2015.

For tourist research involving direct surveys of respondents, it is important to determine the relation between the sample and the population. Population in case of inbound tourist traffic is constituted by all the tourists who visit a given voivodeship. The full identification of a population defined in this way is impossible. No available sources provide credible and accurate information about the size of the population. The Main Statistical Office (GUS) collects and publishes information about provided accommodation and the number of visiting guests, which obviously does not exhaust the description of the phenomenon called 'tourist traffic'. As a result, the research included randomly selected people who declared that they come from outside of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship as well as the inhabitants of the region who use tourist services in the above mentioned locations.

The results were summarised in two sets: one included all completed questionnaires, the other – only questionnaires in foreign language versions (separate charts and commentaries). Within the research no hypothesis was assumed – the main intention of the authors was the quantitative analysis. It has to be added that depending on the analysed question, a different total number of answers was obtained as not all respondents properly completed the questionnaire or marked more than one variant of the answer [Nizioł, Kulasa 2015].

## **RESULTS**

The research included a total of 1216 people including 139 foreigners, which was determined based on the completed questionnaires in different language versions (102 – in English, 37 in Ukrainian). The biggest number of questionnaires was completed in the capital of the voivodeship – Rzeszów, in the Underground Tourist Tour (132 people) and in the seat of the Podkarpacka Regional Tourism Organisation (PROT) (114 people).

### **Sex**

Among respondents, women were in the majority (56,9%) in relation to men (43,1 %). The number of women was 687, while men – 521 (total: 1208 people). In case of eight questionnaires, the respondents did not mark their sex.

In case of foreigners the proportions were quite the opposite: out of 139 foreign tourists, 77 respondents were men and 61 women.

### **Age**

The question about age was properly completed by 1202 respondents, which means that 14 people did not answer the question. The biggest percentage, 36% (432 people), were respondents in the 21-35 age bracket, while almost one third of the respondents were people between 36-50 (368 respondents). People over 50 constituted about one fourth of the respondents (314 people). Undoubtedly, the smallest number of participants (7,3%) was among the youngest respondents i.e. below 20 (88 people). The age structure of foreign tourists was similar.

### **Education**

Another element of the respondents' profile is the information about their education. A total of 1189 people answered the question about their education, which means that 27 people did not specify the level of their education.

In the light of received results, the majority (840 respondents) are people with higher education, while 275 respondents have secondary education and 46 classified their education as 'other'. Only 28 respondents have vocational education.

It seems that the predilection for using tourist services is related to the income level, which, in turn, is related mostly to the level of education, so the bigger number of respondents with higher and secondary education should not come as a surprise. It is people with such status that are more willing to use tourist services and can afford to travel more frequently.

The foreign tourists' questionnaires do not show any differences in their structure according to the education level with regard to the whole sample.

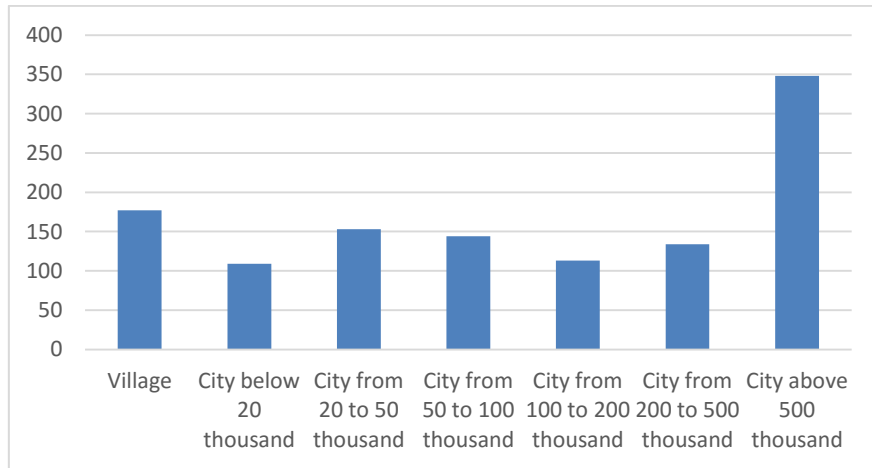
### **Place of residence**

In order to precisely determine the needs and expectations of researched tourists, it is important to obtain the information about the size of the place where they live, since the inhabitants of big cities have different requirements and expectations from those of tourists who come from smaller locations. Such information was obtained thanks to the last personal data question.

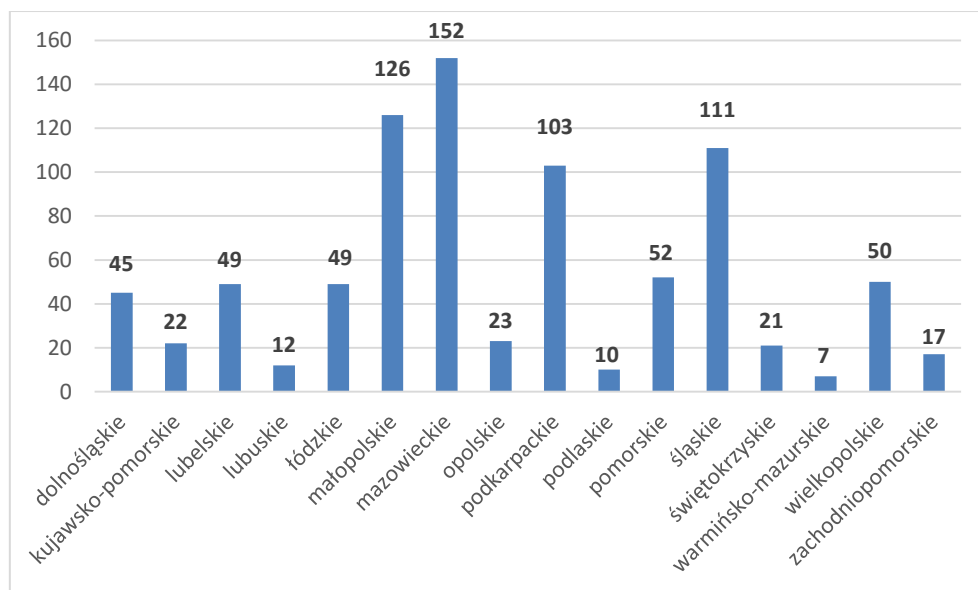
Among 1178 respondents (the number of proper answers) the biggest percentage, almost 30% (348 people), comes from cities above 500 thousand inhabitants. The second biggest group was inhabitants of villages – 15% (177 people). The smallest participation – 9,3% (109 people) in the structure of the researched tourist traffic was inhabitants of towns below 20 thousand inhabitants. The whole structure of the researched tourist traffic with regard to their place of residence is shown in Fig. 1. Inhabitants of big cities constitute the majority according to the residential criteria.

The respondents answering the question about their place of residence were also asked to indicate the voivodeship they come from. Based on the results, it was possible to determine that most people came to the Podkarpacki region from the following voivodeships: Mazowieckie, Małopolskie and Śląskie (relatively closely located to the Podkarpacki region).

It can be noticed that the differences between the leading voivodeships are small and are 3% (26 people) and 2% (15 people), respectively. It is worth mentioning that 12% of tourist traffic participants in the region is constituted by the inhabitants of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship (103 people). The participation of remaining voivodeships was at a similar level, which can be seen in Fig. 2.



**Figure 1.** Quantitative juxtaposition of respondents according to their place of residence  
Source: own study based on PROT research



**Figure 21.** Quantitative juxtaposition according to respondents' voivodeships  
Source: own study based on PROT research

In the group of foreign respondents, the majority were the inhabitants of big cities.

### Duration of stay

One of the main assumptions of the research was to determine the duration of stay of the tourist traffic participants in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The question about the duration of stay was answered by 1201 respondents, which means that 15 people left the question unanswered.

Thanks to the obtained results, it was possible to determine if it was the case of short-term or long-term traffic. Almost one third of the respondents (372 people) stayed in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship from 4 to 7 days. A slightly lower number of visitors i.e. 355

respondents stayed for longer than 7 days. Over one fourth of the respondents decided to spend from 2 to 3 nights in the region. The smallest group (154) were people who stayed only for one night.

Unfortunately, due to the structure of the research tool, it was not possible to distinguish between one-day visitors and tourists who stay at least over one night. In comparison, foreign guests' preferences as to the duration of stay were slightly different. Most respondents intend to stay 2-3 nights. Moreover, compared to the whole research group, more foreigners decide to stay for a longer time i.e. over 7 nights.

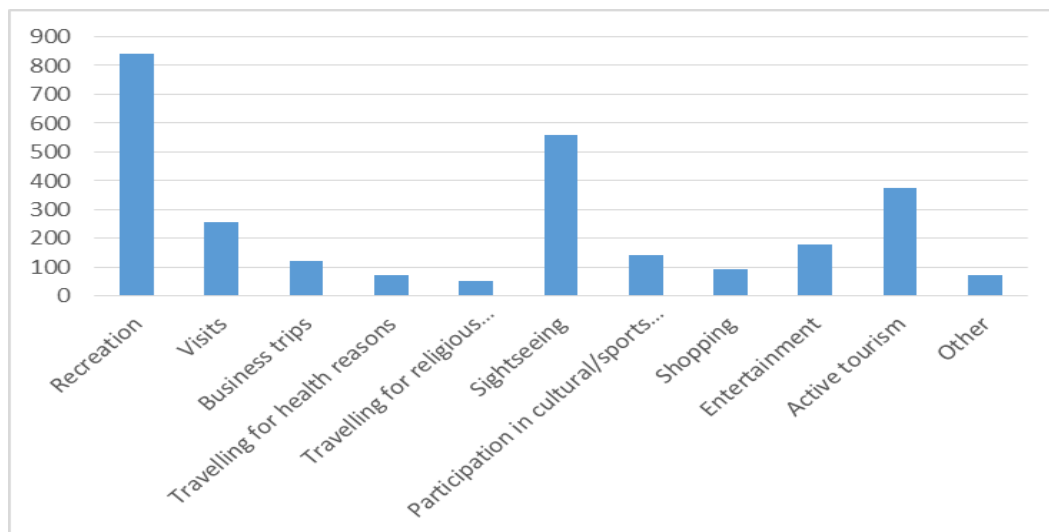
### **The character of the visit**

The results provided information also about the character of the visit. Individual stay (81,2% of the respondents) was much more preferred than group travel (almost one fifth of all respondents). It can be mentioned that only 884 respondents answered the question about the character of their travel properly. It means that as many as 232 people did not give any answer, which may have been caused by the narrow and easily overlooked space dedicated to this question in the questionnaire.

The majority of foreign tourists also travel individually.

### **The purpose of travel**

A significant aspect for the authors of the study was also to determine the purpose of the travel to the Podkarpacki region. The respondents could mark more than one variant, which is why the total number of results exceeds 100% (i.e. 1216 questionnaires). A total of 2765 answers were obtained, among which the recreational purpose was the most popular. Sightseeing was marked as the second most popular answer and active tourism as the third one. Other prominent answers include visits and entertainment.



**Figure 32.** Quantitative juxtaposition of respondents according to the purpose of their travel  
Source: own study based on PROT research

In case of foreign respondents, the hierarchy of travel purposes is quite similar to the preferences of the whole sample.

Subsequently, the questionnaire included open questions where the respondents could point out the attractions and places which they intend to visit during their stay in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The answers were mostly cities: Rzeszów, Łańcut, Przemyśl, Krosno, Sanok, Leżajsk (the Basilica), Krasieczyn (the Castle). Other popular places mentioned in the questionnaire were the Underground Tour in Rzeszów, Museum of Bedtime Cartoons in Rzeszów, the Bieszczady Mountains, Lake Solina, Solina Dam, the museum village Carpathian Troy, museum village in Kolbuszowa, Arboretum in Bolestraszyce and

Bieszczady Railway. Occasionally, the regional health resorts in Rymanów and Iwonicz were mentioned.

The respondents consisted mostly of people who visited the Podkarpackie Voivodeship for the very first time. It appears that almost one third of them did not previously have the opportunity to travel to the south-eastern region of Poland. Only a slightly smaller percentage of them travels to this region very rarely. Almost the same number of respondents (19,4 % and 19,3 %) visit the region very often or from time to time.

The question about the frequency of visits in the Podkarpacki region was answered by a total of 1186 people, which means that 30 respondents did not complete this answer. Most foreigners are tourists, who visited Poland for the first time.

### Planned expenses

Based on the conducted research, it was also possible to obtain data concerning the amount of expenses related to the visit in the Podkarpacki region. Almost half of the respondents declared that they will spend up to 1000 PLN, while almost one third from 1000 to 2000 PLN. Definitely the smallest percentage of the respondents plans to spend 3000 PLN or more during their stay. The total number of respondents who have properly answered the question related to expenses was 1170, which means that 46 people did not give any answer.

Owing to the partial methodological similarity, it is possible to compare the obtained data with the research on inbound tourist traffic in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship previously conducted by other institutions.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1.** The juxtaposition of selected research results of inbound tourist traffic in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship

2009 – University of Information, Technology and Management in Rzeszów (WSliZ)	2011 – MillwardBrown SMG/KRC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• age about 35 years old, higher education</li> <li>• inhabitant of a big city in the Małopolskie, Mazowieckie, Lubelskie or Śląskie Voivodeship</li> <li>• travel by his/her own passenger car organised independently</li> <li>• the purpose of the travel is a short (3-5 days) recreational stay, most often in the Bieszczady Mountains, during which he/she visits selected attractions of the region</li> <li>• travel expenses: 300 to 500 PLN per person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• average age: 41; secondary or higher education</li> <li>• place of residence: the Śląskie, Małopolskie or Mazowieckie Voivodeship</li> <li>• travel organised independently</li> <li>• average duration of stay: 7 days</li> <li>• he/she appreciates regional landscape, peace and quiet, historical monuments; Solina is the biggest attraction</li> <li>• average daily expense per person: 110 PLN</li> </ul>

Source: own study based on the Research on inbound tourist traffic in selected places of tourist reception in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship from May to September 2009, on the Research performed by University of Information, Technology and Management in Rzeszów (WSliZ) commissioned by the Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship (Rzeszów 2009) and on the Research on inbound tourist traffic in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. Report from the research commissioned by the Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, MillwardBrown SMG/KRC (Warszawa 2011), <http://www.turystyka.wrotapodkarpackie.pl/index.php/ruch-turystyczny> (accessed on 5.05.2016).

Comparing the results from Tab.1 with those obtained in the research in 2015, it is possible to verify the hypothesis put forward in this article, stating that despite the passage of years there have been no major differences in the structure of inbound tourist traffic especially

<sup>2</sup>Including the Research on inbound tourist traffic in selected places of tourist reception in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship from May to September 2009, the Research performed by University of Information, Technology and Management in Rzeszów (WSliZ) commissioned by the Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship (Rzeszów 2009).

with respect to the characteristics describing the participants of this traffic and their preferences.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The aim of preliminary research conducted by PROT in 2015 was to obtain basic information about inbound tourist traffic in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship. Thanks to the conducted analysis, it was possible to prepare their summary:

1. People visiting the Podkarpacki region are mainly in the 21-50 age bracket, have higher education and the majority of them are women.
2. They are mostly inhabitants of huge metropolitan areas over 500 thousand inhabitants, from regions such as the Mazowieckie, Małopolskie and Śląskie Voivodeship.
3. Tourists' stay in the area of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship usually lasts from 4 to 7 nights; however, a significant percentage of them decides to stay longer than one week.
4. Most of them travel individually for recreational purposes. For many cognitive aims (sightseeing) and active tourism are also important.
5. The most popular locations in the Podkarpacki region are cities such as Rzeszów, Łańcut, Przemyśl, Krosno, Sanok, Leżajsk, Krasieczyn and their main tourist attractions. Furthermore, many people travel to the Bieszczady Mountains and Lake Solina. Fewer visitors are interested in visiting museum villages, arboretums or health resorts.
6. The majority of visitors visited the Podkarpackie Voivodeship for the very first time. Only a slightly smaller group of visitors are those who very seldom come to the region.
7. During their stay in the region, most tourists intend to spend up to 1000 PLN. Unfortunately, few of them are willing to incur expenses over 3000 PLN.
8. No significant differences were noticed in the answers given by foreigners as regards the preferences of the whole groups of respondents. However, there were more men among foreign guests, more fifty-year-old people for whom the main source of information are tourist information centres and the preferred duration of stay is 2-3 days.

The obtained results can be deemed as credible and meeting specific methodological criteria for this type of quantitative research. However, the results of the research should be treated with reserve since the research was conducted only once. Similar treatment should also be applied in the attempt to evaluate the resultant 'image of tourism' since its actual state might have been influenced by multiple conditions. Despite its deficiencies, the research material seems to be important as a source which might be utilised in the scope of managing tourist traffic in the region.

The obtained data can be a valuable indicator of new directions or the modification of current activities in the scope of promotion and tourist information. Data related to inbound tourist traffic might be also useful in the process of programming new tourist products or differentiating the existing ones, which helps to adjust the offer to particular recipients (first of all the inhabitants of big cities from the Mazowieckie, Małopolskie and Śląskie Voivodeship). Thanks to the determination of main travel purposes in the area of Podkarpackie Voivodeship, it may be concluded that products combining the possibility of sightseeing and active recreation should constitute the biggest attractions for tourists. Moreover, the crucial question seems to be how to determine the amount of money tourists are willing to spend during their stay in the given region, which will help to determine the average purchasing power of visitors and, as a consequence, to adjust optimal prices to the offered services.



Undoubtedly, the attempt to examine tourist traffic in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, undertaken for the first time by PROT, should be continued in the coming seasons. It would be a good idea to strengthen the methodological aspect of the subsequent research by, among other things, putting forward research hypotheses, expanding the questionnaires and standardising the methodology of future research with regard to the previously conducted studies.

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