TOURIST ATTRACTIONS AND QUALITIES OF SPAIN CHOSEN REGIONS, BASED ON STUDENTS OPINION

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Abstract:
Introduction: Among many of Spain's values, we can distinguish wonderful Mediterranean weather, well-established network of public transport, large collections of cultural and natural treasures. No passport control for the citizens of the EU countries (Spain is a part of Schengen group) and common currency – euro – also help the growth of tourism in that region. **The aim of the work**: Research conducted by the author of this paper is to tourist attractions and qualities of Spain's chosen regions, based on students' opinion. **The material and the methodology**: The research tool was a traditional survey: paper handouts, given to the group of 50 students attending the University of Rzeszow. The only condition of the survey was that the respondent had to visit at least once the regions of Andalusia and Castile and Leon. **Results**: Research results show that the biggest value in Andalusia (for the students that have visited Spain) is passive leisure whereas in Castile the enjoyed qualified tourism the most (for example paragliding, climbing, kayaking, mountain climbing, hiking). Typical tourist monuments were much less popular. **Conclusions**: The survey shows that only one-third of the surveyed group visited Spain for touristic purposes, the rest indicated at different reasons behind their travels, which could cause lower results of the true willingness to sightsee. Another reason might also be insufficient knowledge about Spain, even though such knowledge was declared at the start of the survey.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of touristic value is best described by J. Warszyńska and A. Jackowski [1972] describing it as "a collection of the elements of the natural environment or the elements outside of it – together or each on its own – which is the subject of tourist's interest". Going further, we can say that touristic values, together with an appropriate network of public transportation and touristic infrastructure, make up the touristic desirability of a specific region and are directly responsible for tourism traffic in it.

One of the most important parts of the tourism system is tourist attractions, which are a much broader concept that tourist value: tourist value is often a part of tourist attraction [Nowakowska 2002].Other parts of the tourist attraction are prices, tourism infrastructure, the attitude of the local community, informational facilities. Tourist attraction is a place which draws attention due to its specific qualities [Kruczek 2011]. Tourist attractions can be created in places that are void of any tourist's qualities, but three conditions must be met: tourists, a place to see and a factor which draws attention (it can be natural or man-made) [Wall 1997].

Spain is located on South-West of Europe, on the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. The total area is 504.782km2 which makes it second largest, just after France, territory in the EU [lamoncloa.gob.es]. Madrid is the capital and the biggest cities are Sevilla, Barcelona, Valencia, Saragossa and Bilbao. Since 2002 the currency is euro [lamoncloa.gob.es]. Spain is divided into 17 autonomous lands. Spain's climate is, in large portion, depends on the geographical situation. In the north-west, it is quite chilly and it rains a lot, whereas in Andalusia the climate is dry and hot. Summers are mostly warm and sunny; the median temperature is 25°C in July. Winters are mild, with the median temperatures of 12°C in January [spain.info].

Spain's tourism industry is one of the best-developed tourism industries in all European countries. In 2013, it was visited by 60,661 million tourists, which makes it 3rd most popular destination in the world and 2nd highest revenue from tourism [spain.info]. The warm climate and interesting historical, ethnical and architectural sights are the main causes behind this situation. One of the most popular tourist destination in Spain is the Mediterranian coast: Costa de la Luz, Costa del Sol, Costa Dorada, Rias Atlas. The Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands are also quite popular. The most popular cities (due to their architecture and cultural meaning) are Madrid, Toledo, Barcelona, Saragossa, Salamanca. Furthermore, places like Tarragona and Saunto have still some Roman sights and in Sevilla, Grenada and Kordoba we can still see some remanents of Arabic architecture [Pałecka, Sobański 1991].

The main state organ which is responsible for tourism is The Department of Tourism, which is a part of The Department of Industry, Energy and Tourism. Its responsibilities are: developing and introducing tourism policies and versatile support of tourism actions, as well as the development of monuments and tourismequipment [Musiał 2012].

The main elements of the strategy of the tourism development at the country level are institutions responsible for coordinating and planning tourism activities. Among those institutions is The Centre of Knowledge, Intelligence, Tourism and Innovations, which the main goal is to gather and process information from the tourism sector and strengthening the innovations and technology. The autonomous body of the Spanish government is the national organisation Turespana – Spain's Institute of Tourism. This organisation governs the network of 33 Spanish Tourist Offices outside of Spain, which are closely cooperating with the embassies and consulates of Spain. Also, there is an Institute of Tourism Research working in the country, which main responsibility is to study the factors influencing the tourism and gathering and analysing statistical information [lamoncloa.gob.es].

Castile and Leon is the biggest autonomousterritory out of all 17. It also has one of the largest density of population, since it is occupied by only 2.5 mln citizens [lamoncloa.gob.es]. The climate is varied, mainly Mediterraneanwith some continental influences. The regions touristic values are derived from the long and reach history of this region. Castile and Leon has 7 objects that are on the List of UNESCO's World Heritage Site. The most famous ones are Santiago de Compostella, The Old Town and aqueduct in Segovia; Old Town and Universityof Salamanca, Old Town and castle walls in Avila, gothic cathedral in Burgos and Roman gold mines in Las Medullas [Pałecka, Sobański 1991].

Furthermore, Castile and Leon are known for its natural beauty. Tourists can find a lot of nature reserves and landscape parks, forexample, Obarenes Mountains and the canyon of the river Lobos, National Park Peaks of Europe, National Parks Hoces del Rio Duataon and Hoces del Riaza [Pałecka, Sobański 1991]. This region has an excellentpublic transportation infrastructure, with modern roads and highways, and the length of the railway is 3000 km. [Pałecka, Sobański 1991].

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research tool used in this paper is traditional, paper survey. It was hand out directly to the respondents. The survey consisted of two parts. First one included five questions asking about respondent's character in the second part were questions (mostly closed) which allowed to establish what was the extent of respondent's knowledge about Spain's regions and what are the best tourists attractions in Catilia Leon and Andalusia.

The research was conducted on the premises of the University of Rzeszow, the group of students had different majors and were attending different years. They are living in Rzeszow neighbouring towns. The only condition of participating in the survey was a declaration of the visit in both regions.

The survey was filled out by 50 people, the ratio of women to men was 23:27. All of the respondents lived in Rzeszów, however, aplace of birth of some of them was in a different town in Podkarpackie Voivodship. Ages varied between 20-25 years old.

The goal of this paper is to analyse and establish tourist qualities and attractions two regions: Andalusia and Castile and Leon. These are two biggest (in terms of territory) parts of Spain, very different in terms of geography. They also have a different offer for tourists visiting those regions. Analyse of the independent attractions and qualities was done base on the Polish students' opinions, so it is a study base on the interest of this particular group.

RESULTS

The results of the conducted survey allowed for visual representation. Thanks to that we can analyse which of the tourist landmarks in Andalusia and Castile and Leon are the most attractive for Polish students. The first part of the survey gives us basic information about the respondent such as age, gender, marital status, education.
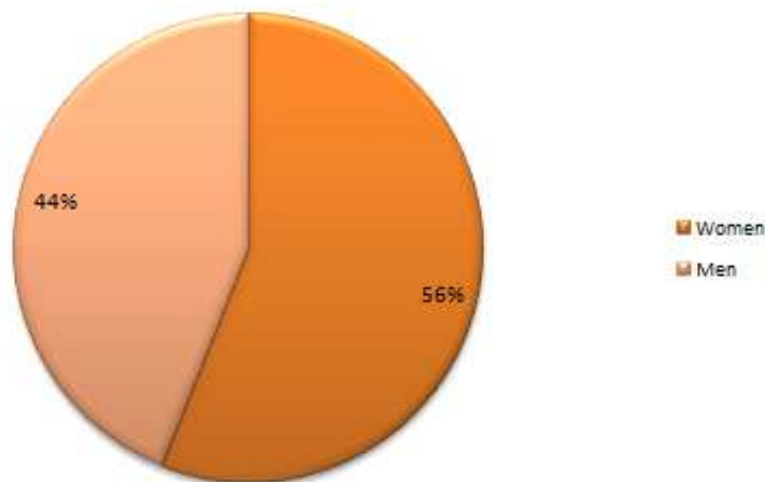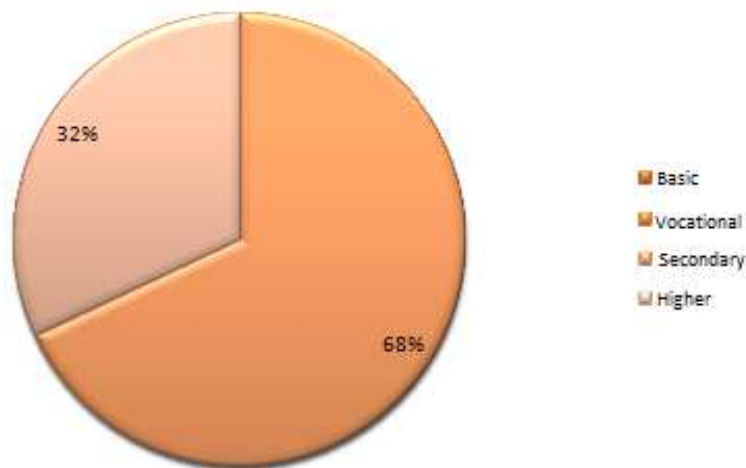

Chart 1: Gender of the respondents.
Source: own study

First questions (Chart 1) shows the division of respondents based on their gender. There were 56% of women and 44% of men.
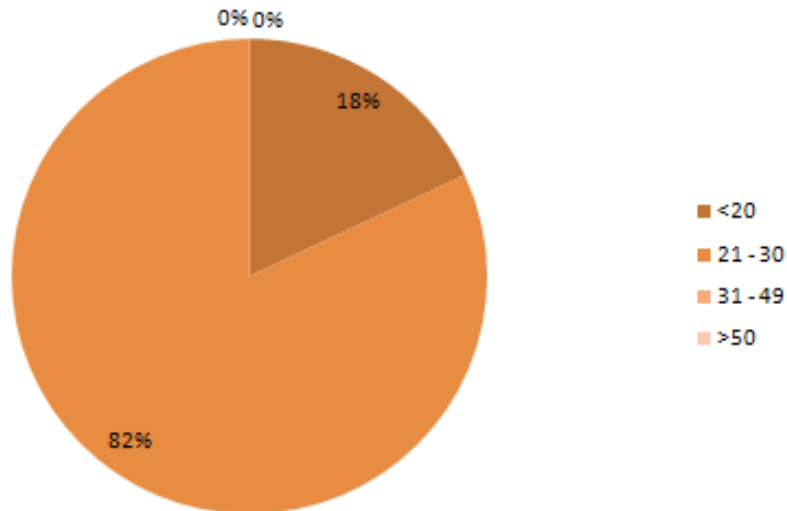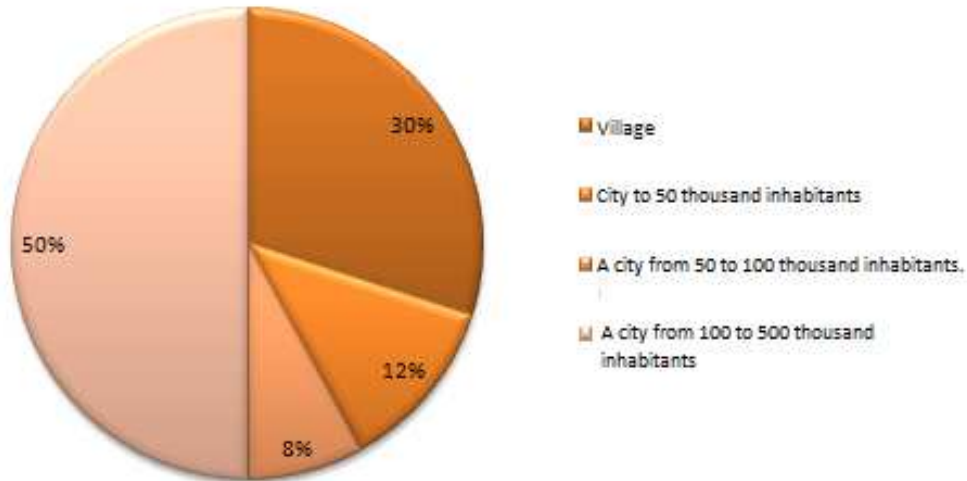
Chart 2: Age of the respondents.
Source: own study

Second questions (chart 2)was about the age of the respondents. Because this group was very specific, the ages were close. Respondents could choose out of 4 age groups: below 21, 21-30, 31-49 and above 50. Almost everyone (82%) were between ages 21+30, 18% of the respondents were younger than 21.


Chart 3: Education of the respondents.
Source: own study

Answers to the next question (chart 3) indicate that it corresponds to the age of the respondents. 68% of them have graduated highschool and 32% have higher education.

Chart 4: Place of residence of the respondents.
Source: own study

Chart 4 shows the place of residence. Half of the respondents declared that theylive in a city with more than 100 000 citizens; 30% lives in the country and 12 and 8% in smaller towns.
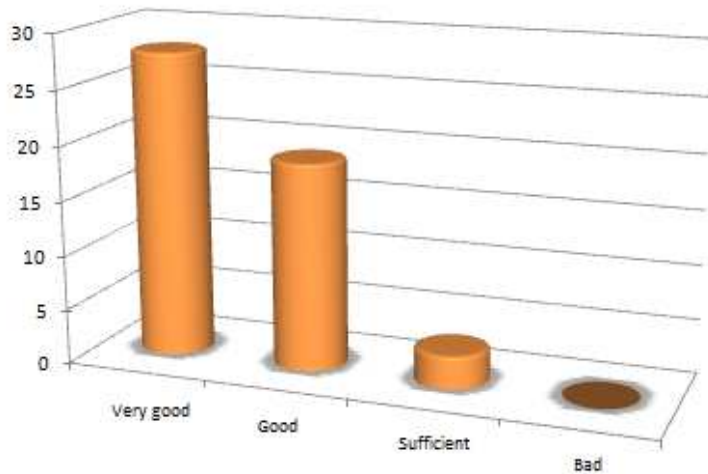

Chart 5: Material wealth of the respondents
Source: own study

The questions about material wealth (chart 5) show that over a half of the respondents thinkthat it is very good, 38% consider it good, 6% (3 people) said that it is average.
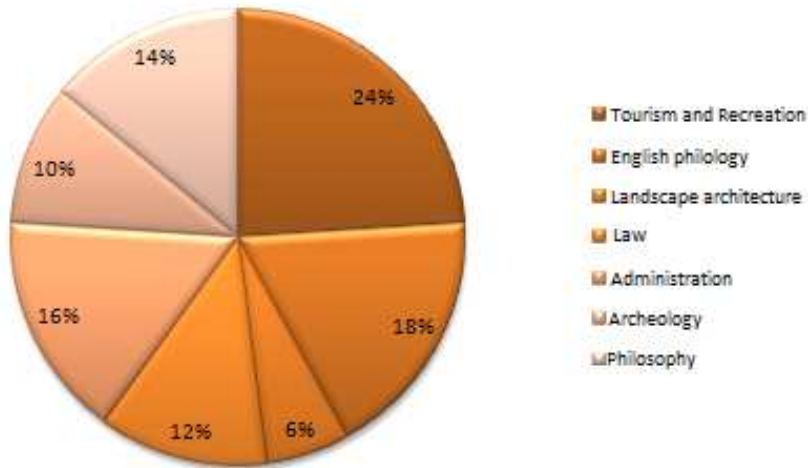
Chart 6: The field of studies chosen by the respondents.
Source: own study

Chart 6 shows which field of studieswas chosen by the respondents. The majority of them – 12% - chose tourism and recreation. 9% - English philology. 16% were studying administration, 14% philosophy, 12% law, 10% archaeology. The smallest amount of people studied landscape architecture.
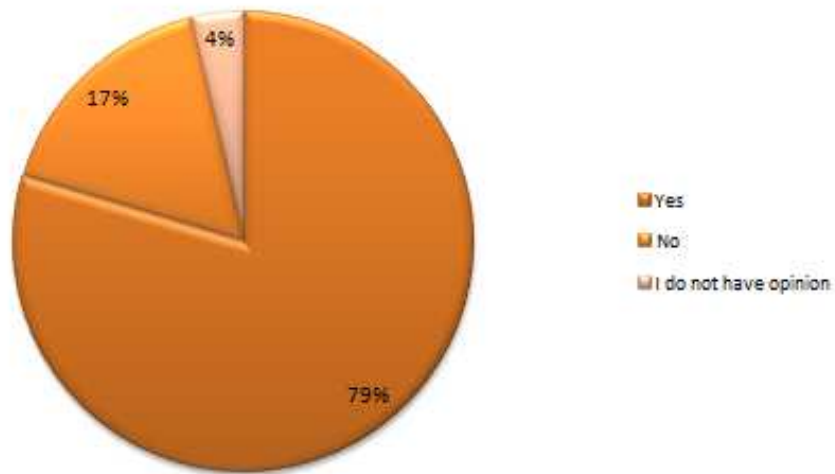

Chart 7: Respondents answers to questions: Are you able, based on your experience, to assess the attractiveness of the regions in question.
Source: own study

Chart 7 asked the respondents if they are able, based on their experience, to assess the attractiveness on Andalusia and Castile and Leon. The majority of them (79%) confirmed their knowledge, only 9 people (17%) said that they are unable to assess such a thing and 2 people couldn't decide.
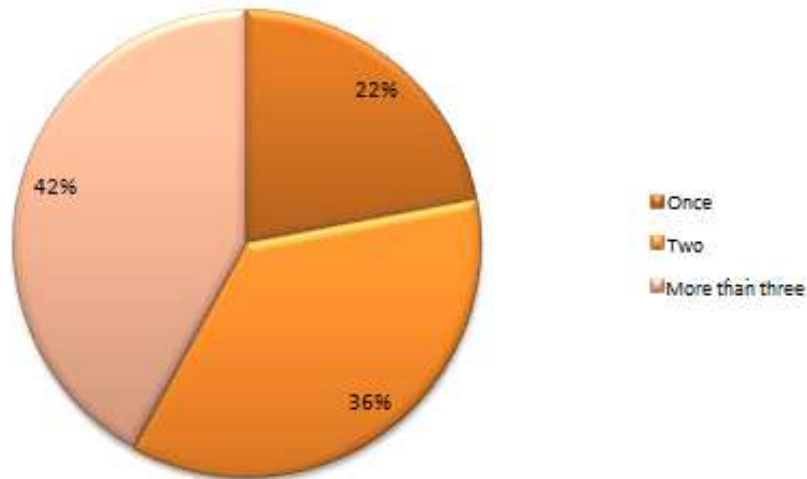
Chart 8: How many times did the respondents visit regions in question?
Source: own study

Next question (chart 8) was about the frequency of the visits to Castile and Leon and Andalusia. 42% of the respondents visited 3 times or more, 36% visited twice. Only 11 people went there just once.
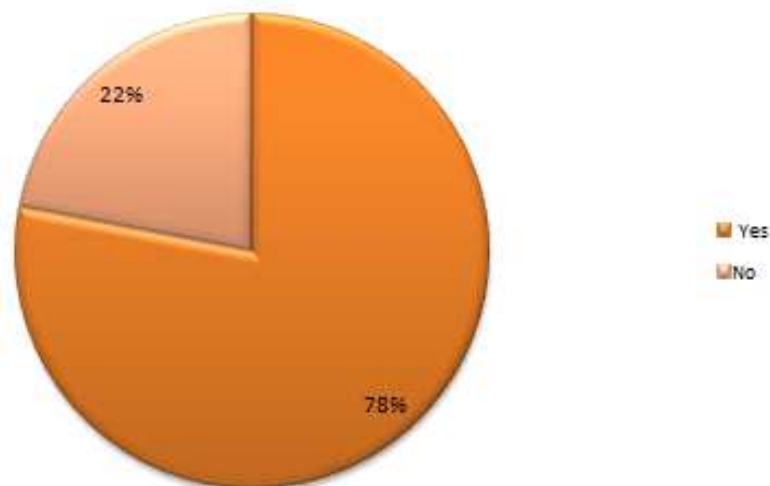

Chart 9: Did the respondents visit other regions of Spain (besides those in question)?
Source: own study

The question no. 9 (chart 9) allowed to establish if the respondents visited any other regions in Spain. It turns out that the majority of the respondents travelled also to some other parts of that country.
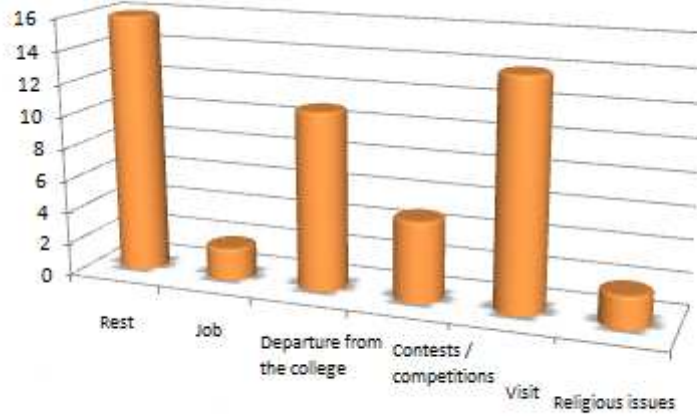
Chart 10: Reason why the respondents visited these 2 regions for the first time.
Source: own study

Next question (chart 10) was about the reasons behind the first trip to Andalusia and Castile and Leon. The majority of the respondents stated that they went there to rest (32%), the second mot popular answer was to visit someone, the least popular were religious trips or leaving to find work.
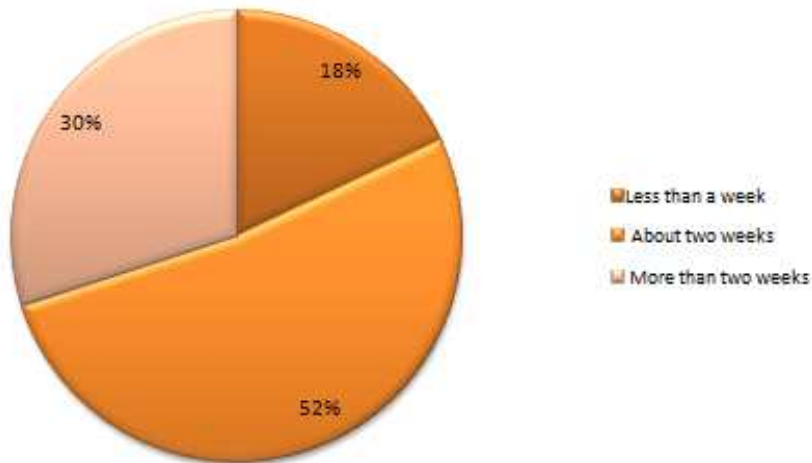

Chart 11: Amount of time spent in Andalusia.
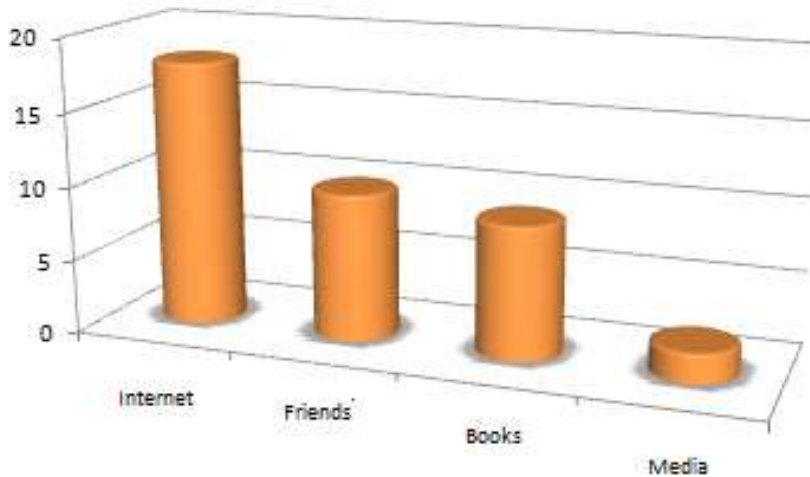Source: own study
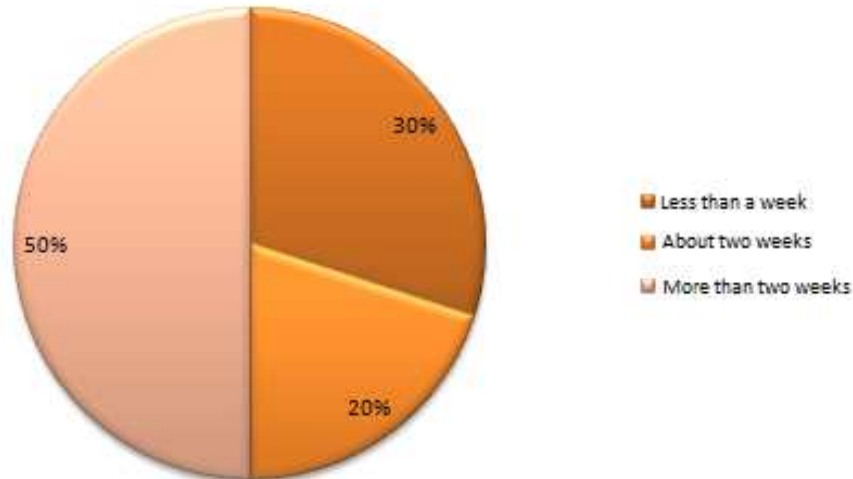
Chart 12: Amount of time spent in Castile and Leon.
Source: own study

Next two questions (chart 11 and 12) were about the same subject, however, divided into two different regions. Respondents were supposed to state how much time did they spent in the region. In the case of Andalusia over a half of the respondents said that they stayed there around 2 weeks, 30% stayed in that region for over 2 weeks and 18% less than a week. In the case of Castile and Leon 50% spend there over 2 weeks, 30% less than a week and 20% around 2 weeks.
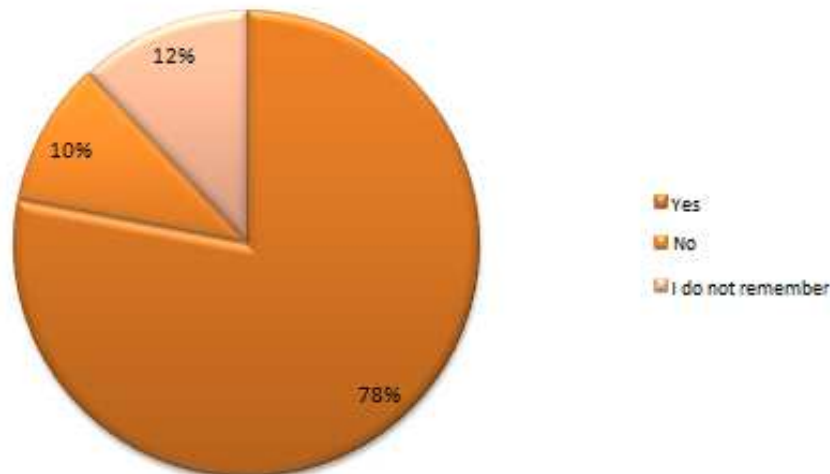

Chart 13: The division of the respondents according to their knowledge about Spain prior to visiting this country.
Source: own study

The next issue (chart 13) was about the knowledge about Spain prior to visiting this country. The majority – 78% stated, that they had some information about the country'stouristattractions in this country, 10% didn't have any knowledge and 12% didn't remember if the knew anything before visiting.

Chart 14: Division of source used by the respondents, while researching Spain before travelling there
Source: own study

Next question (chart 14) shows which sources did the respondents use while learning about Spain (this is connected to the previous question, in which they declared their knowledge). The most popular source was Internet – 46% of respondents used it as their source of information. Second most popular sources were books and tourist guides – 26% and information gathered from friends and relatives – 23%. Radio and television were the least popular source.
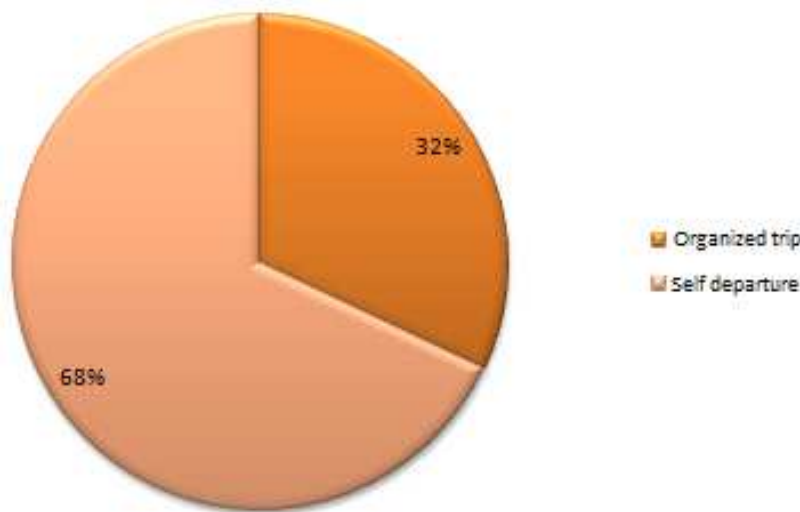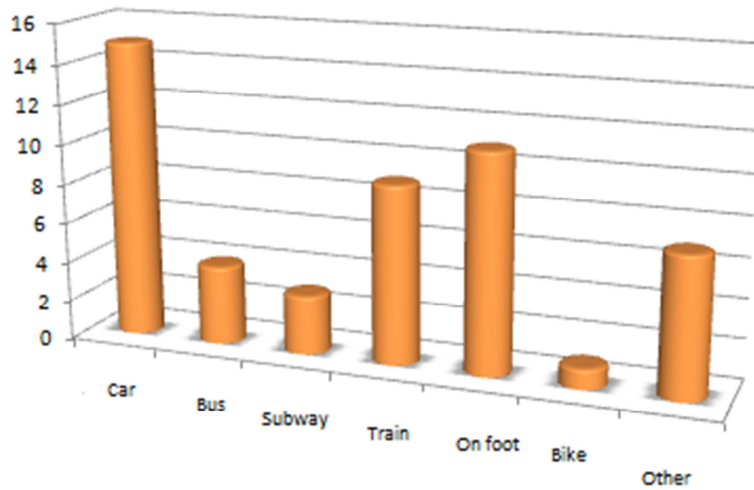

Chart 15: Ways of travelling
Source: own study

Another issue (Chart 15) concentrated on the ways of the journey chosen by the respondents. The majority (68%) travelled independently, 32% used a travel agency and organised the trip.
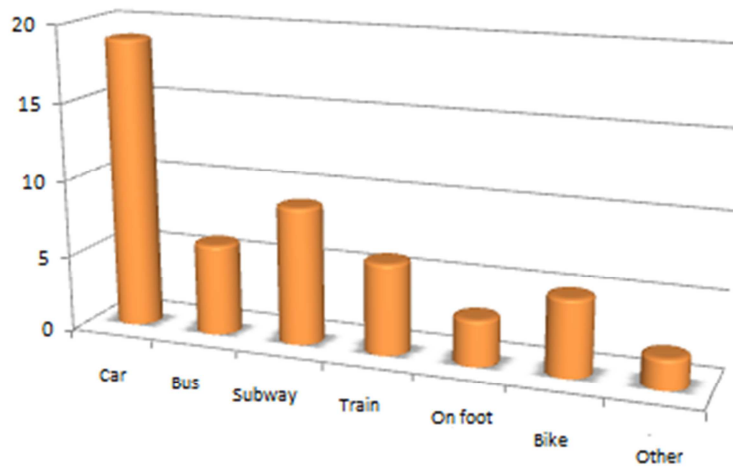
Chart 16: Means of public transport chosen by the respondents to travel through Andalusia
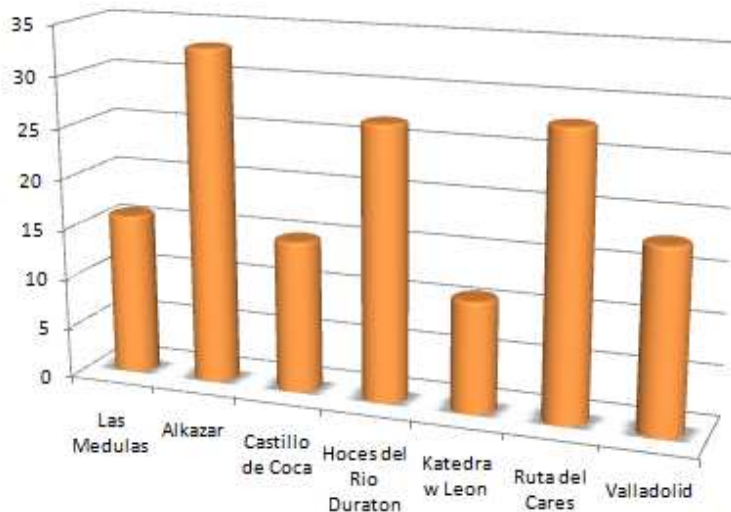Source: own study

Chart 17: Means of public transport chosen by respondents to travel through Castile and Leon
Source: own study

Next two questions (chart 16 and 17) were about the means of public transportation that the students used while they were travelling. In Andalusia the most common one was a car, 18% of students used the subway, 12% buses and trains. 20% chose other forms such as walking, bicycle or horses. Students visiting Castile and Leon travelled mainly by car – 30% chose it as their main mean of transport, which is a smaller number than in Andalusia. More people visiting Castile and Leon used trains and walked if you compare them to those in Andalusia. Also, more respondents in Castile and Leon chose alternative means of transposer (the most popular was hitchhiking).
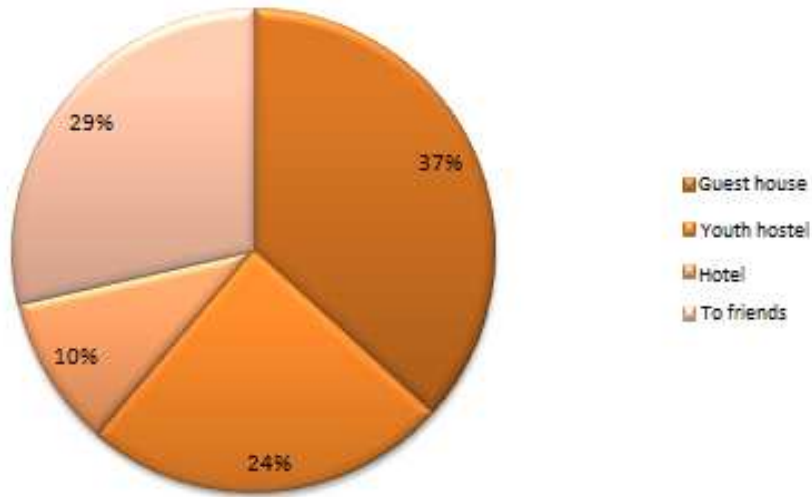
Chart 18: Accommodation chosen by the tourists
Source: own study

Next issue (chart 18) is about the accommodation while travelling in Spain. The most respondents chose boarding house – 37%, 24% chose shelters, 29% stayed over at their friends or family's house. Only 10% chose hotels.


Chart 19: Castile and Leon's sights which would be most likely recommended by the respondents to friends visiting the region for the first time
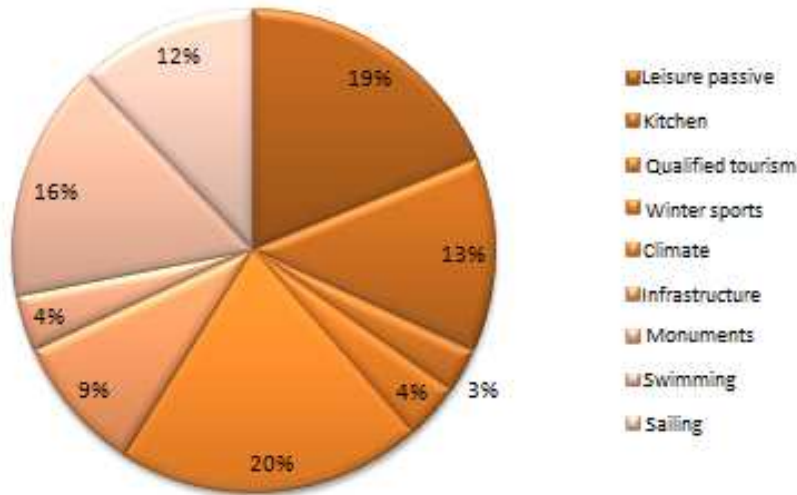Source: own study
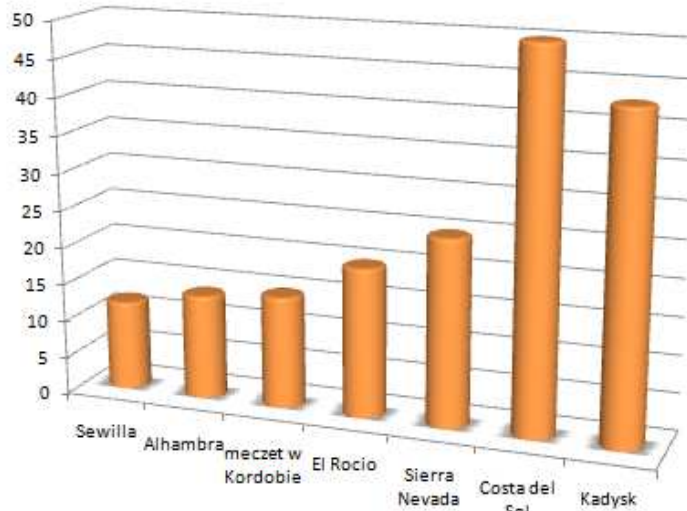
Chart 20: Andalusia's sights which would be most likely recommended by the respondents to friends visiting the region for the first time
Source: own study

Charts 19 and 20 show a short list of the most popular sights in both regions and they also compare their attractiveness, according to the respondents. In Castile and Leon, the most frequented sights were: Alkazar, Hoces del Rio Duaton and Ruta del Cares. Cathedral in Leon and gold mine in Las Medulas were the least popular. In Andalusia Costa del Sol and Kadyks were the most popular, whereas Sevilla came on the last place.
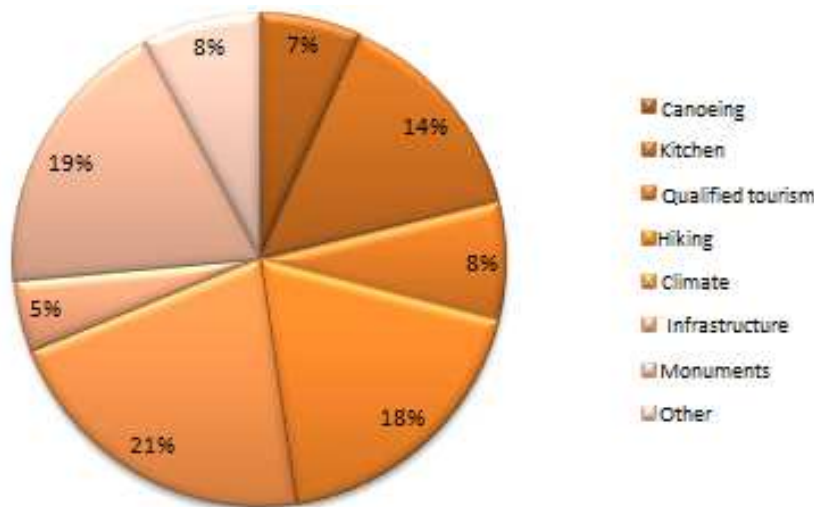

Chart 21: Castile and Leon tourist's attractions divided according to their attractiveness judged by the respondents.
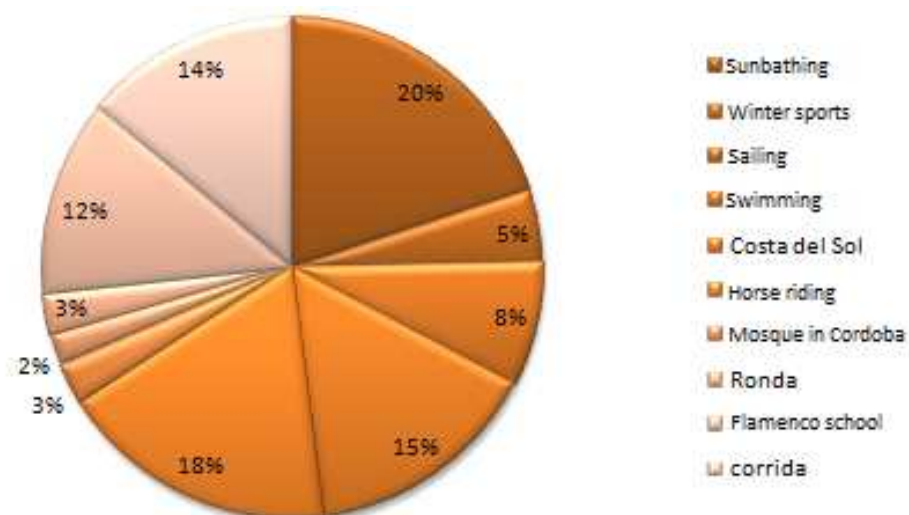Source: own study

Chart 22: Andalusiatourist's attractions divided according to their attractiveness judged by the respondents
Source: own study

Next questions (chart 21 and 22) were open questions and it was supposed to establish what exactly, in each region, is the biggest touristic quality for the respondents. In Castile and Leon (chart 14) climate and weather were the most popular answer (21%), mountain climbing and sights (18%), 19% value cooking, and for the rest of the respondents qualified tourism and kayaking were attractive. Andalusia charmed visitors with its climate – 20% (chart 15) and the possibilities of passive rest 19%. A lot of respondents also valued swimming in the Mediterranian Sea, great cooking and sailing.
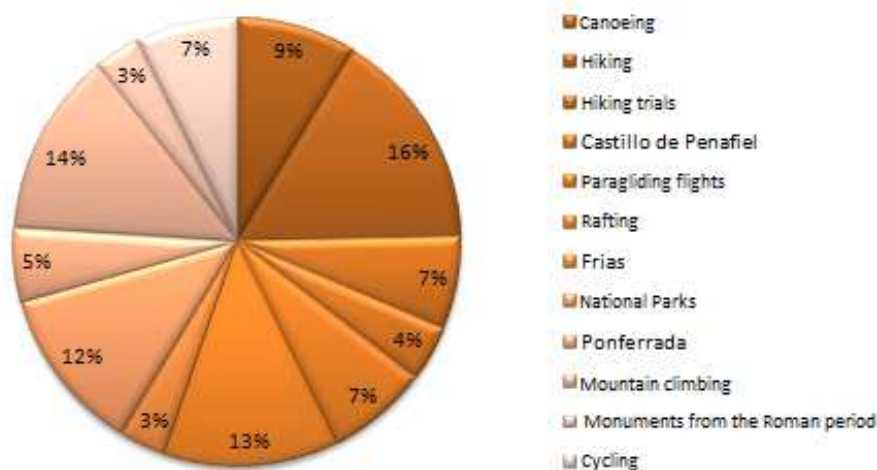
Chart 23: Most frequently mentioned ways of spending free time and interesting places in Castile and Leon
Source: own study

Last two questions (chart 23 and 24) aimed to establish 3 most popular ways of spending free time and some favourite places in both regions. In Castile and Leon (chart 23) the most popular were hiking and climbing, kayaking and paragliding. Favourite places were less frequently mentioned: if they were mostly it was popular national parks, Ponferrada or Castillo de Penafeiel.

Chart 24: Most frequently mentioned ways of spending free time and interesting places in Andalusia
Source: own study

In Andalusia (chart 24) respondents were mostly sunbathing and swimming attended flamenco classes or watched corrida. Sightseeing was not popular, mostly they visited Ronda or mosque in Cordoba.

CONCLUSIONS

The research conducted on the group of students that are attending the University of Rzeszów, which stated that they have visited both Castile and Leon and Andalusia at least once, lead to some interesting conclusions about the opinion concerning tourists' attractions and qualities in Spain, as vied by young Poles.

The most important conclusion is that young people (between ages 21-30) are not interested in sightseeing or getting to know the culture and history of this country.

Both tested regions have a lot to offer, however, respondents prefer passive leisure on the beautiful beaches of Andalusia and qualified tourism in Castile and Leon. One of the reasons behind this may be the fact that only one-thirds of the respondents stated that they went to Spain solely for touristic purposes, which automatically lowers the percentage of sightseers. The rest of the respondents went to Spain visit friends or family, work and travelled due to religious purposes. This does not correspond well with sightseeing (only the last reason may allow some interest in Spain's monuments). Another reason might be little to no knowledge about Spain's sights. Respondents declared that they know what attractions and qualities Spain has to offer, but most of their knowledge comes from the Internet, which is not the most reliable source: it is a vast source of information, yet it is also chaotic. Tourist guides have the advantage of being reliable, organised and comprehensive. Their design encourages tourists to sightsee.

Another conclusion is that Castile and Leon are more attractive in terms of architecture than Andalusia. There is an abundance of wonderful monuments in both places – Roman or Mauretania architecture, however, Castile and Leondoesn't have access to the sea, so its monuments are more popular than those in Andalusia. In all of the questions which allowed to choose between attractions and natural qualities, and culture and architecture, natural qualities and sports connected to them were a clear victor. The most popular among the respondents were: mountain tourism, qualified tourism, passive leisure, water sports and winter sports. To those visiting Spain for the first time, respondents would recommend Costa del Sol – in

Andalusia, Alkasar (despite the fact of being a monument) and Ruta del Cares in Castile and Leon.

Going further: Casile enchanted students with its climate and possibilities of hiking and Andalusia: climate and possibilities of passive leisure. The rest of the questions confirmed the advantage of passive leisure in Andalusia and active leisure in Castile and Leon (in many different forms).

Conducted survey may be the basis for further research regarding theperception of touristic attractions and qualities of Spain, by various age groups of tourists, taking into consideration their interests and needs. Thriving Polish economy, no passport control in EU, excellent infrastructure, countless natural and historical treasure of Spain: all of this leads to a conclusion that this country will soon become one of the most popular holiday destinations among Polish tourists. Knowledge about how Poles perceive Spain, what are the most attractive aspects of the country to them and how would they like to spend their free time there will prove to be very useful. It would be advisable to conductsimilar surveys concerning other countries, which are frequently visited by Polish tourists.

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