

УДК

## СПРИЙНЯТТЯ ПРИРОДНО ЦІННИХ ТЕРИТОРІЙ ЖИТЕЛЯМИ РЕГІОНІВ-РЕЦИПІЄНТІВ НА ПРИКЛАДІ ЗАХІДНО-ПОМОРСЬКОГО ВОЄВОДСТВА

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Одним із принципів сталого розвитку є принцип публічної участі, за умов реалізації якого місцеві громади беруть участь у вирішенні екологічних проблем, а екологічна освіта допомагає створити нову етику поведінки у природному навколишньому середовищі. Жителі туристичних регіонів-реципієнтів зобов'язані стимулювати розвиток туризму, тому особливо важливими стають освітні заходи, які допоможуть людям зрозуміти необхідність розвитку туризму. Разом з тим, такі заходи посилюють екологічну свідомість місцевих громад.

У статті показано особливості сприйняття природно цінного Західно-Поморського регіону його жителями. Учасники дослідження були опитані про те, як вони оцінюють туристичну та природну привабливість воєводства, як сприймають загрози для навколишнього середовища, про їхні погляди на проблеми розвитку туризму на природоохоронних територіях. Питання також стосувалися програм зі збереження природного навколишнього середовища і участі місцевої громади у збереженні природи.

*Ключові слова:* природно цінна місцевість, місцеві громади, сталий розвиток, туристичні регіони-реципієнти, програми збереження природного середовища.

Valuable natural areas are defined as areas of high biodiversity together with the natural and cultural resources connected with them, used in a way that conserves biodiversity [3]. Taking the economic criteria into account, they can also be characterized as “areas, the biodiversity of which is or can be (when appropriate directions and methods are chosen) a dominant, crucial factor of business activity or a factor that can substantially limit conventional forms of economic activity” [4]. There is no doubt that preservation of valuable natural areas for future generations requires actions that are in conformity with the concept of sustainable development, also with regard to tourism [1]. Introduction of principles of sustainable tourism in these areas can be very beneficial to local communities, local and regional authorities, tourists and tourism entrepreneurs.

One of the principles of sustainable development is the public participation principle, according to which local communities take part in solving ecological problems and ecology education helps to create new ethics of environmental behavior [2].

Inhabitants of destination areas must accept actions taken in order to stimulate development of tourism, to which end they must be aware of the profits connected with it. Therefore, it is essential for sustainable development of tourism in valuable natural areas to organize educational actions on a wide scale in order to increase the need and willingness to develop tourism. Such actions can also help strengthen ecological and tourist awareness of local communities. When inhabitants understand that well-preserved environment and landscape can attract tourists, they may become more engaged in actions to protect the environment [2, p.124].

*Perception of valuable natural areas by inhabitants on the basis of a survey conducted in Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship<sup>50</sup>.*

Pro-ecological management of tourist area is based on information how valuable natural areas are perceived not only by professionals, tourists but also by inhabitants of destination areas. The aim of the article is to analyze and evaluate perception of valuable natural areas in Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship on the basis of results of the survey conducted among inhabitants of the voivodeship. The survey participants were questioned about their assessment of voivodeship's tourist and nature attractiveness, knowledge of protected areas in the region, opinion on tourism development in protected areas, and perception of environmental threats. There were also questions about what kind of environmental protection programs there were and how local communities were engaged in environmental protection on a daily basis.

The results of the survey show that inhabitants of Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship think the region is very attractive. 69% of the people surveyed are convinced the region is very attractive or averagely attractive for tourists; only 5% of the survey participants disagree with this opinion.

Among protected areas, Woliński National Park, Drawieński National Park and Drawski Landscape Park were considered tourist attractions by the respondents. The vicinity of the sea was indicated as the biggest tourist attraction of all (38% of the people surveyed). It is worth mentioning that the inhabitants, apart from national parks, did not indicate any forest areas, e.g. the Bukowa forest, the Goleniowska forest or the Koszalińska forest. It shows that people do not think of forests as areas attractive for tourists on a national scale, characterized by beautiful landscape and unique natural value.

The majority of the inhabitants questioned, i.e. 66% regarded valuable natural areas as tourist attractions of Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship.

According to 76% of the respondents, the voivodeship's natural environment is attractive, of which 39% are strongly convinced. When asked to give names of some valuable natural areas in the voivodeship, most of the respondents mentioned Woliński National Park (29%), Drawieński National Park (8%), Drawski Landscape Park (8%), Szczeciński Landscape Park (6%), „Dolina Dolnej Odry” Landscape Park (3%).

The other four landscape parks were indicated by 1-2% of the respondents. Almost 25% of the people surveyed gave a general answer such as: forest areas, lakes, nature, reserves, national parks, landscape parks. 26% did not indicate any valuable natural areas. This shows that although the inhabitants are convinced the voivodeship is attractive for tourists and has attractive nature, 50% of them cannot spontaneously give any specific names of such areas attractive for tourists or natural areas.

43% of the respondents are indecisive or do not know anything about the level or effectiveness of environmental protection in their voivodeship. 27% think valuable natural areas are insufficiently or badly protected whereas 30% think the opposite. Only 8% think protection is really sufficient. The majority of the respondents (81%) wrote that they visit valuable natural areas in their voivodeship.

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<sup>50</sup> The survey on perception of natural areas in the context of tourism by inhabitants of Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship was conducted by Synovate Polska as requested by Polska Agencja Rozwoju Turystyki S.A. (Polish Tourism Development Agency), within the project "Pro-ecology management of tourist area in Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship". The survey was conducted between 17-21 March 2008 where 600 inhabitants of Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship were questioned by means of CATI (Computer Aided Telephone Interviews). "Perception of natural areas in the context of tourism. Report on quantitative research among inhabitants of Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship", by B. Szcześniak, PART SA, Warszawa, 2008.

Evaluation of marketing actions with regard to valuable natural areas is also important. The results of the survey show that over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents think that marketing actions are insufficient; only 9% believe them to be intensive enough. 67% say that marketing of these areas should definitely be improved, 21% agree with this opinion to a certain extent.

Another issue in the survey was to evaluate whether it is desirable to increase the number of tourists who visit valuable natural areas. Over 75% of people agree that it is desirable, while only 4% think the opposite.

According to over 50% of respondents, better promotion of valuable natural areas can, most of all, result in improving their tourist attractiveness in the voivodeship (fig. 1). Better tourist infrastructure is equally important (20% of respondents). 8% of the people surveyed mention greater care for the environment is necessary, while 5% suggest organizing ecology actions/events.

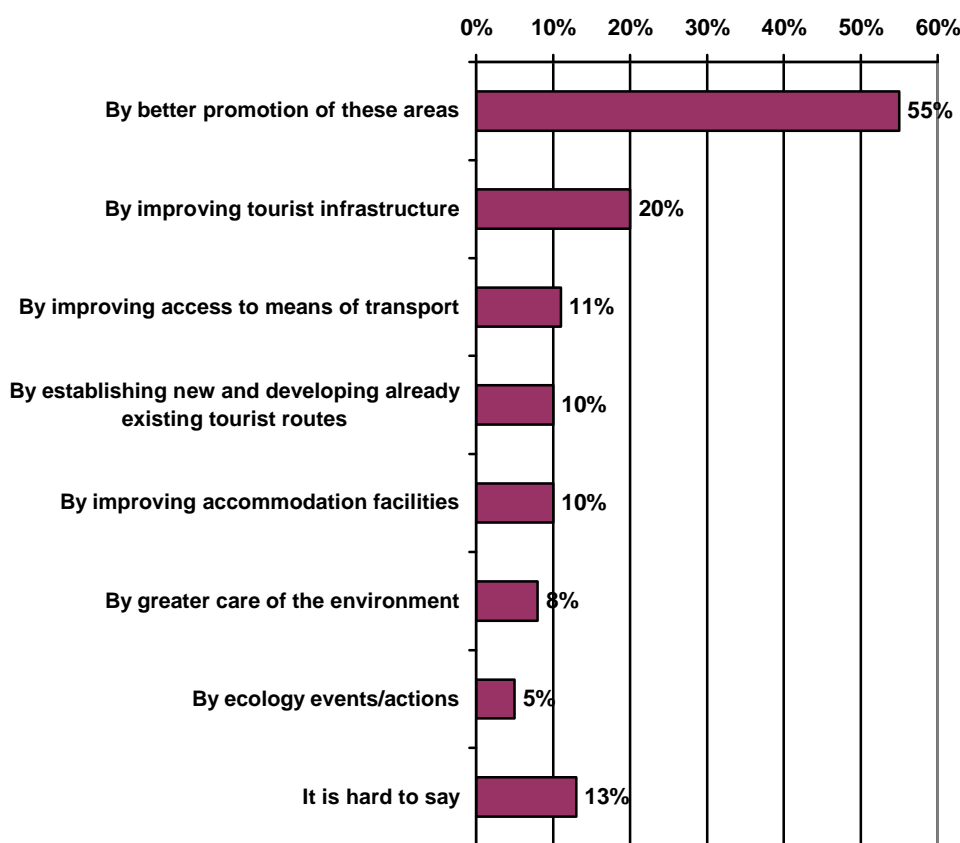


Fig. 1. How is it possible to improve the attractiveness of valuable natural areas in the voivodeship for tourists?

Source: *Source*: own work on the basis of "Perception of nature areas in the context of tourism. Report on quantitative research among inhabitants of Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship", by B. Szcześniak, PART SA, Warszawa, 2008.

The opinion about insufficient promotion of valuable natural areas was also expressed by the people surveyed as an answer to the question about what kind of obstacles can be

encountered by tourists who visit the voivodeship (fig. 2). 37% of the respondents think that insufficient information about the natural areas and the attractiveness of the region can be problematic to tourists. Hindered access to certain places as far as means of transport are concerned, as well as lack of accommodation and catering facilities can also cause problems.

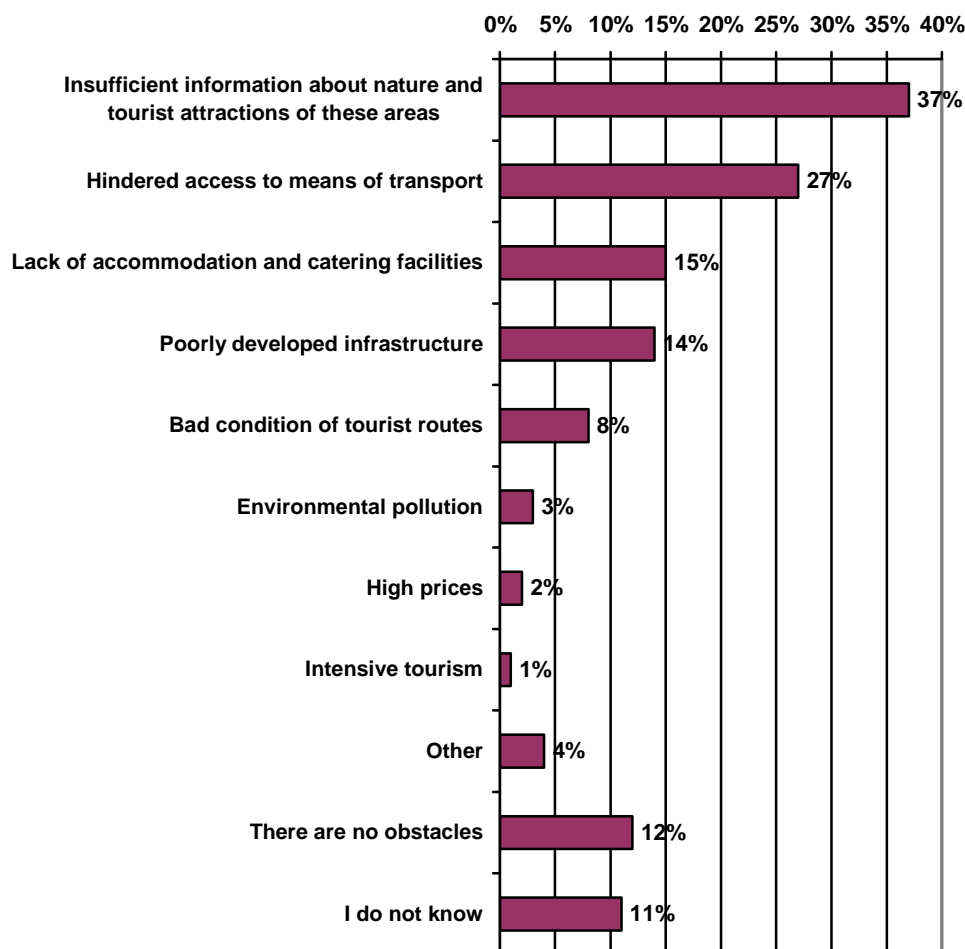


Fig. 2. What obstacles can tourists encounter during their visits to valuable natural areas in Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship?

Source: see Fig. 1.

Further issues from the survey concerned threats to nature and environment. Over half of the respondents mentioned waste among these threats; almost 24% – water pollution, 17% –air pollution; Next, the people surveyed pointed out lack of modern technologies, polluted soil, high-density housing. 8% do not notice or are not aware of threats to the environment. It is worth noticing that the respondents indicated local problems without mentioning global phenomena, i.e. greenhouse effect or thinner ozone layer.

The respondents also evaluated influence of increased numbers of tourists on natural areas. According to 26% a huge number of tourists is a moderate threat, while 16% consider that a big threat for the voivodeship's natural environment.

The people surveyed also expressed their opinion on how effective different solutions can be in improving the state of environment. Some example solutions were given as far as economy of waste, sewage and energy use were concerned. Over 2/3 of the respondents think actions like rubbish segregation, use of big local sewage treatment plants and renewable energy sources have a really big influence on improving the state of environment. Almost half of the people surveyed are convinced of a positive influence of home sewage treatment plants on improving the state of environment.

As regards information about valuable natural areas, 42% of the respondents confirm they have good or fairly good access to such information, while 10% think the opposite. Over half of the surveyed are interested in information about the area. More than half also get information from the Internet, 44% - from newspapers, 25% - from TV, 24% - from leaflets and information bulletins, 11% - by personal visits to valuable natural areas (fig. 3). 52% of people confirm having good access to information about protection and threats to the environment in their region, 48% state the opposite.

Next, the survey examined whether the local community knew what kind of programs that support environmental protection there were in the voivodeship. 58% of the respondents are of the opinion that there are such programs in the region, 13% think the opposite, 29% do not know. Over 80% of the participants who responded positively, however, could not give any names of such programs. Almost 2/3 of the surveyed said the expenses for his purpose were definitely insufficient or rather insufficient, only 8% thought the amount of money spent on that was sufficient.

Next, 93% are of the opinion that they can protect environment on their own. 92% say they would react if they noticed any disturbing change in their surroundings. Over 2/3 of the respondents are personally engaged in environmental protection, while 19% are engaged in actions of ecology organizations or participate in ecology events.

Respondents' involvement in pro-ecology actions is very high. People who answered positively to the question whether they would react or ask for information if they noticed a disturbing change of environment in their region, were also questioned who they would ask for help or information. The majority (57%) would turn to local authorities, the rest pointed out e.g. the police, ecology organizations, environmental protection inspector. 26% of the respondents have already reacted in an ecology matter or asked for information.

The results show that most of the respondents want to be pro-ecological. 91% of the people surveyed take care of their environment. Almost 3/4 say they are careful with excessive use of water, electricity and production of waste. 2/3 of people utilize dangerous waste in a place specially prepared for that purpose.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the survey conducted:

- The inhabitants of Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship highly appreciate nature and tourist attractiveness of their region. They definitely more often indicate nature and landscape attractions than anthropogenic ones among tourist attractions.
- Although the respondents are convinced that their region has very attractive nature and is very appealing for tourists, 12% of them do not give any example of tourist attractions and every second respondent cannot spontaneously name any place attractive for tourists in the region.

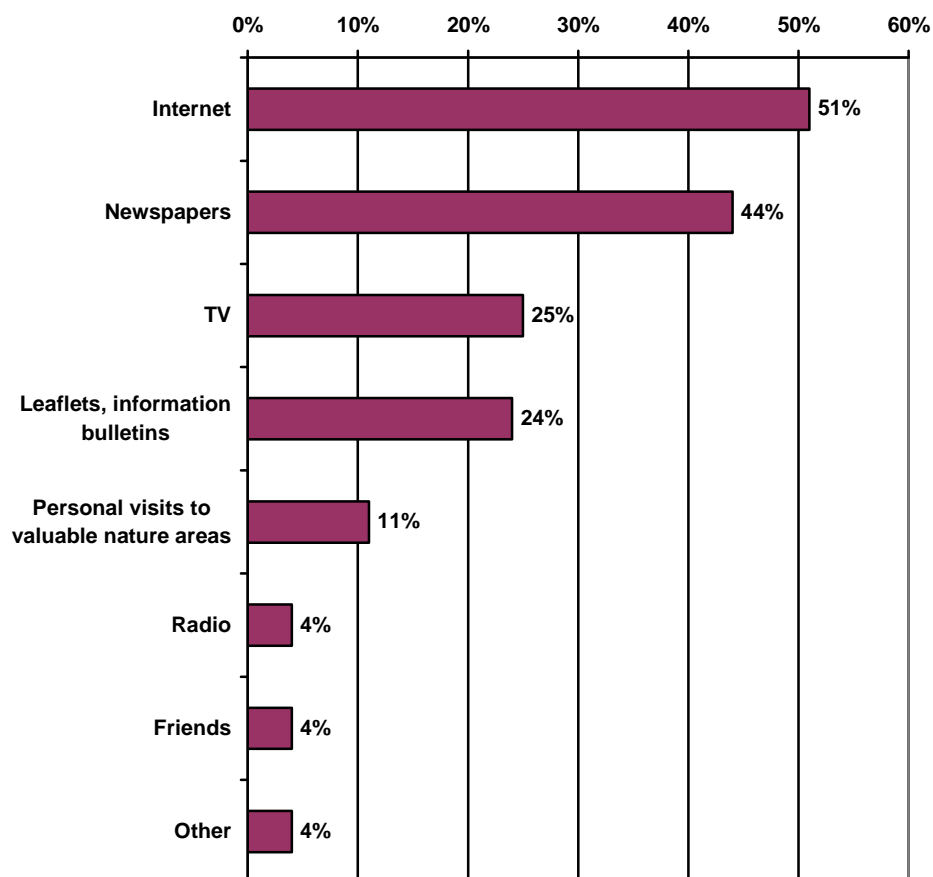


Fig. 3. Sources of information about valuable natural areas and environmental protection in the voivodeship.

Source: see Fig. 1.

- The respondents favor tourism development in their region. Over 75% of the surveyed agree that more and more tourist should be encouraged to visit the voivodeship. Moreover, tourism is not considered an important threat to the natural environment.
- The survey shows that more intensive marketing actions are required. 67% of the people think that promotion of valuable natural areas in the voivodeship should definitely be improved and 21% agree with this opinion to some extent. According to over 50% of the respondents, better promotion of the region is a key to making valuable natural areas in the voivodeship more attractive.
- 43% of the surveyed do not have an opinion or do not know how effective environmental protection in the voivodeship is. The results also show that there is a general lack of knowledge about environmental protection programs in the voivodeship.
- Over 50% of the respondents are interested in information about valuable natural areas. The main source of this information is the Internet, newspapers, less often visits to such areas.

– The people surveyed declare big involvement in environmental protection and are convinced they can directly influence the environment's condition.

The results of the survey conducted among the inhabitants of Zachodniopomorskie voivodeship indicate a necessity to intensify information and marketing actions connected with valuable natural areas. Steps taken to improve awareness of the inhabitants as far as environmental protection projects are concerned also seem to be necessary. To sum up, the information obtained in the survey and connected with perception of valuable natural areas by the inhabitants can be an important clue while implementing the concept of sustainable tourism in Zachodniopomorskie voivodship.

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**PERCEPTION OF VALUABLE NATURAL AREAS BY INHABITANTS OF DESTINATION  
AREAS ON THE EXAMPLE OF ZACHODNIOPOMORSKIE VOIVODSHIP**

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The aim of the article is to analyze and evaluate a perception of the region on the basis of research conducted among citizens of West Pomeranian Region. The research was focused on assessing the tourism attractiveness, knowledge about nature parks and opinions about possible tourism development in this area. Moreover in the survey respondents were questioned about possible threats to protected environment and everyday public involvement in preservation of nature.

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