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## ***CANNABIS INDICA* AS A MOTIVATION FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL BY POLISH CITIZENS**

**Abstract:** Based on an anonymous on-line questionnaire survey, conducted among 1000 respondents, the authors present their demographic, socio-economic and spatial profile, their attitude to cannabis and the tourist trips they went on (scale, directions, destinations), involving cannabis consumption. Tourist trips of this kind were attractive to quite a large number of young people, mostly inhabiting large Polish cities, who usually had used and continued to use this drug. Trips inspired by cannabis were most often made to the nearby Czech Republic and Netherlands, as well as (less frequently) to Spain.

**Keywords:** trips abroad, *cannabis indica* consumption, drugs, Polish citizens.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

*Cannabis indica*<sup>1</sup> is one of the most popular narcotics in the world belonging to the category of 'soft drugs'. It is estimated that in 2014, it was used by *ca.* 3.8% of the world's population, which is slightly over 180 million people<sup>2</sup> (WDR 2016). The inhabitants of EU member states aged 15-64, who had used cannabis at least once in their lives, is 22.1%, i.e. 74 million. The percentage is higher among young EU inhabitants: 30.5% (19 million) in the group aged 15-24, and 31.1% (41.5 million) in a slightly broader group, aged 15-34 (ESPAD 2015). Cannabis consumption in Poland is similar to the average in Europe being highest among adolescents and young adults. In 2014, 4.6% of Poles (a little over 1.5 million) aged 15-64 were cannabis users (ESPAD 2015). From 1990 to 2009 both global and European consumption of *cannabis indica* was on the increase. Recently, after a short period of stability or even decline in some countries, its consumption has been growing again (WDR 2016, EMCDDA 2015).

In all countries around the world, selling and using narcotics, including cannabis, is illegal and punishable with imprisonment, e.g. in Poland – up to 3 years. However, more and more countries are yielding to growing social pressure and mitigating the punishment for the possession and use of cannabis. Some,

under controlled conditions, allow legal consumption for recreational purposes (e.g. the 'coffee shops' in the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, some American states – Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, as well as some other countries like Portugal, Mexico, Uruguay) (MRÓZ 2012). In Poland, the social pressure towards legalizing access to cannabis is also growing (e.g. the marches organized by Cannabis Liberation – a movement fighting for the right to use it for medical reasons, downplaying the negative effects of cannabis consumption in the media and through some public figures, etc.) (MOTYKA & MALISZEWSKI 2014). The growing popularity of cannabis, the varying legality of its consumption in different countries and its market availability (price, quality) encourages people (especially young) to travel to countries where cannabis is legal and/or easily available.

Nowadays, tourist trips are often connected with drug consumption. Tourists travel both in their own countries (e.g. in Hungary, during the May-September season, to poppy fields) and abroad to neighbouring countries (e.g. Germans and French travel to the Netherlands, Poles to the Czech Republic, or Americans to Mexico) or further (e.g. British people travel to Ibiza in Spain) (VALDEZ & SIFANECK 1997, *Travel and drug*

use... 2012, CHERPITEL *et al.* 2015). Tourists motivated by the wish to buy cannabis, travel during weekends (e.g. going to concerts which create a favourable atmosphere for drug use) and short holidays, or go on longer trips (up to several months) with a backpack. It is difficult to estimate its scale. However, in some areas, the percentage is high, for instance it is estimated that in Amsterdam nearly a third of all visitors go to 'coffee shops' where they can use cannabis legally (HOFFMANN 2014).

The aim of this article is to attempt to recognize the phenomenon of the tourist trips abroad made by Polish citizens motivated by the desire to use *cannabis indica*, i.e. to define the demographic, socio-economic and spatial structure of the participants, as well as the character and direction of travel.

## 2. DRUG TOURISM IN THE WORLD LITERATURE

The world literature regarding global consumption of stimulants and narcotics is vast<sup>3</sup>. It comprises research on the current market situation, the distribution, mechanisms and effects of drug taking, identification of the consumption factors, the health, legal and other hazards of drug abuse, as well as ways of preventing it, etc. Many publications present research methodology with regard to drug consumption (e.g. WDR, EMCDDA, ESPAD reports). However, there is not much reference to drug consumption involving tourist trips (MOTYKA 2016, *Travel and drug use...* 2012, URIELY & BALHASSEN 2005, etc.) which mostly concerns the consumption of cannabis. The authors of the few articles on this topic discuss the concept of drug tourism, the motivations to go on such trips, demographic and socio-cultural profiles, drug tourists' readiness to take risks, or visitor-host relationships.

The concept of drug tourism found in the literature is based on drug consumption being the specific motivation to go on a tourist trip. It is a very general and imprecise concept, defined in a variety of ways by different authors (MOTYKA 2016, URIELY & BALHASSEN 2005, VALDEZ & SIFANECK 1997, etc.). As a result, in empirical research, it is necessary to formulate operational definitions for the purpose of individual studies.

The problem of using drugs during tourist trips was indicated in the 1970s by COHEN (1973), who associated them with a type of tourist called a 'drifter'<sup>4</sup>. This view was later confirmed by K. WESTERHAUSEN (2002) who conducted research on the Goa (India) and Koh Pha Ngan (Thailand) beaches, indicating that drug consumption was an element of the 'drifter' subculture. A. VALDEZ & S. SIFANECK (1997) described drug tourism on the border between Mexico and

Texas (USA) and defined it as visiting destinations due to drug availability. N. URIELY & Y. BALHASSEN (2005, 2006) see drug tourism as a tourist's experience involving their fully conscious use of drugs which are illegal at the tourism destination and/or in the tourist's home country. American and European tourists are attracted to the Amazonia region by the chance to try *ayahuasca* – a brew from hallucinogenic plants. These tourists seek authentic, personal and profound experiences during night long religious ceremonies led by local shamans (DOBKIN DE RIOS 1994, VINKELMAN 2005, PRAYAG *et al.* 2015). In contrast to this group searching for an exceptionally profound experience, other types of tourists, such as British holiday-makers on Ibiza (BELLIS *et al.* 2000) or American students on vacation (JOSIAM *et al.* 1998), look mostly for entertainment and recreation. Trips to the Netherlands were motivated by liberalism, a legal opportunity to use cannabis ('coffee shops'), the high quality of the narcotic, its relatively low price, good health care (in case of health problems after taking the drug), as well as the chance to take advantage of the rehab therapy provided there (VAN DEN BRINK 1996, KORF 2002, MONSHOUWER *et al.* 2011, *Travel and drug use...* 2012).

This brief review of the sparse literature on the subject points to: 1) the heterogeneous character of drug tourists; 2) the fact that drug use is not always the main motivation of tourist trips, but is a side effect of tourism experience; 3) the fact that using drugs during a tourist trip is often understood as recreational activity in the context of recreation and youth subcultures.

From the point of view of the influence that drug consumption motivation has on the decision to go on tourist trips, drug tourism may be defined in terms of a continuum. On one end there is its narrow meaning where the sole motivation is drug consumption, while on the other there is its broad meaning where occasional consumption of legal and illegal stimulants is only one of many motivations. In real life, we usually deal with situations fitting between the narrow and the broad concepts (MAĆKOWIAK 2014, MOTYKA 2016, etc.). Such an approach to a definition has been assumed in this article where it is understood as going on a journey during which the tourist (occasionally) uses *cannabis indica* and treats it as one of many experiences during the trip.

The concept of drug tourism presented in the literature is related to research on motivations for drug consumption during a tourist trip. They include the following: 1) the sense of pleasure induced by narcotics caused to the state of mind (GROBE & LÜER 2011); 2) spiritual experience usually involving cultural aspects (HOFFMANN 2014, GROBE & LÜER 2011); 3) mystical sensations, e.g. the ritual consumption of *ayahuasca* in Amazonia in order to experience mystical

states of mind (TUPPER 2008, MOTYKA 2016); 4) curiosity, treating psychological disorders, the need for self-discovery, spiritual development, interest in psychedelic medicine, searching for a purpose in life (VINKELMAN 2005, KAVENSKA & SIMONOVA 2015); 5) avoiding the legal and social consequences of drug taking and trafficking (trade smuggling, etc.), as well as easy access to them (URIELY & BALHASSEN 2005, 2006); 6) legal and cultural regulations concerning the availability and consumption of cannabis and its derivatives in European and North American societies, e.g. resulting from the wish to experiment and experience pleasure in these societies (BELHASSEN, SANTOS & URIELY 2007, DOMOSŁAWSKI 2011, MRÓZ 2012).

Here is a profile of drug tourists based on the research conducted so far (MOTYKA 2016, *Travel and drug use...* 2012, GROBE & LÜER 2011, URIELY & BELHASSEN 2005, and others). The participants of drug tourism are most often young, aged 15-34, still studying and/or already working. There are nearly twice as many men as women and they are usually well educated. They are not addicted to drugs, though they have some experience in using them. Their incomes allow them to travel abroad and they are usually well integrated into society. They play basic social roles and perform everyday tasks. Using drugs during a tourist trip is usually a part of their tourism experience (GROBE & LÜER 2011, MOTYKA 2016 and others). Research has also shown that young people who visited clubs, events, music festivals and dance parties were more experienced in using drugs than others (MEASHAM *et al.* 2001, VAN HAVERE *et al.* 2009, 2011). For instance, Ibiza (Spain) – famous for nightlife and electronic music parties – is a well-recognized place to use drugs in connection with intensive clubbing and partying. A. GROBE & J. LÜER (2011) believe that foreign drug tourism usually does not include addicts who are to some extent excluded from social life. They are hardly ever able to save sufficient funds to travel abroad.

A tourist trip where one of the motivations is drug consumption involves numerous risks. There are usually health and personal safety hazards, resulting from breaking the law of the host country, etc. (*Travel and drug use ...* 2012). N. URIELY & Y. BALHASSEN (2005, 2006), who discussed the problem of the risks involved in drug tourism, claimed that tourists who voluntarily engage in risky activity (drug consumption) do not completely disregard their safety, and the risks they take are to some degree limited. In many reports, the authors stress the problem of implementing proper precautions. It is slowly becoming accepted that prevention should be focused on making people aware of the dangers involved, both in the countries generating drug tourism and in the reception countries, as well as on reducing the damage caused by drug

consumption during a tourist trip. It is also becoming increasingly obvious that prevention should be wide-ranging and integrate the activities of the social environment, the police, prevention forces, damage reduction and legislation. It has also been pointed out that prevention strategies need to be diversified to fit various groups of drug tourists (*Travel and drug use...* 2012). In the academic literature, authors have not devoted much attention to the threats drug tourism poses to local communities, e.g. premature participation of local teenagers in discos, disturbing public order and a number of other inconveniences resulting from the presence of drug tourists (VILLAR 2008, MONSHOUWER *et al.* 2011).

### 3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The empirical study was based on an anonymous online survey with a questionnaire posted on Facebook for the period of March 2016. It was shared from a number of Facebook accounts, as well as from the main Free Cannabis webpage (wide-ranging with nearly 300 000 users). 1200 questionnaires were submitted. After rejecting those which were incomplete, improperly filled in or unreliable, responses provided by 1000 respondents were used in empirical analysis. The questionnaire consisted of nine main questions concerning the respondents' attitude to cannabis consumption, tourist trips involving it, as well as the directions and destinations of these trips. In this way, it was ensured that the respondents did not feel that they were wasting too much time, and at the same time they had an opportunity to describe their experiences gained during tourist trips in more detail. The questionnaire was supplemented with five personal questions (sex, age, education, source of income, place of residence).

This mode of survey focused on tourists who were interested and/or somewhat experienced in cannabis consumption. Therefore, on this basis, it is not possible to establish the popularity of tourist trips motivated by cannabis consumption in Polish society. However, it is possible to provide a valid description (due to the relatively large number of respondents) of the tourists' demographic, socio-economic and spatial structure, as well as the character and locations of their foreign tourist trips. Consequently, comparing the results of the survey to international findings makes it possible to indicate the similarities and differences on Polish trips during which cannabis is used. The material collected was analysed using the statistical description method.

#### 4. EMPIRICAL STUDY RESULTS<sup>5</sup>

The survey analysis includes the demographic, socio-economic and spatial description of the respondents, their attitude to cannabis and their tourist trips (length, directions, destinations), during which they used *cannabis indica*.

The survey participants (and at the same time cannabis consumers) were young people. Nearly 70% of them were aged 19-26. A further 11.5% were aged 17-37, 5% were under 18 while only 3.5% were older than 36. The respondents were mostly male (73%). They were well educated, with 44% having completed just secondary education while a further 35.1% had university education (16.1% - completed and 19% - incomplete). Respondents who had only vocational or educated to only 16 made up around 10% each, while those with just elementary education - only 1%. Despite their young age, the majority of respondents (46%) were self-sufficient financially. 28% were partly supported by their families and only 25% were fully maintained. Thus, they were working and/or studying, with incomes enabling them to travel both in their home country and abroad.



Fig. 1. Respondents' place of residence in Poland

93.5% of the respondents lived in Poland and the remaining abroad, mostly in Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries. The domestic respondents came mainly from large cities, particularly those with over 0.5 million inhabitants (Warsaw, Łódź, Poznań and Wrocław), the largest cities in Poland with well developed services offering the best work and study opportunities, providing a variety of entertainment (nightlife), including greater

access to drugs and stimulants. The next group of respondents lived in the remaining major Polish cities. They rarely came from small towns or villages, which are areas characterized by intensive migration of young and open-minded people to large urban centres in Poland (e.g. Opole or Świętokrzyskie Provinces), where interest in cannabis was small (Fig. 1).

The people taking part in the survey were clearly interested in cannabis consumption during a tourist trip. Over 94% of them had tried this drug before (Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents' earlier experience with cannabis (%)

Frequency of cannabis use	Respondents (%)		
	total	male	female
Very often	26.6	30.1	17.3
Often	30.9	33.3	24.4
Sporadically and occasionally	24.1	24.1	24.2
Only a few times	4.1	2.4	8.9
Very rarely	5.4	5.3	5.6
Once often, now occasionally	0.2	0.3	0.0
Once yes, currently no	2.8	2.1	5.2
So far never	5.8	2.4	14.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source tab. 1-5: authors.

Over 57% of the respondents used the drug often or very often. The next sizeable group consisted of those who used cannabis sporadically or occasionally. People who became intoxicated very rarely, who had used the drug several times before, had given it up or cut down on using it, made up only 12.5%. Only 5.8% of cases were respondents who had never used it. The results presented above clearly show that a large majority can be regarded as regular cannabis users.

Among the 250 women who participated in the survey, responses concerning the use were distributed more evenly than among the men. The greatest difference was observed as regards those who claimed that they used cannabis very often; in this case, the percentage of women was much lower than men. Moreover, a considerable disproportion was observed among the respondents who had never had any contact - this answer was given by a considerably larger number of women (14.4%) than men (2.4%).

The respondents from the predominant group positively related tourist attractiveness to the legality and/or availability of cannabis (Table 2). This result should not be surprising, considering that the majority of respondents were interested in the consumption of this drug.

It also turned out that a large number of respondents (83.3%) would attempt to use cannabis if they were at a place where it is legally permitted. Those who expressed a negative opinion were mostly

those who had had little experience with the drug. As many as 49% of the respondents who had had no experience in this respect admitted they would be willing to try cannabis at a place where it was legal, which points to a considerable openness to new stimuli among this group.

Table 2. The influence of cannabis availability on the evaluation of the attractiveness of tourism reception regions by respondents

Evaluation of the influence of cannabis availability on the attractiveness of a tourism region	Responses (%)
Positive	87.5
Negative	3.8
No influence	0.3
No opinion	8.4
Total	100.0

The results of the survey clearly show that tourist trips motivated by cannabis consumption does exist among Poles, confirmed by the data presented in Table 3.

A total of 38.7% of respondents, including 26.3% of women and 43.3% of men, had at least once in their lives gone on a tourist trip for the purpose of cannabis consumption. The figures seem quite high if we consider that this drug was the main motive of those trips.

The survey shows that for the majority cannabis was an additional tourist attraction (Table 4). However, the percentage who regarded the use of this drug as an important or even key element of their tourist trip was also considerable. This shows that the respondents largely identified their trip with cannabis consumption.

Table 3. *Cannabis indica* as the main motivation of a tourist trip (%)

Cannabis as the main motivation for a tourist trip	Responses (%)		
	total	males	females
Yes	38.7	43.3	26.3
No	59.5	54.7	72.5
Prospectively	1.8	2.0	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 4. The importance of the possibility of cannabis use as a motivation for travel

Importance of cannabis consumption as a motivation to travel	Responses (%)
Highly significant	6.0
Significant	26.0
Additional attraction	55.4
Not very significant	5.3
Insignificant	7.3
Total	100.0

Table 5 shows that the predominant group among the respondents who had at least once made a tourist trip motivated by cannabis consumption included those who used the drug often or very often.

Table 5. Frequency of using cannabis vs. going on a tourist trip (%)

Frequency of using cannabis	Cannabis consumption as a motivation to travel
Very often	35.2
Often	40.3
Sporadically and occasionally	18.3
Very rarely	3.8
Only a few times	0.8
Once yes, currently I don't use it	1.6
Total	100.0

The destinations of the respondents' trips largely depended on the availability of cannabis. About 95.5% of the trips took place in Europe. Slightly over 50% of all European trips were made to the countries of Western Europe, primarily to the Netherlands which received three quarters of the respondents travelling to this part of Europe. The most popular destination was Amsterdam and out of all tourist trips made to this country, 42% were to Amsterdam alone. The second significant destination was Central and Eastern Europe (slightly above one quarter), with the Czech Republic in the lead (83% of the respondents travelling to this part of Europe, with up to 30% going to Prague). The third most popular was Mediterranean Europe (12%), mostly Spain (45.9%). The percentage elsewhere in the world was marginal (4.5%).

These destinations are clearly related to cannabis use. Based on the data presented here, it can be stated that the respondents most willingly chose a relatively close destination where they had easy access to cannabis.

Taking the respondents' motivations and the destinations of their tourist trips into consideration, four basic and most common types of trip can be indicated:

1. They were often holiday and/or winter tourist trips to large agglomerations or famous resorts, and the trips themselves were related to recreation, entertainment and sightseeing rather than cannabis consumption, which was only an additional attraction. These tourist trips were to places like Livigno, Rome, the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria, Budapest, Paris, Crete, Lisbon and other destinations popular in Europe. Sometimes, they were also trips for tourism and recreation purposes, lasting for a few days during the summer holidays, usually for 7-14 days,

including accommodation at a hotel or hostel in Amsterdam. Typical for these trips was considerable expense and their main motivation was usually tourism and recreation in the broad sense of the word, combined with occasional pot smoking.

2. A large number of respondents travelled to visit their families or Polish friends who had emigrated for financial reasons. In this case, apart from the Netherlands (smaller cities, such as Eindhoven or The Hague, but with obligatory sightseeing in Amsterdam), they also visited Great Britain, Germany or Switzerland, where cannabis consumption was rather an addition to the journey. Sometimes they were trips for work and then they involved a much longer stay (usually several weeks). This type of journey involved lower expense because in almost all cases accommodation was provided by the respondents' hosts.
3. Relatively low-budget trips involving backpacking or festival tourism where tourists do not pay much attention to the standard of accommodation. These were short trips, usually lasting a few days, oriented towards visiting 'coffee shops' and concentrated in Amsterdam or its vicinity. The most popular means of transport was train or private car (possibly by plane), and the accommodation usually included cheap hostels or camp sites. The tourists usually travelled in small groups. Sometimes, they were very short stays (e.g. 24 hours), which were parts of longer journeys, divided into stages. Amsterdam, as a stop-over, was visited for the purposes of sightseeing as well as purchasing cannabis. Trips to the Czech Republic were similar where, apart from Prague, the respondents visited the Czech-Polish hip-hop festival in Hradec Kralové, Ostrava, etc. Among those who travelled to the Czech Republic in 2015, the largest group were those who lived in areas situated relatively close to the border. They were usually short trips, made in summer (much more frequently than in winter). Trips of this type included so-called 'Eurotrips' (travelling all over Europe), camping trips (e.g. to the Scandinavian Peninsula), or hitch-hiking journeys to Spain, quite popular from Poland. Their participants were open to new cultures, adventures, stimuli and experiences. This type of travel fits into the definition of drug tourism, formulated by GROBE & LÜER (2011).
4. Tourist trips outside Europe were relatively rare, but they were mostly directed towards destinations connected with the culture of using cannabis or with its wide availability, such as India,

Morocco, the USA, Uruguay, Thailand, Vietnam or Sri Lanka. They were trips typically connected with cultural or possibly business tourism, with the addition of cannabis consumption. They involved high costs usually generated by expensive flights.

## 5. SUMMARY

Drug tourism is spread all over the world, currently in Poland as well. Therefore, it seems surprising that there are so few publications referring tourist trips abroad for cannabis consumption. As a result, its scale and character remains undefined, and the only reliable data are the figures regarding places where this drug is legally available.

The survey that has been conducted makes it possible to establish a number of basic patterns concerning people using cannabis during tourist trips abroad:

- 1) the drug is usually an additional attraction for them, or a kind of stimulant which makes their trip more pleasant;
- 2) the participants of these trips are usually young people, open to other cultures, who do not avoid adventures and are more willing to take the risk of using cannabis than an average tourist
- 3) in the case of tourist trips motivated by cannabis consumption, Polish travellers tend to choose close European destinations where the drug is easily available and legal (the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, more rarely - Spain);
- 4) the respondents stressed the significance of natural assets rather than cultural, as regards the tourist trips they went on.

Based on the research, tourist trips abroad related to cannabis consumption can be divided into two types. The first type includes trips which are motivated by using the drug at destinations where it is available and practically accepted - legally or illegally. Such destinations are places where liberal policy has decriminalized cannabis, or where it is in a sense socially accepted and nobody persecutes users. Examples of such countries are the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Spain, Portugal, Uruguay or the four American states which have legalized its recreational use.

The other type of trip related to cannabis consumption encompassed the majority made by users of this drug. The analysis of the respondents' answers shows that there is a large group of people who use cannabis during every trip, because they regard cannabis as a stimulant magnifying their sensations, which is what they mostly travel for.

The research shows that the scale of cannabis tourism should not be marginalized. In times when the number of different forms of tourism is growing, it is likely that tourists will more and more often face new, often controversial forms and trends (STASIAK 2015). Although using psycho-active substances is as old as the history of human kind, the emergence of drug tourism increased with the hippie movement in the 1960s. *Cannabis indica* as a motivation to go on a tourist trip has been very poorly recognized so far, which opens new research prospects.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the term 'cannabis' is used to refer to all psycho-active products based on this plant, e.g. marihuana, hashish, etc.

<sup>2</sup> In the literature, the scope of drug consumption is defined with the following indexes: 1) the 'experimenting with drugs (life experience) index' defines the number (percentage) of those who have used the drug at least once in their lifetime; 2) 'recent use index' defines the number (percentage) of people who have used the drug in the 12 months prior to the study; 3) 'current use index' defines the number (percentage) who have used the drug in the 30 days prior to the study.

<sup>3</sup> This is supported by numerous references to academic works and papers posted in reports by international organizations, e.g. WDR, EMCDDA, ESPAD, the Polish CBOS, as well as specialist journals presenting the problems of stimulants and drug consumption, e.g. the international 'Journal of Drug Issues', 'International Journal of Drug Policy', or the Polish 'Alkoholizm i Narkomania'.

<sup>4</sup> According to E. COHEN (2003) a drifter is an individual tourist who integrates with the host environment. Tourists of this type are in part similar to those who go backpacking, i.e. traveling alone with little luggage (a backpack). Among backpackers, it is quite common to use soft drugs, although on a smaller scale than it was in the drifters' subculture (see: A. PATYRA & A. DŁUŻEWSKA 2015, p. 46).

<sup>5</sup> The results presented come from the MA thesis by Przemysław Adam PAWLICKI (2016), supervised by Andrzej Matczak, at the Institute of Urban and Tourism Geography, University of Lodz.

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