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## SPORTS TOURISM: TERMINOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

**Abstract:** This article is a terminological discussion concerning sports tourism and those experts who stress its complexity, multifacetedness and heterogeneity. They distinguish between passive and active participation in sports disciplines and at the same time stress the huge role this form of tourism plays in stimulating regional development, mostly due to organizing mass events. This paper is based on the statements of eight experts from different research centres dealing with tourism (mainly sports tourism) accompanied by the authors' attempt to 'standardise' them by referring to the subject literature.

Keywords: sport, sports tourism, specialised tourism, active tourism, cultural tourism.

# 1. INTRODUCTION: RESEARCH METHOD

The article is a summary of an inquiry concerning sports tourism conducted among several experts. In order to standardize the term 'sports tourism', the 'Turyzm/Tourism' journal editors asked specialists for a brief statement with regard to the following five questions:

- 1. Is there, in your opinion, such a form of tourism as sports tourism? What do you understand by it? Does it fit into currently functioning definitions of tourism?
- 2. What should be done and what skills (predispositions) are required for sports tourism?
- 3. What measures can be used to define the scale, seasonality and other parameters of this form of tourism?
- 4. Does sports tourism require special infrastructure? If so, then what?
- 5. What is the future of sports tourism?

As a result of the inquiry, eight opinions¹ were obtained from different research centres dealing with sports tourism: Warmia-Mazury University in Olsztyn, Piasecki Academy of Physical Education in Poznań, Czech Academy of Physical Education in Krakow, University of Wrocław, Academy of Physical Education in Wrocław, Economic University in Poznań, Piłsudski Academy of Physical Education in Warsaw and Mickiewicz University in Poznań.

# 2. 'SPORTS TOURISM': DISCUSSION AND CONTROVERSIES

In recent years, sports activity has been gaining in popularity all over the world. The same concerns sports tourism, especially if it takes the form of participating in large sporting events (MALCHROWICZ-MOŚKO 2015, p. 55). Interest in sports tourism is the result of a growing need for intense emotions and impressions as well as an increasing amount of leisure time and higher incomes. This can be observed in the development of a range of active ways of spending free time, as well as the growth of leisure itself which has led to the development of many new forms of active tourism and sports disciplines, as well as their continuous modification.

Tourism forms involving physical activity and sport are a significant object of Polish and foreign researchers' interest. Over the years, research on these issues has led to the appearance of many concepts and classifications, however a specific terminological chaos in the literature on the subject can also be found – words defining outdoor tourism activity are used arbitrarily – terms are used interchangeably and the differences between them are not clear (BOŃCZAK 2013, p. 61). The researchers studying the phenomena at the interface between tourism and sports do not agree as regards the range of the term 'sports tourism', or the question of categorizing what is hidden behind it (SZCZECHOWICZ 2015, p. 42).

Sports tourism is a young research domain formally established in the early 1990s (PRINKE 2015, p. 77). However, the term appeared earlier, around 1970, and has been widely discussed by authors such as H.J. GIB-SON (1998, 2003), J. STANDEVEN & P. DE KNOP (1999), M. WEED (2008), C.M. HALL (1992), E. MALCHROWICZ-MOŚKO (2015), B. BOŃCZAK (2013), J. MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA (2015a, 2015b). According to A. Pawlikowska-Piechotka<sup>2</sup>, 'in Europe, the tradition of active or passive participation in sporting events, away from the permanent place of residence, goes back nearly 3000 years in time (e.g. travelling to take a passive or active part in the ancient Olympic Games'). However, in W. Alejziak's2 opinion, despite the fact that sports tourism is currently one of the most dynamically developing forms, there is an on-going discussion whether it should be distinguished at all. Studies are still at an early stage. According to S. Bosiacki, it is worth pointing out that sport itself is becoming a powerful 'industry' generating huge financial turnover, as well as becoming a significant element of culture, and a tool used to stimulate a local economy, including the tourism economy.

The literature presents numerous definitions of sports tourism; one of the most popular and most frequently quoted is that formulated by H. Gibson who says that sports tourism signifies tourist trips involving a change in the everyday lifestyle, in order to participate in sports activity (active sports tourism), or to watch sporting events (event sports tourism/ fan-tourism), or to visit sports attractions (nostalgia/ sentimental sports tourism) (GIBSON 1998, p. 45). This definition encompasses both, active and passive participation. It is also worth referring to the definition formulated by J. STANDEVEN & P. DE KNOP (1999), according to which sports tourism includes all forms of active and passive engagement in physical activity, both occasionally or regularly, which is undertaken for non-commercial or non-business purposes, and which requires travelling outside the place of permanent residence and work.

The majority of the participants (e.g. W. Alejziak, S. Bosiacki, D. Ilnicki, M. Pstrocka-Rak, I. Gruszka and Z. Kruczek) referred to these definitions. Thus, sports tourism is a form of tourism in its wider sense, and it is distinguished as a separate type on the basis of its connection with sport, both as regards actually doing it (engaging in physical activity, active participation in a given discipline either as an amateur or professionally), and attending sporting events as a spectator (e.g. fan-tourism). Sports tourism differs from active tourism in that emphasis is put on the activity (sports discipline) itself, while the aspect of travel is mostly limited to reaching the journey's destination (BOŃCZAK 2013, p. 58). To sum up, as A. Niezgoda² claims, '(...) the term 'sports tourism' can

be applied to a form of tourism distinguished on the basis of the travel motivation criterion. Thus, it regards the behaviour of consumers who consider sport to be a motivation to go on a tourist trip'.

W. Alejziak started from explaining concepts such as physical culture, physical education, sport and recreation. In this way, he stressed that apart from the traditional understanding of sport (extreme sports understood as a form of human activity aimed at achieving the best possible results through regular training), the literature on the subject also features the expression 'recreational sports' - a type that '(...) involves those kinds of physical activity undertaken only in free time, for fun or self-improvement which at the same time are safe, can be practiced throughout a person's life, giving pleasure and compensating for the deficiencies and hardships of the contemporary world.' At this point, it seems important to stress that the phenomenon is often referred to as 'sport for all' or 'common sport'. This means both activity practiced at sport-recreational facilities (e.g. fitness classes), and outdoors (e.g. cycling in time off work) (MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA 2015, p. 16). This approach seems to explain the semantic complications of sports tourism, mentioned by S. Bosiacki<sup>2</sup>: '(...) Is a person who spends their holidays at the seaside, goes jogging, cycles for pleasure or plays tennis a traditional recreational tourist or perhaps a sports tourist?' The important elements here seem to be this person's purpose and motivation, as well as the way the sports activity is undertaken.

All the experts taking part in the debate stressed the fact that sports tourism has both an active and a passive form as regards involvement. The most frequently mentioned types of activity undertaken as a part of sports tourism included trips made in order to:

- watch sporting events (fan tourism),
- visit sports facilities (so-called nostalgia sports tourism),
- participate in sporting events as competitors,
- do various forms of sports activity.

A similar classification of sports tourism was presented by B. BOŃCZAK (2013, p. 56) and J. MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA (2015, p. 15), who distinguished (Fig. 1) outdoor and indoor sports tourism (active sports tourism, meaning various sports disciplines), fan tourism (watching sporting events), nostalgia sports tourism (visiting sports facilities, both modern and historical) and the tourism of sportsmen and women (competitors travelling to sporting events).

An interesting and fairly similar classification of sports tourism was proposed by D. Ilnicki, M. Pstrocka-Rak and I. Gruszka<sup>2</sup>. They identified four main types of sports tourism: visiting sports-related sites and museums (understood as nostalgia sports tourism), passive participation in sporting events (understood

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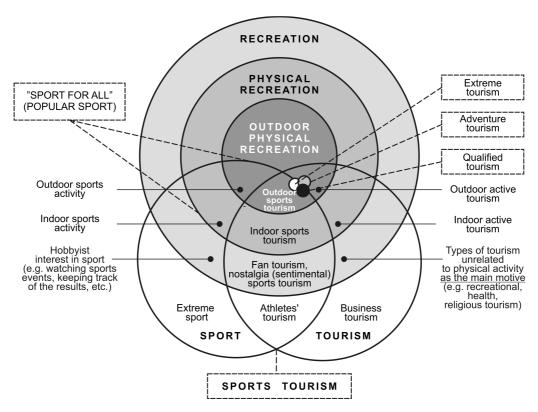


Fig. 1. Model of the relationships between recreation, sport and tourism Source: author after B. BONCZAK (2013)

as fan tourism), active participation in sporting events (amateur and professional), and active and specialised tourism (related to recreational tourism). In this way, the experts stress that nostalgia and fan tourism are related to cultural and sightseeing tourism, amateur participation in sporting events is connected with physical recreation, while professional – with sports and business tourism.

In seems controversial in the classification presented above to distinguish active and specialised tourism as a type; according to J. MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA (2015, p. 15) and B. BOŃCZAK (2013, p. 56), they are separate forms of tourism, but strictly related to sports tourism.

The concept of specialised tourism in Poland was introduced into academic terminology by the Polish Tourism Association (PTTK) in the 1950s (KUREK, ed. 2007, p. 256). It was connected with an attempt to define new areas of tourism which required special equipment and skills (qualifications). Thus, specialised tourism signified the highest form of tourism specialization in a given field, which can make it seemingly similar to sports tourism – it means, for instance, achievements in tourism in order to gain higher distinctions (ŁOBOŻEWICZ 1983, p. 7). Specialised tourism is also regarded as a kind of feat – hence the comparison with specialised sports. This type of tourism, however, also requires having a certain per-

sonality qualities such as psycho-physical preparedness, independence, ability to cope with hardships, high standards of behaviour, the ability to use tourist equipment and behave correctly outdoors and at tourism facilities, as well as a cognitive attitude (knowledge of the environment in which the person stays). It is also important to have the necessary skills (qualifications, often confirmed by certificate) in a given tourism field, as well as to be interested in natural environment, exploration and cognition. Many authors point to the educational character of this kind of tourism (shaping personality). A fundamental element of specialised tourism is also the tourist's passion and expertise which results from being deeply engaged in the activity itself and from a passion for tourism in general (MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA 2015, pp. 30-31).

A slightly different point of view is represented by A. Pawlikowska-Piechotka, who identifies mass 'hard' sports tourism (organized groups of fans), 'soft' sports tourism (individual trips) and nostalgia tourism among all the trips made in order to passively participate in sporting tourism. In turn, among trips made to actively participate in sporting events, she distinguishes active sports tourism (undertaking a given sports discipline) and sports adventure tourism (traveling to remote, hard to reach parts of the world,

expeditions to the 'unknown'). It is worth pointing out that A. Pawlikowska-Piechotka combines adventure tourism with high mountain climbing, hiking and lone sailing (e.g. climbing mountain crowns, breaking sailing records). It must be stressed, however, that activities of this type are also ascribed to forms of specialised, adventure or extreme tourism. This is because the essence of adventure tourism is experiencing a 'trip into the unknown' (exploration). It is characterized by an emotional aspect (for instance connected with higher risk) as well as the spiritual and aesthetic experiences based on contact with different natural and cultural environments. However, adventure tourism is often organized by professional tour-operators and therefore does not require such profound psycho-physical preparedness as specialised tourism. In turn, extreme tourism (risk tourism) means extreme forms of recreation (extreme sports), focused on gaining a strong emotional experience. This is often accompanied by physical exhaustion as well as a high risk of damaging one's health or even losing one's life. In this type of tourism, risk is the key element (MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA 2015, p. 29).

As this discussion implies, establishing fine lines between individual forms of active tourism (sports, specialised, adventure, extreme) is very difficult (sometimes even considered impossible) and greatly depends on the psycho-physical preparedness of tourists, their tourism awareness and professionalism. Many activities may be undertaken in a milder form (active tourism e.g. lowland/mountain hiking), but some of them are only a form of specialised tourism, while others mainly serve the purposes of adventure tourism (e.g. ballooning) or extreme tourism (e.g. canyoning). A widening spectrum of tourist and sports activities can be found related to new trends, fashion and development.

According to L. Butowski<sup>2</sup>, most controversies concern trips made by professionals who can hardly be classified as tourists. In the opinion of L. Butowski as well as D. Ilnicki, M. Pstrocka-Rak and I. Gruszka, there is a group of so called amateurs, who do not treat their participation in competitions as gainful. This form of tourism is also defined as professional tourism and means going to competitions, tournaments and training sessions (BONCZAK 2013, p. 58). A different approach is represented by S. Bosiacki<sup>2</sup>, who claims that '(...) it seems justifiable if we understand sports tourism as exclusively those trips where the main motivation is passive participation at sporting events (fans) or active participation in amateur sporting events (e.g. running marathons, canoeing trips or hiking). He believes that the remaining types can be hardly called sports tourism because professional athletes participate in them (the commercial effect).

Another type, which is thought controversial, is nostalgia sports tourism. The objects of interest in this case are both historical sites (e.g. ancient stadiums) and contemporary monumental sports facilities, especially the seats of famous clubs (e.g. the Manchester United, FC Barcelona, or Real Madrid stadiums), as well as museums of sport and sports clubs, commemoration and exhibitions devoted to sportsmen and women, Olympic Games preparation centres, training facilities, Olympic Villages, 'halls of fame', sportsmen's homes, or cemeteries where the famous are buried.

Alejziak believes that trips which involve visiting sports facilities are of cognitive nature, and sports facilities are no different to others such as museums, churches or old mines. This view is supported by Butowski who makes references to the classical tourism geography classification into recreational, sightseeing and specialised tourism. This classification, though a little outdated and incomplete, shows that each aspect of sports tourism may be ascribed to one of its types. Thus, trips made in order to visit sports facilities and watch sporting events can be included in sightseeing tourism, while participation in sports competitions (competitors, professionals) and various forms of sports activity - to specialised tourism. In Butowski's opinion, the term 'sports tourism' covers different, genetically distant forms of tourism and introduces terminological chaos to the literature on the subject - there are various forms of tourism displaying certain affinity to sport. This opinion is shared by D. Ilnicki, M. Pstrocka-Rak and I. Gruszka<sup>2</sup> from the Academy of Physical Education in Wrocław: '(...) the component forms of sports tourism are included under other types of tourism, such as pop-cultural tourism, business tourism or active recreational tourism'. Trips made in order to visit sports sites expand the relations between tourism and sport by those values related to contact with architecture, and not only strictly sport should also be stressed (SZCZECHOWICZ 2015, p. 42). Perhaps it would be appropriate (though often perceived as quite controversial) to use in this case the term 'cultural-sport tourism' (or 'cultural tourism of sport' (SAHAJ 2015, p. 101), which is defined as travel motivated by the wish to discover and experience sport as a cultural phenomenon - both contemporary and historical (WYSZOWSKA & MALCHROWICZ-MOŚKO 2015, p. 108).

Ending discussion on distinguishing the definitions of sports tourism, it is worth quoting Bośniacki, who says that the term 'sports tourism' is a new and trendy concept, which does not have stable academic foundations and introduces semantic chaos, 'making a career' in Polish tourism literature and trying to transform the terms 'specialised tourism' or 'active tourism'. As

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A. Pawlikowska-Piechotka<sup>2</sup> rightly notices, sports tourism rarely occurs in a 'pure form' – 'it can be assumed that during a trip its participants will be also taking part in cognitive, business or recreational tourism (...). The attempts to define it (...) may lead to excessively expanding or narrowing down this term, as well as distorting this concept and diverting from the popular meaning applied intuitively in everyday language'. To sum up, according to A. Zajadacz<sup>2</sup>, sports tourism cannot be treated as a homogenous phenomenon.

As regards human predispositions to undertake sports tourism, all the experts participating in the debate think that sports tourism in its active aspect requires an appropriate physical condition, good health as well as special preparedness and skill in using equipment. W. Alejziak believes that it is also connected with the formal requirement of possessing certain permits (e.g. sailing licences). In turn, in the case of the passive forms of sports tourism (nostalgia sports tourism, fan tourism), these predispositions may concern only an interest in sport which is enhanced by the desire to take part.

According to S. Bosiacki, participants of sports tourism usually use general tourist infrastructure (accommodation and catering facilities, transport and accompanying infrastructure) as well as the sports and recreation facilities available to all tourists, regardless of their motivation to travel. However, some specialist sports and recreation facilities are addressed at people with higher qualifications (e.g. marinas, climbing walls, cycling circuits). Another issue are the facilities used for sporting events, which are the purpose of travel for both passive and active tourists (but also professionals). They include modern stadiums, sports halls, as well as transport infrastructure (roads, parking lots). According to Z. Kruczek<sup>2</sup>, this development increases the competitiveness of cities and regions through organizing large national and international sporting events. A. Zajadacz² believes that sports tourism trips may not require any infrastructure but they can also heavily depend on the presence of a particular type (e.g. stadiums, arenas, sports halls).

It is forecast that by 2020 income from sports tourism will have increased by 5% each year (WEED 2008, p. 1). Fan tourism alone, also referred to as sporting event tourism, constitutes 14% of the global tourism market, and the value of this sector reaches 600 billion euros (ŚNIADEK 2013, p. 122). The participants point, however, to the difficulty in defining the scale, seasonality and other parameters of sports tourism. Bosiacki says that 'as it is impossible to define sports tourism clearly and precisely, it is difficult to establish its scale and seasonality'. In his opinion, it seems simple to evaluate the number of tourists (fans present at the largest sporting events) although defining the scale of this phenomenon during holiday or weekend

trips is impossible (and requires additional research on travel motivation). In Z. Kruczek's² opinion, the measure should be the economic effects of the tourists' daily expenses. In turn, according to A. Zajadacz, another basic measure is the number of tickets sold (for using infrastructure, participating in events). Sources of information about trips made by professionals (number of trips, number of athletes, destiantion, period of stay, seasonality, costs, etc.) include sports organizations, clubs, as well as the accommodation facilities where they stay. D. Ilnicki, M. Pstrocka-Rak and I. Gruszka claim that the choice depends on the level of spatial reference or a description of individual sporting events. It is not possible to state clearly whether seasonality occurs in sports tourism.

According to most experts taking part (A. Zajadacz, D. Ilnicki, M. Pstrocka-Rak, I. Gruszka, Z. Kruczek and A. Niezgoda), taking tourism development forecasts into account, in the near future further development in sports tourism may be expected both quantitatively and qualitatively (measured by the number of participants and its growing diversity). Sports tourism may become a driver of social and economic growth. Sporting events and active sports tourism may diversify the tourism product and have an influence on its innovativeness.

### 3. SUMMARY

The inquiry has shown an incoherent picture of sports tourism. Despite the adopted definition presenting sports tourism as involving a change in everyday life routine in order to participate in sports activity (active sports tourism), as well as to watch sporting events (event sports tourism/fan tourism), or in order to visit sports attractions (nostalgia/sentimental sports tourism), there are many interpretations of this phenomenon, as well as controversies. While the view that a participant in sports tourism may be active or passive (spectator, supporter) is acceptable, the details vary significantly.

Sports tourism is regarded as one of the most dynamically developing forms of tourism, but at the same time a debate continues whether it should be distinguished at all. What should be stressed is the question of various classifications of sports tourism, to which the experts participating in the inquiry refer to (active and passive participation in sports disciplines), as well as the fact that it is very difficult to ascribe a given activity to a specific type. Moreover, it is typical of different authors to use terms like 'active tourism', 'sports tourism', 'specialised' or 'adventure' and 'extreme' tourism. Additional problems are caused

by the fact that individual components of sports tourism are also included in other types of tourism, such as cultural, business or recreational. This is certainly related to the currently growing range of tourist and sports activities, and the development of new trends, fashion and the growing commercialization of leisure space. However, a useful tool helping to notice the differences between individual types of tourism involving physical activity and sports could be an analysis of the motivations and qualifications of participants. Depending on the participant's qualifications and their motivational structure (including the power of influence of the main motivation), skills, awareness and attitude, individual activities may be included as part of sports, specialised, adventure or extreme tourism.

An important question discussed by the experts is the inclusion of professional trips among forms of sports tourism (professional purposes, money, lack of the cognitive attitude so typical of tourism). This type of trip can hardly be called sports tourism because the participants are professionals (the commercial effect).

The understanding of sports tourism should then be synergic and integrate the features of both tourism and sports.

#### **FOOTNOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> The researchers participating in the debate included: Professor Wiesław Alejziak (The Academy of Physical Education, Krakow), Dr Stefan Bosiacki (Academy of Physical Education Poznań), Dr Leszek Butowski (Warmia-Mazury University in Olsztyn), Dr Dariusz Ilnicki (Wrocław University), Dr Małgorzata Pstrocka-Rak and Dr Izabela Gruszka (Academy of Physical Education, Wrocław), Professor Zygmunt Kruczek (Academy of Physical Education, Krakow), Dr Agnieszka Niezgoda (Economic University in Poznan), Pro-fessor Anna Pawlikowska-Piechotka (Academy of Physical Education, Warsaw/ Warsaw Technical University), Dr Alina Zajadacz (Mickiewicz University in Poznań).
- <sup>2</sup> The full statements of the author and all the experts participating in the discussion can be found at the end of this issue, in the part entitled "Voices in the discussion".

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