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## REMARKS ON SPORTS TOURISM AS A REFLECTION ON *RELATIONS BETWEEN TOURISM AND SPORT CONCERNING THE ORGANIZATION OF TOURISM STUDIES* BY J. KOTUS

**Abstract:** The text is a dispute with the author of the article, who attempted to define the concept of "sports tourism". The article is published in this issue, on pages 19-25.

**Keywords:** sports tourism, sport, tourism, terminology.

After reading J. Kotus' article entitled *Relations between Tourism and Sport concerning the Organisation of Tourism Studies*, I came to the conclusion that it was interesting, but also provoked debate especially on a conceptual plane and as regards an understanding of the two most dynamically developing and popular types of human activity, i.e. tourism and sport.

By establishing the goals, problems and assumptions of his work, J. Kotus starts a discussion on "the mutual relations of tourism and sport", making them his focus. He also asks some research questions: "Does tourism share some common ground with sport?" and "If so, is it a tourism activity?" In the final part of his work, the author hypothesizes that "there is a buffer zone between tourism and sport", which he calls "exploratory activity".

The aims, questions and assumptions presented by Kotus are sufficient to provoke a broader debate on the developments of tourism and sport. My remarks will mainly concern terminological issues, and because they have not been appropriately resolved will lead to many misunderstandings. Inspired by Kotus' article, I will focus mostly on the term 'sports tourism'.

Tourism, particularly dynamic in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. and in the early 21<sup>st</sup> c., has enforced multiple 'corrections' to definitions of tourism and the tourist, as discussed in *Turystyka* (KUREK, ed. 2007). Referring to those who are interested in specific definitions, let us recall here only the most important features that someone must have to be regarded as a tourist. They must have free time which they can spend on travelling, the trip must be voluntary, it must not be

commercial or connected to employment, it should change to a place of stay outside their place of permanent residence, should not last less than 24 hours (a trip including at least one night) or longer than one year. Generally, the purpose should involve a change in the natural and social environment, discovery and recreation, broadly understood as a regeneration of physical and mental strength.

As we can see from the above, the contemporary definition of 'visitors', divided into 'tourists' (at least a 24-hour stay) and 'excursionists' (shorter), is very inaccurate. This, combined with the high mobility of the global population, leads to tourism statistics internationally soaring to over one billion annually (not counting domestic tourists).

The numerous typologies and classifications of tourism according to a variety of criteria have relatively recently included sports tourism.

Let us take a closer look at how this form of tourism is defined by some authors. Describing selected forms of tourism, M. MIKA (2007) distinguished the following: cognitive, recreational, specialised, health, religious and business tourism. The cognitive group includes 'fan tourism', alongside environmental, cultural, ethnic, festival, and other types. This term covers tourist trips connected with sport and sporting events held outside the permanent place of residence, which they make in order to watch sports competitions live. Sports tourism understood in this way includes trips to individual sporting events (one match, one competition), tournaments in a single discipline lasting several days, and continental or world championships. The

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largest sporting event, attended by hundreds of thousands of spectators, is the Olympic Games. It is worth remembering that it was the Olympic Games that suspended wars in ancient Greece and encouraged people to travel to the places where they were held to take part in them. Those remote events can be regarded as the beginning of world sports tourism (LISZEWSKI 2005).

Identifying sports tourism with 'fan tourism' brings it closer to cultural or festival tourism, where the motivation for travel is a specific event in which we want to participate. Nowadays, this comparison is justifiable due to the location of the event. Huge investments in sports facilities are increasingly often planned in such a way that they can be used not only for sport competitions, but also for staging music festivals or performances by renowned artists. This functional flexibility, which refers to types of events and audiences, is observed in Poland e.g. at the Atlas Arena in Łódź, the National Stadium in Warsaw, and several other facilities.

In the work entitled *Turystyka*, the author of a popular course book, W.W. GAWORECKI (2010) describes selected forms of tourism, mentioning 'sports tourism' in 19<sup>th</sup> place. In his opinion, "sports tourism involves travelling outside a given person's place of permanent residence in order to participate in sports activity for recreation, to play sport professionally, to watch sporting events, visit famous sport-related attractions, for not longer than a year without a break, outside a person's everyday environment" (GAWORECKI 2010, p. 94).

Further on, with reference to the literature, the author states that sports tourism is identified with travel in order to:

- visit a place,
- participate in physical activity,
- watch a sports match,
- participate in a sporting event voluntarily.

According to W.W. Gaworecki, sports tourism combines watching sporting events or visiting sports facilities with actually playing sport. It seems that currently these two activities have been separated.

The above review of opinions and definitions encourages me even more strongly to try and formulate a definition of sports tourism as I see it.

Though very generally and imprecisely the term 'tourism', however often changed and extended, does define the phenomenon. The term 'sport', which is put together with tourism here, requires at least some further explanation. In my opinion, one of the most important features of sport is competition. Every person, participating in a sports competition, individually or in a team, tries to achieve a better result or beat an opponent, no matter whether the competition is held in a sports hall, at a stadium, in

a forest, in the water, etc. It is the competitiveness and the desire to win that encourage the person to train intensively that makes a 'champion' out of an 'average' person, although equipped with specific physical and mental predispositions.

Nowadays, in order to bring up a 'true' champion in a given discipline, parents place their child under the care of a coach. The life of this child is divided between school time and training.

The idea of practicing sport with the intention of maintaining good health has moved from sports clubs to 'leisure centres', groups and associations, also those which propagate active or specialised tourism and active recreation.

It is difficult to connect sport, which has been an economic undertaking for many years now, with tourism, or look at it as a model health-oriented activity. Confronted with the brutality of some sports or sportsmen, the slogan '*sport to zdrowie* – sport is health', which used to accompany sport competitions, has had to make room for advertisements of various hypermarket products or for other commercial slogans.

The main purpose of organizing modern professional sport (and only this kind of sport interests the media) is to make money. Both the competitors, for whom sport is a job ('athletes'), performing in specially built arenas (stadiums, halls, pitches, courts, etc.), and those who watch these events ('fans') participate in a great economic undertaking, based on a concrete calculation which includes the remuneration for the competitors, coaches, attendants, physicians and, finally, for clubs, the costs of renting the facilities, etc., as well as the income from ticket prices, TV broadcasts, advertisements and so on. What the organizers of such sports events care about is a positive financial result, while the spectators count on the dose of adrenaline provided by the victory of 'their' competitor, team, etc.

A very interesting example of sports tourism connected with the 28<sup>th</sup> Olympic Games in Athens can be found in the article by M. SŁONIEWSKI (2005). The author gives a fairly detailed presentation of the costs and the profits which the Games brought to Greece (Athens). Without going into detail, it is worth quoting an opinion expressed by the Greek Association of Tourism Enterprises, which claimed that in the year of the Olympic Games, Greece was visited by 10% fewer tourists than in the previous year. The reason turned out to be the inflated hotel prices in that year, as they expected an increased inflow of guests ('fans') wishing to watch the Olympics. Unfortunately, they were mistaken.

To sum up, I would like to express the opinion that the large numbers of people all over the world who travel for the general purpose of sport should be

divided into two groups: those for whom the motivation to travel is the desire to personally watch a sports competition (a fan, supporter), and those who travel to take part in active sport, especially its newer forms (e.g. cross-country or street running), as well as specialised tourism requiring suitable equipment.

It seems that for the first of these would be appropriate to use the term 'fan tourism', suggested by M. MIKA (2007), but adding the attribute 'sport' to it 'sports fan tourism'. It is necessary because the expression 'fan' may also refer to the fans of music bands, singers, festivals, games or other mass events.

'Sports fan tourism' would refer to trips made by those who meet the criteria of a tourist (see: definitions) and passively (as spectators) take part in sporting events (matches, tournaments, championships, Olympic Games, etc.). The number of large, international sporting events is growing from year to year, just like the number of people (fans) who come to watch these events and 'their' favourites (e.g. the ski jumping tournament in Zakopane). It seems right to expand our knowledge about this form of tourism and conduct substantial studies on an international scale.

I believe that the latter of the two groups – tourists who practice different types of activities and prefer active recreation, wanting to improve their health, experience strong emotions, manifest a certain style of living, make a public manifestation (running), etc – are a part of specialised or recreational tourism.

Finally, I would like to refer to the statement included by J. KOTUS (2016) in his article. He assumes that "there is a buffer zone between tourist and sport activity, in the form of exploratory/ cognitive activity, going beyond tourism and sport". First of all, I want to stress that I agree that "tourism and sports activity are different". However, I wish to point out that in some circumstances these activities co-occur and cannot exist without each other. It is difficult to imagine, for instance, a European Cup football match without footballers (sportsmen) or without their supporters (tourists). The former travel to work (and therefore cannot be regarded as tourists), and the latter are 'fan tourists', and their main aim is to see the match and the victory of their favourite team. These relations look different, at least because of the scale of the event, for example during a 10-km ski event for the world championship.

Returning to J. Kotus' theses about the "buffer zone in the form of exploratory/cognitive activity" – the author associates this activity with exploration, which is an activity typical of tourism, but also, according to J. Kotus, of certain sports disciplines.

At this point, it should be remembered that in an article concerning tourism space and its types, S. LISZEWSKI (1995) distinguished a tourism exploration space. In further studies conducted by academics of the Institute of Urban and Tourism Geography, University of Łódź, this concept was developed. They identified the tourism exploration of geographical space (geographical space discovered for the first time) and the individual space of tourism exploration (geographical space discovered for the first time by a particular person-tourist). Nowadays, the former tourism exploration space is rather small (generally, the land areas of the Earth have been discovered), while the latter is the everyday object of discovery at every place visited by a tourist for the first time.

In this sense, the 'buffer' between the tourist and the sport activity, i.e. exploration (discovery), occurs extremely rarely and probably concerns specialised tourism and extreme sports.

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