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IDENTIFYING STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL ASPIRATIONS IN THE TOURISM AND RECREATION INDUSTRY¹

Abstract: The aim of the article, in theoretical terms, is to investigate aspirations for entrepreneurship among students. In empirical terms, the objective is to determine the levels of aspiration in the field of entrepreneurship among students with a tourism and recreation profile in the business area related to their degree. In other words the scale of their willingness to set up their own business in the tourism and recreation industry. To achieve its goal, primary research was conducted using the questionnaire method (114 students of Tourism and Recreation took part). Moreover, desk research was used in the form of literature analysis, 'logical operations' and observation (especially in referring to practical aspects). The article consists of four substantive parts, an introduction and a conclusion. The results of the research show that the level of entrepreneurship aspiration among the students surveyed is high. The majority (89%) plan to set up their own business in the future in the area of tourism and recreation (76%), most often in the accommodation industry, event organisation or catering.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, business, tourism, recreation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the low unemployment rate in Poland at 5.1% (*Bezrobotni zarejestrowani...*, 2019), the contemporary labour market seems to be attractive for potential employees. Such a situation means a large number of work offers, i.e. the ease of finding one from the perspective of job seekers. However, when analysing the work offers more closely, it can be seen that a large number of them concern line positions with a rather low level of pay. This is particularly evident in the tourism and leisure industry where, due to its service nature, a large number of people are needed to perform basic activities. Therefore, students studying in tourism and recreation related faculties are usually at the end of their education faced with the choice of employment in a company at such a position associated with low pay, or starting their own business which is associated with recognition² and a chance for high financial status.

The aim of the article is to investigate the theoretical aspects concerning aspiration for entrepreneurship among students. In the empirical area, the objective is to determine the level of aspiration in the field of entrepreneurship among students with a tourism and

recreation profile in the business area related to their degree, in other words the scale of their willingness to set up their own business in the tourism and recreation industry.

The reason for undertaking these objectives is to draw attention to the lack of (cyclical and comprehensive) research on aspirations for student entrepreneurship in the tourism and recreation business which could then be aggregated on a national, regional or university scale.

To achieve this goal, primary research was conducted using a questionnaire. Respondents were students of Tourism and Recreation, at the former Faculty of Management and Economics of Services (now the Faculty of Economics, Finance and Management) and the Faculty of Physical Culture and Health Promotion (now the Faculty of Physical Culture and Health) of the University of Szczecin. Desk research was also used for an analysis of the literature on the management and economics of tourism, and industry reports on entrepreneurship. Moreover, 'logical operations' (mainly deduction and induction) and observation (especially in referring to practical aspects) were used as well.

2. THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURIAL ASPIRATIONS

The content of this part will be theoretical considerations of aspirations for entrepreneurship among students. Therefore, the notions of aspirations and of entrepreneurship, with particular emphasis on the participants, i.e. students, will be discussed.

The notion of aspiration is often associated with some kind of desire for the future, a willingness to achieve planned goals, or to realize some life ideals. According to Kopalinski (1989), aspiration is a desire (to achieve something) or a desire (to reach a goal, to break down something). Janowski (1977) considers aspiration to be an individual's relatively permanent and strong desire concerning the properties or states that are to characterise life in the future and the objectives to be achieved in that life.

As far as the reflections on entrepreneurship are concerned, it should be noted that this phenomenon is not new and has always existed, but its importance has evolved over the years. The concept is widely known and most commonly seen as a feature of energetic, active people who are ready for various undertakings (Kowalewski, 2018). According to the definition of the *Dictionary of Polish Language*, entrepreneurship is the ability to be enterprising, i.e. to have a spirit of initiative, resourcefulness, willingness to take up various matters and the ability to deal with them successfully (Doroszewski, 1966; Drabik, Kubiak-Sokół, Sobol, Wiśniakowska, Stankiewicz, 2018).

Entrepreneurship, as a concept widely present in the academic literature, is not clearly defined. This is mainly due to research perspectives on entrepreneurship in various disciplines, e.g. economics (where entrepreneurship is treated as a regulatory function of the market which is reflected in the ability of enterprises to destroy creatively, take risks, use market opportunities), management sciences (where entrepreneurship is most often treated as the use of entrepreneurial opportunities in the process of creation and functioning of an enterprise), sociology (where entrepreneurship is considered through the prism of socio-cultural conditions), or psychology (where entrepreneurship is analysed in the context of characteristics and character of an entrepreneurial person) (Korpysa, 2016).

The first entrepreneurial concept in 1730 was outlined by Cantillon who called it the ability to see an opportunity and use one provided by the market in order to achieve a motivating profit for further effective action (Siemiek, 2010). In 1776, Smith saw entrepreneurship as the activity of a person who has a high propensity to save and use the money saved for specific ventures. Around 1800, Say understood this issue as the behavior of an entrepreneur who moves resources from an area

of lower productivity to one of higher, allowing a profit to be made (Gołębiowski, 2014 after: Mazur, 2015; Piecuch, 2010). Schumpeter (1931, after: Wechta, 1997), on the other hand, linked the concept of entrepreneurship with innovation, i.e. with action aimed at creating a new product or service. According to Drucker, on the other hand, entrepreneurship is a feature of a given person or institution but it should not be limited only to the sphere of economic institutions, "entrepreneurship is neither science nor art. It is a practice" (Drucker, 1992 after: Gašiorowska-Mącznik, 2017). Entrepreneurship is a philosophy of people, a functioning of enterprise, a driving force and factor in the development of companies, regions and economies (Piepiech, 2010).

Currently, in the economic literature, entrepreneurship is most often identified with establishing and running a business. This applies both to setting up small, family businesses as well as medium-sized enterprises (Łochnicka, 2016). Additionally, Siemiek describes entrepreneurship as taking related risk in order to obtain certain benefits, mainly of a material nature (Siemiek, 2010).

Entrepreneurship aspirations among students should not be confused with student entrepreneurship. This is because it is a component of academic entrepreneurship (Korpysa, 2016) defined very broadly as the business activity of students, graduates and academics to set up a business, to create spin-off companies (if there is no involvement of the university in the business) and spin-out companies (if there is involvement of the university in the venture) or possibly as part of a 'business on trial' in the legal formula of the Academic Business Incubator (Czyżewska, 2018), in order to commercialise research results (Poznańska, 2014; Tamowicz, 2006).

Academic or even student entrepreneurship is a subject of research by many academics, as evidenced by the works of Ćwiek (2019), Kilar & Rachwała (2014), Kunasz (2008), Siemieniak & Rembiasz (2019) or Wójtowicz (2014). However, there are definitely fewer studies on the issue of entrepreneurship among students in the context of the tourism and recreation business (Bednarska, Majewska, 2008; Buchta, Skiert, Sikora, 2012).

The formation of entrepreneurial aspirations among students at universities is to introduce young people into a knowledge-based society and prepare them for the labour market. In addition, appropriate knowledge management and the skillful use of resources (capital), combined with the ability to take advantage of emerging opportunities, can ultimately contribute to building a more competitive society (Multan, 2015).

To summarise the theoretical issues presented, for the purposes of this study, the aspirations for entrepreneurship among students will be understood as the potential (in the future) aspirations of students in the professional sphere to start and run a business.

3. IDENTIFICATION OF THE TOURISM AND RECREATION BUSINESS AREA

A definition of a tourist or recreation business is difficult to find in the academic literature and the use of these terms by researchers in academic works is rather intuitive. For the purpose of the objective here business will be understood as the activity of enterprises providing tourism and recreation services.

There are many definitions of tourist services in the literature on tourism economics. According to Gawo-recki (2000) these are any socially useful activity aimed at satisfying material and non-material (spiritual) tourist needs. Tourist services are connected with satisfying needs not only during travel and tourist stays, but also before (Kornak, Montygierd-Łoyba, 1985) and after (Łazarek, 1999) and do not serve directly to produce material objects (Kornak, Montygierd-Łoyba, 1985).

Taking into account these definitions of tourism services, a set of enterprises providing them can be listed:

- accommodation providers,
- catering providers,
- travel agencies,
- guide service providers,
- courier service providers,
- transport service providers,
- event organisation providers.

Recreational services are, in the academic literature, much less frequently defined compared to tourist services. In general, they can be defined as useful intangible products in the process of individual and collective consumption, meeting the needs of society for recreation. They are all activities which enable people to renew their physical and mental strength by other means than those resulting from the duties of everyday life (Panasiuk, 2011).

Given the accepted understanding of recreational services, those providing them can be counted as:

- entities providing event animation services (e.g. hotel animations, escape rooms (Stasiak, 2016, 2019, etc.)),
- entities providing physical recreation services (e.g. gyms, dance schools, etc.).

Summing up the discussion on the identification of tourism and recreation as a business area, it should be noted that the quoted examples of enterprises constitute a set of possible answers for respondents. They could also indicate the type of business which, in their opinion, could be included in the analysed profile of a business.

4. RESEARCH METHOD

The article was prepared on the basis of a critical analysis of the literature on the subject (theoretical part) and a questionnaire survey conducted among students

(empirical part). The empirical part of the research is aimed at answering the question of what the level of entrepreneurship aspiration is among students with a tourism and recreation profile in the area of business related to their degree.

All the students of Tourism and Recreation (each mode, type and year of study) conducted at the former Faculty of Management and Economics of Services (now Faculty of Economics, Finance and Management) and the Faculty of Physical Culture and Health Promotion (now Faculty of Physical Culture and Health) of the University of Szczecin were invited to participate in the research.

The survey was conducted between 6.04.2019 and 16.05.2019 during classes and was preceded by information from the interviewer during which its aim was presented and their course discussed.

On the basis of the information received from the teaching staff concerning the number of students in the field of Tourism and Recreation, 125 questionnaires were prepared. Finally, 114 correctly completed questionnaires were accepted for analysis, i.e. 91.2% of the population.

The survey questionnaire consisted of five substantive questions covering eight aspects. The diversity of the studied group was indicated by gender (76.3% women and 23.7% men), age (students aged 18-29), mode of study (93.9% of respondents studying full-time and 6.1% part-time), level of study (84.2% of respondents studying at bachelor level and 15.8% at the master's) and year of study (47.3% were first year students, 20.2% second year, 16.7% third year; and 15.8% were first year master's), place of residence (39.5% came from a city with over 100 000 residents, 33.3% from a town below 100 000 and 27.2% from smaller settlements), professional experience based on an employment contract, a commission or a project (91.2% of students with such experience and 8.8% without) and professional experience in the area of tourism and recreation (59.6% of respondents with such experience and 40.4% without).

5. RESEARCH RESULTS

This part of the study will present three aspects concerning entrepreneurship aspiration among the surveyed students:

- the respondent's declaration of an intention to run a business,
- the relationship of the respondent's hypothetical business activity with the degree,
- the respondents indication of a specific business objective, in the area of tourism and recreation, in which they saw their professional activity.

In relation to the respondent's declarations concerning intentions to run a business, the vast majority, as

much as 89% (102), considered running one immediately after graduation (37), or not immediately but in the future (65) (Figure 1). Such a high result of entrepreneurship aspiration among students does not differ significantly from the results of surveys conducted in 2018 by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development on a group of 8000 adult Poles. Their analysis showed that 86% of those surveyed perceive entrepreneurship as a “good career path, i.e. that one’s own company is a good way to make a career” (*Raport z badania...*, 2019, p. 13). According to the cited report, the attitude of Polish society towards entrepreneurship is currently the highest since the beginning of the GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) survey in Poland, i.e. since 2011 (*Raport z badania...*, 2019).

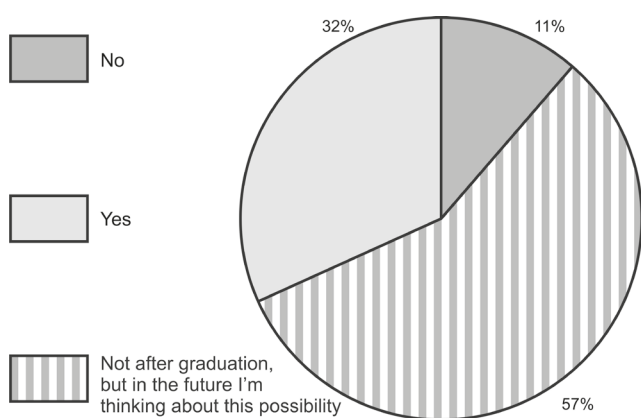


Figure 1. Declaration of the respondents' intentions to conduct their own business activity
Source: author based on a survey

With regard to the relation between the respondent's hypothetical business activity and their education, more than 75% declared that the activities of their potential company would have a tourism and recreation profile (Figure 2). Such a result is not surprising and is probably related to the area of expertise (Tourism and Recreation) in which to pursue professional activity and the specialist knowledge acquired. The arguments hypothetically allow respondents to believe that it will be easier for them in the tourism and recreation industry than in one in which they have no basic knowledge. Moreover, most of them, about 60%, have already had professional experience in the area (either in the form of employment on a contract or in the form of a 140-hour apprenticeship), so they know the problems and challenges, but also the opportunities that characterize the tourism and recreation business.

As regards the respondents' indication of a specific subject for a tourism and recreation business activity, opinions varied (Figure 3). It is worth noting that during the survey the students were willing to mark several variants, however they were asked to indicate as few activities as possible and of the closest interest

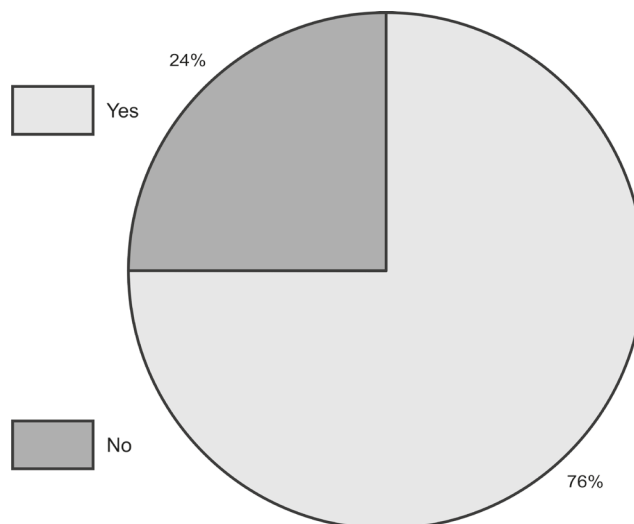


Figure 2. Relationship between the respondent's hypothetical business activity and degree
Source: author based on a survey

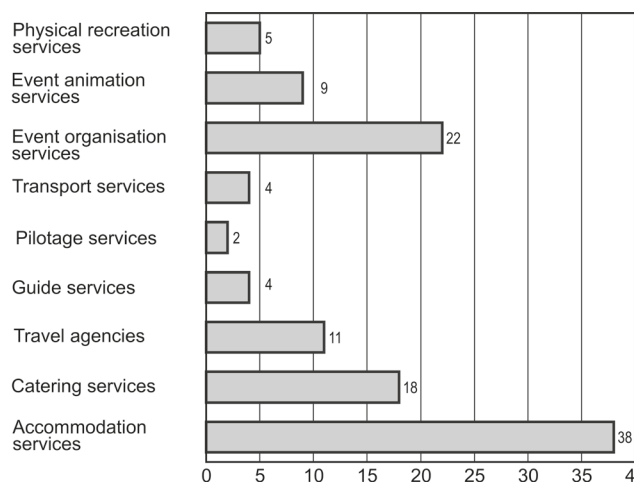


Figure 3. Subjects of business activity by respondent
Source: author based on a survey

to the respondent. The survey shows that the most often indicated related to the provision of accommodation services, event organisation and catering, and the least frequent to activities related to the provision of courier, guide and transport services. Such a great interest in providing accommodation services may be related to the large proportion who were first year students (47.3%), who in the semester during which the research took place, were doing classes on the “Hospitality” course. However, the highest rank, the provision of accommodation services, seems to be only a declaration, as the capital requirements for establishing this type of business do not translate into real financial possibilities for over 37% of respondents. The second activity in terms of respondents' interest, the provision of event organisation services, may also be related to the specific group of students, as in the academic year 2018/2019 a course on “Management of sports and tourist events” started

for the first time. Unlike other specializations such as “Tourism Manager”, “Tourism Business”, “Health Basics of Tourism and Recreation” or “Motion and Ecotourism Animator”, it is one referring to a specific type of activity in the area of tourism and recreation business. However, the provision of catering services may be related to the fact that catering as an industry is one of the most frequently chosen places for students to do their apprenticeship. It should also be noted that the respondents had the opportunity to indicate their own leisure activities outside the list, but none of them took advantage of this opportunity.

To conclude, the level of entrepreneurship aspiration among the surveyed students can be assessed as high. Most (89%) are planning to set up their own business in the future in tourism and recreation, specifically in the accommodation industry, event organisation or catering. As the research is not representative, its results cannot be generalised. However, the data obtained provide interesting information on the level among students, thus providing a basis for academic and business discussion. A continuation of the author's research on student entrepreneurship, including additional aspects (e.g. self-assessment of aptitude for managing a business), as well as an extension of the scope of the study (generalizing it for the whole of Poland), is also being considered.

6. CONCLUSION

The process of forming aspiration for entrepreneurship among students, which has positive rather than negative associations in a business context, is a serious challenge for universities and the entire higher education system in Poland. It requires both a personal and team approach to the student in order to provide comprehensive support.

The conducted research seems to be satisfactory from the point of view of an assessment of the university's activity in the field of entrepreneurship, as evidenced by the high level of aspiration among students with a tourism and recreation profile related to their degree program.

However, reality must be taken into account. According to the research carried out by the Academic Career Office of the University of Szczecin on monitoring the professional careers of graduates in all faculties, only 4.4% run their own business of which 37.5% is consistent with their field of study and 25% only partly (Akademickie Biuro Karier Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2017). Similar results were obtained by Jelonek, Kasparck and Migrowski (2015) claiming that in the case of young people (under 30) only 4% of them are “self-employed”. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn

about the rather low level of entrepreneurship among the young.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that this study presents only a small part of the issue of entrepreneurship aspiration among students. The subject matter requires further exploration on the basis of theoretical considerations and empirical research. An interesting aspect will be to find a cause-and-effect relationship between the results obtained concerning the plans of students after graduation to run their own business, and statistical data on the implementation of these plans.

ENDNOTES

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² Nearly 8 out of 10 (76%) Poles are of the opinion that those who have set up their own companies and have been successful should be recognised – *Report from the survey Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2017/2018 Polska*, PARP 2019, s. 8.

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