

## MIDDLE-AGED WOMEN IN POLAND AS A SEGMENT OF TOURIST SERVICES RECIPIENTS

Agata Balińska✉

Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW

### ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to present middle-aged women as a segment of recipients on the tourism services market. The article characterizes women's tourist activity. The available statistical data was reviewed. A survey (hand-out survey) was also conducted on a non-random sample of 155 women. The following research problems were used in empirical studies: What are the reasons for women giving up tourist trips? What form of organization and length of trips do the respondents prefer? Is there a relationship between the respondents' ability to drive a car and their tourist activity? In whose company do women usually go? What goals decide about undertaking tourist activity and which factors have the greatest impact on the organization of a tourist trip? What is the dream tourist trip of the respondents? The research allowed to determine the ways of spending time preferred by women during tourist trips. Women willingly participated in domestic and foreign tourist trips. They usually left with their family or partner, and the main reason for the trip was the desire to entertain, get to know interesting places and rest. Factors that were most important for the respondents were the weather, leisure places and company. The price was definitely less important.

**Key words:** women, customer segment, tourist trips

**JEL codes:** E7, H31, P46, Z32

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism market is very diverse. It is subjected to socio-consumer trends that exist on the consumer market. That is why we observe a significant diversity of vacation offers. In addition to the typical ones, appealing to a wide audience, there are more and more offers targeting various customer segments. The literature review shows that customer segmentation in tourism market can be based on various criteria and there are different approaches to this process [Jefmański 2006, Nowacki and Zmyślony 2012, Manczak 2014]. In the author's opinion it can be argued that middle-aged women (40+) form an attractive and underestimated segment of tourism participants. Assuming after E. Kąciak [2011] that

creating a market segment involves answering the following questions: who? (consumer description e.g. socio-demographic characteristics), how many? (segment size) and why? (dimensions of cognitive and motivational structures typical for consumers in this segment), it can be argued that the adopted research group constitutes a consumer segment. It would also be justified to ask if creating this customer segment could be useful.

There are many conditions determining the utility of customer segments and the most common include [Mazurek-Łopacińska 2005]: accessibility (the ability to advertise and sell products), measurability, size, the possibility of providing effective service, stability, traceability, homogeneity, sensitivity (customers are likely to resonate with marketing instruments).

Agata Balińska <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8777-9955>

✉ [agata\\_balinska@sggw.pl](mailto:agata_balinska@sggw.pl)

As no segment is completely homogeneous, it can be assumed that also the customer segment adopted by the author meets the conditions of utility. In addition to the obvious variable, which is age, this group shares other qualities. Middle-aged women increasingly often enjoy a stable professional, financial and family situation. They often have experience in combining part-time or full-time work with childcare (in Poland in 2017, 10.6% of women worked part-time, of which 16.5% due to childcare). For men these figures were respectively: 4.4% and 4.5% [GUS 2018]. Women of this age often feel the need to do something for themselves; they seek self-fulfillment and personal development. These needs are analyzed in numerous popular psychological publications and press articles, as well as created by advertising messages. Women are also the most frequent recipients of marketing campaigns, which is reflected in the advertisements placed in mass media.

The tourist activity of women has also been analyzed in scientific literature [Berbeka 1999, Kieźel 2010, Niemczyk 2010, Łubkowska et al. 2014]. However, there are too few studies taking into account other variables, such as age, in addition to gender. The scarcity of such research is also visible in public statistics databases.

The typical tourism offer targeted to women (including women aged 40+) is a spa & wellness holiday, rejuvenating, slimming or cleansing treatments etc. Proposing mainly this type of offer is a manifestation of stereotypical perception of women and their needs. This has prompted the author to undertake the research that was presented in this article. The aim of this study was to explore 40+ women's participation in tourism, with particular focus on destination choices, favorite leisure activities and preferred trip organization.

The study reviewed the available secondary data illustrating the tourist activity of women. Additionally, a survey research was carried out on a random sample of 155 women aged 40+. The following research issues have been formulated in empirical studies:

- What are the reasons for the resignation of women from tourist trips?
- What type of organization and length of trips do the respondents prefer?
- Does the ability of the respondents to drive a car affect their tourist activity?

- In whose company do women travel most often?
- What are the goals that decide about taking up tourism activities and which factors have the greatest impact on the organization of a tourist trip?
- What is the dream of a tourist's trip?

The collected empirical material was subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis. The test results are presented in tables and graphs. The U Mann-Whitney test was used to analyze the relationships between selected variables.

### **The female tourism market**

The proportion of women in the population of Poland is 51.6%. The majority of women (61.3%) live in cities. Women aged 40+ are 53.1% of the female population, of which almost half (49.2%) are in the age group of 40–59 (they constitute 26.1% of the female population in general) [GUS 2017]. The data published by Poland (GUS) also show that women were slightly more active as tourists than men. Nearly one in five women (19.8%) participated in short-term domestic trips, 25.5% in long-term trips and 9.2% in foreign trips lasting a minimum two days. In the case of men, these figures were respectively: 18.5%, 23.2% and 8.0% [GUS 2014]. In the aforementioned GUS study a detailed analysis of long-term trips (minimum four days) was carried out also with regard to gender. It shows that a statistical Polish woman usually takes a trip once a year (85.5%), organizes the trip by herself (80.0%), uses a car as a means of transport (70.5%), stays with her family or friends (34.8%) or rents a guestroom in private guesthouse (22.8%), chooses a destination situated 201–700 km from the place of residence and travels accompanied by people from outside the household (76%) [GUS 2014]. Women most often participate in one long-term trip per year and in 76.8% of cases the destination is located no more than 500 km from the place of residence. Most often these are privately organized leisure trips taken in company of people from outside the household. Most frequently women travel by car; they stay with their family or rent a guestroom in private guesthouses. The short-term trips are less researched. However, GUS statistics show that 44.8% of women participate only in one short trip a year, but 43.3% in 2–5 trips. Also in this case, they most often (64.4%) stay with the family. The indicated means of

transport and place of accommodation are preferred by Poles in general, regardless of gender [GUS 2019].

In response to the changing tourist needs of women, there are more and more actors (travel agencies, foundations, holiday platforms) that direct their offer to this group of customers. This is interesting from the point of view of cognitive and practical phenomenon and as such requires research.

### Empirical research results

The empirical study was carried out using the survey technique. The questionnaires were distributed in Warsaw agglomeration. The study was conducted in the first half of 2017 years in the center of Warsaw. 155 women participated in the studies. The choice of women living in the agglomeration was intentional and resulted from the high tourism activity of the inhabitants of this area, a specific fashion for short- and long-term trips and their high mobility.

The sample was dominated by women in the 40–50 age group (47.5%), and 51–60 years (31.0%). The remaining ones were in the age groups: 61–70 years (10.3%) and 71+ (11.0%). More than half had higher education (58.0%), 28.4% – secondary education, 9.7% – basic vocational education and 3.9% – primary education. The place of residence of respondents varied, i.e. 47.1% lived in a city of over 100,000 inhabitants, 25.2% – in rural areas, 11.0% – in a town up to 15 thousand inhabitants and 16.8% in a city of 15–100 thousand residents. Only 12.9% of respondents declared that they were single. The remaining ones declared that their households consisted of: two persons (26.5%), three persons (24.5%), four persons (22.6%) and 5+ (13.4%). The vast majority did not have minor children (68.4), 13.5% had one child, 10.3% – two children, 7.1% – three and more. A large share of respondents was professionally active. Over a half (54.8%) worked full-time and 18.1% ran their own business. Retired women and those receiving disability benefits were 18.1%. The rest stayed at home (6.5%), or took on irregular jobs (2.5%). Respondents' personal financial situation was rated as very good (11.0%), good (38.7%), average (42.6%), poor (7.7%), very poor (11.0%).

Taking into consideration the adopted research area, it was important to determine respondents' mobility

understood as the ability and willingness to travel. The most numerous group (43.9%) declared that they are happy to drive a car on distant, also unknown routes, 12.9% of respondents drive only on well-known, short routes (to work, shops, children's school), and as many as 43.2% do not drive at all.

The tourist activity of respondents was quite diverse. Most often they took one trip a year (31.6%) or two trips a year (29%). More frequent trips were declared less often (by 18.7% of respondents). The number of respondents travelling once every few years was 12.9% and 7.7% declared that they travel rarely. There was no statistically significant relationship between women driving a car and their tourist activity, which seems surprising (Manna-Whitney U test:  $Z = 0.28747$   $p = 0.773750$ ).

The reasons for resigning from travels varied. Respondents mentioned lack of financial resources (32%), lack of travel companionship (21.3%), lack of time (18.7%), no need to travel (13.3%) and lack of suitable offer (10.7%). There was no statistically significant relationship between the reasons for resignation from tourist trips and demographic variables of the respondents.

The surveyed women most often traveled with their family or a partner and less often alone (Table 1). Almost half of respondents sometimes made trips with friends. The benefits of trips without partners are drawn Durko and Stone [2017]. Their research shows that female trips only in a women's society, without families or partners have a positive attitude not only on relations between women, but also strengthen bonds within the family.

Table 2 provides information on the length of stay and people accompanying the trips of the respondents.

They usually took week-long or longer trips. The longest trips were used by the oldest women and those living in big cities (confirmed by Mann-Whitney U test). Short-term trips were chosen relatively rarely. Mostly, respondents planned trips together with their travel companions (48.4%) and alone (22.6%). The travel agent's services were used only by 19.3% of the surveyed women.

The study aimed to determine which individual goals are important in the process of making tourist destination choices (Fig. 1).

**Table 1.** Travel companions of respondents (%)

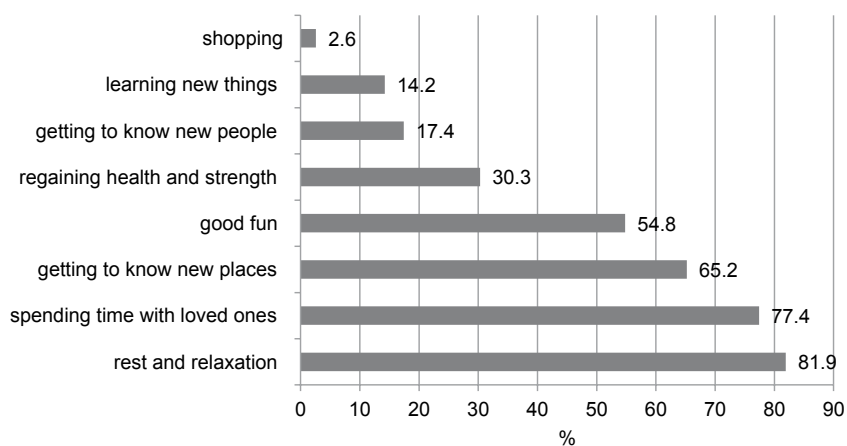
Frequency	Travel companions			
	only with a partner/ husband	with friends	with family	alone
Most often	50.3	40.6	74.8	7.1
Sometimes	29.7	47.1	24.6	21.9
Never	20.0	12.3	0.6	71.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own research.

**Table 2.** Length of the respondents' journey (%)

Frequency	Length of trip (number of days)			
	1	2–3	4–7	>7
Most often	12.9	34.7	56.1	49.0
Sometimes	38.1	58.1	38.1	35.5
Never	49.0	7.2	5.8	15.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: own research.



**Fig. 1.** Destinations of respondents' tourist trips

Source: own research.

Respondents named the most important reasons for trips: rest and spending time with their loved ones (77.4%), and for the least important shopping (2.6%). Age and other demographic variables did not decide on leading goals (Mann-Whitney U test from  $Z = 0.29$  at  $p = 0.774$  to  $Z = -0.59$  at  $p = 0.550$ ). Other researchers

also point to the very wide impact of tourism on human well-being, including Smith and Diekmann [2017], Khan [2011].

The study also aimed to investigate what factors counted most in the process of a trip organization (Table 3).

**Table 3.** The importance of selected factors in the process of organizing a trip

	most important	medium importance	not important	total
Price	34.7	64.5	0.8	100.0
Destination	63.1	36.1	0.8	100.0
Time of trip	33.1	65.1	1.8	100.0
Weather	42.4	55.8	1.8	100.0
Attractions	27.4	70.6	2.0	100.0
Travel companions	48.3	50.0	1.7	100.0
Accommodation	29.9	70.1	0.0	100.0
Length of trip	13.8	78.2	8.0	100.0

Source: own research.

In the decision-making process respondents focused most on destination and travel companions. The length of the trip was of lesser importance. The vast majority (79%) preferred to travel by car and it was true also for those respondents who did not drive themselves.

Respondents were also asked to evaluate the attractiveness of various types of trips (differing in theme). The list includes elements that are most often included in trips for women and several less popular proposals (Table 4).

The holidays that scored the highest were beach holidays and “city breaks”. This last proposition enjoys the last time, more and more popular among tourists re-

gardless of the gender. City break offers are offered by many travel agencies. Also, city managers, airlines and hoteliers promote this type of spending time. The least attractive were weight loss holidays, SPA & wellness holidays and art and craft workshops. There was no statistically significant difference between the age and the place of residence of the respondents and the perceived attractiveness of the various forms of rest (verification was performed by a Whitney-Mann U test, the value of the testing between age and attractiveness Rest:  $Z = 0.51$  at  $p = 0.61$ , and between the place of residence and attractiveness:  $Z = 0.61$ ,  $p = 0.54$ ).

**Table 4.** Attractiveness of various tourist trips in the opinion of respondents (on a scale of 1–5, where a higher score indicates a more attractive holiday and 5 is the highest score, % of respondents)

Type of trip	Evaluation/score					Average score
	1	2	3	4	5	
Weight loss holiday	42.6	25.8	22.6	4.5	4.5	2.0
Group trip with attractions such as art and craft workshops	31.0	21.3	27.1	17.4	3.2	2.4
Fitness holidays (with sports activities e.g. Nordic walking etc.	27.7	18.7	27.7	11.6	14.2	2.7
Trekking in the mountains	25.8	16.1	20.6	16.1	21.3	2.9
SPA & wellness holiday	24.5	14.2	16.8	26.5	18.1	2.3
Seaside & beach holiday	18.1	9.0	19.4	26.5	27.1	3.4
Guestfarm holiday	18.1	20.0	32.3	22.6	7.1	2.8
City-break	12.9	16.1	21.9	30.3	18.7	3.2

Source: own research.

The surveyed women most often searched for holiday destinations on the Internet (social networking sites, thematic sites), asked friends and looked for inspirations in magazines (also online editions). The insightful search of women for information preceding the purchase process is also indicated by Zalega [2017]. Friends are an important source of information all the time. Contact with him is less often direct, and more often through social media.

## SUMMARY

The official statistics, in which women were separated as a group, showed that they are active participants in the tourism market. They take domestic and foreign trips for different purposes and in diverse company. There are also more and more travel offers dedicated only to women and they go beyond relaxation in spa & wellness facilities. The customer segment consisting of women aged 40+ seems particularly interesting. The empirical research presented in the paper showed that female respondents were quite active tourists. The main reasons for limiting tourist trips was the financial situation and the lack of a person who could accompany during the trip. The ability to drive a car did not determine their tourism activity.

Most often they traveled with family or only with a partner, but very rarely alone. Their most important travel goals, apart from rest and relaxation, included cognitive goals and entertainment. The most important factors taken into account when organizing a trip included a tourist destination, travel companions and weather. Interestingly, the least desirable by the respondents were trips on slimming vacations, to the spa and handmade workshops. The most attractive types of holiday indicated by respondents were seaside and beach holidays, city breaks and trips to the mountains.

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## **KOBIETY W ŚREDNIM WIEKU W POLSCE JAKO SEGMENT ODBIORCÓW USŁUG TURYSTYCZNYCH**

### **STRESZCZENIE**

Celem artykułu jest prezentacja kobiet w średnim wieku jako segmentu odbiorców na rynku usług turystycznych. W artykule dokonano charakterystyki aktywności turystycznej kobiet. Zaprezentowano wyniki badań ankietowych (przeprowadzono je na próbie 155 kobiet) pokazujących aktywność turystyczną i organizację wyjazdów przez kobiety. Określono preferowane przez nie sposoby spędzania czasu podczas wyjazdów turystycznych. Kobiety chętnie uczestniczą w krajowych i zagranicznych wyjazdach turystycznych. Zwykle wyjeżdżają z rodziną lub partnerem, a głównym powodem wyjazdów jest chęć rozrywki, poznania ciekawych miejsc i odpoczynku. Co ciekawe jako najmniej atrakcyjne respondentki wymieniały wczasy odchudzające, wyjazdy do hotelu spa oraz z ofertą warsztatów rękodzieła artystycznego. Czynniki, które dla respondentek miały największe znaczenie to pogoda, miejsce wypoczynku oraz towarzystwo. Zdecydowanie mniejsze znaczenie miała cena. Co ciekawe niewielki wpływ na sposób organizacji wyjazdów ma umiejętność jeżdżenia samochodem przez respondentki.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kobiety, segment odbiorców, wyjazdy turystyczne