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STUDIA ECOLOGIAE ET BIOETHICAE



22/4 (2024)

The State Forests' "Spend the Night in the Forest" Program in the Context of Education for Responsible Tourism in Poland

Program Lasów Państwowych „Zanocuj w lesie”
w kontekście edukacji na rzecz odpowiedzialnej turystyki w Polsce

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Received: 23 May, 2024; Revised: 4 Oct, 2024; Accepted: 14 Oct, 2024

Abstract: The aim of the article is to present the key elements of the State Forests' "Spend the Night in the Forest" program as well as the selected results of its evaluation in the view of education for responsible tourism. The article is divided into two parts. The first, theoretical part, presents the assumptions of the idea of *Leave No Trace* outdoor ethics, which tally with the paradigm of education for responsible tourism. Its task is to develop the skills, knowledge and competences in the field of rational and responsible use of natural resources. At the same time, it lays the grounds for the "Spend the Night in the Forest" program. In the second, empirical part, the author presents selected results of the evaluation of the "Spend the Night in the Forest" program including demographic characteristics of its participants, their motivations, preferences regarding the choice of area, the way of organizing the camping, types of activities undertaken as well as assessment of the principles corresponding to the *Leave No Trace* idea. In addition, the article presents suggestions regarding the division of respondents into user groups. The cited results indicate that the respondents declared their willingness to take care of the forest as a common good and tried to educate and influence other tourists camping in a way inconsistent with the *Leave No Trace* principles. It can be concluded that the "Spend the Night in the Forest" program supports education for responsible tourism. By enabling the participants to experience nature in its natural state, it helps rebuild human relationship with nature. Moreover, the program serves the purpose of shaping public awareness that we all influence the environment and that we all are responsible for its current and future state.

Keywords: responsible tourism, outdoor ethics, sustainable tourism, Spend the Night in the Forest, Poland, *Leave No Trace*

Streszczenie: Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie głównych założeń programu Lasów Państwowych "Zanocuj w lesie" oraz wybranych wyników oceny jego przebiegu w kontekście edukacji na rzecz odpowiedzialnej turystyki. Artykuł został podzielony na dwie części. W pierwszej – teoretycznej, zaprezentowano założenia idei etyki outdoorowej *Leave No Trace* wpisujące się w paradygmat edukacji na rzecz odpowiedzialnej turystyki. Ma ona za zadanie wyposażyć ludzi w umiejętności, wiedzę, kompetencje w zakresie racjonalnego i odpowiedzialnego korzystania z zasobów przyrodniczych. Stanowi jednocześnie merytoryczny fundament programu "Zanocuj w lesie". W drugiej, empirycznej, autor przedstawia wybrane wyniki ewaluacji programu "Zanocuj w lesie" w tym cechy demograficzne uczestników, ich motywacje, preferencje dotyczące wyboru obszaru, sposób organizacji biwaku, rodzaje podejmowanej aktywności oraz ocena regulaminu programu nawiązującego do założeń *Leave No Trace*. Ponadto prezentuje propozycje podziału respondentów na grupy użytkowników. Przytoczone wyniki wskazują, że ankietowani deklarowali chęć dbałości o las jako o wspólne dobro, starali

się edukować i wpływać na osoby biwakujące w sposób niezgodny z zasadami *Leave No Trace*. Można wnioskować, że program "Zanocuj w lesie" wspiera edukację na rzecz odpowiedzialnej turystyki, pozwala doświadczać przyrody w jej naturalnym stanie, a tym samym na nowo zbudować relacje z naturą i kształtować świadomość, że każdy swoim zachowaniem wpływa na środowisko i jest odpowiedzialny za jego obecny i przyszły stan.

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka odpowiedzialna, etyka outdoorowa, turystyka zrównoważona, Zanocuj w lesie, Polska, *Leave No Trace*

Introduction

The increasing weight of civilization problems of the end of the 20th century has induced a significant change in thinking about the natural environment and its relationship with socio-economic development. The effects of extensive economy began to arouse concern related to the depletion of natural resources and led to a re-evaluation of the concept of development focused solely on the increase in production, consumption and exploitation of nature (Rokicka and Woźniak 2016). Progressive degradation of the natural environment caused societies to rethink further directions of human development. It was noticed that the growing civilization threats are not only the effect of imperfect technology, but above all the result of the defective system of values and lifestyle prevailing in the societies of the rich North¹. The cause was indicated as the crisis of man – the system of values, institutions, principles of cognition and their maladjustment to reality – as well as the irrational exploitation of natural resources in order to achieve short-term maximization of profits (Skowroński

2006, 50). The ideas of a new "quality of life" lived in greater harmony with nature began to gain increasing popularity, while, at the same time, the ecological problems became the matter of concern of specialists representing various scientific disciplines (Rokicka and Woźniak 2016). The concept that gained universal recognition was the idea of sustainable development,² which was worked out by the World Commission on Environment and Development and first presented in the *Brundtland Report* of 1987. Initially, discussions concerning sustainable development were focused on need to reduce the negative impact of economies on the natural environment. Over the years, the concept has entered the mainstream of discussions on socio-economic development, and its latest program, the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", was adopted in 2015.

1. Sustainable Tourism – Responsible Education

Changes in the approach to economic development and thus to the use of natural resources also included tourism – a phenomenon of the 20th century. Tourism, as a new global socio-economic phenomenon, on the one hand supports the development of regions and the economic development of countries and, on the other hand, contributes to the devastation of natural, cultural and social resources. As noted by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon – over a billion tourists travel each year, and

¹ Global (rich) North – (poor) South – terms defining the division of the world according to differences in the level of development. The criterion used for the division is the quality of life, integrating the socio-economic dimension (constituted by, among others, consumption, level of health care and education) and the political dimension (reflected in respecting political and civil rights). This term is commonly used as it is less controversial than the previous divisions into developed and developing countries and Third World countries. The countries of the North include, among others, the countries of the European Union, the USA, Australia, Japan, selected countries of Asia (Solarz 2009).

² The idea of socio-economic development assumes such development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland 1987, 41).

tourism has become a strong and transformative force that brings tangible changes to the lives of millions of people. Therefore, the potential of tourism for sustainable development is enormous. As one of the world's largest sectors of the economy generating employment, tourism helps reduce poverty and drives inclusive development (ResponsibleTourismPartnership.org 2024). In view of the above, sustainable development through tourism should be implemented as widely as possible to all forms of tourism, including mass tourism and the principles governing sustainable development in tourism should be applied to its natural, socio-cultural and economic aspects with the goal of achieving a state of balance among them (Butowski 2013, 10-11). The idea of sustainable development is still being debated today, and the multitude and diversity of opinions expressed by researchers as well as the various practical solutions implemented lead only to agreement on the issue of specifying the goals and tasks for sustainable tourism (cf. Hendel 2016, 18). As noted by Nawrocka (2010, 95-96), numerous analyses of planning documents in Poland reveal that the issue of sustainable development of tourism is frequently addressed declaratively and in general terms, without providing specific instruments, indicators, norms and standards. Consequently, practical implementation of the principles of sustainable development in the area of tourism faces significant constraints. Moreover, some people might believe that engaging in sustainable tourism will require them to incur additional expenses or sacrifices (Nieżgoda, Janczak and Patelak 2020, 84).

In view of the above, it seems that the concept of responsible tourism may prove more understandable, especially for tourists themselves, and therefore possible to be implemented on a "small scale."³ This con-

cept appeals directly to the ethical attitudes and behaviours of organizers and travellers themselves and instead of proposing the, sometimes unclear, vision of sustainable development, it provides recipes for specific actions. Its goals inscribe in actions related to minimizing the negative effects of human pressure on the natural and social environment, while significant emphasis is placed on specific attitudes and behaviours. This, naturally, does not mean abandoning the assumptions of the concept of sustainable tourism, but that responsible tourism should be treated as a tool for achieving selected goals of sustainable development. This is especially true since responsible tourism is not a distinct, isolated idea, but it intertwines with all forms of human activity and evolves with the changing needs and attitudes of people. The growing interest in responsible tourism is correlated with the growing social sensitivity of tourists, and this translates into standards that are set for tourism organizers while at the same time participants of holiday trips are starting to set them for themselves (Poczta 2014, 95). A new kind of tourist, a post-tourist, is emerging (Post-turysta.pl 2024), i.e., one who understands the causes and effects of tourist behaviour as well as its global interdependencies. Only a conscientious tourist can travel in a truly ethical and responsible manner.

The key role in the transformation process is played by education, which is considered by the UN as a basic tool for solving the biggest problems of the modern world (UNESCO 2002). The goal of Education for Sustainable Development is to strike a balance between traditional and cultural practices, to act towards the preservation of the planet's natural resources as well as social and economic well-being. It emphasizes the need to respect human

3 Responsible tourism is not so much a type of tourism as a form of travelling that minimizes the negative impact of tourism on the broadly understood environment, both natural and social, while generating

benefits for the host community. The concept of responsible tourism was defined in 2002 in the so-called Cape Town Declaration at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (ResponsibleTourismPartnership.org 2024).

dignity, to acknowledge diversity as well as to protect the natural environment and the resources of our planet (Batorczak and Klimska 2020, 18-19).

Education and awareness are a key element in the development of sustainable tourism. Educational programs and information campaigns aimed at both tourists as well as industry and local communities can raise public awareness in the scope of responsible behaviour, environmental protection and respect for local traditions and cultures (Galewska 2023, 40). Even more so because, as Kowalczyk (2008) notes, all tourist and recreational behaviours are culturally conditioned, therefore the causes of problems in contemporary tourism should be sought not in the bad will of tourism participants, but in the simple lack of awareness of the effects of their own behaviour, most often resulting from the lack of knowledge. Education for responsible tourism should focus on raising awareness of the interdependencies, causes and effects of tourist behaviours and shaping attitudes as well as ethical norms that support responsible use of resources, especially natural ones. The notion of environmental (outdoor) ethics, or the Leave No Trace program, is one of the ideas included in the education for responsible tourism. The program, which has been in place for more than 25 years, aims to encourage tourists and recreational users to behave responsibly so as to reduce their negative effects on the environment. Polish version of the program based on the assumptions of responsible tourism is the "Spend the Night in the Forest" program was launched in May 2021.

2. Leave No Trace - the main assumptions

The Leave No Trace (LNT) program, initiated in 1991 in the United States, was the result of cooperation among federal agencies, including the US Forest Service and NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School). The goal of the program was to promote responsible behaviours that minimize human impact on the natural environment during outdoor activities.

Thanks to the involvement of numerous partners, including the Boy Scouts of America, the American Camp Association, academic centres and outdoor companies, the assumptions of the LNT program reached a wide audience becoming the official doctrine of conscious and responsible tourists in the United States. Currently, the LNT project is run and coordinated by the non-profit organization Leave No Trace Centre for Outdoor Ethics (LNTOE), in lasting partnership with other participants. The mission of LNTOE is to educate people about responsible use of nature, through education, research, volunteering and cooperation. The program's reach has long since expanded beyond the borders of the United States, garnering worldwide recognition and a wide coalition of partners, also in Poland (Płoskonka 2021, 240).

The LNT educational model focuses on the one hand, on the issue of human impact on naturally valuable areas as part of tourist and recreational activities and, on the other hand, on social attitudes related to the processes of management, protection and sharing the natural environment. The LNT teaching model draws its knowledge base from a variety of sources, including scientific research, federal agencies, the outdoor industry, and field educators (Płoskonka 2019, 31-32). The activities undertaken as part of the project, supported by numerous research results, made it possible to distinguish the main areas of human impact on the environment (including impact on wild animals, vegetation, water resources, soils, cultural resources). In addition, the researchers defined the relationship between recreational use of natural areas and the impact on these areas (Figure 1).

The intensity of tourist and recreational traffic is not uniform in time and space, which means that natural areas are exposed to damage to vegetation and soil to a varying degree. In the initial phase of impact, the natural environment is characterized by natural resilience to the pressure of tourist and recreational traffic (in the case of forests,

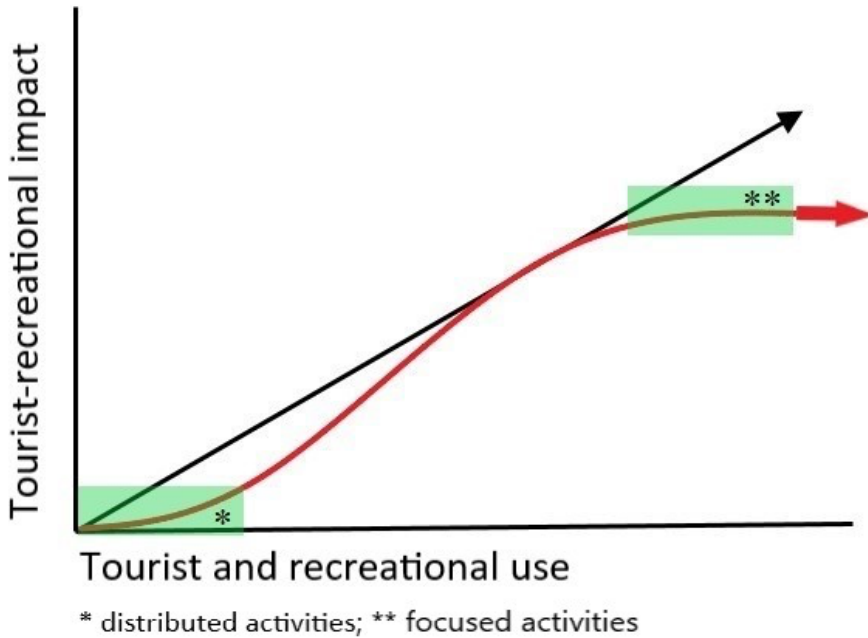


Figure 1. The relationship between the impact and use of recreational areas. Own study based on: (Hammitt and Cole 1998, 15-17; Płoskonka 2018, 96)

Table 1. Seven principles of Leave No Trace (Marion 2014, 7-80; Płoskonka 2018, 98-99).

Principles	Selected instructions
Plan Ahead and Prepare	Before setting off on your journey, get familiar with local conditions (including regulations and customs). Plan your route, check the weather conditions, prepare appropriate equipment and clothing to minimise your impact on the environment. Travel in the smallest possible group.
Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces	Avoid leaving the designated trail, camp at a reasonable distance from water sources, only in designated areas (on durable surfaces). Limit the size of the campsite to the necessary minimum.
Dispose of Waste Properly	Take all trash with you and dispose of it in designated places (pack it in, pack it out) Satisfy physiological needs in provided toilets or bury the solid human waste appropriately. Wash your body and dishes away from water reservoirs, rivers and springs.
Leave What You Find	Use the surroundings in such a way as to leave natural resources intact (do not destroy vegetation, soil, do not build permanent structures, do not leave any traces of your presence).
Minimize Campfire Impacts	Light small campfires only, when necessary and in designated areas. Limit direct contact of fire with the ground whenever possible. Secure the campfire when finished. If conditions allow, use a gas stove to prepare food.
Respect wildlife	Observe wildlife from a safe distance, do not follow, disturb or feed animals. Keep food and waste tightly closed. Do not disturb the peace and do not make noise in the forest.
Be considerate of Others	Do not disturb other tourists and avoid frequented places. Observe the applicable regulations, orders and property rights.

this is called the natural absorption capacity of forests⁴), therefore, the impact should be dispersed. However, after some time, this impact begins to grow, reaching a point where the degree of change is already so great that further use does not significantly deteriorate the condition of the natural environment. In such a situation, it is recommended to focus impacts on functional areas (recreational clearings, tourist trails, campsites).

Irresponsible and excessive use of the natural environment has a significant impact on these areas. Seven general principles have been developed to reduce the negative effects of anthropogenic pressure (Table 1). These principles constitute the core of the Leave No Trace concept and, combined with the propagated knowledge and the acquired skills, they are intended to minimize the impact of humans on the natural environment.

3. Polish solutions - the "Spend the Night in the Forest" program

The need to change the approach to tourism, restrict activities that negatively affect its development, as well as to care for the natural environment, has been reflected both in official government announcements (Pot.gov.pl 2024) and in actions taken in recent years. The experience of other countries, including the often cited Scandinavian or American examples, indicates that success was achieved by the country that focused on education, and not by imposing restrictions. Thus, education becomes a preventive measure teaching people how to behave in nature without destroying it, while contributing to reducing the need for the introduction of legal regulations. The "Spend the Night in the Forest" program launched in May 2021 is one of the examples of the transformation taking place in Poland towards responsible tourism. The concept of the program

naturally fits into the assumptions of responsible tourism and reflects a balanced attitude between protecting the natural environment and practicing tourism. In this way, it enables building new relations with nature, ones based on conscious conduct in accordance with outdoor ethics. It should be noted that the programme itself did not change the statutory provisions, but only enabled a more favourable (soft) interpretation of the applicable regulations.

The main elements of the "Spend the Night in the Forest" program include (Lasy.gov.pl 2024a):

Program areas are designated in virtually every forest district in Poland (Figure 2), their total area is nearly 645,000 ha, while the size of individual areas ranges from 5,830 ha to 250 ha.

- The designated areas are devoid of any tourist infrastructure and their boundaries (which are also the camping boundaries) are marked on a publicly available map and in the mBDL mobile application available on the State Forests website.
- The areas can be accessed only on foot, in the case of travelling by car, the car can be left in designated forest parking lots.
- Within the areas, there may be periodic bans on entering the forest due to the threat of fire or conservation work being carried out, as well as a permanent ban on entry related to forest crops or animal refuges. Such places are marked with signs with the inscription "entry prohibited" and, in the case of a periodic ban, an indication of the reason and period of the ban.
- A maximum of 9 people can camp in the same place at one time, and the camp itself cannot be longer than two nights in a row. This is to limit the negative anthropopressure on the surrounding nature.
- Camping according to the above rules does not require any formalities, however, forestry management

⁴ Forest's natural absorption capacity is measured by the number of people who may use one hectare of forest simultaneously (in a specific unit of time) use without causing damage (Kikulski 2011, 289-290).

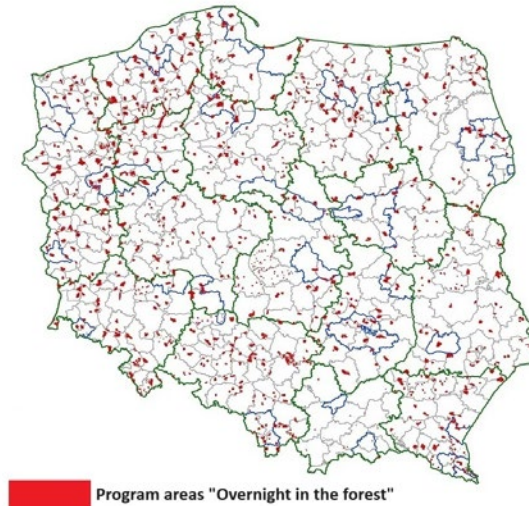


Figure 2. Map of the areas covered by the "Spend the Night in the Forest" Program

Source: Las.gov.pl 2024b.

units encourage visitors to report their stay, which allows, among other things, to determine the intensity of use of selected areas.

- Overnight stays in larger groups and camping for a longer period should be reported by e-mail to the appropriate forestry management unit. The notification should be sent no later than 2 business days before the planned camping.
- It is not allowed to collect wood in the areas (for the purpose of lighting a fire), visitors must bring it with them. Tourists can pick forest fruits and mushrooms for their own use without destroying the forest floor.
- Campfires can only be lit in places designated for this purpose by forestry management units, while the use of gas cookers (a burner mounted on a gas cylinder) is permitted conditionally – they can be used up to the 2nd degree of fire hazard and under constant supervision.
- The recommended way to spend the night in the forest is the use of visitors' own hammock and tarp tent, and in the event of pitching a tent, it should be done on a durable surface, without damaging the forest floor or moving the forest litter.

- Pack it in, pack it out, especially campsite waste and leftover food.
- When satisfying physiological needs, visitors should bury the solid waste and limit the use of personal hygiene products that interfere with the natural environment, especially wet wipes.
- Camping with dogs is allowed, but letting the dogs loose is prohibited.

As part of the initiated Polish version of the program, a "3 × Z" rule of was created, based on the 7 principles of the Leave No Trace outdoor ethics (Table 2).

4. "Spend the Night in the Forest" Program – Selected Results of the Evaluation Study

As part of the summary of the activities to date, the State Forests commissioned the Evaluation Centre to conduct an evaluation of the "Spend the Night in the Forest" program. The aim of the study was to evaluate the course of the State Forests Program in the scope of making forests available for camping and to conduct a study on a group of people taking advantage of this opportunity. The evaluation included 2 groups of respondents who provided answers using electronic surveys (CAWI): forest users (n=870) who spent at least one night

Table 2. The “3 × Z” rules as part of the State Forests’ “Spend the Night in the Forest” (own elaboration)

Principle	Selected instructions
Plan ahead (PL “Zaplanuj”) (i.e. be prepared and travel thoughtfully).	check the forest district data and the location of the area where you intend to camp, via the Forest Data Bank (https://www.bdl.lasy.gov.pl/portal/), the mBDL application (mobilny Bank Danych o Lasach – mobile Forest Data Bank) or information on the forestry management unit websites, check the current periodic bans on entering the forest, e.g. due to high fire risk. In such a case, you should cancel your trip or choose another place where the ban does not apply, plan your journey to the selected destination and, if travelling by car, check the location of parking spaces (it is forbidden to enter the forest with motor vehicles, including campers), familiarise yourself with forest navigation, including installing the dedicated mBDL navigation application, check the markings of forest units (take with you a printed map) and check the contact details of the forestry management unit, mandatory registration for groups of more than 9 people or camping for more than two nights, everything you bring in (equipment, food, water, garbage bags) must be prepared independently and taken with you. There is no infrastructure, running water, garbage cans or other amenities in the camping areas. Ready-made checklists are available on the State Forests website.
Stay overnight (PL “Zanocuj”) (i.e. camp appropriately, limit the use of campfire, respect wildlife and other forest users).	reach the campsite before dusk, it is recommended to use your own hammock and tarp tent, in case of using a tent it should be pitched on a durable surface (without destroying the forest floor), keep food in tight containers so as not to attract wild animals, light a campfire only in designated places, gas stoves are recommended, if you get lost, locate the nearest unit post and contact the forestry management unit or call the emergency number 112
Pack it out (PL “Zabierz”) (i.e. leave the existing nature intact, take care of waste and trash)	when leaving the campsite, take everything you brought with you (including trash, leftover food, etc.) and check if any of the smallest items of equipment (e.g. ropes) have not been left behind. upon returning home, immediately check your entire body for ticks.

in the area covered by the program; those making program areas available – coordinators and forestry management unit managers supervising these areas. The study was carried out between May 2021 and April 2022 within 429 forest districts in which the areas covered by the program are located. The author of the article obtained access to the research results with the consent of the State Forests as a social partner – on behalf of the Polish School of Survival Association, involved in the implementation of the project and presents only selected results provided by forest users. The information gathered made it possible to categorize the participants according to particular demographic traits (Figure 3). Men made up 79% of survey respondents, while women made up 21%. Two age groups predominated, making up over half of the sample: those

in the 25–34 age range (31%) and those in the 35–44 age range (33%).

Despite the fact that the program constitutes a new public initiative, it is already known among those interested in camping in nature. Over 90% of respondents have heard about the “Spend the Night in the Forest” program, primarily through social media (59%) or the website of the State Forests (16%). The most popular voivodeships in which tourists spent the night were Mazowieckie, Dolnośląskie, Pomorskie, Zachodniopomorskie and Wielkopolska. The least popular places to spend the night were the smallest voivodeships: Świętokrzyskie and Opolskie. (Figure 4).

The next analysed question was the motivation for choosing specific areas covered by the program (Figure 5). Tourists spending the night in the forest most often chose

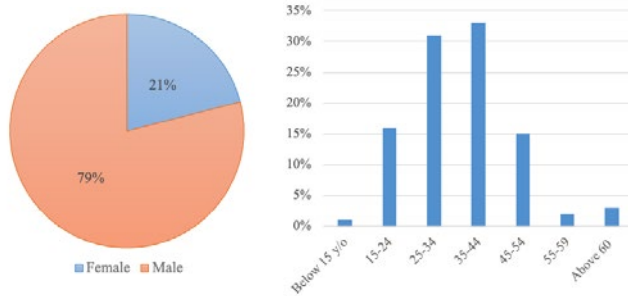


Figure 3. Selected demographic characteristics of respondents

Source: (Szostakowska and Jeleń 2022).



Figure 4. Respondents' preferences regarding the choice of location (by voivodship)

Source: (Szostakowska and Jeleń 2022).

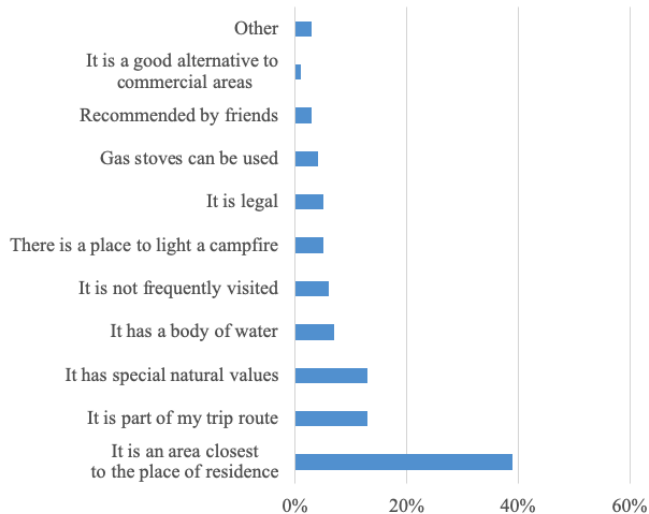


Figure 5. Motives for choosing a specific area within the "Spend the Night in the Forest" program

Source: (Szostakowska and Jeleń 2022).

areas located close to their place of residence (39%), allowing for quick access to the campsite and travel back home, or having special – in the opinion of respondents – natural values (13%). The least important turned out to be the limitations resulting from the use of gas stoves (3%) or recommendations from friends (3%).

The largest group of users (Figure 6) – almost every second respondent, were people identifying as recreational tourists (46%). This group, in principle, preferred sleeping in a tent, used mainly gas stoves, were supporters of spending time with family or relatives or friends, treated sleeping in the forest as a stopover on a hike and put emphasis on physical health by practicing sports during the camping. The second largest group were tourists identifying as bushcrafters (28%), i.e. those who preferred sleeping in a hammock, used a campfire more often than a gas stove, were supporters of spending their free time alone/with a partner/friend, treated the stay in the forest as a form of training allowing them to develop the skills necessary to cope in difficult conditions and those who put emphasis on developing craft skills (handicraft). The survival group (4%) on the other hand, emphasized the need to challenge oneself and acquire survival-related abilities. It should be mentioned that over ten percent of respondents were unable to place themselves in just one of the survey's categories; for this reason, they were referred to as multi-roles.

The next variable examined was the method of organization and duration of the camp (Figure 7). Almost half of the respondents most often chose to spend the night alone (49%) or with a friend/acquaintance (34%). As regards user groups, bushcrafters were the largest group that preferred spending time alone or with a partner/acquaintance, while recreational tourists definitely preferred spending the night with family or friends. The vast majority of respondents spent only one night in the program area (75%), less often two nights (21%). Only one

in twenty respondents (5%) decided to stay longer.

The next variable examined were motivational factors (Figure 8). The main motivation factor for spending time in the forest was the desire to be close to nature (72%) and the need to relieve stress and improve the mood (69%). The third most frequently chosen motivation was the need to calm down and escape from everyday noise (57%).

The activities that the respondents engaged in while camping were equally interesting (Figure 9). The most common activities undertaken by respondents were those directly related to camping, food and campsite accommodation (70%) as well as relaxation in nature and getting away from the bustle of the city (68%)

Finally, respondents assessed the provisions of the regulations that refer to the Leave No Trace assumptions. Most of them were positively assessed by the respondents. The recipients understand what they are for and agree with them, in particular with the provision limiting the number of people spending the night in the forest (almost 85% of respondents support it) or the requirement to keep dogs on a leash (over 80% of respondents agree with it). The greatest doubts were raised by the provision on the ban on collecting brushwood (almost 60% of respondents would like to change this provision) and the ban on using fire outside designated areas (over 40% of respondents would like to change this provision). The supporters of changing both provisions are in the vast majority people identifying as bushcrafters, i.e. users with greater awareness and skills than the average person spending time in the forest.

Conclusion

Successful implementation of the principles of sustainable development into tourism activities depends on a joint educational effort and the accompanying modification of the previously dominant value system. The goal of education for responsible tourism should be to shift tourists' attitude from

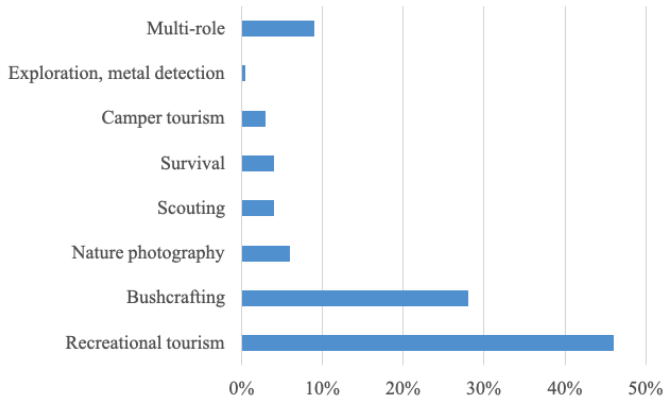


Figure 6. Division of respondents according to their declared activity
Source: (Szostakowska and Jeleń 2022).

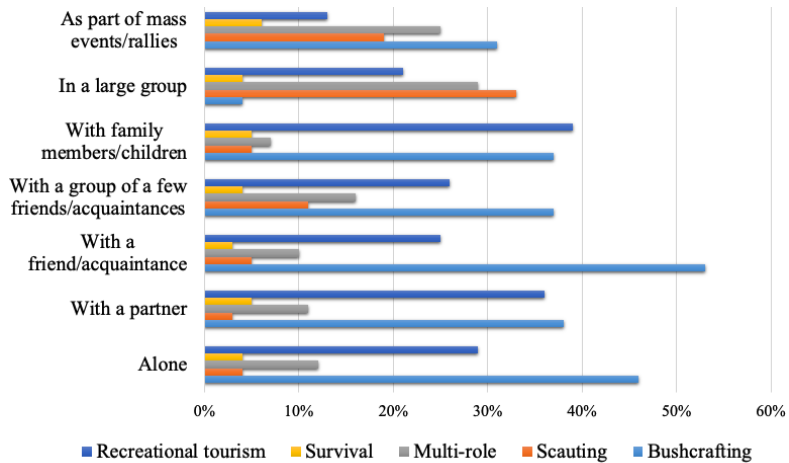


Figure 7. Methods of organizing a camping divided by user groups
Source: (Szostakowska and Jeleń 2022).

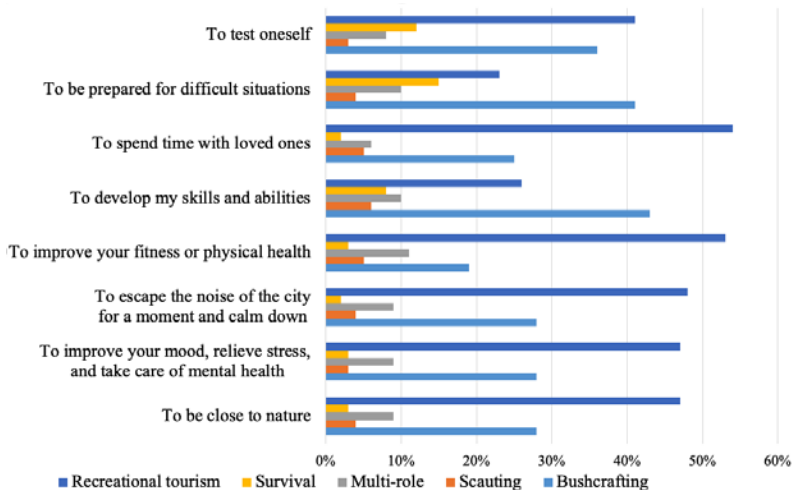


Figure 8. Motivations for spending time in the forest divided by user group
Source: (Szostakowska and Jeleń 2022).

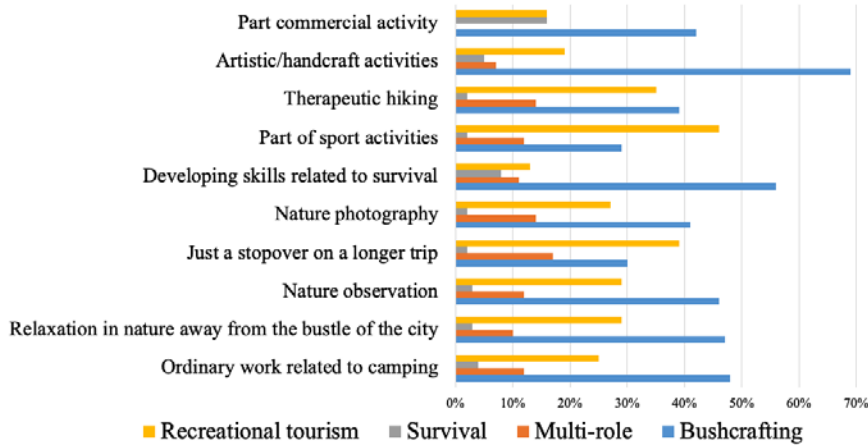


Figure 9. Types of activities undertaken during camping divided by user groups

Source: (Szostakowska and Jeleń 2022).

that of nature’s “conquerors” to nature’s “partners”. This also involves reversing the popular saying formulated by René Dubos, “think globally, act locally”, to “act globally, think locally” (En.wikipedia.org 2024). The State Forests’ “Spend the Night in the Forest” program drawing on the best global models is undoubtedly an example of such an initiative. By allowing visitors to experience nature in its natural state, it helps build new relationships with the environment and shape the public awareness that everyone’s behaviour affects nature and that everyone is responsible for its current and future state.

As demonstrated by many years of experience of the Leave No Trace program implemented in the United States, education significantly raises social awareness and promotes support for ethical attitudes towards nature (Buckley and Littlefair 2007). A special example in Europe are the Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland) where the *allemansrätten* law was established – the Outdoor Recreation Act, which is in force in Norway (Norwegian: *allemannsretten*), Sweden (Swedish: *allemansrätten*) and Finland (Finnish: *jokamiehenoikeus*) stating that every person has the right to contact with nature. This results from the belief that man is an integral part

of nature, and civilization should coexist with it, not compete with it.

The conducted evaluation allowed for a preliminary characterization of respondents and distinction of user groups, among which the most numerous were recreational tourists and bushcrafters. These groups included mostly men aged 25-44, whose main motivations were related to the benefits of contacts with nature as well as nature’s positive impact on people. Their camping was primarily weekend-long (one night in the field), and they were looking for areas of significant natural value located close to their place of residence. The respondents declared that they were ready to observe and, if necessary, instruct other overnight visitors in order to protect the forest for the benefit of all. Conscientious forest users made an effort to educate tourists camping in a manner inconsistent with the Leave No Trace principles or those who are just beginning their adventure with overnight stays in the forest. The vast majority of respondents expressed their willingness to participate in the program, contribute to its development and cooperate with forestry management units. The importance of educational initiatives about proper behaviour in the forest is growing. This will lead to eliminating

undesirable behaviours and promote conscious and responsible outdoor leisure.

In conclusion, it should be hoped that further development of the "Spend the Night in the Forest" program will significantly contribute to the dissemination of the idea of outdoor ethics and behaviours congruent with the Leave No Trace principles (or the "3xZ" principles as regards Poland) and thus permanently enter the forest etiquette of conscientious and responsible tourists.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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