

The Perception of City Image by Organized Groups of Visitors **Vnímanie imidžu mesta organizovanými skupinami návštevníkov**

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The article deals with the city image. It focuses on the problems connected with the evaluation of different attributes of the city's image perceived by the tourists. A study was conducted among members of organized tour groups guided in Poznan (Poland). The research allowed the identification of the most relevant attributes of the city image based on which the segmentation of respondents was made. The factor analysis of the city image attributes allowed to identify four hidden dimensions of the image: tourist infrastructure-knowledge, affective-aesthetic, functional and hospitality. In addition, two segments of visitors who significantly differ in terms of evaluation of Poznan's image were identified: Dissatisfiers – those who perceive the elements of Poznan image as average or lower and Satisfiers – the tourists who value these elements high. The factor of image to which the city authorities should pay the most attention is hospitality: getting to the city, guide services, residents' attitudes and atmosphere of the city. These elements are perceived by the tourists as most strongly related to the overall evaluation of city's attractiveness.

Keywords: *City image. Evaluation. Segmentation. Visitors' perception. Poznan.*

JEL Classification: *L₈₃*

Článok sa zaoberá imidžom mesta. Skúma problémy spojené s hodnotením rôznych atribútov imidžu mesta vnímaného návštevníkmi v cestovnom ruchu. Potrebné údaje sa získali prieskumom účastníkov organizovaných zájazdov v Poznani (Poľsko). Prieskum bol základom pre segmentáciu respondentov a umožnil identifikáciu najdôležitejších atribútov imidžu mesta. Výsledkom analýzy je identifikácia štyroch skrytých faktorov vplyvujúcich na imidž mesta, a to poznanie infraštruktúry cestovného ruchu, citovo-estetické aspekty, funkčnosť (bezpečnosť, čistota, WC, automaty, suveníry) a pohostinnosť. Príspevok charakterizuje dva typy návštevníkov hodnotiacich imidž mesta – spokojní a nespokojní. Mestská správa by sa mala zamerať na zlepšenie imidžu mesta z hľadiska dopravnej dostupnosti, služieb sprievodcov, pohostinnosti miestneho obyvateľstva a atmosfére v meste. Tieto prvky vnímajú návštevníci najviac pri hodnotení atraktívnosti mesta.

КРúчové slová: *Imidž mesta. Vnímanie. Návštevníci. Segmentácia. Poznaň.*

Introduction

The bargaining power of cities is increasing on the tourism market. They function not only as the most attractive and most visited destinations, but also as key market players (Law 2002, Aleksandrova et. al. 2011). Acting through their representatives - tourism organizations, local governments, development agencies – cities have their own development strategies, offer

products and carry out promotional campaigns, with the greatest emphasis on creating the desired image in the eyes of current and potential customers. Competition for tourists, who tend to select first the destination of the trip, and then the services they will use (Buhalis 2000), is now international and even global, a fact which is highlighted by a number of authors (Buhalis 2000, Clark 2004, Maitland, Newman 2009, Meethan 2001, Nawrot, Zmysłony 2009). Many cities such as Glasgow (Daskou et al., 2004), Manchester (Ward 2000) and London (Hopper 2003) have already completed the design of their new images. Modern tourists are experienced and demanding users of international cities, and their typological structure is very diverse. Some of them visit the city for the first time, while others are already familiar with or related to it in some way (via relatives or friends, interests, re-visits, etc.). Additionally, there are different motives for their visit, which affect the use and perception of individual components of the urban offer (Maitland, Newman 2009). Therefore the effectiveness of city image formation depends on the prior segmentation of market customers, which should be carried out precisely at the city level. Examining the city image perception can help further to identify those factors that disturb the desired image, as well as those that differentiate the perception of city image attributes by individual segments of tourists.

Cities can be offered and sold on tourist markets on the basis of different travel motives which may include a set of individual products such as tourist attractions, facilities and other 'commodities' (Ashworth, Voogd 1990, p. 7). The city can be viewed as a complex of elements, which can be divided into core and background elements. First group includes the city scenery (architectural heritage, urban settings, green areas) as well as other cultural heritage objects (museums, theaters, exhibitions), sport and entertainment facilities (stadiums, swimming pools, casinos, theme parks), festivals and other cultural events. The core attractions are supplemented by the sector of accommodation and catering services (hotels, restaurants, pubs) and the trade sector (shops, markets, fairs) (Enc. of Tourism 2000). Law (2002) distinguishes between primary, secondary and additional elements of an urban tourism resources. The primary elements provide the main reason for the visit and may include: (1) places of cultural activity (museums, art galleries, theaters, cinemas, concert halls, conference centers), sport facilities (indoor and outdoor) and entertainment facilities (nightclubs, casinos, festivals, events); (2) leisure settings: physical (historical tracts, interesting architecture, monuments of architecture, parks and green areas), social-cultural features (liveliness of the place, local traditions and garments, cultural heritage, tourists' attitude, safety). Secondary elements include accommodation, catering, shops and markets. The additional elements, according to Law (2002), include accessibility, transportation and parking areas and tourist information (maps, signs and guides).

Destination image is seen as a critical influence for tourists' destination choices (Baloglu, McCleary 1999, Chen, Kerstetter 1999). According to Crompton (1979), destination image is an attitudinal concept consisting of the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that tourist hold of a destination. Kotler et al. (1993) defines the concept of a 'place image' as the sum of the beliefs and impressions that people hold about a place.

Image comprises both cognitive and evaluative components (Embacher, Buttle 1989, Baloglu 2001). The cognitive component consists of the beliefs and knowledge about primarily tangible physical attributes of a destination while the affective one describes the affective evaluation of the quality of experiences concerning the attributes and the environment as a whole. Echtner and Ritchie (1993) have identified other components of a place image: attributes and holistic impressions. Each

of these components contains functional (tangible) and psychological (abstract) characteristics. They conclude that each image can range from that based on „common” functional and psychological traits to those based on more distinctive (unique) features, events or auras.

The city image can be formed through various sources. In particular, influential factors in forming the city image could be: brochures, guidebooks, local tourist offices, travel guides, travel agents, magazines, newspapers, friends and relatives, as well as personal experiences resulting from a previous visit to the destination (MacKay, Fesenmaier 1997, Baloglu, McCleary 1999, Sarma 2007).

1. Aim, material and methodology

The paper presents results of Poznan’s tourist market segmentation based on the perception of its image by tourists. The second aim was extracting those image attributes which significantly differentiate the perception of the tourist segments obtained in the study.

Data for the study was collected through a questionnaire-based survey conducted among members of organized tour groups guided in Poznan during the first quarter of 2009 (1 January – 31 March 2009). The survey was carried out by specially trained B.A. students from the Poznan University of Economics. Interviewers asked the respondents to fill in questionnaires at the end of a guided tour. They tried to research all of the tours that ordered guide services through one of three entities: City’s Tourist Information Centre, a PTTK⁵ Office and the ‘Kultour’ travel agency within the specified period of time. 323 respondents from 25 out of 34 planned trips participated in this study.

Before the questionnaire was developed, scales used to evaluate destination image and attributes of an urban tourism product were analyzed. The scales designed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993), Baloglu and Mangaloglu (2001) and Pikkemaat (2004) were used in the questionnaire development. Attributes of the urban tourism product were evaluated by each respondent. They were asked to evaluate each of the attribute of the city of Poznan using a 5-point Likert scale (from *very good* – 1 to *very bad* – 5). This way, 14 functional (tangible) attributes of the city’s image were evaluated. The scale was supplemented with three psychological (abstract) attributes measured using a 5-level semantic differential scale. The overall evaluation of attractiveness of the city was made with a single-item, 10-point scale. The questionnaire also included a part where the respondents provided information about gender, age, education, country of origin, the number of previous visits in Poznan, the type of trip, the travel group, the number of previous visits in Poznan and the main goal of their visit.

A number of statistical methods were used to analyze the data. First, in order to discover the hidden dimensions of Poznan’s image and to reduce the number of variables, a factor analysis was performed which included 17 elements of tourist image. The principal components method and a VARIMAX rotation were employed. The minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 was assumed for factor inclusion and the minimum factor loading of 1.0 to decide whether a given item of the scale should be included in the factor (Hair et. al 2007). The reliability of the factors was checked using Cronbach’s alpha (α) coefficient.

In the next step, a cluster analysis was performed to segment visitors into homogenous groups of people who evaluated the city image in a similar way. The segmentation was done by

⁵ Polish Tourist Country-Lore Society

means of K-means clustering, using extracted factors as the segmentation criterion⁶. The goal was to obtain clusters of visitors whose perception of Poznan's image is similar. The criterion for selecting this variant was provided by the results of analysis of variance (ANOVA) (testing significant differences between means of the extracted factors) and Euclidean distances between them. Next, a χ^2 test was used to evaluate the differences between the socio-demographic and other characteristics of the segments. Finally, a multiple regression analysis was performed to determine which factors of Poznan image have the strongest influence on the general assessment of the attractiveness of the city.

The respondents consisted of 323 people, including 56.7 % of women and 43.4 % of men. The largest group consisted of people aged up to 16 years (35.9 %). This was due to the fact that 48 % of the respondents were participants of school trips⁷. The total number of people aged up to 25 years accounted for 58.5 %. Most respondents had college or university education (35.5 %), followed by high school graduates (23.4 %). The Polish nationality was prevalent among the respondents (36.39 %), the next most numerous groups being Germans – 11.4 %, Spaniards – 8.9 % and Americans – 8.6 %. 71.2 % of the respondents visited Poznan for the first time. For most people (52.7 %), Poznan was not the main destination in their trip. 63.43% of the respondents stayed in the city overnight. Most tourists traveled with friends (84.8%). The most typical purposes of the visit were: sightseeing and recreation (44.2 %), education (7.9 %), shopping (6,3 %) and business (5.8 %)

2. Results and discussion

In order to identify the hidden dimensions and to reduce the number of items of the scale used to measure Poznan's image, a factor analysis was performed. It revealed the existence of four factors: *tourist infrastructure and knowledge* (4 items, Cronbach $\alpha = 0,81$), *affective-aesthetic* (4 items, Cronbach $\alpha = 0,72$), *functional* (5 items, Cronbach $\alpha = 0,86$) and *hospitality* (4 items, Cronbach $\alpha = 0,72$) (tab. 1).

Out of the four factors, the *affective-aesthetic* ($M = 1.811$) and the *hospitality* factor ($M = 2.109$) have the lowest mean values, in other words, they have been evaluated as *good*. The *functional* factor ($M = 3.415$) has the highest mean value, which means that *security*, *cleanliness public toilets*, *cash points* and *souvenirs* availability in the city were evaluated as the poorest attributes of Poznan's city image.

As a result of analysis of variants of 2, 3 and 4 clusters, a two-cluster variant was chosen as optimal, the reason being the clarity of information and the ease of interpretation. In the first cluster (Cluster I) 83 respondents were grouped (25.7%) with 240 respondents in the second (74.3%) (Cluster II).

⁶ *k-means algorithm* is an algorithm to assign k centers to represent the clustering of N points ($K < N$). The points are iteratively adjusted (starting with a random sample of the N points) so that each of the N points is assigned to one of the k clusters, and each of the k clusters is the mean of its assigned points (Bishop, 1995, quoted after StatSoft, Inc., 2001).

⁷ Despite such a composition of the research sample, the validity and reliability of the gathered data are high because the sample included almost all the people that visited Poznań with organized groups in researched period.

Table 1 Factor analysis of Poznan's tourist image attributes

Attributes of the Poznan's tourist image	Factors			
	1	2	3	4
Tourist infrastructure-knowledge				
Signposting tourist information system	0.701			
Catering	0.616			
Shopping facilities	0.610			
Knowledge of languages	0.637			
Affective-aesthetic				
Monuments and other attractions		0.583		
Interesting		0.847		
Tourist friendly		0.751		
Beautiful		0.763		
Functional				
Security			0.708	
Cleanliness of the city			0.585	
Public toilets			0.712	
ATMs / cash points / card payment possibilities			0.616	
Souvenirs			0.537	
Hospitality				
Getting to the city				0.529
Guide service				0.698
Atmosphere of the city				0.548
Residents' attitudes towards tourists				0.603
Eigenvalue	2.243	2.758	2.349	2.081
Extracted variation (%)	13.195	16.222	13.820	12.243
Mean	2.597	1.817	2.958	2.109
Standard deviation	1.156	0.680	1.187	0.882
Cronbach α	0.816	0.725	0.861	0.720

Source: Own elaboration.

Analysis of variance showed that the two clusters significantly differ ($p < 0.001$) in terms of all extracted factors (tab. 2). The mean scores calculated for each factor in both clusters indicate that tourists in Cluster II are much more satisfied with all the city image factors than tourists in Cluster I. Therefore the first cluster can be described as Dissatisfiers and the second cluster as Satisfiers.

Table 2 Cluster analysis results (two clusters)

Factors	Cluster I Dissatisfiers (n=83)	Cluster II Satisfiers (n=240)	F	p
Tourist infrastructure	3.990	2.047	365.48	0.001
Affective - aesthetic	2.087	1.716	15.77	0.001
Functional	4.333	2.396	339.27	0.001
Hospitality	3.031	1.754	185.50	0.001

Source: Own elaboration.

The next step of the analysis was to check which of the socio-demographic and trip characteristics differentiate the clusters. Out of nine features only two had significant differences between the clusters (tab. 3). The first one was *the number of previous visits in Poznan*. Significantly more first-time visitors (80.7 %) were dissatisfied than satisfied (68,2 %) (Mean = 71,43) and inversely, significantly more of those visiting for a second time or more were satisfied (31.8%) than dissatisfied (19.3%) ($\chi^2 = 4.73$, $p = 0.03$) (Mean = 28,6). The second significantly differentiating feature was the nationality of the respondents ($\chi^2 = 23.1$, $p < 0.001$). Significantly more people from the USA and Holland fell into the Cluster II Satisfiers (10.8 % and 7.5 %) than into the Cluster I (1.2 % and 3.6 %) and conversely, much more people from France fell into the Cluster I Dissatisfiers (15.7 %) than in the second one (3.3 %).

Table 3 χ^2 test results of a cluster differences.

Characteristics	Cluster I Dissatisfiers (n = 83)	Cluster II Satisfiers (n = 240)	Mean (n = 323)
Number of previous visits in Poznan			
Any time	80.72	68.20	71.43
One or more	19.28	31.80	28.57
χ^2 test	$\chi^2 = 4.733$, $df=1$, $p = 0.029$		
Nationality			
Polish	36.14	35.42	35.60
German	12.05	10.83	11.15
Spanish	7.23	9.17	8.67
USA	1.20	10.83	8.36
French	15.66	3.33	6.50
Dutch	3.61	7.50	6.50
Other	24.10	22.92	23.22
χ^2 test	$\chi^2 = 23.086$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.00077$		

Source: Own elaboration.

In order to identify the factors that have the strongest impact on the overall assessment of the attractiveness of the city of Poznan, a multiple regression analysis was performed (tab. 4). The total rate of the attractiveness of Poznan measured using a 10-point scale was taken as a dependent variable. The four previously-obtained factors of the city image formed independent variables. The analysis was performed twice: separately for the group of Dissatisfiers and separately for

Satisfiers. For Cluster I (Dissatisfiers), the model was significant on p-level < 0.0001 and explained 32 % of the variance in overall attractiveness (F = 9.13). It was revealed that out of the four factors only Affective-aesthetic has a significant influence on the perception of attractiveness ($\beta = 0.53$, $p = 0.0001$). In the second cluster (Satisfiers), the model was significant on p-level < 0.0001, explaining 24.2 % of the variance of attractiveness evaluation (F = 18.8). The second model revealed that two factors have a significant influence on attractiveness: affective-aesthetic ($\beta = 0.34$, $p = 0,0001$) and hospitality ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0,0009$).

Table 4 Multiple Regression Analysis Results of City's Attractiveness Evaluation Based on Image Factors

Clusters		Beta	Std. Error	B	t	p
Dissatisfiers	Constant			-0.612	-0.457	0.648
	Tourist infrastructure	-0.004	0.095	-0.007	-0.049	0.960
	Affective-aesthetic	0.525	0.94	1.232	5.571	0.0001
	Functional	0.093	0.097	0.194	0.958	0.340
	Hospitality	0.166	0.095	0.295	1.754	0.083
Satisfiers	Constant			0.401	1.120	0.263
	Tourist infrastructure	0.0822	0.059	0.177	1.374	0.170
	Affective-aesthetic	0.337	0.063	0.700	5.302	0.0001
	Functional	-0.004	0.060	-0.006	-0.074	0.940
	Hospitality	0.213	0.063	0.566	3.339	0.0009

Cluster 1: R = 0.564, R² = 0.318, F(4.78) = 9.131, p < 0.0001, std. error of estimate = 1.396

Cluster 2: R = 0.492, R² = 0.242, F(4.23) = 18.846, p < 0.0001, std. error of estimate = 0.985

Conclusion

The performed research allows the formulation of a number of conclusions aimed at improving the tourist image of Poznan.

The factor analysis of the elements of the city image revealed the existence of four hidden dimensions of the image: tourist infrastructure-knowledge, affective-aesthetic, functional and hospitality. Affective-aesthetic was evaluated most highly, while functional and tourist infrastructure-knowledge received the lowest marks, which can be an indication for the city authorities as to what action needs to be taken. The low evaluation of security, cleanliness of the city and public toilets are especially dangerous and important. Unless basic tourist needs are satisfied, they will not be interested in other elements of Poznan's tourist product. Moreover, these low rated attributes lie within the competence of municipal authorities, so they should be the main area of interest of municipal authorities in Poznan's city image is to improve. It may provide some comfort that the high scores obtained by affective elements and monuments are accompanied by a low rate of standard deviation. This reflects a broad agreement of the respondents in the evaluation of affective attributes of the city image.

The two identified segments clearly differ from each other in terms of the evaluation of Poznan's image. The first segment consists of people who evaluate the elements of Poznan's image relatively low. Fortunately, this is a fairly small group. The second segment consists of tourist who value them highly. All extracted factors significantly differentiate these two groups, but two of them are more

efficient at doing so. Tourist infrastructure (eg. signposting system, catering, shopping facilities and knowledge of languages) and functional elements (security, cleanliness, public toilets and ATM's) are the most discriminatory factors.

The 'Satisfiers' group includes much more tourists visiting Poznan for the second time or more than the 'Dissatisfiers' group does. This means that second-or-more time visitors tend to assess elements of the city image better than first-time visitors. This may be due to inappropriate promotional campaigns, based on which visitors built their image of Poznan, whereas the expectations of returning visitors are much more realistic. This may, in turn, lead to a greater satisfaction and higher ratings of many image attributes.

Another feature that differentiated the evaluation of the image was the country of visitors' origin. Clear differences in this respect were found among people from France, USA and Holland. The 'Dissatisfiers' were clearly dominated by French, while the 'Satisfiers' by Dutch and U.S. citizens. This could result from the program and organization of guided tours on the one hand, or from cultural differences and the lack of their understanding by tour operators on the other. Therefore, whenever preparing promotional campaigns for Poznan or even Poland targeted at these nationalities (especially the French) and preparing programs for those clients, one should take into account the cultural specificities of the visitor's country of origin.

The image factors most strongly associated with the overall assessment of the Poznan attractiveness were affective-aesthetic in the Dissatisfiers cluster and affective-aesthetic in the Hospitality in Satisfiers cluster. Therefore the most important city image attributes for visitors are affective features (interesting, friendly and beautiful) and tourist attractions. The attributes on which the city authorities must focus are getting to the city, hospitality and guide services. The other two are very difficult to change: residents' attitudes and atmosphere of the city.

The main limitation of this study results from the sample of respondents. These were mostly young people, visiting the city as part of school trips. Adding older, wealthier market segments to the respondents' group could significantly influence the perception of the image. It could also reveal the existence of other segments characterized by other preferences and evaluating Poznan differently.

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