

BALANCING TOURISM AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING: EVALUATING PILGRIMAGE SERVICES IN CZĘSTOCHOWA

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Abstract: As people seek novel and engaging experiences during their leisure time, places of worship and religious sites emerge as popular tourist destinations. In Poland, Częstochowa stands out as one such revered location, home to the Black Madonna Monastery. Annually, approximately 4 million tourists flock to this sanctuary, with many opting for pilgrimages on foot.

While visiting Częstochowa, tourists rely on well-prepared infrastructure to facilitate their stay. However, some residents, particularly those living near the sanctuary, express grievances regarding the inconveniences caused by the influx of tourists. Achieving a harmonious balance between the needs of tourists and those of the residents is imperative. While tourists contribute significantly to the city's revenue, residents strive to maintain a semblance of normalcy amidst the tourist influx.

Therefore, analyzing residents' perspectives is crucial to identify areas needing improvement concerning pilgrimage-related activities and to gauge resident satisfaction levels. This paper aims to assess the impact of tourism services on the development of Częstochowa and the daily lives of its residents. Conducted through direct interviews with Częstochowa residents, the research employed the Critical Incident Technique (CIT), typically used for evaluating service quality. This method not only facilitated the organization of obtained data but also highlighted areas needing enhancement.

Following the direct interviews, the analysis phase commenced, wherein critical incidents were identified, categorized into positive and negative incidents, and further grouped accordingly. Subsequently, a matrix classifying critical incidents was constructed to identify particularly impactful incidents and those causing significant resident dissatisfaction. The research findings were then presented to city authorities to pinpoint areas for potential improvement as identified by residents. These recommendations aim to not only foster the city's development but also enhance residents' quality of life. Such initiatives constitute significant strides towards fostering sustainable tourism in Częstochowa.

Keywords: service; tourist service; quality of life; CIT; sustainable tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

Travel, especially for leisure, remains a popular pursuit for many individuals seeking relaxation and new experiences. Each year, people actively seek out novel destinations



to explore, considering factors such as travel costs, timing, and personal interests. With modern advancements in transportation and streamlined processes for arranging travel, the accessibility and frequency of travel have increased significantly.

Religious sites and places of worship have emerged as significant destinations for travelers, with Częstochowa standing out as a notable example in Poland. Renowned for the Black Madonna Monastery and the Miraculous Icon of Mother Mary, Częstochowa attracts pilgrims from across Poland and around the globe. Many Polish pilgrims undertake arduous journeys on foot, dedicating several days or even weeks to reach the sanctuary. Such pilgrimages exemplify the profound spiritual significance attached to these destinations, transcending geographical boundaries and cultural differences.

Częstochowa's pilgrimage tradition, drawing four to five million visitors annually, is emblematic of the enduring appeal of religious sites within Christianity and other faiths. However, the pilgrimage experience presents unique challenges and opportunities within the broader context of tourism services. Pilgrimage journeys are often deeply personal and individualized, varying in duration and intensity, which poses challenges in standardizing and assessing the quality of services offered.

The influx of pilgrims and tourists to Częstochowa, as in many other pilgrimage sites, has significant implications for the local community. Residents must navigate the influx of visitors during peak seasons and learn to coexist with them harmoniously. However, the unchecked growth of tourism, characterized by overcrowding and environmental degradation, poses sustainability challenges for these communities.

As tourist numbers soar, renowned destinations find themselves inundated, rendering sightseeing a cumbersome endeavor. The influx of visitors poses myriad challenges for local communities, disrupting their daily rhythms. Instances of disregarding rules and social norms by tourists often result in damage to the visited sites, littering, and environmental degradation. This phenomenon, known as overtourism, casts a shadow over tourist hotspots, impacting them adversely (Ingaldi and Dziuba, 2022).

The paper aims to explore the impact of tourism services on the development of Częstochowa and the quality of life for its residents. Utilizing the Critical Incident Technique (CIT), the research gathers insights directly from residents to identify critical events and areas for improvement. By addressing these concerns, the study seeks to foster sustainable tourism practices that benefit both the city's development and the well-being of its residents. The findings will be shared with city authorities to inform policy decisions and promote responsible tourism management.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Perkumiene and Pranskuniene (2019) highlight the pressing need for a discussion on overtourism in the context of travelers' rights and the rights of local residents. As travel becomes increasingly accessible and affordable, the travel services sector experiences significant growth driven by the rising desire of people to explore new destinations. However, it is crucial to consider the rights of both travelers and local residents in the face of overtourism challenges. Croce (2018) predicts a continued increase in tourist numbers, fueled by factors such as growing wealth, technological advancements, and reduced travel costs.

Goodwin (2017) offers a straightforward definition of overtourism, describing it as a situation where either locals or tourists perceive a place as excessively visited, resulting in changes to its character and loss of authenticity for tourists, while causing irritation and

inconvenience for residents. Overtourism is closely tied to the ease of travel, allowing more individuals to venture to even the most remote locations. This concept encompasses a variety of interconnected phenomena that warrant careful analysis, particularly as it intersects with the principles of sustainable development (Capocchi et al., 2019).

Numerous cities have begun to address overtourism-related issues, with Venice serving as a prominent example. The Italian parliament approved an additional admission tax for one-day tourists visiting Venice, slated to take effect in 2020. Additionally, measures such as banning bathing in fountains and eating near monuments have been implemented in various Italian cities, including Rome. Santorini in Greece has introduced daily tourist entry limits, while other destinations like Capri and Majorca are contemplating similar measures. In response to anti-tourist sentiments, Barcelona saw left-wing activists organize protests with the slogan "Tourists go home" in the summer of 2017 (Mihalič, 2019; Hughes, 2018). Similarly, authorities in Częstochowa are considering implementing a 1PLN tax on each pilgrim visiting the city to fund post-pilgrimage cleaning efforts.

The phenomenon of overtourism is also evident in pilgrimage travel. Religious journeys continue to gain traction in Europe, leading to overcrowded and noisy pilgrimage sites, particularly during major religious holidays. While this can impact the quality of life for residents and the development of visited areas, it is important to acknowledge the positive contributions of tourism, including pilgrimage, to local communities. These sites provide employment opportunities and generate revenue for cities, which can be reinvested in their development. Therefore, tourism and pilgrims should not be viewed solely as a burden but as potential assets for the community.

The concept of sustainable tourism, i.e. tourism, which has a positive impact on the environment, society and economy, appears often in the literature (Peeters and Dubois, 2010; Høyer, 2000; Larsen and Guiver, 2013; Canavan, 2014; Labenko et al., 2024). The most important element in the definition of sustainable tourism is the word "positive" because only such impact will allow the term "sustainable" to be used. And it should be remembered that economists predict continuous growth in the tourism services sector, mainly due to: increased income of people and their free time, greater and easier mobility, and greater public awareness of potential places to see (EEA, 2001). Thus, according to World Tourism Organization, the sustainable tourist should (UNWTO 2004):

1. Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.
2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
3. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

Therefore, the solutions should be sought not only to please tourists and attract them to a given place, a given tourist attraction, and thus ensure a profit for the visited place. The residents, the impact of tourism on their lives, on the development of the visited place should be also taken into account.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Czestochowa is an academic and industrial city. From a tourist's point of view, it is a city that is known primarily from the Black Madonna Monastery, which is a Mecca for Polish and foreign Catholics. Every year, the city is visited by about 4 million pilgrims. Pilgrims on foot come to the city, often covering hundreds of kilometers to pray, ask for health for themselves and loved ones, for blessing. They use various types of facilities in the city, primarily accommodation, restaurants, shops, public transport (on coming back home). The city authorities and residents are proud of such a monument and the number of pilgrims visiting the sanctuary. This means for the city not only popularity, but above all jobs and revenues for the city budget.

The city has adequate infrastructure in the form of accommodation, restaurants and shops dedicated to pilgrims. The most important is the accommodation base, which must be available for every budget. The organization of the pilgrimage movement in the so-called rush days (main Catholic holidays) when a particularly large number of tourists come to the city is a very important issue. In such cases, policemen who direct the movement of pilgrims and help them to move in the city, are involved. On these days, medical service is also involved to be able to react quickly when needed. After the pilgrims' visits, the cleaning services clean up the city, especially centre and neighborhood of the sanctuary and take away the rubbish. All of these creates additional costs that are borne by the city. Unfortunately, some residents do not agree with the opinion that tourists bring only benefit to the city. They often treat pilgrims as a necessary evils, who block the movement not only in the city center, but also on its suburb, disturb everyday life. They think that pilgrims paralyze the city's traffic and life, and even make a mess and behave in an "inappropriate" way. They claim that the city does not earn on tourists, but only incurs costs related to e.g. waste disposal, directing traffic etc. The only beneficiaries are the sanctuary and Pauline monks.

It is, therefore, necessary to reach out to the most interested people (residents) through direct interview and ask about their opinion on this subject. It should be checked how this type of tourist services affect the everyday life of both residents and the city itself and whether it causes its development. Such research may indicate areas related to pilgrims that have a positive and negative impact on the residents of Czestochowa. Areas indicated as negative are those requiring reaction from the city authorities, the sanctuary and tourism enterprises of Czestochowa.

A balance between tourists' satisfaction and residents' lives must be found. Tourists mean additional profits for the city but the residents stay here permanently. That is why it is necessary to analyze the opinions of the residents so that it is possible to see which areas related to pilgrims need improvement, and with which the residents are satisfied, how tourism affects the city itself, but also their lives.

The research had a form of the direct interview with residents of Czestochowa. To analyze the results of the research, the assumptions of Critical Incident Technique (CIT) were used. This is one of the methods of quality service assessment very frequently described in literature. It is skipped in researches because of the amount of time and work it consumes. However, its application allows drawing interesting conclusions. The author of CIT is commonly considered J. Flanagan, who developed this technique for research for the Aviation Psychology Program of US Air Force during World War II (Flanagan, 1954; Krok, 2011; Butterfield and Borgen, 2005).

The CIT introduces an important term - a critical incident. The incident itself, also called an event in literature, can be defined as observable human action that is sufficient enough to be able to give some conclusions (Bitner et al., 1990). It is the interaction between customers and employees of service enterprises that causes particular satisfaction or dissatisfaction. If the features of a given service do not meet the expectations, the customer is dissatisfied, while if the features of the service exceed expectations, the buyer is willing to renew the purchase of the service (Pilarz and Kot, 2019). In case of the research presented in the paper, it is an interaction between the city's residents and the offer for pilgrims and the pilgrims themselves.

The basis of the CIT is the collection of incidents by direct interview with people and analyzing them in order to arrange them in the appropriate scheme, which allows to detect problems and their causes. Respondents indicate and describe detailed events that were particularly satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Incidents are collected until they allow for real and potential analysis and give visible results (Bitner et al., 1990). The CIT method usually is used according to the following steps (Czubala, 2012; Ingaldi, 2018; Wolnowska et al.):

1. Direct interview with people. The respondent talks about the incident, his feelings, while role of the interviewer is to guide the subject on the right topic, according to the assumptions of the previously prepared data sheet.
2. Categorization. After collecting the information, an incident identification system is created to serve the categorization of incidents based on similarities. All incidents are sorted into categories and groups.
3. Final categorization. Based on a two-step analysis carried out in the previous stage, an independent expert assigns the described incidents to individual categories and groups, as well as positive and negative incidents.
4. Creating statistics. An analysis based on presenting the proportions between positive and negative incident in each group, as well as between them.

All incidents collected during a direct interviews are subjected to analysis. First, it should be checked whether the incident can actually be considered critical. After elimination of incident not related to a given service and enterprise, and not critical, the rest of incidents are classified into categories and groups that correspond to specific areas of activity of a given service enterprise (Stoma and Doroszewicz, 2009; Jubenville and Cairns, 2016).

As already mentioned, the CIT method is used to assess the service quality. However, its purpose was changed here. It was used to assess the impact of tourist services offered by a research city on the life of its residents and its development. But the use of the method remained unchanged. Data for the CIT method are collected through a direct interview with residents of the city who had any kind of contact with pilgrims. The residents of Czestochowa, as an integral part of the city, participate in the life of the city, and thus are part of the tourist (pilgrimage) service. They can describe positive and negative incidents related to pilgrims visiting this city because they have direct contact with them. Therefore, they are a source of valuable information about the conducted research. The research was conducted in 2022, it was assumed that the minimum research group is 400 residents.

First, a direct interviews with the residents of Czestochowa were conducted. They were asked to describe positive and negative incident related to pilgrimages and pilgrims in the city. They were asked to describe how they think their life is affected and whether they also see the impact on the development of their home city. In the end, 426 people took part in the research, who described 438 different incidents.

Then, it was analyzed whether all the incidents described by the residents can be treated as critical and valuable. In this way, the incident that did not contribute anything to the research or could not be treated as critical, were eliminated. In this way, 410 critical incidents of various types were qualified for further analysis. Subsequently, qualified incidents were analyzed. According to the steps described earlier, these incidents were first divided into categories and groups as well as positive and negative incidents, and then statistics for individual categories and groups were calculated. The results were shown in tabular fashion.

In the next step, a matrix of two variables was built. The X-axis is the number of positive incidents assigned to each category, while the Y-axis is the number of negative incidents. The positive incidents here are called the potential of magic moments, while the negative incidents the potential of poverty moments. The matrix has been transformed in relation to the original one and based on the Cartesian system. This facilitates both the matrix creation and reading the results. Both variables were evaluated on a two-stage scale: small and big. Each group of incidents was evaluated in the above-mentioned scale based on the number of incidents. Scale limits can be determined independently based on the analyzed data (Urban, 2018). The lateral limits were determined by checking the minimum and maximum number of positive and negative incidents, while the division limit is a half of this interval. The limits have been calculated separately for both axis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis were presented in Table 1. Categorization into 5 groups was carried out.

Table 1

Summary of critical events incident to pilgrims in Czestochowa (own study)

Categories and groups	Type of incidents				All incidents	
	Positive incident		Negative incident		Sum	
	quantity	% of incidents	quantity	% of incidents	quantity	% of incidents
C1. General preparation of the city						
1. Hotels	7	1.71	4	0.98	11	2.68
2. Equipment for pilgrims	6	1.46	3	0.73	9	2.20
3. Parking	4	0.98	12	2.93	16	3.90
4. Additional tourist attractions	19	4.63	7	1.71	26	6.34
5. Toilets	3	0.73	18	4.39	21	5.12
6. Catering points, restaurants	16	3.90	6	1.46	22	5.37
Sum for C1	55	13.41	50	12.20	105	25.61
C2. Preparation of the pilgrimage movement						
7. Traffic in the city center	4	0.98	22	5.37	26	6.34
8. Traffic in the suburbs	7	1.71	12	2.93	19	4.63
9. Additional train / bus communication	17	4.15	3	0.73	20	4.88
10. Additional public city transport	5	1.22	2	0.49	7	1.71
Sum for C2	33	8.05	39	9.51	72	17.56
C3. Preparation of pilgrimage ceremonies						

11. The surroundings of the sanctuary	11	2.68	16	3.90	27	6.59
12. Sound systems	3	0.73	21	5.12	24	5.85
13. City services	23	5.61	6	1.46	29	7.07
Sum for C3	37	9.02	43	10.49	80	19.51
C4. City economics						
14. Profits for the city	3	0.73	19	4.63	22	5.37
15. City advertisement	27	6.59	4	0.98	31	7.56
16. Local tourism	16	3.90	23	5.61	39	9.51
Sum for C4	46	11.22	46	11.22	92	22.44
C5. Tourists' behavior						
17. When entering the city	7	1.71	24	5.85	31	7.56
18. During the ceremonies	4	0.98	5	1.22	9	2.20
19. After the ceremonies	5	1.22	16	3.90	21	5.12
Sum for C5	16	3.90	45	10.98	61	14.88
Total sum	187	45.61	223	54.39	410	100.00

Source: own study

Among the positive incident, those related to the general preparation of the city (C1) deserve attention. Most positive incidents were recorded in this group. In this category incidents related to additional tourist attractions (4) and catering points, restaurants (6) dominated. It should be emphasized that the residents themselves can also use these elements, which could undoubtedly have an impact on the results. What is interesting, also in case of negative incident, most of them were those associated with the same groups.

As the second important category of positive incidents, residents indicated city economics (C4), including city advertisement (15). Tourists who visit the city and who are satisfied can attract others. What is interesting, positive and negative incidents were equally recorded in this category. If it comes to the negative incidents, the most incidents were related to local tourism (16) and profits for the city (14). Residents note that often tourists visit only the sanctuary, they do not know about other places worth seeing, or the sanctuary is the only one destination. This is reflected in the city's profits. The sanctuary area belongs to Catholic church, which means influence for the sanctuary itself, not for the city and its residents. But this city incurs expenses related to cleaning and city services etc. so only cost, small or none profit.

The fewest positive events were recorded in the case of tourists' behavior (C5). Often in Czestochowa it is possible to hear the voices of residents that tourists disturb, disrupt everyday life. Perhaps that's why so few positive incidents in this category but a lot negative once.

In case of negative critical incidents, the results in individual categories were similar, with a slight predominance of the general preparation of the city (C1). Most incidents were related to toilets (5), the city and the vicinity of the sanctuary are not well equipped with toilets, pilgrims often do not want to pay for the use of the toilets, which, unfortunately, ends in a known way, which is often complained by residents who live in the center or close to the sanctuary and see it. Residents also complained about parking (3), although such incidents were not so many, especially since most pilgrims come to the city on foot. Residents drew attention to two interrelated groups, i.e. the behavior of pilgrims when entering the city (17) and traffic in the city center (7). The pilgrims' entry into the city is particularly burdensome for the residents, especially in the so-called rush days, when the largest and most numerous groups of pilgrims come to the sanctuary. The main street of the city, leading to the sanctuary, but often other streets are blocked, residents must wait

for a given group of pilgrims to pass to be able to move freely or must choose another way. As pilgrims pass through the city, they sing, shout, and use additional sound systems (12), which the residents also complain about. But the sound systems (12) also applies to loudspeakers mounted in the vicinity of the sanctuary and on the main street of the city leading to the sanctuary. Residents complain that religious rites begin very early in the morning (even at 5) and end very late (at 23 or even later), which is heard in their houses and disturb in everyday life, especially with windows open during hot summer days.

In Figure 1 the percentage of positive and negative incident in all categories were summarized and presented. The most positive incidents were recorded in the case of category C1, i.e. the general preparation of the city, the least in the case of category C5, i.e. tourists' behavior. The structure of negative incidents was more homogeneous.

In Figure 2 the matrix of incidents described by respondents was presented. This matrix was constructed according to the previously described procedure.

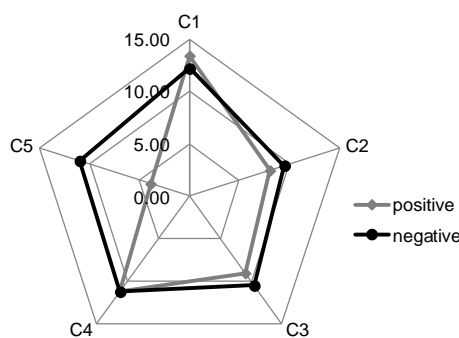


Fig. 1. Summary of critical incidents in categories (own study)
Source: own study

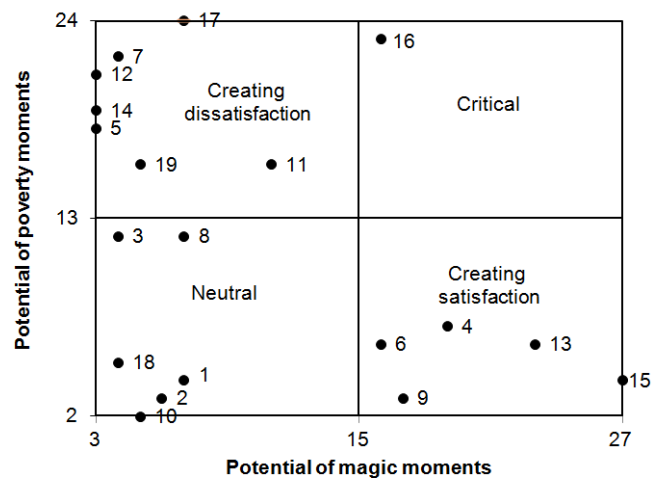


Fig. 2. Matrix of critical incidents
Source: own study

It can be seen that many of the critical incidents' groups are located on the left side of the matrix. It means not too many positive incidents. If it comes to neutral incidents and those creating satisfaction, the city authorities should not worry. They should instead be interested in those that are in the areas of critical incidents (16) and those creating dissatisfaction (5, 7, 11, 12, 14, 17, 19). Local tourism (16) is an important element that, according to residents, should be improved. There are many places in Czestochowa and the surrounding area that are worth seeing. Unfortunately, poor advertising means that pilgrims do not know that such places exist and limit their visit to the city only to the sanctuary. Therefore, the city authorities should think about how to encourage pilgrims to take advantage of other attractions of the city. These attractions can bring extra income to the city.

In the case of a group of incidents creating dissatisfaction, particular attention should be paid to toilets (5), sound system (12) and profits for the city (14), which are located on the left border of the matrix, which means the smallest number of positive critical incidents among all groups. As for toilets, the city authorities should consider bigger number of toilets and higher frequency of cleaning. As for the sound systems, this is a problem described in the local press for a long time. Too loud sound system, especially in the morning and evening disturbs, but here the city authorities have to get along with the

sanctuary authorities, which is unfortunately very difficult. Another problem, already described, are individual groups of pilgrims that carry their sound systems to sing religious songs together, which is also heard by residents during the day, which is very difficult to eliminate. Only regulations set by the city authorities and the sanctuary can help here what is not so sure.

Two groups, i.e. traffic in the city center (7) and the surroundings of the sanctuary (11) are difficult to change. The nature of pilgrimage tourism means that individual groups of pilgrims have to walk along selected streets of the city to reach the sanctuary. They cause the biggest blockage in the city center, often preventing residents from crossing the streets. Perhaps better information for residents about the dates and times of pilgrims' passage would help to better organize their everyday lives. In the summer time many residents simply escape from the city during pilgrimage periods with more tourists. The very surrounding of the sanctuary belongs to the church, the city authorities have no influence on it.

It should be emphasized here that not all the areas indicated in the matrix can be improved to increase residents' satisfaction and turn pilgrimage to sustainable tourism. These are tourists' behavior when entering the city (17) and after the ceremonies (19). The city authorities can't do anything to influence this behavior. Some regulations can be introduced, but it is uncertain whether pilgrims will follow them, because they are used to their laws and habits.

5. CONCLUSION

In summary, pilgrims undeniably exert a significant impact on the city of Częstochowa and its residents. Through the utilization of the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) method, direct interviews were conducted with residents, eliciting descriptions of critical incidents, both positive and negative, associated with the annual pilgrimage influx.

The outcomes of this research enabled the identification of key areas warranting improvement, with the potential to enhance the city's development trajectory and the residents' quality of life. Subsequently, these findings were conveyed to the city authorities for consideration. It's important to acknowledge, however, that certain aspects highlighted by residents, such as pilgrims' behavior or elements intrinsic to the sanctuary, may be beyond the direct control of city officials.

While the study offers valuable insights, its scope is not without limitations. The reliance on direct interviews may have introduced bias, particularly given the specific demographic focus of participants primarily from the city center, where the impact of pilgrimage activity is most pronounced. Furthermore, the possibility of underreporting critical incidents due to reluctance or fear of repercussion underscores the need for continued research to validate and refine these findings.

Moving forward, ongoing investigations are imperative to corroborate and expand upon the present findings, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between pilgrimage tourism and the city of Częstochowa, ultimately guiding informed policy decisions and initiatives aimed at promoting harmonious coexistence between residents and visitors.

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