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WATER TOURISM AS A CHANCE OF RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF MAŁA PANEW VALLEY

Abstract: The canoe trail on Mała Panew is a less popular route of this type in Poland. It is a picturesque water route on a meandering river, characterized by a large variety of landscapes. Enterprises dealing with comprehensive canoeing services, as well as marinas being the starting and ending points of particular canoeing sections were created along the valley of the river. The facilities providing services of widely understood rural tourism are a complementary offer to active recreation on Mała Panew.

The aim of this article is to assess the natural potential of Mała Panew valley and to demonstrate the role of canoe tourism in the development of rural tourism in this area. Internet sources and bibliography are the research material. Moreover, field studies and interviews with selected travel agents were conducted.

The results show great natural value of Mała Panew valley. The existing tourist and paratouristic infrastructure, allows for tourist arrivals and professional canoeing.

Natural and non-natural values are an attractive tourist offer. Taking into account the proximity of large urban centers, while improving and intensifying marketing activities, there is a real chance to revive interest in rural tourism in Mała Panew valley and to activate local tourist businesses.

Key words: water tourism, Mała Panew, rural tourism, canoeing

INTRODUCTION

Inland water tourism has long been very popular. However, only a few years ago, as a result of the liberalization of regulations (such as licenses), it has become really widespread. One of the most frequently practiced varieties is canoeing, which enables exploration of practically all the basins (lakes, water bodies, rivers, canals and other waterways). Unlike other forms of water tourism, canoeing does not require extensive infrastructure, although it undoubtedly constitutes an important element, which, together with its natural and cultural values, makes this form of tourism attractive.

Currently canoe tourism trails have been designated on most of the basins. It is estimated that in Poland there are about 15 thousand kilometers of rivers and water reservoirs, which make it possible to practice canoeing tourism (Klementowski 1995). Moreover, in 2013, about 213 waterways with a total length of 15 393 km were registered (Owsiak 2013). Mała Panew is one of them. Although it has been present in informative and advertising materials of particular municipalities and tourist institutions (e.g. PTTK) for many years it is still a little known, albeit a picturesque trail. Interesting attractions include numerous meanders and, above all, significant diversification of natural and cultural values on particular sections of the river. The functioning infrastructure (though not sufficient) in the form of marinas, camping sites, higher standard accommodation as well as catering and paratouristic facilities year by year makes the canoe trail of Mała Panew an ever increasing attraction of the areas through which the river flows. Marketing activities are also important. Companies offering canoeing, individual sections and existing

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infrastructure appears more often in industry publications promoting not only canoeing on Mała Panew but also rural tourism facilities.

In the scientific literature the issue of water tourism is taken in various aspects. It finds its place in the broader concept of tourism (Merski 2002, Lijewski et al. 2008) and it is also elaborated in foreign literature (Jennings 2007, Pollock et al. 2007). There are also scientific articles about water tourism in narrow contexts (Wyrzykowski 1994, Wiluś 2007, Nitkiewicz-Jankowska and Jankowski 2012).

On this elaboration, both inhouse and field studies have shown that both tourism (natural and non-natural) values and existing infrastructure have a certain potential. Assessment of this potential – as the main objective of this article – is a summary of mentioned studies.

THE RANGE OF RESEARCH

According to J. Kondracki (2001) the area of Mała Panew valley is entirely located at the Opolska Plain (318.57). The Opolska Plain extends in the right river basin of Odra River from Stobrawa north to Tarnogórski Garb being already on the Silesian Upland in the south (Ruman, 2011). It borders from the north-west with the Oleśnicka Plain, in the eastern belt with the Silesian-Kraków uplands and from the south-west with Wrocławska Proglacial Valley. The surface is covered with loam, sand, gravel, clay and loess formations overgrown with Bory Stobrawskie, where the "Smolnik" and "Bażany" reserves were created. The area of the Opolska Plain is approx. 2600 km² and it is divided by a Mała Panew River flowing through the middle, creating Obniżenie Małej Pawki in its eastern part (Kondracki, 2001).

Mała Panew (Fig.1) is the right-bank tributary of Odra River, and its length (about 132 km) and the catchment area (about 2130 km²) make it the largest Odra tributary in its upper course (Czaja, 2011). The slopes of Próg Woznicki are the source area of Mała Panew, and then the river flows into the broad and sandy plain which narrows in the Kalety region. In terms of nature, it is one of the most interesting sections of Mała Panew, where a meandering river (photo 1.) creates several-meter indentations. The valley extends only in the vicinity of the town of Kolonowskie and reaches a maximum of 2 km wide. From Ozimek to the Turawa Reservoir, the trough of Mała Panew has been settled as it passes through an area of the so-called reservoir backwater (Czaja, 2011).

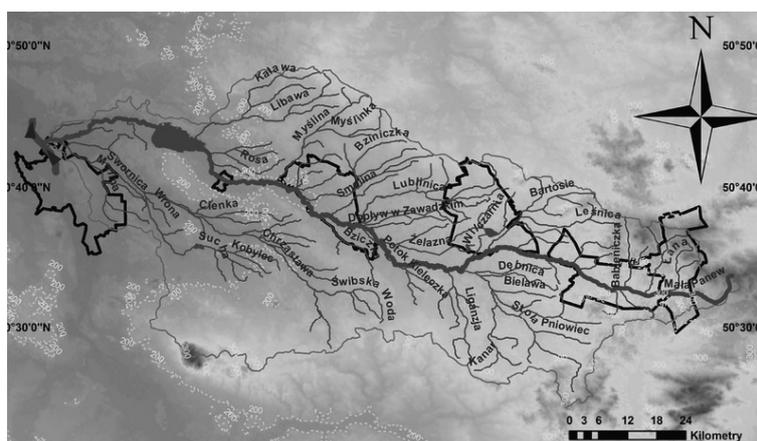


Fig. 1. Mała Panew River (black lines – city boundaries along the river: Woźniki, Kalety, Lubliniec, Zawadzkie, Kolonowskie, Ozimek, Opole)

Source: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma%C5%82a_Panew#/media/File:Ma%C5%82a_Panew_\(rzeka\).png](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ma%C5%82a_Panew#/media/File:Ma%C5%82a_Panew_(rzeka).png)
access: 24.04.2017



Photo 1. Meander of Mała Panew in the area of Zawadzkie town

Source: <http://www.essli2012.pl/index.php?id=46> access: 24.04.2017

Numerous reserves and protected areas were created in Mała Panew, and the most interesting include: „Jeleniak Mikuliny” reserve located in Koszęcin commune 37 ha, crane breeding site, protecting the old trees, approx. 2,5 ha „Dęby Burowszowskie” reserve located in Tworóg commune and "Hubert" reserve located in Wielowieś commune, where on the area of a little bit over 13 ha mixed forest is being protected (Kondracki, 2001).

The settlement was established by the river. Larger settlement centers include Ozimek, Kolonowskie, Zawadzkie and Dobrodzień

RESEARCH MATERIAL

Research materials used in the article were collected in two stages. The first stage included inhouse studies. Authors have made a list of entities providing rural tourism services (especially canoe tourism), located in the valley of Mała Panew. The list is shown in Table 1 with a comment from field studies.

Table 1. Selected rural and canoe tourism facilities in the valley of Mała Panew

Facility	Range of services	Comment
Resort „Zielona” (Kalety)	Accommodation, catering, recreation	Resort in the process of modernization
Hotel „Prawdzie” (Krupski Młyn)	Accommodation, catering, recreation, SPA and fitness	Hotel in the process of categorization and expansion of the offer; new facility
Mill „Bombelka” (Żędowice)	Canoes, parties, paintball, accomodation	
Canoe marina „Tropicana” (Zawadzkie)	Canoes, small catering	Seasonal activity
Canoe marina „Siber” (Kolonowskie)		Moved/liquidated
Canoe marina „Amazonka” (Kolonowskie)	Canoes, paintball, small catering	Seasonal activity
Dzika Chata (Staniszczce Małe)	Restaurant	
Turawa canoeing (Turawa)	canoes	Seasonal activity

Source: Own study

The second stage included field studies. Mapping and inventory took place at the riverside area of Mała Panew as well as in Kalety, Krupski Młyn, Żędowice, Zawadzkie, Kolonowskie, Staniszczy Mały and Turawa. Additionally, in three enterprises interviews with the representatives of the facilities were conducted - OW „Zielona”, Hotel „Prawdnic” and Mill „Bombelka”.

RESULTS

During the field studies (I half of April) despite favorable weather, only three of these facilities provided any tourist services. First of them was Resort „Zielona” in Kalety, the second one was a newly constructed hotel „Prawdnic” in Krupski Młyn and the last one was Mill „Bombelka” in Żędowice. During the interviews 9 questions were answered, which are shown in Table 2. Empty boxes in the table indicate no response. In the case of „Prawdnic” hotel this empty box is due to the short existence of the hotel on the market, therefore the representative of the hotel does not have the knowledge to provide a reliable answer.

Table 2. Information on selected tourist facilities in the valley of Mała Panew

Question:	OW „Zielona”	„Prawdnic” hotel	Mill „Bombelka”
1 – range of services	Accommodation, recreation (field, city canoe rental), catering, educational offer	Accommodation, restaurant and bar, recreation, SPA and fitness	Canoeing, paintball, outdoor events, accommodation, camping
2 – period of increased tourist interest	Holidays and weekends		Weekends (May-September) and holidays
3 – scale of the regional significance of the object	regional	Reception for foreign tourists – business tourism	regional
4 – length of stay		1 day	1 day
5 – features attracting the tourists	Water reservoir, forest	Silence, forest surroundings and other natural values	Natural values (mainly forest, river), silence; canoes
6 – cooperation (and its range) with other entities	The city of Kalety – canoe rental; private entrepreneurs – sleigh rides, dancing parties		Private entrepreneurs – event service (catering), paintball, marina access to other canoeing organizers and individual tourists
7 – factors satisfying the tourists most	Natural values, location in the forest	Kitchen in the hotel restaurant (game, fish)	River wildlife, isolation from civilization, lack of bigger infrastructure
8 – factors causing the tourists dissatisfaction			Low water level in the river
9 – areas needing improvement to increase the attractiveness of Mała Panew	Improving the standard of services offered, increasing interinstitutional cooperation, active participation of various actors in the organization of events		Ineffective marketing – lack of translation of the tourist centre operation into the effects of entrepreneurs

Source: Own study

There are leisure and holiday complexes at Turawskie Lake and in its immediate vicinity (photo 2). Their back facilities are very different in terms of service standards. There are camping

sites, resorts, boardinghouses, guest houses and hotels, bars and restaurants. During studies these facilities were closed, in some of them renovations works were performed, preparing them for the tourist season.



Photo 2. One of leisure complexes at Turawskie Lake

Source: G. Jankowski

CONCLUSIONS

Summing up the above considerations, it can be stated that the tourist traffic in the valley of Mała Panew is characterized by seasonality. It is a normal phenomenon for canoe tourism, although the canoeing season is increasingly extended, for example by spring rafts to clear the troughs and direct river waters. Therefore, conducted studies proved that the seasonality of canoe tourism on Mała Panew is enclosed in a period from May to the end of August, occasionally there are still canoe trips in April and September. This is caused not only by weather conditions, but to a large extent this is influenced by the fact that a significant portion of the tour operators serving the canoe trail of Mała Panew offers their services only during the holiday season (e.g. Kajnar tourist office based in Gliwice rents equipment in canoe hostel in Krupski Młyn – photo 3).

Infrastructure is an extremely important element that influences the tourism potential in this area. Most of the facilities are unfortunately rather primitive, "home-made" slips, bridges and places making it easy to cross the weir (canoe carrying and passes – photo.4). However, apart from such facilities there is also an infrastructure already offering an adequate level of services. An example of this is OW „Zielona”, which (according to the interview) year to year increases the range of services (suitably prepared sandy beach, canoe platform with hinterland or event organization) but mostly their quality (renovation of standard rooms, catering facilities and surroundings around the objects). The situation is similar in the case of Mill „Bąbelek”. In addition to a well-prepared marina with full facilities (barbecues, bonfires, shelters, benches, etc.), the place offers a camping site and accommodation in a brick building. An additional attraction is a very popular paintball arena. According to field studies conducted, the number of participants using the attractions of the area is slowly but systematically increasing



Photo 3. The facilities of „Kajnar” seasonal canoe marina

Source: G. Jankowski



Photo 4. Canoe pass on the weir in Kolonowkie

Source: G. Jankowski

We cannot forget about the current promotional activities strongly highlighted during the interviews. They are performed, together with marketing, mostly by individual entities in a given area. However, the lack of coordination and coherent marketing projects for the entire canoe trail of Mała Panew is seen as rather insufficient, although nowadays, as clearly emphasized by the interviewee, it is much better than a more than 10 years ago when there was no promotion or marketing at all. Thus, such activities are carried out by individual municipalities, canoeing companies, owners of catering and lodging facilities and industry organizations (e.g. PTTK). Despite this (or perhaps due to it), information about Mała Panew canoe trail, the natural and



cultural attractions associated with it, and the facilities of accompanying infrastructure can be found in numerous materials concerning the trail itself and the areas through which it passes.

It can therefore be stated that already in the present form the tourist product of water tourism is an important aspect of the tourist potential of Mała Panew valley. Its impact on the rural tourism infrastructure development can be seen, not only in the form of elements directly associated with the canoe trail, but also accommodation and catering facilities from newly constructed „Prawdzie” hotel, aspiring to be a three-star hotel, through holiday resorts (e.g. OW "Zielona") to agritourism farms offering accommodation.

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