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Joanna Kosmaczewska
PhD (Economics), Associate Professor,
Department of Economics and Economic Policy in Agribusiness,
Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences,
Poznań University of Life Sciences
28 Wojska Polskiego Str., Poznań, 60-637, Poland
joanna.kosmaczewska@up.poznan.pl
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5848-9764>

Acceptance of foreigners among the host students in the context of tourism development in Poland

Abstract. This study examines social distance as a basic component of students' attitudes towards foreigners. The methodological approach in this research is designed to provide answers to the question: Does social distance play any role in the context of international tourism? The Bogardus Social Distance Scale was applied. A total number of 162 questionnaires were correctly completed by Polish and Ukrainian students (quota by nationality, age, gender and level of education). The survey was conducted in 2018. The research appears to show a statistically significant relationship between the respondents' declared attitude towards the Muslims and the Gypsies and the willingness to visit the country where such people reside. The findings have shown that there was no statistical relationship between the respondents' attitudes presented towards otherness and the fact that the respondent might know somebody who is a representative of the researched nationalities. The paper contains recommendations for the development of international tourism, especially destination marketing organizations (DMOs). It is recommended to use the social distance measure to set priority directions for inbound tourism when developing tourism marketing strategies, along with taking into account cultural diversity in the individual regions of Poland.

Keywords: Tourism Development; Social Distance; Destination Marketing Organization; Poland; Spatial Marketing

JEL Classification: A14; I29; L83

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Космачевска Й.

кандидат економічних наук, доцент,
кафедра економіки та економічної політики в агробізнесі, факультет економіки та соціальних наук,
Університет природничих наук у Познані, Познань, Польща

Ставлення до іноземних студентів у контексті розвитку туризму в Польщі

Анотація. У статті розглянуто соціальну дистанцію як основний компонент, який визначає ставлення студентів до іноземців. Використаний при проведенні дослідження методологічний підхід дозволяє дати відповідь на питання, яку роль відіграє соціальна дистанція в контексті міжнародного туризму. Для отримання результатів автором статті було застосовано шкалу Богардуса (шкалу соціальної дистанції). У процесі дослідження польські та українські студенти, загальне число яких становить 162, заповнили відповідні анкети з урахуванням квот за національною ознакою, віком, статтю та рівнем освіти. Дослідження показало наявність статистично значущого зв'язку між заявленим ставленням респондентів до мусульман та ромів і бажанням відвідати країну, де проживають ці люди. Разом із тим результати дослідження не підтвердили наявності статистично значимого зв'язку між ставленням респондентів до іноземців і тим фактом, що респонденти могли самі відноситися до осіб, що належать до національностей, зазначених у дослідженні. У статті наведено рекомендації щодо розвитку міжнародного туризму, зокрема організацій з маркетингу територій.

Ключові слова: студенти; туризм; соціальна дистанція; маркетингова організація; маркетинг територій; Польща.

Joanna Kosmaczewska

Prof. UPP dr hab.,

Katedra Ekonomii i Polityki Gospodarczej w Agrobiznesie, Wydział Ekonomiczno-Społeczny,
Uniwersytet Przyrodniczy w Poznaniu, Poznań, Polska

Akceptacja obcokrajowców w kontekście rozwoju turystyki w Polsce

Streszczenie. W artykule zastosowano miarę dystansu społecznego Bogardusa do zobrazowania nastawienia studentów do tzw. «obcych», przy czym badano nastawienie do Żydów, Romów i Muzułmanów. Celem artykułu było poszukiwanie odpowiedzi na pytanie czy miara dystansu społecznego może mieć istotne znaczenie w turystyce międzynarodowej, zwłaszcza w kontekście funkcji recepcyjnych miejsca docelowego. Badanie przeprowadzono w 2018 roku wśród studentów (narodowości polskiej i ukraińskiej) Wyższej Szkoły Gospodarki w Bydgoszczy (n=162). Wyniki badań wykazały istotną statystycznie zależność między deklarowaną przez respondentów postawą w stosunku do Muzułmanów i Romów a deklarowaną chęcią odwiedzenia kraju, w którym dominują wspomniane nacje. Stwierdzono także brak statystycznie istotnej zależności między deklarowaną postawą w stosunku do «obcych» a wcześniejszymi kontaktami z reprezentantami poszczególnych nacji. Wyniki przeprowadzonych badań wskazują, że miara dystansu społecznego może być przydatna do wyznaczania kierunków priorytetowych dla zagranicznej turystyki przyjazdowej, przy czym należałoby także uwzględnić zróżnicowanie kulturowe w poszczególnych regionach Polski.

Słowa kluczowe: rozwój turystyki; turystyka przyjazdowa; dystans społeczny; docelowa organizacja marketingowa; Polska.

1. Introduction

Internationalization of universities, which has been observed for a couple of recent years, results from the necessity of attracting as many students as possible and, among other reasons, from competition clearly noticed in the field of higher education. Since 1987, international students' exchange has been greatly supported by Erasmus Programme, the main task of which is to simplify students' and academic teachers' mobility, giving them a chance to continue part of their studies or academic work abroad, as well as to give various universities the opportunity of taking part in different international projects and cooperate with foreign partners. Poland joined the Programme in 1998-1999 and since then has been its active participant (Kolanowska, 2008).

Since 2014-2015, Erasmus +, a new more complex programme prepared by the EU concerning education and sport, has been in operation. Its total, the budget for the years 2014-2020 amounts to 14.7 million Euro, which means a 40% increase in relation to the previous edition of EU programmes concerning education and professional development (European Commission, 2018). Such an approach clearly shows how important the internationalization of educational processes observed in the field of higher education is (European Commission, 2018). Fee-paying studies offered by Polish universities, especially in the area of medicine and technology, seem to be gaining more and more popularity. All these actions not only make Polish students able to meet their counterparts from other countries at Polish universities much more frequently, but also give them the possibility of continuing some part of their studies abroad. Thus, it ought to be assumed that global education, apart from traditionally perceived knowledge, should also provide students with such abilities as understanding and acceptance of religious or cultural otherness. This ability seems to be particularly important, especially in the context of the fact that globalisation concerns not only the economic life, but also the social one. Therefore, functioning in a multicultural environment while working, studying or simply visiting other countries as a tourist has already become a daily routine for the major part of our society. On the other hand, 64% of employers consider international experience important for recruitment. On average, 92% are looking for transversal skills such as openness to and curiosity about new challenges, problem-solving and decision-making skills, confidence, tolerance towards other personal values and behaviours (European Commission, 2016, 2018). Furthermore, motivation of students to participate in the Erasmus Programme depends on the region. While living abroad and meeting people are of similar importance for students in all regions, such phenomena, together with the development of language skills, play a much bigger role for Northern-European and Western-European students than other factors. Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, students primarily choose to go abroad to improve their command of foreign languages and to broaden their career prospects. Students in Southern Europe wish to develop their language and soft skills and, of all the regions, they have the highest motivation to go abroad in order to increase their future employability abroad (European Commission, 2016, 2018).

Therefore, bearing in mind the foregoing, the aim of this article is to analyze the social distance as the basic component of the students' attitudes towards foreigners in the context of tourism development in Poland. In this paper, we try to find an answer to the question whether social distance plays any role in the context of international tourism.

The article is organised as follows: a statistical data review of the foreign students in Poland, a review of the social distance presented in the literature with respect to the effects of studying abroad on attitudes towards other cultures, an explanation of the methodology of the research and the main conclusions. The Bogardus Social Distance Scale has been applied.

In the 2017-2018 academic year, there were 1,291.9 thousand students in higher education institutions, which is by 4.2% less than in the previous academic year. It was the seventh successive year when a decline in the number of students was recorded, which was influenced by demographic changes (Central Statistical Office of Poland, 2017, 2018). It is predicted that this tendency will continue for a couple of coming years and that up to the year 2020, Poland will experience the biggest decrease in the number of students of all OECD countries (Łukaszczyk, 2013).

Nevertheless, the number of foreign students at Polish universities has been gradually increasing, due to the fact that educational offers are promoted and supported by the Conference of Rectors of Universities in Poland, which together with the Educational Foundation «Perspektywy (or «The Prospects) run the «Study in Poland programme that presents study programmes and research opportunities available in Poland in English (The Prospects, 2018).

In the 2017-2018 academic year, foreign students constituted 5.6% of all students (Central Statistical Office of Poland, 2018). The significant growth of the proportion of foreign students in relation to a total number of students in Poland was observed mainly because of constantly decreasing number of domestic students, the issue which was mentioned previously.

According to the latest data published by the Central Statistical Office (Figure 1), the highest number of foreign students arrived in Poland from Ukraine (66%), Belarus (9%), Norway (3%), Sweden (3%) and Spain (3%) (Central Statistical Office of Poland, 2018).

The higher education institutions and destination marketing organizations are actively using strategies that include advertising Polish universities on billboards along Ukrainian streets, creating special counselling centres in major cities of Ukraine with representatives from Ukrainian universities, various programs of financial support for Ukrainian students, especially those who received the Polish Card (Hrynkevych, 2017).

However, as the results of the research taken by Popow (2015) show, for foreign students, the choice of Poland as a host country frequently happens to be relatively coincidental. The surveyed hardly ever mentioned the desire to learn more about Polish culture as the main reason of their choice. Which is more, they used to express the opinion that their stay in Poland was short enough, so there was no particular need to learn either the language or about the Polish culture since this knowledge would turn useless after their return to their home country. Those students

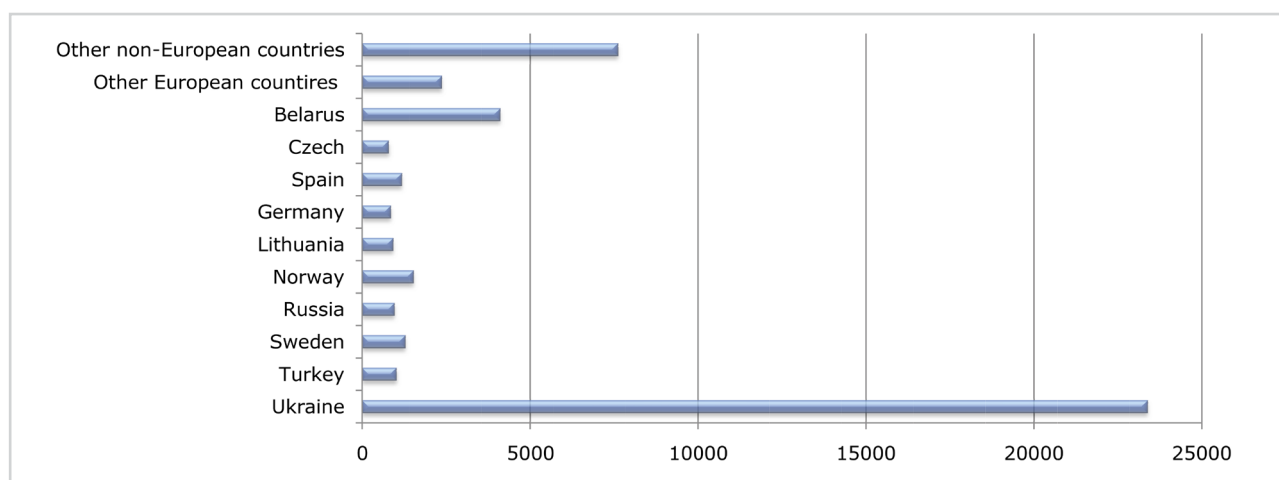


Figure 1:

Foreign students in Poland in the 2017-2018 academic year

Source: Compiled by the author based on data by Central Statistical Office of Poland (2018), Statistical Office in Gdańsk (2018), Centre for Education and Human Capital Statistics (2018)

seemed to treat their studies in Poland as a sort of a «sprig-board for their further professional career, the place where, from the point of view of their domestic labour market, they were able to gain some useful knowledge as well as experience of studying abroad, bearing a relatively low-cost stay. Poland also happens to be chosen by foreign students as a host country for some sentimental reasons arising from the students' origin and family connotations. Such students possess a very precise image of Poland, mainly based on their historical knowledge of the country and on what they heard from their family members (Popow, 2015).

The fact of going to study in another country, especially a culturally different one, is very likely to bring numerous consequences of not only an organizational character, but also those resulting from not speaking the local language or not knowing the legal system of the country where the students are temporally staying. Such a situation may quite negatively affect the students' daily life, especially in the area of health care where they can encounter quite a number of difficulties. Moreover, the foreign students are quite likely to experience the feeling of marginalisation or even discrimination presented to them by the students from the host country, as well as the difficulties of getting adapted to the new environment (different culture, habits, values, food); they can also feel homesick, miss their family and friends and experience anxiety related to a different culture as well as a fear of discrimination and being treated stereotypically (Houghton, 2014; Wright & Scharnt, 2013; Stein et al., 2018). At the same time, the stereotypic approach may also apply to the visited country and its inhabitants, because, as research has shown, insufficient contact with students in the visited country (host country students) does not verify common stereotypes but even strengthens them (Stankiewicz, 2011).

The authorities of Polish universities, together with non-governmental institutions and organizations, have already started introducing compulsory and facultative classes that would prepare students to participate in the multicultural world. However, as the research results obtained by Popow (2015) show, foreign students prefer spending their free time in the company of other foreign students representing different cultures or in the company of students coming from their home country. Thus, the majority of them hardly ever declare staying in close relationships with Polish students, mainly, as they point out, due to the language barrier. Apart from the language problems, foreign students studying in Poland found Polish cuisine, together with the lack of possibility of getting food products coming from their home countries, quite challenging. Changeable weather, as well as difficulties occurring in finding a well-paid job which might assure a relatively high level of life, turned out to be among other important challenges (Chutnik & Kuźmińska-Haberla, 2014). In addition, as indicated by the results of the study of the students from Ukraine, before coming to Poland or at its early stage, they declared concerns about the language barrier, separation from family and friends, contact with stereotypes about themselves and difficulties with living in Poland (Rębisz & Grygiel, 2018).

Paradoxically, contemporary Poland, which is definitely actively involved in ongoing global educational, economic, political and cultural processes, still remains quite a homogeneous country, especially with regard to ethnical, cultural and religious issues (Podemski, 2012; Stankiewicz, 2011).

Situations, in which the natives are able to meet foreigners who come to Poland on educational, business or tourist purposes, create an opportunity of finding out more about other nationalities, cultures and understanding foreigners' behaviours.

2. Brief Literature Review

Cross-cultural competencies may be perceived as being ready to live and communicate with other members of multicultural communities (Thomas et al., 2008). However, this readiness cannot be limited solely to knowledge itself (cognitive level), but it should also concern cultural experience in the area of awareness and attitudes (affective level) and particular abilities. Therefore, the competences constitute a peculiar conglomerate of knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness which, in assumption, lets people cope with a new social and cultural environment and facilitates the whole process.

Social studies investigating attitudes presented by the natives towards foreigners most frequently check to what extent the natives are ready to let the people considered to be different regarding their nationality, ethnic origin, denomination, the level of disability or sexual orientation, into their lives and how close relationships can be maintained between them (Ahmed, 2007; Nyaupane et al., 2008; Sinkovics & Penz, 2009). This level of understanding and intimacy of

personal and social relationships between the natives and the foreigners was referred to as a «social distance, the term first introduced into literature by Park, and for the first time used for research purposes by Emory S. Bogardus, who created a seven-grade scale, illustrating the «social distance. The scale begins with the question concerning the possibility of getting married to an «alien and ends with the question concerning agreement for the «alien's stay in the native's country (Bogardus, 1933). The «social distance scale created by Bogardus allows to analyse the respondents' attitudes towards others in the following contexts:

- macro-social public sphere;
- micro-social public sphere;
- private sphere;
- intimate sphere.

In recent years, it has been used and adapted many times (Parrillo & Donoghue, 2005; Bichi, 2008; Wahl et al., 2012; Helbert & Kim, 2018), for example to measure people's attitudes towards people with disabilities (Vignes et al., 2008) or with a different skin colour (Helbert & Kim, 2018). The properly modified Bogardus scale was also used in research and relationships between residents and tourists in tourist destinations (Sinkovics & Penz, 2009; Tasci, 2009; Woosnam & Lee, 2011; Yilmaz & Tasci, 2015; Thyne et al., 2018).

Tourists may perceive differences or similarities between the destination and their home countries. For instance, German students describe a lack of organization and planning in Poland as a definitely different from «German standards» (Stankiewicz, 2011). This impression can result either from tourists' own earlier experiences or stereotypes they have already built up on the basis of information they gained either in an active or passive way.

Other possible sources of getting, the above mentioned, information on the destination place can be a contact with people inhabiting this particular country, the people who can be perceived as the ones being the representatives of typical behaviours found in the particular country or among its residents. In this context, the social distance scale could be also used to explain prejudice, stereotypes, and racial attitudes, which are also relevant to destination-image construct (Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Tasci, 2009; Sinkovics & Penz, 2009). As it was conceptualized by Cohen (1972), the more social distance felt toward the inhabitants, the stranger the environment will be perceived. Higher social distances felt toward the inhabitants, just as the strangeness in the destination, can be correlated with a feeling of threat, thereby reducing the likelihood of visit or revisit to the destination.

On the other hand, the social distance theory has also proved that host residents are more likely to accept and tolerate people who are more socially and culturally similar to them (Thyne et al., 2006). For instance, Thyne et al. (2006) investigated nationality, age, and type of tourist in order to determine which factor turned out to be the most important one for residents in determining tolerance for tourists. The obtained results showed that in each case nationality appeared to be the most important factor and the Americans were found to be the most preferred nationality, whereas the Japanese and the Germans the least preferred ones. The social distance scale was minimally used among students.

However, Nyaupane et al. (2008) investigated attitudes of students participating in a study abroad programme toward host residents and proved that «social distance plays a more important role in forming attitudes prior to the trip than attitude change after the trip . This result was partly consistent with the conclusion made by Pizam et al. (1991) in a pre-trip and post-trip survey to study changes in attitudes of American students visiting the former Soviet Union. The students who were participating in the study abroad programme to the USSR declared more positive attitudes than the non-study abroad students, which suggests that people's attitudes towards the hosts improve when they decide to visit the destination. A study by Litvin (2003) also proved that students' attitude changed significantly between the pre- and post-travelling from Singapore to Egypt and Israel. The attitudes towards Egyptian people and towards Egypt changed negatively, but the attitudes towards Israelis and towards Israel changed positively. Litvin (2003), like Thyne et al. (2006) and Çelik (2019), reasonably suggested that the post-trip attitude change depends on the country visited.

Based on the results from various empirical and theoretical researches reviewed above, it can be concluded that the social distance influences the post-trip attitude of either students and tourists. It also plays an important role in forming expectations and choosing destination process at the stage of planning the visit.

3. Purpose

This study used the social distance theory to investigate the students' attitudes towards otherness. The main goal was to diagnose the current state of the students' attitudes towards religious and cultural differences as well as to otherness in the context of tourism development in Poland. The students' attitudes were examined with respect to foreigners representing three particular confessions such as the Muslims, the Jews and the Gypsies.

The following detailed research questions were put forward in the paper:

«Towards which nationality do the students show the smallest social distance?», «Does the fact of having an acquaintance representing one of the mentioned above nationalities significantly decrease the social distance?», «Does the earlier visit to the country where a particular nationality is found to dominate affect the social distance?», «Does the social distance influence the tourist destination in the future?».

In order to explore the students' attitudes to otherness it was necessary to conduct some surveys. A special questionnaire built with the Bogardus' Social Distance Scale was developed, and later it was extended and adapted to tourism market on the basis of Sinkovics and Penz (2009). The students were asked to imagine seven basic situations which were constructed by Bogardus and several additional situations in which they would meet tourists and indicate on the attitudinal items how comfortable or uncomfortable they would feel. A 5-point Likert scale was applied. In the present study, a modified version was used, with 16 questions about consenting to enter a relationship with a Muslim, a Jew or a Gypsy, in the following interpersonal situations:

- 1) Would you marry into the group?
- 2) Would you have them as close friends?
- 3) Would you have them as next-door neighbours?
- 4) Would you work with them in the same office?
- 5) Would you be their flatmate?
- 6) Would you accept them as Polish citizens?
- 7) Would you have them as visitors?
- 8) Would you sit beside them on a bus?
- 9) Would you accept their company in a public swimming pool?
- 10) Would you share a place in a restaurant with them?
- 11) Would you like to see them in big groups walking around a town?
- 12) Would you take a photo of them?
- 13) Would you like them to take a photo with you?
- 14) Would you bar them from Poland as tourists?
- 15) Would you bar them from Poland as students?
- 16) Would you bar them from Poland as employees?

Each variable was measured according to the five-point Linkert scale, beginning with the total lack of acceptance (1) through complete indifference, ending up with a strong acceptance of the presented situations (5). A total number of 162 questionnaires were correctly completed by Polish and Ukrainian students of tourism at the University of Economy in Bydgoszcz. The University of Economy in Bydgoszcz students were purposely selected for the study, as it has the highest internationalization rate (16.8%) out of all the universities in Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodeship. In addition, 57.9% of all the students from Ukraine studying in the voivodeship studied at the University of Economy in Bydgoszcz (Statistical Office in Bydgoszcz, 2017).

The sample design comprised a quota sample (quotas by nationality, age, gender and level of education). The survey was conducted in 2018.

4. Results

Since the majority of students who study tourism and recreation at the University of Economy in Bydgoszcz are the ones coming from Ukraine, the research sample was selected in such a way that it could reflect the real structure of the surveyed students. The students' average age was 23. The details of a sample description have been included in Table 1.

As the research results show (Figure 2), the respondents turned out to demonstrate the smallest social distance towards the Jews. In all the studied aspects, i.e. concerning public, private and intimate spheres, this nationality appeared to be treated most favourably. On the other hand, social distance expressed towards the Muslims and the Gypsies turned out to be much bigger

Table 1:
 Summary of the respondents' profile (n = 162)

	N	%
Nationality		
Polish	86	53
Ukrainians	76	47
Gender		
Female	72	57
Male	54	43
Education		
Master	48	38
Bachelor	78	62

Source: Compiled by the author

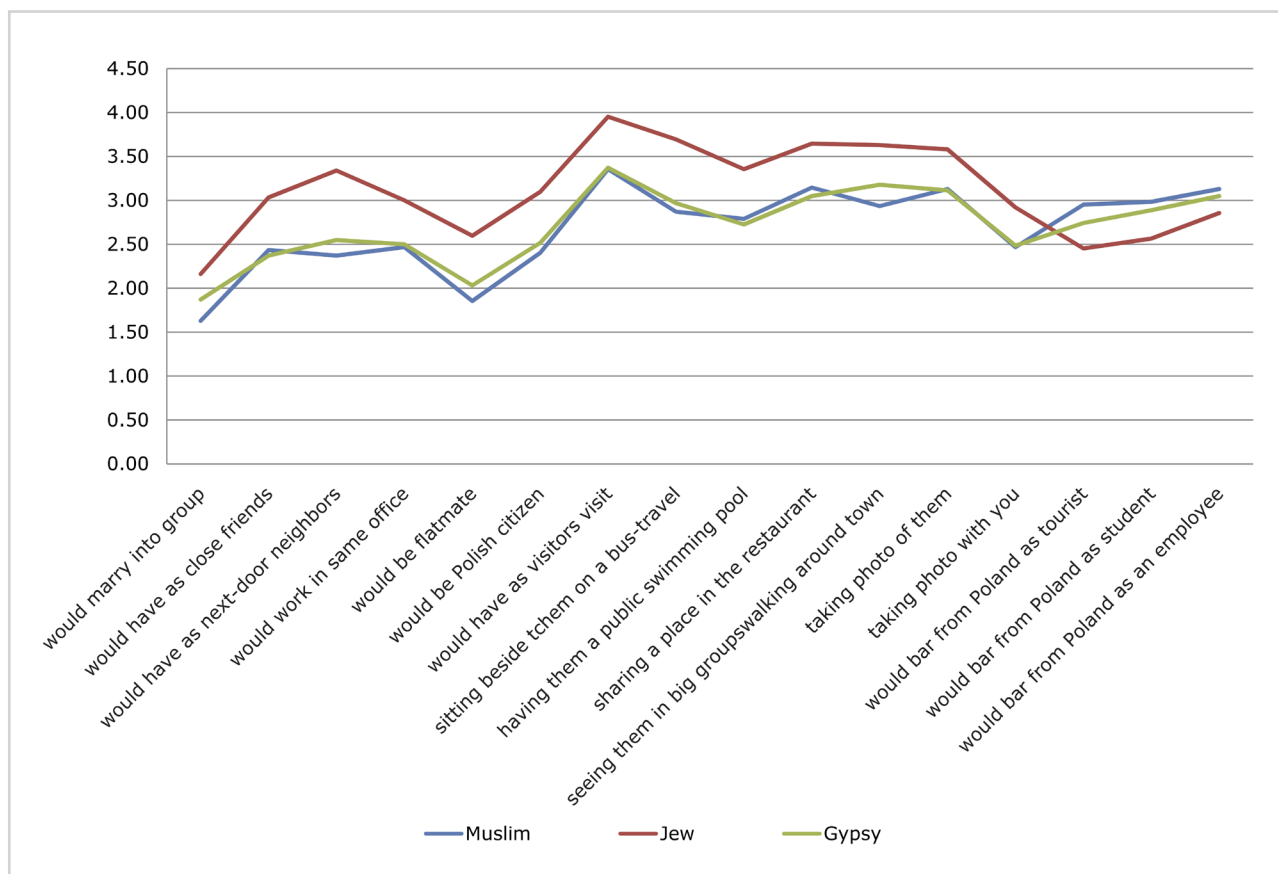


Figure 2:

Detailed answers to the questions checking the level of social distance (five-point Likert scale)

Source: Compiled by the author

and looked almost the same with regard to both nationalities. According to A. Sulek (2012), sympathy for Jews is more common in Poland than in Austria and Germany, but less often than in the USA or France, for example.

In order to check if the attitude presented by Polish and Ukrainian students was not very different statistically, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test was applied. In both groups, the value of social distance was compared, excluding the three preclusive questions. In the case of the attitude expressed by both Polish and Ukrainian students towards the Muslims and the Gypsies, no statistically significant difference was found. However, in the case of the Jews, the Polish students turned out to show statistically smaller social distance than the Ukrainian students did (Mann-Whitney U-test, $z = -2.916$; $p = 0.04$). The detailed answers to the research questions are presented in Table 2.

Taking into consideration the scope of the article, the questions concerning acceptance of the Muslims, Jews and Gypsies as tourists visiting Poland, were analysed in a very detailed way (Figure 3). Also in this case, the Jews appeared to be the nationality towards which the smallest social distance was expressed and they were perceived as the ones who were most favourably

seen as tourists visiting Poland. The average value of the answers concerning the two remaining nationalities was around 3.3, which allows to assume that the majority of the respondents were not fully convinced what attitude they really wanted to express with respect to this issue.

According to Bogardus’s assumptions, the question concerning eliminating otherness from the country was also included in the questionnaire. However, in this case, the question was supplemented by the form in which the respondents would like to get rid of otherness from Poland. The following graph shows the overall percentage of the answers: «I rather agree and «I definitely agree (Figure 4).

Table 2:
 Detailed answers to the research questions

Variable	Muslims		Jews		Gypsies	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Would you marry into the group?	1.63	1.06	2.16	1.16	1.87	1.03
Would you have them as close friends?	2.44	1.40	3.03	1.38	2.37	1.38
Would you have them as next-door neighbours?	2.37	1.45	3.34	1.29	2.55	1.40
Would you work in same office with them?	2.47	1.40	3.00	1.44	2.50	1.41
Would you be their flat-mate?	1.85	1.20	2.60	1.38	2.03	1.25
Would you accept them as Polish citizens?	2.40	1.42	3.10	1.24	2.52	1.36
Would you have them as visitors?	3.35	1.44	3.95	1.12	3.37	1.42
Would you sit beside them on a bus?	2.87	1.47	3.69	1.10	2.97	1.47
Would you accept their company in a public swimming pool?	2.79	1.36	3.35	1.15	2.73	1.39
Would you share a place in the restaurant with them?	3.15	1.44	3.65	1.15	3.05	1.45
Would you like to see them in big groups walking around town?	2.94	1.38	3.63	1.22	3.18	1.48
Would you take a photo of them?	3.13	1.57	3.58	1.35	3.11	1.61
Would you ask them to take a photo with you?	2.47	1.45	2.92	1.41	2.48	1.50
Would you bar them from Poland as tourists?	2.95	1.49	2.45	1.17	2.74	1.46
Would you bar them from Poland as students?	2.98	1.51	2.56	1.20	2.89	1.45
Would you bar them from Poland as employees?	3.13	1.50	2.85	1.34	3.05	1.45

Source: Compiled by the author

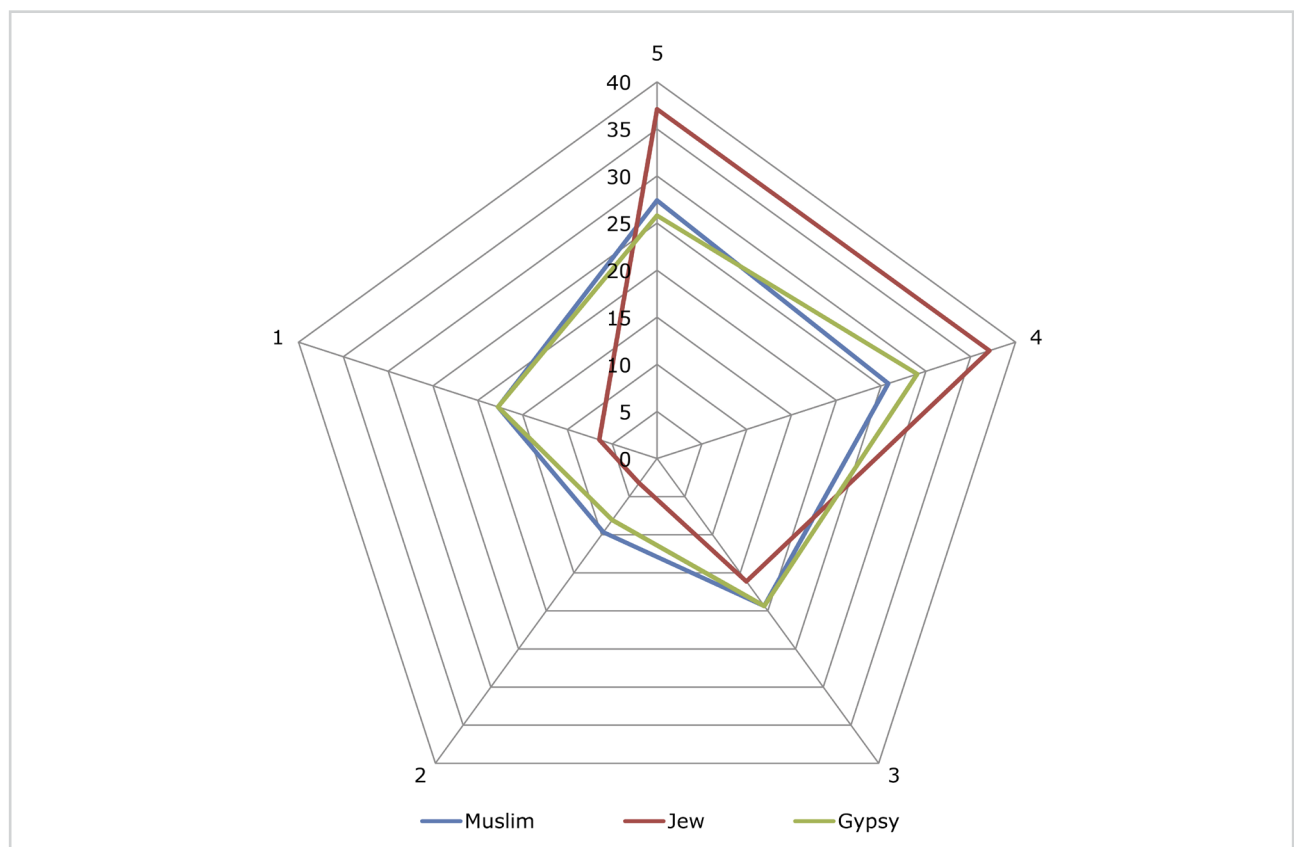


Figure 3:
 The respondents’ attitude declared towards the otherness represented by people visiting Poland as tourists

Source: Compiled by the author

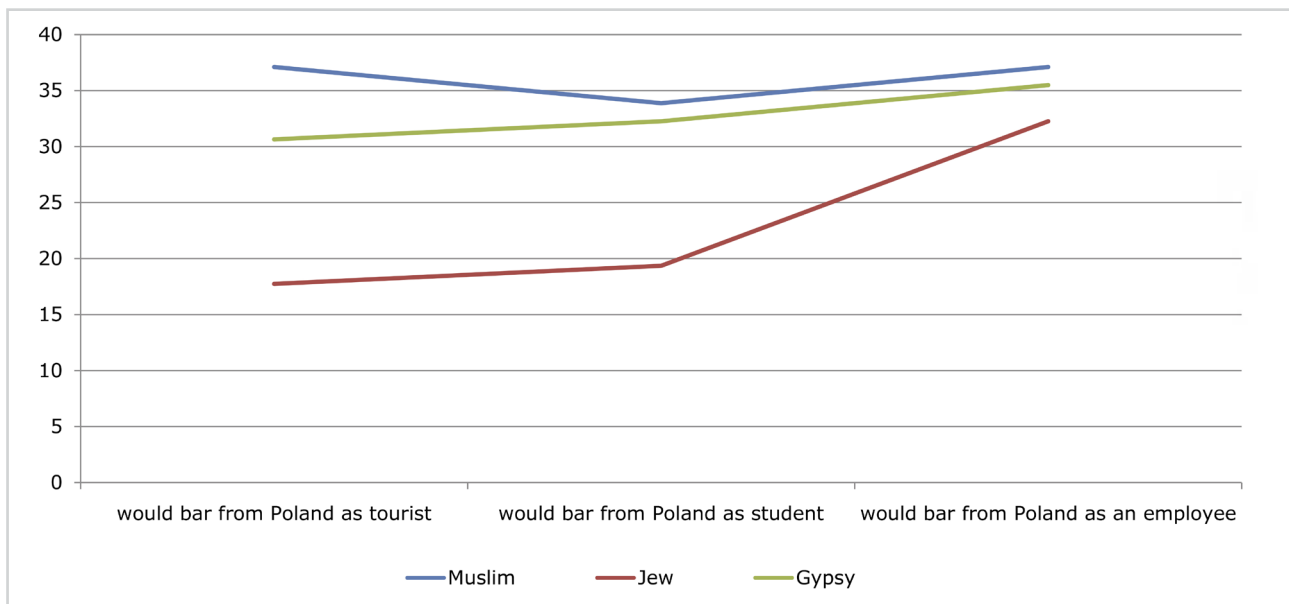


Figure 4:
The respondents' attitude declared towards eliminating otherness from Poland
 Source: Own calculations

In this case, the smallest social distance was shown towards the Gypsies. Concerning the attitude towards the Jews and the Gypsies, the surveyed students appeared to express the most favourable approach towards the members of these nationalities if they were to visit Poland as tourists rather than students or potential employees. Only in case of the Muslims, their stay in Poland as students was perceived more favourably than as tourists or employees.

Pearson's correlation coefficient allowed to find out that there was no statistical relationship between the respondents' attitudes presented towards these particular confessions and the fact that the respondent might know somebody being the representative of the researched nationalities. No statistical relationship between the respondents' attitude and their earlier visit to countries such as Turkey, Israel or Romania, was determined. However, the research appeared to show a statistically significant relationship between the respondents' declared attitude towards the Muslims and the Gypsies and the respondents' willingness to visit the country where those people reside (assuming the respondents were not limited by either time or money). People, who declared the smallest social distance towards the Muslims simultaneously expressed their readiness to visit Turkey (Pearson correlation coefficient $r = 0.304$; $p = 0.016$), and those who showed more favourable attitude towards the Gypsies wanted to visit Romania ($r = 0.272$; $p = 0.033$). In the case of the Jews, no particularly important relationship between the respondents' attitude towards the confession and their willingness to visit Israel was observed. Obviously, some slight relationships were found, however it must be assumed that the factors impacting the willingness to visit a particular country are mostly determined by the country's current geopolitical situation and its tourist attractiveness. Thereby, Griffiths and Sharpley (2012) suggest that one of the influencing factors on the tourist-host relationship is the nationality of each and, in particular, their nationalism as a cultural determinant of encounters and the subsequent relationship between tourists and hosts may be prejudiced or shaped by these nationalisms, both individually and with respect to each other. The importance of social distance in understanding host attitudes towards tourism is also confirmed by others researcher in Japan (Thyne et al., 2018), New Zealand (Thyne et al., 2006) and Austria (Sinkovics & Penz, 2009).

5. Conclusions

In the context of ongoing internationalisation and tourism development, the ability to live in a multicultural environment and get open to any kind of otherness seems to be not just a desired behaviour pattern, but simply the obvious one. The changes that are constantly taking place, especially in the area of higher education, give students a great deal of opportunities to realize a chosen part of their educational process, including educational processes in other countries. However, according to the research results, the Ukrainian students studying tourism and

recreation at the University of Economy in Bydgoszcz did not declare any smaller social distance towards the Muslims, the Jews or the Gypsies. Although, in general, the smallest social distance was expressed towards the Jews, the reason for such a result should be rather found in the favourable attitude declared by Polish students. Thus, it must be assumed that in the researched case, the fact of studying in another country did not result in wider openness to otherness, which seems to be quite contrary to the results obtained by Pizam et al. (1991). Also, it should be remembered that the answers given by Ukrainian students concerned otherness in Poland, not in their home country. Therefore, it can be assumed that the obtained results might have been strongly impacted by this fact.

As the research results show, the fact of a direct relationship with the representative of a particular confession or an earlier visit to the host country, where the particular confession constitutes the majority of its inhabitants, did not affect the level of social distance declared by the respondents. As Stankiewicz (2011) pointed out in her research, this may result from insufficient mutual contact. Nevertheless, destination marketing organizations (DMOs) should consider that the attitude to a particular nationality may be one of significant factors impacting the choice of the future tourist destination. Thereby, students' attitudes towards foreigners can be used by DMOs in the development of effective marketing communications for specific target markets. DMOs members, such as hotels, attractions, and historic districts should have a keen interest in promoting open-mindedness in the context of tourism development. It should be assumed that the presented research results could be different in different provinces of Poland, due to the historically shaped openness to otherness. Therefore, the topic remains open for further research. Nevertheless, the use of the social distance measure to set priority directions for inbound tourism when developing tourism marketing strategies is applicable throughout Poland.

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