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Sports tourism as a new form of tourist activity – terminology and history of the concept

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Turystyka sportowa jako nowa forma aktywności turystycznej – terminologia i historia pojęcia

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł dotyczy szeroko rozumianego pojęcia turystyki sportowej. Pomimo stosunkowo długiego czasu funkcjonowania, badania nad tym pojęciem i wszelkiego rodzaju rozważania rozpoczęto dopiero w latach 70. XX wieku. Złożony charakter zjawiska oraz prowadzone przez cały czas badania powodują, że pojęcie to wzbudza wiele wątpliwości. Rozwój badań i rozważań nad tym pojęciem z roku na rok uwidacznia się coraz bardziej. Mocno zauważalny jest także wzrost liczby publikacji odnoszących się bezpośrednio do tej tematyki. W niniejszym artykule podjęto próbę uporządkowania i systematyzowania opracowanych dotychczas publikacji naukowych i wyników badań. Artykuł opracowano na podstawie przeprowadzonej kwerendy i analizy źródeł literatury związanych zarówno z turystyką sportową, jak również z geografią turystyki, czy też pojęciami związanymi ze sportem. Pod uwagę wzięto zarówno literaturę zagraniczną, jak również polskie źródła literatury. Wspomniany przegląd literatury zaprezentowany został w sposób chronologiczny. W artykule wspomniano również o domniemanych początkach zjawiska turystyki sportowej sięgających już czasów starożytnych. Treść uzupełniono o rozważania autora artykułu. Do-

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konany przegląd literatury udowodnił, że zjawisko turystyki sportowej nie zostało jeszcze w pełni opisane i zbadane, co niewątpliwie spowodowane jest krótkim czasem intensyfikacji badań i rozważań nad tym pojęciem.

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka sportowa, sport, turystyka aktywna, kultura fizyczna.

Abstract

This article deals with the broadly understood concept of sports tourism. Although this term has been used for a relatively long time, it was not until the 1970s that research on the concept and all kinds of considerations began. The complex nature of the phenomenon and the research being carried out all the time result in many doubts regarding this concept. The development of research and reflection on this concept is becoming more and more apparent every year. The increase in the number of publications relating directly to this topic is also strongly noticeable. In this article, an attempt has been made to order and systematize scientific publications and research results that have been developed so far. The article has been prepared on the basis of a search and analysis of literature sources related to both sports tourism and the geography of tourism, or concepts related to sport. Both foreign literature and Polish literature sources were taken into account. The aforementioned literature review was presented in a chronological order. The article also mentions the alleged beginnings of the phenomenon of sports tourism dating back to ancient times. The content has been supplemented with the author's remarks. The review of the literature has proved that the phenomenon of sports tourism has not yet been fully described and researched, which is undoubtedly due to the short time of intensification of research and deliberations on this concept.

Keywords: sports tourism, sport, active tourism, physical culture

Introduction

The last few decades have witnessed dynamic development of tourism. The intensification of tourist traffic connected directly or indirectly with a specific leitmotif of a trip has also been noticeable. This has led to the creation and distinction of several new forms of tourist activity. One of such activities is sports tourism.

It is generally accepted that sport tourism can be defined as making trips related to sport. It can be both passive and active participation in a sports event, as well as visiting sports-related places. However, all aspects relating to the issue of sports tourism raise many questions and debates referring both to terminology and its practical side. Because of this, terminological confusion is noticeable. Moreover, many academics often try to completely negate the functioning of such a form of tourist activity. Major problems concerning the definition of sports tourism also result from the fact that for many years tourism and sport have been considered and researched as two completely separate issues. However, research and observations carried out in the last few decades show that

sports tourism is becoming an increasingly important element of tourism development strategies in many regions of the world.

This article attempts to systematize the definitions of sports tourism developed to date. Moreover, an analysis and comparison of definitions of this concept have been carried out. Above all, attention has been paid to the types of tourist activities that create sports tourism and the groups of people practising this type of tourism.

A search and analysis of literature related mainly to the geography of tourism, active tourism, sport and physical culture have been used as a research method. Both Polish and foreign literature was taken into consideration. Additionally, a search of internet scientific articles as well as reports and papers delivered during international scientific conferences was conducted.

1. History of scientific research on the phenomenon of sports tourism

Many researchers believe that the beginnings of sports tourism can be traced back to ancient times, when people travelled to watch the ancient Olympic Games [46]. The beginnings of sports tourism are also seen in ancient Rome [7]. According to many researchers, the Romans used sporting events to distract the inhabitants from deteriorating conditions of everyday life. Another event in which the beginnings of sports tourism can be seen is the first modern Olympic Games held in 1896. According to McFee [32], these games could be considered not only as a simple sports spectacle, but above all as a tourist spectacle. This becomes evident primarily during the opening and closing ceremonies of the Games, which can be confidently regarded as a major cultural event attracting crowds of tourists. In later years, attention was also drawn to the increase in tourism associated with, for example, alpine skiing, tennis, fishing and golf.

The very concept of sports tourism appeared in the literature only a few decades ago. It is a relatively young subject matter. It appeared in the literature only in the 1990s, but research on this issue had begun some 30 years earlier. The growing number of sporting events and an increase in sport-related tourism have aroused great interest among many researchers. This was particularly evident in the English and German literature. Proof of the growing popularity of this phenomenon was, for example, the establishment of a specially dedicated scientific journal "Journal of Sport Tourism". One of the first significant works on this issue was the study *Sport and Tourism* by D. Anthony in 1966 [31].

Many sociologists claimed that one of the main aspects contributing to the development of sports tourism was the systematically increasing popularity of sports events [13]. The competition between individual cities to host sporting

events became increasingly apparent. G. Redmond [41] suggested that the development of a global leisure industry based on multiple specializations, referring to a range of leisure-related services, also contributed to the development of sports tourism. Due to the rather high cost of sports equipment, initially this form of tourist activity was intended only for more affluent people [10, 18]. In turn, J. Kurtzman and J. Zauhar [27] believed that sports tourism developed as a result of greater recognition of the relationship between sport and tourism, as well as increasingly easier travel associated with rapid technological development.

As a research subject, sports tourism was constituted in the early 1990s [36]. However, despite the development of sports tourism, W. Alejziak [1] questions the sense of distinguishing this type of tourist activity. In fact, research on this phenomenon is still in its early stages. According to S. Bosiacki [5], on the other hand, sport is becoming a tool generating increasing financial turnover and is an important element of culture and local economy.

Initially, several researchers made an attempt to shape the profile of a sports tourist. The pioneer of the mentioned solution was R. Schreiber [41], who was one of the first to develop such a profile. According to him, it was a person travelling by air who had played golf, tennis or skied in the last year. Furthermore, it has been highlighted that sports tourists differ in their level of engagement in sport both as participants and spectators [17], [23], [40]. According to P. De Knop [8], a sports tourist was a person who played sports during a holiday. Three years later, the same author stated that it was becoming more common to actively play sports compared to watching sports events. He distinguished, among others, trips directly related to sport (e.g. skiing trips), trips where sport is not the main motive of the trip, but tourists use sports facilities, and trips where tourists participate in informal sports events.

In addition to investigating the profile of the sports tourist itself, the reasons why they engage in these types of tourism activities were also considered. P. De Knop [9] listed three levels of involvement and participation in sport during holidays. C. Hall [20] postulated to distinguish two types of sports tourists - activity participants and hobbyists. The former treat participation in sport as an opportunity for self-expression, while hobbyists focus on competition. C. Hall [20], on the other hand, believed that the two basic behaviors associated with sports tourism are: travelling outside the place of permanent residence to observe sport and to participate in sport. He set rather narrow boundaries for activities that can be classified under sports tourism. Japanese researchers led by H. Nogawa [37] suggested that a person who stays at the venue of a sporting event for at least 24 hours can be considered a sports tourist, while visiting the venue is only of secondary importance. Furthermore, they believed that these tourists can be divided into people attending a sports event, spectators watching a sports event, and sports enthusiasts organizing trips on their own. J. Kurtz-

man and J. Zauhar [28], on the other hand, decided to describe sports tourism with reference to five basic products: sports tourism attractions, tourist attractions, sports tourism resorts, tourist cruises, tourist tours and event-type tourist events. As suggested by J. Standevan [43], sports tourism should be understood two-dimensionally. In his opinion, sport can be defined as a cultural experience associated with physical activity, while tourism as a cultural experience of a place.

2. The evolution of the definition of sports tourism

A fundamental problem hindering the effective development of a definition of sports tourism has been the differences between sport and tourism. For a long time, these issues were treated completely separately [19]. At the end of the 1960s, it was questioned whether sport was limited only to the rules of a given competition, or whether it additionally included physical activity and competition [30]. The definition of tourism itself was similarly questionable. The question was whether a business trips could be treated as tourism or whether leisure trips could only be classified as such. According to researchers such as R. McIntosh, C. Goeldner and J.R.B. Ritchie [33], such trips can be treated as tourism due to the fact that there is an element of travelling outside the place of permanent residence. In connection with the aforementioned aspects, it has been considered for some time whether sportspersons travelling to matches or sports competitions can in fact be defined as tourists. It has been argued that sportsmen and sportswomen, like other tourists, can have a significant impact on reception areas, as they use, among other things, accommodation or catering services. Doubts have been expressed about the fact that athletes receive financial remuneration for their participation in competitions, which was largely at odds with the WTO definition of tourism.

The first tentative attempts to develop a definition of sports tourism appeared in the 1980s. German and English-language studies predominated. They were quite influenced by two trends prevailing in Europe in the 1970s. The first one was connected with travels to the Mediterranean region, and the second one with the penetration of the Alps [36].

In the case of German language literature, the first was based on concepts such as: *Freizeitsport*, *Sport und Urlaub*, *Sport für alle*. These terms emphasized the recreational and leisure function of sport [11]. J. Schwark [42] noted that during this period there was an increasing number of publications devoted to the areas of sport and tourism, as well as to sports tourism itself. However, they did not find any scientific reference. Among other things, the social character of sports tourism was singled out. In 1995, a work edited by A. Dreyer and A. Kruger

was published entitled *Sporttourism. Sporttourismus: Management – und Marketing-Handuch*, partly devoted to market behavior in sports tourism.

In the case of English language literature, the first publications on sports tourism, as in the case of German language literature, appeared in the 1980s. It was then in 1982 that S. Glyptis in her work entitled *Sport and Tourism in Western Europe* distinguished five areas occurring in connection with sports tourism, i.e. sports team groupings, specialized or active holidays, exclusive sports holidays, holidays based on the “sports offer” available and watching sports events [31].

Topics related to sports tourism have also appeared in Polish scientific literature. Qualified tourism was considered one of the most important forms of active leisure in Poland for many years [30]. For the first time, such a term appeared in the 1950s in connection with the activities of the Polish Tourist Country-Lovers’ Society. This nomenclature was introduced due to the desire to jointly define all types of tourism activities, such as cycling or skiing tourism. This term was commonly used for several decades. However, attempts were made to separate qualified tourism from the so-called professional sport containing an element of competition. Many similarities and differences between the notion of qualified tourism in Poland and the notion of sports tourism used abroad were pointed out by J. Merski [34]. He acknowledged that in Polish literature the difference is that it is referred to as qualified tourism. Moreover, G. Bieńczyk [3] stated that many elements connect qualified tourism with recreational sport and the difference between them lies in the aspect of competition which is a feature of recreational sport.

In the 1980s, the term “active tourism” was also introduced into Polish literature. It referred to hobby and recreational activities constituting the main or essential element of a given trip. After some time, this term started to be used interchangeably with the concept of qualified tourism. This led to a kind of terminological chaos.

The described considerations concerning the phenomenon of sports tourism eventually contributed to the development of definitions of this concept. The first ones began to appear in the early 1990s [tab. 1]. C. Hall attempted to formulate a definition of sports tourism in 1992. He highlighted two basic elements based on practising sport and observing it. A few years later, another definition by S. Gammon and T. Robinson [15] specified that this form of tourist activity is based on travelling outside the place of permanent residence. They also indicated the purely competitive nature of sport. A year later, H. Gibson [18] formulated a definition which is still considered one of the most comprehensive ones. Based on it, further definitions of sports tourism are still being created today. Apart from those mentioned above, H. Gibson also specified such an aspect as visiting places closely related to sport. Another definition was developed jointly by J. Standeven and P. De Knop [43]. However, compared to H. Gibson’s defini-

tion, they narrowed down the definition to the relationship of sports tourism to sport itself and sport events. T.D. Hinch and J.E.S Higham [21] also made a significant contribution to the development of the definition of sports tourism as well as to the research process. On the basis of existing definitions, they concluded that sports tourism is travelling away from the place of daily activities for a limited period of time during which sports are characterised by specific rules and there is a specific element of competition. Therefore, they emphasized the key role of sport in this definition.

The next studies on the explanation of what sports tourism is appeared already in the 21st century. Their authors were mainly German scholars. In 2002, W. Freyer attempted to develop two further definitions of this phenomenon. The first one only emphasizes in very general terms that sport is the main motive for travelling outside one's place of residence. In the second one, he clearly differentiated between two groups of tourists practising sports tourism, i.e. active sportspeople and passive sportspeople. In another definition, A. Dreyer [12] stated that sport as a motive is the foundation of travels. As participants in this form of tourist activity, he distinguished among others: sports journalists and people visiting sports museums. J. Schwark [42] emphasized to a much greater extent the mental and emotional aspect associated with sport. He believed that it is very difficult to draw the line between sports tourism and practising sports in a specific tourist space. A little later, Polish researchers developed their own definitions of sports tourism. The first one was created in 2006 by J. Kosiewicz and K. Obodyński [25]. However, they listed the variants shaping this form of tourist activity and it was only a general understanding of the phenomenon's specificity. In another Polish definition, W. W. Gaworecki [16] largely referred to the definition by H. Gibson [18]. He distinguished three basic elements shaping this phenomenon. M. Kozak [26], in turn, focused on tourists' behaviours confirming their genuine interest in sport. A slightly different definition was formulated by B. Bończak [4]. He distinguished the aspects related to amateur and professional sports practice. Compared to other definitions, he eliminated the aspect of visiting sports-related places. In his view, it is even possible to discuss the relations among three concepts in the „triangle”, i.e. sport, tourism, and recreation.

Table 1. Development of the definition of sports tourism

Year	Author	Definition	Remarks
1992	C. Hall	A form of tourist activity that can be divided into two main categories – travelling for sport or watching sport.	In the author's opinion, however, this definition does not contain a very clear determinant of tourism in the form of travelling away from the place of permanent residence.

Table 1. Development of the definition of sports tourism (cont.)

Year	Author	Definition	Remarks
1997	S. Gammon, T. Robinson	Area relating to the travel of individuals and groups away from their usual place of residence to participate actively or passively in competitive or recreational sporting events.	This is the first time that a motif related to travel has been cited, which, according to the author, makes it possible to speak of tourism at all.
1998	H. Gibson	Travel outside the usual place of residence to engage in sporting activities for recreation or competition, to watch popular and elite sporting events and travel to visit sports-related attractions, e.g. sports venues, sports museums.	One of the most extensive and comprehensive definitions of sports tourism. It shows a wide scope of this concept.
1999	J. Standevan, P. De Knop	Travel based on active or passive participation in sporting events and travel for the purpose of passive observation of sporting events.	In the author's opinion, it shows the narrow range of activities that sports tourism encompasses. It does not fully describe the phenomenon.
2001	T. D. Hinch and J. E. S Higham.	Travel outside the place of daily functioning for a limited period of time, during which sport is characterised by specific rules and there is a specific element of competition.	The authors highlighted the key role of sport in the sports tourism phenomenon.
2002 (1)	W. Freyer	Temporary departure from a permanent place of residence and staying in a foreign place for sporting reasons.	In the author's opinion, this definition does not fully describe the phenomenon of sports tourism either.
2002 (2)	W. Freyer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Active sports tourism – Leaving one's usual residence and travelling to a destination to actively participate in sport. 2. Sports tourism for passive sports-persons – leaving one's usual residence and travelling to a destination to support, watch and experience sport. 	Compared to the first definition, W. Freyer included a distinction between two groups of sports tourists. This makes the definition more accurate in this form.
2004	A. Dreyer	Sports tourism – a form of tourism that includes any form of temporary absence from a place of permanent residence that has a significant purpose in dealing with the subject of sport.	According to the author, the statements contained in this definition do not fully explain the essence of the phenomenon of sports tourism. It does not specify what exact forms of activity can shape this type of tourist activity.

Table 1. Development of the definition of sports tourism

Year	Author	Definition	Remarks
2006	J. Schwark	The assimilation of sport practised in one's "own" life environment in other circumstances that do not occur in everyday life or the presentation and assimilation of other sports activities in the conditions that do not occur in one's everyday life.	In comparison with the other definitions, it is, according to the author, not very logical and difficult to understand. It does not really explain what sports tourism is.
2006	J. Kosiewicz, K. Obodyński	Sports tourism is a form of tourist activity that manifests itself in three variants: active tourism, qualified tourism and extreme tourism.	The first Polish definition of sports tourism, it can be described as a scientific understanding of the phenomenon. It is based solely on active sport.
2008	W.W. Gaworecki	Travel to participate in sporting activities for recreational or professional purposes, to watch sporting events or to visit sports-related tourist attractions.	The definition refers to a large extent to the definition developed 10 years earlier by H. Gibson. It emphasizes the wide scope of the phenomenon of sports tourism. According to the author, among "Polish" definitions, this one is the most complete.
2010	M. Kozak	A set of behaviors confirming tourists' genuine interest in sport, as well as their personal participation in sports life in the broadest sense.	In the author's opinion, the definition focused on the psychological feelings of tourists towards sport. Practically does not explain the essence of sports tourism at all.
2013	B. Bończak	A form of tourism based on the relation between sport and tourism can be distinguished between the so-called soft sport tourism, i.e. travel to attend a sporting event as a spectator, the so-called hard sport tourism relating to amateur physical activity, and tourism by athletes undertaken in connection with various types of sporting competitions and training.	The definition emphasizes the close relation between sport and tourism. It distinguishes between the recreational and professional aspects of sport. It is largely based on the definitions of H. Gibson (1998) and W.W. Gaworecki (2008).
2022	A. Maxbuba- Toychievna B. Izzatov	Participating in and observing sporting activities, for recreation or competition, as well as observing sport at grassroots or elite level and travelling to visit a sporting destination, such as a sports museum.	Confirmation of earlier considerations and definitions developed by, among others, H. Gibson (1998).

Source: own elaboration based on literature.

The definitions developed so far are mostly based on sport as the main motive for practising this form of tourist activity. The first definitions specified that sports tourism is based on active participation in sport, watching sport events as fans (Fig. 1). These activities were mentioned in the definitions by C. Hall [20], S. Gammon and T. Robinson [15], J. Standevan and P. De Knop [44], T. D. Hinch J.E.S Higham [21], W. Freyer [14], J. Kosiewicz and B. Obodyński [25] and B. Bończak [4]. For the first time, H. Gibson [18] added to her definition visiting sports-related places to the form of activities shaping sports tourism. Following her example, this aspect was also included by W. W. Gaworecki [16]. Some of the definitions of sports tourism, however, were described in a very general and not very specific way, and they regarded only sport-related trips. Such definitions were developed by W. Freyer [14], A. Dreyer [12], J. Schwark [41] or M. Kozak [26] and also A. M. Toychievna B. Izzatov [45].

According to the author of this article, the best and the most comprehensive definition is the one developed by H. Gibson [18]. It broadly describes the essence of the phenomenon of sports tourism and reflects the essence of this phenomenon best.

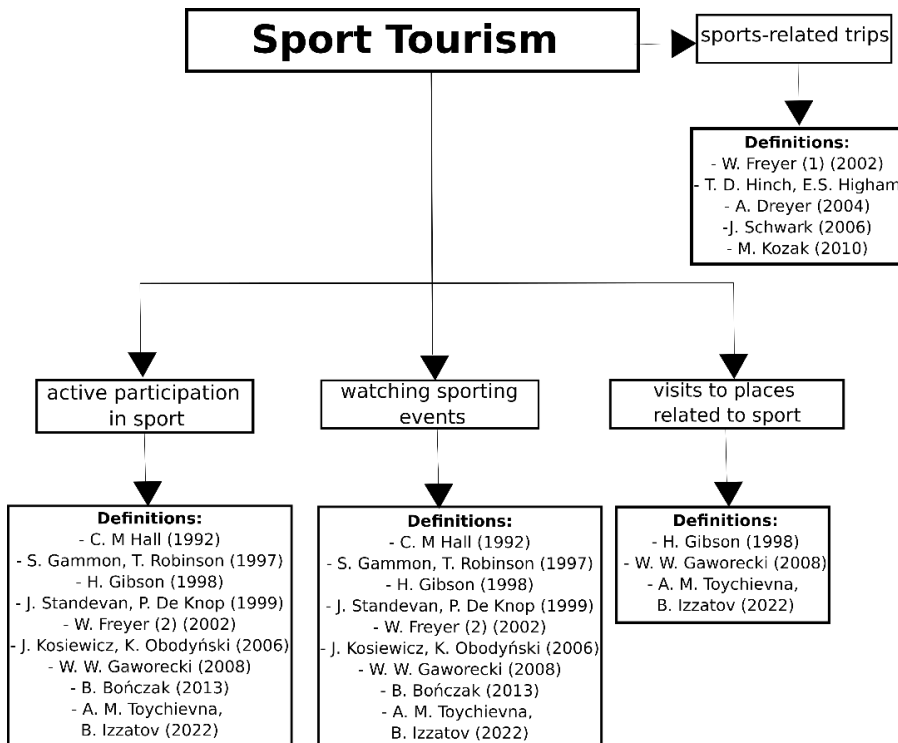


Fig. 1. Activities shaping sports tourism in the definitions developed so far

Source: own elaboration based on literature.

The relatively short existence of the term “sports tourism” in the literature makes many researchers express considerable doubts about its content. Among other things, they wonder whether trips to undertake leisure activities in the broadest sense of the word could be regarded as sports tourism [35]. An excellent example of doubts about the very shape of the definition of sports tourism, as well as about its general functioning, is the discussion published in the 26th issue of the scientific journal “Turyzm” in 2016, edited by J. Mokras-Grabowska. Considerable doubts about the issue of sports tourism, in turn, were expressed by L. Butowski [6]. In his opinion, it is difficult to classify professional athletes travelling to sports events as active competitors as tourists. According to S. Bosiacki [5], all trips with sport as the main motive can be recognized as sports tourism. There are also big doubts in case of nostalgic sports tourism, namely visiting places connected with sport. According to W. Aleziak [2], visiting places connected with sport should be regarded as ordinary cognitive tourism.

When analysing the concept of sports tourism, it should also be mentioned that the definition of this phenomenon continues to be expanded and developed by researchers from all over the world. Often the concept is a leitmotif of scientific conferences on sport and tourism. On the basis of the most up-to-date considerations, it has been concluded that sports tourism is a strongly developed and complex phenomenon, also in economic and marketing terms. In this phenomenon, sport is the leitmotif, but elements such as sports event, outdoor recreation, sports management and health and fitness also play an important role [22]. Y. H. Kim [24] also highlighted the strong impact of sports tourism on service sectors such as catering, hospitality and sports and leisure facilities. In 2022, A. Maxkuba Toychievna, together with B. Izzatov, stated that sports tourism consists of participating in and observing sports activities for recreation or competition, as well as observing sports at a basic or more professional level and travelling to visit a sports destination, such as a sports museum. [45]

Conclusion

A review of the literature on the phenomenon of sports tourism shows that this phenomenon has not yet been sufficiently described and studied. This is mainly due to a relatively short period that has elapsed since the intensification of research on this issue. Although the phenomenon has been in practice since ancient times, it was not until about 50 years ago that it received serious attention. An additional problem is that for many years the concepts of tourism and sport were treated as two completely different issues. This was due, among other things, to the lack of closer cooperation between institutions responsible for sport and those responsible for tourism. Moreover, there was a noticeable

lack of interdisciplinary research into sport and tourism. Conflicts of interest between different institutions and lack of an integrated policy on sports tourism were also highlighted. The author also expressed the opinion that there is not enough research on the relationship between tourism and sport.

The definitions of sports tourism which have been drawn up so far most often point to three elements which shape this form of tourist activity: active participation in sport, watching sporting events and visiting places associated with sport (so-called nostalgic sports tourism).

Sports tourism is currently regarded as one of the most developing areas of leisure time. It is becoming an important part of life for people interested in sport. Scientific research on its economic, marketing and social aspects, as well as those related to sport and physical culture, are of great importance in its development. Many believe that certain sporting events attract far more tourists than beaches, monuments or other tourist attractions. The rapid development of this form of tourist activity and the intensification of tourism connected with sport makes one conclude that this issue will receive further scientific research in the next few decades. Such research will certainly make it possible to systematize and significantly expand the knowledge on this type of tourist activity acquired to date.

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