

## SEX AND EROTICISM AS TOURIST MOTIVES

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### Abstract

*Tourism combines a number of motives: a couple of these are sex and eroticism. This problem is the subject matter of many studies and analyzes mainly in the foreign-language literature. The analysis which was undertaken in the present article concerns the significance of this motive in tourist trips. For this purpose, the results of author's own research were used with the aid of a questionnaire technique. The questionnaire form was placed on one of web portals. The research carried out made it possible to present several interesting results. It was demonstrated that sex and eroticism constitute a fundamental motive of travelling, yet some fundamental differences were observed in the case of the individual groups taking into consideration among others the age criterion, education, marital status etc.*

**Key words:** *Eroticism, Motives, Sex, Tourism.*

**JEL classification:** *L83*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourist trips are characterized by a significant diversity. This is the result of among others journey destinations, the length of stays or tourist motives. These also include motives of an erotic nature.

The primary purpose of this publication is to depict tourist motives (first of all erotic ones) in the light of the author's own research. The author intended above all to demonstrate how this problem is perceived in the individual groups (among others in relation to the sex, age or education).

The author wishes to mention that the results of the research carried out should not be explicitly equated with the phenomenon of sex-tourism. Generally speaking, in the literature, the phenomenon of sexual tourism is closely connected with erotic motives. However, a review of the literature demonstrates that a precise definition of this phenomenon is very problematic (Borzyszkowski, 2011). The definition provided by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the one most frequently referred to in the literature. According to it, sex-tourism is trips organized by the tourist industry or without its participation but using its structures, whose basic purpose is to lead to commercial sexual contacts between tourists and those persons who reside in a given territory (WTO, 1995). The literature includes most frequently references to a prostitutional nature of sex-tourism, yet on the other hand some researchers (including M. Opperman) are of the opinion that the sexual tourism should also include the so-called "romantic tourism" or accidental sexual relationships (Gibson, 2001). It should be also borne in mind that sexual tourism cannot be explicitly equated with prostitution. It results from the beliefs on the part of

many male sex-tourists (and often female sex-tourists) of the possibility to purchase tenderness rather than sexual services. There are situations when relations of tourists are maintained with local women also after their return home (Pruth, 2007).

It should be clearly mentioned that some of results should be approached with a certain reserve. If the definition of sex-tourism is quite a debatable matter, all the more a correct definition (and thereby a distinction) by those examined is not to be expected. Regardless of the certain imperfections of the results, their potential value should be appreciated mainly due to certain issues being perceived by the groups analyzed. At the same time, it is worth to emphasize that the motives of "sex and eroticism" were considered jointly for simplification purposes although these notions are not identical.

### 2. SEX AND EROTICISM AS TOURIST MOTIVES IN THE LIGHT OF RESEARCH

The analysis included in this article was conducted based on the results of the author's own research. The research was carried out in the period from September to December 2010 with the use of a questionnaire technique. The questionnaire form was placed on one of those web portals which serve for this type of research. A total of 309 persons supplied answers. At the same time, certain imperfections of the research carried out should be emphasized. The abovementioned portals are used mainly by young people. This is reflected in the results obtained (Table 1). The fact of the decisive numerical dominance of women is to be noted.

**Table 1 – Structure of people examined (%)**

No.	Feature	Percentage	
1.	Education	Higher	44.5
		Secondary	40.3
		Basic, junior high school, vocational	15.2
2.	Marital status	In matrimony	22.5
		Informal relationship	30.3
		Single	47.2
3.	Age	Over 50 years	3.6
		30-50 years	16.6
		Up to 29 years	79.8
4.	Sex	Men	29.5
		Women	70.5

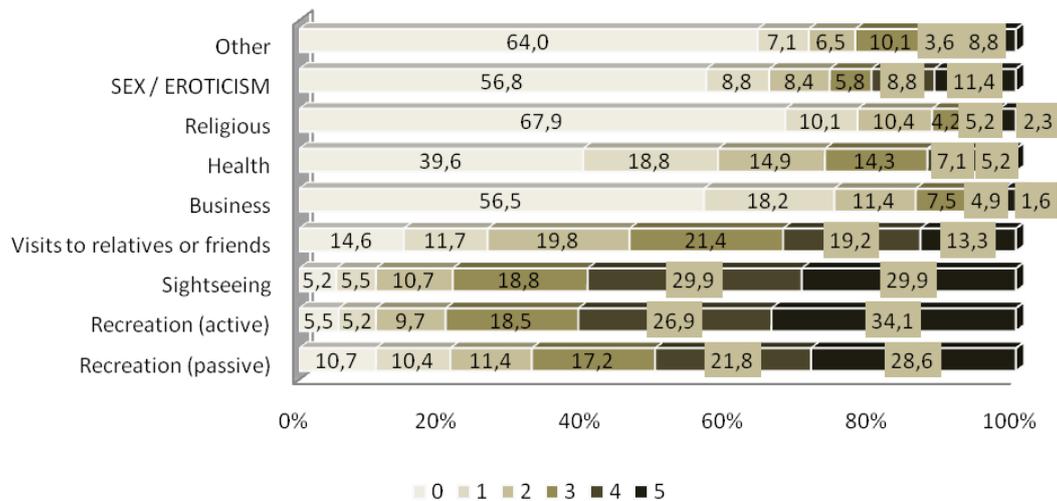
In spite of considerable disproportions in the age structure of the group examined it is worth to make a reference to the results of research carried out by foreign scientists that indicate quite a young age structure of those people who travel for erotic purposes. For example, research carried out with a group of 657 men (leaving for Thailand, the Philippines, Kenya, Brazil and the Dominican Republic) demonstrates that people aged 20-29 years constituted 73.1% of the respondents, and the average age was 34.6 (Wällisch, 2010). Other sources provide

information that from among Italian the so-called sex-tourists, men aged from 20 to 40 constitute 85% (www.tur-info.pl). D. Abu-Nasr states that men aged 35-55 are the average customers of sex-trips (Bender, Furman, 2004). It is evident from the report supplied by the Italian department of ECPAT (an international non-government organization which functions in 70 countries and fights child's pornography and children trafficking) that a typical twenty first century sex-tourist is well educated, is in a middle class, and the average of age is ca. 27 (Redzimska, 2009).

A determination of the degree of importance of individual tourist motives was one of the purposes of the research carried out. For this purpose, the method of quality classification was applied. Values from 0 to 5 were to be assigned to each element (purpose of the trip), where:

- "0" – element does not occur;
- "1" – least important element;
- "5" – most important element.

The motives connected with sex and eroticism are quite unique (Figure 1). First of all, it is worth to notice that after totalizing the so-called extreme values (i.e. answers "0" or "5"), the abovementioned purposes were ranked on the third place (68.2%) after religious motives (70.2%) and other motives (72.8%).

**Figure 1 – Erotic motives in the structure of tourist needs (%)**

*Explanations: A scale from 0 to 5 was used, where 0 – phenomenon does not occur, 1 – phenomenon has the smallest significance, 5 – phenomenon has the largest significance*

Furthermore, the author decided to examine those replies which can generally be defined as "average" i.e. those with values "2" and "3". In this case, the motives analyzed achieved the lowest values (13.2%). Thereby, it can be stated that erotic (sexual) motives in the structure of tourist trips of those examined have definitely extreme values. What is interesting, the results obtained coincide with those from the research carried out by O. Hordyński (2010) with a group of the residents of Koszalin, a town with 107 thousand residents, situated in the north of Poland

(Figure 2), even though a slightly different division of motives was applied. The structure of the group examined (100 people) was as follows:

- Considering sex: 66 men and 34 women;
- Considering education: primary – 13%, vocational – 15%, secondary – 50%, higher – 22%;
- Considering age: below 18 – 13%, 19-26 – 52%, 27-34 – 9%, 35-43 – 8%, 43-50 – 12%, over 50 – 6%.

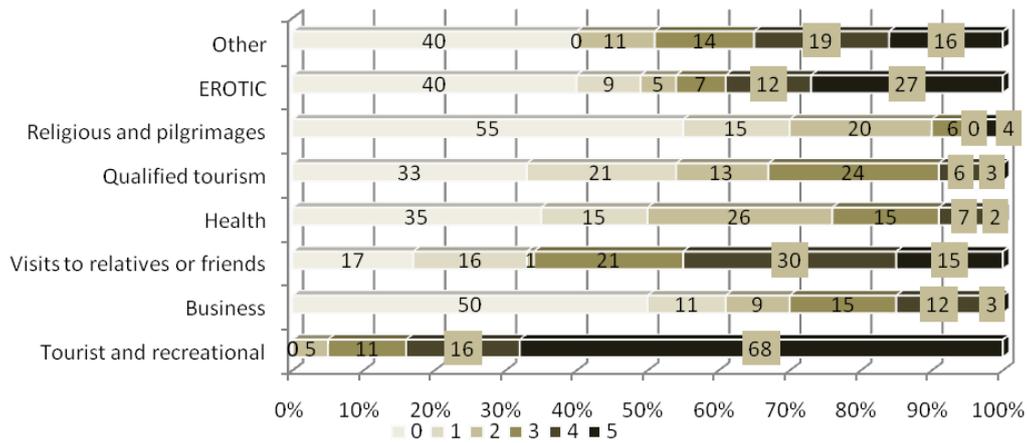


Figure 2 – Tourist preferences of the residents of Koszalin (%)

Source: O. Hordyński - *Turystyka w hierarchii potrzeb mieszkańców miasta Koszalin, praca dyplomowa napisana pod kierunkiem J. Borzyszkowskiego, Instytut Ekonomii i Zarządzania, Politechnika Koszalińska, Koszalin, 2010, p.49*

It is also in this case that it can be stated that the motives examined demonstrate certain specificity. It appears that among the tourist motives of the residents of Koszalin, they mainly accept extreme values: 40% of the respondents estimated them as "not occurring" ("0"), while on the other hand 27% of the respondents indicated them as "most essential" ("5"). Thereby, these values constitute 67% of the answers provided. There is a similar situation only in the case of tourist and holiday motives: the extreme values sum up to 68%, yet in this case not a single person indicated this motive as "not occurring" ("0"). It is also worth to notice that only erotic motives are characterized by the lowest degree of "being average", i.e. expressed with the percentage of those who indicate "2" or "3" (12%). In the case of the other motives, these values were considerably higher: tourist and recreational (16%), business (24%), visits to relatives and friends (22%), health (41%), going in

for qualified tourism (37%), religious and pilgrimages (26%), other (25%).

The characterization of erotic motives in the individual groups, i.e. regarding education, marital status, age and sex looks particularly interesting (Figure 3). First of all, substantial differences are observed in the perception of the abovementioned motives between women and men (over twice as frequently, they indicate the most important motive of tourist trips). A decreased interest in relation to trips connected with "erotic experiences" is also to be observed with an increase of the respondents' age. A similar situation is to be observed in the case of education. The trips with an erotic background are also of a definitely smaller significance to those who are married: this motive is indicated as the most important one four times less frequently than by those who are in an informal relationship, and five times less frequently than among single persons.

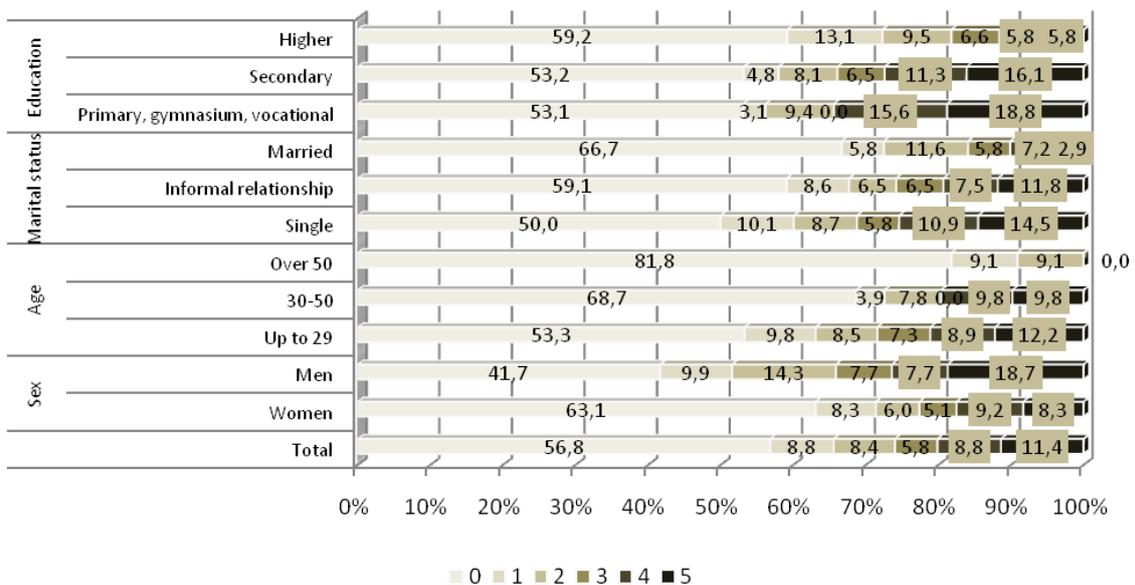


Figure 3 – Erotic motives in individual groups (%)

The respondents were also asked to indicate whether they have so far participated in a trip of an erotic character (Figure 4). In this case, a cautious approach needs to be adopted in relation the answers obtained. It needs to be assumed that the respondents do not possess (in a great majority) any knowledge concerning the definition of the so-called sex-tourism. In the literature (WTO, 1995; Kibicho, 2009; Clancy, 2002) it is often assumed that erotic tourism concerns only trips of a commercial nature, where the tourist pays for sexual services (Borzyszkowski, 2011).

However, it should be remembered that the definition of the phenomenon of sex-tourism still remains very problematic. Investigations into the phenomenon of erotic tourism demonstrate that the main motive of trips, which is use the sexual services, does not always have to be connected with these services being "bought" by tourists. There are also specialized travel agencies on the tourist market which offer stays in closed holiday centers to those who wish to establish accidental sexual contacts which are not of a commercial nature, e.g. between tourists and residents or in a group of tourists (Kurek, ed., 2007).

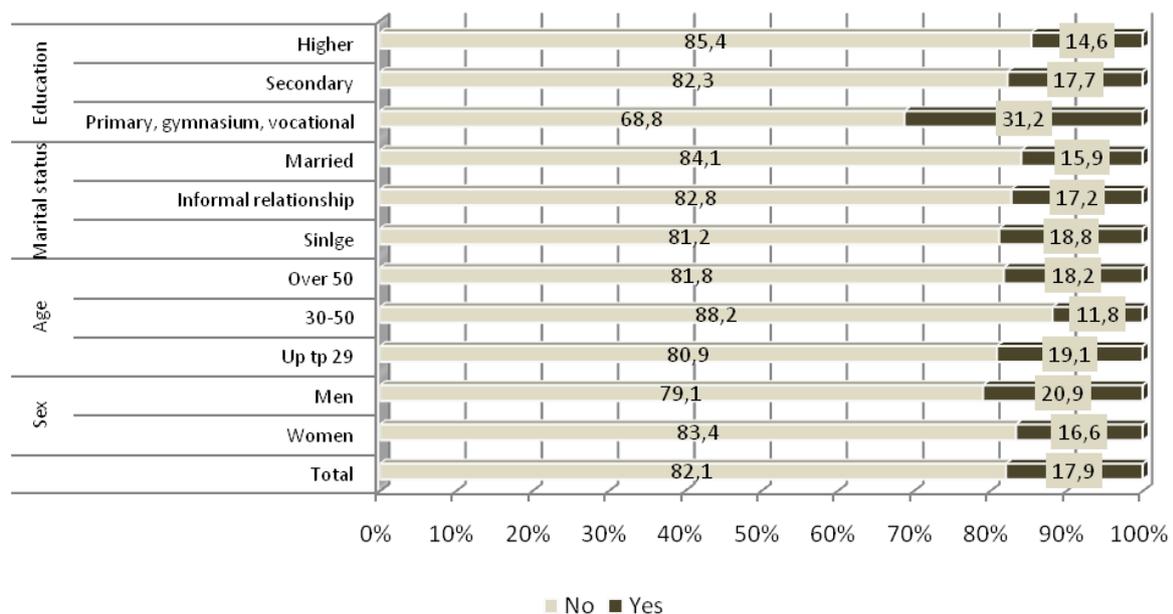
It is hard to refer to those who declare their participation in trips with an erotic character as sex-tourists. This is the result not only of the fact that the respondents do not possess any knowledge concerning the definition of sex-tourism as such but also of the problem of a precise definition who a sex-tourist is. The literature provides definitions that this is a tourist involved in sexual relationships with the so-called commercial sex worker (CSW) during a stay in a specific destination. On the other hand, definitions are provided that this is an adult person who travels for

the purpose of sexual contacts with another adult person, frequently in exchange for money or gifts.

A precise definition of a sex-tourist is problematic for many reasons including the following:

- Can a person who travels for erotic purposes on the territory of their own country be referred to as a domestic sex-tourist? How is the same phenomenon to be related to homosexuals?
- Can a person whose only intention is to have sexual contacts during the trip be classified as a sex-tourist? Should this type of behavior be "planned" before the trip? Or is it that a person be considered as a sex-tourist who goes on a trip with an intention to have sexual contacts and realizes them?
- How is a person to be classified who visits traditional places recognized as red light districts and at the same time does not pay anything for sexual services? What about a tourist who uses "visual" erotic services and who has no sexual contacts (Kibicho, 2009)?

This incoherence is also confirmed by research abroad. As provided by D. Kleiber and M. Wilke, from among 661 German tourists who had sexual contacts with the female residents of the Dominican Republic, Kenya and Thailand, almost 20% of them defined themselves as sex-tourists. What is interesting, this also concerned those people whose trip was primarily connected with a direct intention of sexual relationships with local women (Taylor, 2001).



**Figure 4 – Percentage of those respondents who declare participation in at least one trip of an erotic nature (%)**

Regardless of the digressions on erotic tourism, it is worth to notice that the results presented in Figure 4 in the majority of cases coincide with the value from Figure 3. Thereby, it can be stated that tourist preferences (or rather needs) related to sex (eroticism) are reflected in trips realized. The participation of people aged over 50 in trips is the only exception: 18.2% of the respondents participated in them, that is more than people aged 30-50. It should be emphasized that in the case of the respondents' participation in trips of an erotic character, such significant disproportions are observed in the case of preferences (Figure 3). For example, the difference between the participation of married people and single people is only 2.9 percentage points. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that the data from Figure 4 mainly concerns information from the past, while Figure 3 presents the current needs of the respondents. Therefore, a situation is possible where married people provided answers from the period when they were single.

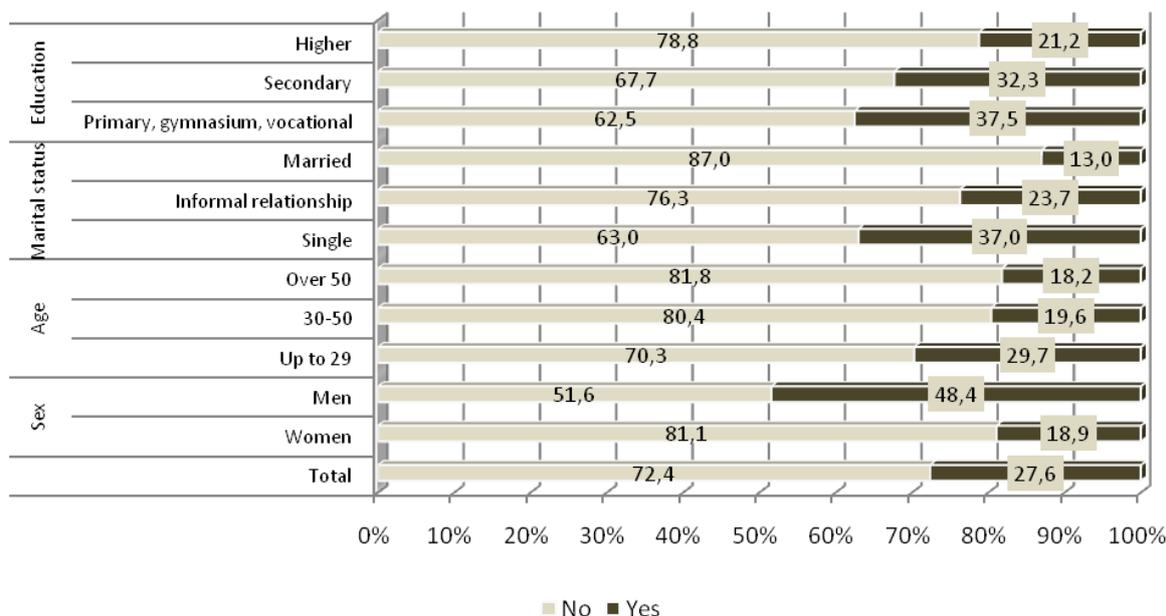
At the same time, a cautious approach needs to be accepted in relation to the replies supplied by people with basic, junior high school or basic vocational education. It is difficult to agree to the fact that as many as almost 1/3 of the respondents have participated in trip with an erotic character, i.e. almost two times as many than the average (17.9%).

Those who declared their participation in trips of a sexual character also indicated the number of such trips:

- Once – 16.4%;
- Twice – 21.8%;
- Three times – 12.7%;
- Four times – 5.5%;
- Five times – 3.6%;
- Six times – 3.6%;
- Seven times and more – 36.4%.

From among those people who indicated that they have participated in at least 1 sex-tourist trip, 67.3% declare the intention of another trip. Significant differences were observed in the individual groups with respect to the sex: 84% of men who participated in such a trip wish to repeat it, while 58% of the women declared this intention. The results are definitely different with those respondents who did not participate in such a trip: from among them, it is only 19.3% who want to participate in such a trip.

A closer comparison of the results of the research concerning the plans of those polled concerning their participation in trips of an erotic character (as the basic purpose) demonstrates several interesting conclusions (Figure 5).



**Figure 5 – Respondents' declarations concerning plans to participate in a trip of an erotic character (%)**

It can be observed that plans concerning trips for erotic purposes (Figure 5) coincide to a significant extent with the trips that have been realized so far (Figure 4), although in certain cases there are essential differences (Table 2).

Comparing the participation so far and plans of the respondents concerning trips of an erotic nature, it is observed that there is a predominant number of

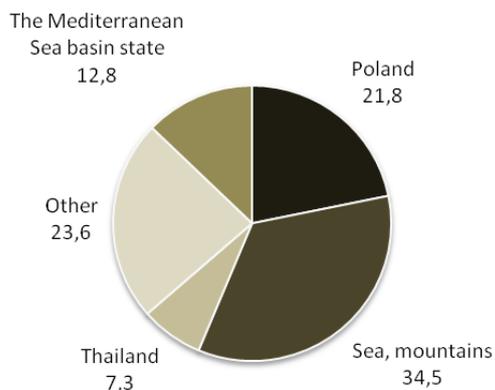
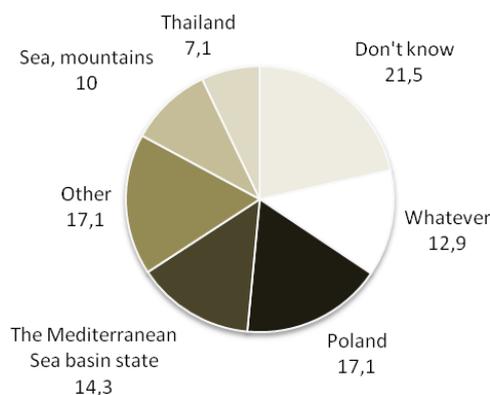
those who declare participation in this type of trips. Only in the case of people aged over 50, the values did not change, and among married people, these decreased. This may suggest that trips of an erotic nature demonstrate a developmental tendency, which can be characteristic of a significant majority of the social and demographical groups analyzed.

**Table 2 – Respondents' declarations concerning the realization and plans of trips for erotic purposes\* (%)**

No.	Feature		Participation (A)	Plans (B)	Difference (in percentage points) (B-A)
1.	Education	Higher	14.6	21.2	+6.6
		Secondary	17.7	32.3	+14.6
		Primary, gymnasium, vocational	31.2	37.5	+6.3
2.	Marital status	Married	15.9	13.0	-2.9
		Informal relationship	17.2	23.7	+6.5
		Single	18.8	37.0	+18.2
3.	Age	Over 50	18.2	18.2	0
		30-50	11.8	19.6	+7.8
		Up to 29	19.1	29.7	+10.6
4.	Sex	Men	20.9	48.4	+27.5
		Women	16.6	18.9	+2.3
5.	Total		17.9	27.6	+9.7

*Explanatory notes: \* – Data in the table contains "yes" replies from Figures 4 and 5*

Those respondents who have participated in at least one trip with the basic motive being erotic one were asked to indicate the destinations of the trips (a maximum of 5 destinations could be indicated). The diversity of the answers obtained allowed an isolation of several most important destinations (Figure 6). Their classification, which is not totally clear, results from the character of the answers provided by the respondents.

**Figure 6 – The respondents' travel destinations related to erotic purposes (%)****Figure 7 – Destinations declared as the potential directions of the respondents' trips connected with erotic purposes (%)**

Plans concerning the potential travel destinations related to erotic purposes are similar (Figure 7).

It is to be observed that the destinations of the trips made so far correspond to a significant extent to the travel plans of those examined. However, a considerable percentage is to be observed of those (34.4%), who do not have any specified destinations (answers "I don't know" or "whatever").

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The research analysis carried out in the article indicates several significant observations concerning sex and eroticism as the motives of travelling.

- i. The quality classification method applied demonstrates that erotic motives are characterized by extreme values. This means that they are of no importance to a significant part of the respondents, while on the other hand they are of the greatest significance to an essential part of the respondents.
- ii. An interesting diversification was observed taking into consideration the criteria applied. Men exhibit a definitely higher interest in trips of an erotic nature. A decrease of an interest in trips connected with "erotic experiences" is also visible with an increase of the age of the respondents. A similar situation is observed in relation to education. Trips with an erotic background are also of a definitely lower significance to married people.
- iii. A comparison of the results concerning realized and planned trips with erotic motives demonstrates the predominance of the latter ones. Thereby it can be assessed that this type trips are positively

- perceived by the respondents and have an opportunity of further development.
- iv. Similarities were found in the scope of the answers provided concerning the destinations of realized and planned tourist trips for the purpose under analysis. On the other hand, a significant percentage was indicated of those people who do not have any precisely defined trip destinations.

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