

The Role Of Tourism In Human Life: Are Tourist Needs Basic, Or Higher-Order?

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Abstract— This article aims to determine whether tourism should currently be classified as a basic need or if it remains a higher-order need. The literature on this topic provides limited research on how tourism fits within this framework. A key contribution of this study is its consideration of challenging circumstances such as COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, and inflation when assessing tourism through the lens of basic and higher-order needs. To achieve this objective, a combined theoretical and empirical approach was adopted. The study utilized research methods commonly applied in such analyses, including a critical literature review and primary data analysis using the Chi-square independence test and Classification and Regression Trees (CART). A survey was conducted among 643 Polish residents at the turn of 2022 and 2023. The findings indicate that most respondents, both those who recognize the impact of inflation and war in Ukraine and those who do not, consider tourism a basic need. Likewise, during the COVID-19 pandemic (in 2020 and 2021), both those who traveled and those who did not largely regarded tourism as an essential need, believing that, regardless of circumstances, they must travel at least once a year. The study concludes with theoretical and practical implications

Keywords— basic needs, higher-order needs, war, economic crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, motives.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that tourism has undergone significant changes in the post-COVID-19 era. This unexpected and

unforeseen crisis transformed tourism into a highly desirable commodity while simultaneously stripping it off its egalitarian nature, something that had previously characterized such activities. Until recently, tourism was considered a luxury, accessible only to some rather than a universally sought-after experience (Theuns, 2014). Tourism not only provides entertainment and relaxation, but also plays a crucial role in education, personal development, and cultural exchange. Its individual aspects are just as important as its social dimensions, as tourism processes and the tourism industry have always been key economic, social, and sociological factors. However, their role has evolved to such an extent that today, they hold a different significance compared to the pre-pandem.

Research on tourism dates back to the 19th century and has continuously evolved, becoming an increasingly sophisticated field of study. An interdisciplinary approach to tourism (Candela & Figini, 2012; Okumus et al., 2018) has led to its recognition in economic, social, psychological, cultural, environmental, and many other contexts. Contemporary tourism research also focuses on sustainable development, tourism management, and its impact on various social and environmental aspects, as well as on how technological advancements shape their perception. Both tourism demand and supply are constantly evolving, influenced by often unpredictable and diverse external circumstances (Griffin et al., 2017; Pizarro et al., 2015).



This article aims to determine whether tourism should be classified as a basic need or if it remains a higher-order need. To address this question, the study adopts a theoretical and empirical approach. The structure of the paper is divided into four parts. The first part comprises a critical review of the literature. It refers to the theory of needs, human motivation to undertake tourist activity, factors influencing the attitudes and behaviors of tourists, as well as civilizational changes conditioning these processes along with the evolving environment. The main contribution of this study is the empirical data analysis conducted using statistical methods. Accordingly, the second part discusses the research methodology. The study was conducted on the residents of Poland. A typical research method for this type of study was used – analysis of primary data, using the Chi-square test of independence and CART classification trees. The next section presents the results, which enabled the verification of the hypothesis. The study concludes with key findings from the analyses and outlines both theoretical and practical implications.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of human needs has been a subject of academic inquiry since the early 20th century, explored by numerous scholars such as Abraham Maslow (Hierarchy of Needs), Clayton Alderfer (ERG Theory), David McClelland (Theory of Achievement, Power, and Affiliation Needs), Frederick Herzberg (Two-Factor Theory), Douglas McGregor (Theory X and Y), Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (Self-Determination Theory), and Adam Grant (Career Altruism). Psychological insights play a significant role in shaping attitudes, motives, and approaches to achieving tourist goals. References can be found in theories of psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud), individual psychology (Alfred Adler), cognitive psychology, humanistic psychology (Filep & Laing 2019), and social psychology (Pearce, 1982; Iso-Ahola, 1982). These and other need theories are still the subject of scientific research and are used in many fields, including management, social psychology, marketing, and behavioral sciences.

At the same time, that is, from the first half of the 20th century, researchers began studying human needs in tourism. Scholars such as Kurt Lewin, Abraham Pizam, Philip L. Pearce, Muzaffer Uysal, John Urry, Stephen L. J. Smith, C. Michael Hall, Erving Goffman, Chris Ryan, Jafar Jafari, and G. M. S. Dann made significant contributions to this field.

Among the theories addressing the fulfillment of tourism-related needs, one notable perspective is the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Within this framework, Csikszentmihalyi and Coffey (2017) introduced a simple, two-dimensional model for tracking motivation as it relates to both physiological and psychological well-being during travel. In contrast, proponents of positive psychology, such as Crompton (1979), Dann (1977), and Pearce and Lee (2005), proposed an alternative approach. Their approach evaluates expected benefits as hedonic or eudaimonic and links “tourist

motivation directly to the pursuit of greater well-being, away from usual domiciles” (Filep & Laing 2019). In other words, tourist motivation can be understood as belonging to either a hedonistic state, focused on pleasure and enjoyment, or, more broadly, a eudaimonic state, centered on personal growth and deeper fulfillment (Pearce, 1982; Pearce & Lee, 2005).

Among the first concepts dealing with sociology and anthropology, suggesting broad explanations of why tourists travel and how to meet their needs during this process by tourism organizers are: Goffmans' concept of performance, MacCannell's ideas on alienation and site sacralization (MacCannell, 2013) or Urry's tourist gaze (Urry and Larsen, 2011). Currently, they are increasingly questioned due to their overly theoretical nature, little related to the real practices and experiences of tourists and tourism service providers (cf. Robinson, 2014).

When analyzing the processes that lead to tourism decision-making, several key aspects must be considered. The first is the advancement of civilization. In developed countries, individuals now have the financial resources, leisure time, and technological capabilities to travel for a variety of purposes and personal motivations. Social and generational transformations have also played a role, contributing to a growing focus on sustainable development and eco-conscious travel decisions. Shill and Dey (2023) argue that the motivation to be a responsible tourist is driven by feelings of pride, satisfaction, and the pursuit of new knowledge. As Sheldon (2020, p.1) observes, “tourism scenarios involving deep human connectivity, deep environmental connectivity, self-inquiry, and engaged contribution—or some combination of these four scenarios—can shift human consciousness.” In this sense, tourism plays a significant role in shaping awareness, identity, character, and life direction. Among emerging trends, tourism motivations are increasingly viewed through the lens of experience, emotions, and well-being. Age has become a key determinant in shaping these preferences and needs. Research has focused on two primary demographic groups: Millennials, who are now entering adulthood, and seniors, who have become a larger and more active segment than ever before (Niemczyk et al., 2023). Millennials are considered the most dynamic segment -tech-savvy, experience-driven, and inclined to trust their own opinions. Technology, particularly AI-driven solutions, is playing an increasingly important role in meeting tourism needs, particularly among younger travelers. AI-based travel tools have gained popularity, although research on their adoption remains limited. Duan, Edwards, and Dwivedi (2019) suggest that cultural differences and personal values may influence the acceptance of AI assistance in travel decision-making (see also Schneider & Leyer, 2019; Shi, Gursoy & Chen, 2019; Shi, Gong, Yuhuang & Gursoy, 2020).

Another frequently discussed topic in tourism research is the role of experience, motivation, and the benefits derived from travel (Kim, Ritchie & McCormick, 2019; Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983). As Godovykh and Tasci (2020, p. 4) explain, “the experience starts with the arousal of the need for a product or service, the need for a vacation in tourism, leading to dreaming, motivation, information search, decision, purchase, planning,

anticipation, visiting, remembering, and potentially planning to repurchase.” Well-being is another key factor frequently cited as a primary motivator for travel, regardless of age. Among seniors, in particular, tourism is often associated with maintaining physical and mental health. Sharafuddin and Madhavan (2020) define wellness as consisting of six latent variables: physical, emotional, spiritual, social, mental, and environmental well-being. Csikszentmihalyi and Coffey (2017) developed a model to explore variations in travel motivation based on its benefits or consequences for individuals seeking well-being. The authors suggest that this model may vary across cultures and, as a newly developed framework, requires further empirical validation. Similarly, Uysal et al. (2015) and Pearce (2020) emphasize that well-being is most likely to be achieved when tourists are fully immersed in their experiences, emotionally engaged, and experiencing positive states of flow.

A completely new perspective, alongside the aspects of creating experiences and wellness, is the idea of travel as an activity driven by the search for narratives that align with the individual and social identity of the traveler (Moscardo, 2020). At the core of this concept is the connection between stories embedded in tourist experiences and how these narratives are used and shared after the journey. The stories that tourists create based on their travel experiences fulfill a need for social interaction and self-actualization. As Laszlo (2008) highlights, tourism allows individuals to reflect social status, structures, and systems while also meeting personal needs such as creative expression, strengthening family bonds, exploring and shaping new identities, and providing guidance or advice to others. Stories can also serve as a bridge between the image and identity of destinations, fostering a relationship between the local community and tourists (Moscardo, 2017b). Particular attention is given to stories that enhance a destination’s appeal and those that tourists seek to experience or recreate during their travels (Sheldon, 2020). Furthermore, storytelling can be a tool for promoting more sustainable tourism by explaining and encouraging responsible behavior both at destinations and beyond (Moscardo, 2017a). It can also offer alternative narratives about tourism itself. Ultimately, it can be argued that tourists travel in pursuit of stories that resonate with their individual and social identities.

Finally, it is important to note that contemporary tourism motivations and needs have undergone significant transformation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sigala (2020) emphasizes that during the COVID-19 lockdown, people recalibrated their personal values and priorities across all aspects of life—professional, personal, relational, and educational—including their attitudes toward travel. Cheung et al. (2021) analyzed travel motives before, during and after the pandemic. The findings from in-depth interviews confirmed the processes described in ERG theory, encompassing the Satisfaction-Progression, Frustration-Regression, and Simple-Frustration continuum. However, the dominant psychological needs of tourists varied across each phase. The literature highlights that even during lockdown, people still experienced tourism needs, adapting their travel behaviors by visiting closer locations and assessing risk levels based on individual

characteristics. This, along with the factors discussed above, provides compelling evidence supporting the classification of tourist needs as fundamental human needs. Further reinforcing this argument is the persistence of tourism even in wartime conditions. As Wawoczny (2023, p. 211) states: "During the conflict, relevant entities continue working on tourism promotion plans. Although the Ukrainian government officially discourages travel to Ukraine and does not endorse taking risks (...), it can be concluded that tourism in Ukraine persists despite the war." This suggests that armed conflict does not deter individuals from leaving their place of residence and entering potentially dangerous tourism environments. Moreover, even residents of conflict zones continue to engage in travel (Seweryn, Niemczyk, & Gródek-Szostak, 2024).

In summary, human motivation for engaging in tourism has evolved over time. Considering contemporary conditions and opportunities, contemporary tourism now aligns with fundamental needs essential for achieving satisfaction, well-being, health, social connections, self-awareness, and personal identity. These needs persist regardless of challenging circumstances—and, in some cases, difficult conditions such as COVID-19, the war in Ukraine, inflation, and economic recession may even intensify the desire to escape, unwind, and break away from the routine of everyday life. Further evidence that tourism has become a basic need is reflected in the way people talk about travel. When vacation periods approach, the common question is no longer "Are you traveling?" but rather "Where are you traveling?"

III. METHODOLOGY

The research for this study was conducted among residents of Poland. In recent years, the strength of Polish tourists' needs has been shaped not only by the COVID-19 pandemic but also by the war beyond Poland’s eastern border and the economic crisis, reflected in rising recession and inflation. These factors led the authors to propose the following research hypothesis:

H: Regardless of external factors, tourism is perceived as a basic need by the majority of Poles.

To verify this hypothesis, a survey study was conducted using the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing) method at the turn of 2022 and 2023 on a purposive sample of 643 Polish residents (The study met the minimum required sample size of 600 respondents, calculated based on Poland’s population in 2022 (36.82 million), with a 95% confidence level and a maximum measurement error of 4%). The research tool was a self-developed questionnaire distributed via Facebook profiles. The questionnaire consisted of 13 specific questions and 6 demographic questions. The survey began with a key question aimed at identifying whether respondents perceive travel as a basic need (a fundamental necessity, meaning that, regardless of circumstances, they must travel at least once a year) or a higher-order need (one that can be deprioritized in favor of more pressing needs, allowing respondents to forgo travel altogether). Subsequent questions explored the frequency of travel, the method of trip organization, participation in

tourism during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the intensity of travel needs, and perceived safety in tourism participation.

The sociodemographic structure of respondents is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE OF RESPONDENTS.

Characteristic	Category	Participation %
Sex	Woman	70.0%
	Man	30.0%
Age	18-25 years	20.0%
	26-35 years	22.4%
	36-45 years	25.2%
	46-55 years	19.1%
	56-65 years	9.6%
	Over 65 years	3.7%
Education	Higher	75.9%
	High school	21.3%
	Vocational	2.2%
	Primary	0.6%
Professional status	School/college student	18.2%
	Professionally active	73.6%
	Unemployed	0.6%
	Stay-at-home	2.2%
Place of residence	Pensioner	5.4%
	Village	26.8%
	City < 100 K residents	21.9%
	City 101 K - 250 K residents	3.3%
	City 251 K - 500 K residents	3.4%
Financial situation	City > 500 K residents	44.6%
	Very good	14.9%
	Good	54.3%
	Average	29.1%
	Poor	1.5%
	Very poor	0.2%

Source: Own research.

As observed the average respondent was a middle-aged woman with higher education, actively employed, living in a large urban area, and in good financial standing.

To examine the relationship between the need for travel and a set of independent variables, the Chi-square independence test and CART classification trees were applied.

The sample size, measurement scale of responses, and statistical test assumptions determined the analytical framework of the study. The Chi-square test of independence and Cramér's V coefficient were used to assess the relationships between categorical variables. To analyze the relationship between the perception of travel and a set of independent variables, the CART (Classification and Regression Trees) decision tree algorithm was applied (Breiman et al., 1984; Loh, 2011). This algorithm is considered one of the most advanced methods for constructing decision tree models. CART allows both the dependent and independent variables to be at any level of measurement and does not impose strict assumptions on the data. Its key characteristics include:

- Automatic selection of the best predictors (creation of an independent variable importance ranking)
- No need for variable transformation (e.g., logarithmic or square root transformation)
- Automatic detection of interaction effects
- Robustness to outliers
- No requirement to replace missing values
- The statistical calculations were performed using Statistica 13.3 software.

IV. RESULTS

When asked about the nature of the needs fulfilled by tourism, two out of three respondents stated that tourism is a basic (fundamental) need—meaning that, regardless of circumstances, they must travel at least once a year. Only 31.3% of respondents indicated that tourism is a higher-order need—one that can be deprioritized in favor of more pressing needs, making it possible for them to forgo travel altogether.

TABLE 2. RESULTS OF THE CHI-SQUARE INDEPENDENCE TEST AND STRENGTH OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NEED FOR TRAVEL AND A SET OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Independent variable	Chi2 value	df	p value	Cramer's V value
p3_independently	0.032	1	0.857	0.007
p3_travel agency	0.974	1	0.324	0.039
p3_workplace	2.704	1	0.100	0.065
p3_church	3.820	1	0.051	0.077
p3_association	0.043	1	0.835	0.008
p3_other	0.949	1	0.330	0.038
p4a_2020	35.917	3	0.000	0.236
p4b_2021	34185	3	0.000	0.231
p9_savings	0.163	1	0.686	0.016
p9_loan	0.179	1	0.672	0.017
p9_earlier	2.707	1	0.100	0.065
p9_whatever	2.058	1	0.151	0.057
p9_spontaneously	8.505	1	0.004	0.115
p9_habitually	27.354	1	0.000	0.206
p10_independently	25.693	1	0.000	0.120
p10_travelagency	8.050	1	0.005	0.112
p10_workplace	3.547	1	0.060	0.074
p10_institution	0.063	1	0.802	0.010
p10_other	0.443	1	0.506	0.026
p12_earlier	0.248	1	0.619	0.020
p12_whatever	9.960	1	0.002	0.124
p12_strongneed	8.374	1	0.004	0.114
p12_Poland	4.822	1	0.028	0.087
p12_abroad	0.065	1	0.798	0.010
p12_other	0.443	1	0.506	0.026
p13_date	0.004	1	0.949	0.003
p13_Poland	0.023	1	0.879	0.006
p13_abroad	3.153	1	0.076	0.070
p13_noimpact	10.053	1	0.002	0.125
p13_other	1.327	1	0.249	0.045
Sex	3.922	1	0.048	0.078
Age	7.289	5	0.200	0.106
Education	15.124	3	0.002	0.153
Professional situation	5.674	4	0.225	0.094
Place of residence	11.614	4	0.020	0.134
Financial situation	7.635	4	0.106	0.109

Source: own study.

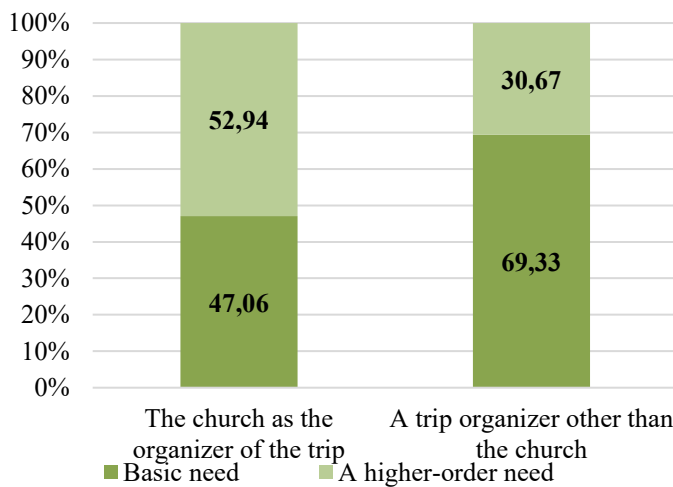
The statistical calculations indicate that whether Poles perceive travel as a basic need or a higher-order need is significantly correlated with the following factors:

- 1) Preferred method of travel organization – before the pandemic, a significant relationship was observed only in cases where the church acted as the trip organizer (p3). However, after the pandemic, significant correlations

emerged for self-organized trips and travel agency-organized trips (p10).

- 2) Participation in tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic – significant correlations were found for tourism participation in 2020 (p4a) and 2021 (p4b).
- 3) Approach to travel planning – a statistically significant relationship was observed in cases where respondents did not engage in extensive preparation, preferring spontaneous travel decisions, or where travel was viewed as a habit (p9).
- 4) Perception of inflation's impact on travel decisions – a significant relationship was found in cases where respondents considered inflation unimportant, believed that their travel needs were stronger than inflation-related concerns, and adjusted their travel plans by opting for domestic tourism instead of international trips (p12).
- 5) Perception of the impact of the war in Ukraine on travel decisions – a significant correlation was observed where respondents did not perceive the conflict as having any effect on their tourism choices (p13).
- 6) Demographic factors – the perception of travel as either a basic or higher-order need was also significantly correlated with gender, education level, and the size of the respondent's place of residence.
- 7) The relationship between perceiving tourism as a basic or higher-order need and the organization of travel by the church/parish before the COVID-19 pandemic is presented in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. TOURISM AS A BASIC OR HIGHER-ORDER NEED AND THE CHURCH AS AN ORGANIZER OF A TOURIST TRIP BEFORE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (%)



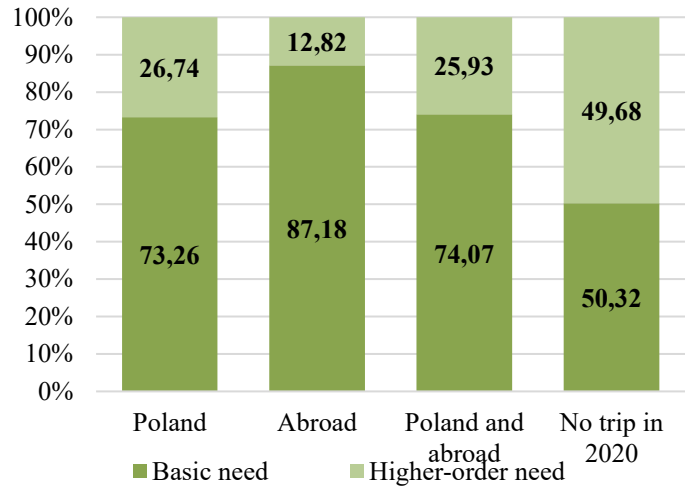
Source: own study.

Almost 53% of Poles whose pre-pandemic (before 2020) trips were organized by the church (parish) stated that travel is a higher-order need for them. In contrast, among those whose trips were arranged by institutions other than the church or who organized their travels independently, the majority (over 69%) perceived tourism as a basic (fundamental) need.

their trips were domestic, international, or both, most considered tourism a basic need –Figure 2. The highest proportion of respondents who viewed travel as a basic need was among those who travelled abroad (over 87%). A similar trend was observed among those who travelled only within

Poland (over 73%) and those who traveled both domestically and internationally (over 74%). Among those who did not travel, the division was nearly even, with 50.32% considering tourism a basic need, while the rest classified it as a higher-order need.

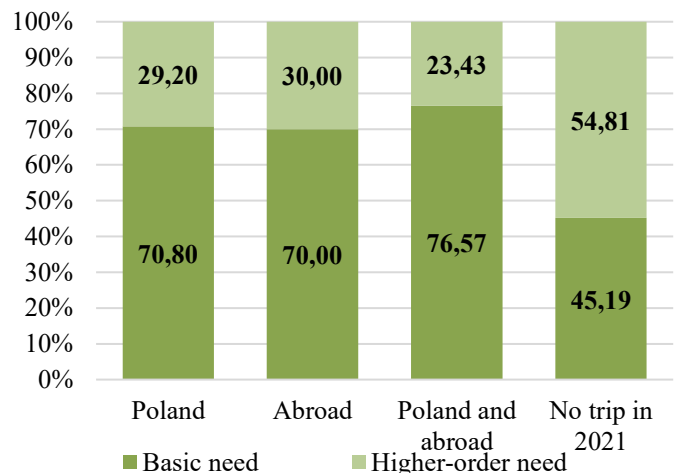
FIGURE 2. TOURISM AS A BASIC OR HIGHER-ORDER NEED AND PARTICIPATION OF POLES IN TOURISM DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN 2020 (%)



Source: own study.

In the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021, there was a slight decrease in the percentage of respondents who considered tourism a basic need among those who travelled within Poland and those who travelled abroad. However, in both groups, the proportion of individuals viewing tourism as a basic need remained significantly higher than those who classified it as a higher-order need (nearly 71% and 70%, respectively). Among those who engaged in both domestic and international travel in 2021, the gap between those who perceived tourism as a basic need and those who saw it as a higher-order need widened even further, reaching 77% vs. 23% - Figure 3. Only in the non-traveling group did respondents who regarded tourism as a higher-order need slightly outnumber those who considered it a basic need (just under 55%).

FIGURE 3. TOURISM AS A BASIC OR HIGHER-ORDER NEED AND PARTICIPATION OF POLES IN TOURISM DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN 2021 (%)

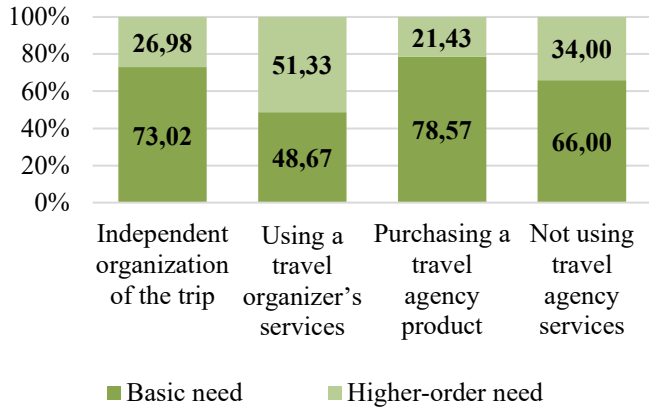


Source: own study.

Nearly three out of four individuals (74%) who

independently organized their trips in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic (2022 and 2023) considered tourism a basic need – Figure 4. Conversely, among those who did not arrange their own travels, a slight majority (51%) regarded tourism as a higher-order need. When analyzing the use of travel agency services, it is evident that tourism is perceived as a basic need by nearly 79% of individuals who purchased travel products from these agencies. Similarly, 66% of Poles who did not use travel agencies after the pandemic also considered tourism a basic need.

FIGURE 4. TOURISM AS A BASIC OR HIGHER-ORDER NEED AND INDEPENDENT TRIP ORGANIZATION OR TRAVEL AGENCY PURCHASES AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (%)

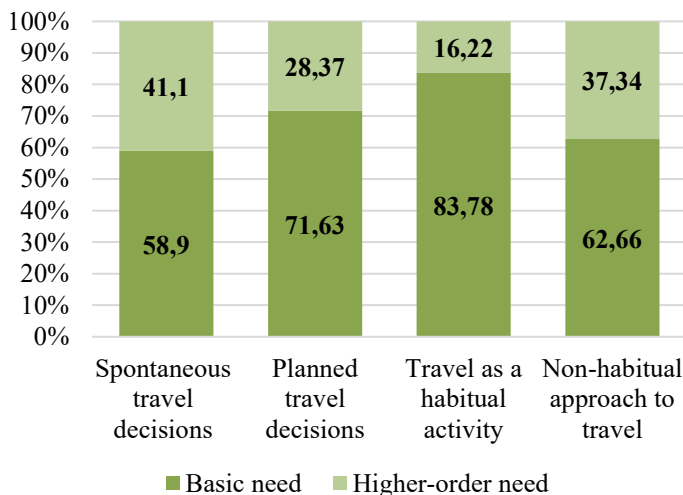


Source: own study.

Among individuals who travelled spontaneously after 2021, without extensive prior planning, nearly 59% considered tourism a basic need. In contrast, among those who planned their trips in advance, this percentage was even higher, with almost 72% sharing the same view – Figure 5. Among Poles who perceive travel as a habit (i.e., those who always travel regardless of

circumstances), nearly 84% regarded tourism as a basic need. Interestingly, a similar perspective was held by almost 63% of respondents who did not consider travel a habitual activity.

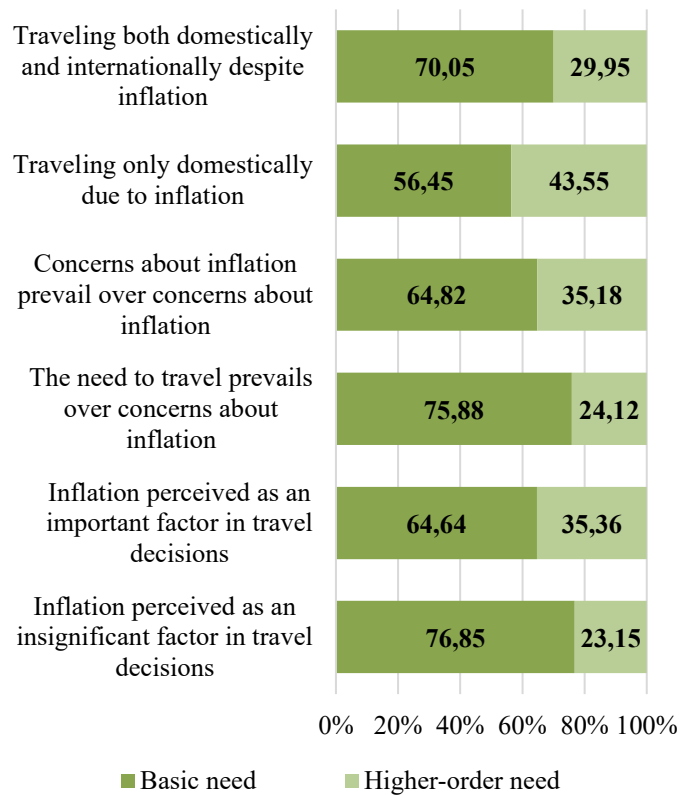
FIGURE 5. TOURISM AS A BASIC OR HIGHER-ORDER NEED AND SPONTANEOUS DECISION TO TRAVEL AND TOURISM AS A HABIT AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (%)



Source: own study.

Regardless of how Poles perceived the impact of inflation on travel decisions after the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority still considered tourism a basic need – Figure 6.

FIGURE 6. TOURISM AS A BASIC OR HIGHER-ORDER NEED AND THE ROLE OF INFLATION IN TRAVEL DECISIONS (%)



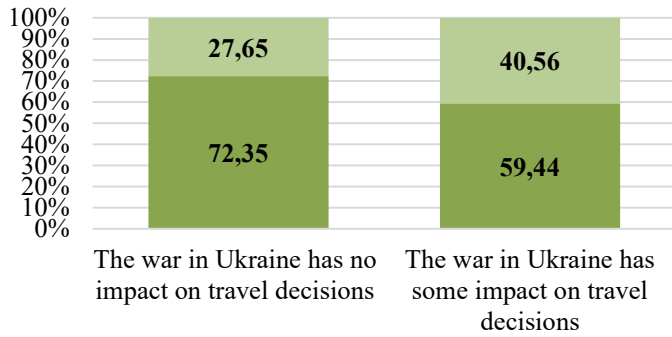
Source: own study.

The highest proportion of individuals who consider tourism a basic need is found among those who regard inflation as an insignificant determinant of travel participation (nearly 77%) and among those who believe that their need to travel is stronger than the inflation rate (almost 76%). However, even among those who consider inflation an important factor in travel decisions and those for whom the need to travel is not stronger than inflation, the majority still perceive tourism as a basic need (nearly 65% vs. 35% in both groups).

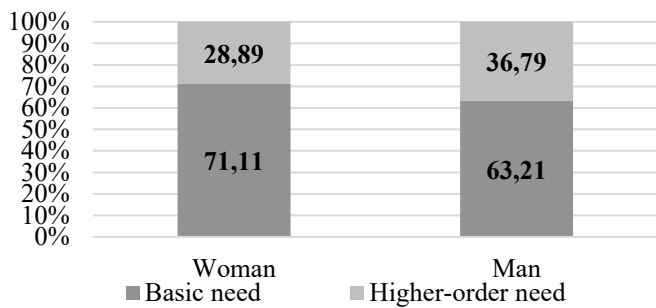
Similarly, regardless of whether the war in Ukraine, initiated by Russia's invasion on February 24, 2022, is perceived as having an impact on Polish tourism decisions or not, more people consider tourism a basic need rather than a higher-order need – Figure 7. This difference is slightly more pronounced among those who claim that the Russia-Ukraine conflict does not affect their participation in tourism at all (72% vs. 28%). However, even among those who acknowledge that the war has some impact on their travel decisions, the majority (over 59%) still perceive tourism as a basic need.

When analyzing the demographic characteristics of Polish respondents, it is evident that more women than men perceive tourism as a basic need (over 71% vs. 63%, respectively) – Figure 8.

FIGURE 7. TOURISM AS A BASIC OR HIGHER-ORDER NEED AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE ON TRAVEL DECISIONS (%)



Source: own study.
 FIGURE 8. TOURISM AS A BASIC OR HIGHER-ORDER NEED AND RESPONDENTS' GENDER (%)

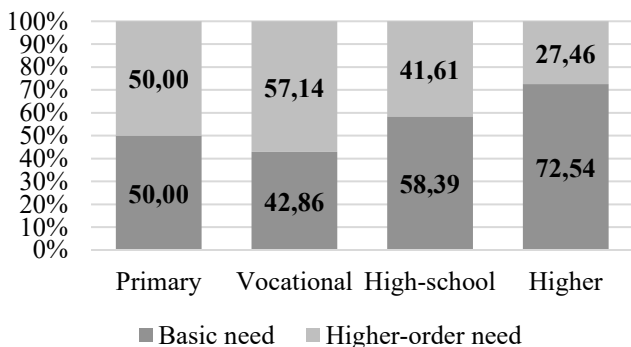


Source: own study.

When analyzing the relationship between education level and the perception of tourism as a basic or higher-order need, it becomes evident that the proportion of Poles who consider tourism a basic need increases with higher education levels – Figure 9. While the lowest percentage is found among respondents with vocational education, where the majority (over 57%) regard tourism as a higher-order need, the trend shifts with higher

education levels. Among those with secondary education, a higher proportion considers tourism a basic need compared to respondents with primary education (58% vs. 50%, respectively). In the tertiary-educated group, this proportion is the highest, with nearly three out of four Poles holding a university degree perceiving tourism as a basic need

FIGURE 9. TOURISM AS A BASIC OR HIGHER-ORDER NEED AND RESPONDENTS' EDUCATION (%)

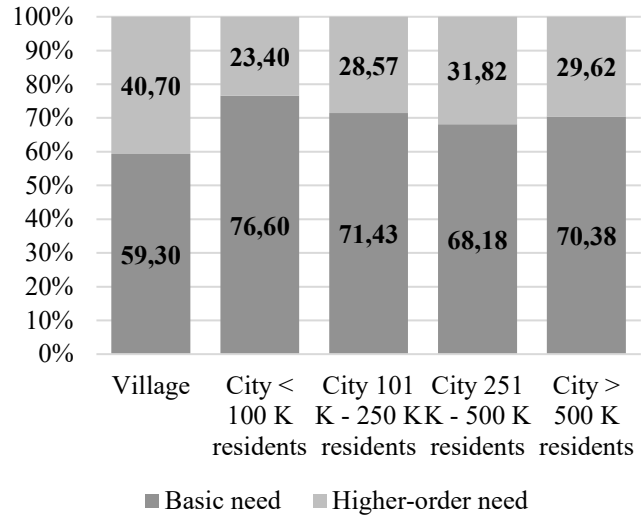


Source: own study.

Regardless of the size of their place of residence, the majority

of respondents perceive tourism as a basic need, rather than a higher-order need – Figure 10. The highest proportion of individuals who consider tourism a basic need comes from small towns (up to 100,000 residents), where nearly 77% hold this view. Among residents of medium-sized cities (101,000–250,000 residents), large cities (251,000–500,000 residents), and very large cities (over 500,000 residents), approximately 70% also regard tourism as a basic need. The lowest percentage of those considering tourism a basic need is among rural residents, but even in this group, the proportion exceeds 59%.

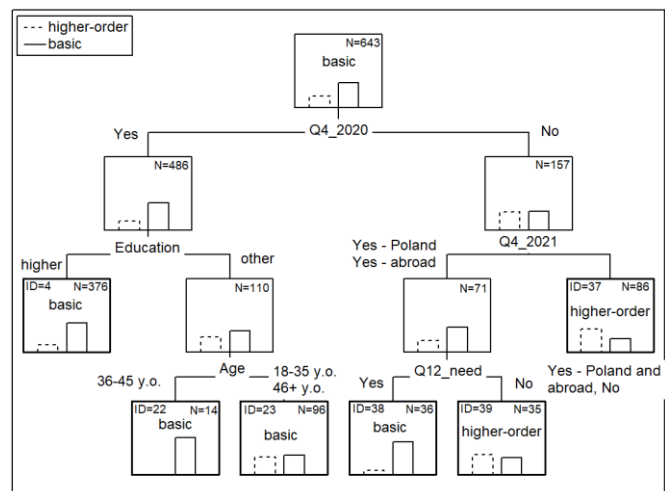
FIGURE 10. TOURISM AS A BASIC OR HIGHER-ORDER NEED AND RESPONDENTS' PLACE OF RESIDENCE (%)



Source: own study.

A graphical representation of the CART model is presented in Figure 11. The model accuracy is 72.94% and the area under curve (AUC) is 0.713.

FIGURE 11. CART DECISION TREE MODEL.



Source: own study.

Based on the terminal nodes of the CART model, the following insights can be drawn:

- 79.52% of Poles who participated in tourism in 2020 (during the COVID-19 pandemic) and hold a university degree (ID4).
- 100% of Poles who participated in tourism in 2020, have

an education level below university, and are aged 36–45 (ID22).

- 52.08% of Poles who participated in tourism in 2020, have an education level below university, and are either 18–35 years old or 46+ years old (ID23).
- 88.89% of Poles who did not travel in 2020 but traveled internationally in 2021 or engaged in domestic tourism in Poland and believe that their need to travel is stronger than inflation (ID38).

On the other hand, the following groups predominantly consider tourism a higher-order need:

- 54.29% of Poles who did not participate in tourism in 2020 but traveled internationally or domestically in 2021 and believe that their need to travel is not stronger than inflation (ID39).
- 63.95% of Poles who did not participate in tourism in 2020 but traveled internationally or domestically in 2021 or remained at home (ID37).

V. CONCLUSIONS

The conducted analyses confirmed the research hypothesis: regardless of external factors, the majority of Poles perceive tourism as a basic need. Both those who see the role of inflation or the war in Ukraine, and those who do not see the role of these factors, mostly treat tourism as a basic need. Also during the COVID-19 pandemic (in 2020 and 2021), both those who traveled (in Poland, abroad or both in Poland and abroad) and those who did not travel anywhere at that time, mostly consider tourism to be a basic need - regardless of everything, they have to travel at least once a year.

In the existing tourism literature, studies addressing whether tourism is a basic or higher-order need are highly limited. Most research focuses on applying Maslow's hierarchy of needs to tourism (e.g., Pearce, 1982) or analyzing various motivation theories, such as the Travel Career Ladder (e.g., Ryan, 1998; Lee & Pearce, 2002) and Travel Career Patterns (e.g., Lee & Pearce, 2002, 2003; Pearce, 2005; Pearce & Lee, 2005). Other studies explore the influence of various factors on tourism participation, including war (Variakojienė & Achonen, 2022; Wawoczny, 2023), inflation (Athari et al., 2021; Hang et al., 2020; Rastogi et al., 2024), and more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic (Gössling et al., 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; McCartney, Pinto, & Liu, 2021; Sharma, Thomas & Paul, 2021; Cheung et al., 2021; Sigala, 2020; Persson-Fischer & Liu, 2021).

However, very few studies explicitly address whether tourism should be classified as a basic or higher-order need. One of the few scholars to discuss this issue was Theuns (2014), who examined it in the context of socioeconomic and political changes, such as social justice, income distribution, and the environmental impact of travel, as well as future sustainability requirements. His conclusions are largely based on Harrod (1958), who argued that travel is an expression of oligarchic wealth or an unnecessary luxury. Similarly, Hindley, Legrand, and Laeis (2022) examined the relationship between luxury

tourism and sustainable development, questioning whether tourism in its current form is itself a luxury. The authors concluded that it is becoming increasingly difficult to classify tourism as either sustainable or unsustainable, luxury or non-luxury. Instead, they raised the broader issue of whether tourism has become an unsustainable phenomenon—an unjustifiable luxury pandemic. On the other hand, Bojanic & Lo (2021) found that international travel has become more of a necessity than a luxury, particularly in developed economies at the end of the 20th century. Additionally, Minh Thao (2023) analyzed tourist needs and motivations, as well as tourist typologies in relation to need fulfillment. He concluded that travel and leisure are no longer considered luxuries but rather commonly accessible goods.

In conclusion, while the existing literature explores the topic of tourism needs and motivations, it does not specifically examine the impact of external crises—such as economic downturns, wars, or pandemics—on the perception of tourism as a basic need. This gap in research highlights the added value of the present study.

This study provides several theoretical implications in the context of tourism development strategies, particularly at a critical time for the tourism sector. Given the relative scarcity of literature on this topic, the findings contribute valuable insights. Some of these theoretical implications may be useful not only for researchers in destination management but also for academics in management sciences, economics, and physical culture studies.

First, the study provides observations at a “sensitive” period for the tourist consumer. It is the first study to analyze the tourism market through the lens of such significant circumstances affecting all tourism market participants. Secondly, it provides a better understanding of how tourism needs have evolved after COVID-19. The findings indicate that most of the respondents consider tourism a basic need, believing that they must travel at least once a year, regardless of external conditions. Thirdly, the study focuses on travelers as a group while acknowledging the specific nature of tourism products, particularly in terms of attributes that shape tourism motivations. It should be further explored in the literature, as motivation can influence the intensity of fundamental needs, reinforcing the perception of tourism as a necessity.

The implications of this study are relevant to all stakeholders in the tourism market, including tourism service providers, destination management organizations, and tourists. This study can help tourism suppliers, such as the accommodation, gastronomy, and transportation sectors, adopt a creative approach to product offerings. Demand is driven by unique and distinctive experiences, which makes it essential to design innovative tourism products. Therefore, making important marketing decisions focused on design thinking and service personalization, supported by a proper segmentation strategy, is crucial in light of the perceived necessity of traveling. The findings of this study can also be used by destinations to support rational planning of tourism spaces, ensuring diversity in tourism offerings. Additionally, the study raises awareness among tourists that traveling does not necessarily require long-

distance trips, since short, nearby getaways can effectively fulfill tourist needs as well as more distant journeys. Finally, it is important to mention tourism policy, which acts as a bridge between service providers and consumers through a set of government tools aimed at meeting the tourism needs of society, optimizing labor and capital utilization in the tourism economy, shaping the scale and structure of tourism flows, and creating conditions for further tourism development, without which, as tourists, we cannot do without.

A clear limitation of this study is that the research was conducted in only one country, Poland. However, the findings may serve as a valuable foundation for comparative studies in other countries, particularly in more developed ones. At the same time, considering the impact of the war in Ukraine, no country would have been a better research field than Poland, which, as Ukraine's direct neighbor, experiences the consequences of the conflict most acutely. It would certainly be interesting to explore this topic among residents of other cultures affected by armed conflict. However, only this specific condition would make a given country comparable to the situation described in Poland. The other circumstances addressed in the article, those shaping contemporary tourism needs as basic or higher-order – such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of the economic crisis – have had a global impact. It is reasonable to assume that the world has changed significantly since 2020, leading to a reassessment of tourism needs, with tourism increasingly perceived as a necessity, not only by Poles but also by people in other countries.

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