

Contemporary image of a social tourism organisation. Case study of the Polish Tourist Country-Lovers' Society

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Abstract. The objective of the quantitative representative survey was to ascertain the characteristics and image of the Polish Tourist Country-Lovers' Society - PTTK (Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno-Krajoznawcze), a non-profit organisation operating in the sphere of social tourism, among non-members of the organisation. The findings indicate that, among the public, PTTK is either recognised but evokes no associations (among the majority) or is not known at all. The findings indicated that, among individuals belonging to the Baby Boomers and generation X, and to a limited extent, generations Y and Z, PTTK was spontaneously associated with a narrow range of characteristics not directly related to the profile of social tourism. The results demonstrated that the contemporary image of PTTK as a social tourism organisation is based on a limited set of features that are not inherently related to tourism. Furthermore, this image is shaped by age, education and place of residence of the surveyed Poles, and does not align with the organisation's actual activities in the sphere of social tourism.

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Contents:

1. Introduction	104
2. Literature review and hypotheses	104
2.1. Background	104
2.2. Sample description	106
3. Methodology	107
4. Results	108
5. Discussion and conclusions	112
5.1. Theoretical and practical implications	113
5.2. Limitations and further research	115
Acknowledgement	115
References	116

1. Introduction

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) constitute the third sector, which is defined as a domain of public-benefit activities (Brzuska et al., 2017; Dadic Fruk et al., 2022). They are defined as contemporary inclusive forms of civil society, characterised by a relatively mature social identity, a degree of organisation, the private nature of their initiatives, independence and non-commerciality, as well as a significant share of volunteerism. They play an important role in shaping social attitudes (Gliński, 2006). Nevertheless, some scholars have put forth the notion that such entities may prove to be a hindrance to innovation and economic advancement. Furthermore, it has been suggested that increased public involvement in public affairs may lead to a decline in the efficacy and resilience of governmental institutions (Bogacz-Wojtanowska, 2006). Nevertheless, these views are the subject of considerable debate. The efficacy and utility of social organisations can be evaluated by assessing the satisfaction of the stakeholder groups within their respective environments (Bryson, 2004; Kotas, 2014; Perzyńska et al., 2021; Charycka et al., 2023). This necessitates the implementation of effective communication and image-building strategies with diverse stakeholders (Mato-Santiso et al., 2021). Social organisations may be regarded as a form of social trust institution (Williams & Baláž, 2021) that, with the financial support of state institutions, offers services that are not fully addressed by the public sector. In order to minimise public criticism regarding the funding of social organisations, which are frequently financed through taxpayer contributions (Borzaga, 2020), it is imperative to consider how they are perceived by their direct beneficiaries, prospective clients, and the general public. The public image of the third sector is of pivotal importance in determining its capacity to attract members, volunteers, sponsors and public funding. Thus, the closer an organisation is to the optimum, the greater the public's willingness to engage socially in philanthropy or volunteering (Adamiak, 2015). The difficulties and problems related to image can be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that a considerable number of organisations do not attach any significant importance to activities aimed at enhancing their image. A significant proportion of organisational leaders not only eschew activities designed to enhance their image but also demonstrate a lack of awareness of how their organisation is perceived in the local environment (Adamiak, 2015). This knowledge gap is addressed by this research, which draws upon the experiences of the Polish Tourist Country-Lovers' Society (PTTK), one

of the oldest and largest social tourism organisations in Poland, which constitutes the case study in this research.

In light of the aforementioned considerations, the key research gaps (and the overall objectives of this study) pertaining to the formation of the contemporary image of social tourism organisations such as PTTK are as follows: (1) the search for variables and methods to assess the characteristics and manifestations of a social tourism organisation's functioning, (2) the identification of spontaneous associations with social tourism organisations from the perspective of their potential stakeholders from a given generation, (3) the identification of the characteristics of a social tourism organisation's contemporary image, (4) the identification of opportunities and directions for the formation of the organisation's future desired image.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

2.1. Background

One of the primary objectives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is to enhance well-being and quality of life, including through tourism. As Ramkissoon (2020) asserts, the selection of management strategies that facilitate tourism development or foster a relationship between personal benefits and the support of local residents for its growth (Tomaszewski, 2018; Su & Swanson, 2019) represents a crucial aspect in this regard.

There are arguments for viewing tourism not only as a commercial force that supports the development of a destination's economy, but also as an important social need and a universal right of access to various types of tourist services (Fletcher et al., 2020; Alamineh et al., 2023). One form of tourism that is perceived in a favourable light and which is distinguished by social inclusion (Akdemir, 2020) is social tourism. However, the objectives of social tourism may vary considerably among destinations (countries) (Minnaert et al., 2013). In periods of economic and political instability, social tourism can play a pivotal role in the restructuring of the tourism economy (McCabe et al., 2011) and can also be a cost-effective addition to social policy (Minnaert et al., 2009). It is therefore imperative that social tourism strive for diversity of access to tourism facilities for all citizens in order to contribute to the sustainability of the tourism economy (Diekmann & McCabe, 2013). Despite the extensive discourse among tourism business researchers and practitioners, the term "social tourism" has yet to be sufficiently defined,

as there seems to be no consensus on a universal definition of this form of tourism (Kociszewski, 2021; Korbiel-Dominek, 2021). Consequently, there is also a difficulty in presenting the theoretical background to this phenomenon. The term “social tourism” is also used to refer to “tourism for all” (Cisneros-Martínez et al., 2018) and even to “subsidised tourism” (a term similar to social tourism and its premise of financially assisting the poorest), which is a questionable concept (Zawistowska, 2012; Gryszel, 2014). This doubt is due to the fact that the beneficiaries of social tourism are no longer limited to the low-income social strata, but rather encompass all those who can benefit from it. Moreover, Torelli (2017) posits that contemporary social tourism is predicated upon values that facilitate universal development. Stasiak and Włodarczyk (2012) identify three principal areas of social tourism: social tourism (in its strict sense); social entrepreneurship in tourism; and tourist travel linked to socially engaged projects. For the purposes of this study, a general definition is adopted (after BITS-IST, 2021) that social tourism is “a range of programmes, events and activities that enable all sections of the population - particularly young people, families, retirees, people on modest incomes and people with limited physical abilities - to enjoy tourism, while nurturing quality relationships between visitors and host communities”.

As McCabe and Qiao (2020) observe, social tourism remains a niche research area, with limited empirical evidence available to demonstrate its benefits (Eusébio et al., 2015) for the institutions developing it (Minnaert et al., 2009). This study attempts to address this gap to a limited extent. It is noteworthy that social tourism, and in particular the various organisations operating within this field, which should prioritise the needs of their members, frequently fail to consider individuals outside their own membership who could engage in this form of tourism. Moreover, these organisations frequently demonstrate a lack of awareness regarding the existence of alternative opportunities (Chung & Simpson, 2020). The networks and types of social tourism organisers are highly diverse, encompassing a broad range of beneficiaries who may be excluded from traditional tourism activities (Minnaert, 2020). The objective is to diagnose the differences in the image of these organisations as perceived by different stakeholder groups (e.g., members and non-members of the organisation), including an analysis of the factors that enable or inhibit participation in social tourism (Zielinski et al., 2018; Minnaert, 2020). In recent years, Poland has witnessed a notable surge in discourse on social tourism, encompassing the organisation of a dedicated scientific congress

and the dissemination of cross-disciplinary research (Różycki, 2022). It is particularly noteworthy that PTTK has emerged as a pivotal driving force in the advancement of social tourism in Poland (Fedyk, 2024). In light of the aforementioned observations, our hypothesis is:

H1. The lack of awareness of the Polish Tourist Country-Lovers’ Society (PTTK) among non-members is evidenced by the absence of associations with or knowledge of PTTK as an organisation specialising in social tourism.

It is also noteworthy that social or non-profit organisations operating in the tourism economy, including the Polish Tourist Country-Lovers’ Society, have the potential to act as intermediaries between the commercial tourism industry and the social tourism stakeholder market. This is particularly the case in the context of reducing barriers to participation in various forms of tourism activities (Carneiro et al., 2021). Concurrently, these same organisations are confronted with a multitude of challenges, including constrained financial resources, a shortage of specialised personnel (Chen et al., 2023), and a scarcity of suitable tourism offerings (Martins et al., 2022) tailored to specific social or generational groups (e.g., X, Y, Z, Baby Boomers). It is not uncommon for such organisations to experience difficulties as a result of a lack of a clear image in the tourism market, an incoherent organisational identity, or accelerating reputational loss (Bozkurt, 2018). These phenomena are also evident in the functioning of PTTK. The development of the not-for-profit sector is a fundamental aspect of any modern society (Dudic-Fruk et al., 2022). However, such organisations experience periods of growth and decline and are subject to a range of external pressures, both local and global (Suykens et al., 2020). The aforementioned symptoms also have a significant impact on social tourism. Along with the institutions responsible for its implementation, social tourism is subject to a multitude of factors (Stasiak & Włodarczyk, 2012). The increasing commercialisation of tourism in the market economy has resulted in a growing number of individuals being deprived of the opportunity to engage in travel and leisure activities. This has led to the exclusion of certain groups or even entire generations from the universal right of access to various types of tourist services (Olszewski-Strzyżowski, 2021). Consequently, organisations within the social tourism sector, including PTTK, are required to assume new responsibilities or roles or to develop novel forms of services tailored to the needs of their stakeholders. It is noteworthy that the evolution of social tourism

(and of the organisations responsible for its provision) is largely a reflection of the shifting patterns of tourism consumption among its beneficiaries, who represent diverse generational groups. Furthermore, it is associated with the attitudes of the organisers and stakeholders of this form of tourism (Ostoja-Kozłowska, 2021) and the multitude of trends and tendencies within the tourism economy and its surroundings (*Diagnoza ...*, 2023). Based on the above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Younger generations (generations Y and Z) are less likely to associate PTTK with social tourism than are older generations (generation X and Baby Boomers).

For any organisation, the fundamental preliminary step in the construction of a communication strategy is the baseline diagnosis, which involves the identification of its image and reputation. The process of creating an organisation's image may be reflective of selective perception (Luczak, 2011), as stakeholders only perceive those organisations or their characteristics (including services) that are in line with their interests, needs and motives (Dębski et al., 2019). Consequently, a significant challenge for contemporary social tourism organisations in a competitive market is to identify their reputation and existing image in order to actively shape the desired image, which should align with their identity, characteristics and attributes. It is important to note that image and reputation are not identical concepts. There is considerable debate among scholars regarding the nature of these concepts and the relationship between them. While Kotler and Bariach (1999) consider reputation to be an element of image, other researchers define reputation as an overall assessment of image made through the prism of a stakeholder's personal values (Neville et al., 2005). The term "image" can be defined in two ways. Firstly, it can be defined as "the set of meanings by which an entity is known and by which people describe, remember and refer to it" (Altkorn, 2002: 15). Secondly, it can be defined as "the subjective idea we have of the object of our interest" (ibid.). It can be examined through the prism of associations (spontaneous, prompted, at the forefront of one's mind), benefits and personality traits; meanwhile, it can be interpreted as actual, reflected, desired or optimal (Budzyński, 2002; Łuczak, 2011). While image is an individual, subjective and unique construct, reputation is a social phenomenon that concerns the assessment of an institution's ability and readiness to meet the expectations of its environment. A five-dimensional model of brand reputation was constructed based on a nationwide sample of Poles,

as part of a diagnosis of brand reputation in the eyes of consumers carried out for the Premium Brand Foundation (*Report ...*, 2019). The dimensions of the model were trust, media atmosphere, corporate social responsibility (CSR), perception of the brand through the prism of the employer, and recommendation to friends. Given the above, our following hypothesis is:

H3. The image of PTTK as an institution operating in the sphere of social tourism is incongruent with the image that the organisation desires to project.

2.2. Sample description

The Polish Tourist Country-Lovers' Society (PTTK) was established in 1950 from the merger of the Polish Country-Lovers' Society (active since 1906) and the Polish Tatra Society (active since 1873). The organisation boasts a membership of nearly 50,000 individuals distributed across 287 branches throughout Poland. PTTK is one of the largest social tourism organisations in Poland, operating within the field of tourism and uniting individuals. Approximately 13,000 members of PTTK (representing 22% of the total) are under the age of 30. Furthermore, the organisational structures of PTTK include 8,200 instructors (including volunteers) in various forms of tourism and 4,200 tourist guides. PTTK is the proprietor and operator of a total of 160 properties, comprising tourist facilities, hotels and other commercial establishments. The aggregate gross registered value of these assets is estimated to be PLN ~173 million. In the 2022 financial year, the organisation generated a profit of PLN ~8 million, which was allocated in full to its statutory objectives. Moreover, ~76,000 km of hiking trails throughout the country remain under the management of PTTK (*Report on the activities of PTTK*).

The principal objective of PTTK, apart from operating in the sphere of social tourism, is the advancement of tourism and sightseeing, as well as the promotion of active forms of recreation among children, young people and adults. This encompasses a range of activities, including various types of hiking or rallies, rafting, cruises, as well as youth holiday camps and tourist camps. In the year 2022, the organisational units of PTTK arranged 14,300 excursions attended by over 337,800 people, including 109,300 young people. Moreover, PTTK is developing a system of accredited tourism badges, 31,800 of which were awarded in 2022 (Gryszel, 2024 a; *Report on the activities of PTTK*). The presented image of PTTK provides

a comprehensive illustration of this association as a model organisation of social tourism operating within the Polish tourism market.

3. Methodology

The research process was divided into three stages with the use of multidirectional analyses and the operation scheme presented in Figure 1.

The study comprised an analysis of primary and secondary data, as well as a review of scientific publications on: the concept and meaning of social tourism and the conditions of its development; the nature of non-profit organisations operating in different areas of social tourism; social tourism stakeholders and their motivations and needs; and processes for shaping the image of tourism organisations. A central component of the study was a survey based on a CAWI questionnaire (comprising closed questions). The concept of the study, including the content of the questionnaire, was based on previous research (Fedyk, 2024; Gryszel, 2024 b; Walas, 2024) and in consultation with selected experts from PTTK. The CAWI questionnaire was distributed between January and February 2024. A random-quota sampling method was employed, based on the demographic distribution of the Polish population (38 million) who are not members of PTTK. The quotas reflect the distribution of the

population by gender, age (divided into generations Z, Y and X and Baby Boomers) and place of residence. The confidence level was set at 95%, with a fraction size of 0.9 (allowing for the assumption that almost all Poles are not PTTK members) and a maximum error of 3%. In accordance with these parameters, the requisite minimum sample size was established at 384 individuals. Ultimately, 500 individuals were surveyed, exceeding the estimated minimum sample size.

In the statistical analysis of the survey results, the chi-square test of independence was employed to verify the hypotheses (χ^2). This was conducted using the `chisq.test` function in the R programme. The R programme is a free tool that allows for a variety of statistical and econometric calculations and has numerous practical applications (see Crawley, 2015; Gatnar & Walesiak, 2009; Grzegorzewski et al., 2014). The chi-square independence test is one of the most frequently employed tests for ascertaining relationships between non-metric (nominal, ordinal) variables (see Aczel & Sounderpandian, 2017). This test enables the inference of the absence of a relationship between characteristics (null hypothesis) or the existence of a relationship (association) between characteristics (alternative hypothesis). The strength of the relationship is not revealed by the chi-square independence test, so alternative coefficients such as Cramer's V, Cohen's W or Chupurov's T are typically employed to assess it. Given the difficulty of assuming normality in the distributions of characteristics in the

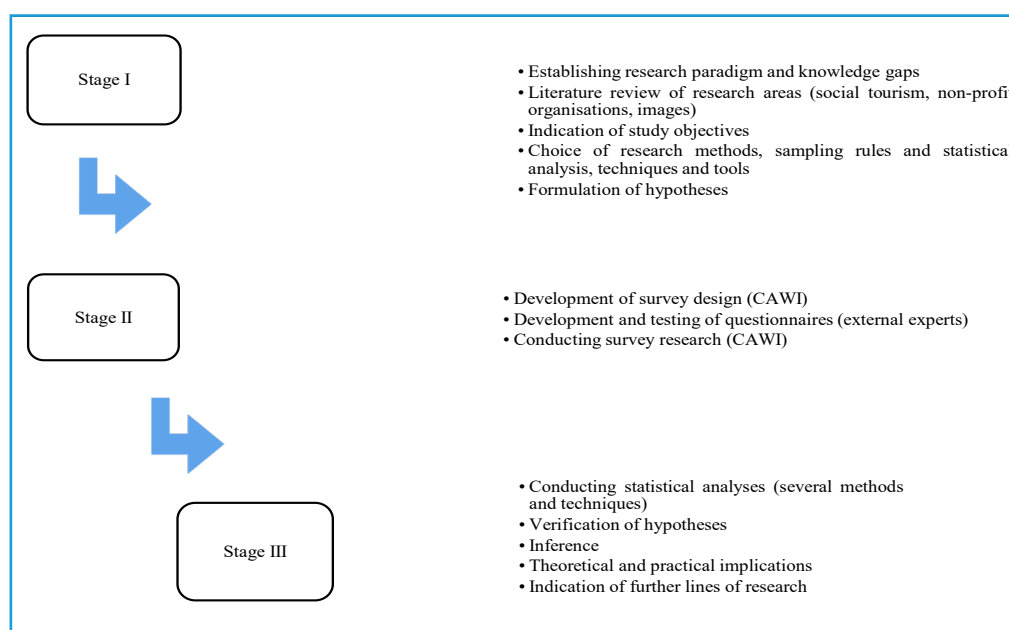


Fig. 1. Graphical scheme of study design

Source: own elaboration

sample under analysis, the hypotheses were evaluated using the non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test, utilising the `wilcox.test` function. This test for a single sample is based on the null hypothesis that the sample is drawn from a population with a certain median value (Taheri & Hesamian, 2013). In the case of metric traits, the Spearman rank correlation measure was employed to ascertain the strength of the relationship between variables that had been measured at a minimum on an ordinal or metric scale (see Aczel & Sounderpandian, 2017). In cases where the characteristics under examination were exclusively metric, the Pearson correlation coefficient was employed. This is because the Pearson coefficient is subject to a number of well-established assumptions and limitations. Consequently, the results obtained were compared against those yielded by the Spearman rank coefficient and the τ -Kendall coefficient.

4. Results

The initial objective of the research process was to identify the respondents' attitudes towards any social organisation, their declared involvement in its work, and their expected benefits. This was deemed to be a potentially influential factor in their opinions and attitudes towards PTTK. Consequently, over four fifths of the respondents (84%) indicated that they do not belong to any social organisation. No particular type of organisation was identified as being significantly more prevalent among respondents than others. A similar pattern emerged with regard to membership of other organisations, with the following percentages indicated: hobby and recreational (5%), caring and charitable (5%), self-help (4%), ad-hoc (2%), representative (2%).

It is noteworthy that none of the survey participants was affiliated with tourism organisations. Nevertheless, as many as 29% of respondents indicated the greatest potential for activity in organisations, declaring their level of involvement as either 4 or 5 on a six-point scale where 0 signifies "no interest in engaging with any social organisation" and 5 represents "complete involvement". Conversely, the percentage of responses indicating the lowest potential for such activity (i.e., 0 and 1) was 28%. The majority of respondents selected intermediate answers, specifically 3 and 4, representing 44% of the total. This distribution of responses resulted in an average score of only 2.5, which is notably low. Notably, a higher percentage of participants indicated an extreme lack of interest in involvement in community organisation work

(19%) than expressed a desire for full involvement (11%).

Furthermore, the respondents' anticipated benefits of belonging (actual or potential) to any social organisation were also identified utilising a five-point scale ranging from 1 (not relevant) to 5 (very relevant). The highest average ratings were assigned to the following five benefits: friendliness and community atmosphere (4.2), opportunity to obtain information and knowledge (3.9), opportunity to meet people with similar interests (3.9), and gaining new skills (3.9). The least important benefits, as indicated by the respondents, are as follows: identification with the organisation by wearing an organisational badge (2.9), gaining a position in the organisation to influence its activities (3.0), priority in the use of services (3.2), or gaining a certificate/badge (3.2) (see Fig. 2).

Regarding the significance of the benefits of belonging to a social organisation, statistically significant differences emerged in the variables related to generation as indicated in Table 1.

The first hypothesis (H1) sought to identify the associations that individuals have with PTTK as a social tourism organisation. The majority of the Polish public has no associations with PTTK as a social tourism organisation. Two hypotheses were formulated: the null hypothesis (H0), which posits that half of the respondents will indicate that they have associations with PTTK as a social tourism organisation (median is a high rating), and the alternative hypothesis (H1), which posits that half of the respondents will not express such an opinion (median is less than a high rating). A p-value of less than $2.2e-16$ ($2.2 \cdot 10^{-6}$) was obtained using the R programme and the `wilcox.test` function. This indicates that, at the 5% level of significance, there is sufficient evidence to reject H0 and accept H1 instead. This supports hypothesis H1 that the majority of respondents have no association with PTTK as a social tourism organisation.

In response to the open-ended (not multiple-choice) question from the CAWI survey, respondents indicated a maximum of three associations with PTTK. These responses included "I do not have any association" and "I do not know what PTTK is." The results of the survey are presented in Fig. 3. The key observation is that only one in ten respondents indicated that they were unaware of what PTTK is (10.2% of respondents), yet at the same time, as many as 49% of respondents indicated that they had no association with PTTK whatsoever. A total of 59.40% of respondents indicated that they had no association with PTTK as a social tourism organisation, thereby confirming hypothesis H1.



Fig. 2. Expected benefits of membership in a social organisation

Source: own study based on CAWI survey (n=500)

Table 1. Significance of benefits of belonging to a social organisation

The prestige of the organisation is more important to Baby Boomers (3.6) and generation X (3.5) than generation Z (3.1).
Personal professional benefits are more important to generation Z (3.9), Y (3.5), X (3.3) than Baby Boomers (2.7).
Personal professional benefits are more important to generation Z (3.9) than generation X (3.3).
Gaining a certificate / badge is more important to generation Y (3.4) than Baby Boomers (3.0).
Gaining a position in an organisation to influence its activities is more important to generations Z (3.4), Y (3.2) or X (3.1) than Baby Boomers (2.7).

Source: own elaboration based on CAWI survey (n=500)

The second hypothesis, designated as H2, postulated an association between the image of PTTK and generational affiliation. The primary variable in the image of PTTK as a social tourism organisation is generational affiliation, encompassing generations X, Y and Z and the Baby Boomers.

Hypothesis H2 was verified through two distinct methodologies. Firstly, the chi-square independence coefficient (χ^2) was employed to assess

the relationship between generational affiliation (X, Y, Z, Baby Boomers) and the mean image rating of PTTK as a social tourism organisation. To this end, a contingency table was constructed and the `chisq.test` function was employed in the R programme. The value of the chi-square statistic was 19.213 with nine degrees of freedom, and the p-value was 0.02344. This indicates that, at a significance level of 5%, there are grounds for rejecting the null

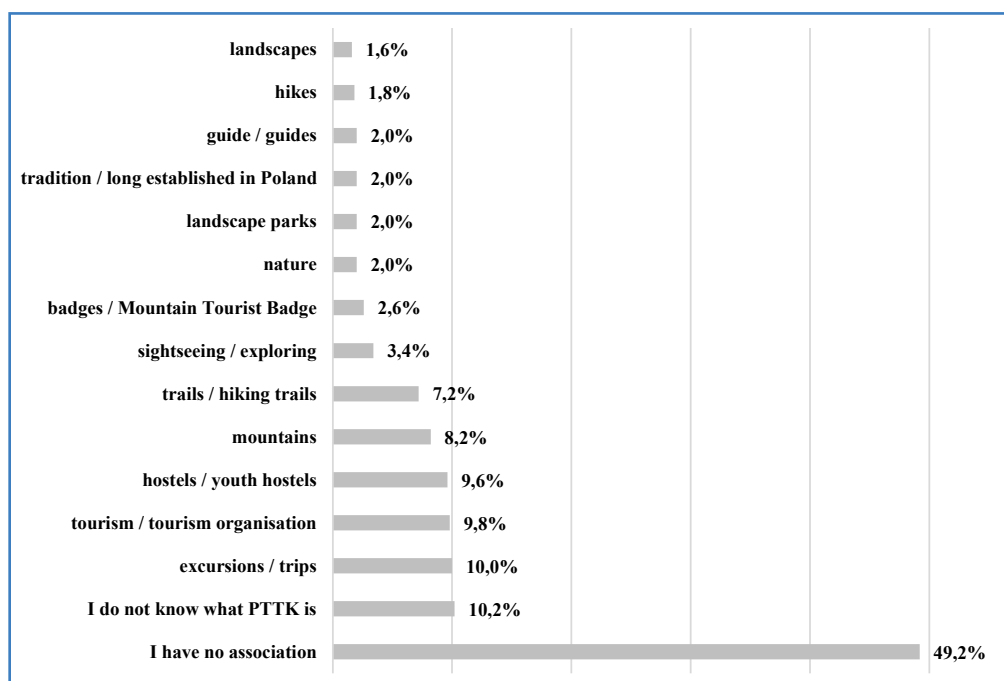


Fig. 3. Spontaneous association with PTTK

Source: own research, CAWI, n=500 (all respondents), open question, indications above 1%

hypothesis, which states that there is no relationship between generational affiliation and the evaluation of the image of PTTK. To assess the strength of the relationship between generational affiliation and the assessment of PTTK's image, Cramer's V (0.1211), Cohen's W (0.2097) and Chupurov's T (0.12106) coefficients were calculated. The indicated values of these coefficients indicate that the relationship is of slight strength. In the second stage of the analysis, the correlation coefficients were calculated between the age of the respondent and the average PTTK score. Consequently, the Pearson linear correlation coefficient was 0.1278. However, as the scatter of scores (correlation plot) did not suggest a linear relationship between the variables, the τ -Kendall correlation coefficient (0.0986) and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (0.14629) were also calculated. The values of both coefficients confirm that the relationship between age (generation) and the evaluation of the image of PTTK as a social tourism organisation is weak, yet at the same time they indicate a positive strength of this relationship. This indicates that respondents in the older age group tend to rate the image of PTTK slightly more favourably than those in the younger age group.

Notably, a significant proportion of Generation Z (33%) are unable to discern the characteristics of the image in question and, similarly, lack awareness of the term "PTTK" (33%), in contrast to the other

generations, namely Millennials (generation Y) (14%), Generation X (4%) and the Baby Boomers (4%). Furthermore, a significantly higher proportion of Generation Y respondents indicated that they were unaware of the meaning of the term "PTTK", in comparison to both Generation X and the Baby Boomer generation. Those belonging to the Baby Boomer generation were more likely to perceive the features of the image and were able to indicate spontaneous associations with PTTK (52%) than those belonging to generations Z (28%) and Y (31%).

The third hypothesis (H3) pertains to the congruence of the PTTK image with the activities undertaken by the organisation in the sphere of social tourism. It was found that the image of PTTK is incongruent with the aforementioned activities.

In order to verify respondents' perceptions of PTTK's functioning as a social organisation, six sub-hypotheses (H0 and H1) were constructed (see Table 2). The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for a single sample was then employed, as this non-parametric test does not require the assumption of normality of the trait distribution. The R programme was used to obtain a p-value of less than $2.2e-16$ ($2.2 \cdot 10^{-6}$), at a significance level of 5% for hypothesis H3. The results of this verification are presented in Table 2.

The results of the verification of the components of hypothesis H3, as presented in Table 2, demonstrate that the image of PTTK as an organisation operating

Table 2. Significance of benefits of belonging to a social organisation

Aspect of PTTK functioning as a social organisation - sub-hypotheses	Verification H ₀	Verification H ₁
Half of respondents indicate that PTTK has (H ₀) / does not have (H ₁) assets	rejected	accepted
Respondents who are not members of PTTK are aware (H ₀) / are not aware (H ₁) that PTTK's levy offers NNW insurance for members.	rejected	accepted
Half of the respondents perceive (H ₀) / do not perceive (H ₁) PTTK's activities to support low-cost activities	rejected	accepted
Half of respondents see (H ₀) / do not see (H ₁) the attractiveness of PTTK activities	rejected	accepted
Half of respondents perceive (H ₀) / do not perceive (H ₁) the widespread availability of PTTK as a social tourism organisation	rejected	accepted
Half of respondents see (H ₀)/do not see (H ₁) the social importance of PTTK	rejected	accepted

Source: own elaboration based on CAWI survey (n=500)

in the sphere of social tourism is incongruent with the image that PTTK desires to project. The activities of PTTK are conducted in accordance with the null hypotheses (H₀), whereas over half of the respondents perceive them to be entirely contrary to the alternative hypotheses (H₁). It can therefore be concluded that hypothesis H3 is also positively verified.

Furthermore, the relationship between the respondents' place of residence and their evaluation of PTTK's activities, as well as their level of education and their evaluation of PTTK's activities as an organisation operating in the sphere of social tourism, was examined. To examine the relationship between the respondents' place of residence and their evaluation of PTTK, a contingency table was constructed, and the chi-squared statistic was calculated. This yielded a value of 22.094 with 12 degrees of freedom. The p-value was 0.03648, indicating that the null hypothesis (H₀), which states that there is no relationship between place of residence and PTTK evaluation, should be rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis (H₁), which posits a relationship between these variables. The Cramer's V (0.1298), Cohen's W (0.2249) and Chupurov's T (0.1208) coefficients were calculated concurrently, with the resulting values indicating that the relationship is relatively weak.

In examining the relationship between respondents' educational backgrounds and their perceptions of PTTK as an organisation engaged in social tourism, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

was employed, yielding a value of 0.853588. This indicates a strong and positive correlation between the level of education and the evaluation of PTTK. Consequently, it can be inferred that individuals with a higher level of education will rate the level of PTTK's activity in the sphere of social tourism more highly.

To verify the actual reputation-building image (as previously defined) based on two variables, namely trust and references, a 0–10 point scale was employed, which is most commonly used in the measurement of the NPS (Net Promoter Score) index. It was hypothesised that the proportion of responses indicating a value of 9 or 10 would indicate a group with confidence in the image association and, consequently, would provide a positive reference for the organisation. A score within the range of 7–8 on the aforementioned scale should be interpreted as indicative of an indifferent attitude. Conversely, a score between 0 and 6 is indicative of a negative image association. The highest percentage of indications at the 9–10 points level relates to associations such as “needed” (43%), “respecting tradition and history” (40%), “full of interesting people/enthusiasts” (33%), “with authority” (29%), and “cheap forms of activity” (27%) (see Fig. 4). The highest percentage of negatively perceived associations (from 0 to 6 points) relate to the following: a young organisation (55%), the promotion of the organisation itself (43%) and its development (39%), as illustrated in Figure 4.

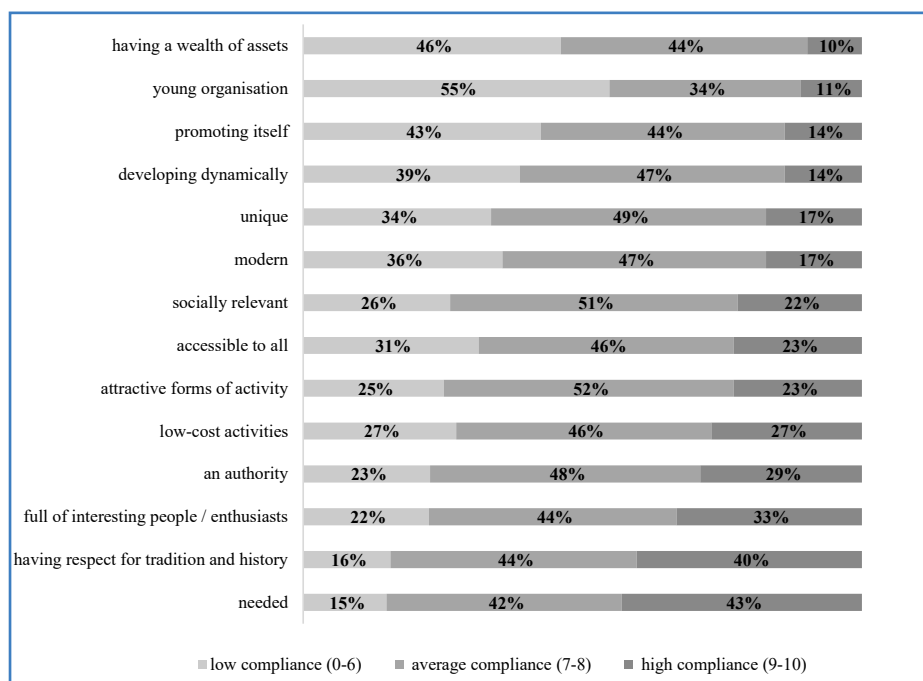


Fig. 4. Image of PTTK

Source: own elaboration based on CAWI survey (n=449 – respondents who marked a different answer than “I do not know what PTTK is” in the question about associations)

5. Discussion and conclusions

Over the past decade, there has been a notable surge in interest and research on social tourism issues (see Diekmann et al., 2018), which serves to underscore the pivotal role that social tourism can play in conferring substantial benefits to the individuals and communities supported through diverse forms of social tourism. Concurrently, social tourism is an extremely expansive phenomenon, encompassing a multitude of disparate types and forms of tourism. This requires its ongoing evolution and the monitoring of trends and tendencies across diverse domains. These include sustainable tourism (Duarte & Nyanjom, 2015) and the adaptation of social tourism organisations (including PTTK) to the changing needs and expectations of their stakeholders or beneficiaries, as highlighted by Minnaert (2020) and confirmed by this research. It should be noted that, despite the significant role played by PTTK in serving social tourists, in the case of meeting the needs of tourists with special needs, the scope of support offered by PTTK is smaller than that of other organizations focused on this market segment (e.g., the foundations “Aktywni bez Barier” (Active Without Boundaries), “Szerpowie Nadziei” (Sherpas of Hope) or “Łączą nas góry”

(The Mountains Connect Us). Foundations of this type often operate regionally, but their number and specialisation significantly exceed the activities of PTTK. Despite the acknowledged role of social tourism organisations in the creation of social values, there is still a paucity of knowledge regarding the mechanisms through which these values are generated at the level of individual stakeholders. This research makes a contribution to this area of scholarly inquiry.

The findings of the quantitative CAWI survey (based on a representative sample of 500 individuals) indicated that PTTK is a well-known entity among the majority of respondents (only 10% of respondents indicated that they were unfamiliar with PTTK). Conversely, 49.2% of respondents indicated that they have no association with the organisation, thereby corroborating hypothesis H1. Furthermore, the results indicated that PTTK remains largely unknown to individuals belonging to Generations Y and Z, thereby corroborating hypothesis H2. A restricted range of spontaneous associations with PTTK was identified, including references to hiking, hostels and hiking trails. However, these associations are not directly linked to the characteristics of social tourism. It is noteworthy that these spontaneous associations are predominantly held by the Baby Boomer generation, and to a lesser extent

by those in younger generations. It would, however, be erroneous to view this as an unequivocally negative factor for the organisation. Those engaged in social tourism activities are less likely to belong to Generation Y or Z. In contrast, the Baby Boomer and X generations have already become familiar with PTTK, which carries out activities for them on a wider scale. It has been demonstrated that the contemporary perception of PTTK as a tourism (social tourism) organisation is based on a limited set of characteristics that do not necessarily have a direct link to tourism. These include tradition, history, the character of the organisation's staff, and the affordability of its activities. The actual image of PTTK is also largely dependent on the age, education and place of residence of the respondents (potential customers or stakeholders of the organisation), which corroborates hypothesis H3. This corroboration also permits the conclusion that it is challenging for an entity to establish a favourable image. It is noteworthy that PTTK, in its capacity as a social tourism organisation, engages in a multitude of image-building activities. Regrettably, these efforts are not perceived by individuals external to the organisation, as evidenced by the corroboration of hypothesis H3 (verification of partial hypotheses).

It is noteworthy that social tourism is currently emerging as a significant component of the tourism market. This is demonstrated by the increasing acknowledgement of the requirements of the elderly and individuals with disabilities by entrepreneurs and organisations operating within the tourism economy (Gabruc et al., 2018). Nevertheless, it is essential to recognise that this demographic is perceived as having limited profitability, which represents a significant barrier to the advancement of social tourism. Some researchers have identified this perspective as stereotypical, given the growing profitability of the senior tourism market (Przybysz & Stanimir, 2022). In certain circumstances, social tourism and the organisations responsible for its development (including PTTK) could play an integral role in the functioning of a relatively low-income society with an interest in participating in tourism (McCabe et al., 2010). This is irrespective of the age group in question, as evidenced by the findings (see H2). However, this requires the implementation of targeted measures within the domain of long-term tourism policy (including social policy) at various levels of the tourism economy, coupled with the simultaneous evolution of the system through which social tourism services and products are organised. This evolution must occur concurrently with the evolution of the systems of action of the organisers of such services and products, including PTTK.

It is crucial for entities engaged in the organisation of social tourism to prioritise the development of their own identity while constructing a desired image through the utilisation of communication tools tailored to the perspectives of diverse customer groups. This approach is corroborated by the findings of the present research, including the verification of hypotheses H2 and H3.

It is evident that the expectations of contemporary recipients of services provided in the sphere of social tourism, including young people (generation Y or Z) or seniors (Baby Boomers and generation X), shape the trajectory of its development (Dębski et al., 2019). Concurrently, this highlights the necessity for qualitative alterations in the context of the organisers of this form of tourism, including non-governmental organisations affiliated with PTTK. This conclusion is corroborated by the findings of the research (see H3). It is of the utmost importance to consider the perspectives of a diverse range of stakeholders in order to achieve a balance of interests in the context of social tourism (Mikos von Rohrscheidt, 2021a; b). This represents a contemporary challenge for the formulation of an organisational strategy for an entity with a long-established social mission in the field of tourism, such as the Polish Tourist Country-Lovers' Society. The most probable factors conducive to the success of a social tourism organisation will be robust leadership, a clear market orientation and an organisational culture that strikes a balance between financial and social objectives (von der Weppen & Cochrane, 2012). This represents a challenge for the subject of this study, PTTK.

5.1. Theoretical and practical implications

Debates on the role of social tourism are becoming increasingly prominent in the academic world (McCabe & Qiao, 2020; Franzidis, 2018). As reported by Gabruc et al. (2018), there is a broad interdisciplinary interest in the concept. It is imperative to pursue new avenues of inquiry into the domain of social tourism, as proponents of this field contend that it plays a pivotal role in propelling the social and economic dimensions of tourism, while also conferring invaluable health and well-being benefits upon tourists (Cisneros-Martínez et al., 2018; Kakoudakis & McCabe, 2018). Despite the acknowledged role of social tourism organisations in the creation of societal benefits (Altınay et al., 2016), there remains a paucity of knowledge regarding the mechanisms through which these benefits are generated at the level of individual stakeholders. This study makes a contribution to this ongoing scholarly

inquiry. The findings of our study offer, for the first time, a comprehensive understanding of the current positioning of a social tourism organisation from the perspective of non-members, while representing a diverse range of generational groups (Baby Boomers, X, Y, Z) with varying interests in different tourism activities. This analytical approach is aligned with the call by numerous researchers for a deeper understanding of the motivations and experiences of diverse social tourism beneficiaries, including young people, older adults, individuals with disabilities, families, and so forth (McCabe & Qiaom, 2020). From this perspective, future research should increasingly focus on the relatively under-researched target groups that have not used the offer of social tourism organisations (CAWI survey respondents), as well as the circumstances and conditions that make it difficult for different groups to fully engage in tourism, as explicitly pointed out by Diekmann and McCabe (2016).

The concept of organisational image is frequently defined in a manner that is context-specific. Nevertheless, a widely accepted perspective holds that image represents the subjective perception of an individual and encompasses all associations with an organisation, its products or services (Gorbaniuk, 2010; Pilch, 2018). This is reflected in the scope of our study in relation to PTTK. The final configuration of an organisation's image is frequently shaped by the subjective perceptions and beliefs of the recipient (stakeholder, prospective customer). Such perceptions are frequently influenced, though not necessarily controlled, by the organisation itself. This is achieved through a phenomenon that Wojcik (2021) terms "whispered advertising", which can take various forms. In examining the image of PTTK from the perspective of its potential stakeholders, a number of measurable variables were identified. These included the degree of familiarity with PTTK, the nature of spontaneous associations, and the characteristics of PTTK's contemporary image. This constitutes a significant contribution to the scientific understanding of the subject matter and represents a new field of research, focusing on the development of methods and techniques for auditing tourism organisations, including those operating in social tourism. These methods are based on quantitative analyses, rather than solely qualitative variables, and take into account the opinions of the organisations' potential stakeholders. This approach is in accordance with the recommendations put forth by Eusebio et al. (2013).

In light of the aforementioned context, the findings are significant for the scientific-based construction of the objectives and directions of the necessary

evolution of numerous social tourism organisations operating within the contemporary tourism economy. This is particularly relevant in light of the increasing prevalence of competition for the same customer groups, and the growing importance of the desired image and reputation of the organisation as an essential tool for success (Wojcik, 2021). The findings presented here can serve as a foundation for further research into the potential for growth of other types of non-profit organisations within the tourism sector, which presents a challenge for researchers (Dadic-Fruk et al., 2022). Furthermore, the findings can be employed to delineate operational models for social tourism organisations, positioning them as active agents in the domain of tourism planning and development (Martins et al., 2022). This enables them to respond in an efficacious manner to the turbulence inherent in their environment and to the evolving expectations and needs of their customers and stakeholders. Furthermore, recent research has investigated the role of tourism in the individual's life and the growth of interest in social tourism (Diekmann & McCabe, 2016). This study contributes to this research area.

The research project focused on one of the largest social tourism organisations in Poland, which has about 60,000 members, a well-established market position and a tradition of over 70 years of operation. Nevertheless, these attributes do not influence market recognition or the desired image of PTTK. Despite the numerous efforts to enhance the organisation's image, as many as 49.2% of respondents reported no associations with PTTK. The findings of this study can be beneficial for other social organisations, which should consistently examine and verify their desired image and effectively build it. This is because the image is linked to the effectiveness of activities carried out for social tourism market segments.

It would appear that the findings of research into social tourism have a limited impact on policy, the transfer and exchange of knowledge between researchers, practitioners and decision-makers in the tourism sector. This observation was first made by Diekmann and McCabe (2016). In light of the aforementioned considerations, the proposed technique and tools for studying the characteristics of non-profit organisations of social tourism are readily applicable within organisational practice. Moreover, they serve as a vital support mechanism (Lavis et al., 2003) for the crucial process of conducting continuous performance evaluations in light of rising stakeholder expectations and organisational management principles in the context of today's highly competitive tourism economy, where uncertainty and risk are pervasive

features (Williams & Baláž, 2015). The variables selected by the authors may also be applied to other organisations operating in the social tourism sector that are experiencing difficulties in maintaining competitiveness in their services or exhibiting signs of organisational inefficiency and ineffectiveness (Verschuere & Suykens, 2020). Such outcomes may result from a loss of reputation, an illegible or blurred representation of the organisation's image, or an inability to adapt to new market conditions in a timely manner. It is of the utmost importance that these negative phenomena be diagnosed and counteracted without delay. They manifest themselves in the case of PTTK.

The aforementioned concept of evaluating the market position and image of a tourism organisation can be applied – practically and without significant limitations – to other types of organisations performing specific functions in the tourism economy, irrespective of the resources they possess. The issue of the constraints imposed on the analytical capabilities of tourism organisations is highlighted by several authors, including Eusebio et al. (2015), McCabe and Qiao (2020) and Minnaert et al. (2009).

5.2. Limitations and further research

It is important to acknowledge that the present study is not without limitations. The analyses conducted focused on a limited set of variables pertaining to the perception of PTTK as a social tourism organisation and its current image. It is notable that, in recent years, the majority of social tourism research has employed qualitative methods, which are valuable for understanding the benefits that this form of tourism offers to its participants. However, to address the exclusion of others from social tourism activities, advances in quantitative research are needed, as explicitly advocated by Eusebio et al. (2013).

Moreover, the survey and its results were based on the subjective opinions of selected stakeholders (individuals external to the organisation, representing different generational groups). The views expressed by survey respondents might not fully reflect the views of PTTK members as a whole, given that the sample included individuals from different generational groups (Baby Boomers, X, Y, Z). Consequently, the opinions expressed might not fully align with the overall position of PTTK in the tourism economy and the sphere of social tourism. Furthermore, the research did not encompass the

perspectives of ordinary members and functionaries of PTTK, which would have facilitated comparative analyses regarding the perception of PTTK's position and image. It is therefore recommended that further scientific enquiry and managerial action be undertaken in this area. This is corroborated by the findings of Białopiotrowicz (2015), which indicate that the image of social tourism organisations can only be fully realised once the aforementioned research has been conducted. This will then serve as the foundation for implementing processes of evolution for these organisations. The evolution of social tourism is inevitable and necessary, given the market weaknesses and inefficiencies in administrative actions observed by Wyganski (2006) in the sphere of social tourism. Social tourism is at a pivotal moment in its functioning, and further research should aim to investigate the problems (current and future) facing the social tourism sector, including organisations such as PTTK. This research should take into account interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral challenges. While the research was conducted in one of the largest Polish organisations operating in the social tourism market, with one of the longest traditions and a well-established market position, it would be erroneous to generalise these results and apply them to the entire group of organisations dealing with social tourism. Instead, they should be treated as a case study, with a view to undertaking comparative analysis with other organisations of this type.

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