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IMAGE OF WARSAW IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF ITS INHABITANTS, ENTREPRENEURS AND TOURISTS

Abstract: The objective of the paper is to determine the characteristics and components of the Warsaw image residing in the consciousness of three investigated groups: metropolitans, entrepreneurs and tourists. A public opinion poll indicated that the prevailing features of respondents' associations with Warsaw were related to the city particularity as the capital of Poland. Metropolitans and entrepreneurs' conscious imagination of Warsaw were observed to be very suggestive, while tourists' were observed to be weak. The respondents regarded the city of Warsaw as the most attractive in Poland to run a business in and to visit, and as possessing many historical and cultural assets. The research showed that the majority of the investigated metropolitans, entrepreneurs and tourists judged the living conditions in the capital as good or very good.

Key words: city image; components of the image; Warsaw

INTRODUCTION

The debate on cities images is rarely undertaken in the course of geographical research. Image building issues are still mostly within the interest of territorial marketing but it should be underlined that geographers' interest in these issues increases.

In Poland the research on ground perception were focused on investigating inhabitants' territorial awareness, spatial representation and preferences, and attitudes toward chosen characteristics of a singular structures or regions (Gwosdz 2001). Since the 1980's numer-

ous research in perception of the Warsaw space were conducted by M. Bartnicka (1986, 1991), H. Libura (1990), A. Kowalczyk (1992), H. Dziakowska and M. Grochowski (1998) among the others. The perception of the capital city by its dwellers and changes in this perception were also researched under the guidance of B. Jałowiecki (2000). It must be therefore underlined that the majority of the above research focused only on city space valorization and on permanent dwellers' imagination of the capital. Complex research on images of the Polish cities and their components in the consciousness of different social groups is still missing.

An opinion poll was conducted in order to determine the characteristics and components of the Warsaw image. The poll with the participation of Warsaw residents was carried out in 31 randomly chosen junior high and secondary schools; 681 questionnaire responses were collected. The next investigated group consisted of entrepreneurs, whose companies have headquarters or branch offices located in Warsaw; they filled in 108 questionnaires. The investigated entrepreneurs were members of the Confederation of Polish Employers, Union of Employers of Warsaw and Masovian Region or lottery chosen Warsaw entrepreneurs. The last investigated group consisted of 131 tourist visiting the capital city. The opinion poll was conducted from January 2006 to May 2007.

THE AFFECTIVE IMAGE OF WARSAW

In order to obtain the affective image of Warsaw, the respondents were asked about their associations with the word "Warsaw". The opinion poll indicated that in all three groups the first association was related to the particular functions of the city as the capital of the country. The respondents mentioned such words as: *the capital of Poland, the capital of one of the members of the European Union, the municipal city, big city, the most important city in Poland, the pride of Poland.*

Family ties with the city played a great role in the metropolitans' associations. They used words like: *the city of residence, the city of my family, the city of my birth, the city of my ancestors.* The metropolitans underlined the emotional ties. Their first association with Warsaw was: *my city, my place.* Many respondents underlined they feel strongly connected with the city and would never like to move out.

However, in the tourists' associations the city's past was very important. Answers like: *The Warsaw Uprising, The Second World War, reconstruction after the War, communism* appeared.

Symbolic characteristics were also important in the tourists and entrepreneurs' associations; they mentioned: *the Mermaid*¹, *Wars and Sawa*².

The majority of given associations had a positive meaning. Answers related to transportation problems in the city together with crowd and noise dominated among the negative ones.

Significant differences were found in each group's associations with Warsaw. The tourists' responses were more diversified and a considerable part of the respondents had great difficulties with presenting their associations with the city.

Symbols of the city were another components of its image. A part of the poll referring to the symbols was conducted with the participation of the metropolitans and the tourists. For the majority of the respondents the most significant symbol of the city was the Palace of Culture and Science. It was indicated by 22% of the investigated metropolitans and 11% of the investigated tourists. The metropolitans often mentioned the Old Town (13%), the Royal Castle (9%) and the Royal Łazienki Park (6%) as well. For the tourists the most important symbols of Warsaw were: the Mermaid monument (6%), the Old Town (6%) and the Royal Łazienki Park (6%).

A considerable part of the investigated tourists had difficulties with listing symbols of Warsaw, so among their answers more general categories appeared (*churches, reconstruction of the city*), certain characteristics of the city (*cosmopolitanism, parochialism*), or certain characteristics of the Varsovians (*truthfulness, generosity*). They also quite often indicated

¹ The image of the Mermaid appeared in the city crest in 1938. The crest represents a right-facing female figure with a fish tail, a rising sword in her right hand and a round shield in her left hand, situated on the red background. The Mermaid is also a heroin of one of Warsaw legends. According to the legend, the Mermaid was captured by a merchant while she was swimming from the city of Gdańsk up the Vistula river and decided to stay at Warsaw. The merchant wanted to make fortune on her singing, but the Mermaid was liberated by the inhabitants of the city. In reward she promised them to help in danger, and therefore she is armed with a sword and a shield.

² According to another legend the name of city of Warsaw takes its origin in names of twins – a boy called Wars and a girl called Sawa, who were children of a fisherman living at the Vistula river. The twins were named and christened by the Polish king Kasimirus, in gratitude for the hospitality of their parents.

national symbols (*the Eagle* and *the National Flag*) as city symbols. A small number of the tourists who mentioned the Royal Castle (2%) and the Zygmunt's Column (1%) was surprising in the light of municipal authorities efforts to promote these as the symbols of the city.

The respondents' imagination of Warsaw was investigated with the semantic differential technique (Fig.1). The procured semantic profiles indicated significant differences in perception of the city by the investigated groups, both in emotional and suggestive aspects. The metropolitans and entrepreneurs' imaginations were more suggestive than the tourists'. The metropolitans and the tourists noticed the bright sides of economic features; they associated Warsaw with modernity, development and wealth, while the entrepreneurs underlined its negative economic aspects. On the other hand, the entrepreneurs and the tourists judged in favor of the living conditions; according to them Warsaw is a peaceful, clean, rather friendly and safe city. The metropolitans disliked the hygienic aspect; they associate the city with crowded streets and mass transportation, turmoil and dirtiness. These dissimilarities between the groups may have resulted from different contact with the city: people living and working in the city disliked pollution and dirtiness more than people just visiting the city and spending a few days in its representative areas. People traveling to or experienced in running a business in other cities considered the Warsaw development rate as lower than seen by its inhabitants.

THE COGNITIVE IMAGE OF WARSAW

In order to obtain the cognitive components of the Warsaw image, the respondents were asked about Warsaw's attractiveness as a place to live, a place to run a business in and a place to spend their leisure time.

The majority of the investigated metropolitans (65%) judged the living conditions in the capital as good or very good and even more responding metropolitans (77%) appraised the living conditions as changing for the better. In their opinion Warsaw became a more friendly place to live.

The respondents highly rated the standard of teaching in Warsaw schools and the quality of cultural offer; these were positively rated by over 60% of the respondents. Interestingly, the result of semantic

differential research indicated that the metropolitans did not consider Warsaw to be a cultural centre. It may signify that although the metropolitans highly appraised the cultural offer proposed towards them, they found it insufficient to rank Warsaw as a major cultural centre. The metropolitans positively rated also the public transportation; over 30% of the respondents opined it was good or very good, but it should be underlined that their contentment was above all due to the functioning of the underground line, because at the same time they declared that traffic jams had been annoying them the most.

Fig. 1. Images of Warsaw in the consciousness of the respondents – distribution of semantic differential characteristics

Source : own elaboration

The metropolitans ranked tidiness and safety in the city the lowest (over 30% negative response), what matched the results of the semantic differential research.

The tourists were also asked to judge the living conditions in Warsaw and their positive responses (48%) ranked after the metropolitans'.

Table 1.
The respondents' associations with the word „Warsaw”

Characteristics/Values		Inhabitants	Tourists	Entrepreneurs
town-planning	+	0,73	3,06	1,37
	-	0,1	0,51	-
architectural	+	7,28	10,72	5,52
	-	0,52	-	-
sanitary	+	0,52	-	-
	-	3,53	3,06	1,37
infrastructure	+	0,83	-	-
	-	0,21	-	2,76
social	+	4,26	1,02	2,76
	-	1,04	0,51	-
historical	+	1,98	20,92	2,07
	-	-	-	-
ecological	+	1,14	3,06	0,68
	-	-	-	-
symbolic	+	6,13	11,74	7,58
	-	-	-	-
familial	+	9,25	0,51	2,07
	-	-	-	-
functional	+	1,46	1,02	0,07
	-	0,73	-	5,52
emotional	+	8,32	2,04	4,83
	-	0,1	0,51	-
modernity	+	0,94	2,04	1,37
	-	0,1	0,51	-
entertainment	+	-	1,53	-
	-	-	-	-
work	+	1,04	-	1,37
	-	-	-	-
monotony	+	0,1	-	-
	-	0,1	-	0,68
order	+	-	-	-
	-	0,1	-	-
uniqueness	+	46,26	29,59	49,66
	-	0,62	-	1,37
useful values	+	0,62	-	-
	-	0,21	-	2,07
esthetic values	+	0,62	4,08	1,37
	-	0,02	1,02	0,69
ethical values	+	0,1	1,53	-
	-	-	0,51	1,37
existential values	+	0,83	0,51	-
	-	0,21	-	3,45

Source : own elaboration

The opinion poll conducted in the group of the tourists indicated that Warsaw has been a city of great tourist attractiveness. Over a half of the respondents appraised favorably almost all the capital's assets and draws. They ranked historical and cultural draws highest; over 80% of the respondents judged them as good or very good. They also rated highly: availability of shops and shopping centres, transportation accessibility around the city and local public transportation, which was criticized by the metropolitans. The tourists ranked the offer of the entertainment business lowest; only 45% of them gave positive appraisal. That was a surprising result as the metropolitans themselves valued the capital's night life highly.

In order to obtain the cognitive components of the Warsaw economic image, the entrepreneurs were asked to estimate Warsaw attractiveness in terms of business investment. The majority of the respondents (52,8 %) considered Warsaw to be the most attractive city to run a business in. The rest ranked Wrocław, Poznań, Krakow, Łódź, Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot as more attractive.

The entrepreneurs were asked to appraise individual factors of Warsaw investment attractiveness. They ranked highest: proximity of the absorbent outlet (78% of positive evaluation), availability of office space in various standard (64% of positive evaluation) and quality of telecommunication services (64% of positive evaluation). Surprisingly 50% of the respondents positively opined the technical infrastructure in Warsaw, while simultaneously indicating the transport infrastructure to be one of the major obstacles against the incoming of more investment to the capital city. It was a result of the opinion that Warsaw has been characterized by relatively good transportation accessibility, but its major problem has been heavy traffic – from the outskirts to the centre and transit resulting out of lacking ring roads, what was confirmed by the research conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers in 2007. The accessibility of water-supply, sewerage and power services was also highly appraised.

The entrepreneurs mostly criticized lacking support of the local authorities and high labour cost; these factors were negatively opined by 50% of the respondents. The high costs of starting a business (premises costs, employment costs, fierce competition) and the quality of service in the municipal offices were poorly rated. Moreover, according to the respondents the poor quality of service in the municipal offices and bureaucracy were the most significant factors discouraging to invest

in Warsaw. The respondents took note of the scattering of town council offices, inconvenient offices opening hours, long terms of awaiting for administrative decisions, and negative attitude of office workers towards the clients.

The tourists were also asked for their opinion about the economic image of Warsaw. Little over 50% of the respondents considered Warsaw to be a significant European economic centre.

CONCLUSIONS

Versatile suggestiveness and spatial unification of Warsaw characteristics in consciousness of the investigated groups should be underlined. The research indicated differences in perception of Warsaw between people tightly connected with the city and those with little personal contact to it. The imaginations of Warsaw in the consciousness of the metropolitans and the entrepreneurs were more suggestive and more spatially unified than ones of the tourists'. The suggestiveness of metropolitans' imaginations showed in emotional intensity of their answers and, similarly to those of the entrepreneurs', in little diversity of their answers. Major spatial unification of the metropolitans and entrepreneurs' perception of Warsaw showed in little diversity of characteristics and definitions associated with the city. The cognitive components of the Warsaw image were appraised rather positively both by the metropolitans and the entrepreneurs.

Suggestiveness and spatial unification of tourists' imaginations were lower and it showed in their very diversified associations with the city. The image of Warsaw in the tourists' consciousness seemed to be more positive than in other groups'. The tourists' imaginations of the city, their associations and their opinion upon tourist attractiveness of Warsaw were positive.

However, it should be kept in mind that the tourists' image of the capital city was little suggestive and that might signify it could change in a short time.

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