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## Spatial Differentiation of the Personal Profile of Polish Sailors

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**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the article is to describe and present different personal types of Polish sailors (behavior, habits, preferences), treating this form of leisure activities unequally. Sailing in Poland is becoming an increasingly popular and accessible form of recreation and sport every year. The environmental conditions of northern Poland predispose to practice this form of activity not only Poles, but also visitors from abroad. The following work is the result of a nationwide survey conducted by the Polish Yachting Association (PYA), as well as a consequence of the Author's committed research among Polish and German sailors of a smaller area, i.e. the transboundary area of the Szczecin Lagoon.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The study used a triangulation of methods, using as much data as possible from different sources and cross-checking them. The quantitative study used the CAWI survey method, through which 800 responses were received. The qualitative study used focus group interviews (FGI), individual in-depth interviews (IDI) and additionally used the observation method.

**Findings:** observations and qualitative research indicate a great diversification of the personal profile, inside the seemingly homogeneous community of sailors. It is not only the nationality element that determines the diversity of personality types that have been characterized in the international waters of the Szczecin Lagoon. Other socio-demographic factors (including age, gender, education level, income, family size) also influence the behavior, habits and recreational preferences of respondents. The conducted research effect was a division into several categories of boaters generally named as: experienced boaters, young boaters, partner boaters, recreational boaters.

**Practical implications:** First of all, the sailing community was segmented, a seemingly homogeneous group of participants in this form of activity. Several clearly characterized groups of people engaged in recreation and sailing sports were obtained. Learning about the habits and preferences of boaters should find its outlet in the marina construction and expansion projects implemented in such a way as to meet their expectations.

**Originality/Value:** Focusing on an innovative way of presenting the not-quite-structured sailing environment. Using quantitative and qualitative methods to unveil the boating environment. Initiating primary statistical research in this type of dispersed and ephemeral group of respondents.

**Keywords:** Sailors, water basins, northern Poland.

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## 1. Introduction

Sailing is a discipline of water sports, a type of tourism or recreation, and a form of training both for the future crew of ships and as a so-called "character school" for youth. Sailing is practiced on vessels propelled by wind power through sails. As an activity, it can be undertaken on different water areas, at different times, for different reasons, at different skill levels of participants, by different numbers of participants, through formal or informal groups.

It combines different elements, provides unforgettable emotions, allows people to test themselves, explore their limits, teaches discipline, teamwork, stress management, overcoming their own weaknesses and the forces of nature (Jennings, 2007). Historically, it was used as a means of survival in search of food and safety. It was also used as a variation of transportation, exploration, migration, and later warfare.

Yachting and motorboating in Poland takes place mainly in its northern part, in Pomerania and Masuria. Pomerania is a geographic region of Poland covering the entire coast of the country (770 km). The advantage of the region is the presence of both lake basins, some of the largest in the country in terms of area (Łebsko 71.4 km<sup>2</sup>, Dąbie 54 km<sup>2</sup>, Miedwie 35.3 km<sup>2</sup>, Jeziorak 32.2 km<sup>2</sup>, Gardno 24.7 km<sup>2</sup>, Jamno 22.4 km<sup>2</sup>) and sea basins, including bays (Choiński, 1991). Harbors and marinas in Poland are mainly concentrated in the Szczecin Lagoon, Gdansk Bay and Puck Bay.

This is geographically determined by currents and winds, as well as the location of the most popular tourist destinations, such as Szczecin and the Tri-City. The cross-border location of the Szczecin Lagoon in the Euroregion Pomerania makes it easily accessible by waterways to international sailors from Germany and Scandinavia, but also by inland waterways from southern or eastern Poland. The uniqueness of the area lies in the multitude of forested areas, also under nature protection, including Poland's first water park - Wolin National Park, Natura 2000 areas, ecological utilities, social reserves, the Szczecin Lagoon Nature Park, as well as nature reserves.

This is an area where enthusiasts of peace and quiet surrounded by nature will find themselves best. Due to unfavorable terrain, extremely different climate and weather conditions from the rest of the coast, and poor transportation infrastructure, the

central part of Pomerania lacks sailing centers, such as marinas and harbors (Rembarz, 2019), which would allow free sailing along the entire coast. Lake areas have less developed hotel and service facilities compared to the marinas of the coastal strip.

Masuria is a very popular tourist region in Poland. It is called the "Land of a Thousand Lakes," and under this name they have been honored by the UNESCO organization in the ranking "New 7 Wonders of Nature" as one of the modern wonders of the world, which attracts sailors and tourists. Masuria has no access to the Baltic Sea.

However, it is home to Poland's largest lakes in terms of area - Śniardwy (113.8 km<sup>2</sup>) and Mamry (104 km<sup>2</sup>) (Choiński, 1991). The most popular resorts and both sailing centers are Giżycko, Ryn, Mragowo, Mikolajki and Ostroda. Large water areas allow to concentrate a large number of tourists in one location, which is favorable for the organization of mass events. This is important for attracting sponsors. Large groups of visitors are also an argument for carrying out intensive promotional activities in these locations, aimed particularly at water sports enthusiasts.

As the popularity of motorboats increases, the number of power boaters is growing every year. This trend is related, among other things, to society's increasing focus on recreation and comfort, including on the water. In addition, the driving of a motorboat is often compared to driving a car which requires slightly less skill than that required to steer a sailing yacht which can also give the impression that motorboating is more accessible.

According to a survey by the Polish Sailing Association, 70% of Poles have ever been in contact with sailing. The number of sailors is estimated at 4.3 million, of which more than 0.5 million are professionals, participating in competitions. More than 2.5 times as many people declare they can steer a boat on their own. Some 3.4 million Poles say they have ever sailed as a crew member, actively engaging in various tasks on board. In contrast, more than 5 million Poles admit to having taken part in cruises as recreational, passive crew at least once every few years (Biznes, 2019).

## **2. Data and Methods**

The scope of the acquired data was not limited only to those who practice sailing in a sporting manner, i.e. instructors, competitors and regatta participants, but also included those who practice sailing recreationally (Błacha and Nowacki, 1997). The initial stage of the survey showed that as many as 30% of Poles over the age of 15 had at least once encountered sailing in a more or less professional form. Most of them were people sailing for company with other more experienced sailors. Sometimes their contact with sailing was a one-time event.

The study used triangulation of methods (Denzin, 2006), which involved using as much data as possible from different sources and cross-checking them. This was done to ensure a higher quality of the research and reduce measurement error. The quantitative study used the CAWI survey method. This is an online survey based on respondents filling out an electronic survey questionnaire (Pollster, 2023). The time scope of the research conducted was November 2015. 800 responses were received through this method.

Qualitative methods were also used, including focus group interviews (FGI). This is a discussion conducted by a moderator in a group of purposively selected people (the best results are obtained in a group of min. 6, max. 12 people). The discussion is centered around a specific topic or several topics (Abrsesta, 2023). For the purposes of the study, 4 focus interviews were conducted, i.e., 3 groups with men and 1 with women.

The results obtained were further expanded by conducting individual in-depth interviews (IDI) (Cross Marketing, 2023) among 20 experts, i.e., members of the Polish Yachting Association, heads of sailing clubs, charter companies, marina managers, boat builders, professional sailors. In addition, the field observation method, also referred to here as ETNO IDI, was used (Angrosino, 2010). It involves observing and describing the behavior of a group or society, here sailors, in its natural, routine, everyday environment, way of life and culture, and analyzing social life striving for a detailed and detailed description of their social reality.

### 3. Results

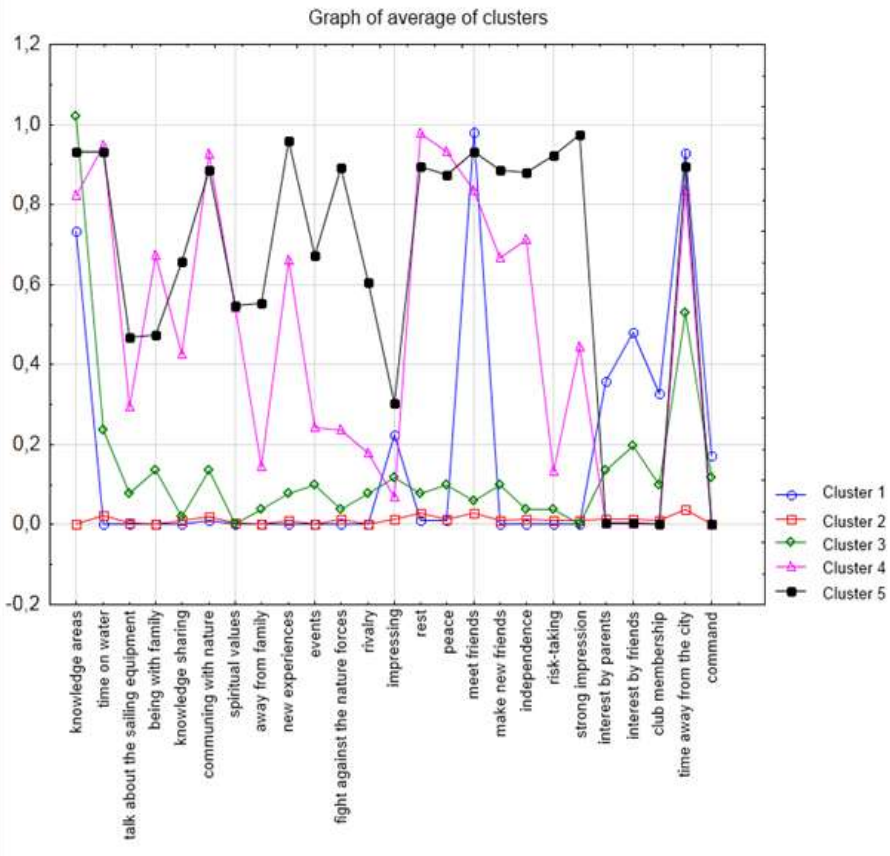
The research conducted by the Polish Sailing Association in 2015 confirmed the hypotheses of an earlier study conducted in 2010 on the Szczecin Lagoon that there is no such thing as a typical Polish sailor. Separation of clusters, i.e., grouping of respondents was done in terms of declared similar sailing motivations, and their conventional names were independently determined by the Author (Figure 1).

Cluster No. 1 is represented by the recreational type. Focus No. 2 is the conquering and exploring type. Focus No. 3 is the leadership type of sailor. Focus No. 4 is defined as the educational-moralistic type, and the last No. 5 is the snobby-sports type (Osóch, 2015).

In the study conducted by the PYA, it is appropriate to speak of at least four personality types, whose conventional names were also given by the research team, and these are:

***Sailors with experience:*** They are predominantly men (64%) over the age of 55, with a stable financial situation (26% with a monthly salary of 3-5 thousand PLN per person in a household of mostly 2 people (40%)), higher education (69%), living mostly in large cities with a population of more than 200 thousand.

Figure 1. Graph of average of clusters – polish sailors sailing motivations.



Source: Own elaboration.

Sailing activity is recreation and relaxation for them, regardless of weather conditions. They acquired their experience at least a decade ago. They do not feel the need to deepen their knowledge and improve their sailing skills. They are open-minded and sociable, eager to make new friends, but they take cruises, usually 1-2 weeks long, with a proven circle of friends. Masuria is the most frequently indicated sailing destination, along with calm lake areas.

When planning a cruise, they are most likely to rely on the recommendation of friends, less often than others on the Internet, as they are significantly less open to novelties. For them, essential yacht equipment during a cruise is a first-aid kit, a good stormtrooper and a bathing suit. In their free time they are more likely than others to listen to Polish Radio and local stations.

**Young sailors:** They are mostly men (67%) in the age group of 25-39 years (47%), with a stable material situation (25% with a monthly salary of 3-5 thousand PLN and 10% of the order of 6-7 thousand PLN per person in a household of mostly 3 people

(34%)), with higher education (61%), living mostly in rural areas. Sailing activities must provide strong emotions, they are driven by adrenaline, the need to compete, win and conquer new territories. Their sailing experience ranges from 4 to 10 years.

Sailing frequency is higher than others, as once every 2-3 months. They prefer cruises lasting 3-7 days. They use charter companies, but also relatively often have their own yacht. They often take sea cruises. They are active in acquiring further qualifications and knowledge. Indeed, they are more likely to hold sailing patents and licenses, including the rank of yacht sailor and helmsman.

They rate their knowledge and skills highly including navigation. They are fulfilled in life and financially resourceful. They are less likely than others to show admiration toward people who own expensive cars and automobiles, and are more likely to indicate that they can afford most things they want. They are also much more likely to indicate that they have a weakness for sailing gadgets and like to surround themselves with sailing-related items, and are willing to spend a lot on sailing-related items.

**Affiliates:** They are mainly women (58%) in the age group: 40-54 (36%) and over 55 (34%), with a stable financial situation (25% with a monthly salary of 3-5 thousand PLN and 10% of 6-7 thousand PLN per person in a household of mostly 2 people (29%)), with a university education (67%), living mostly in rural areas. They value rest in nature and mental relaxation the most. More often than others, they indicate that it is a good way to spend time with loved ones.

Like experienced sailors, they have been sailing for more than 10 years, but sail infrequently, once every few years, usually on a friend's yacht, describing themselves as passive crew members.

Most often, they do not have a sailing license. More often than others, they point to the aspirational nature of sailing - it is an activity associated with prestige, developing good character traits, and is also a constant challenge to themselves and others. They see sailors as courageous, responsible, determined. They would also like their children to practice sailing. During a cruise, weather forecasts, descriptions of sailing routes and information on attractions available on land are important to them.

**Recreational sailors:** They are predominantly men (62%) without much dominance of the age group, with higher education and a stable financial situation, with 2 people in the household (36%) and living mostly in rural areas. For them, the main reason for sailing is curiosity, and sailing in addition to relaxation, they are much more likely than the rest to describe sailing as an adventure during which they can test themselves and have a powerful experience. Sailing in their performance is active fun with people, positive emotions, laughter.

They are open to others and are eager to meet new people. They are usually sailing beginners, their experience is negligible or small, 1-3 years. Despite the least skill and lack of a patent (82%), they try to perform every maneuver carefully and to the best of their ability - they find failure to observe sailing etiquette irritating. After a cruise, they are eager to share photos with other participants using social networks. In addition, they are indeed more likely to sail on a friend's yacht and use modern equipment - mainly navigation - during a sailing trip than the others.

#### **4. Summary and Discussion**

Among the surveyed group of sailors, actively involved crew members, participating in boat work during the voyage, account for about 15% of the population. Nearly 5% of the surveyed Poles declare self-reliance in operating a sailboat. The surveyed population mostly consists of men. It is more often the domain of people with at least a high school education and an established financial position. Sailors are a physically active group, additionally engaging in activities such as skiing, biking, running and trekking.

The main motivation for entering the world of sailing is the desire to spend time with interesting people in an interesting way - for some this means having fun, for others it means sports competition and the opportunity for self-improvement. Others are looking for contact with nature and escape from the hustle and bustle of the city, while others simply want to be close to people with whom they have experienced a lot and with whom they share common interests.

They strongly prefer to engage in "weekend" sailing. Most often, they sail recreationally, spending passive time while cruising, with friends. This is also confirmed by an assessment of their own skills, which are based primarily on being a crew member during a cruise and not having sailing licences (more than 70% of respondents cannot boast any sailing licence). The reasons that encouraged most of the group of respondents to try sailing are primarily curiosity to experience something new, an adventure with people they feel comfortable with.

For most Poles, sailing has so far been a one-time adventure or a relatively infrequent activity - no more than once a year. When deciding on such an activity, they most often use a yacht organized by friends and participate in on short cruises of a few hours, usually in the Great Mazurian Lakes. This is the most popular destination and sailing location for the vast majority of people.

Colloquially, sailors are seen as adventurous, challenge-loving and adventure-seeking people. In the eyes of the public and their own, they appear sociable and confident, so they prove to be reliable and responsible when cruising. The main benefit of sailing is the opportunity to get away from everyday life, indulging in contemplation of nature, sports competition, extreme experiences and a solid dose of adrenaline.

## 5. Conclusions

The study analyzed the opinions of Polish sailors on their preferences, motivations and involvement related to sailing. The starting point was a detailed analysis of materials from secondary sources. The second important source of information was the material obtained through survey, interview and observation. They made it possible to designate profiles of sailors, in terms of socio-demographic factors, tastes and preferences, as well as motivations prompting them to engage in water sports.

The research made it possible to compare the sailing community over several years. Sailing for pleasure has taken and continues to take a variety of forms, is the result of from a variety of motivations, and is treated, as a form of lifestyle. One author (Jennings, 2007) suggested dividing sailing motivations as:

- the need for escape, separation and the pursuit of freedom,
- the search for a life purpose (Allport, 1975),
- the need to advance in sailing from an amateur and hobbyist to a way of life and lifestyle,
- the challenge and desire for adventure, the need for fulfillment and self-actualization (Maslow, 1970, Iso-Ahola, 1980),
- the need to establish relationships with partners, spouses, family members, friends, and to strengthen intergender relations,
- the desire to travel related to the theory of exit motivation (Seving, 2021).

It has been found that sailing motivated by an individual need is intensified when the other people of the same passion participate in experiencing this pleasure. Sailing both individually and in groups, in addition to the pleasure of sailing, brings deep aesthetic emotion. Finally, sailing for pleasure transforms and educates people, bringing benefits to the development of culture and the progress of civilization.

A growing group of participants in sailing tourism, the change in the development and maintenance of marinas is improving every year. Recognized expectations and needs of boaters to improve the operation, as well as to make leisure activities at the resorts more enjoyable, should find an outlet in the ongoing projects for the construction and expansion of marinas.

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