TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................................... 5

I. THE LIFE CYCLE OF A CITY’S TOURIST FUNCTION: THE CASE OF POZNAN – Katarzyna Czernek, Piotr Zmyśłony .............................................. 9
   1. The tourism area life cycle model ................................................................. 9
   2. The city and the life cycle of a tourist area .................................................... 12
   3. The problems of tracing the tourist evolution of a city ............................... 15
   4. The life cycle of the tourist function of Poznań ........................................... 20
      4.1. Development of tourism function in Poznań before 1950 ....................... 20
      4.2. Post-war correction and centrally controlled stagnation (1950–1963) .... 23
      4.3. Development marked by strong interferences (1964–1987) .................. 25
      4.6. Resumed development (since 2003) ..................................................... 29
   5. Development determinants of Poznań’s tourist function ............................. 30

II. THE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN POLISH CITIES IN THE LAST DECADE – COMPARISON OF POZNAN WITH THE BIGGEST CITIES IN POLAND – Justyna Majewska .................. 33
   1. Method of determining the level of tourism development ............................. 34
   2. Testing the method – the case of Poznań ....................................................... 41

III. APPRAISAL OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT’S IMPACT ON THE TOURIST FUNCTION OF A BIG CITY – Grzegorz Golombski .................................. 59
   1. Appraisal of local government’s impact on tourism development – a methodology ................................................................. 60
   2. Tourism development instruments used by city authorities ........................ 64
   3. Appraisal of city authorities impact on tourism development ..................... 66
   4. The results ...................................................................................................... 70
      4.1. Climate for tourism development ............................................................ 70
      4.2. Success-producing actions ................................................................... 73
      4.3. Tourism vision ...................................................................................... 80
      4.4. Tourism development strategy .............................................................. 84

IV. A SURVEY OF POZNAŃ RESIDENTS ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE CITY – Agnieszka Niezgoda ......................................................... 99
   1. Social considerations of tourism development in the big city .................... 99
   2. Results of the empirical study ..................................................................... 103
      2.1. Methodology ........................................................................................ 103
# Table of contents

2.2. Residents’ perception of tourism development and attitudes towards tourists ................................................................. 106  
2.3. Residents’ perception of the city’s attractiveness for tourists ............... 114  
2.4. Residents’ perception of tourist infrastructure in the city ................ 118  
2.5. Environmental awareness and its role in tourism development ............ 121  

LITERATURE .......................................................................................................................... 133  

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................. 140  

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................... 142
Chapter I

THE LIFE CYCLE OF A CITY’S TOURIST FUNCTION: THE CASE OF POZNAŃ

The tourist activity of a city changes in time both in terms of demand and supply. The rates of change, however, are different: variations in demand are faster, more dynamic and less predictable than supply adjustments. Moreover the scope and content of a city’s tourism offer reflect an aggregate of its cultural, social, economic and topographic elements. In marketing terms they create a city product, a mix of tangible resources and intangible, abstract elements [Glińska, Florek & Kowalewska 2009]. This is a reason why adaptive processes in tourism supply are prolonged, and certain changes and new development conditions are difficult to capture in the short and medium term. All researchers studying life cycles of tourism areas, including Butler [1980], Haywood [1986] and Agarwal [1997], emphasise the need to collect source material covering the longest possible time interval since the life-cycle evolution curve only becomes apparent in the scale of decades rather than years.

Delineation of a tourism area’s development path leads to a better understanding of processes and phenomena affecting the destination’s present state, and facilitates adoption of suitable strategies and tactical instruments. In this study authors attempt to identify and analyse subsequent development phases of the tourist function of the city of Poznań basing the analysis on Butler’s TALC concept [1980]. An additional objective is to identify factors which had the strongest impact on the shaping of subsequent development stages in the analysed period.

1. The tourism area life cycle model

The concept of tourism area life cycle was proposed by Butler in 1980. Butler adopted a marketing concept of the product life cycle [Tooman 1997]. Similarly
to the life-cycle of a commercial product which includes the phases of introduction, growth, maturity and decline, a tourism area – constituting an integral whole – passes through subsequent development stages: from initial exploration, through a period of involvement, a further stage of development, later consolidation and stagnation, and finally a post-stagnation stage decline or rejuvenation, stabilization. The variable most often used to determine the stage of development is the number of visitors or visitations. The life cycle trace over a period of time is graphically represented by an s-shapes logistic curve (Figure 1).

![Image of the tourism area life cycle model]

**Figure 1. The tourism area life cycle model**

Source: [Butler 1980]

In Butler’s model subsequent life-cycle stages are characterised by changes taking place in the tourist area in terms of tourist volumes and the types of market segments served (from allocentrics and explorers to mass tourism) on the one hand, and the level of tourism infrastructure development and environmental impacts on the other. The stages of a tourism area life cycle are described in greater detail in Table 1.

According to Butler, most studies show that the life-cycle trace and the level of growth can differ significantly from destination to destination. Variations in life-cycle curves can be due to many factors, such as the level of economic development, aggregate tourist numbers, area’s accessibility, government policy or the number of competitive destinations [Butler 1980]. The life cycle can also be
Table 1. The stages of a tourism area life cycle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>Characterised by a small number of visitors representing a specific type of tourist: the allocentrics and explorers, attracted by unique and considerably different natural or cultural features of the area. Poor accessibility, lack of specific facilities provided by visitors and low tourism awareness on the part of local community limit the number of tourists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>The amount of tourist visitations gradually increases. Hence both the private sector (accommodation, food, etc.) and the public sector (technical and social infrastructure) is involved to serve the tourists. The number of local residents drawing benefits from tourism grows. Seasonality of tourism demand becomes apparent, and a need arises to promote the area on external markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Characterised by a noticeable change in the physical appearance of the area, heavy advertising and domination of mid-centrics and institutionalised tourists. The tourist offer of the destination is to a greater degree created not by local entrepreneurs but by external actors taking over much of the control over the production of tourism goods. The number of tourists at peak periods is approaching the permanent local populations, leading to instances of mutual resentment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consolidation</td>
<td>The number of visitors exceeds the number of permanent residents and continues to grow though the rate of increase is getting smaller. The area’s carrying capacity is likely to be exceeded as the volume of tourist flows approaches the upper limits. For this reason the host community more often than ever is against tourism development. The major part of the area’s economy is tied to tourism, but at the same time there are fewer new investments in the tourism infrastructure. Marketing activities undertaken by the public and private sector aim at an extension of the tourist season.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stagnation</td>
<td>Numbers of tourists hover around the upper limit of carrying capacity. The area’s image is well established, but becomes divorced from its geographic environment and is out of touch with current trends and needs a change. The area is visited mainly by repeat tourists whose satisfaction, however, is likely to decline owing to – for example – a worsening condition of facilities. The quality of life of the host community is also endangered as the area’s carrying capacity is likely to be exceeded (man-made attractions dominate over nature-based ones). Tourist attractiveness of the area is likely to suffer, leading to a decline in tourist visitations. The type of visitor changes toward organised mass tourist/psychocentrics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>The area loses its competitive position and faces a declining market. Repeat visitors decide to spend their holidays elsewhere. Those who decide to visit tend to keep their stay short – they come for a weekend or same-day trip. Tourism ceases to be a dominant economic function of the area and tourist accommodation facilities are being converted to alternative use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter I. The life cycle of a city’s tourist function: the case of Poznań

continue Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rejuvenation</td>
<td>This stage can replace the stage of decline if the destination’s managers decide to take action aimed at raising the area’s attractiveness by exploiting or providing different or completely new attractions. The goal is to attract new market segments and thus generate increased tourist visitations, consequently restoring tourism as an important economic function of the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stabilisation</td>
<td>Destinations with unique and world-famous attractions keep a timeless attractiveness and are able to keep up the stable number of visitations. The only condition is constant human tastes and preferences of visitors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from [Butler 1980].

affected by unpredictable circumstances and changing fortunes. Nevertheless, if development is not controlled the final effect – according to Butler – is almost always the same: an inevitable decline of the tourist area [Butler 1980].

Even though Butler’s TALC model is subject of criticism in literature, it still provides the groundwork for many studies on tourist areas. Butler himself more than two decades later justified the utility his model in the following way (Butler 2006):

– there is no possibility that a tourism area can develop continuously without well thought-out management and control;
– there are few other models that provide an alternative to TALC;
– tourism management is rarely practiced in most tourist areas, being typically replaced with tourism promotion;
– at the time the model was conceived there were many places that could develop into tourist areas;
– it is necessary to understand the process of a tourist area development in order to implement in such areas the concept of sustainable development, in many ways interrelated with the TALC model.

The description of life-cycle phases provided in Table 1 shows that each stage has distinct features. The tourist area managers will attribute specific roles to those features and take actions adequate to existing circumstances. For this reason it is essential to identify the present cycle stage of a destination.

2. The city and the life cycle of a tourist area

An exploratory review of the subject literature yields an unequivocal result: the TALC model is least frequently applied to urban destinations. For over thirty years the concept’s utility has been tested primarily in coastal areas [e.g. Agar-

Among the best known urban analyses is a study by Stansfield [1978, 2006] on successful rejuvenation of Atlantic City (USA) through a repositioning of the city’s offer following the legalisation of gambling. With 37 million visitations a year the city had become the most popular tourist destination in the USA. Equally well known is Getz’s [1992] case study of Niagara Falls on the USA–Canada border. Thanks to world-famous water falls the city remains in a permanent state of mature stabilisation which combines attributes characteristic of several stages described by Butler. In turn Paskova [2002] presents an analysis of social and economic changes in the historic town of Cesky Krumlov (Czech Republic) providing an insight into spatial differentiation of residents’ attitudes towards tourism development.

Grabler [1997] in his study of 43 European cities constructs a synthetic life-cycle model based on changes in tourist numbers from decade to decade. The author identifies six cycle stages to which individual cities are subsequently assigned and analysed in depth by detailed criteria.

In Polish literature of particular interest are Liszewski’s [1990] studies on tourism development in the city of Łódź. Liszewski uses the case of Łódź to test a previously devised typology of tourist space [Liszewski 1995] which shows many similarities to the TALC model.

One may wonder why there is a relative paucity of empirical urban studies. The main reasons could be the following:

– urban tourism is a relatively recent form which hitherto has not been a subject of many historical analyses [Kowalczyk 2005; Page & Hall 2003; Russo 2006];

– there are few studies testing the classic principles and indicators of Butler’s model on urban destinations, such as the relationship between the number of visitors and the number of permanent residents;

– statistical data are deficient (this will be discussed later in the course of this article);

– cities are large and complex socio-economic systems where tourism is only one of its many activities or industries, often auxiliary or marginal, except for smaller towns where it can play a dominant role or heritage cities such as Venice, Salzburg, Bruges or Dubrovnik, and where changes due to tourism development are not clear-cut and unequivocal and therefore are rather difficult to analyse;
the city offers many different products depending on the travel motive, which adds to the difficulty of an otherwise complex analysis [Grabler 1997, pp. 56–57).

The rather infrequent application of TALC model to city tourism is accompanied by a debate on the utility of Butler’s concept in the context of urban areas. Both van der Borg [1991] and Russo [2002, 2006] use the concept as a starting point for an in-depth qualitative analysis of spatial-economic costs and benefits and the changing structure of visitor flows.

Van der Borg [1991] adds two additional elements to the TALC model. The first one is an extension of the main cycle variable – the volume of demand – by an analysis of its structure (a ratio of same-day visitors to the total number of tourists). The second element is an analysis of the distribution of direct and indirect economic costs and benefits throughout the cycle and the related level of prices. Van der Borg’s concept identifies four proper phases: launching, take-off, stagnation and decline, which are preceded by a pre-tourist phase. Additionally, the author claims that “there is no straightforward correspondence between any particular stages of urban life cycle and the development of tourism” [van der Borg 1991, p. 64].

Russo’s ‘vicious circle’ of tourism development provides a detailed description of negative impacts of uncontrolled tourism in heritage city at mature phase of its development which are due to spatial concentration of attractions and tourism demand, displacement of tourism supply to periphery, a declining emotional involvement of visitors and shorter lengths of stay. The author abandons the idea of the life-cycle curve. Instead the direction and intensity of the tourist function evolution is determined through the analysis of concentration of attractions and tourist demand and the simultaneous spatial expansion of tourist supply on the one hand, and a diminishing emotional involvement of visitors combined with declining lengths of stay on the other [Russo 2002, 2006]. In contrast to a long-term perspective of Butler’s and van der Borg’s concepts, the “vicious circle” model focuses on medium and short term development periods.

Another important aspect of an urban tourist destination is the fact that because of the multitude of travel motives and types of tourist activities cities are present on many markets at the same time. Page and Hall [2003] stress that tourists visit urban destinations not for a single purpose so they are “but one set of users in the multifunctional city which comprises the ‘historic city’, the ‘cultural city’, the ‘business city’, the ‘sport city’, the ‘nightlife city’, the ‘leisure shopping city’ and the ‘tourist city’” [Page & Hall 2003, p. 85]. Also Haywood [1986] and emphasise that, as tourism evolves, a destination can sequentially enter distinctly different market segments. In addition, Law [2002, p. 54] notices that “as the city evolves and new features emerge, so new product packages can be created”. Therefore assuming a product perspective in determining the life
cycle of a urban tourist area one should in fact analyse not one but several independent cycles [Haywood 1986]. The problem is that statistics for separate products are not available, therefore such analysis is impossible to make [Grabler 1997]. Available tourism variables, such as the number of overnight stays or the number of tourist visitations, are general synthetic measures. Hence we should not talk about the product life cycle with respect to a city as it is not a single product. We should rather talk about the life cycle of the tourist function of a city as one of its many economic activities.

Moreover, cities can be offered and sold on tourist markets on the basis of different travel motives which may include a basket of individual products such as tourist attractions, tourism facilities and other ‘commodities’ [Ashworth & Voogd 1990, p. 7]. It often happens that a single city attraction offers a greater tourist potential than all the remaining products combined. Therefore, as Law [2002, p. 196] observes, in a city which goes through its life cycle, “different attractions may go through a lifecycle, but it is unlikely that they will all be at the same stage simultaneously with the consequence that while one is declining, another will be growing”.

As can be seen from the above discussion the determination and analysis of a city’s tourist life cycle is a complex and difficult task, and the cognitive value of such analysis can be questioned because of inadequacy of statistical data on which it is based. No researcher, however, will reject the TALC concept as an analytical tool in tourist area life cycle studies. It is worth highlighting that just through defining the stage of the tourist life cycle in which the city is currently positioned; we are supplied with new or more detailed information for strategic decision-making and actions.

3. The problems of tracing the tourist evolution of a city

To achieve the research objectives set in the introduction to this article secondary analytical methods have been employed, i.e. a critical analysis of available sources, statistical methods (a simplified time series analysis), and a descriptive analysis. Seeing that in this type of research both quantitative and qualitative information is analysed, historic and contemporary written and non-written sources, statistical data, data bases, and scientific publications reporting original work or extant literature reviews were used.

The application of the TALC concept in analysis of a specific tourist area almost in every case is fraught with problems which are primarily due to inability to obtain long and complete time series of data needed to produce – as far as possible – an accurate and comprehensive picture of phenomena influencing
tourism development. The multiplicity of factors affecting the life cycle of a tourist area, reflecting a complex nature of tourism activity, pose an additional difficulty of the TALC model application. Many researchers, including the concept’s author himself, confirm this complication [Agarwal 1997, 1992; Butler 1980, 2000; Getz 1992; Haywood 1986; McElroy et al 1993; Schuckert, Möller, Weiermair 2007; Stansfield 1978]. Among many problems of TALC application they identify the following:

– temporal discontinuity of statistical tourism information which usually began to be collected relatively recently, necessitating a review other secondary sources, both published and unpublished, often casual and based on diverse measuring methodologies [Agarwal 1997];

– changeable methods of collecting and publishing statistical tourism data, resulting in incomparability of information obtained by relevant institutions due to frequent modification of methods, spatial scope, and classification criteria [Agarwal 1997];

– unsuited spatial scope of available statistical information which usually presents regional or national level rather than information relevant to local level, the most frequent subjects of TALC analysis such as local resorts and single destinations [Agarwal 1997];

– limited reliability of published statistics due to deficiencies mentioned above and incompleteness of data (only certain tourism phenomena were measured, only selected facilities were included, measurements were made only at certain times of year) [Marciniak & Kraśniewska 2009];

– problems with graphic representation of the cycle owing to a multiplicity of units of measurement that could be used to best reflect the complex development process [Haywood 1986]; researchers overcome this problem by employing one of the following solutions: first one is to plot one or two leading variables and complement the model with a discussion of supplementary variables, as practiced by Cooper and Jackson [1989], Corac [2006], Iaoannides [1992], and Schuckert and Kronenberg [2008]; the second solution consists in constructing a synthetic indicator incorporating a number of development aspects on both the demand and supply sides (Majewska 2008 and the next chapter of this book); the third way is to completely abandon the graphic representation and replace it with a detailed descriptive analysis as exemplified by the studies by Agarwal [1997] and Stansfield [1978];

– difficulties in a precise identification of the beginnings and ends of subsequent cycle’s stages and factors responsible for the transition from one phase to the next owing to general inability to set apart and individually measure many phenomena impacting tourism evolution (identification of symptoms characteristic of the respective cycle stages is one of the contemporary directions of studies on TALC, undertaken by for example, Manente and Pechlaner [2006] or Weiermair [2008]).
All those problems were experienced in the modelling of the life cycle of tourism in Poznań. These difficulties were further intensified by two factors. First, the analysis concerned an urban area where tourism was only an auxiliary activity, therefore more difficult to measure. Second, most of the measured cycle fell in the period of the socialist, centrally planned economy in which statistics for the services sector were neglected in favour of more tangible industries. In addition, before World War I Poznań and the Wielkopolska region lied in the areas annexed by Prussia, and in the inter-war period they were part of independent Poland. Therefore the full cycle spans four different economic (and statistical) systems.

Bearing in mind the above difficulties the following research framework was adopted:
1. Both demand and supply information should be used to trace the life cycle of Poznań’s tourism function.
2. The graphic representation of the model would be based on two leading quantitative units of measurement: the number of overnight stays in hotels, and the number of hotel beds.
3. The analysis would be complemented with a descriptive analysis of additional processes and events occurring in individual cycle stages, not represented in a graphic form.

These assumptions limit the cognitive value of the study as they exclude other components of the tourist industry. However, the two selected variables enabled to maintain a continuity and clarity of the analysis despite limited availability of data sources.

The process leading to the formulation of these assumptions was arduous and complex. In order to retrace the evolution path of tourism in the city we had to review a vast amount of varied information sources. The main source of tourism knowledge regarding the pre-war period were official municipal directories (address-books), both German (referring to the period 1872–1917) and Polish (1923–1930)\textsuperscript{1}. Alas, information contained in these publications turned out to be incomplete and discontinuous, as they stated only the number and type of overnight accommodation. A more comprehensive statistical material was available only from 1950 onwards, therefore the authors decided to model the life cycle of the city’s tourism starting from that particular year. The quality of the reviewed data sources, however, deserves a special comment.

First, during the years of the socialist system the statistical information for tourism was collated and published mostly on a regional level. The local level was less important from the viewpoint of central planning and was therefore often omitted from statistical yearbooks. Moreover, spatial scope of the pub-

\textsuperscript{1} A list of statistical sources is given at the end of the publication.
lished data changed along with reforms of administrative divisions of Poland: during the analysed period there were four comprehensive reforms changing the administrative division at all levels [Wielka encyklopedia PWN 2004], entailing relevant modifications of statistics (on a continuous basis). The result of these changes and adaptations is a diversified, but generally available statistical material. For example, the number of overnight stays were published in the following way (sources are provided at the end of this publication):

- for the year 1950 with respect to nationalised hotels (data for the city level only);
- for the period 1950–1954 with respect to all hotels (city level only);
- for the period 1955–1959 with respect to hotels and other selected nationalised tourist establishments (city level only, incomplete data);
- for the period 1960–1973 with respect to all hotels (separate data for the city level and regional level);
- 1974 – data not available;
- for the period 1975–1979 with respect to collective tourist establishments (city and regional levels);
- for the period 1980–1989 with respect to collective tourist establishments (regional level);
- for the period 1990–2008 with respect to collective tourist establishments (city and regional levels).

Parallel to changing their spatial scope, methods of data collection were also subject of modifications over time with regards to the type of units of measurement (variables), the range of objects (the kind of tourist establishments) and the time references used for reporting. This is also connected with the changing classification system for tourism establishments in Poland. Błądek and Tulibacki [2003] report that there have been five main changes introduced to the classification system for accommodation establishments after World War II (1958, 1964, 1977, 1990 and 1997). Modifications to Polish statistics for tourism lasted until the year 2000 when they finally conformed to UNWTO requirements. The last change took place in the year 2000 when data collection time-base was changed from quarterly to monthly and the cut-off date was moved from the end of third quarter to the end of year, which resulted in missing data for the fourth quarter of 1999 [Turystyka 2000]. In effect the basic units of measurement, published in a chaotic way and referring to different types of facilities, are not always comparable from year to year.

2 Statistics did not include hotels maintained for own use by companies, institutions, etc, nor tourist facilities such as hostels or guest houses.

3 Information on the number of tourists using overnight accommodation in Poznań is available in published sources with respect to hotels only (1950–1959, 1974–1975, 1984–2008) or overnight stays.
The overall effect is that basic units of measurement published in the statistics, such as the number of overnight stays or the number of visitors staying in tourist establishments are not entirely reliable and comparable. Taking into consideration all the limitations, data from statistical publications had to be supplemented by examining tabulations of a draft working type, kept in the Poznań Statistical Office archives. In some cases a linear trend function was applied to estimate the missing data. However, overcoming all of the shortcomings proved impossible. Ultimately we managed to collect data concerning the following measures ( alas only for certain time series): the number of tourist establishments, the number of hotel beds, the number of tourists staying in collective tourist establishments, and the number of overnight stays.

Complete data for the entire analysed period (1950–2008) were available only with respect to:
– the number of hotel beds,
– the number of overnight stays in hotels (except for the period 1994–1996 in which the information collected by statistical offices concerned rooms rented) [Turystyka 1994].

Despite their limitations, those two variables were accepted as the basis for the graphic modelling of the life cycle of the city’s tourist function. Apart from the best availability of information concerning these two variables, there are three additional arguments. Firstly, hotels have always played the leading role in the development of tourist establishments in the city. Secondly, data recorded by public statistics in respect of this type of tourist establishments cover the entire population of existing facilities. Thirdly, modifications and methodological changes discussed earlier affected this type of establishments in the smallest degree.

Finally, assessing the research value of the collected data the limited reliability of statistics questionnaires filled out by tourist establishments’ managers should be taken into consideration. However, we assumed that information deficiencies due to this possible failure were not significant enough to distort the overall picture of the city’s tourist function in its evolution cycle.


4 The linear trend function was used, for example, with respect to year 1993 for which statistics were available only for the first three quarters.

5 We should not, however, forget the characteristic feature of Poznań’s tourist accommodation supply in the form of private short-term renting of rooms or flats to trade fair visitors. This activity, only periodically and partially included in official statistics, first started in the late nineteen-twenties on account of the General National Exhibition. As statistical data concerning this type of accommodation are extremely fragmentary, they cannot be used in the analysis.
4. The life cycle of the tourist function of Poznań

The model of the life cycle of Poznań’s tourist function presented in Figure 2 is based on two variables: the number of overnight stays in hotels (demand variable) and the number of hotel beds (supply variable)\textsuperscript{6}. Additionally, on the time axis there are references to important events marking the milestones in the evolution of tourism in the city.

The study identified five stages different in duration and evolution intensity: stagnation, development, decline, involvement and returned development.

The detailed analysis of tourism evolution in Poznań, supported by statistical data, concerns the period 1950–2008. However, the picture would be incomplete without a general outline of tourism in the city before World War II. Despite a shortage of reliable information sources referring to that period we were able to identify major events and circumstances influencing development of the city’s tourism supply in the past.

4.1. Development of tourism function in Poznań before 1950

Historical sources and some fragmentary statistical data suggest that activities related to serving the traveller in Poznań began in the second half of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century. At that time the town and the surrounding villages saw the first inns and taverns being established to serve noblemen, traders and messengers, that is – using today’s terminology – the business traveller. Apart from inns and taverns there were no other facilities provided for those scarce wanderers, which is characteristic of Butler’s exploration stage. This early period of tourism activity lasted relatively long: only towards the end of the eighteenth century, already under Prussian rule following the partition of Poland, the first principles for categorisation of inns were enacted and the first modern hotel was opened (1796) [Bładek & Tulibacki 2003]. Both those events possibly marked a transition from exploration to the involvement stage.

In the following years, on account of geopolitical circumstances, development of Poznań was held back. The town, performing the function of a military outpost, was surrounded by a ring of fortifications which effectively curbed its spatial and economic growth. Despite that predicament the flow of travellers and the hotel industry itself continued to grow owing to the city’s favourable location, development of the railways, growth in trade, and later the industrial revol-
Figure 2. The model of the life cycle of Poznań’s tourist function
Chapter I. The life cycle of a city’s tourist function: the case of Poznań

In the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries Poznań’s historical sources suggest that at least sixteen high standard hotels and many guest houses operated in the city [Address 1879]. Just before the outbreak of World War I the number of hotels in Poznań amounted to 22 establishments [Address 1913]. We must add that in those times hotels integrated the function of serving the tourist with many other services addressed to town residents. Hotel postal addresses and indeed premises were used as seats of companies, trading syndicates, banks, and social circles. Hotels were also popular venues for social life and cultural events. A significant fact from the perspective of our considerations is that all new establishments were located in the centre of the town, a feature characteristic of early development phases of urban areas. The establishment of a new services and trading centre in the middle of Poznań and consequent escalation of land prices can be directly attributed the city’s emerging tourist function [Błądek & Tulibacki 2003]. With the passage of time Poznań consolidated its mercantile and industrial profile, and tourism activity assumed a strong albeit auxiliary economic role in the town, lasting until the present day. The growing number of tourist establishments in the town gave rise to a differentiation of standards, necessitated intense promotional activities and stimulated a development of auxiliary services and industries. Already at the turn of the nineteenth century Polish economic circles began to organise industrial exhibitions, precursors of later trade shows. In 1911 the Eastern Germany Exhibition was staged by the German government in the outskirts of Poznań, boosting the town’s trading infrastructure and its image as an organiser of such events [Januszkiewicz 2009]. A further development of the town’s tourist activity, then entering the stage of development, was halted by the outbreak of World War I.

The war and its economic aftermath led to a dramatic decline in travel in all Europe. The Wielkopolska region and its capital were no exception. A recovery of the local tourist market began along with the reconstruction of political structures of the new Polish state. It can, therefore, be said that after a period of correction caused by war tourism again entered the stage of involvement. Poznań’s tourism product based on the town’s image as a trading centre gradually regained its position on the domestic and international markets. The town’s accessibility significantly improved with the commissioning the civilian airfield and Ławica Airport in 1925 and establishment of regular air connections [Zarzycki 2001].
During the interwar period the town gained the position of the biggest trade fair centre in reborn Poland, a reputation won on account of Poznań Fair trade shows and the General National Exhibition (GNE) staged in Poznań in 1929. The aim of the 1929 Exhibition was to present economic, cultural, scientific and political achievements in the first decade of independent Poland. In just four-and-a-half months the exhibition attracted over 4.5 million visitors of whom 200 thousand were foreign guests. For the purposes of the exhibition the town modernised its public infrastructures and gained well over a hundred new buildings and facilities many of which are still used today [Bombicki 1992; Januszkiewicz 2009; PWK 1928, 1929]. Many local people joined in the organisation of the event by offering guest rooms to visitors, a service that had become a feature of the town’s accommodation supply in the following decades. The regular trade fairs preserved the town’s character and image, greatly influencing the overall development of tourism in Poznań. However, in the years following the 1929 Exhibition the tourist activity gradually declined, ending abruptly with the outbreak of war.

In conclusion we could say that the history of tourism in Poznań before 1950 evolved along the following phases: exploration until the end of 18th century, involvement until about 1910, transition to a development phase broken by the outbreak of World War One, decline during the war period (1914–1918), re-involvement in the 1919–1929 decade, and gradual decline caused by the Great Depression of the nineteen-thirties (1930–1939). Two driving forces that triggered Poznań’s tourist life cycle can be identified: the overall policy of the German (before WWI) and Polish government (interwar period), and the entrepreneur and investment activity of local business groups.

4.2. Post-war correction and centrally controlled stagnation (1950–1963)

Poznań entered the era of popularization of travel with its own bagagge of centrally planned economy. The many drawbacks of that economic system included: absence of market mechanisms, demand and prices, a key role of central planning and central distribution of resources, politicisation of the economy – the communist party dictated the country’s economic policy, determined the content and goals of the central economic plan, controlled execution of the plan, and even directly intervened in operations of enterprises [Wilczyński 1991]. In those times also local government had very limited responsibilities and authority as most decisions were made at the central government level, and state ownership of property and means of production dominated [Milewski & Kwiatkowski 2005; Wilczyński 1991]. All those circumstances directly or indirectly affected development of tourism in Poznań.
Furthermore, in the nineteen-fifties the whole nation’s effort was concentrated on rebuilding the country from war devastations (Poznań was destroyed in 55%). Priority was given to industrialisation of the economy and nationalisation of private property [Allock & Przeclawski 1990; Kruczańska 1990], while tourism did not receive much interest. Consequently, the tourist sector declined and tourism economy development gap relative to other European countries grew wider. Towards the end of 1956 there were only 60 thousand beds in Polish hotels, hostels, and holiday guest houses combined, compared with 200 thousands in Spain or 150 thousand in Denmark [Szymański 2004]. In Poznań itself most tourist establishments had been destroyed or damaged by war and only a few were reconstructed (e.g the historic Bazar Hotel, or Rzymski Hotel). Several facilities that survived the war, such as Polonia Hotel, were gradually converted to other use. Additionally, after 1950 many hotels were nationalised. The number of hotel beds fell by almost 50% in the first three years of the analysed period (1950–1952), and continued to decline, albeit not as dramatically, in the following years reaching the number of 711 beds in 1963. That decline was necessarily reflected in the demand figures (Figure 2), which ranged between 245 thousand and 320 thousand overnight stays (average 285 thousand) per annum. Of particular interest is a clear decline in overnight stays soon after 1956 following a bloody suppression of the popular uprising in the city against the communist rule.

Because of the specific position of the city’s product both in domestic in international tourist markets it is important to mention that the Poznań International Fair resumed its activities in 1947 and for years to come the institution was used as a propaganda instrument of “the socialist economic success” (in the period 1951–1955, however, organisation of trade shows was suspended for economic reasons). Although the popularity of trade shows was great from the very beginning reaching the figure of 1.2 million visitors in 1955, visitations fell to just over 430 thousand towards the end of the nineteen-fifties. Deemed to perform supporting roles to the city’s trade fair function, the hotel industry and other tourist-related economic activities were encouraged to develop to serve the growing numbers of foreign visitors. Emerging as one of the most important industrial centres in Poland, Poznań soon reinstated the business character of its tourist offer.

Even though in terms of number and quality Poznań at that time offered superior tourist accommodation compared with other Polish cities, in many cases facilities were housed in run-down buildings constructed at the beginning of the century, offering standards below European average. Underdeveloped state-run tourist establishments were in part supplemented with private flats and guest rooms rented on a short term basis to visitors by entrepreneurial locals. This was an important element of tourism supply in the city’s dating back to the times of
the General National Exhibition (1927), albeit rarely reflected in official statistics due to its informal character (exception was a period in the second half of the nineteen-eighties decade when some statistical data referred to the hiring of private guest rooms).

Summing up, after a period of adaptation to new socio-political circumstances the local tourism economy did not resume an involvement stage. The sequence of life-cycle stages was disturbed. Tourism in Poznań entered a politically controlled premature stagnation stage diverting in its features from the classic Butler model [1980]. Firstly, this stage was brought about by investment inactivity and lack of tourism policy on the part of central government, although it has to be said that development barriers were to a large extent due the economic and social aftermath of World War II. Secondly, the threshold of tourist carrying capacity was in that period not exceeded by any measures [Martin & Uysal 1990] as both supply of accommodation (underdeveloped) and demand were not great (an average length of stay fell in the nineteen-fifties from 4.7 to 2.2 nights with amplitudes of tourism demand corresponding with trade shows staged in the city). Despite the strong impact of trade fairs the city’s tourist profile did not acquire it final shape, and opportunities for further development had by no means been exhausted.

4.3. Development marked by strong interferences (1964–1987)

In the nineteen-sixties increased recreational and tourist demand due to intensive urbanisation of the country inspired national authorities to treat tourism as an instrument of social policy [Kruczała 1990]. Tourism and the relevant investments in tourist infrastructure began to be included in subsequent planning cycles of national economic development. The chart in Figure 2 reveals two characteristic features of tourism development in the analysed period. The first one is an impact of ten-year plans visible as an increase in statistical values in the second or third year of the planning cycle beginning from 1963 (a detailed analysis follows). The second is an impact of economic crises and the related political events on the decline of tourist flows, most clearly visible during the period of martial law (1982–1983).

The development stage began in 1964 (Figure 2) when the Merkury Hotel was opened [Błądek & Tulibacki 2003, pp. 40–41]. By 1989 the number of beds in collective tourist establishments increased threefold (with an average annual growth of 7%). The greatest increase in hotel supply, taking the total number of beds from 1000 to 3200, took place in the nineteen-seventies as a result of partial opening of the market to international hotel chains (in Poznań it was the French Accor) and the pro-spending government policy based on foreign borrowing
[Bładek & Tulibacki 2003]. The quantitative growth was accompanied by changes in standards and in the quality of services offered by hotels, however not to the extent to equal international standards. Frequent changes in hotel categorisation and statistical methods used in respect of tourism economy make it difficult to measure and unequivocally appraise those developments.

With the growing supply of hotel accommodation came quantitative and qualitative improvements in the city’s tourism offer, that is in cultural and natural (modified by man) attractions. For example, the number of museums increased in that period from 6 to 15 [Rocznik statystyczny miasta Poznania 1966; Rocznik statystyczny województwa poznańskiego 1976–1988], and recreational facilities within the city borders were revitalised (e.g. Lake Malta, the new Zoological Gardens). Access to the city also improved, but only in terms of road infrastructure. The role of Ławica Airport, however, was marginalised by central authorities: by 1989 it provided only eight regular domestic connections [Zarzycki 2001].

Development of the tourism infrastructure and activities of the Poznań International Fair increased the city’s visibility in Europe and had a positive effect on foreign tourist flows (in the period 1974–1989 the average share of foreign tourists in the total visitors number stood at 19%). Apart from the business traveller Poznań attracted culture tourism (groups and individual visitors) and holiday-makers spending vacations in state-run holiday facilities located within the city borders.

Development of the supply side brought positive effects in terms of increased tourist numbers (Figure 2) although one has to bear in mind that the volume, structure and directions of tourist flows were to some extent centrally controlled through the generation of social tourism and domestic business travel (Szymański 2004). The number of overnight stays in hotels tripled by 1987, a year in which the greatest number of overnights was registered (729 thousand in hotels alone, with the total number of tourist overnight stays reaching 2.4 million in that year).

Owing to the fact that from 1974 onwards available statistical material is more comprehensive, our analysis of the period can be supported by additional data. The greatest number of tourist visiting Poznań in the analysed period was registered in the years 1977–1980 when it reached the figure of half-a-million visitors per year, and in 1987 when it approached that level (491 thousand, including 350 thousand using hotel establishments). The length of stay averaged 2 days, and was stable throughout the period.

Despite this positive picture, the development stage of 1964–1987 was interrupted by short-lasting but intense perturbations. The demand trace in Figure 2 clearly shows the episodes of sharp decline in tourist visitations caused by economic crises and the related political upheavals of 1969–1970, 1977, and 1981–
1983. In the latter case the fall in demand was accompanied by a supply decline. The most dramatic impact on tourism had the imposition of martial law by military authorities in December 1981, lasting until July 1983. In that period the number of overnight stays declined by an unprecedented 30%, while the number of foreign visitors fell by 64% [Figure 2; Tablice 1982–1984]. It is worth to add that the martial law in Poland and an associated threat of possible military conflict had global repercussions for tourism reflected in the decline of travel in Europe and the world [WTO 2001].

The development stage 1964–1989 can be summarised by emphasising the following features of the period:

– domination of central development plans and state financing of investment;
– the average rate of growth in overnight stays amounting to 4.7% for the entire period (6.3% in the period 1964 and as much as 13.2% in the years 1984–1987);
– minimal local involvement on the supply side, limited to short-term renting of private guest rooms and some supporting services (such as guide services);
– minimal impact of local authorities on tourism development due to limited powers vested in local government and limited possibilities of economic intervention;
– spatial concentration of tourist establishments in the strict centre of the city and in the vicinity of trade fair grounds;
– inadequate quality of tourist services as measured by world standards despite many new investments.


In 1988 the bankrupting centrally controlled economy finally fell into crisis. A severe downturn was also noted in tourism which saw an average 2.8% decline in overnight stays. The crisis was a prelude to a revolutionary transformation of economic rules in Poland, causing a further and stronger decline in the following years.

The centrally controlled economy left a legacy in the form of yet another decline stage in the city’s tourism necessitating an adaptation of the sector to new economic circumstances. Central planning was replaced with market economy based on private property, competition and entrepreneurship. In the period of economic transition internal demand was decimated by hyperinflation and raging unemployment. In effect the local tourist market collapsed: during the first two

years of reinstated market economy (1990–1991) the number of hotel guests fell by 35%, the number of overnight stays by 31%, and the International Poznań Fair registered a massive 80% decline in visitors. Accommodation supply in Poznań saw a short-term correction in 1990 when the number of hotel beds fell by 6% (down to 2875 beds) to recover in the following year (1991) by 10% to the level of 3160 beds. We must add that the correction was – theoretically – even more pronounced for other types of tourist establishments. According to official statistics in 1988 the total number of tourist establishments’ beds in the city was greater than 16 thousand to ultimately fall to the level of 6.5 thousand in the next few years (a 60% decline). That, however, was mostly a statistical variation due to a change in data collection and classification which took place in 1990: the public statistics ceased to register guest rooms offered by private individuals (4.7 thousand places) and miscellaneous holiday facilities (4.2 thousand places) [Rocznik statystyczny miasta Poznania 1995].


In Poznań – a strong trading and industrial centre – the decline ended already in 1992 when the number of tourist visitations with a corresponding increase of overnight stays rose by 12% (not reflected in the chart). That was without a doubt caused by opening the country to international markets as a result of which the share of foreign guests in the city’s hotels rose to around 50%.

The main theme of the new involvement stage that began in the early nineteen-nineties was a return of the tourist sector into the hands of private entrepreneurs and local government, a change which soon bore fruit in the shape of the city’s tourism products being introduced to international markets. At first initiatives undertaken by all new actors were haphazard, uncoordinated, and lacking strategic thinking. Overall 13 new tourist establishments were commissioned during that period, raising the number of beds by 2.1 thousand, including 1.2 thousand in hotels (a 40% and 35% increase respectively). Most new establishments, however, were small or medium in size and offered moderate standards. High standard accommodation was still in short supply. Despite expectations international hotel operators did not immediately enter the market, with the exception of Accor which had been present in Poland earlier and in the nineties dominated Poznań’s hotel market through investments in the privatised Polish chain of Orbis Hotels.

Following the systemic changes of the early nineteen-nineties local governments regained control over local development. The first comprehensive tourism development strategy for Poznań was published by city authorities in the year 2000 [Bosiacki 2000].
During the entire period attempts were made to promote the city, initially addressed at domestic recipients and German tourists. Those early marketing activities, however, had a form of short-term, isolated promotional campaigns. The business profile of the city had an impact on seasonal fluctuations of demand: visitations fell during summer holidays and in December. This horizontal trend lasted until 2003 when another wave of investment activity provided an impetus for the city to enter the next development stage.

4.6. Resumed development (since 2003)

By the year 2003 market mechanisms and the role of local government in the country’s economic development had been firmly put in place. Also around that time, owing to legislative changes and because of public finances constraints, new forms of collaboration in tourism between private and public sectors were initiated (e.g. Destination Management Organisations). With Poland’s accession to the European Union in 2004 Polish cities gained access to a new source of finance: the UE funds. The year 2003 can therefore be regarded as the beginning of a new development stage.

The first evidence of the emerging new trend is an increased foreign direct investment in tourist establishments. Local control of hotel accommodation gradually diminished as international hotel chains, such as Starwood, IBB Hotels, Best Western and NH Hotels, entered the market increasing the number of beds by 1.3 thousand and bringing about the ultimate differentiation of standards.

The second proof is a rapid and incessant growth of tourist visitations and overnight stays in hotels. An average annual rate of growth in the period 2003–2008 was 8.7% with rising average hotel room occupancy levels (47% in 2008) [GUS 2010].

Thirdly, owing to new forms of public-private collaboration, year 2003 marked the beginning of integrated strategic management of tourism development in the city. Poznań’s Local Tourist Organisation (Destination Management Organisation) was called into being. Established as an association of the local government and private sector entities, the organisation is still on a learning curve and its potential has not been fully utilised. Nevertheless, its establishment coincided with the implementation of several projects aimed at quality improvement of the local tourist offer. The projects, designed to fill development gaps and to extend as far as possible a development stage of the city’s tourism, include the following undertakings:
– the inner-city signposting system (2004);
– Poznań Convention Bureau (2005);
Chapter I. The life cycle of a city’s tourist function: the case of Poznań

– “The Royal and Imperial Route” (2005) and the associated Culture Tourism Centre “Trakt” (2009);
– the new promotional strategy for Poznań in which tourism constitutes one of eight fundamental dimensions of the city’s image (2009);
– establishment of the formal framework for the urban agglomeration of Poznań (2009).

Since the year 2003 access to the city has improved dramatically owing the commissioning of a new motorway towards Berlin and Warszawa and the expansion of air connections between Poznań and other European centres (between 2002 and 2008 the number of passengers processed through Poznań Ławica Airport increased four-fold [Rocznik statystyczny Poznania 2009]. At the same time the road infrastructure in the city has considerably improved, with bicycle lanes and walkways being provided in the city centre (co-financed from European structural funds).

Newly commissioned attractions such as museums, sports and recreation facilities, and shopping and entertainment centres have greatly enhanced the city’s tourist offer. Importantly, the problems of excessive concentration of tourism infrastructures and services in the city centre and benefits transfer beyond the city’s borders have not been observed. Even though the city centre is still the main tourism focus, many attractions and tourist facilities are spread out across the city and new investments are located in such a way as to disperse the flow of tourists (e.g the planned Cathedral Island Interactive Centre will be situated in the revitalised district of Śródka). Significant social, socio-psychological, and economic problems due to tourism development (such as crowding, excessive noise, concentrated traffic, negative attitudes of locals, increased crime at tourist attractions, etc) have not been observed either, reflecting a moderate level of tourism development in Poznań and a fairly comfortable margin of carrying capacity. It appears that direct and indirect benefits of tourism development will continue to accrue to the city and its residents in the foreseeable future.

The presented analysis indicates that the tourist function of Poznań could now be approaching another turning point – a transition from development to consolidation. Poznań is on the doorstep of tourist maturity. It is therefore important to extend the present development stage for as long as possible.

5. Development determinants of Poznań’s tourist function

As the study shows, the evolution of tourism in Poznań diverts considerably from the classic Butler model which postulates the sequence of consecutive stages of exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, and finally
stagnation leading to decline or rejuvenation. Quite apart from the fact that the early stages of tourism life cycle in Poznań took place before the period covered by the detailed study, there are two major features of the city’s tourist life cycle: sequence alteration and a twice-repeated development stage (Figure 3).

One can argue that these diversions from the hypothetical model were caused by strong external influences affecting the territory and the tourist function alike. It should also be noted that the two development phases occurring in the cycle were quite different from each other in terms of driving forces and development processes as they took place in diametrically different (simply dichotomous) economic circumstances: a centrally controlled economy and a market economy respectively. The systemic transformation, which was a direct cause of a premature albeit short-lasting decline stage, divided the city’s tourism life cycle into two sub-cycles beginning in each case with a difficult period of adaptation to revolutionary changes in the economy, and gave rise to a repeated phase of development. Looking forward we may assume that, barring extraordinary events, further evolution will be consistent with the model sequence, that is the next stage in the city’s tourism development will be consolidation.

The life cycle curve of Poznań’s tourist function shows a double cycle sequence, which Kotler [2005] calls a cycle-recycle pattern. In its classic form the cycle-recycle pattern is made up of two full cycles occurring one after another – the primary cycle and the repeated cycle. The shape of Poznań’s double cycle is somewhat different (Figure 3):

– the first cycle taking place in a centrally planned economy (1950-1989) includes the stages of stagnation, development and an early part of the decline phase; being incomplete and centrally steered it cannot however, be regarded as a primary cycle;
– the second – free market – cycle (1991–2008), which includes the end of the decline phase carried over from the first cycle and the stages of involvement and repeated development, can be regarded both as a secondary cycle by virtue of its order in the sequence, and a primary cycle because of the character of its driving forces.

The main development driving forces in the entire cycle of Poznań’s tourist function are listed in Figure 3.

In the first sub-cycle the most significant driving force was total central government control over economy, society and ideology [Allock & Przeławski 1990], which acted either as a stimulant (1964–1987) or suppressant (1950–1963) of tourism development. The immense extent of state intervention eliminated any material impact of other development factors. The only other driving force at the time – and incidentally a direct consequence of the primary force – were strong socio-political crises. Internal development forces played third-rate
if not marginal role. The Poznań case in the first half of the analysed period shows that an external factor can repress tourism development for long years.

![Diagram showing the tourist life cycle of Poznań in the period 1950–2008](image)

**Figure 3. The tourist life cycle of Poznań in the period 1950–2008**

After 1989, hitherto suppressed forces of evolution were released. Central control gave way to such development forces as local entrepreneurship, local involvement, market competition, collaboration between stakeholders, gradual changes in tourism management (after 2003), inter-regional competition, changes in tourist demand, and the new role of the tourist function of the city. The weight of individual development factors acting together cannot be unequivocally determined. Instead attention should be given to natural balance of internal and external forces.

The market-driven tourism development in Poznań in the second half of the cycle has two underlying themes. The first motive is a recovery of the distance lost in the first half-cycle due to its inherent weaknesses, starting with improvements in the volume, structure and quality of services, and continuing with the implementation of solutions and methods in the scope of tourism organisation and management in the region. The second theme is the rivalry with increasingly competitive cities at home and abroad enforcing diversification and quality improvement of the city’s tourism products. Hence identification and analysis of Poznań’s stage of tourism development against its biggest urban rivals Poland is so important.
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LIST OF FIGURES

1. The tourism area life cycle model ................................................................. 10
2. The model of the life cycle of Poznań’s tourist function ................................. 21
3. The tourist life cycle of Poznań in the period 1950–2008 ................................. 32
4. Identification of stages in a tourism area life cycle ........................................ 40
5. Cities typology matrix (cities classification map) ......................................... 40
6. The number of tourists staying overnight per 100 permanent residents in the period 1997–2009. The city of Poznań against selected cities and the average for the ten biggest cities in Poland ................................................................. 42
7. The number of overnight stays per 100 permanent residents in the period 1997–2009. The city of Poznań against selected cities and the average for the ten biggest cities in Poland ................................................................. 42
8. The number of tourist accommodation places per 100 permanent residents in the period 1997–2009. The city of Poznań against selected cities and the average for the ten biggest cities in Poland ................................................................. 43
9. The ratio of registered tourist firms per 1000 permanent residents in the period 1997–2009. The city of Poznań against selected cities and the average for the ten biggest cities in Poland ................................................................. 43
10. The ratio of registered tourist firms to the total number of registered commercial enterprises. The city of Poznań against selected cities and the average for the ten biggest cities in Poland .............................................................................. 44
12. The structure of the synthetic measure of tourism development in Poznań in years 1997, 2002 and 2009 .................................................................................................................. 46
13. The structure of the synthetic measure of tourism development in Poznań in years 1997 and 2009 ................................................................................................. 46
14. The structure of tourism development synthetic measure for selected Polish cities in 2009 .................................................................................................................. 48
16. Capacity utilisation in Poznań hotels: all tourists and foreign visitors only, against the average levels for ten biggest cities in Poland ........................................ 49
17. The number of foreign tourists staying overnight in the period 1997–2009 per 100 permanent residents. Poznań against selected cities and the average for ten biggest cities in Poland .................................................................................. 51
18. The number of overnights attributed to foreign visitors per 100 residents in the period 1997–2009. Poznań against selected cities and the average for ten biggest cities in Poland .................................................................................. 51
19. The number of tourist firms with foreign capital per 1000 residents in the period 1997–2009. Poznań against selected cities and the average for ten biggest cities in Poland .................................................. 52
20. Ratio of tourism firms with foreign capital to the total number of tourist enterprises (%) in the period 1997–2000. Poznań against selected cities and the average for ten biggest cities in Poland .............................................. 53
21. Tourism development trajectories for the city of Poznań in the period 1997–2009. The red trajectory highlights international aspects of tourism development, the blue trace refers to the general tourist function of the city ........................................ 53
22. The structure of “internationalised” synthetic measure of tourism development for selected Polish cities in 2009 ............................................................... 55
23. The structure of “internationalised” synthetic measure of tourism development for the city of Poznań in 1997, 2002 and 2009 ................................................................. 56
24. The structure of “internationalised” synthetic measure of tourism development in Poznań in the years 1997 and 2009 ................................................................. 56
26. Conditions for the development of a city’s tourist function .............................................. 62
27. Determinants of a city’s tourist function development ................................................. 69
28. Development determinants of a city’s tourist function. Number of points scored by the city of Poznań .................................................................................. 97
29. Relationship between tourism demand and quality of life in the tourism destination ................................................................. 102
30. Doxey’s Irridex model .............................................................................................. 102
31. Residents perception of tourism development in the city .......................................... 107
32. Positive impacts of tourism in the city ...................................................................... 108
33. Negative impacts of tourism in the city ................................................................. 110
34. Tourist in the eyes of Poznań residents ................................................................. 111
35. Residents’ attitudes towards tourists (present) ..................................................... 112
36. Residents’ attitudes towards tourists (future) ....................................................... 113
37. Residents’ perception of Poznań’s attractiveness for tourists .................................. 114
38. Residents’ perception of Poznań’s attractiveness compared with other Polish cities .................................................................................................................. 115
39. Residents’ perception of the reasons why tourist come to Poznań ...................... 116
40. Residents’ perception of local authorities’ engagement in the city promotion ........ 117
41. Residents’ forecast of the number of tourists visiting Poznań in the future ........ 118
42. Does Poznań have enough accommodation places to cope with tourist demand? 119
43. Do you think the range of leisure options available to visitors is sufficiently wide? 119
44. Residents’ opinion on transport within the city ..................................................... 120
45. The residents’ opinions on the role of tourism in city development .................. 125
46. Residents’ opinion on their role in tourism development ....................................... 126
47. Residents’ opinion on the importance of sustainable development ................... 127
48. Residents’ declared environmental behaviour ...................................................... 129
49. Do local authorities spread environmental education in the community? ........ 130
50. Do you wish that your child (or close relative) .................................................... 130
LIST OF TABLES

1. The stages of a tourism area life cycle ................................................................. 11
2. The synthetic measure of tourism development in the biggest Polish cities and the average annual rate of growth in the period 1997–2009 ................................. 45
3. The structure of tourism development synthetic measure for the biggest cities in Poland in 2009 ................................................................................................. 47
4. The “internationalised” synthetic measure of tourism development in the biggest Polish cities and the average annual rate of growth in the period 1997–2009 ... 54
5. The structure of “internationalised” synthetic measure of the tourist function of the biggest cities in Poland in 2009 ................................................................. 54
6. Innovations as the basis of growth ................................................................. 61
7. Local government's tasks incorporated into tourism strategy ...................... 64
8. Statements describing the role of tourism in city development .................... 71
9. Threat symptoms (warning signals) .............................................................. 72
10. Appraisal of the city’s functional innovations ............................................... 74
11. Appraisal of the city’s spatial innovations ..................................................... 76
12. Appraisal of the city’s customer orientation (success-producing actions) ...... 79
13. Appraisal of the city’s tourism vision ............................................................ 81
14. Appraisal of the city’s direct actions influencing tourism supply ................ 85
15. Appraisal of the city’s own actions influencing supplementary tourism supply 86
16. Appraisal of the city’s own actions influencing tourism demand ................ 90
17. Appraisal of the city’s own actions: destination management .................... 93
18. Appraisal of city policies administered to stimulate the surroundings .......... 95
19. The resident’s assessment of the role of tourism in city development .......... 123