Bicycle Transport as an Opportunity to Develop Urban Tourism – Warsaw Example

Michał Roman*, Monika Roman

Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Faculty of Economic Sciences, Nowoursynowska 166 St., 02-787 Warsaw, Poland

Abstract

The article presents innovative solutions in respect of cycling tourism in Warsaw. To illustrate it, a bike rental system is presented. The article characterizes the level of bicycle transport in voivodeships. In order to do that, the report entitled, “Transport i łączność” [“Transport and Communication”] and the data of the Central Statistical Office (GUS) “Turystyka” [“Tourism”] are utilized. It can be noticed that the development of longer cycle lanes and building new ones as well as bike stands and parks will enable tourists and the inhabitants of Warsaw to increase the share of bicycle use for transport in urban tourism.

© 2014 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).
Peer-review under responsibility of the scientific committee of Green Cities 2014

Keywords: bicycle transport; urban tourism; bike rental; Warsaw;

1. Introduction

Nowadays, transport is one of the most important factors determining the existence and development of cities (Koźlak, 2008). Almost all cities are under the pressure of traffic congestion. That congestion results in numerous social conflicts and is not in harmony with the natural environment, and is the main source of most transportation problems. In such a situation, there is an urgent need to adopt a transport development model that could guarantee the mobility adequate to social demand but with the lowest possible impact on the environment. The constitutional principle of sustainable development is the way to solve the problem.

In urban tourism, means of road transport (cars, buses and bikes) and rail transport (trams, trolleybuses and underground) are especially important. The infrastructure of bicycle transport includes: tourist trails, cycle lanes, and

* Corresponding author. Michał Roman, tel. + 48 22 5934161, e-mail: michal_roman@sggw.pl
bicycle stands and parks. Bicycle traffic is mentioned in domestic and international documents as an important element of a sustainable transport model. The highlighted advantages are not only connected with transportation and ecology but also with health.

At present, it can be observed that cyclists, including people who use bicycle-sharing systems, are very active. Bicycle rentals are services offering the use of a bike on a short time basis, for a deposit or at a fixed rate. The bicycles can be of various types: traditional ones, tandems or carrier cycles. The bicycle is the most environmentally friendly means of transport as riding a bike does not poison the environment or emit fumes.

The article aims to present bicycle transport exemplified by the bicycle-sharing system in Warsaw. It also characterizes the level of bicomorskie cycle transport infrastructure in voivodeships. In order to do that, the report entitled, “Transport i łączność” and the data of the Central Statistical Office “Turystyka” are utilized.

2. Bicycle transport and urban tourism

Urban transport is a business activity that consists in transportation services provided within the area of a city and in its suburbs (Podoski, 1985). The issue of urban transport is connected mainly with the transportation of passengers in Poland it is often substituted by a term ‘komunikacja miejska’ [‘urban communication’ (sic!)] (Wyszomirski, 2009). Depending on the mode of transportation, urban transport can be divided into road, rail and water (Sambor, 1999).

The term ‘urban’ highlights the basic area of transport operations but it does not specify it thoroughly. Urban transport operations, as a rule, go far beyond the administrative borders of a city/town and reach the suburban areas actually in another municipality. The basis for qualifying certain suburban areas to be serviced by urban transport is the character of traffic in the area determined by the function it fulfills for the city/town. Many suburbs play the same role as city districts. These include all the areas with the majority of dwellers working in the city and those where there are many institutions employing city dwellers, or where there are recreational facilities for city dwellers (Sambor, 1999).

Urban tourism is very important for the development of urban transport. Urban tourism, as a differentiated, complex and dynamic phenomenon, escapes thorough definitions and analyses and that is why some researchers prefer to use a term ‘big city tourism’ (Zajączkowski, 1978). There is no doubt that tourism in urban areas adopting different forms has become an important element of the economic landscape of most big cities but also a factor in revival and development (Pender, Sharpley, 2008).

Over the last years, there has been a significant change in the relationship between demand and supply in urban tourism. While in the past cities could differentiate their tourist offer and through marketing attract a certain type of visitors, nowadays the market of tourist towns is so saturated that many of them have lost their uniqueness (AASHTO Executive Committee, 1999).

Tourist trails, including cycling paths, are another important issue in tourism. They mark routes for tourists by specifying descriptions and characteristic features (Frade, Ribeiro, 2014).

3. Tourist cycling routes and bike paths

Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno-Krajoznawcze [Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society] defines a tourist trail as a “track segregated in the area that is used for excursions, marked with unique blazes (symbols) and equipped with information facilities, which ensure that a tourist without any specific skills or experience can safely and calmly go along in every season and any weather conditions”. There are differences between trails for walking, skiing, cycling, kayaking and horse riding (Instrukcja, 2007).

It is essential that the traffic on tourist trails is regulated. It is always necessary to comply with the signs. In winter or when being modernised, some trails can be closed. Non-compliance with the signs equals pure stupidity and means unnecessary risk for one’s own health and life. Moreover, the right of way is as follows: hikers first, horse-drawn vehicles after them, cyclists last.

On the other hand, a bike lane (a path for bicycles), according to the Central Statistical Office, is an “independent road or its part (e.g. a lane) designated for bicycle traffic and marked with adequate traffic signs” (Transport i Łączność, 2012). It is characterised by having symbols marking its course and helping to find the right way.
In 2011, there was 72,238.8 km of tourist trails in Poland, 24% of which (17,116.4 km) were cycling trails. The comparison of the length of cycling trails in 2011 to the previous year shows that it increased by almost 630 km. The biggest mileage of cycling tourist trails is characteristic of West Pomerania Province, Lubuskie voivodship and Małopolskie voivodship. The length of cycling lanes in Poland in 2011 was 5,782.8 km and the regions with their biggest mileage were: Masovian, Greater Poland and Silesian Voivodeships. However, if we calculate the length of cycling lanes per 10,000 citizens, the highest rate belonged to Lubusz, Opole and West Pomeranian Voivodeships (Transport, 2012).

Bicycle lanes can be found first of all in big cities, that is why bicycle transport can have an impact on urban tourism. Building longer trails and new bicycle lanes as well as bicycle stands and parks will enable tourists and city dwellers to increase the share of bicycle transport in urban tourism.
In 2011, the cities with the longest cycling lanes were Warsaw, Wroclaw, Cracow and Poznan, which had more than 1,000 km of bicycle lanes. Cities such as Zielona Góra, Olsztyn, Opole and Kielce did not exceed 40 km of bicycle lanes. However, as regards the length of bicycle lanes per 10,000 citizens, the dominating cities were Rzeszow, Zielona Gora and Wroclaw.

![Figure 3. Map of bicycle lanes in Warsaw](source)

Source: Warszawski Raport Rowerowy 2012, Biuro Drogownictwa i Komunikacji Urzędu m.st. Warszawy

In Warsaw, there are about 275 km of bicycle lanes at present. Most of them are a few kilometres long, separated and poorly linked sections:

(i) Szlak Wisły [Vistula Trail] (c. 37 km): Puszcza Kampinoska – Powsin,
(ii) Szlak Słoneczny [Sunny Trail] (8.5 km): Groź-Rowecki Bridge – Lazienkowski Bridge,
(iii) Szlak Obwodowy [Ring Trail] (21.4 km): Na Rozdrożu Square – Bielany,
(iv) Szlak Bitew Warszawskich [Warsaw Battles Trail] (32.7 km): Na Rozdrożu Square – Marysin Wawerski,
(v) Podskarpowa Ścieżka Rowerowa [Podskarpowa Bicycle Path] (5 km): Powiśle – Gdański Bridge,
(vi) Bemowo (8,5 km): Powstańców Śląskich Street – Kampinos National Park,
(vii) Białoleka (17 km): along Żerański Canal and Modlińska Street,
(viii) Bielany (12 km): Kasprowicza Street – Wisłostrada and Olszyna Park – Powstańców Śląskich Street,
(ix) Targówek (4 km): Rembińska Street – Św. Wincentego Street,
(x) Ursynów (13 km): along the streets: KEN, Rosoła, Wąwozowa, Jeżewskiego and Ciszewskiego,
(xi) Wawer (22 km): Anin – Aleksandrów, and
(xii) Wilanów (7 km): Wilanowska Avenue – Powsin.

The most popular trail in Warsaw runs along the left bank of the Vistula River, from Młociny to Powsin. One can also have a ride in Puszcza Kampinoska [Kampinos National Park] and Las Kabacki [Kabacki Forest]. There is a good network of bicycle lanes in Ursynów, Bemowo and Białoleka and one can easily get across the river over Świetokrzyski and Siekierkowski bridges. Everybody who does not have a bicycle of their own can hire one from Nextbike rentals.

4. Nextbike as an example of innovation in rural transport

Nextbike is an example of innovation in road transportation supporting both urban transport and urban tourism. It is a German network of self-service bike rental stations operating in 50 cities in seven countries in the world and having 10,000 bicycles. Most of the company’s rental points are in the Ruhr district. The project, together with NorisBike in Nuremberg, was subsidised by the German Ministry of Transport and - as an innovative bike rental system - got EUR 10 million. Depending on the season and the aura of an average urban bike rental, Nextbike enjoy about 400 people a day in the summer.
In Poland, the urban self-service bike rental systems have operated in Wroclaw – Wrocławski Rower Miejski [Wroclaw City Bike], in Poznan – Poznanski Rower Miejski [Poznan City Bike], in Warsaw – Bemowo Bike and Veturilo and in Opole – Opole Bike since 2012. The bike rental stations in Warsaw are presented in Figure 5.

![Figure 5. Bike rental stations in Warsaw](image)

Source: www.nextbike.com as of 12 February 2014.

The city dwellers and tourists in Warsaw can use about 2,000 bicycles offered in 167 bike rental points. The urban bike rental system is addressed to people who like active lifestyle and cycling but do not have their own bicycles or live in flats where they do not have enough room for bicycles for the whole family. It is a very good solution to reduce the congested city on the way to work or school and also for tourists.

The advantages of the bike rental system in Warsaw for tourists are as follows:

(i) Rental stations are located close to tourist attractions and main transport routes in the city,
(ii) A bike can be returned at every station with no extra fees for a stopover during sightseeing,
(iii) A bicycle can be returned at any time seven days a week (around the clock),
(iv) It is a very convenient solution for tourists travelling by train, coach, underground and trams, and
(v) Having registered at one station, a tourist can rent a bike at every station.

The existing urban bike rental system is beneficial for tourists, city dwellers and cities that decided to launch the project as well as for the whole country.
5. Conclusion

In June 2013, a millionth bicycle rental took place in Warsaw, which proves great popularity of the bike rental system among the city dwellers and tourists. According to Nextbike statistics, during one weekend the rental record reached about 12 thousand bicycles. In Warsaw in 2012, on sunny days bicycles were rented 8 thousand times on average. All these facts prove that the system was a great success and is a big opportunity for other cities that have bigger mileage of cycling lanes, including Crocow, Gdansk, Szczecin, Łódź or Bialystok. It can also encourage other smaller towns that are visited by tourists like Augustów, Mikolajki or Sopot to launch such projects, too.

The launch of the Nextbike innovative bike rental system made some other cities launch competitive bike rentals. Poznan is an example of that. Its ZTM [Urban Transport Company] introduced its own bike rental system that is incompatible with the other one. This proves that there is a lot of interest in this innovative solution in transportation.

References

Warszawski Raport Rowerowy 2012, Biuro Drogownictwa i Komunikacji Urzędu m.st. Warszawy.