THE 'I WAS HERE' SYNDROME IN TOURISM: THE CASE OF POLAND

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ABSTRACT: Tourism appropriates tourist attractions and takes possession of them, marking them both physically and symbolically. Tourists visiting attractions tend to create distinctive marks, usually characterised by some significance in terms of self-identification, on the places and monuments visited by them, and this could be regarded as a symptom of a specific 'I was here' syndrome; in the present study, the authors examine the prevailing practices of marking attractions in tourist spaces, as also the marks themselves. We endeavour to identify the nature of the phenomenon and the consequences for both the attractions and the subjects managing them. The survey carried out involved several chosen sites in Poland, all of which are characterised by a recognised historic status in the realm of public space as well as a clearly identified sociocultural or legal value, which by definition imposes the requirement for adhering to a certain behavioural code when within their precincts and towards them, and excludes other kinds of behaviour. These attractions are all subject to different forms of institutionalised control, which, however, fails when it comes to safeguarding them from the practices of marking undertaken typically by tourists; these occurrences have become a routine phenomenon, which is unsurprising given the fact that the rituals of the contemporary mass and mediatised tourism have made this kind of tourist behaviour common, albeit on a lower scale than previously expected.

KEYWORDS: marking attractions, vandalism, national park, open-air museum, UNESCO World Heritage List

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Introduction

In 2022, the number of people on Earth was reckoned at almost eight billion; and on average, one in eight people is a tourist, which means that the population of tourists is a real crowd in which it is easy to remain anonymous. Although humanity has not always been as numerous as it is nowadays, the desire to stand out from the crowd and mark one's presence in it (or perhaps most of all on Earth) has accompanied humans, essentially from the very beginning of their existence. Initially, the tools for this were primitive signs, drawings painted or carved laboriously on rock walls, imprints and 'negatives' of hands in caves… Although these processes might have had various meanings, either sacral or simply practical, they undoubtedly constitute a poignant reminder of the generations of thinking and feeling human beings living before us (von Petzinger 2016). The interpretation of such marks usually consists of discovering the meanings attributed to them. However, it often turns into a process of attributing new meanings, especially

when there is no relationship between the interpreter and the creator (due to time distance, cultural differences, etc.). Creating marks should be considered as purposeful (because of the effort involved, practical values), but will the aim always be achieved?

The problem of marks is directly connected with the development of tourism. On one hand, the tourist is an explorer of marks, even their collector (Urry 2007), and one of the aims of an explorer is their interpretation. However, often simultaneously, tourists are the authors of marks that they leave both in the real and virtual spaces. Focusing only on the classical form of creating marks, we want to establish ways of unofficial 'marking' of the space by tourists in Poland, and ponder over the aims of such actions and their consequences. The spatial and legal aspects will be of particular interest to us, as well as possible social and economic consequences. We will also look at the ways to limit or prevent the (unwanted) marks or practices of their production. Unwanted marking of the tourist space is always a problem, and often treated as vandalism. Not merely organisers, managers and owners of attractions but also tourists face this reality, and try to solve it or simply deal with it somehow. Our research might help to evaluate the current situation and find better or final solutions. Such problems receive little attention in scientific research, especially in Poland, despite distinct (but often short-lived) interest in terms of public opinion and mass media coverage.

The research subject comprises several chosen tourist attractions in Poland, all of which are characterised by a recognised historic status in the realm of public space as well as a clearly identified sociocultural or legal value, which by definition imposes the requirement for adhering to a certain behavioural code when within their precincts and towards them, and excludes other kinds of behaviour. These will be historic sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, national parks and open-air museums, which are subject to different forms of institutional control.

Space, place, territorial attachment

In spite of the civilisational development that makes it possible to live beyond the limits of classical geography (Giddens 2001), the human being remains a deeply territorial creature. Not only do people live in chosen spaces but they also domesticate them, take possession of them and shape according to their liking. The space becomes a 'place' when people give it individual, social and cultural meanings (Tuan 1987). These meanings often assume a material dimension; people place different marks and symbols in the space, showing their attitude towards it. They locate their activities in 'places'. At times, an emotional attitude towards a place is reflected simply in taking care of it. However, when the space is safeguarded from being infringed through personalisation and physical marking, it becomes a 'territory' (Bańka 2002). As Cobel-Tokarska (2011: 48) writes, "the sense of territory is one of the strongest factors conditioning man's attitude to space. We owe it the need to place borders, to divide private and public, individual and common space". From the perspective of environmental psychology, Bell et al. (2004: 346) understand human territoriality as "a set of behaviours and cognitive processes of an individual, based on perceived ownership of the physical space". Because of those behaviours, territoriality is manifested in space, through placing visible marks showing its belonging, e.g., graffiti among football fans (see: Paleczny 2007) or gangs and other criminal environments (Bell et al. 2004: 355). It is also manifested in activities undertaken by specific communities to 'show off' (see: Orange Order march in Belfast, Evans, Tonge 2017: 789). Bell et al. (2004: 349) note that "people may experience their own 'I' more strongly through territories which they possess and ways in which they personalise them". The space is thus humanised for various reasons, including demonstrating domination and control over it and manifesting attachment to the 'place' we feel emotionally connected with. Analogically, some kinds of human activity occur in space when it stays beyond someone's control or belongingness. According to 'the broken window theory', visible signs of lack of control result in gradual intensification of the phenomena of social disorder in 'nobody's' space (Willson, Kelling 1982).

The space is a 'patched canvas', a palimpsest, which bears traces left by subsequent human generations. They compete (consciously or not) to make the sign they leave legible and unique.

Not everyone, however, was a born Einstein or Giotto; hence, for a great majority of contemporary people—including tourists, being the focus of our interest—a sufficient legacy are social media posts or various permanent marks in the landscape. Both are kinds of a perennial form of the confirmation 'I was here'; marks or actions are usually trivial in their content, because the mere fact of 'marking' the space seems to be more important.

'I was here' marks in tourism

For millennia, travellers have left intentional traces of their visits to extraordinary places. Historical drawings, signs, names and inscriptions—painted or carved—cover the walls of the Roman Colosseum, the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the temple of Dendara in Egypt and the so-called Mirror Wall in Sigiriya in Sri Lanka. This historical graffiti was not created merely at the beginning of the tourist boom in the 19th century but also many centuries earlier, e.g., in times of the Crusades in Jerusalem (Kljun, Pucihar 2015). They were also left behind by subsequent generations of travellers visiting the same place over centuries (as examples, we may mention the so-called Mirror Wall, Sigiriya, where inscriptions from the seventh to the fifteenth centuries may be found [Cooray 2012], or Persepolis in Iran [Bhati, Pearce 2016: 92]). There are also multiple other locations, having been famous attractions in the centuries gone by, that were subject to marking at all places frequented by tourists, but are relatively less popular tourist destinations today (Fig. 1). Interestingly, the described practices have usually been considered a manifestation of vandalism, both in the past and now. However, not even the status of a sacred place has served as a protection from this practice; the walls of temples can be observed to be rife with markings, made by both ordinary 'tourists' and pilgrims (Fig. 2).

The mass nature of tourism encourages spontaneous and unreflective, not to say thoughtless, behaviour, especially when tourists' experience is, for them, far removed from what their heritage is (see the case of the Chinese student who covered the ancient sculptural decorations of Luxor in Egypt with the inscription 'Ding Jinhao
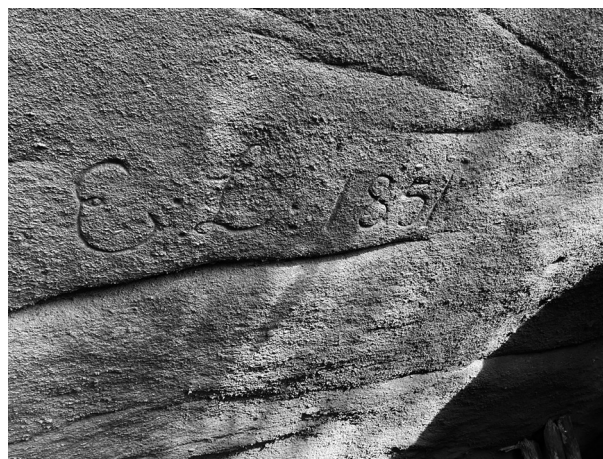

Fig. 1. Historical graffiti carved in the rocks of the Jański Wierch range.
Source: photo by Chylińska (2021).

was here'). While the desire to leave behind a (hopefully lasting) inscription that would remain on the monument as a 'testament' of one's visit to the location seems to be inherent in many people, it also constitutes vandalism when the consequence is defacement; and such phenomena, referred to as tourism vandalism when the perpetrators of such acts are tourists, seem to be common regardless of location, as evidenced in instances from around the globe, for example tourists have covered runic stones in Jelling, Denmark with graffiti, and carved their names on trees in the bamboo forest in Arashiyama, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Additional illustrations of tourism vandalism, of which leaving a sign of one's presence at famous cultural attractions apparently seems to be the most popular manifestation, are available in the literature, e.g., Yilmaz et al. (2020: 97). Nowadays, tourists leave their marks on both cultural and natural attractions (Fig. 3), as well as on elements of tourism infrastructure.

Independent of geographical or historical-cultural factors (Clark 2002), the place-marking practices appear to be universal and are strongly linked to human nature. In the age of mass tourism, regarding both the space it enters and the character of its participants, behaviour patterns typical of other spheres of human life and activity manifest themselves in the tourist space (e.g. behaviour typical of sports or urban subcultures).

Bhati and Pearce (2016) state that tourist behaviour at a tourist attraction is influenced by certain motivations, intentions and the perception of

Fig. 2. The 16th-century Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre in Żagań, covered with historical inscriptions (Poland). The oldest inscription on the chapel dates back to 1607: *Hic fuit Daniel Rudolfo(s) Griphishagensis Pomeranus Ao. MDCVII* ('Here repented Daniel Rudolph from Gryfino in Pomerania in 1607').
Source: photo by Chylińska (2014).

Fig. 3. Not only monuments – traces of tourists' presence on a tree in the forests of the Owl Mountains (Poland).
Source: photo by Chylińska (2021).

certain (favourable or not) conditions and opportunities. Owing to the nature of the attraction, and its age, uniqueness and symbolic value, as well as the conditions of ownership or conservation, unauthorised placing of graffiti on the surface or in the vicinity of tourist attractions, as well as other activities interfering with their appearance or structure and having the character of 'marking', are often assessed in terms of vandalism, which automatically puts them in the category of more or less unwanted and negatively assessed phenomena[1]. For some tourists, such activities

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[1] The scale of the phenomenon can be evidenced by the 'Appeal' to readers published in successive issues of *National Heritage Landscapes* (2000, issues 2, 3 and 4), calling for help to put an end to the filth and disrespect of monuments and urban spaces. The subject of the dozens of photographs posted documenting the problem identified was almost exclusively graffiti. The added questions and exhortations, such as 'Do we have to tolerate it?', 'How to fight it?' and 'Let's not pretend we don't see the danger and aggression in it!', seem to be an expression of helplessness against such practices of marking space. The campaign by the National Heritage Institute during 2020–22, 'Monuments are your heritage. Don't let them be destroyed. React!' (Zabytki to Twoje dziedzictwo… 2020), is seemingly similar in nature, but additionally includes training on how to prevent and respond to cases of

Table 1. Tourist behaviour described as 'marking' tourist attractions (tentative list).

Activities	
Direct, material, permanently disturbing structure or appearance of attraction	**Indirect, non-material, symbolic, including virtual space, not disturbing structure or appearance of attraction**
– Placing the date of visit on the attraction – Placing the date of visit/stay with initials of names and surnames of tourists on the attraction – Placing the date of visit/stay with full names and surnames of visitors on the attraction – Placing marks/symbols/drawings showing sympathy for or belonging to specific subcultures on the attraction – Placing declarations regarding interpersonal relationships, liking or antipathy, intentions, etc. – Throwing paint; dousing – Damaging the attraction – Destroying the attraction – Leaving traces of being there (open windows, moving objects, etc.) – Littering – Placing impersonalised, random drawings on the attraction – Leaving behind (personal) items (photos, personal belongings, 'lucky money') – Taking 'souvenir' artefacts from the visited place (plants, rocks, etc.) – Removing/adding elements of the environment of the attraction – Placing commemorative elements on the attraction – Entries in a guest book	– Photographing tourist attractions – Taking a selfie with tourist attractions – Taking a selfie with tourist attractions, accompanied by risky behaviour, going against the rules – Photographing/filming despite a ban or unwillingness towards it – Organising spontaneous actions – Behaviour violating ethical, cultural norms

Source: author's own compilation, based on observations and field research, and discernment of professional literature.

are a kind of social expression; people define themselves in this way, expressing their own self (Bhati, Pearce 2016: 99). Behavioural–ecological theories link this kind of vandalism to the need to achieve satisfaction consisting of enjoyment, risk-taking and expression. Undertaking risky behaviour is facilitated by the lack of supervision and control, consumerism and the breakdown of social bonds and rules, which results in the lack of responsibility, respect or elementary ethical rules.

Tourists take up various ways of 'marking' places (Table 1), demonstrating their presence in places attractive for tourists. Some of them constitute a direct physical interference with the site, whereas others are not of such nature, which does not mean that they are occasional or that their impact is of little range and effect (i.e. Lyndhurst n.d.; Schultz et al. 2013). The latter are the result of the development of the latest technologies, above all

the spread of the Internet and social media (see: Cohen, Cohen 2012: 94). Sontag (1979) writes that tourists' taking photographs of the places they visit is symbolic of taking possession of them. For Urry (2007) it is an act of visual consumption, of collecting 'place-marks', akin to stamps in a stamp album. Photographs can now be shared on the Internet via social media or blogs. A 'selfie' against the background of a popular attraction sometimes becomes a psychological compulsion, leading to dangerous behaviour that could constitute a threat to the safety of not only the tourist engaging in such behaviour (Gillman 2014), but possibly also that of fellow tourists sharing attendance at the same tourist spot.

The behaviour patterns listed in Table 1 can be described taking into account the audience for whom these practices of 'marking' space are intended. The meaning of personal items left behind in a visited place is known only to the people who left them there, just like a date or other anonymous inscription without a comment. Photographs of tourist attractions only serve

damage to cultural heritage, and reminds of criminal sanctions.

their authors until they share them with others: family or friends at a meeting, or with an almost unlimited number of viewers on the Internet. Initials of names, full names or drawings easy to relate to specific manifestations of sociocultural life are outward-directed expressions that seem to say: 'Look, it's me and I was here.' They are a testimony of recklessness, bravery, fantasy and externalised emotions, a thing to be admired, commented upon. The marks or the practice of creating them take place secretly or in unexposed places, or, on the contrary, they happen where everyone can see them.

Methods and materials

In order to recognise the problem of physical and symbolical marking of tourist attractions by tourists, the authors used a survey technique. The questionnaire was created using Microsoft Forms, which allows for minimising the workload connected with completing and sending it back. The questions in the survey can be divided into three groups. Two questions deal with general typological identification and tourist traffic. Another four are to establish the ways in which tourists mark the space[2]. The remaining five questions (or more, depending on the answers provided) address issues pertaining to the means of dealing with the indicated instances of tourists' activities. In the introduction to the questionnaire, it was pointed out that the most competent people from each institution — those who deal directly with the discussed issues — should be appointed to fill in the questionnaire (We had no influence on whether or not this request was taken into account, or on the general willingness [and, in the case of institutions working for the benefit of society, the sense of duty] to fill in the questionnaire).

The survey encompassed three groups of tourist attractions: national parks, open-air museums

and Polish sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Each is subject to specific forms of institutional supervision, and their tourism value (particularly in terms of their recognition and popularity) is clear and recognisable due to their protected status.

There are 23 national parks in Poland, which constitute a popular tourist attraction, in some cases noting a record attendance. According to Miazek (2020), around 30% of national tourist traffic is concentrated in the national parks area, despite the fact that they constitute just slightly over 1% of the country's territory. In national parks, the number of visitors in 2019 varied from 13,000 to nearly four million (according to the data provided by the Ministry of Environment 2019). Tourists can explore the most valuable or the most popular places in the parks using a network of tourist trails. Few places are subject to permanent control (e.g. monitoring) and the supervision of tourist behaviour may be exercised on an *ad hoc* basis by the Park Guards. All 23 national parks were included in the survey and contact details were obtained from the official information on their websites.

In some respects, open-air museums resemble national parks. They are a type of museum run 'in the open air', which allow preserving relocated, reconstructed or *in situ* historical buildings, in a recreated or authentic historical-cultural landscape. Although admission to open-air museums is supervised and usually charged, visitors are free to explore meticulously furnished historical buildings, which today represent much more than exclusively rural heritage. They are less diverse in terms of attendance, with the majority receiving several tens of thousands of tourists per year in recent years, and few receiving several thousand. In order to establish the size of the researched group, a list of museums published by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland was analysed, and the gathered data were completed and verified based on other sources (National Heritage Institute, 'Ethnographic Workshop' Association, museums' websites). The working group included 65 institutions, and after excluding those with imprecise or wrong address data, the survey questionnaire was sent to 62 open-air museums.

There are 16 sites in Poland listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. These are

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[2]   The basic foundation for the concepts used in the construction of questions is derived from a tentative list providing some examples of undesirable behaviour considered as 'marking activities', and classifying them into those that disturb the structure or appearance of the concerned monument and those that do not, merely involving symbolic acts of disrespect or flouting of ethical or cultural norms (Table 1).

individual cultural attractions, complexes of buildings and one natural area. UNESCO World Heritage status is a major tourist attraction, and the sites, based on tourist traffic, varied from those having several up to a dozen thousand visitors to those visited by one to two million guests. Some of the sites include a number of attractions, managed in different ways or by different entities, or made available to tourists in different ways (public open space, enclosed buildings, sites in different locations). That is why, when there was no other possibility, the survey was addressed to the best-recognised components. In such cases, it was usually easy to identify the manager who had formal custody of it. Since Białowieża National Park was part of the survey within national parks, data were collected for 15 sites (or representative tourist destinations) on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In four cases, we deal with cultural heritage occurring in various locations; in such a situation, the questionnaire was sent to each separate location, so that at least one site represented a given element of the heritage. A total of 27 questionnaires were sent to the attractions in this category.

The research was done in March and April 2022, before the tourist season. Overall, 112 questionnaires were circulated by email. Two weeks after the questionnaires were dispatched, a reminder email was circulated again with the questionnaire attached. This activity was repeated after another fortnight, and after several further days, the research was completed. Each time, institutions that had already taken part in the research were removed from the mailing list.

The maximum number of answers were received shortly after sending the questionnaire. However, the respondents' reaction was rather weak at all stages. In about seven weeks of carrying out the questionnaire survey, 34 answers were received, which corresponds to 30.35% of the sent questionnaires and 33.66% of the surveyed institutions.

Results

The return of responses to the questionnaire from the different groups varied considerably – it was high for national parks (69.9%), low when it comes to open-air museums (17.7%) and moderate in the case of Polish UNESCO World Heritage Sites (26%, which means 43% of the researched institutions). Seven out of ten most visited parks took part in the survey. The tourist attractions from the UNESCO list and the open-air museums are more diverse in terms of attendance, representing all its cases.

The aggregated results of the survey (Table 2) allow concluding that the most common way of marking the tourist space, indicated by all institutions participating in the survey, is littering. This is not necessarily an intentional action and not everyone associates it with marking the tourist space. However, it can be perceived as such; the tourist leaves (usually temporary or short-lived) traces of his presence. Most of the time, they do not have much meaning beyond 'aesthetic pollution', but they sometimes happen to be spectacular, repellent or dangerous.

Damage to attractions, even though not as common as littering, is reported more frequently, usually occasionally at particular sites. Depending on the category of attraction, it takes on the form of placing the date of the visit together with the initials of the tourists or their names, or nonpersonalised drawings; leaving items on the site (national parks); and placing symbols indicating sympathy towards or membership in particular groups (UNESCO World Heritage Sites). Other less frequent activities include leaving traces of one's presence (open-air museums); and leaving items or taking something away, making graffiti with date and name, and leaving traces of one's presence (UNESCO World Heritage Sites).

The surveyed institutions hardly ever or never have to deal with being covered with some kind of substance, such as paint. Regarding national parks and open-air museums, this also applies to graffiti showing belongingness to groups and expressing keenness of some sort. In national parks leaving behind personal items was not observed and in open-air museums placing commemorative elements was not noticed, nor was destruction of attractions or dates with tourists' names or other marks.

The most frequently indicated category describing the frequency of the researched ways of marking is 'does not occur', which accounted for up to one-third of indications in national parks and UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and double the sum of all the other four measures

Table 2. The occurrence of selected types of 'marking' tourist attractions according to the categories of institutions.

Types of 'marking' tourist attractions*		Occurrence (by number of indications)																				
		Commonly				Often ≥10				Rare 2−9				Once				Never			
		NP	WH	OM	Σ	NP	WH	OM	Σ	NP	WH	OM	Σ	NP	WH	OM	Σ	NP	WH	OM	Σ
Material	1.	3	0	0	3	3	1	0	4	**10**	**4**	3	17	0	1	1	2	0	1	**7**	8
	2.	3	0	0	3	4	1	0	5	8	**4**	1	13	0	1	0	1	1	1	**10**	12
	3.	3	0	0	3	1	0	0	1	3	2	0	5	0	0	0	0	9	5	**11**	25
	4.	2	0	0	2	3	1	0	4	8	3	0	11	0	3	1	4	3	0	**10**	13
	5.	3	0	0	3	2	0	0	2	7	3	0	10	2	2	0	4	1	2	**11**	14
	6.	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	4	0	0	4	1	2	1	4	8	5	**10**	23
	7.	2	0	0	2	4	1	0	5	**10**	5	6	21	0	1	3	4	0	0	2	2
	8.	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	8	4	2	14	2	0	1	3	4	3	**8**	13
	9.	2	1	1	4	3	1	2	6	5	1	3	9	2	0	2	4	4	**4**	3	11
	10.	**11**	2	0	13	5	**4**	3	12	0	1	**7**	8	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
	11.	3	0	0	3	5	1	0	6	5	3	2	10	1	2	0	3	2	1	**9**	12
	12.	1	1	0	2	2	1	3	6	1	3	4	8	3	0	0	3	9	2	4	15
	13.	2	1	1	4	5	1	3	9	6	2	3	11	1	1	0	2	2	2	4	8
	14.	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	3	2	0	5	2	2	1	5	9	2	**10**	21
	15.	1	0	0	1	2	0	1	3	1	2	1	4	0	1	0	1	**11**	4	9	24
Non-material	16.	**16**	**7**	**10**	33	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	17.	**16**	5	**8**	29	0	2	2	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	18.	5	1	1	7	1	1	1	3	7	3	3	13	0	0	0	0	3	2	**6**	11
	19.	3	1	0	4	5	0	1	6	6	1	2	9	0	1	1	2	2	**4**	**7**	13
	20.	3	0	1	4	7	1	0	8	6	**5**	7	18	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	3
	21.	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	2	0	8	0	1	0	1	9	4	**11**	24
	22.	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	2	2	0	4	1	0	0	1	**11**	5	**11**	27
Σ		86	20	22	128	55	16	17	88	106	52	45	203	15	19	12	46	88	47	146	281

Answers were received from 16 out of 23 national parks, 7 out of 16 World Heritage Sites in Poland and 11 out of 62 open-air museums.

*The types of 'marking', including other forms of mutilation that are carried out in places of tourist attractions, typically include the following:
  1. Placing the date of visit on the attraction
  2. Placing the date of visit/stay with initials of names and surnames of tourists on the attraction
  3. Placing the date of visit/stay with full names and surnames of visitors on the attraction
  4. Placing marks/symbols/drawings showing sympathy for or belonging to specific subcultures on the attraction
  5. Placing declarations regarding interpersonal relationships, liking or antipathy, intentions, etc.
  6. Throwing paint; dousing
  7. Damaging the attraction
  8. Destroying the attraction
  9. Leaving traces of being there (open windows, moving objects, etc.)
10. Littering
11. Placing impersonalised, random drawings on the attraction
12. Leaving behind (personal) items (photos, personal belongings, 'lucky money')
13. Taking 'souvenir' artefacts from the visited place (plants, rocks, etc.)
14. Placing commemorative elements on the attractions
15. Other physical ones
16. Photographing tourist attractions
17. Taking a selfie with tourist attractions
18. Taking a selfie with tourist attractions, accompanied by risky behaviour, going against the rules
19. Photographing/filming despite a ban or unwillingness towards it
20. Behaviour violating ethical, cultural norms
21. Organising spontaneous actions
22. Other nonphysical ones

Values indicated in bold formatting are those representing at least 50% of items within the specific category of institutions.

NP – national parks; OM – open-air museums; WH – World Heritage Sites
Source: own elaboration.

in open-air museums. This might be due to the specificity of the studied attractions: in places that are under more control (as it may seem to tourists), that is to say open-air museums or some UNESCO World Heritage Sites, visitors mark the space by using items found on site and not by scribbling inscriptions or drawings (which are more time-consuming). The situation is different in larger and seemingly less controlled national parks and the remaining UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Here, the diversity of the acts of marking the tourist space is far more visible and intensive. Among all the researched parks, the situation of Table Mountains National Park and Kampinos National Park stands out. Both indicate all or a great majority (12 out of 15) of the described acts of marking the tourist attractions as common. Moreover, Pieniny National Park describes 11 acts of material marking of the attractions as common or frequent. These parks are among the most popular parks in Poland and in the researched group. Thus, the situation of Tatra National Park might make one wonder, as the assessment of the occurrence of the described events reveals that it is much less evident, even though the tourist traffic is the heaviest here. Presumably, such a decisive assessment of the intensity of the phenomenon is based on the fact that, in Table Mountains National Park, the tourist traffic has grown significantly over only a few years.

The analysis of particular questionnaires seems to confirm these observations, as among national parks and UNESCO World Heritage Sites, particular respondents listed several ways of marking the space in greater detail, while as frequently, the responses sent by open-air museums contained the answer 'does not occur'. The assessment of the researched ways of tourists' marking of space indicates that these are varied (Table 3). It is often the case that the activities around a tourist attraction are considered vandalism with criminal sanction or vandalism that was to be prevented by education (mostly regarding national parks and open-air museums). A few respondents indicate a lack of tools to fight with these phenomena, a kind of helplessness.

In the case of non-material ways of marking space, all respondents indicated photographing places and taking a selfie in front of attractions as common practices. Taking photographs in

spite of bans, organising spontaneous actions and others were indicated equally often: however, these were marked as not occurring. Again, the most frequently selected descriptive category was 'does not occur'. In second place, but visibly less frequently, was the common occurrence of certain phenomena – these became everyday reality at tourist attractions. Some of the phenomena were considered 'occasional/rare', especially behaviour that violates ethical norms (Table 2).

In the case of non-material ways of marking space, extreme indications are noticeable. This is clearly emphasised by the evaluations of the indicated phenomena – apart from the most popular 'does not occur', the approval of tourists' activities is the most frequently chosen category. If some practices are considered vandalism, education is supposed to be a panacea. Non-material ways of marking space do not seem to be considered threatening or unwanted. On the contrary, they are expected to and/or bring potential benefits, e.g., in terms of promotion or recognition.

The vast majority of respondents claim that the (indicated) practices of marking space have always existed. Certainly, it is impossible that some of the phenomena discussed could have always existed, as for example half a century ago there were no smartphones. However, these answers should not be regarded as a misunderstanding or error, but rather as a general opinion concerning all practices, in total, without distinguishing between particular activities. Hence, the responses related to UNESCO World Heritage Sites are slightly different; here the last decade or two were more frequently indicated. It can be assumed that this is at least partly due to the formal status of the site (placement of the site on the World Heritage List, which would thereafter formally constitute a reason for the attractiveness of the site being characterised by such a rank). The period of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic did not affect the frequency of marking spaces (apart from two UNESCO World Heritage Sites that were closed): two-thirds to three-quarters of respondents are of this opinion. The others indicate a slight increase (mainly national parks) or decrease (mainly open-air museums and UNESCO World Heritage Sites). This is altogether puzzling, since during this time the willingness to travel (and thus, by implication, to practise tourism) decreased and various restrictions were

Table 3. Perception of the specific types of 'marking' tourist attractions according to the categories of institutions.

Types of 'marking' tourist attractions*		Perception of specific types of 'marking' tourist attractions (by number of indications)																						
		Behaviour tolerated, approved, positively perceived				Behaviour tolerated, 'does not bother us', indifferent				Behaviour tolerated as it is impossible to fight against it				Behaviour seen as vandalism that we try to limit through education				Behaviour seen as vandalism, acting against law				Behaviour does not occur			
		NP	WH	OM	Σ	NP	WH	OM	Σ	NP	WH	OM	Σ	NP	WH	OM	Σ	NP	WH	OM	Σ	NP	WH	OM	Σ
Material	1.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	5	7	3	3	13	6	1	0	7	0	1	**8**	9
	2.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	5	7	2	2	11	5	2	0	7	1	1	**9**	11
	3.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	7	1	1	9	3	2	0	5	3	**4**	**10**	17
	4.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	4	**8**	1	0	9	3	**4**	0	7	3	0	**11**	14
	5.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	5	7	1	0	8	6	3	0	9	0	1	**11**	12
	6.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	7	3	1	11	6	**4**	**10**	20
	7.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	4	11	**11**	**5**	4	20	0	0	3	3
	8.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	5	**10**	4	1	15	4	2	**8**	14
	9.	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	5	2	4	11	3	1	2	6	4	0	0	4	4	**4**	3	11
	10.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	7	**9**	5	5	19	6	0	0	6	1	0	1	2
	11.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	4	6	2	3	11	6	3	0	9	0	1	**8**	9
	12.	0	1	1	2	0	1	2	3	3	3	2	8	4	0	1	5	1	0	0	1	**8**	2	5	15
	13.	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	3	1	4	6	1	3	10	**9**	1	0	10	1	2	4	7
	14.	0	2	1	3	2	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	4	0	0	4	1	1	0	2	**9**	3	**10**	22
	15.	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	5	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	1	**10**	**5**	**10**	25
Non-material	16.	**8**	**7**	**10**	25	6	0	0	6	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
	17.	6	**5**	**9**	20	**9**	2	1	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
	18.	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	3	3	7	**8**	2	2	12	3	0	0	3	2	1	**6**	9
	19.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	3	7	3	3	13	6	0	0	6	1	**4**	7	12
	20.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	5	2	**6**	13	**9**	**4**	0	13	1	1	4	6
	21.	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	4	2	0	6	1	1	0	2	**9**	3	**11**	23
	22.	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	2	**11**	**5**	**10**	26
Σ		15	17	22	54	20	3	8	31	35	26	17	78	104	30	38	172	100	34	6	140	76	44	151	271

Answers were received from 16 out of 23 national parks, 7 out of 16 World Heritage Sites in Poland and 11 out of 62 open-air museums.

*The types of 'marking', including other forms of mutilation, that are carried out in places of tourist attraction typically include the following:

1. Placing the date of visit on the attraction
2. Placing the date of visit/stay with initials of names and surnames of tourists on the attraction
3. Placing the date of visit/stay with full names and surnames of visitors on the attraction
4. Placing marks/symbols/drawings showing sympathy for or belonging to specific subcultures on the attraction
5. Placing declarations regarding interpersonal relationships, liking or antipathy, intentions, etc.
6. Throwing paint; dousing
7. Damaging the attraction
8. Destroying the attraction
9. Leaving traces of being there (open windows, moving objects, etc.)
10. Littering
11. Placing impersonalised, random drawings on the attraction
12. Leaving behind (personal) items (photos, personal belongings, 'lucky money')
13. Taking 'souvenir' artefacts from the visited place (plants, rocks, etc.)
14. Placing commemorative elements on the attractions
15. Other physical ones
16. Photographing tourist attractions
17. Taking a selfie with tourist attractions
18. Taking a selfie with tourist attractions, accompanied by risky behaviour, going against the rules
19. Photographing/filming despite a ban or unwillingness towards it
20. Behaviour violating ethical, cultural norms
21. Organising spontaneous actions
22. Other nonphysical ones

Values indicated in bold formatting are those representing at least 50% of items within the specific category of institutions.

NP – national parks; OM – open-air museums; WH – World Heritage Sites.
Source: own elaboration.

introduced, leading to a decrease in the number of visitors or a periodic decrease in tourist traffic at the sites. This should translate correspondingly into a decrease in the frequency of the studied practices. One respondent commented on the current situation:

> …*people can generally be divided into wise and stupid and there are no major Covid-related changes in this aspect* (questionnaire survey – national parks, own translation).

The respondents have revealed a wide variety of types of places where the marking of the space occurs. Owing to the heterogeneity of the studied phenomena, it was possible to indicate multiple answers and additionally to explain the discussed situations. However, with exceptions, almost everyone chose only one answer – so was this the most common situation or one of many? In the case of national parks, two-thirds of the marking cases are revealed in key places, in plain sight or in hiding without a clear pattern, which may be conditioned by the channelling of tourist traffic (via tourist trails) in nature protection areas (Fig. 4). Those who move away from such places leave traces of their presence in any place, but in such a way that it is visible. This is mentioned by the remaining answers from this group of respondents. In attractions associated with the UNESCO World Heritage List, the marking of the space is found in any location, both visible and hidden. In cases where tourist traffic is strictly regulated and channelled, marking is revealed only in key and visible locations. Puzzling responses were received from open-air museums. More than one-third of the institutions surveyed said that there were no cases of marking of space, which was contrary to previous declarations. A similar number of establishments indicated that the marking of space was present everywhere, without any regular pattern. A few other answers were equally distributed among the remaining indications, from which it can be concluded that the tourists were moving around the whole museum area on their own, without (conscious) control.

Some of the ways in which tourists mark space directly interfere with the condition, structure, appearance or accessibility of the attraction, thus changing it. Most of the tourist attractions
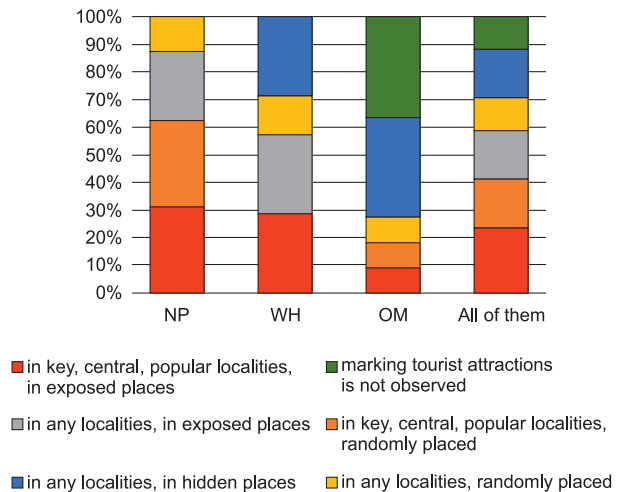

Fig. 4. Characteristic of places with tourists' marks according to the types of institutions.
Source: own elaboration.

surveyed undertake action to restore the place to its pre-interference condition. In the case of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, this always or often happens, and one-third of open-air museums do the same. Of the latter, two-thirds do not do so, half of them due to the fact that there are supposedly 'no cases' of marking of space there. On the other hand, 13 out of 16 (more than 81%) national parks very often or often had to restore their attractions to the state from before the tourists' interference. For all the institutions surveyed, the most important 'costs' of restoring attractions to their pre-marking state are connected with time and labour. Apart from the financial ramifications involved in needing to 'clean up' after an act of vandalism, there are also multiple other factors that result in problems for an administration faced with the aftermath of such an act: regret that the wider resources of the institution have met with a need to be employed pointlessly, the trouble needed to be taken in seeking external expertise, and finally, the modification of in-house infrastructure in a way that would allow an effective deployment of external resources, including, possibly, specialised tools/equipment.

Owing to the rather reserved approach to sharing knowledge on the part of the respondents and the imprecision of the statements, the data obtained do not allow for a more comprehensive and/or in-depth explanation of the studied issues. The two main problems related to this are the lack of clarification when selecting the 'other' category (e.g. what does it mean

when the respondent indicates that 'other' costs were the most important in the restoration of an attraction to the condition prevailing before the interference of tourists?) and the detected contradictions in the accounts of some respondents (e.g. the marking of space 'does not occur', while in previous answers many were listed).

Discussion

It is difficult to identify clear reasons for the reluctance towards the survey research, maybe apart from the general social dislike for this type of research due to its ubiquity and the fact that we are constantly confronted with it (Poland is not an exception here). It was further noted that no responses were received in cases where the questionnaire was sent to a parish, parish priest or religious congregation, or to small, local or private open-air museums. It is not known how many institutions stopped completing them for factual reasons (a few comments were sent concerning a slightly different understanding of the concept of 'marking'), personal reasons (who should fill them in?), time reasons (e.g. workload) or other case-specific reasons (e.g. absence of responsible persons). It seems that all such issues can be ignored, treated as just apparent obstacles. It is difficult to imagine an institution of this type being able to work without Internet access or with faulty computer equipment for seven weeks. The absence of people in charge for such a long time is not plausible, either. Even lack of time is not a significant barrier: the time taken to complete the questionnaire varied between 25 min and 60 min. However, the response rate of the questionnaires has not differed significantly from the level obtained in other studies using a questionnaire sent via email. Generally, email survey response rates are declining. Using some techniques applicable to mail surveys to increase response rates does not guarantee success in collecting data (Sheehan 2001).

Each group of tourist attractions experiences practices of marking the tourist space, the effects of which can sometimes be damaging for the attractions themselves. Actions related to symbolic 'taking possession of attractions', by taking photos of them or against their background, are generally tolerated by their managers and are part of

the trend called mediatisation and performativity of tourism (Cohen, Cohen 2012: 2183–2194). Tourists simply behave 'like tourists', practising specific rituals in relation to tourist attractions and in relation to their own tourist experience (MacCannell 2013). A different treatment may be applied to taking photographs and sharing them online after having destroyed, damaged or less drastically altered the tourist attraction, that is to say documenting vandalism.

While the symbolic marking of tourist attractions does not seem particularly threatening to the attractions, the 'mundane' but widespread littering does. As indicated by Khawaja and Shah (2013), inferring from the literature review pertaining to littering, people litter for a variety of reasons: out of laziness, because others also do it, because there is no bin in sight or when they do not bear personal costs associated with littering. Moreover, Williams et al. (1997) claim that one of the main reasons for littering is indolence.

Based on our study, it is difficult to assess to what extent littering is intentional among tourists and would accordingly need to be understood as a practice of deliberate marking, having as its (likely subconscious) aim taking possession of the space; however, such an assessment seems ultimately to be justified. Tourists colonise space, leaving traces of their presence therein. Rubbish left by tourists is therefore not only an aesthetic or environmental problem, but has its social consequences. 'The broken window theory' (Willson, Kelling 1982) connects visible signs of lack of control with gradual intensification of the phenomena of social disorder in space (Schultz et al. 2013). If we assume that littering (leaving behind mess, disorder) in the tourist space is something more than just a lack of good manners on the part of tourists, and is in fact a manifestation of territoriality (an expression of domination over the environment), it is difficult to expect that the phenomenon will spontaneously disappear. According to Owen (2007), what may discourage vandalism is the constant, though presumably expensive, maintenance of the sites as a visible sign of the managers' control over them. It confirms the observation made by Khawaja and Shah (2013) that vandalism is fostered by weak (or even invisible) institutions failing to exercise control over places. At the same time, however, some studies indicate that the high visibility of cleaning services

in public spaces can send a signal that someone else is taking responsibility for litter, encouraging littering even in clean areas (Lyndhurst n.d.: 67).

Although our questionnaire survey did not address the specific ways in which the surveyed individuals dealt with the aforementioned behaviour of marking space, especially those perceived as vandalism, the few open-ended responses mentioned attempts to channel the unwanted behaviour in specially designated places or to make tourists aware of the criminal seriousness of some of it. In one national park, so-called sticker boards appeared, where tourists can spray graffiti or stick stickers (Fig. 5), and a UNESCO World Heritage castle reports any disturbance or damage to the attraction to the relevant services.

The marking of attractions might only be a single manifestation of a wider mentality of entitlement that tourists may feel in the region of the attraction and its environs, stemming from the fact of their making an economic contribution to the place in particular and the tourism sector in general, and some of the more outlandish tourist behaviour that fall outside the framework of generally accepted norms, even bordering on vandalism, may have their origin in this way of thinking. It is a fact that no matter how positively it is perceived, tourism is based on a steady stream of economic transactions as a tool for development, a source of popularity, etc. A tourist for example buys a product in the region of the tourist attraction or pays for the transport that has brought him there, and the remembrance of these facts may result in the sustaining of a subconscious entitlement to have expectations and put forth demands, even at the cost of incrementally compromising the viability of the place itself as a tourist attraction. This fact is confirmed by the opinion of one of the open-air museums:

In recent years, however, it is noticeable that tourists are becoming more demanding. They think that by

Fig. 5. Stickers entirely covering the entrance area (A) of the Śnieżka Mountain Meteorological Observatory (B) in Karkonosze National Park.
Source: photo by Chylińska (2022).

paying for a ticket they can enter everywhere, touch everything or just take something. The Museum of Masovian village is, among other things, an open-air museum where picking fruit and vegetables in the gardens in the exhibition areas is an increasingly frequent phenomenon. This is also true of approaching and stroking animals, and trying to forcibly open the doors which are closed. In addition, inappropriate tourists' behaviour, e.g. inappropriate outfit or eating during a visit, is increasingly evident (questionnaire survey – open-air museums, own translation).

Research has shown that although the phenomenon of marking tourist attractions in popular tourist destinations is rather widespread, it does not reach such great proportions as it would seem from media coverage (see e.g. AS 2019; Skupin 2019; Vandals in the Table Mountains… 2021). The most harmful actions or those leading to, e.g., disturbance or destruction of attractions, if they occur, are usually reported in the mass media in an atmosphere of sensation and righteous indignation, and may multiply the scale of the problem in general perception. Such publicity, however, acquires a deeper meaning if it is to serve the strategy of 'blaming and shaming', in order to shame the perpetrators (especially if they were detected and punished) and discourage others who would like to follow in their footsteps. 'Is this the kind of 'notoriety' I had in mind?' – such a question may (but does not have to) be asked, within themselves, by those responsible for the vandalism as they read the content of the mostly negative comments that can be expected to appear under the description of the event in the press, or, more frequently, in social media.

In their perceptions of remedies for unwanted tourist interference with a tourist attraction categorised as 'I was here' behaviour, the surveyed institutions display an attitude similar to that towards tourism vandalism described by Bhati (2023), and Bhati and Pearce (2016). If such actions are not a crime, education is the preferred solution. For Bhati (2023), an effective fight against tourism vandalism is described by the so-called 'PREP framework', where education is coupled with prevention, participation (together with local communities and stakeholders) and restoration of the attraction's value. It is difficult to determine, however, to what extent

respondents agree with this approach, as they overwhelmingly provided just short statements and did not offer more complex responses. In Bhati's view, an effectiveness in tackling tourist vandalism, including some of the behaviour that are the focus of our research, requires a shift in focus from the effects of vandalism to its causes. He writes (Bhati 2023: 5):

"Studying vandalism through a constructivism paradigm can be traced in five key turns: turning from an assumed objectivity of the truth to subjectivity; turning from the standardized and absolute solutions to social context-based relativism; turning from 'what happens' to understanding 'why and how it happens'; turning from a linear to a nonlinear understanding of vandalism; and turning from theory to pre-practice theory–post practice models".

The present research on the situation of tourist attractions in Poland being subject to 'marking' by tourists has its limitations due to the relatively small representation or selection of specific categories of the wide spectrum of the places visited. Even so, it can be a starting point for further analyses focused on the tourist himself and aimed at developing effective strategies to combat behaviour patterns considered to be vandalism. It seems that transferring territorial behaviour of tourists from real to virtual space could be a good direction for such actions, and this is already happening to some extent. An example of this is the possibility of marking attractions on the Internet, especially in social media, or the possibility of leaving virtual graffiti on an attraction, described by Kljun and Pucihar (2015).

In the real space, it seems to be effective to some extent to channelise marking of attractions by, for example, creating legal places and ways where it would be acceptable for tourists to perform some acts confirming their presence. Such actions fit into 'the PREP Framework' postulated by Bhati (2023); they contain necessary preventive and educational elements, and they do not focus on limiting the expression of tourists but direct or disarm it. Reports from one national park that applied this solution are promising. Not every tourist will necessarily be satisfied with this partly controlled opportunity for expression, but in combination with basic rules of social life

and possibly criminal sanctions (which should be inevitable), it should lead to a marked decrease in the manifestation of unwanted marking of tourist space. However, applying 'participation' element to our research is limited by the status of the tourist attraction. At most, in a few cases (some UNESCO World Heritage Sites), the local community may live or stay nearby. A tourist attraction with this status is usually clearly (legally, spatially) separated from the local community.

There are still the most commonly used methods of limiting vandalism by controlling and restricting tourist traffic to designated places and tourist trails. However, in view of the decrease in the quality of control and despite locally introduced monitoring systems, the effectiveness of this type of activities does not seem to be satisfactory, as emphasised by the respondents (including a well-known castle from the UNESCO World Heritage List). The problem lies in the fact that the factor that plays the biggest role here is the adverse sociocultural changes that have taken place concerning the attitude towards the common good, property and respect for heritage (whether someone else's or common), which might possibly have their origin in expansion of consumerism, demanding behaviour and expressive/emotional behaviour. Systems, regulations and institutional actions tend to be one step behind the tourists' actions. The visitors have their own agendas and follow their own rules, independent of those of the society. As shown by the research, the manifestations of marking of the tourist space can be found almost everywhere, more precisely in all places to which tourists have access, despite all efforts to reduce or eliminate manifestations of vandalism or unwanted traces of tourists' presence. Therefore, while not denying that the measure of educating tourists was mentioned by the institutions surveyed as a means of reducing marking of the tourist space, the above-mentioned education should be broadened and deepened so that the whole society is periodically presented and reminded with, as well as instilled with, principles of good behaviour towards common goods, such as tourist attractions, cultural heritage, traditions and valuable natural areas. Such a model ought to be deeply ingrained in them, from which they would ideally not contemplate deviating even in the (hypothetical) absence of a supervising authority.

Without the reconstruction of the educational function of not only the school and university but also the local community and especially the family, the activities of the national park or cultural institutions may be insufficient or ineffective due to their specific spatial and temporal isolation (the principal limitation hindering such an approach from succeeding being randomness, i.e. only a few people would be subject to it, and only for a short time).

Final remarks

The marking of places in space by the people living in it is a common practice, and one that is not limited to tourist space. The status of tourist attraction only makes places more recognisable and more 'visible', literally and figuratively, in real and virtual space, which is understandable in the context of the mediatisation of tourism. Technology plays a considerable role here, and in the 'informal competition' between tourists and managers for control over the tourist space, it seems to give the former an advantage (see: Chylińska, Kosmala 2018: 172 and further).

Although the phenomenon of marking tourist attractions has affected all tourist sites, regardless of the degree of supervision and protection status, it does not seem to be as 'drastic' as the media may suggest. Simple measures already limit the inconvenience (but not the scale) of the phenomenon, and visible signs of control, supervision and care discourage tourists from vandalism, regardless of how much they resemble 'Sisyphean work' from the perspective of the institutions surveyed. Nevertheless, the current mechanisms and ways of managing a tourist attraction are not able to protect it from vandalism or simply from undesirable actions by tourists. Even though the accepted or even expected ways of marking tourist space are more common, the undesired ones arouse greater interest, result in bearing additional costs and occupy managers' thoughts. Addressing this problem, and trying to solve it, becomes an imperative necessity.

Protective status (e.g. national park, open-air museum) or a kind of certificate of value (UNESCO World Heritage List) do not seem to discourage tourists from wanting to preserve traces of their presence in the visited places. It is probably due

to the subjective character of heritage (abstract for others) or perhaps to the lack of a clear, legible border between the 'sacred' (a tourist attraction with a special status) and profane in the tourist space. Although, while crossing the gate of a museum, a tourist may be aware of entering a space subject to certain norms, it may be not so obvious in the open spaces of national parks or the undefined or blurred boundaries of sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List. As we suppose, tourists' attitudes are rooted in personal and social values, which are constantly and dynamically changing nowadays due to broader ethical and technological transformation (respondents wrote about young people and their behaviour). Thus, only in cooperation with other institutions involved in education and upbringing will it be possible to achieve a more permanent effect – a sense of joint responsibility for the tourist attraction visited by the tourist. However, all those avenues of thought need further research.

The conducted research is exploratory in nature and has certain limitations in terms of conclusions. These, however, are not due to the fact that the study was conducted among tourist attractions from a particular geographic space and selected from among the sites of chosen categories. They are rather due to a certain one-sidedness of the research perspective, based on the observations of the managers of the tourist attractions rather than on direct research into tourists' motivations and behaviour. This opens the field for further research and analysis aimed at protecting tourist attractions from tourist interference, especially vandalism, including more effective protection and surveillance.

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Author's contribution

The authors declare that their contribution to the preparation of the paper was equal in all respects.

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