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CHAPTER 8

Leisure Activities of LGBT Singles: Tourist Behavior in the Context of Individual Attributes

Introduction

An expanding sphere of human activity, which can be described as free time constitutes a characteristic feature of global reality. The number of hours and days devoted to activities beyond mandatory ones is growing; thereby, the mass demand for leisure as well as forms and methods of its rational management is also on the increase. Nowadays, free time has become an important element of sport/recreational and tourist activity of every individual, including the singles. It is the result of a growing awareness of recreation outside the place of permanent residence, but also the desire to maintain good health, which in case of people living alone is of the most significant value (Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2011).

People living alone enjoy the privilege to decide on their own how to spend free time. One of the elements of modern life is quality leisure time; individually tailored to the needs and expectations of a lonely person (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011). According to J. R. Kelly, leisure requires freedom and independence, because family life entails a number of commitments that restrict this freedom (Kelly, 2001, p.44).

Singles – who are they?

It should be clarified that in this article the author uses interchangeably the terms “person living alone”, “single”, or “lonely individual”. In the light of the teachings of praxeological sciences, which include, among others, the science of physical culture, it may be assumed that a lonely person (commonly called single) is a person who has never been married, or due to the death of a partner or dissolution of marriage or divorce – no longer remains married, or in any other relationship (e.g. hetero- or homosexual civil partnership, cohabiting) (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2013b).

The term “single”, although it is not a recognised definition, has found a permanent place in our native language, carrying positive connotations which successfully replaced the stereotypical, negative associations centered around spinsterhood and bachelorhood. Today, being a single woman is increasingly socially acceptable (Maeda & Hecht, 2012), while still being a spinster bears pejorative associations. Nowadays, a lonely individual (displacing negative connotations for the adjective “lonely”), is understood as an individual living alone, managing his/her own financial resources (own/one-person/independent) household (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2009, 2011, 2013b). Staying alone equals free disposal of your life energy and managing leisure time to one’s liking. The ability to stay in solitude is thus linked to the discovery of self and self-realization, with constantly increasing awareness of one’s own deepest needs, feelings and impulses (Storr, 2010, p.46).

In the light of numerous previous considerations of representatives of many different sciences with regards to singlism – a person living alone/single or a lonely individual can be male or female in various age groups, having mostly higher or secondary educational status and representing freelance professions; they are people in various civil status situations, running (own/one-person) urban, urban-rural or rural household (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011, 2013b). Their solitary lifestyle may be a consequence of their own choice¹, or be the result of random events. At the same time, this loneliness can be permanent or temporary, which is closely associated with an individual’s coexistence with regard to various conditions, especially biological (including psychological), socio-cultural and economic factors (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2013b).

¹ Among women single by choice there is the desire to get married and have children (Dales, 2014).

One may come across a view that there is a significant difference between a lonely person and a single. Since singlism is considered a kind of lifestyle, it should in no way be associated with loneliness. These individuals, despite the fact that they stay alone should not feel lonely when they have a group of friends, acquaintances. An additional assumption that determines whether someone can be considered as a single or lonely individual, are his/her demographic, socio-cultural and economic characteristics. Disregarding the existing findings of foreign pioneers of research into the problems in question (Stein, 1976, 1981; DePaulo & Morris, 2005), a number of Polish sociologists narrowed the term “single” to denote people aged 25–40 (up to 50–55 years of age), mostly highly educated inhabitants of urban agglomerations who receive high incomes. Today, the topic is giving rise to controversy and still – in the opinion of the author – requires open discussion to develop a clear consensus reflecting reality.

Due to the present, consumer nature of the society, one might risk putting forward a thesis that single people constitute a heterogeneous, conscious (Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2011) segment of purchasers who, in terms of various factors perform their own, often individualized (sublime) consumer process. In other words, due to loneliness, mass consumer market has emerged. It caters for all the needs of this category of people paying particular attention (beyond the existential needs) to the nature of single people participation in undertaking sport/recreational and tourist activity in their spare time (Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2011; Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2013b; Biernat & Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2012, 2013; Lubowiecki-Vikuk & Sarnowski 2013).

Among the increasing number of people living alone, there are also people from the LGBT community (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011; Makuchowska & Pawłęga, 2012, p.67; *Being Trans in the...*, 2014). So far, no research aimed at analysing this group's leisure activity manifested in the form of tourist has been carried out. Thus, the objective of this work is to explore the tourist behavior of LGBT singles against the background of people with heterosexual bias who live alone (e.g. Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011).

Physical Activity vs. Health of Singles

Physical activity, promoted and supported through active participation in its various forms, such as in sports and active tourism, should be one of the manifestations of singles care about their own health and body, and

simultaneously the criteria of physical education. Promoting physical activity in a lonely lifestyle is a prerequisite. Many researchers have proved that a lower health status is characteristic of people leading solitary lives. Heart diseases, hypertension, cancer, pneumonia, weaker eyesight, bad mood, depression, insomnia, premature death (suicide), different levels of physical activity are more frequent among them; they are addicted to smoking and alcohol consumption, follow inappropriate diet and in case of aging singles growing social isolation, arthritis and Alzheimer's disease are commonplace. (Koskenvuo et. al., 1981; Lipowicz, 2001, Eng et. al., 2005, Lee et. al., 2005; Kharicha et. al., 2007, Mor et al., 2013). Single parenthood is also associated with detrimental consequences for health which lower the levels of physical activity (Dlugonski & Motl, 2013).

Despite the fact that both women and men living alone – more often than those who are married – have slim bodies (Lipowicz et al., 2002) the overall biological condition of bachelors indicates that they are far less physically and mentally fit than their married counterparts (Lipowicz, 2001). At the same time, non-heterosexual single male individuals require social support from family and group of friends, which is generally expected to improve the state of their well-being (Hostetler, 2012). The category of aging LGBT people more frequently notices the harmful effects of solitary lifestyle. First and foremost, it is the feeling of stress resulting from overall partner relations, and social bonds, health and self-esteem (Kuyper & Fokkema, 2010). As for health of this category of people, A. V. Wagenen, J. Driskell and J. Bradford (2013) reached different conclusions, stating that they demonstrate remarkable resilience in coping with the problems in the field of physical and mental health. The more so because it has been proved that being alone is not associated with the threat of physical activity among older people (Lim et. al., 2005). It is certainly encouraging for the future. However, public awareness campaigns to combat homophobia and enhancing the effectiveness of social and health policies in favour of LGBT (including singles) should improve the complex, and at the same time worrying situation.

Method

Participants and Procedure

To explore the examined phenomenon the method of induction alongside CAWI method (Computer Assisted Web Interview) were used. On the basis of

own research and review of the literature on the researched issues, an attempt has been made to formulate general conclusions on the (expected) behavior and tourist preferences of LGBT singles in Poland. Behaviors of this type are mostly performed in free time.

When choosing a CAWI method the author to a large extent wished to maintain intimate space of the researched environment. Due to the fact that non-heterosexual people are hard-to-reach research group, characteristics of post-modern society and globalisation – where the Internet plays an increasingly larger role in everyday life, while becoming a tool of modern, interdisciplinary research (Zajac & Batorski, 2009) were taken into account. Apart from that, more comfortable conditions, such as convenient for the respondent's time have an impact on the participation in the research project. Furthermore, the capitalintensiveness of the implementation of this type of research does not pose any major limitation. CAWI method is not an ideal research method. In Poland, still 33.1% of households do not have the Internet access (Batorski, 2013). It has been assumed that the LGBT community – including singles, for which e-services are a part of their lifestyle (Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2011) – has a significant share in Internet penetration. The author developed an electronic questionnaire and assigned an ad address of a website to it. In the form of an invitation to participate in a study the site was then launched on specially dedicated online forums, social networking and dating sites and official websites of selected organisations and associations acting for the benefit of the LGBT community.

Two hundred and seventy people representing all four LGBT groups, i.e. gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people took part in a survey. It is worth noting that this is the first such study in Poland, including all members of the LGBT community. The research group is not a representative sample – despite the lack of reliable sociodemographic LGBT data², the author has attempted to carry out this type of study, bearing in mind its limitations, but also the awareness that the undertaken initiative may inspire further research in this area, if only due to increasingly numerous studies and research relating to socio-cultural gender identity which is referred to as “gender”. This study is not conclusive, it took an explanatory direction.

² In Poland there are only rough estimates with regard to the number of gays and lesbians. It has been assumed that they account for approx. 5% of the society which equals around 5 million people, most of whom are men.

The study was conducted over a period of three months (January – March 2014), it finished with the end of the winter tourist season. The Internet survey included questions relating to the participation in tourism over the last year. The respondents were asked about trips (participation in at least one tourist trip in the analysed period), the directions of trips (domestic, European, non-European trips), their duration (1 day, 2–4 days, 5 or more days), purpose (leisure or recreation, visits to relatives and/or friends, business, shopping, travel, health) and the level of tourism expenditure (less than 1000³, 1001–2000, 2001–3000, 3001–4000, 4001–5000, over PLN 5000). For further analysis ($n = 162$) has been adopted to refer to only those respondents who described their current civil situation as a single.

Results

Among the study group, men constituted 87.7% and women 12.3%. Over half of them are people aged 20–29 years, and every fifth person was aged 18–19 years. Other respondents were 30–39 years old (19.1%), 40–49 (4.3%) and 50+ (2.5%). Respondents received the following levels of education: tertiary (35.8%), secondary (55.6%), vocational (4.3%) and primary (4.3%). Most respondents (37.7%) lived in cities with the population of over 500 thousand. Every fifth respondent was a dweller of a city inhabited by 101–500 thousand or 21–100 thousand people. 11.1% of respondents were from small towns (population up to 20 thousand) while every tenth person surveyed lived in rural areas. Respondents belonged to certain socio-professional groups: pupils/students (52.5%), white-collar workers/blue-collar workers (37.7%), occasional workers (12.3%), the self-employed ones (4.9%), the unemployed (2.5%) and retirees/pensioners (1.2%). In terms of monthly net income, the surveyed people were classified into the following categories: ≤ PLN 2,500 (56.2%), PLN 2,501–3,500 (11.7%), > PLN 3,500 (16.1%) and lack of income (16.0%). Respondents sexual orientation was a key component of the research. Thus, among the subjects 81.5% were gay, 17.3% bisexual and 1.2% of transgender people.

Drawing from own research, a conclusion was reached that the rate of tourist activity among LGBT singles amounted to 82.7% – a significant percentage of respondents took part in at least one voluntary tourist trip over the last year in relation to the total number of subjects. The majority

³ PLN 1,000 ≈ \$248

of respondents (68.5%) undertook domestic tourism activities. They covered weekend trips (2–4 days) – 51.8%, and/or long trips (5 days or more) – 40.4%. Nearly 8% of respondents took day trips outside the place of permanent residence. 44.4% of respondents picked a European country during the analysed period. Most trips lasted five days or more (78.6%), and every fifth respondent participated in the so-called short trips lasting from 2 to 4 days. 2.9% of respondents were attracted by one-day tourist trips. 12.3% of the subjects set out on non-European journeys. They were long trips (90.9%), and less frequently, short-term (9.1%) ones.

More than half of respondents were accompanied by friends and/or acquaintances to on their tourist trips, while 14.8% went with families. This emphasises the importance of interpersonal relations for this community. Nevertheless, every third respondent went on a trip alone.

Respondents expenses related to the purchase of certain products and services (basic services [accommodation, food and transport], together with sports, recreational and semi-tourist services) were at a different level and depended on the income level ($p < .001$). Over half of the respondents has allocated an amount of less than PLN 2,000 (including 30.7% of respondents who have spent less than PLN 1,000) for that purpose. Every fifth respondent has spent PLN 2,001–4,000, and every third above PLN 4,000 (including 20.4% of subjects who have spent more than PLN 5,000). Respondents monthly net incomes had a significant impact on trips to European ($p < .001$) and non-European countries ($p < .001$).

The level of tourist expenditure is influenced by, among others, preferred standard of hotel services, means of transport the trip organisation. Respondents during their tourist trips were service users in a variety of accommodation facilities, such as:

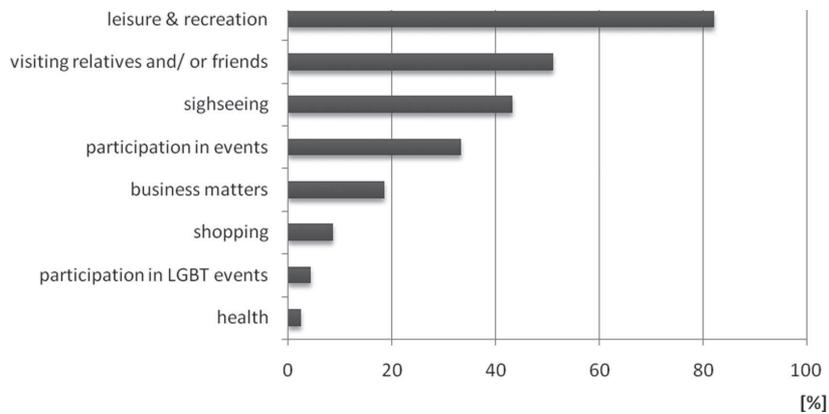
- hotel (52.5%),
- relatives and/or friend's apartment (48.1%),
- B&B/Inn (22.2%),
- hostel/shelter youth (11.7%),
- agri-tourism farm (10.5%),
- campsite/campground (5.6%),
- rented flat/house/apartment (5.6%),
- hostel (1.9%).

During the analysed period LGBT singles have chosen (own) car (47.5%) – which is the most commonly used means of road transport. In addition, coach/bus (45.1%), rail (38.3%) and air transport (31.5%) have been used. The

survey data indicates that the researched group of respondents appreciates the advantages of road transport (inexpensive, comfortable).

Just like the majority of the society nowadays, surveyed LGBT singles organised their trip/trips independently (88.3%). The services of professional organisers and travel agents have been used by 11.7% of respondents.

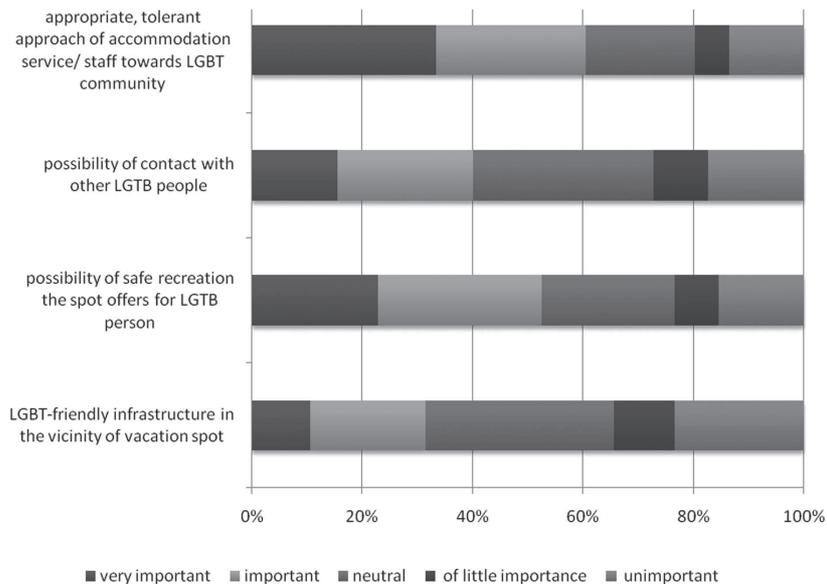
Figure 1. Purposes of respondents tourist trips



Source: own study based on research $n = 162$

A significant number of LGBT respondents (82.1%) travelled in the last year in order to rest and undertake active leisure activities – Figure 1. Additionally, their tourist trips were combined with the desire to visit relatives and/or friends (51.2%), explore the values and attractions of various tourist destinations (43.2%) and participate in cultural and entertainment events (33.3%). Apart from business matters (18.5%) and shopping (8.6%) respondents have travelled over this period in order to participate in the events dedicated to LGBT (4.3%). It is worth noting that this is (alongside health) a sporadic purpose of their trips. By far, the least frequent purpose of LGBT singles was health related (2.5%): primarily these were the trips for medical purposes, followed by spa and wellness centre and sanatoriums trips.

Figure 2. Level of significance of the factors affecting the choice of holiday destinations among the respondents



Source: own study based on research $n = 162$

Various factors affect the purposes and consequently the choice of tourist trips destinations among the surveyed respondents (Figure 2). According to the subjects, an appropriate, tolerant approach of accommodation service/ staff towards people from the LGBT community is among the most crucial aspects (very important and important 60.5%). Over half of the respondents, with a predominance of males ($p < .001$), expressed a need to take safe rest implement in a given location without having to hide their LGBT identity.

The existence of infrastructure reputed to be LGBT-friendly (bars, restaurants/hotel, discos, saunas, etc.) in the vicinity of the holiday spot turned out to be of little or no significance (11.0% and 23.5% respectively), and slightly more importance was attached to the possibility of contact with other people from the LGBT community (9.9% and 17.3% respectively). On average, nearly one third of the respondents showed a neutral attitude to the analysed factors.

Discussion

The participation of LGBT singles in tourism is significant (82.7% of all respondents), although the rate of this activity against the background of travelling of seniors 50+ (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2012), and people living alone in big cities (Biernat & Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2012) is lower by about 12% on average. It may be related to lower incomes of the group despite the fact that the LGBT segment is considered to be quite attractive on the tourist services market (Borzyszkowski, 2012).

Tourist trips generally foster the development of stronger social bonds, constitute suitable time to nurture friendships and family relationships. Studies have shown that non-heterosexual singles, just like others (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011) most frequently travel in the company of friends, acquaintances and family members. Interestingly, when undertaking tourist activities, female singles spend their free time in the company of friends more often than male singles (Heimtun & Abelsen, 2012). It may be due to the fact that they do not demonstrate preference to have their meals in solitude during holidays (Heimtun, 2010). There is no doubt that interpersonal contacts, including social gatherings are of vital importance for people living alone, both in everyday life (Such-Pyrgiel, 2014), especially at weekends (Whillans, 2014) and during a temporary stay outside their place of permanent residence for tourism purposes (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2013). However, every third LGBT single has travelled alone. There is reasoned concern that single gays in the absence of a companion may not want to take up tourist activity, hence the H. L. Hughes & R. Deutsch (2010) propose the activation of these people. In their opinion, a life of a non-heterosexual single is more likely than in case of heterosexual individuals. The tourist sector can try to encourage these people to decide on tourist trips whose purpose will be social meetings and/or sexual activity (Hughes & Deutsch, 2010). The latter travel motif raises a legitimate objection, because according to own research, no LGBT single pointed out to a tourist activity aimed at this type of tourism. LGBT people would rather expect offers based on active leisure opportunities, and participation in cultural events and entertainment, including cultural tourism (Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło 2011; Niemczyk, 2012). Respondents expressed a need to take safe rest implement in a given location without having to hide their LGBT identity. Thus, they could be offered a product based on the typical free time behaviours of singles and appealing to three patterns: innovative intellectualists, eloquent educated people and comfort loving

types (Figure 3). Polish LGBT singles, as well as singles 50+ can present mixed types of behaviours in leisure time (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2013, 2014).

Figure 3. The typology of singles with respect to their attitudes and approach towards sport for all and tourism



Source: (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2013a).

However, it should be noted that only one in ten respondents bought a travel package from a travel agency. This fact should be taken into account while creating a range of services for non-heterosexual singles, and appropriate marketing activities – based on silver marketing & cocooning (Duliniec & Sznajder, 2010, p.55) and e-services and e-tourism (Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2011) – should be undertaken by sole travel services wholesalers, i.e. representatives of the hospitality sector (hotels, guest houses/dormitories), catering and transport (especially road and rail transport)⁴. Currently, single

⁴ One example is airlines (American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, LOT, EasyJet, SAS), also European cities branding (Prague, Berlin, Vienna, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Zurich, Madrid, also

people, as active consumers, are not searching for ready travel packages, which has been confirmed, *inter alia*, in their opinion regarding no need for the presence of LGBT-friendly infrastructure in the vicinity of the holiday spot, or the fact of the lack of offers due to a poor products range and unattractive prices (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011). Singles engage in the process of product generation (travel service) as its co-creators, while becoming prosumers (Toffler, 2001). Conscious way of satisfying personalised tourism and sports desires is an important characteristic of people living alone (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011), including the LGBT community. Singles search for offer via the Internet, book accommodation, purchase transport tickets. It is a general trend emerging on today's services market (Lubowiecki-Vikuk & Paczyńska-Jędrycka, 2010).

One can not fail to agree with the thesis that singles – including non-heterosexual people and older – are a group: (1) oriented towards the sense of insecurity and inequality, (2) for which customised programmes are created, and (3) the inefficiency of policy towards this social environment (Portacolone, 2013; Binnie, 2014).

An increasing fraction of single people 50+ (also younger singles), unfortunately translates into an increase in the number of poor populations, forced to efficient management of their finances (Dąbrowska & Janoś-Kresło, 2011; Portacolone, 2013). Thus, the level of tourist expenditure of the analysed subjects is quite varied [for the record, every fifth respondent has allocated PLN 5,000 for tourist purposes, and a third less than PLN 1,000]. This is reflected in the choice of the tourist destinations, means of transport and the place of temporary stay.

The vast majority of LGBT singles have chose a short-term stay in the country. It seems that weekend trips are among popular forms of their activity, just like in case of all Poles and Europeans (Rosa, 2012). On the contrary, urban singles prefer long trips (Biernat & Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2013). It seems that the diversity of tourist expenditure is related to the ways of spending leisure time in the visited places. Although LGBT singles mostly choose big cities, including Warsaw, Cracow, Poznań, Wrocław and the Tri-City – the level and accessibility of all of their attractions, including tourist ones, is so diverse that the expenditure there can actually be impulsive. Moreover, the choice of means of transport: car, bus, train allows to make savings in favour of good accommodation, which is a hotel, or a more intimate guest house. Meanwhile, those

Cracow) and hotel and catering industry: Kimpton Boutique Hotels & Restaurants, Sofitel and Sheraton hotel chains.

who went to visit relatives and/or friends and were accommodated by them, could save or spend higher amounts of money on leisure and entertainment.

One worrying fact is that a low percentage of respondents participate in health tourism. As mentioned in the introductory part of the study, the biological condition of people living alone is not satisfactory. It seems that the promotion of physical activity among this category of people is not only necessary, but also poses a challenge for many entities, including the highest public health sectors. The participation of singles in active forms of recreation (sport for all and active tourism) will allow them to cope with the negative effects of being “single”, thus affecting their life experience and level of satisfaction with their lifestyles (Kousha & Mohseni, 1997; Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011). Sport for all and tourism as a form of spending leisure time can prevent not only the poor physical condition of singles by resting in the bosom of nature or interpersonal contacts, but also help to improve their physical fitness and stress resistance (Lubowiecki-Vikuk & Basińska, 2008; Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2011, 2013b).

The share of broad social category which is single people (elderly, LGBT, people with disabilities) in health tourism will allow to preserve (get) better health, and/or aesthetic appearance of the body, combined with relaxation, physical and mental regeneration, sightseeing and entertainment (Lubowiecki-Vikuk, 2010). In many cases, it will allow to eradicate various addictions: smoking, abuse of alcoholic beverages, workaholism (Lubowiecki-Vikuk & Paczyńska-Jędrycka, 2010), which is associated with the need to conduct health education classes.

In addition, a test of strength for social policy in many countries should be not only to minimise social inequality, and discrimination against singles (DePaulo & Morris, 2005; Binnie, 2014), for example, by increasing community involvement in order to decrease the negative aspects of senile loneliness (Luo & Waite, 2014), but also an attempt to create appropriate residential and organisational conditions for LGBT (Kusek, 2014). It is worth noting that this is not about creating the so-called ghettos intended for LGBT, including singles, but drawing attention to the acceptance of the needs and behaviors of the analysed social environment.

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