

# CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN THE CZECH - GERMAN PART OF THE EUROREGION NEISSE – NISA - NYSA

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## Abstract

The economic position of the Liberec region is highly influenced by geographical proximity of the neighbouring states (Germany and Poland). This closely affects not only the potential of cooperation between companies on both sides of the borders, but also the "shopping tourism". We can come across these visitors in shopping centres, recreation areas, entertainment centres, at sports events, etc.

The article describes partial results of primary research on the behaviour of customers in the Czech- German part of the Euroregion Neisse - Nisa - Nysa (ERN). The main objective of the research was to identify the purchase behaviour in the Czech-German part of the ERN and analyze relevant dissimilarities. This article deals with a partial objective – to ascertain reasons for visiting the Czech-German border region.

## Introduction

Every customer makes different decisions in terms of his/her purchase behaviour and is influenced by various factors. Behaviour of the customers differs very much and businesses should consider this issue if they want to compete on the market. The so-called "The European consumer" is characterized in connection with a tendency towards integration and globalization, and can be identified by common features as well as by much dissimilarity. [1] More and more people are in a position to travel abroad and it is the proximity of the German border that has led the marketing department of the Faculty of Economics in Liberec to accomplish a primary research of the purchase behaviour in this area. This particular topic is described in more detail in a joint project of the TU Liberec and IHI Zittau, called: "Analysis of the consumer behaviour in the Czech-German part of the NISA Euroregion, regarding ecologically oriented behaviour of the buyers", sponsored from the program -

Objective 3/Ziel 3 – for the support of the cross-border cooperation between the Czech Republic and the Free State of Saxony. [2]

Purchase behaviour focuses on decisions of individuals, when they spend their own resources (time, money, effort) on items connected with consumption. That includes: what, why, when, where and how often people go shopping, how often they use the products, how they value them after shopping and the impact of these evaluations on their future shopping. Purchase behaviour and determination of the customers result from their needs and purchase opportunities. [3] Consumer behaviour cannot be accepted separately in relation to common behaviour and in connection with the society. [4] Purchase behaviour of the same person can vary from one type of goods to the other.

Many factors affect purchase behaviour, for example personal characteristics of the customer, external influence, parameters of goods and consumer's situation, etc. [5] A common customer may not notice some of those effects, though they are quite substantial. These influences can include values recognized in society, and connected with the overall culture in particular countries. [6] It is important to follow the perception of novelties on the market, provenance of goods and feelings of consumers in those countries, in connection with their different culture. [7]

For years, retailing was considered to be a regional element and belonged to small and middle-sized businesses. Over the past 20 years the market in the Czech Republic has undergone a dynamic development. New services and products had to establish their own market and find their own consumers, by creating another business infrastructure. The entrance of retail chains into the Czech Republic represented a significant role. They flooded the market and changed the style of life as well as shopping and social conventions of the consumers. The first foreign retail chains entered the Czech market at the beginning of the nineties of the 20th century. They took over parts of the commercial network of the former state enterprises at first, and then started to expand their outlets on "Greenfield land" and began to establish common developments in commerce. [8] Numbers of outlets multiplied, accompanied by intensive modernization, with new forms of sales trends, new sorts of retail units and wholesale stores. This brought a period of expansion of retail areas and improvements of service standards of retail network. To ensure the growth of companies with high turnover of goods, it was necessary to take advantage of the existing retail areas more intensively and focus on the strategy of marketing diversity from the competing businesses. [9] More shopping facilities and forms in retailing allowed the customers to make decisions by their feelings and needs. [10] That could be noticed in changes of preferences, i.e. supermarkets and hypermarkets became the main shopping places. [11] The selection of shops, where the customers consequently make their purchase, is a process of interaction between retail dealers and their strategies on one hand, and customers and their characteristics on the other. [12]

## **1 Material and methodology**

To learn about the required information on purchase behaviour, we selected a quantitative system of data collection in the form of a written questionnaire, which was distributed by trained consultants – students of the EF TUL Liberec and the IHI Zittau, in the Czech-German part of the Euroregion Neisse - Nisa – Nysa. This Euroregion is situated on the territory of three border regions, the Czech Republic, Germany and Poland, and was officially founded on 21st of December 1991.

There are 1 051 105 citizens in the Czech-German part, according to available data as per 31.12.2008. The population of the Czech-German part of the ERN is split in ratio: 42% citizens in the Czech part of the ERN and 58% in the German part. According to the structure

of the population in the Czech-German part of the ERN, the biggest group of citizens is in the age group of 25 to 44 i.e. 27,3 % of the total number of the population in the Czech-German part of the ERN; 25,6% of citizens aged 60 and older; 22,4% is in the age group of 45 to 59. The remaining 24,7% are citizens up to 24 years of age (resulting from data as per 31.12.2008).

Income, which highly differs, is an important parameter for the purchase behaviour analysis. According to the available statistics from 2008, the average gross monthly income in the Czech part of the ERN was 21 170,- CZK, which is 792 € according to middle rate of the Czech National Bank in 2008 (1€ = 26,738 CZK). In the German part of the ERN, the average gross monthly income was considerably higher, i.e. 2 366 €. [13]

The structured questionnaire included several sections to complete all the objectives of the research. Three groups of consumer goods were selected as the interest sphere of the questionnaire: fast-moving consumer goods (consumables), clothing and footwear, and durable goods. The aim was to survey customers' buying habits regarding these groups of consumer goods, in different regions of the ERN in connection with the influence of different cultural and social environment, and to analyze dissimilarities of consumer behaviour. The presented article applies to these particular objectives:

- reasons for visiting neighbouring regions,
- purchased products / services,
- level of spending / shopping expenses.

The research took place in the Liberec region and in the German part of the ERN (Zittau area) in 2010. Logical methods, analyses and comparison of the results from both countries were applied for elaboration. The results are presented in the form of graphs and charts.

## **2 Results and discussion**

370 respondents on the Czech side and 201 respondents on the German side of the ERN participated in the marketing research. The above mentioned group can be characterized more closely on the basis of socio-demographic criteria. The sample of 370 Czech respondents included 253 women (68,4 %) and 117 men (31,6 %). The respondents were at the age of 15 and older. The biggest group was between the age of 21 and 30 (38,6%). The largest district of the monitored region (Liberec) is represented by almost half of all respondents, and Šluknovský výběžek - the Šluknov Hook - by 3% of the respondents. In terms of economic activity, over 60 % of economically active respondents participated in the research. 133 women (66,2 %) and 68 men (33,8 %) were questioned on the German side. The structure of the respondents considering other spheres e.g. employment and income, was comparable with the structure of the respondents in the Czech Republic.

The primary objective of the questionnaire was to find out whether the customers use the proximity of the neighbouring border region for their shopping. The partial objectives were to find out what is the main reason for visiting the region, what products and services consumers buy most often and how much they usually spend on their shopping.

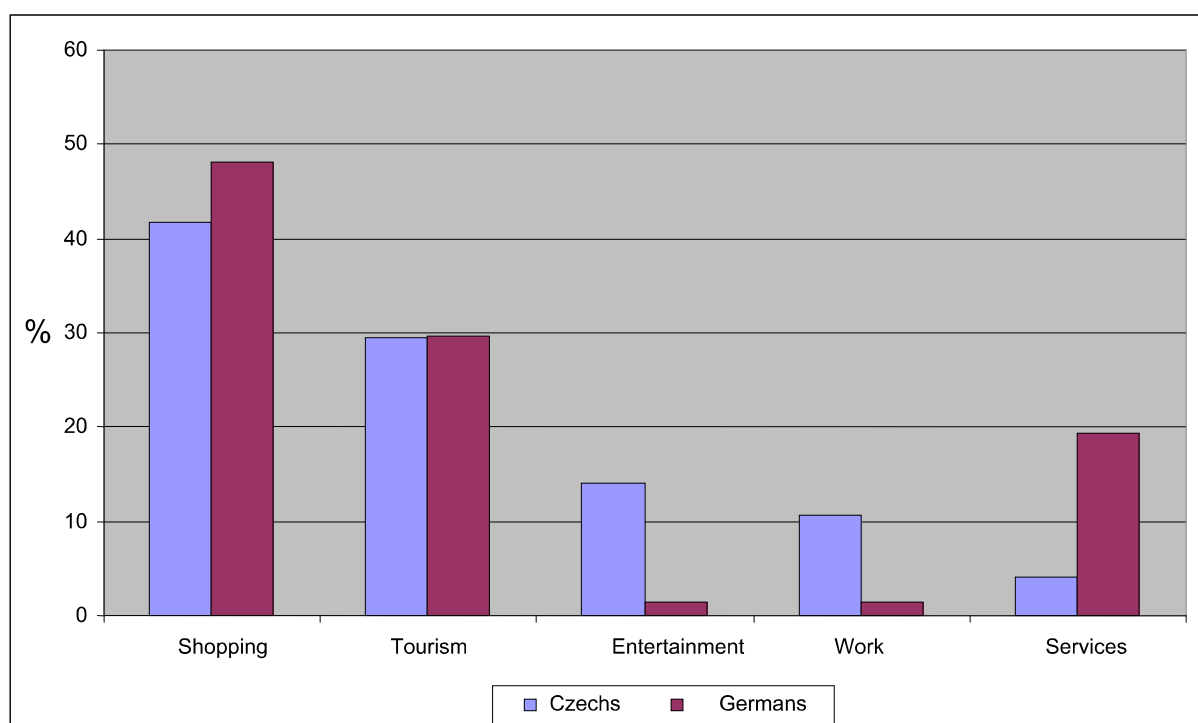
The most respondents, who visit the German border region, come from the Šluknov Hook and from the district of Česká Lípa (60 % in total). The second most represented district is Liberec (52% of the respondents from this district visit the German border region), and 27 % of the respondents from the Semily district go to the German border region. In terms of the respondents' age, the category within the range of 31 to 40 years of age dominates.

According to the results of the research, over the past 20 years the frequency of tours to the German as well as the Czech border region has shown an increasing tendency. Approximately 50 % of the respondents stated that they visit Germany more often at the present time than in previous years, only 13 % of the respondents (predominantly age group of 51 and older)

replied that they visited Germany more frequently before 1989. The German respondents also visit the Czech part of the Euroregion more often than before 1989 (according to approx. 60 % of the respondents).

One of the objectives of the research was to define the reason for trips to the neighbouring border region, and the main motive of the respondents to travel to the region. The respondents were asked to specify the main reason of their visit by choosing from the list of five possible answers (shopping, tourism, entertainment, work, services).

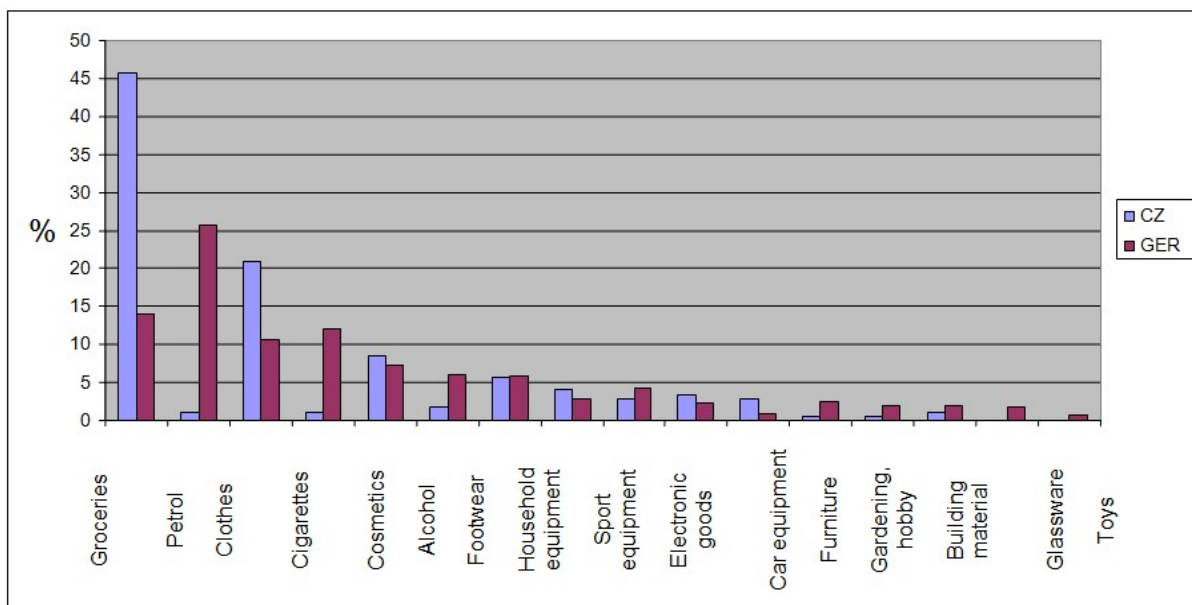
The Czech respondents stated shopping as the most frequent reason of their visits (41%), the second most frequent reason was tourism (29,4 %) and the third most frequent reason of their visits was entertainment (14 %). These reasons are summarized in *Fig. 1*. The German respondents specified shopping as the most frequent reason for visiting the Czech border region (48,1 % of respondents), then tourism (29,6 %) and services (19,3 %). The results of the research can show the dissimilarities in the reasons of visits. Services are a more frequent reason for visiting the neighbouring foreign region for the German respondents than for the Czech respondents.



own resources

*Fig. 1 Reasons of the Czech and German consumers visiting the Czech-German part of the ERN*

Another part of the research considered the most often purchased products and services, in the Czech as well as in the German part of the region. The most popular products to buy in the German border region are groceries. They were stated by 45,8% of the Czech respondents as a reason for travelling to Germany. The second most often purchased goods according to the Czech respondents were clothes, followed by detergents and cosmetics, footwear and household equipment. The research showed that the least interesting goods for the Czech respondents in German border region were petrol, cigarettes, furniture, alcohol etc. The most frequently purchased products are presented in *Fig. 2*.



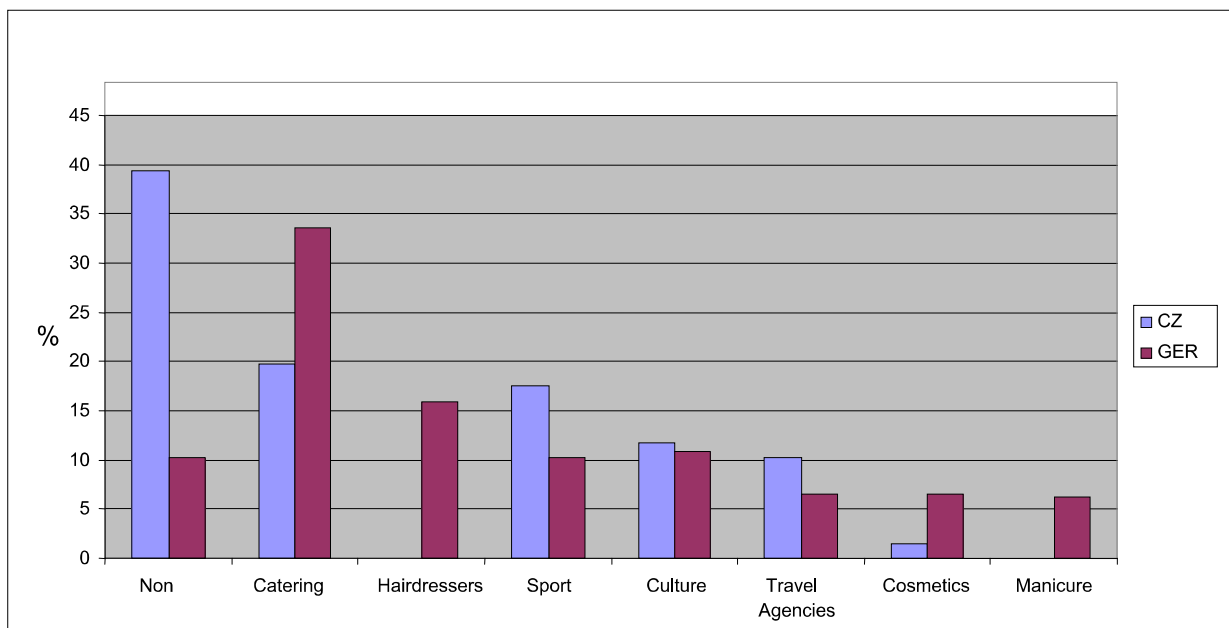
own resources

*Fig. 2 The most often purchased products, own resources*

The German respondents were, in the Czech part of the ERN, mostly buying petrol, groceries, cigarettes, clothes, cosmetics, alcohol and footwear. The main differences in shopping were spotted between groceries, petrol and cigarettes.

The Czech and the German respondents not only buy products, but also use services offered in the border region. Services are not a common reason for trips of Czech citizens to the German border region, nevertheless the most popular services used by the Czech respondents included catering, sporting activities, cultural events and services of travel agencies. Sporting activities are also intensified by newly built cycle paths from Liberec to Zittau, various nature trails and natural landscapes on the German side of the border region. Cosmetic and hairdressing services in the German border region are the least used services (see *Fig. 3*).

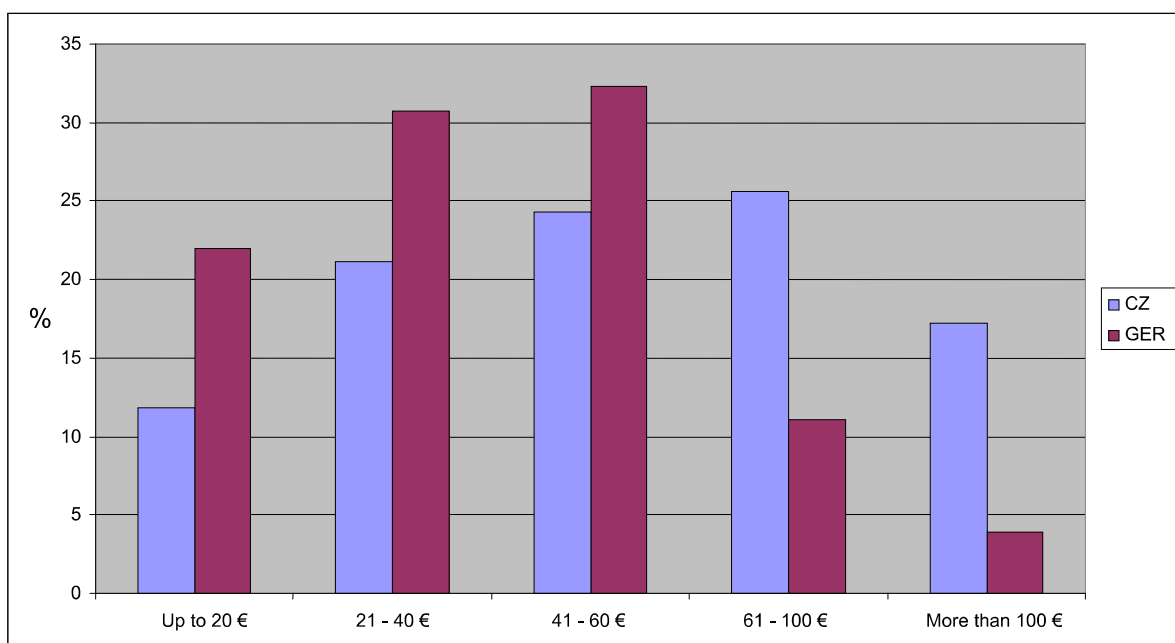
The research in the area of shopping/use of services proved different preferences of Czech and German citizens. The German respondents more often mentioned catering services as the reason of their trips to the Czech border region, followed by visits to the hairdresser's, cosmetics and manicure. One of the significant reasons for visiting the Czech border region (stated by approx. 10 %) is culture and sport.



own resources

*Fig. 3 The most frequently used services*

Another subject of the research was to ascertain expenses, or the amount of money that the Czech and German visitors usually spend, when they travel to the neighbouring region – see *Fig. 4*. The most Czech respondents stated that they usually spent 61 to 100 Euros during one visit to Germany. The German respondents most often mentioned the amount of 41 to 60 Euros usually spent in the Czech border region. The research confirmed that respondents with higher income spend more.



own resources

*Fig. 4 The usual amount of expenses of the Czech and German consumers in the Czech-German part of the ERN*

The most visited towns on the Czech side of the ERN are Liberec (34,5 %) and Hrádek nad Nisou (29,9%). Zittau belongs to the most frequently visited towns in the German border region (stated by half of the respondents). Zittau is 30 km from Liberec and less than 10 km from Hrádek nad Nisou. The second most often visited town is Dresden, followed by Gorlitz and Bautzen. The respondents mentioned these towns as destinations of their visits. [2]

The respondents, who visited Germany, mostly appreciated a clean and tidy environment and wider range of goods. The German border region was evaluated positively for its interesting tourist designations, quality products, better cycle paths, lower prices of products, helpfulness and goodwill of businessmen.

## **Conclusion**

The willingness of the addressed group of respondents, from the monitored territory of the Euroregion Neisse – Nisa – Nysa, to travel and buy goods and services (e.g. groceries, clothing and durable goods), differs significantly in particular parts of the Euroregion. Less than half of the Czech respondents stated that they visited the German border region because of shopping or tourism. The most purchased products in Germany are groceries, clothing and footwear.

More than half of the German respondents also go to the Czech border region because of shopping and tourism, but unlike the Czech respondents, their reason is to use the services more often, e.g. mainly catering and hairdresser's. The most purchased products are petrol, cigarettes and clothing.

The most frequent reason for visiting the Czech part of the ERN was shopping. Therefore, any further research could deal with attractiveness of shopping centres, study the profile behaviour of the visitors in connection with the growing popularity of using services and analyse the ways of spending spare time in Liberec. The information could considerably contribute to targeted communication with the tourists in order to increase the number of visitors in the Czech part of the ERN.

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## **CHOVÁNÍ SPOTŘEBITELŮ V ČESKO-NĚMECKÉ ČÁSTI EUROREGIONU NEISSE- NISA – NYSA**

Ekonomická pozice Libereckého kraje je silně ovlivněna geografickou blízkostí sousedních států (SRN a Polsko). To se dotýká ne jenom možností spolupráce firem na obou stranách hranic, ale i nákupní turistiky. V rámci pohraničního regionu lze denně pozorovat návštěvníky ze sousedních zemí. Tyto návštěvníky lze potkat v nákupních střediscích, rekreačních zónách, zábavních podnicích, při sportovních událostech apod. Článek popisuje dílčí výsledky primárního výzkumu chování zákazníků v česko-německé části Euroregionu Neisse- Nisa – Nysa. Hlavním cílem výzkumu bylo poznat nákupní chování v česko – německé části ERN a analyzovat případné odlišnosti. Tento příspěvek se věnuje dílčímu cíli – zjištění důvodů návštěvy česko-německého pohraničí a hlavního motivu cesty respondentů do zahraničí.

## **ERGEBNISSE DER FORSCHUNG - DAS VERHALTEN DER VERBRAUCHER IM TSCHECHISCH-DEUTSCHEN TEIL DER EUROREGION NEISSE- NISA – NYSA**

Die wirtschaftliche Situation des Bezirks Liberec wird stark durch die Nähe der Nachbarländer BRD und Polen beeinflusst. Das betrifft nicht nur die Möglichkeiten der Zusammenarbeit der Unternehmen beiderseits der Grenze, sondern auch die Einkaufstouristik. Im Rahmen der Grenzregion kann man Vielzahl der Besucher aus den Nachbarländern beobachten. Diesen Besuchern kann man in Einkaufszentren, Erholungs- und Vergnügungseinrichtungen, bei Sportveranstaltungen usw. begegnen. Sie tragen wesentlich zur regionalen Wirtschaft bei, deshalb ist es nötig, ihnen höhere Aufmerksamkeit zu widmen. Der Artikel beschreibt die Teilergebnisse der Primärforschung, die auf das Kundenverhalten im Tschechisch-Deutschen Teil der Euroregion Neiße-Nisa-Nysa ausgerichtet wurde, d.h. "auf die Feststellung des Zwecks der Besuche des tschechisch-deutschen Grenzgebiets".

## **ZACHOWANIE KONSUMENTÓW W CZESKO-NIEMIECKIEJ CZĘŚCI EUROREGIONU NEISSE-NISA –NYSA**

Na ekonomiczną pozycję Kraju Libereckiego ma mocny wpływ geograficzna bliskość sąsiednich państw (Republiki Federalnej Niemiec i Polski). Dotyczy to nie tylko możliwości współpracy przedsiębiorstw po obu stronach granicy, ale również tzw. turystyki zakupowej. W ramach regionu przygranicznego każdego dnia obserwuje się znaczącą liczbę odwiedzających z krajów sąsiednich. Osoby te można spotkać w galeriach handlowych, ośrodkach rekreacyjnych i rozrywkowych, na imprezach sportowych itp. Artykuł przedstawia częściowe wyniki badań zachowań klientów w czesko – niemieckiej części Euroregionu Neisse – Nisa – Nysa. Głównym celem badań było poznanie zachowań zakupowych w czesko – niemieckiej części euroregionu oraz analiza istniejących różnic. Niniejszy artykuł poświęcony jest jednemu z celów prowadzonych badań – zidentyfikowaniu powodów odwiedzin w czesko – niemieckim pograniczu i głównych motywów wyjazdów respondentów za granicę.