

SHOPPING TOURISM IN GDANSK

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to present research findings on how shopping tourism influences the amber market in Gdansk, specifically by comparing customer flow on regular workdays and national free days. The study aims to determine whether shopping tourism - particularly amber gemstone shopping - fluctuates based

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on the population's free time. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, a range of statistical methods were applied. The comparison method was used to synthesize results from various data points to form statistically robust conclusions. Descriptive analysis provided a summary of event counts, while data segmentation based on calendar dates allowed for differentiated insights on client behavior across workdays and national holidays. Additionally, graphical charts illustrated the frequency distribution of client visits, offering a clear visual representation of shopping patterns. The findings indicate that national holidays significantly influence customer traffic for amber shopping, resulting in noticeable shifts in visitation patterns. Statistical analysis demonstrates that client flow to amber shops increases on national free days compared to regular workdays. This shift suggests that shopping tourism for amber is sensitive to the availability of free time among the population.

Key words: Shopping tourism, Amber Gemstone, Polish national free days

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INTRODUCTION

Shopping tourism has emerged as a critical sector for destinations seeking to generate significant economic impact through competitive positioning. We can define shopping tourism as a modern type of travel that prioritizes shopping, which has become an important factor in individuals' decisions to go somewhere away from their usual environment. Tourists engaging in shopping tourism seek enriching, memorable experiences and often favor destinations offering key attributes such as cultural attractions, climate, affordability, safety, accessibility, and active government promotion. These tourists often combine shopping with local exploration, culinary experiences, and sightseeing, underscoring the need for destinations to provide a safe, affordable, and accessible environment that enhances the appeal and satisfaction of the shopping tourism experience (Lee and Choi, 2019).

In addition to its wealth of tourist attractions, Gdansk's prominence in amber shopping further enhances its appeal as a tourist shopping destination. Recognized as one of the world's leading centers for amber trade, the city has earned the title of the "Amber Capital of the World." This status is reflected in its numerous shops and workshops dedicated to amber craftsmanship and commerce, which play a significant role in the local tourism landscape (Piatkowska, 2017; Studzieniecki, 2022; Cudny et al., 2023).

This study examines the flow of tourist visitors to amber shops in Gdansk by observing variations in customer activities based on their leisure time. The strong position of Gdansk in the amber trade not only underscores its historical significance as a commercial hub but also enhances its attractiveness as a popular tourist destination. This unique characteristic positions Gdansk as a focal point within sustainable tourism strategies, emphasizing the intersection of shopping tourism and cultural heritage. By leveraging its rich amber trade, Gdansk effectively attracts shopping tourists seeking authentic experiences,

contributing to the city's economic vitality and cultural preservation (Olszewski-Strzyżowski, 2018).

This study focuses on analyzing customer flow in six selected amber shops within Gdansk's historic Old Town over three distinct dates: April 25, May 2, and May 9. These dates were strategically chosen to differentiate customer numbers based on workdays and a national holiday, as April 25 and May 9 were regular workdays, while May 2 was a national holiday in Poland. To observe the contrast, customer entries were tracked during specific time intervals each day, providing insight into how tourist shopping behavior varies according to the type of day.

Among the selected shops, four are located on Mariacka Street, called Amber Street (pl. Mariacka), a popular and scenic area highly admired by visitors. These shops - BG Amber, Dawid, A2 Amber House, and Image Silver - are situated within Gdansk's renowned amber district, where tourists often spend time enjoying the ambiance. In contrast, the other two shops, Amber Art on Długa Street and Millenium Gallery on Długie Pobrzeże, were chosen for their unique locations outside of Amber Street, positioned among a variety of other retail stores. This setup allows for a comprehensive analysis of customer flow across different types of shopping environments within the Old Town.

THE AIM AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

The research was conducted over three specific dates (April 25, May 2, and May 9) to assess variations in the number of clients visiting selected shops. These dates were strategically chosen to contrast visitation patterns on different types of days: April 25 and May 9 were regular workdays, while May 2 was a national holiday in Poland. Observations focused on tracking the number of clients entering the shops over designated time intervals throughout each day. Among the selected shops, four are located on Mariacka Street, a popular and scenic area highly admired by visitors. These shops - BG Amber, Dawid, A2 Amber House, and Image Silver - are situated within Gdansk's renowned amber district, where tourists often spend time enjoying the ambiance. In contrast, the other two shops, Amber Art on Długa Street and Millenium Gallery on Długie Pobrzeże, were chosen for their unique locations outside of Amber Street, positioned among a variety of other retail stores. This setup allows for a comprehensive analysis of customer flow across different types of shopping environments within the Old Town.

To achieve a comprehensive analysis (Wendt and Bógdał-Brzezińska, 2018a), several methodological approaches were employed:

Comparative Analysis: This method was used to contrast client numbers across the selected dates, enabling a clear understanding of how the visitor varies depending on the type of day.

Descriptive Analysis: This approach was applied to provide a coherent summary of the collected data, ensuring the integrity and consistency of observations.

Categorical Division: Client numbers were differentiated by specific calendar dates to observe the impact of workdays versus free days.

Graphical Representation: Visual tools were utilized to illustrate the findings, facilitating clearer comparison and interpretation of visitation trends across different dates.

AMBER SHOPPING TOURISM IN GDANSK

Gdansk is located on the northern coast of Poland along the Baltic Sea, at 54°22' north latitude and 18°37' east longitude. This strategic position has historically made Gdansk a vital hub for both land and maritime trade routes. The nearby Martwa Wisła (Dead Vistula) River, a branch of the Vistula River - one of Poland's largest rivers - connects Poland to Central and Western Europe, facilitating the city's trade development. Specifically, Gdansk's access to the Baltic Sea and its inland waterways has played a critical role in the city's economic and commercial growth. These geographical features have been central to establishing Gdansk as a prominent trade and tourist center (Wendt and Wiskulski, 2017; Pantea et al., 2024) (Figure 1). Additionally, Gdansk is one of the world's foremost centers for amber trade, earning it the title "World Capital of Amber" (Wendt, 2010; Kosmowska-Ceranowicz, 2012; Olszewski-Strzyżowski and Wendt, 2018). Amber plays a major role in Gdansk's touristic appeal, with numerous shops and workshops dedicated to amber craftsmanship and trade.

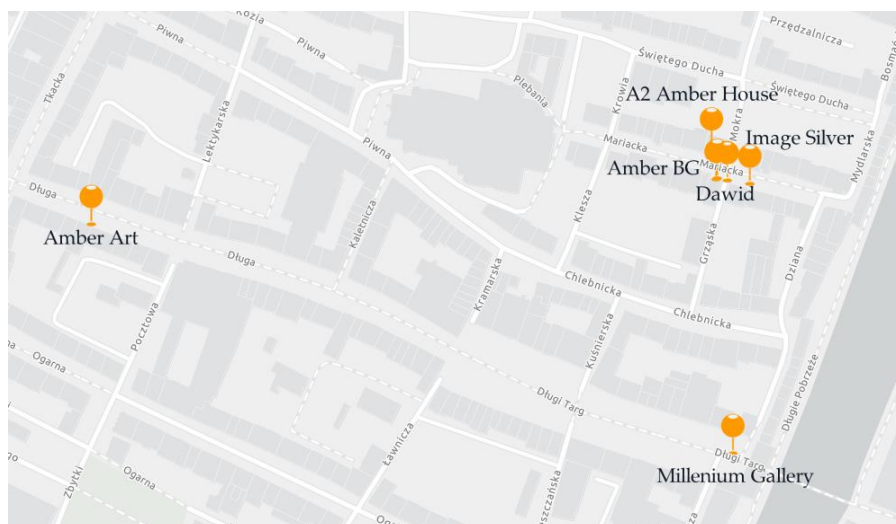


Figure 1. Gdansk location map

Formation of Amber

The Polish term for amber, "bursztyn," is derived from the German word "Bernstein," which translates to "burning stone" (bern = fire, stein = stone). This etymology reflects the historical significance attributed to amber's distinctive characteristics. In Russian, amber is referred to as "yantar," a term that highlights the gem's cultural and historical importance along the Baltic and Kaliningrad coasts, where it has been highly valued for centuries.

The process required for amber formation spans a very long period and is generally thought to have occurred between the Cretaceous Period (approximately 100 million years ago) and the Eocene Epoch (around 50 million years ago). Amber is believed to have originated from a forest that covered large areas of the Scandinavian Peninsula, Finland, Karelia, and the Kola Peninsula to the north of Samland, collectively known as Fennoscandia. For many years, the source of amber was thought to be an extinct pine tree, *Pinites succinifera*.

However, it has recently been suggested that a tree related to the umbrella pine (*Sciadopitys*) may have been the resin producer.

Amber forms from fossilized tree resin that was originally produced as a defense mechanism in response to injuries or fractures in the bark. Resin seals wounds and protects the tree from external threats, including insects (Edwards et al., 2007). Its sticky nature also attracts small invertebrates, such as insects, which become trapped in the resin and are then preserved as inclusions (Jenkins Shaw et al., 2022). These inclusions are typically covered by subsequent resin flows, leading to layers of entombed specimens. Fresh resin gradually loses its volatile oils and hardens through a process called polymerization, after which it is known as "copal." Copal is the first stage of amber formation. When the tree dies, the copal becomes buried in the soil, where it remains for millions of years, undergoing further polymerization to transform into true amber. The resin's antiseptic and antimicrobial properties protect any trapped organisms from decomposition, allowing for extraordinary preservation in the fossil record, occasionally even preserving soft tissues (Fowler, 2018; Wolfe et al., 2009).

Amber Gemstone Classification

According to the International Amber Association from Gdansk, Poland, there are several classifications of the Amber Gemstone:

- Natural Baltic Amber (Succinite) - Gemstones that went through mechanical treatment, without changing their natural properties (grinding, cutting, polishing). It retains its original chemical composition and physical properties.
- Modified Baltic Amber (Succinite) - Gemstones that were put through thermal or high-pressure treatment, changing their physical properties such as the degree of transparency and color or shape.
- Reconstructed (pressed) Baltic Amber (Succinite) - Gemstone made of Baltic Amber pieces that were pressed in high temperature and under high pressure without adding components.
- Bonded Baltic Amber (Succinite) (doublet, triplet) - Gemstone consisting of two or more parts of natural, modified or reconstructed Baltic Amber added together with the use of the smallest possible amount of a binding agent necessary to join the pieces.

Amber Shopping through Tourism

Gdańsk, recognized as the World Capital of Amber, boasts a rich array of shops specializing in this unique gemstone. In the Old Town alone, there are 19 amber shops, each offering a variety of products that highlight the beauty and versatility of amber. Additionally, the Przymorze area features three shops that specialize in amber products: "Biżuteria Artystyczna Beata Narkiewicz-Sas," "Amber Marcin Buzalski," and "Bursztyn Prasowany. Drucker W." In the Oliwa region, there is also a shop that sells lamps adorned with amber gemstones.

Our research is based on 6 shops in the region Old Town of Gdansk:

- four Amber shops on Amber (pl. Mariacka) Street:
 - BG Amber
 - Dawid
 - A2 Amber House

- Image Silver.

- one shop named Amber Art (Długa 74, 80-831 Gdańsk, Poland);
- one more Amber shop called Millenium Gallery (Długie Pobrzeże 2, 80-888 Gdańsk, Poland).

THE RESULT OF THE FIELDWORK RESEARCH

The first shop, Amber Art (Figure 2), has the same results of the following shop, Millenium Gallery. As expected, the chart (Figure 3) shows us the second date has almost 9 times more clients than the first date, yet the last date has almost as many clients as the second one.



Figure 2. Amber Art shop

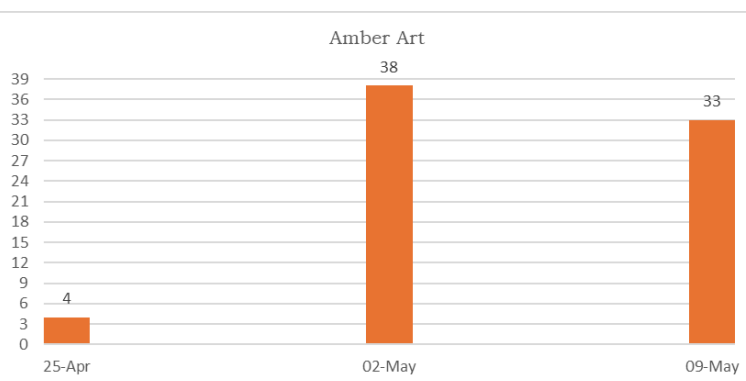


Figure 3. Amber Art shop visitors count during 25th April - 2nd May - 9th May

Like the first shop, Millenium Gallery (Figure 4) is in the same situation (Figure 5), the first day has a low client count, but the second has 6 times more clients and the last day has still a high client count despite the expectations owing to the start of normal days with work hours.



Figure 4. Millenium Gallery shop

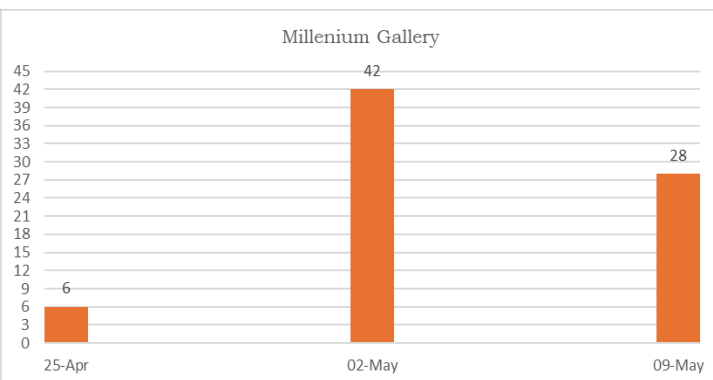


Figure 5. Millenium Gallery shop visitors count during 25th April - 2nd May - 9th May

The next four shops, located on the famous Amber Street in The Old Town, have various results regardless of their narrow location. As expected, the first shop named Dawid (Figure 6) has the client count (Figure 7) according to the

calendaristic dates: the first and last date have a similar, lower count, and the second one, where people had free workdays, has almost double the numbers.



Figure 6. Dawid shop

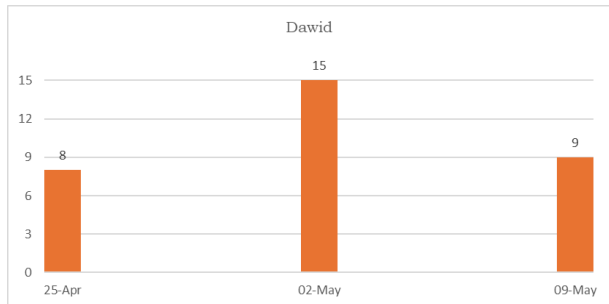


Figure 7. Dawid shop visitors count during 25th April - 2nd May - 9th May

The second shop in Amber Street, A2 Amber House (Figure 8), is low value (Figure 9) yet, as expected, more clients visited the shop during the second date.



Figure 10. A2 Amber House shop

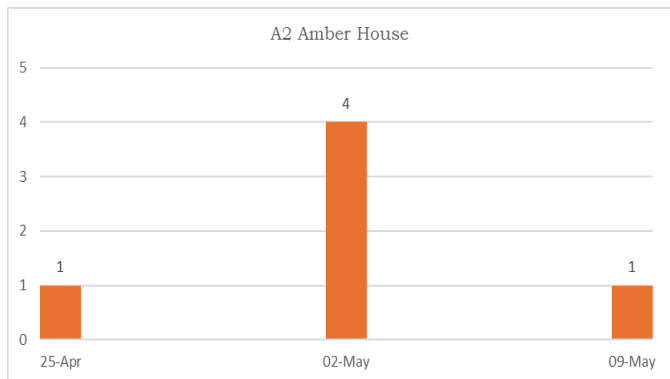


Figure 11. A2 Amber House shop visitors count during 25th April - 2nd May - 9th May



Figure 12. Image Silver shop

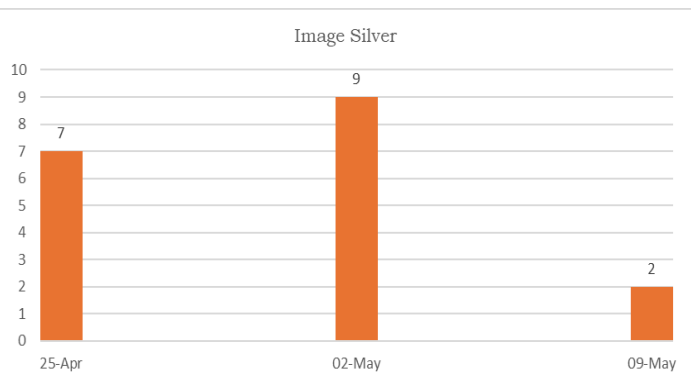


Figure 13. Image Silver shop visitors count during 25th April - 2nd May - 9th May

Contrary to the first few shops, Image Silver (Figure 12) has quite a different client count value (Figure 13) meaning the first date has a higher count than the last one, however the date which suits the calendaristic day with the free time.

Like the last shop, Amber BG (Figure 14) has the same appearance in terms of the graphics (Figure 15), the first day having more visitors than the third one, and the second one having more than double.



Figure 14. Amber BG shop

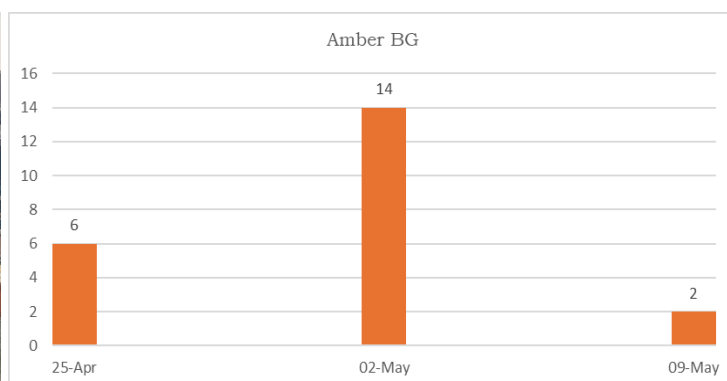


Figure 15. Amber BG shop visitors count during 25th April - 2nd May - 9th May

In conclusion, the first two shops, Amber Art and Millennium Gallery, exhibited similar fluctuations in visitor numbers. In both stores, visitor numbers were low on the first days, while a significant increase of nearly six to nine times was observed on the second days. As expected, this increase in traffic occurred on dates that coincided with holidays. Although the visitor numbers dropped again on the last date with the start of workdays, they remained higher compared to the first date. This situation indicates that despite the shift to working hours, the stores still maintained a high potential for visitors. The four stores on Amber Street, despite being in similar locations, displayed different visitor trends. The first store on Amber Street, Dawid, showed a predictable trend in visitor numbers. Visitor numbers were low on the first and last dates, with nearly a twofold increase on the second date, which coincided with holidays. Similarly, low values were observed in the second store on Amber Street, but an increase in visitor numbers was recorded during the holiday dates. In contrast, a different trend was observed in the Image Silver store. In this store, the visitor count on the first date was higher than on the last date, while the visitor count peaked on the second date due to the holiday effect. Lastly, a similar trend was observed in the Amber BG store; the number of visitors on the first day was higher than on the third day, and there was a significant increase in visitor numbers on the second date, coinciding with the holiday.

These results indicate that holidays and working days have a notable impact on the number of visitors to the stores, and this impact can vary depending on store location and visitor profiles.

The overlap of peak periods in amber shopping tourism in Gdansk with Poland's national holidays and other holiday periods of increased tourist density

will contribute to a rise in tourism activities and revenue. The study by Felsenstein and Fleischer (2003) on shopping tourism demonstrates that proper timing plays a critical role in increasing the number of tourists and sales. In this context, amber shops in Gdansk can enhance visitor attraction by organizing special campaigns and events during national holidays and major festivals. Timothy and Butler (1995) indicate that the promotion of local specialty products and their marketing in an international context have a significant impact on enhancing shopping tourism (Bar-Koëelis and Wendt, 2018; Wendt et al., 2021). The amber sector in Gdansk can highlight cultural values through marketing campaigns focused on national identity, making Gdansk an attractive destination for tourists coming to shop (Wendt and Bógdał-Brzezińska, 2018b). For example, by providing information on the historical significance of amber and emphasizing local handicrafts, a deeper cultural shopping experience can be offered to visitors. Moreover, Reisinger and Turner's (2012) studies on shopping tourism reveal that shoppers typically seek culturally meaningful and unique products. Amber stores in Gdansk can cater to this interest by offering unique amber items crafted with local artisanship. Additionally, interactive experiences such as workshops on amber craftsmanship or guided tours highlighting the historical significance of amber can be organized. Such experiences not only enhance interest in the city but also position Gdansk as a unique cultural shopping destination. Additionally, as expressed in studies by UNWTO (2014) and Wong and Law (2003), shopping tourism has broader economic and social impacts. The amber shopping sector in Gdansk not only contributes to the local economy but also positively influences other sectors, such as accommodation and transportation. By collaborating with local businesses on various projects, amber retailers can foster sustainable economic growth and strengthen the social fabric of the community.

CONCLUSIONS

Shopping tourism in Gdansk has an active flow, especially during the days when people are free from work. Largely because of the popularity of the famous name, World Capital of Amber, Gdansk attracts tourists from all around the world, which are sent into a fascinating world of the Amber resources found in the city.

Regardless of the small number of clients visiting the shops, Gdansk has a lot of visitors focused on gemstones. During the research we have found that clients tend to be more attracted to the shops where they have a unique location. And regardless of the admiration of the Amber Street, it does not have that many clients as other shops such as Amber Art or Millenium Gallery. People do tend to use the admired Amber Street mostly for leisure rather than a shopping location, whereas other Amber shops have more clients being surrounded by shops unrelated to their offer.

Amber is a great tourist attraction for the city of Gdansk, that brings value to Shopping Tourism in the city.

In practical terms, these results underscore the importance of aligning marketing and operational strategies in amber shops with national holiday schedules. By understanding the impact of free days on shopping behavior, businesses can better plan for increased tourist traffic and tailor their offerings to maximize customer engagement during these peak times. This insight

highlights the role of strategic timing in enhancing shopping tourism and capitalizing on the unique appeal of amber products.

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