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THE DIVERSIFICATION OF TOURISM SPACE IN CENTRAL POMERANIA

Abstract: The paper presents issues of the formation and diversification of the Central Pomeranian tourism space. The author conducted an analysis of tourism accommodation facilities and tourism assets, which allowed him to identify a number of functional subspaces within the Central Pomeranian tourism space. Particular attention was paid to recreational tourism in coastal and lake areas, as well as to selected aspects of agritourism and the role of spas in Central Pomerania.

Key words: Central Pomerania, tourism space, spa treatment, recreational tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The turn of the 21st c. was marked by an unusual rate of transformation which influenced all areas of life. One is tourism which has been developing very rapidly compared to other similar phenomena. This development, as regards demand and supply, is strongly related to spatial expansion, while the spatial changes caused by tourism are best visible in areas of tourism reception. The growing amount of free time, typical of post-industrial society, often referred to as leisure society, as well as a general increase in affluence, curiosity about the world and the improving accessibility of many places, as yet unexplored, result in a growing interest in new spaces. More and more areas are acquiring qualities typical of tourism spaces.

For the purpose of the discussion presented in this article, the author will use the definition formulated by S. LISZEWSKI (1995), which has been supplemented and expanded several times, as well as the definition of tourism space presented by B. WŁODARCZYK (2009). S. LISZEWSKI (1995) describes tourism space as a "functionally distinctive part (subspace) of general geographical space, i.e. a space consisting of natural elements of the Earth's crust (natural environment), permanent elements of human activity in this environment (economic), as well as the human environment in its social meaning".

Tourism space understood in this way is a functionally distinctive subspace of geographical and social

space, and the reasons why it was created and developed include the need for recreation, cognition and experience, the attributes of modern tourism (LISZEWSKI 1995). Thus, it may be assumed that this space was created by people who use the geographical and social environment for tourism purposes, discover and develop it to satisfy their need for recreation, cognition and experience.

The main aim of the paper is to present the diversity of the internal structure of Central Pomeranian tourism space. On the one hand, the author will identify the natural and anthropogenic determinants of tourism development; on the other hand, a lot of attention will be devoted to tourism infrastructure and traffic. Taking into consideration the complexity of the Central Pomeranian tourism space, some aspects of spa tourism and seaside tourism will be presented, with a particular consideration of recreational tourism.

2. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AS A TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STIMULANT

Central Pomerania, which includes the medium-sized former Koszalin and Słupsk voivodeships, covering the total area of 15,923 km², extends over the middle part of South Baltic Coast/*Pobrzeże Południowobałtyckie* (Słowińskie Coast/*Wybrzeże Słowińskie*, Bialo-

gard Plain/*Równina Białogardzka*, Słupsk Plain/*Równia Słupska*, Damnicka Upland/*Wysoczyzna Damnicka*), as well as the northern part of the Pomeranian Lake District/*Pojezierze Pomorskie* (Lobeska Upland/*Wysoczyzna Łobeska*, Drawskie Lake District/*Pojezierze Drawskie*, Drawska Plain/*Równina Drawska*, Polanowska Upland/*Wysoczyzna Polanowska*, Bytowskie Lake District, *Pojezierze Bytowskie*, Szczecineckie Lake District/*Pojezierze Szczecineckie*) (KONDRACKI 1994). Taking into account the physiographic conditions in the studied area, we may identify three basic types of landscape: the plains in the south, formed by outwash plains and ground moraine, the varied landscape of terminal moraines and other young postglacial formations in the middle part, and the ground moraine plain area in the north, cut with *Urstromtäler* (AUGUSTOWSKI 1977).

Due to the glacial character of the relief, the large number of lakes, the sizable forested area and the coastal location, Central Pomerania has considerable tourism potential, with the seaside areas being particularly attractive. Their attractiveness is determined first of all by the following natural environment elements:

- the wide, sandy beach,
- maritime climate and balneological assets,
- considerable exposure to sunlight, clean air,
- protected areas (a national park, landscape parks, nature reserves, monuments of nature, etc.),
- therapeutic mud and mineral water deposits.

When analyzing the tourism attractiveness of the natural assets of Central Pomerania, one should men-

tion the lake areas. The large number of rivers, the wealth of post-glacial landforms, a healthy microclimate, large forest complexes, and above all numerous lakes, make it possible for specialized tourism (fishing, hunting, water sports) to develop.

The diversified tourism attractiveness of Central Pomerania has been confirmed by a comprehensive tourism valorisation¹ (Fig. 1). After estimating tourism assets, infrastructure and accessibility by transport by means of a point-based ranking method, and after calculating the tourism attractiveness coefficients of individual *gminas* (communes), it turned out that the most attractive were the seaside *gminas* and those located in the southern part of the Central Pomeranian lake region.

3. ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES

The number of tourism accommodation facilities has been commonly regarded as the basic measure of tourism infrastructure, and the main indicator of the reception capability of the region (WŁODARCZYK 2009). In 2012, in the area of Central Pomerania there were 647 facilities, which offered 84,600 beds². The accommodation facilities, located in 22 towns (71.0%) and 43 *gminas* (66.2%), were clearly seasonal (64.4%) and distributed unevenly (Fig. 2). Natural environment qualities which contribute to tourism development in Central Pomerania are found in two different areas: in the coastal zone and in the lake region. The greater tourism-recreational attractiveness of the natural coastal environment was the reason for the highest concentration of accommodation facilities in the coastal zone. In the coastal zone, a classic bands and nodes system of tourism accommodation distribution is found; the areas between individual elements of tourism investment are not strongly anthropogenic and include cultural and natural elements (SZWICHTENBERG 2006). An exception is the eastern part of the Central Pomeranian coastal zone, with individual nodes of concentration. The seaside area consists of the following tourist regions: Dźwirzyno-Grzybowo-Kołobrzeg-Sianożęty-Ustronie Morskie, Gąski-Łazy, Dąbki-Darłowo, Wicie-Jarosławiec, Dębina-Rowy, Smoldzino-Gardna. Single concentration nodes are formed at Ustka and Łeba. The most attractive part of the area for tourists offered 75,800 beds (89.6% of the total number). The administrative units with the largest numbers of beds included: the city and *gmina* of Kołobrzeg (19,400 beds), the rural *gmina* of Mielno (13,300), the towns and *gminas* of Ustka (10,500), Darłowo (10,200) and Łeba (8,800), and the *gminas* of Ustronie Morskie (6,900) and Postomino (4,100).

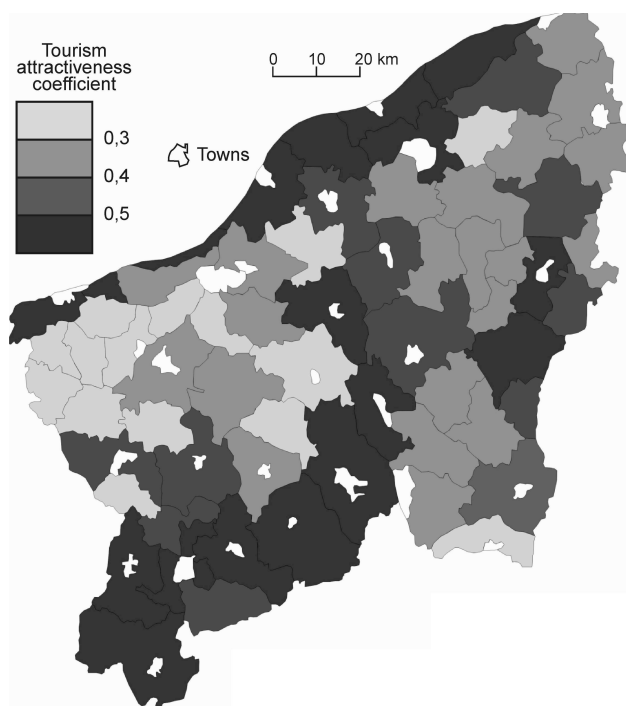


Fig. 1. The attractiveness of Central Pomerania: 2004
Source: E. Rydz (2007, p. 18)

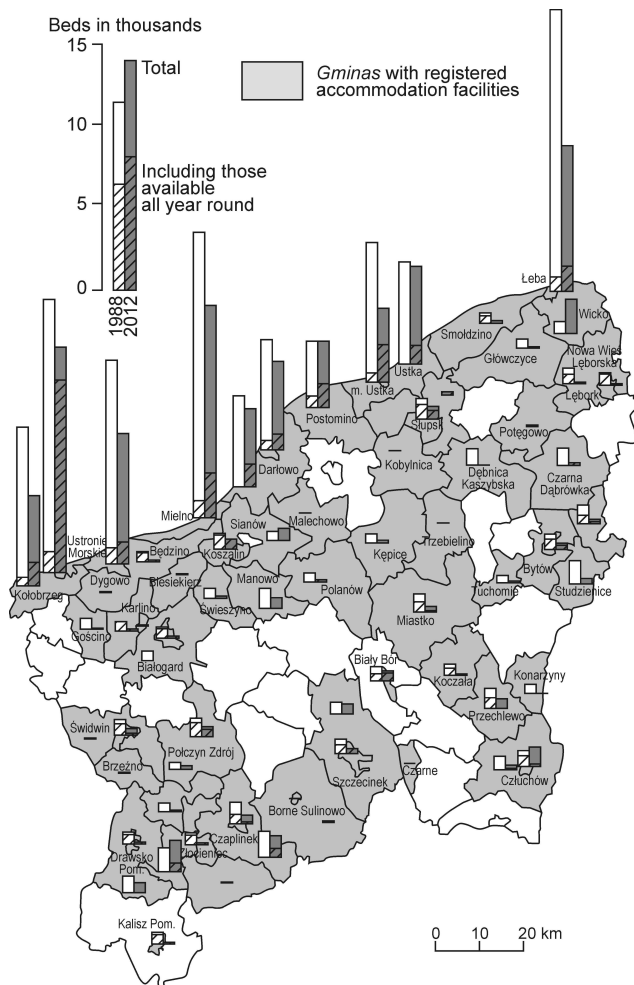


Fig. 2. Accommodation facilities in the *gminas* of Central Pomerania: 1988 and 2012

Source: author's compilation

There are basically two lake-forest areas in Central Pomerania: Drawskie Lake District/*Pojezierze Drawskie* and Bytowskie Lake District/*Pojezierze Bytowskie*, as well as a part of Krajeńskie Lake District/*Pojezierze Krajeńskie*. The Drawskie Lake District is the area of the largest concentration of lakes in Pomerania, with about 320 ribbon and ground moraine lakes, covering over 1 ha (KONDRACKI 1994). Its visual-landscape attractiveness is heightened by the largest and picturesquely situated lakes: Drawsko, Lubie and Wielimie, around which tourism accommodation and concentration nodes have been formed. They are made up by: the towns and *gminas* of Złocieniec (1600 beds), Czaplonek (900), and Drawsko Pomorskie (300). The other tourism region includes Bytowskie Lake District, with a considerable number of relatively small lakes. Tourism accommodation facilities are found in the town and *gmina* of Bytów (400 beds), the *gmina* of Studzienice (400), the town and *gmina* of Miastko (300) and the *gmina* of Parchowo (300). An isolated tourism region in the southern part includes the town and

gmina of Człuchów (1400 beds) and the *gmina* of Przechlewo (600).

Research shows that the forms of tourism accommodation in Central Pomerania are greatly varied, but still the majority of beds are offered by holiday recreation centres (40.8%), situated mainly in the coastal zone. Just four coastal towns provided a total of 9700 beds (2000 in Kołobrzeg, 2700 in Darłowo, 1500 in Ustka, 3500 in Łeba).

Summer tourism accommodation of the lowest standard includes youth hostels and camp sites. In 1988, they made up 15.1% of the whole accommodation, while in 2012 – only 13.2%. The smaller number of beds is the result of the decreasing role of youth hostels (a drop from 1.8% in 1988 to 0.2% in 2012). Spatially, however, we may observe a growing number of beds at school youth hostels in the region, functioning mainly in the Drawskie Lake District, and are used mostly by school and university students during hiking trips and on sailing camps.

The accommodation facilities of the highest standard include hotels, motels and pensions. Over the past 20 years, the number of beds in hotels and motels has doubled. It is partly due to increasing the standard of already existing facilities, usually holiday recreation centres, as well as to building new ones.

Generally speaking, Central Pomerania has a poorly developed network of hotels, which function mainly in seaside towns. The main role is played here by Kołobrzeg, which offers 3600 beds in hotels, i.e. 42.4% of the whole hotel accommodation in Central Pomerania. A new element of the tourism accommodation structure in this region is agritourism accommodation. We should stress at this point that until the early 1990s, it was the enormous farms created from former State Agricultural Enterprises (*Państwowe Gospodarstwa Rolne* – PGRs) that played the predominant role in agriculture. The liquidation of PGRs was one of the causes of mass unemployment and the functional reconstruction of the countryside. You can often find historical palaces in villages which formerly belonged to PGRs, e.g. the palace-park complex in Strzekęcín, called the 'Amber Palace'. A stimulus for the economic revival of many micro-regions was agritourism – a form of rural tourism developing at farmsteads. According to the Institute of Tourism, in 2009, agritourism activity was found on 455 farms, while in 1996 there had been only 193 such places (RYDZ 2007). Jointly, they offered 5110 beds. Agritourism in Central Pomerania develops mainly in the seaside *gminas*, largely depending on the attractive natural and landscape environments.

The other region with a large number of agritourism accommodation facilities is the Lake District area. The region of Drawskie Lake District, across Szczecineckie Lake District, as far as Kaszubskie Lake

District, has the largest density of agritourism farms and the largest number of beds.

Private rooms to let are an important part of tourism infrastructure in Central Pomerania and a significant element of tourism accommodation on the coast. However, it seems impossible to estimate a credible number of beds in guest rooms, due to the incomplete and unreliable reports. Numerous studies, conducted as a part of field practice done by social-economic geography students, confirm that the number of beds is significantly under-calculated.

4. RECREATIONAL TOURISM

According to A. MATCZAK (1987), tourism is a social phenomenon which basically involves a change of the place of stay; the main motivation is the need to rest and the main object is a person who has the possibility to choose the place of recreation, its forms and organization, to suit his/her interests, physical predispositions and financial means.

In the light of registered collective accommodation facilities, in 2012, nearly 1.1 million tourists stayed in Central Pomerania, 4.9% of recorded tourism in Poland. They were mostly Polish tourists, and they made up 80.5% of all tourists in Central Pomerania.

The largest tourist centre, situated directly on the Baltic Sea, was Kołobrzeg, with 349,000 tourists, i.e. 31.7% of the total number in the region. The most intensive is recorded in the coastal zone, which has been confirmed by Charvat coefficients (Fig. 3).

The second most important tourism region is the Lake District. In comparison to the seaside area, tourism here is relatively low and less concentrated, making up only 7.5% of the total in Central Pomerania (JAŻEWICZ 2011). The main centres of this region are its towns: Szczecinek (12,500 tourists), Bytów (10,300), Połczyn Zdrój (7,400), Czaplinek (6,900), Człuchów (5,900) and Złocieniec (5,600).

On the other hand, the study concerning the average time spent in Central Pomerania, allowed us to indirectly define the forms and character of visits. The mean duration in the coastal zone was 6.7 days, which shows that it is tourism based on a single place. In the Lake District zone it is shorter and ranges between 2.6 days in Biały Bór to 4.8 days in the *gmina* of Złocieniec. As shown by E. RYDZ (2007) and A. SZWICHTENBERG (2006), a certain drawback of tourism in Central Pomerania is its seasonality. An analysis of the seasonality of tourism-recreation in the area of Central Pomerania, conducted using both direct and indirect methods, points to one specific tourist season – summer with a clear domination of

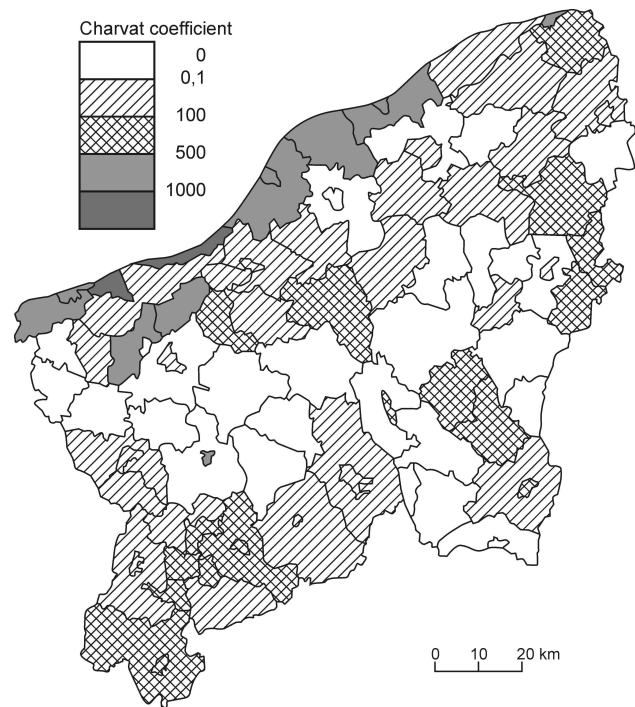


Fig. 3. Tourism intensity in Central Pomerania in 2012:
Charvat coefficient
Source: author's compilation

July and August. This seasonality is determined by the climatic conditions on the south coast of the Baltic Sea.

The importance of the tourist function in a given area is also shown by its geographical range of influence. In order to present the role of the holiday-recreational function in Central Pomerania, the territorial origins of tourists were analysed, using examples of tourist destinations in the *gmina* and town of Darłowo. The area was visited by both Polish and foreign tourists. The majority of foreigners were Germans and Scandinavians; smaller numbers came from Austria, Ukraine and the Netherlands. Polish visitors arrived from all Polish voivodeships, mostly from those situated in the western and central-southern parts of Poland, as well as from the mazowieckie, opolskie and małopolskie voivodeships.

5. SPA MEDICINE

With its wealth of natural assets with medicinal properties, mineral water springs, microclimate, etc., Central Pomerania is undoubtedly an exceptionally attractive and unique area, not only in Poland. As regards seaside spas (Kołobrzeg, Dąbki and Ustka), we should mention the stimulating nature of the bioclimate. A particular feature of the coastal climate is the presence of aerosols consisting of sea salt crystals

of iodine, produced by breaking waves. Optimum conditions for inhaling natural sea aerosols are provided when the wind blows from the sea and when it is foggy, while the quantity decreases with distance from the sea shore (KOZŁOWSKA 2009). The medicinal properties of the maritime climate are intensified by the forest complexes in the area. From the bioclimatic point of view, it is very important that many plants produce phytoncides – volatile chemical substances (essential oils) with germicidal and fungicidal properties, exuded by pine, larch, lime, oak and juniper. In the coastal zone of Central Pomerania, the most common is pine with its strong medicinal properties. An undeniable asset of seaside spas is climate- and water-therapy. Thalassotherapy (Gr. *thalesse* – sea), i.e. treating patients through a maritime climate, was already known in ancient Greece. Doctors' observations supported by clinical studies, proved the considerable usefulness of the sea and its climate in treating many chronic conditions (STRABUSZYŃSKA-LUPA 2009). The available materials show that thalassotherapy in Poland has a long tradition, as the first pools were built in as early as the beginning of the 19th c.: Kołobrzeg (1803), Sopot (1823), Świnoujście (1824), Ustka (1835), Krynica Morska (1840), and later Dąbki (1958).

Among lakes and forested moraine hills, in the middle of Drawski Landscape Park, we find the oldest spa in Central Pomerania – Połczyn Zdrój (1793). The lack of heavy industry, a low population density and abundant, wild nature make the Drawskie Lake District one of the ecologically cleanest areas of our country. A thick wall of forest, air saturated with the smell of resin, the abundance of lakes, and the location in the valley of the Wogra River give the local microclimate medicinal properties. For the most part of the year, the air has optimum humidity, and there are many sunny days. Strong winds are scarce and the annual temperature ranges are relatively small.

The most precious natural resources in the area are high quality therapeutic mud and saline waters. The therapeutic mud extracted from the high moraine hills is described by experts as one of the best in Europe. Połczyn Zdrój is one of the few spas in Poland where therapeutic mud is extracted on the spot; it does not have to be transported and processed, so it retains all the valuable medicinal properties. Połczyn saline water is drawn from about 1200 metres and contains a wealth of natural mineral elements. Due to the fact that it contains bromine, chlorine, iodine, calcium, potassium, magnesium, sulphur and a number of other elements, it is used for inhalation and medicinal baths.

At present, the spas of Central Pomerania offer treatments for twelve types of health problems, included in the International Statistical Classification

of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD10), and they largely correspond to clinical specializations. At the end of 2010, the majority of treatments were provided by spas in Kołobrzeg (11), Świeradów Zdrój (11), Świnoujście (10) and Ciechocinek (10). Kołobrzeg also belongs to the group of spa *gminas* with the largest number of spa medicine facilities in Poland – 27 at the end of 2010, and is closely followed by Ciechocinek, with 22 facilities.

The high status of the Central Pomeranian spas is also proved by the fact that in 2000-10 they had the following types of medical facilities: spa hospitals, spa sanatoriums, natural therapy centres, and spa outpatient clinics. In-patient facilities included sanatoriums for children. In 2010, 7500 patients under 18 years of age were treated in Kołobrzeg and Dąbki (49.0% of the total for Poland) – 5100 in Dąbki and 2500 in the spa hospital in Kołobrzeg. In comparison, at the largest facility of this type in Poland – Rabka Zdrój – 6000 children were treated at the same time.

The importance of the four 'statutory' spas in Central Pomerania is undoubtedly confirmed by the fact that at the end of 2010 they offered not only a wide spectrum of treatments, but also a total of 8381 beds in spa medicine facilities. This made up 22.2% of the total number of beds in the 44 Polish spa medical facilities in the same year.

Another measure of the considerable potential of the spa medical facilities situated in the area is the total number of patients, which amounted to 145,066 in the same year, i.e. 25.3% of all the people using the services of spa medical facilities all over Poland. The most popular is Kołobrzeg, where in 2010, sanatoriums were visited by 104,396 patients, i.e. 79.1% of all those treated in Central Pomeranian spas.

As regards the number of beds in sanatoriums and the number of patients, major Polish spas also include Połczyn Zdrój, Dąbki and Ustka. In Dąbki, situated on the sand bar between the Baltic Sea and Lake Bukowo, the main assets are the healthy microclimate, breath-taking nature, vast forested areas, the wealth of unique specimens of seaside fauna and flora, therapeutic mud deposits, a golden beach, a beautiful lake and total tranquillity.

The importance of Central Pomeranian spas is confirmed by the fact that in 2010, 4,759,400 treatments were administered here, i.e. 15.7% of the total number in Poland (Table 1). I believe that the fact that over the period of 2005-10 the number of places in sanatoria was steadily growing is positive. The number of beds increased by 22.3%, compared to a mean national increase of 8.2%. The number of patients increased by over 31.9%, while in other spa medicine facilities that increase was less spectacular (4.0%). The number of person-days in Central Pomeranian spas increased by over 15.2%, while in the remaining 40 spas – by 7.4%

(PONIKOWSKA 2009). The more rapid increase in the number of patients than the number of person-days in Baltic spas shows that the mean duration of stay decreased. This is confirmed by the results of research conducted by E. RYDZ (2005) in Kołobrzeg. On the one hand, this may be explained by the increasing popularity of shorter stays (often for the weekend) for a variety of purely medicinal purposes, as well as for SPA & Wellness treatments. On the other hand, we must not ignore the significant share of foreign patients (mainly from Germany and Scandinavia). Foreign patients usually prefer 2-week stays. Research shows that in 2010, 26,200 out of 42,200 foreign patients staying in Polish spas (c. 62.0%) chose Kołobrzeg as the main place of stay. Foreigners made up 26.9% of all patients staying for treatment in Kołobrzeg.

Table 1. Basic data regarding spa medicine facilities in Central Pomerania: 2005 and 2010

	Beds – as of 31 st December	Inpatients	Persondays of treatment in thousands	Treatments in thousands*
Poland – total:				
2005	34 894	550 789	9 315,9	30 698,9
2010	37 760	572 885	10 010,8	30 244,5
Central Pomeranian spas total:				
2005	6 784	109 938	1 846,3	4 789,3
2010	8 381	145 066	2 130,2	4 759,4
including:				
Dąbki				
2005	698	4 496	225,3	359,7
2010	799	14 155	195,2	383,1
Kołobrzeg				
2005	4 561	83 458	1 233,4	2 953,0
2010	5 966	104 396	1 496,7	3 127,1
Połczyn Zdrój				
2005	890	13 769	227,4	1 046,1
2010	960	17 296	258,4	807,1
Ustka				
2005	635	8 215	160,2	430,5
2010	656	9 246	179,9	442,1

* Data as of 2009.

Source: Spa medicine in Poland in 2005-2010. Statistical data and materials. Central Statistical Office. Statistical Office in Krakow, Krakow 2011; author's compilation.

The potential of Central Pomeranian spas also lies in the large number of natural therapies, which include mineral and natural mud baths, as well as inhalation. The conditions presented earlier, provided by the natural environment and local infrastructure, fully confirm that these therapies have become a brand product of the spas under discussion. They

offer 20% of the total number of treatments of this kind nationally, and the demand for traditional, natural medicinal products is growing, as they are the most trusted by patients. The popular natural therapies available in the spas, especially in Połczyn Zdrój and Kołobrzeg, include therapeutic mud treatments.

The youngest of the spas, Dąbki, due to its special location protruding into the open sea, has a highly favourable maritime climate, helpful in treating respiratory system diseases and allergies in children and adults. Therefore, inhalations make up over 85% of the total number of natural therapies for patients here.

In the coastal zone of Central Pomerania, based on rich natural resources with medicinal properties, as well as a particular type of climate, there are numerous 'statutory' spas, holiday-rehabilitation centres (e.g. in Jarosławiec) and destinations which provide selected medicinal services as a part of health prophylaxis (e.g. Dźwirzyno, Ustronie Morskie, Mielno, Łeba). People staying at destinations which have a holiday-rehabilitation function, take advantage of biological regeneration, hydro-massage, purely medicinal treatments, but also SPA and Wellness centres

Central Pomeranian spas are a major attraction for domestic and foreign tourists alike. People are becoming increasingly interested in this method of spending their leisure time, so spas have good prospects for development.

6. SUMMARY

The results of the analysis of quantitative data (accommodation facilities) on the one hand, and qualitative data (types of tourism assets) on the other, confirm that tourism space of Central Pomerania is internally diversified, with distinctive functional subspaces. As shown by the article, the importance of these subspaces varies, if we consider the development of tourism infrastructure, intensity of tourism and tourism assets. The most significant is recreational tourism, developing mainly in seaside areas, mostly based on places with a periodically changeable functional structure. Recreational tourism in the lake area plays a less important role and tourism nodes are by isolated lakes of a typically seasonal character. An extremely important role in Central Pomerania is played by agritourism, as it creates a chance to revive post-socialist farming areas. A particular role in Central Pomeranian tourism space is played by spa medicine, the economic basis of destinations functioning throughout the year. The growing interest in spa tourism among Polish and foreign patients forms strong foundations for the development of this activity in Central Pomerania.

FOOTNOTES

¹ In order to calculate the tourist attractiveness for *gminas*, J. WARSZYŃSKA's method was applied (1970).

² The source material used for analysis comes from the Local Data Bank, www.stat.gov.pl. The registered tourist accommodation facilities certainly do not present a realistic picture, there are significant discrepancies between statistical office and field studies. However, due to the size of the studied area, the registered accommodation facilities were taken into account.

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