

Determinants of participation in sport and tourism of visitors to Polish health resorts. A case study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. Spa tourism includes not only participation in tourist activities but also in recreational sports.

Aim of Study. The aim of the study was to identify the social and economic determinants of tourist and sports activity of Polish spa-goers.

Material and Methods. Primary and secondary materials have been used in the research. Secondary materials were data from diagnostic poll surveys and the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS). Primary data were collected on the basis of the author's pilot surveys.

Results. The participants indicated a number of reasons for visiting spas. The highest percentage of respondents pointed to curative and recreational aims as the most important. Gastronomic base was the best assessed factor, while tourist information and local transport the worst. The primary factors attracting visitors to the Kołobrzeg health resort were natural curative values, the quality of services and the standard of its accommodation base. The most common recreational activity was swimming, but interestingly, the spa-goers pointed to a shortage of swimming facilities.

Conclusions. Among the main aims of visiting a spa were preventive treatment and the opportunity to rest, resulting from widely understood wellness motivations. The development of wellness tourism in the Kołobrzeg spa depends on the increased supply of swimming and relaxation services, including yoga. A visit to a spa is determined not only by internal but also external factors. The spa visitors gave the highest marks to curative treatments, spa town atmosphere, hospitality and safety standards, while transport and tourist information services obtained the worst assessment.

KEY WORDS

sports and tourism, determinants of participation, spa, wellness health tourism, types of physical recreation.

Introduction

Travelling to spas is not only a form of tourism but also a recreational sport activity practiced by health resort visitors. Therefore, spa tourism, and especially wellness health tourism [1], is a kind of participation pattern that can be found not only in tourism, but also in the wide area of sport [2, 3]¹. Participation in both tourism [4, 5] and sport [2, 3,

6] depends on numerous factors. The determinants of participation in tourism can be demographic, socio-economic, natural, geographical and personal. These factors can influence the decision to make a tourist visit and the tourist visit itself [5]. The existence of different types of determinants of participation in tourist activities has been confirmed by different researches².

¹ The Act on Sport from 25 July 2010 defines sport as "(...) all forms of activities which, through occasional or organized participation, influence or improve physical fitness, development of social relations or achievement of sports results on all levels". Dz. U. [Polish Journal of Laws] no. 127, item 857. According to this Act, sport together with physical education and movement rehabilitation constitute physical culture. It means that the contemporary legal concept of "sport" also includes the term "physical recreation".

² W. Alejski studied 23 factors determining the participation of Poles in tourism in 2005. The examined factors included gender, age, education, social and professional community, work status, place of employment, opinions on the risk of losing a job, personal income, income per family member, savings, pensioner status, marital status, household size, number of adults in a family, place of residence, living conditions, possible change of living conditions, religiousness, children and political attitudes [4].

Similarly, participation in sport is based on a number of theories which describe the determinants of people's choices concerning their activities in leisure time [3, 6]. R. Winiarski distinguishes between personal factors (physical abilities, fitness, need of physical activity) and environmental factors (impact of society and culture) [3]. K. Sas-Nowosielski emphasizes, for example, the role of ontogenetic determinants of sports activity such as the possibility to undertake physical activity, perception of barriers in sport, and a belief that undertaking physical activity is reasonable [6]. Among determinants of health tourism development A. Lewanowska lists economic, social, psychological as well as supply factors [7].

Aim of Study

The aim of this study was to identify social and economic determinants of tourist and sports activities of Polish spa visitors. The following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the motives behind tourists' visits to spas?
2. What are the visitors' opinions about the health resort offer, including tourist and recreational facilities?
3. What factors encourage people to go to a health resort?
4. What sport and recreational services (wellness) are popular and what services are deficient?

Material and Methods

The present study used both primary and secondary materials. The latter consisted of data from diagnostic poll surveys and from the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS). Primary materials were collected during the author's pilot surveys. More specifically, the following materials were used:

- Data from a poll survey on assessment of the tourist product of Polish health resorts carried out by the Institute of Tourism in Cracow and the Association of Polish Spa Towns in Krynica in 2005, on a representative random sample of 3,461 visitors to all statutory health resorts in Poland. On the basis of the collected survey data and the official health resort ranking list, a ranking of competitiveness of particular components of the tourist product of Kołobrzeg spa was established³.
- Data from a regional database of the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS), which allowed us to determine the number of tourist visits as well as the health and tourist

potential of Kołobrzeg spa compared with other health resorts.

- Data from a questionnaire carried out among visitors (N = 52) to a statutory spa in Kołobrzeg (Zachodniopomorskie Province) in July 2009. Randomly chosen visitors were asked to fill in a specially prepared questionnaire which included 14 thematic and 7 metric questions, mostly open-closed, in accordance with the diagnostic poll method. The data from the questionnaires⁴ were subjected to a descriptive and comparative statistical analysis⁵.

Results

Assessment of the health and tourist potential of the Kołobrzeg spa compared with other health resorts

The representative surveys carried out in all Polish health towns and communes in 2005⁶ as well as the data from the Polish Central Statistical Office (GUS) allowed us to create a health resort ranking on the basis of assessment of health, tourist and para-tourist infrastructure, tourist and health services and the relationship between the prices and quality of these services [18], and determine the ranking position of the Kołobrzeg spa (Table I).

The ranking positions of different spas show that the Kołobrzeg spa is highly competitive (among the top five spas in Poland) in the following categories: cultural infrastructure (ranking position 4), gastronomic facilities (5), sports and recreational infrastructure (3), transport services (3), number of tourists using accommodation in spas (1), number of foreign tourists using accommodation in spas (1), number of tourists using tourist accommodation facilities (1), number of foreign tourists using tourist accommodation facilities (1), number of night's lodgings in spas (1), number of night's lodgings (1), number of facilities designed for tourist accommodation (1), number of spas (1), and number of night's lodgings in tourist accommodations (1).

Data from Table I also show that the Kołobrzeg spa was ranked low in such categories as health accommodation base (29), tourist information (24) and professionalism of service (22).

As regards the importance of components of standard health-related services, i.e. curative spa treatment facilities, several facts should be noted (Table II). The guests assessed highly the quality of graduation towers and drinking rooms in Kołobrzeg (4.11) as well as balneological services equip-

³ In order to compare the spa communes ANOVA was used as a standard parametric method. The level of statistical significance of differences between the spas was set at $p < 0.05$ [8].

⁴ The questionnaire reliability was checked using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. It exceeded the threshold value of 0.7, and for some questionnaire items it even reached 0.9.

⁵ The statistical descriptive analysis included such measures as arithmetic means, standard deviation, quartiles, coefficients of variation, etc. In the analysis of correlations mainly non-parametric methods of estimation of strength as well as direction of relationships were used, e.g. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. For quality variables, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (for variants possible to order), Yule's coefficient of association (for 2 x 2 tables), Chi-square, correlation relationships (for correlations between nominal and ordinal measures), and Kendall's tau-b and tau-c rank correlation coefficient were used. For variables with standard distribution, Student's t-test was used to compare mean values in the studied independent groups, determining the homogeneity of variance (Fisher-Snedecor and Levene's tests). To compare two groups with variables with non-standard distribution, the Mann-Whitney U test was used. For non-homogenous variances of the compared groups with standard distribution, the Cochran and Cox C Test was used. The distribution of the studied variables was checked with the Shapiro-Wilkes test. In the statistical analysis the level of significance was set at $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

⁶ 43 statutory health resorts from Poland were examined.

Table I. Evaluation of components of tourist product in the Kołobrzeg spa

No.	Competitiveness components of the Kołobrzeg spa product	Competitiveness of the Kołobrzeg spa	
		Evaluation ^{***} /Level	Place in the ranking of Polish spas
1.	Transport infrastructure	3.33	17
2.	Technical and sanitary equipment	3.72	19
3.	Health accommodation base (evaluation)	3.80	29
4.	Tourist accommodation base (evaluation)	4.13	8
5.	Infrastructure designed for walking (evaluation)	4.04	19
6.	Bicycle and fitness trails (evaluation)	3.89	15
7.	Graduation towers and drinking rooms (evaluation)	4.11	15
8.	Cultural infrastructure (evaluation)	4.04	4
9.	Gastronomic facilities (evaluation)	4.04	5
10.	Lifts (evaluation)	3.83	9
11.	Sports and recreational facilities (evaluation)	3.94	3
12.	Cleanliness, safety and aesthetics (evaluation)	3.87	18
13.	Cultural, sports and recreational events (evaluation)	3.76	7
14.	Professionalism of service (evaluation)	4.13	22
15.	Tourist information (evaluation)	3.75	24
16.	Spa services (evaluation)	4.11	15
17.	Trips and entertainment (day and night) (evaluation)	3.78	11
18.	Accommodation services* (evaluation)	3.88	6
19.	Public health service* (evaluation)	3.69	19
20.	Medical services* (evaluation)	3.93	9
21.	Beauty services* (evaluation)	3.74	8
22.	Transport services* (evaluation)	3.93	3
23.	Gastronomic services (evaluation)	3.91	7
24.	Cultural services (evaluation)	3.69	12
25.	Tourists using accommodation facilities in spas (number)**	107 477	1
26.	Foreign tourists using accommodation in spas (number)**	42 535	1
27.	Tourists using tourist accommodation facilities (number)**	192 137	1
28.	Foreign tourists using tourist accommodation services (number)**	78 436	1
29.	The percentage of the usage of accommodation facilities (%)**	65.1	8
30.	The percentage of the usage of spa accommodation facilities (%)**	73.80	17
31.	The number of night's lodgings in spas**	1 238 600	1
32.	The number of night's lodgings**	1 766 834	1
33.	The number of facilities designed for tourist accommodation**	51	1
34.	The number of spas**	23	1
35.	The number of night's lodgings of tourist accommodation**	9 025	1
36.	The number of night's lodgings in spas**	4 834	1

*evaluation of the relationship between prices and the quality of services in spas, **data from 2004, ***the evaluation scale: from 2 to 5. Source: Authors' own study on the basis of [4].

ment (e.g. water drinking facilities, inhalations). However, fourteen other spas were more competitive in this field. The infrastructure designed for strolling in the spring park, which is a standard component of spa tourism, was also highly assessed (4.04); nevertheless it only reached the 19th place in the ranking.

Among standard pro-health services, typical spa services were assessed highly (4.11) (however, 14 other spas received

higher scores) as well as medical services (3.93, 9th position in the ranking). The curative accommodation base (sanatorium, hospital) in Kołobrzeg is not a competitive component of the tourist offer (29th place in the ranking) and it was assessed below "good" (3.8).

One of the components of spa tourism, the so-called new paradigm, are trips and entertainment. However, in the case of Kołobrzeg spa this component was scored 3.78

Table II. Spa assessment in marks

Spa assessment (from -5 to 5)	
Assessment Category	Mark (\pm SD)
Gastronomic base	4.49 (\pm 0.95)
Cleanliness	4.37 (\pm 0.82)
Quality of tourist service	4.29 (\pm 1.19)
Safety standards	4.27 (\pm 1.27)
Accommodation base	4.26 (\pm 1.64)
Hospitality	4.21 (\pm 1.11)
Town atmosphere	4.15 (\pm 1.51)
Attractiveness of treatment and therapy	4.01 (\pm 1.26)
Recreational and sports services	3.13 (\pm 2.09)
Organization of tourist events	3.12 (\pm 2.26)
Organization of cultural events	2.86 (\pm 2.32)
Tourist information	2.72 (\pm 1.95)
Tourist signs	2.46 (\pm 2.19)
Local transport	2.24 (\pm 2.02)

Source: authors' own study

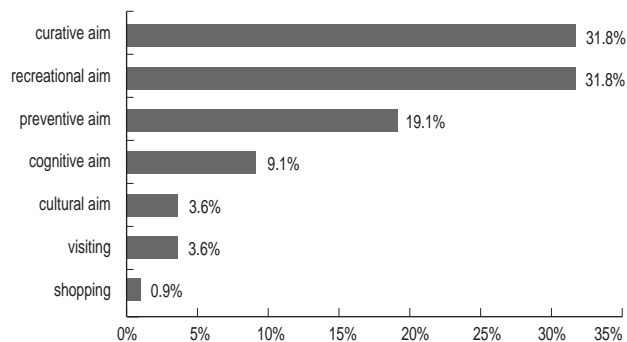
at the 11th place in the ranking, which was indicative of its rather low competitiveness. Similarly, often innovative components of the tourist product, e.g. beauty services, are not highly competitive (3.74, 8th place). Moreover, from the chosen components of potential product innovativeness, "infrastructure of bicycle and fitness trails" had also low competitiveness (3.89, 15th place). A very important example of potential components of product innovativeness are facilities for the development of sports and recreational services. Despite the evaluation level below "good" (3.94), the sports and recreational infrastructure in Kołobrzeg is competitive in relation to other Polish spas (3rd place in the ranking).

Although the results of surveys on the quality (respondents' marks) of some components of the tourist product in the Kołobrzeg spa do not prove their high competitiveness, this seaside resort is an acknowledged leader on the Polish spa market (Table I). It cannot be forgotten that the development of tourist and spa movement in Kołobrzeg is undoubtedly influenced by the greatest potential of its spa treatment infrastructure in Poland (Table I).

The aim of a visit related to the needs and motivation of spa visitors

The respondents usually indicated several reasons for coming to a spa. The most frequently specified (38%) were the curative aim and the recreational aim. Almost every fifth visitor (19.1%) indicated a preventive aim, and every tenth (9.1%) – a cognitive aim. Other aims such as business, religious, educational or sports (competitive) were not found (Fig. 1).

No significant relationship between the specified aim and the sex, marital status, age, education, level of income or place of origin was found. However, it does not mean that such connections were absent, as they might not have been identified due to the small number of respondents who took part in the research.

**Figure 1.** Aims of visiting the Kołobrzeg spa (%)

Key aspects of tourist stays and their assessments

The respondents assessing the Kołobrzeg health resort took a few factors into consideration. They gave their marks on a scale from -5 to 5. As Table II shows, the highest marks were given to the gastronomic base (4.49 \pm 0.95) followed by cleanliness (4.37 \pm 0.82). The following factors were also highly evaluated: quality of tourist service (4.29 \pm 1.19), safety standards (4.27 \pm 1.27) and accommodation base (4.26 \pm 1.64). However, it is worth noticing that the marks given to these categories were much more diversified than scores in the two leading categories.

Tourist information and local transport (< 2.5) were given the lowest score, but it must be mentioned that the grading scale was between -5 and 5, so a score above 0 may be considered satisfactory.

It must be underlined that the assessment of recreational and sports services necessary for realization of wellness aims was not the highest (3.13). Comparing the above assessment with the attractiveness of treatment (4.01) necessary for realization of healing aims, it must be stated that in the examined resort the fulfillment of curative aims was better than of wellness aims.

Determinants of visits to the Kołobrzeg health resort

The primary factors determining a visit to the spa in Kołobrzeg were its natural curative values, the quality of services and the standard of accommodation. The least important factor was a doctor's referral (opinion). This may be interesting as 47% of respondents came to the spa through their insurer (NFZ – National Health Fund, ZUS – Social Insurance Company, PEFRON – National Disabled Persons Rehabilitation Fund, KRUS – Farmers' Social Security Company).

The division of respondents into commercial (i.e. those who visit the spa on their own and pay for it) and so-called contractual (i.e. those whose visits are financed by the insurer) revealed a number of differences. The statistically significant differences ($p = 0.0214$) were observed in relation to the standard of accommodation – commercial visitors rated it higher. Also the safety standards in the spa were viewed differently – contractual visitors rated this factor higher than the commercial group ($p = 0.0157$). There was also a large difference in the assessment of historical and cultural qualities of the spa ($p = 0.0221$) as well as advertising and promotion ($p = 0.0045$) (Table III).

When it comes to factors (scale from 1 to 10) connected to a large extent with wellness, the following ones turned

out to be fairly significant: possibilities of spending free time (average mark: 7.19); standard of recreational and sports base (6.30) and the range of services in the spa (7.49).

Using the recreational and tourist offer of the Kołobrzeg spa

The analysis of ways of spending free time in the spa facilities showed that the spa swimming pool was used most often; however, this was an attraction that displayed the highest variability of assessments, which can be indicative of a significant diversification between particular groups of pool users. Other popular spa attractions included dancing, cultural and sports events and trips. Using a solarium

or playing games which do not require intensive physical effort such as bowling, billiards and darts seemed to be least interesting (Table IV).

Deficiencies in the recreational and tourist offer in the Kołobrzeg resort

The offer of the Kołobrzeg spa mostly lacks swimming facilities (Fig. 2). Also, it is worth noticing that 20% of respondents pointed to the lack of relaxation and recreation options. On the other hand, the lowest number of respondents indicated deficiencies in the tourist (“trips”) and curative offers (“additional treatments”). Considering the fact that Kołobrzeg is a spa town, almost 10% of peo-

Table III. Factors determining a visit to the Kołobrzeg spa

Factors determining a visit to the spa (from 0 to 10)				
Category	Overall (N = 52)	Commercial (n ₁ = 26)	Contractual (n ₂ = 23)	Significance of differences
	Mark (±SD)			p
Natural curative values	8.79 (±1.77)	8.39 (±1.92)	9.40 (±1.35)	0.5874
Quality of services	8.25 (±2.24)	8.30 (±1.92)	8.18 (±2.67)	0.6021
Standard of accommodation base	7.93 (±2.18)	8.29 (±1.94)	7.76 (±2.39)	0.0214 ←
Popularity and prestige of the spa	7.73 (±2.78)	7.42 (±2.92)	8.31 (±2.50)	0.1075
Feeling safe in the spa	7.72 (±2.84)	7.35 (±3.24)	8.57 (±2.06)	0.0157 ←
Standard of gastronomic base	7.57 (±2.39)	7.60 (±2.16)	7.79 (±2.70)	0.2546
Wide range (multi-optional) of services in the spa	7.49 (±2.75)	7.05 (±2.85)	8.23 (±2.49)	0.0734
Possibilities of spending free time	7.19 (±3.16)	6.62 (±3.49)	8.00 (±2.54)	0.1516
Good opinion of the spa	7.12 (±2.29)	7.00 (±2.12)	7.47 (±2.70)	0.3011
Standard of recreational and sports facilities	6.30 (±3.12)	5.57 (±3.28)	7.58 (±2.43)	0.7220
Previous visits to the spa	5.87 (±3.71)	5.04 (±3.76)	7.20 (±3.34)	0.0780
Good and easy access	5.82 (±4.12)	5.68 (±3.75)	6.71 (±4.60)	0.0273 ←
Standard of local transport	5.78 (±3.65)	4.87 (±3.62)	7.53 (±3.29)	0.2560
Historical and cultural values	5.25 (±3.37)	4.30 (±2.82)	6.92 (±3.71)	0.0221 ←
Advertising and promotion	5.14 (±3.55)	3.77 (±2.94)	7.29 (±3.45)	0.0045 ←
Distance from the place of residence	5.00 (±3.96)	3.86 (±3.69)	6.79 (±3.83)	0.3713
Doctor’s referral/opinion	4.97 (±4.03)	3.50 (±3.49)	7.07 (±3.91)	0.5874

Source: authors’ own study

Table IV. Frequency of using spa attractions

Frequency of using the recreational and sports offer of the spa (0 – 10)	
Category	Mark (±SD)
Swimming pool	5.50 (±4.55)
Dancing eves	4.47 (±4.04)
Cultural and sports events organized by the spa	4.23 (±3.32)
Trips and hikes	4.20 (±3.52)
Aerobics and other forms of gymnastics	2.27 (±3.40)
Recreational and sports team games	2.23 (±2.53)
Gym	2.00 (±3.18)
Relaxation and calming exercises	1.96 (±3.12)
Solarium	1.52 (±2.98)
Bowling, billiards, darts	1.33 (±2.94)

Source: authors’ own study

ple who declared a lack of “additional treatments” is not that low.

Bearing in mind the increasingly important role of recreational elements in health tourism, the following deficiencies of the Kołobrzeg spa must not be left unacknowledged:

- exercising at the gym (over 13.5% of respondents indicated they lacked this type of physical activity),
- cultural and sports events (over 11.5% of respondents indicated the lack of thereof),
- playing team games (over 13.5%),
- dancing and aerobics (over 15.5%).

Moreover, under the “other offer” some respondents pointed to the lack of sauna and possibilities to play tennis or table tennis; nevertheless, such declarations constituted no more than 4% answers, being undoubtedly the least important component of the analyzed offer of recreational and tourist services.

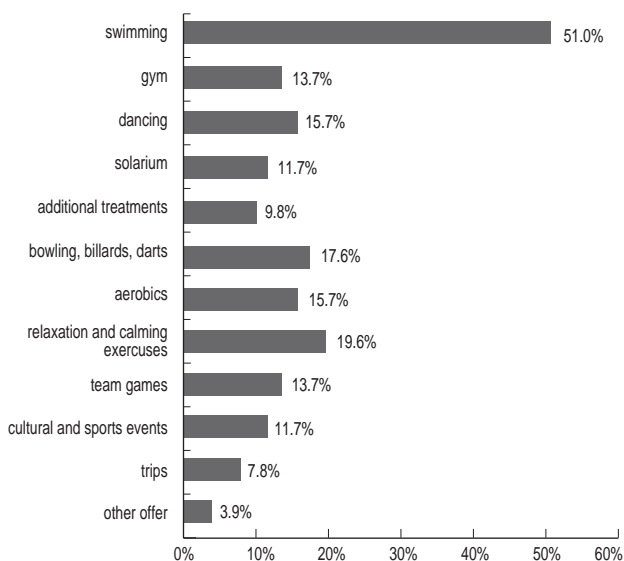


Figure 2. Deficiencies in the recreational and tourist offer as specified by visitors to the Kołobrzeg resort (%)

Discussion

The results of the present study carried out in the Kołobrzeg health resort confirmed the results of other studies. The most important aims of visiting spas were curative, recreational and preventive [8, 9, 10]. The results revealed that in a big spa – like in Kołobrzeg – recreational and preventive aims related to wellness motivation are as much important as curative aims, whereas curative aims prevail in small spas that focus on one function, as confirmed in an earlier study of the Wysowa health resort in the Mazowieckie Province of Poland [10].

It must be remembered that the recreational and tourist motivation of visitors comprises different aims [11], thus it is difficult to talk about a single reason for their visits to a spa, even if it is the most important one. The dominance of wellness-related aims shows that the prevailing number of visitors were motivated by preventive and/or recreational aims. But it does not rule out that their secondary aims can be curative [12]. As a consequence, “wellness visitors” will use some of the services for “curative visitors”.

Considering other research on the motivation in wellness tourism, it must be noticed that such reasons as relaxation, recreational physical activity, “pampering” and “escape” do prevail [12]. They prove the wide potential for development of wellness tourism, especially when the medical paradigm is not the most important one.

Increasing market needs result in a growing share of wellness services (recreational and sports or cosmetological), especially in the most popular curative and tourist health resorts. This was confirmed by a study carried out in the Kołobrzeg spa – the biggest one in Poland, with over 200 thousand visitors and on average 1.7 million lodgings

annually, during the last few years [14]. This was also confirmed by previous representative studies carried out in 2005 in all statutory spas in Poland on a sample of 3,390 visitors, showing the dominance of the preventive aims (33.7%) followed by curative (28.6%) and recreational aims (19.6%) [8]. This is important, since according to the health tourism model, the realization of curative aims is particularly related to wellness tourism [1].

Achieving a particular aim by the spa visitors allows them to fulfill their needs [15]. According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, human needs can be divided into physiological, aesthetic, safety, love/belonging, esteem, self-actualization, knowledge and understanding [16]. If Maslow’s theory is applied to tourist activity, that it shows that tourism can satisfy people’s needs on all levels [17]. Considering the broad meaning of the term “health”, it must be noted that spa visits do not only result from the fulfillment of the need of safety, for instance, visits with a curative aim. Following Maslow’s theory, health resort visits being examples of tourist activity are also connected with recreation, pleasure, joy, cognition, thus resulting from the realization of higher needs [18].

In the research of tourist and recreational activity the theory of motivation is often applied [11, 18, 19]. Especially the theory of needs plays an important role in studying the reasons for tourist trips [18]. The two basic concepts are “push” and “pull”, which can be used in the analysis of motivation for spa visits.

The “push” concept is related to factors which induce people to go to a spa (so-called “internal” factors⁷), i.e. needs which are the contents of particular aims. R. Winiarski distinguishes the following recreational motivations: activity-related, cathartic, health-related, emotional, social, ambitious and cognitive [11]. Following the above theory, especially activity-related, cathartic and health-related motivations can be regarded as primary reasons behind spa visits⁷.

In the theory of needs, the “pull” concept comprises the so-called “external factors” which often determine a visit to a spa [19]. The research on the “pull” factors of the Kołobrzeg spa showed that these are (in visitors’ opinion) curative values of the spa and the quality of services. The present study confirmed the results of earlier research, where natural curative materials turned out to be one of the most important [10]. In turn, foreign studies of the “pull” factors in spas showed that, in the visitors’ opinion, the important factors – apart from curative values and spa infrastructure – included the range of medical services, innovative forms of treatment and services, quality of gastronomic services and friendly attitude of the spa personnel [21]. A study by J. Górna pointed to the importance⁸ of such factors as cleanliness (4.5), sanitary equipment (4.4) and available treatments (4.4) [9].

The analysis of visitors’ assessment of the spa in Kołobrzeg confirms the results of other studies in which visitors gave high marks to cleanliness, safety standards, hospitality, atmosphere of the spa town and spa treatments

⁷ In literature four segments determined by different motivations can be distinguished, i.e. wellness holidays, beauty holidays, health care holidays and anti-aging holidays [20].

⁸ The scale of importance: from 1 – not important to 5 – very important.

[8, 10, 22]. Furthermore, the research carried out by J. Górna showed that high marks were given especially to the personnel (i.e. doctors, nurses, physiotherapists) using natural curative materials during treatments [9].

The study of components of the Kołobrzeg spa offer revealed high assessment of the gastronomic base, which has not always been given high appraisals [10]. This shows a systematic improvement of this factor in Polish spas. Moreover, it must be remembered that the Kołobrzeg spa is one of the biggest in Poland, where the potential of gastronomic offer is significantly high. The results of studies by other authors showed that with regard to catering, the highest marks were given to quality of food, manners and politeness of staff and cleanliness, which on average received 4.1 on a 5-point scale [9].

One of the elements of Polish health resorts services (often poorly assessed by visitors and tourists, and thus influencing the competitiveness of these places) is the sports and recreational offer. The studies of other authors confirm that in some Polish spas both the availability and attractiveness of sport and recreation facilities in wellness services were the worst assessed factors of the spa product [21]. On the other hand, the traditional curative offer was assessed higher. Furthermore, in the presented survey results concerning the Kołobrzeg resort, the comparison between the sports and recreational offer (3.13) and curative offer (4.01) definitely favors the latter. This has been confirmed by other studies of the spa offer in Kołobrzeg as well [8, 22].

The comparison of the sports and recreational infrastructure of the spa in Kołobrzeg with other spas in Poland awarded the Kołobrzeg spa the third place [8]. It can be stated that the analysed infrastructure was competitive in comparison with other Polish spas. However, the rather low assessment of sports and recreational infrastructure (3.94) in a representative study from 2005 indicated the general low level of competitiveness of the wellness offer in other Polish spas: 40 of them were ranked below the Kołobrzeg spa. This shows that the role of the sports and recreational offer is not fully exploited, and it is often an innovative component of the spa product in Poland [23, 24].

The study of the popularity of the sports and recreational offer in Kołobrzeg showed that visitors most often expected such elements as: swimming, dancing, cultural and sports events, trips and hikes (in the order of preference). This was also confirmed by other researchers, however, the order of preference varied [9, 10, 25]. According to the respondents, the offer of the Kołobrzeg spa lacks the swimming facilities. Over 50% of respondents emphasized this shortage, which results from the rather limited number of appropriate swimming places in Kołobrzeg in relation to the extensive tourist and spa activity in this town. On the other hand, the swimming offer is the most popular one, which was proven by other research results.

Other deficiencies in the sports and recreational offer, also indicated in other studies, include insufficient amount of relaxation and calming exercises, e.g. yoga, which are the basic services of wellness tourism [10, 25]. It results from the fact that visitors find it difficult to pursue their cathartic ("purifying") aims in spas, and it is also connected with fulfilling

their need of relaxation [11], being a consequence of a high level of stress experienced by an increasing number of Poles.

Conclusions

1. One of the main motivations for visiting the Kołobrzeg health resort is, apart from therapy, recreational and preventive treatment resulting from widely understood wellness aims.

2. The aims of visits to the largest spa in Poland are connected with the health, cathartic and activity aims.

3. Further development of wellness tourism in the Kołobrzeg spa depends on a larger offer of swimming facilities, e.g. thermal baths, and relaxation and calming services, including yoga. The conducted study clearly confirmed the existence of these deficiencies.

4. A visit to Kołobrzeg is determined not only by the so-called internal "push" factors (need-related), but also by external "pull" factors, including mainly curative values of a spa and the quality of services.

5. The visitors to the Kołobrzeg spa gave their highest assessment marks to gastronomic base, cleanliness, quality of service, safety, accommodation, hospitality, atmosphere of the town and curative treatments (in order of importance).

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