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RANGE OF THE SPATIAL INFLUENCE AND TOURIST'S PERCEPTION OF THE POLISH COASTAL RESORT EXEMPLIFIED BY USTKA

Krzysztof Parzych

*Institute of Geography
Pomeranian Academy in Słupsk
ul. Partyzantów 27, 76-200 Słupsk
e-mail: krzysztof-parzych@wp.pl*

Abstract

Costal resorts are main regions penetrated by tourists in Poland. The reception values of the coastal resorts are mainly predestinated to the holiday tourism (3 S from English words – sea, sun, sand). Tourist traffic in coastal resorts has seasonal character. The first goal of this article was to show the range of the spatial influence and tourists' perception of the tourist coastal resort exemplified by Ustka. Second goal was to determine the tourists way of perceiving Ustka considering theirs demographic and socioeconomic features. The results proved the strong position of Ustka as one of the most popular Polish coastal resorts indicating the wide range of its spatial tourist influence.

Key words: Ustka, tourists, range of tourist spatial influence, perception of the tourist space, tourist-recreational space

INTRODUCTION

Coastal resorts are one of the main tourist destinations in Poland. The coastal environment is a very strong attraction for tourists and constitutes a complex system of tourist band recreational values which are utilized by reposing people. P.L. Pearce (1992) distinguish three elements in tourist and recreational coastal zones. There are:

- the hinterland – the zone of the tourist infrastructure where accommodation and other tourist services for guests are provided. This zone is situated behind the beaches and there are all hotels or different types of accommodation and various tourist services as gastronomy, travel agencies, tourist information and other services,
- the transit zone – the zone where the dunes are,
- recreational and activity zone – the zone of various activities which are situated in the area of beach and sea.

This structure of coastal zone is typical for major coastal resorts in the world.

Ustka is one of the most popular Polish coastal resorts and every year is visited by many Polish and international tourists and visitors. The town is situated in the middle of Polish coast line of Baltic Sea, about 17 kilometers from Słupsk. Today Ustka has about 17 000 inhabitants. Tourism, apart from fishing industry, creates most income for the town and belongs to its economic basis. Ustka is famous as a popular resort and as a spa resort. Spa Ustka is famous for curing respiratory track diseases, cardiovascular system, internal illnesses and kinetic diseases.

RANGE OF THE SPATIAL INFLUENCE OF USTKA AS TOURIST COASTAL RESORT

A range of the spatial tourist influence of the seaside resorts is one of the most interesting problems in the matter of tourist migrations in coastal resorts.

The range of the spatial influence of Ustka was a major research problem undertaken in this studies in the context of what are the geographical origin and socioeconomic features of visitors coming to Ustka. The second subject of interest for the author of this article was: tourists – behavior and their perception of recreational area in Ustka. Our source of information were questionnaire surveys, from the 5th July 2006, taken on beaches in Ustka in the middle of the week. Nearly 500 tourists (497) participated in our research. The questionnaire form contained questions such as: ways of travel used, accommodation facilities during their stay in Ustka, ways of spending free time, how many trips to Ustka were taken before and the duration of planned stay in Ustka. Tourists were asked about their opinion on tourist attractions of Ustka and surroundings, qualities and flaws of the town in the wide context of the tourist-recreational development. We wanted to get tourists opinions and their perception of tourist area of Ustka and its surroundings. In our questionnaire form we also included questions on demographic and socioeconomic structure of visitors in Ustka.

The tourists questioned by us (497 persons) come from 135 cities situated in all Polish provinces. Such a great variety of places where tourist came from is the proof that Ustka is highly esteemed as holiday destination and health resort. Warsaw was the place where most of the questioned tourist came from (51 persons). It was about 11% of the whole examined population. Number of inhabitants of Słupsk was significant as well, which was the result of short distance between those places. There were 49 people from Słupsk, what equals 10% of the whole population questioned. The next in the line where places of origins such as: Poznań (34), Kraków (16), Wrocław (13), Bydgoszcz (13), Łódź (12), Toruń (12), then Kielce, Częstochowa, Lublin,. Over half (50.7%) of asked tourists were inhabitants of major Polish cities (with number of inhabitants over 100 000). The rest of the tourists came from cities and towns with population smaller than in these mentioned above.

High number of tourists from the big cities generally confirms the higher tourist activity of people living in cities, what is a result of:

- generally higher spatial mobility and tourist activity of urban population,
- better financial status of urban population,

- higher participation of people with higher education level, comparing to the analogical situation for people living in rural areas,
- much faster and more burdensome pace of living in the city, noise, pollution and other disadvantages of the city life.

These are the main factors and reasons why more substantial number of the urban population is participating in tourist activities, comparing to people living in the country.

Spatial analysis of residence places allowed to distinguish main areas of where do visitors from Ustka reside. These are:

- towns within the short distance from Ustka, Słupsk and other towns of the Pomoranian province,
- major cities (capital cities) and other towns of surrounding provinces,
- cities of strongly urbanized provinces, with the biggest cities – Mazovian, Łódź, Małopolska provinces (Fig. 1).

The smallest number of tourists in the examined population come from the Opolskie, Podkarpackie and Lubuskie provinces. Analysis of the spatial range of all the places that visitors in 2006 came from allows to conclude, that touristic importance

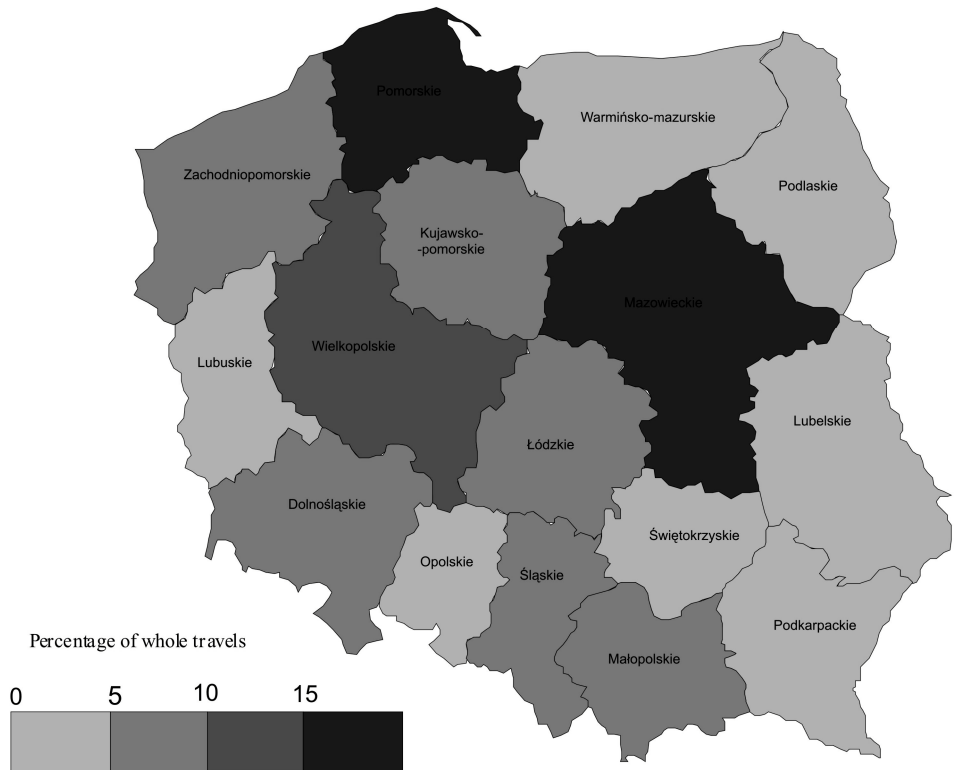


Fig. 1. The range of the spatial influence of Ustka

Source: personal study, based on the results of the questionnaire survey

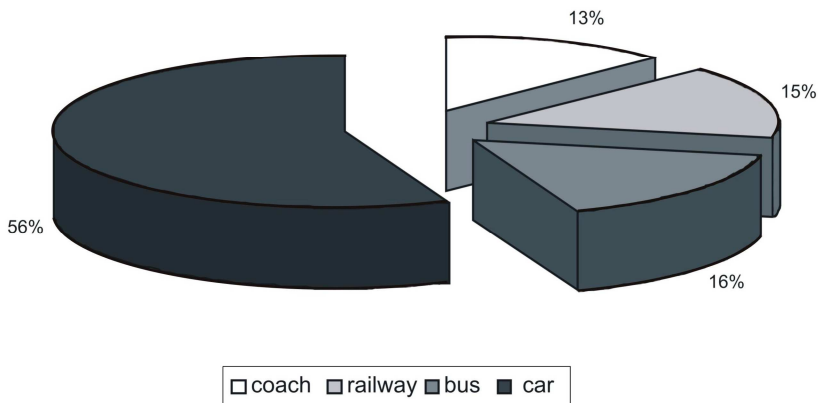


Fig. 2. Ways of transport used by the examined group of tourists in their travel to Ustka
Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

of Ustka is a function of two main determinants: the level of urbanization of tourists' origin territories and spatial distance of these areas and reception's area – Ustka. The smallest number of tourists in the examined group come from the states located in the greatest distance from Ustka, and at the same time from states with the lowest level of urbanization and from smaller towns.

The majority of tourists participating in the survey arrived to Ustka individually, therefore car was dominating way of transport (Fig. 2). The bus and train were other ways of transport used in the travels. Small amount of rail and bus journeys to Ustka is a result of the car travelling domination in domestic tourism (dominance of the individual tourism). In case of Ustka this situation is also caused by small amount of train and bus connections.

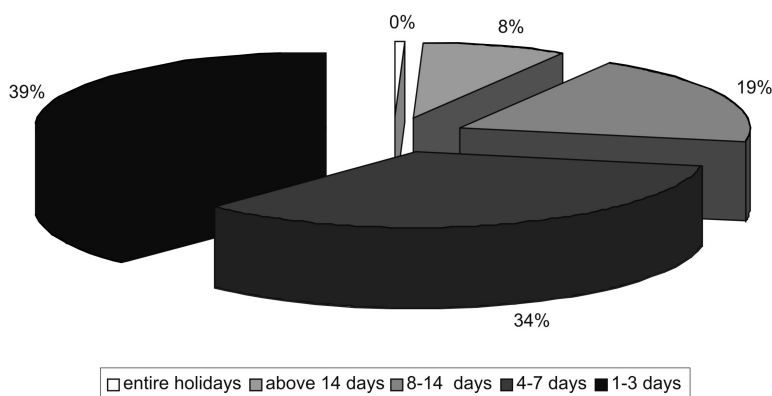


Fig. 3. Tourist's length of stay in Ustka
Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

As a typical seaside resort (without spectacular tourist attractions) Ustka is above all meant for long-stay tourism (Fig. 3). The examined tourists were asked about planned length of their stay in Ustka. The majority of examined tourists declared stay for 1-3 days (37.4%), next groups declared stay for 4-7 days (34.5%) and above 14 (19%) days. Large amount of declared stays from 1 to 3 days was caused by big number of inhabitants of Słupsk and surrounding areas. They usually stay in Ustka for short time and often without accommodation. Tourists from other regions usually declared stays from 4 to 7 days and above 14 days.

Accommodation facilities are the basic elements of the coastal areas' tourist management. In case of seaside resorts the quantitative evaluation of these facilities is coming across certain problems. This is a result of the specific situation of Polish seaside resorts, where the majority of accommodation facilities is seasonal. Furthermore many of accommodation places offered by inhabitants of Ustka are situated in private houses and often unregistered amongst official accommodation facilities. Such situation causes certain problems in the statistical identification of accommodation facilities and tourist traffic in the city.

The official statistic data of GUS and Institute of Tourism allow to determine the approximate number of accommodation objects, number of accommodation places and the number of Polish and foreign tourists using those places. However the official statistic data of registered objects, accommodation places and recorded tourist traffic in Ustka are burdened with the substantial undervaluation. The scale of the mistake is not known. According to Potocki who researched the accommodation infrastructure and tourist traffic in the region of Lower Silesia the mistake of official statistic data (GUS) can reach even 30%¹.

According to data of the Institute of Tourism (2006) the town of Ustka had 5176 accommodation places (2402 all-year-round places) and rural commune of Ustka re-

Table 1

Accommodation infrastructure and tourist traffic in Ustka in 2006

COMMUNE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Rural commune of Ustka	34	17	5176	2402	58753	1850	519570	5863	272	6117
City commune of Ustka	51	8	6812	1105	38157	2752	304923	18682	109	4041

Source: Data of the Institute of Tourism, www.intur.com.pl

1 – general amount of objects of accommodation, 2 – amount of all-year-round objects, 3 – general amount of accommodation places, 4 – amount of all-year-round accommodation places, 5 – amount of tourists, 6 – amount of foreign tourists, 7 – amount of nights spent by tourist, 8 – amount of nights spent by foreign tourists, 9 – amount of guest rooms, 10 – amount of accommodation places in guest rooms

¹ Observations come from the unpublished paper of Jacek Potocki about "Development of the Polish Sudety accommodation since World War II to modern times" represented during the 23rd conference: "Tourism geography research workshops" on the 20-22/09/2007 in the Rochna Town.

spectively 6812 and 1105 accommodation places. The data indicates a high differences between the number of stationary and seasonal accommodation facilities and confirm the seasonal character of tourist traffic in Ustka (Tab. 1). According to the official statistics of the Institute of Tourism in 2006 the town of Ustka was visited by

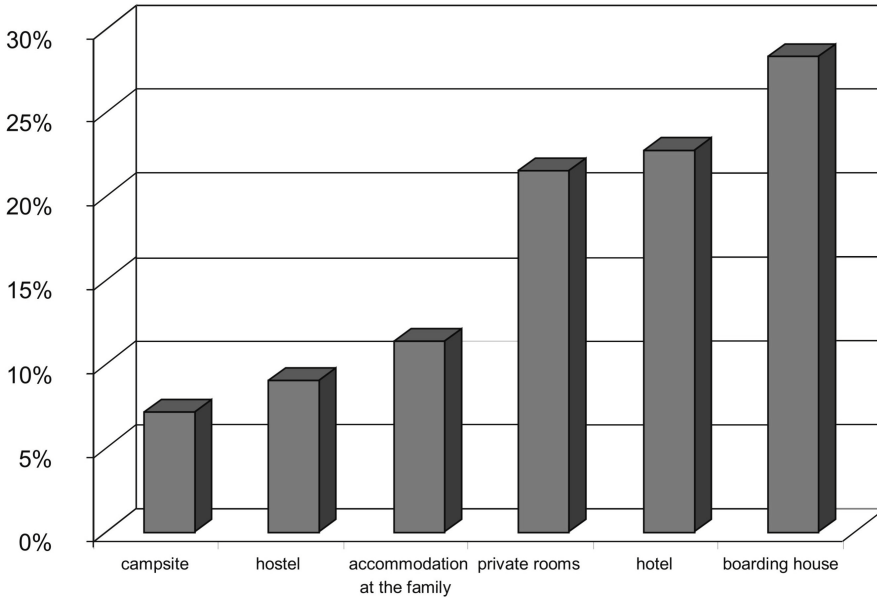


Fig. 4. Forms of accommodation used by tourists during their stay in Ustka
 Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

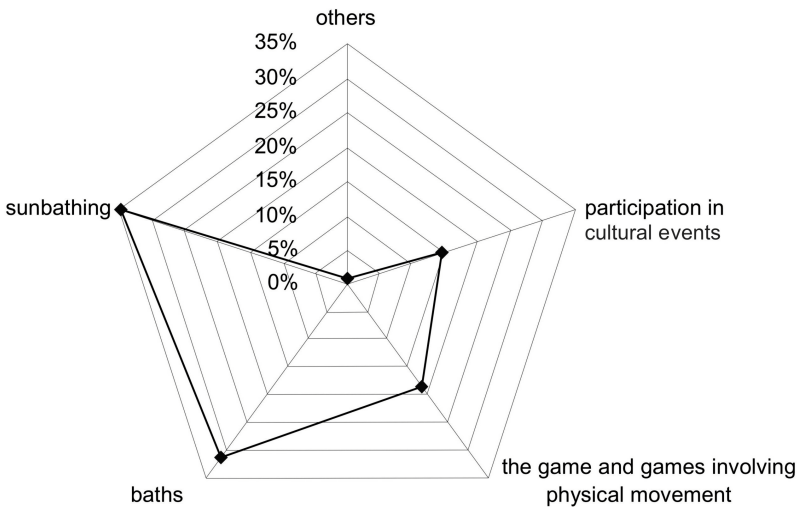


Fig. 5. Major forms of time spending by tourists during their stay in Ustka
 Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

58 753 tourists and rural commune by 38 157. They spent 519 570 nights in the town area and 304 923 in the rural commune area.

Tourists were asked about the forms of accommodations they used during their stay in Ustka (Fig. 4).

The majority of tourist used an accommodation in boarding house (27%), then in hotels (23%) and in private rooms (20%).

Amongst the forms of spending time tourists in Ustka most often chose baths, sunbathing and participation in different festivals located on the beach and on the promenade (Fig. 5).

The majority of respondents visited Ustka again, however significant part of tourists was not able to say which time did they visit Ustka. It is worth noticing, that half of visiting Ustka were there at least 10 times in the past and that nobody was visiting Ustka for the first time. Such a big number of tourists revisiting Ustka may mean that tourists are quite loyal to this town and is a sign of unquestionable quality of the place and its tourist values. This certainly confirms the high position Ustka has among Polish coastal resorts and the importance holiday tourism has in Polish people's mind. However, on the other hand 25% of all population questioned came from Słupsk and surroundings and most of them visited Ustka over 20 times (Fig. 6).

The majority of stays in Ustka were individual holiday trips so they were mainly organized independently (Fig. 7). Over 50% of respondents declared they organize their excursions to Ustka themselves, and about 30% of travels were organized by their families and friends. Only 10% of all trips were organized by professionals such as travel agencies.

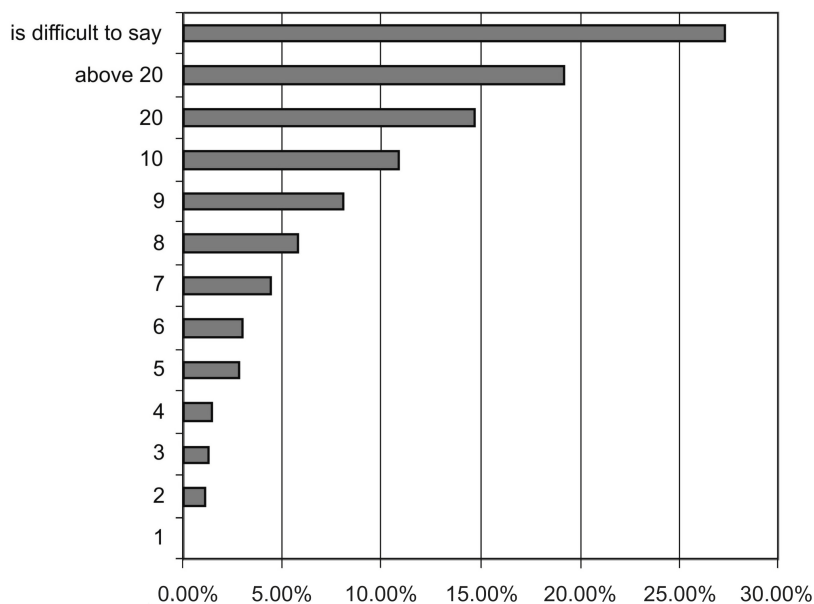


Fig. 6. Number of stays in Ustka up to date

Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

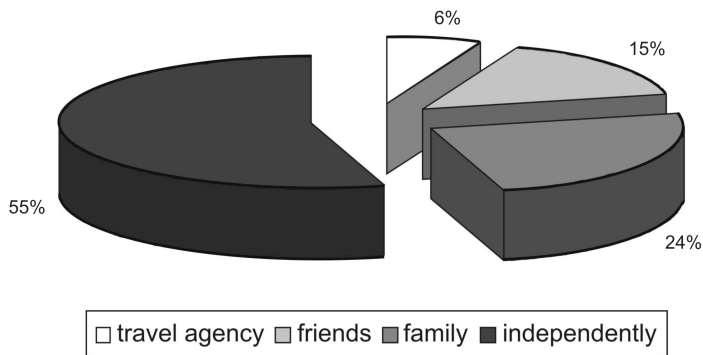


Fig. 7. Forms of organizing tourist trips to Ustka

Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

This mainly shows that in Poland people tend to use travel agencies when going abroad, as international journeys usually create more problems and are more sophisticated. Tourist trips within the country are usually taken without any professional help (as travel agencies or tourist boards for example).

SOCIOECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF TOURISTS VISITING USTKA

One of the main the tourist activity's determinants is socioeconomical structure of tourists themselves. This kind of activity is strongly determined by financial status, level of education and demographic structure of tourists, especially age. Sex of population is a less important factor when comes to tourist activity and attendance.

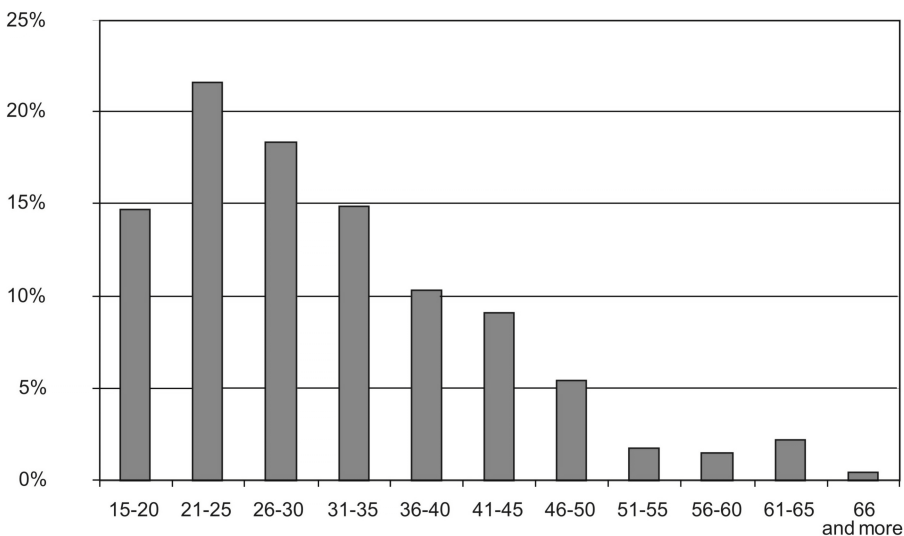


Fig. 8. Age structure of tourists

Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

The majority of the examined tourists' group were young people, what points to the structure of age (Fig. 8). About 70% of respondents were under 35 years, majority of which were 21-25 years (21.5%) and aged 25-30 – 18.3%. Definitely the least of the respondents were older than 50 years old – only about 6% of the whole group of tourists.

Analysis of the tourists' education structure shows the dominance of people with university (40% of the whole group) and high school education (about 33%). This indicator confirms the higher tourist mobility of people with university and secondary education, comparing to other social groups (Fig. 9).

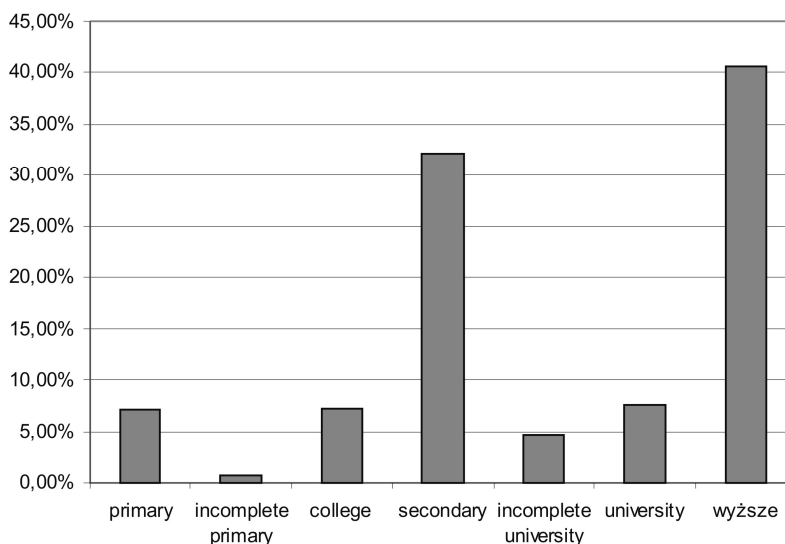


Fig. 9. Structure of education of tourists

Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

Many researchers points in their studies at higher tourist mobility of people with university and secondary education (Latosińska 1998, Matczak 1987, 1992).

In the questionnaire form given we asked our respondents about their average income per single member of a family, which helped us to estimate their financial status (Fig. 10). Analysis of given results confirms generally well-known tendency to higher tourist mobility of people with better financial status. Over half (52%) of tourists estimated their income per single member of their families above 750 zloty. Participation in tourism of people with the lowest profits – below 500 zloty per 1 member of a family (about 7%) was the lowest of all.

This situation shows that although the range of spatial influence of Ustka as the coastal resort is extensive, which seems to be confirmed by the variety of places where tourist come from, at the same time the participation in tourist activity stays under the influence of their financial status.

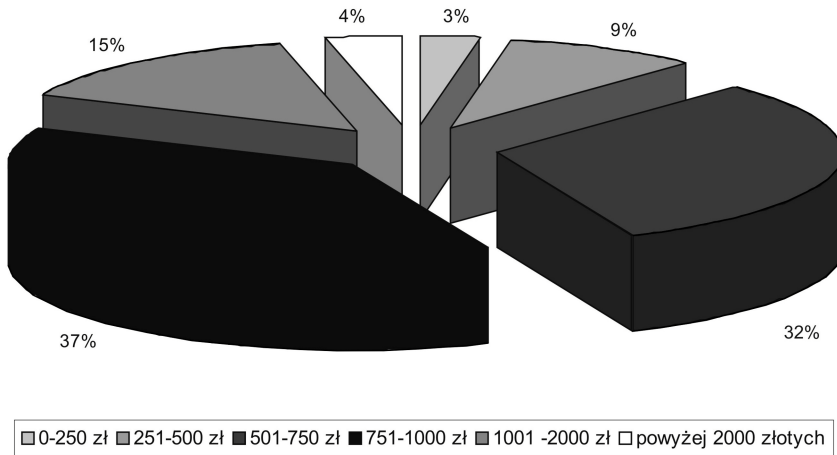


Fig. 10. Financial status of tourists

Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

Analysis of the socioeconomic structure of tourists participating in our questionnaire, allows to create a typical profile of a tourist visiting Ustka. It is a person most often young, up to 35 years old, well educated (university or secondary education) and with the high financial status.

PERCEPTION OF THE TOURIST SPACE OF USTKA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS IN OPINION OF THE TOURISTS

Perception of the tourist area is often an issue brought up in the contemporary research on tourism. These examinations were taken by researchers representing various fields of science: geography, sociology and most often psychology. According to Miossec (1977) choice of the holiday destination is determined by esthetic-psychological reasons rather than natural beauty of the spot or anthropogenic values. The most important thing is a complex picture, combination of natural and anthropogenic resources, tourist services, surroundings, which exist and function together and at the same time create opportunities to be positively perceived by tourists. According to Krzymowska-Kostrowicka (1995, 1997) tourist choices of the destination place are rarely motivated by one piece of geographical environment. Touristic attractiveness is an outcome of many variables and factors, such as climate, presence of waters, lay of the land and its variety, development of the area and visual-esthetic effect of the entire area with the importance of perception. We tried to determine the general perception of the tourist and holiday area by asking visitors about the most essential tourist attractions of Ustka. Respondents named 31 elements which influenced their opinions on tourist and holiday attractiveness of Ustka and its surroundings (Fig. 11).

These 31 elements were pointed 735 times. However, it is worth noticing that as many as 197 people were not able to name any elements which, according to them, would have any effect on perceptive tourist attractiveness of Ustka and its surroundings.

Analysis of answers received in matter of what determined attractiveness of Ustka and its surroundings, lets us distinguish a few categories. The first one would be the tourist-holiday attractions of Ustka. The most commonly people questioned pointed at festivals and other cultural events organized on the promenade and directly on the beach (26.1%). According to tourists, the second thing connected with tourist attractiveness of the place were cruises on the Baltic Sea (13.1%), then – sea, lighthouse and the promenade. It is worth mentioning that people named Slovinski National Park as one of the most attractive spots of touristic value in Ustka and surroundings. Generally the tourists perception of Ustka and its surroundings was limited to the attractions located mainly in the town and in the distance not farther then 40 kilometers from Ustka, except for Bornholm which was indicated by some of the people questioned.

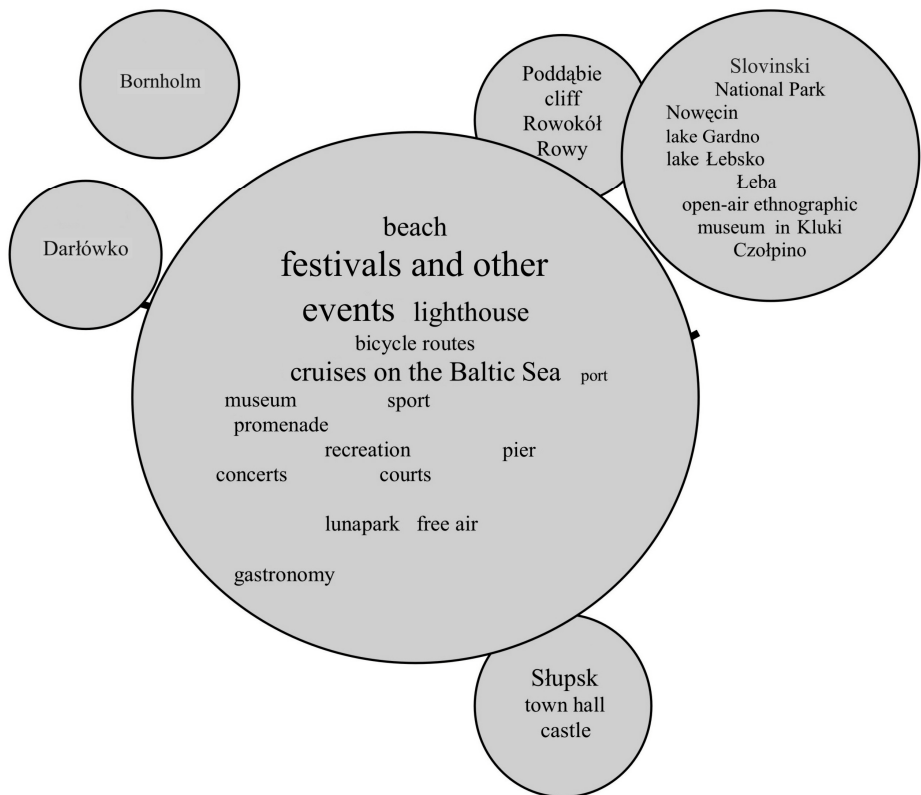


Fig. 11. Perceptual scheme of the touristic holiday space of Ustka and its surroundings on the basis of indications of tourists

Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

Tourists' opinions about tourist services in Ustka and its main defects were the supplement by information gathered on the way tourist perceive the area of Ustka.

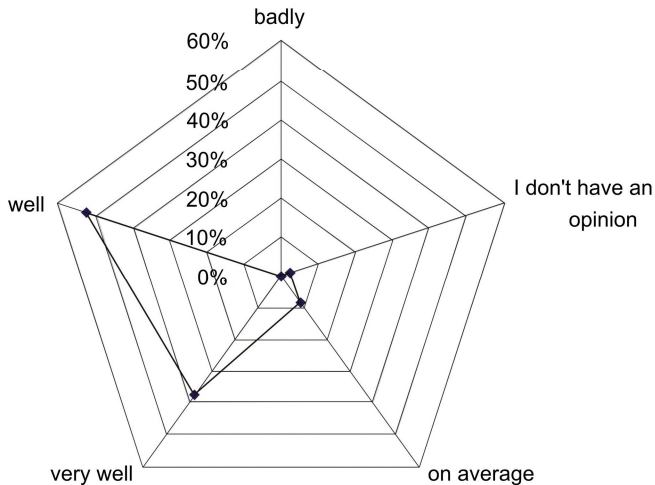


Fig. 12. Evaluation of tourist development in Ustka, made by tourists

Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

The majority of tourists positively judged Ustka as a holiday destination and its tourist services – 50% well and 40% very well (Fig. 12). About over 300 people out of 496 examined were not able to indicate any disadvantages in the matter of tourist infrastructure. It confirms generally the good opinion the tourists have about Ustka

Table 2
Tourist services of Ustka visitors most often complained about

Tourist services of Ustka visitors most often complained about	indicates (in %)
toilets	20.0
prices	14.1
garbage	11.9
lack of entertainment	9.4
car	8.5
parks	7.2
transport	3.8
gastronomy	3.4
lack of entrance to the beach	3.0

Source: own study based on the results of the questionnaire survey

as the tourist-holiday destination. Other 192 remaining people named 29 elements of tourist facilities which should be improved according to them (Tab. 2). In this group of respondents the most of remarks related to the sanitary conditions (31.9% were concerned about the condition of toilets in tourist objects and about garbage). Nearly 14% complained about the high prices. From other defects in development and tourist services of Ustka, tourists have most often named the poor entertainment, lack of parking places, difficulties in travelling inside the town and in getting into it. Ustka has wonderful holiday and health features, is very popular among tourists and stays one of the key coastal resorts of Poland. Good opinions tourists have about Ustka and its holiday and health attractions confirm that it is a very famous town, and place Ustka and its surroundings among the most popular coastal resort in this part of the Baltic Sea shore.

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ZASIĘG PRZESTRZENNEGO ODDZIAŁYWANIA TURYSTYCZNEJ MIEJSCOWOŚCI NADMORSKIEJ I JEJ PERCEPCJA NA PRZYKŁADZIE USTKI

Streszczenie

Głównym obszarem penetracji w krajowym ruchu turystycznym są miejscowości nadmorskie. Walory recepcyjne kurortów nadmorskich predestynują je przede wszystkim do turystyki wypoczynkowej typu 3S. Ruch turystyczny w miejscowościach nadmorskich ze względu na charakter tych walorów ma nierównomierny rozkład w ciągu roku, charakteryzując się najwyższymi na tle miejscowości turystyczno-wypoczynkowych innych regionów kraju wskaźnikami sezonowości.

Celem artykułu była analiza zasięgu przestrzennego i społeczno-ekonomicznego oddziaływania miejscowości nadmorskiej. Studium przypadku stanowiła Ustka – jeden z najpopu-

larniejszych i najczęściej odwiedzanych nadmorskich kurortów w Polsce. Drugim interesującym zagadnieniem badawczym była percepcja Ustki jako miejscowości turystycznej w opiniach turystów. Materiał źródłowy stanowiły wyniki badań ankietowych, jakim poddano około 500 turystów przebywających w dniu 5.07.2006 roku w Ustce. Badania przeprowadzono na plażach. Wyniki wskazują na wysoki poziom zainteresowania Ustką osób z regionu Słupska i powiatu słupskiego oraz turystów pochodzących z dużych, silnie zurbanizowanych województw z bardzo rozwiniętymi aglomeracjami miejskimi – Warszawy, Poznania, Łodzi, Wrocławia, Krakowa. Ustka jest najczęściej odwiedzana przez osoby młode, mające wykształcenie wyższe i wysoki status materialnym.

Percepcja przestrzeni turystyczno-wypoczynkowej Ustki wskazuje, że miejscowość ta jest w oczach turystów najczęściej identyfikowana z licznymi imprezami kulturalnymi, rejsami po morzu, plażą oraz latarnią morską. W świadomości badanych osób znaczące miejsce zajmują niektóre atrakcje turystyczne okolicy – obszar Słowińskiego Parku Narodowego, Słupsk oraz klifowy odcinek wybrzeża na wschód od miasta.