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DIRECTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOURIST PRODUCT OF THE GOCZAŁKOWICE-ZDRÓJ VILLAGE

Summary

The research described in this paper is centred around the small spa village of Goczałkowice-Zdrój (German: *Bad Gottschalkowitz*), located in the south of Poland, in the Silesian Voivodeship, the Pszczyński powiat, and the Goczałkowice-Zdrój commune. Along with the rise in the importance of the tourist services sector – including spa services – the tourist product of this tourist town has become the subject of a complex analysis and evaluation in the context of adapting it to the requirements of the market and the needs of consumers, as well as indicating directions for its development. In order to be successful on the national and international tourist market, as well as stay ahead of their competitors, Polish spas should adjust their policies to the needs and determinants of the contemporary market, providing a proper product – preferably an individualised and integrated one, sufficient for the challenging triple-segmented (patient, patient-tourist, tourist) market.

Key terms: Goczałkowice-Zdrój, village, spa, tourist product, curative product, directions for development

INTRODUCTION

The role of the tourist services sector – including curative services – within market economy has been on the rise in each region of our country. This situation leads to the need to perform a complex analysis and evaluation of each region product, or tourist town product, in the context of adjusting it to the requirements of the market and consumer needs.

The research described in this paper focuses on the town of Goczałkowice-Zdrój (German: *Bad Gottschalkowitz*), especially regarding the possible directions for the development of its tourist product. Goczałkowice-Zdrój is a small

spa village located in the south of Poland, in the Silesian Voivodeship, the Pszczyński powiat, and the Goczałkowice-Zdrój commune. It also holds the Goczałkowice-Zdrój commune office. The village is situated 250-260 m.a.s.l. in the vicinity of the international road from Cieszyn to Katowice, in the Kotlina Oświęcimska macro-region, on the border of the Równina Pszczyńska and the Upper Vistula Valley, near the Goczałkowickie Lake (32 km²), referred to as the Silesian sea- (with a water storage reservoir built in 1958), the main source of drinking water for the Upper Silesia region and a source of tourist-recreational functions. The village's location near the lakefront, in the vicinity of Vistula ponds and oxbows, directly affects the surrounding climate. From the south-eastern side the village is surrounded by Beskids ranges, and by the Pszczyńskie Forests (former Pszczyna Wild Forest) and wavy plateaus. The forests and fish ponds located in the area constitute a large part of the commune.

The Goczałkowice-Zdrój spa is located in the western part of the 5th, “south-western” bioclimate region, the warmest one in Poland, within a sub-region of increased thermal stimulation [Kozłowska-Szczęsna T. et al. 2002]. Between 1975-1992 the town was a peripheral district of Pszczyna. It is currently an autonomous administrative unit [Kaczyński I. and Kaczyński T. 2006]. The spa is considered a lowland spa, located near the lake, though the local climate also combines sub-mountain climate traits, with a soothing and relatively balancing effect. Air temperature in the area is higher than in the neighbouring towns. The vicinity of the lake affects the occurrence of fog and strong wind, which is quite common for the area. The dominant bioclimate here is lightly stimulating, periodically moderately stimulating, modified by water reservoirs and a high level of ground water [Kozłowska-Szczęsna T. et al., 2002].

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to identify the tourist product of Goczałkowice-Zdrój. The town contains tourist and curative infrastructure as well as the natural resources which allow it to function as a spa. The study also includes an attempt at indicating the directions for development of new tourist products, which could have a positive impact on the condition of the spa.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using a direct and indirect inventory. The direct inventory involved fieldwork, with an urban and an architectonic inventory, photographic documentation, as well as many sketches. Among the things studied were: the existing tourist and curative potential of the town, as well as the adjustment possibilities for some of the facilities – especially with regard to

their use for curative functions – and elements related to tourism and recreation in a broad sense, which could eventually serve as an important tourist product in the development of the town.

The indirect inventory involved the gathering of information on the town's history, especially its founding and the history of the spa and the functioning of each curative facility. This part of research was based on materials found in the commune, community interviews and information in the indicated sources. The gathered data was complemented by photographic documentation.

THE TOURIST PRODUCT OF THE SPA

There are 44 statutory spas in Poland. Most of them are located in the southern part of the country, in mountain areas, especially in the Dolnośląskie and Małopolskie voivodeships. At the time of dynamic changes and growing competition, the potential of Polish spas is a non-sufficient vehicle for their development. In order to be successful on the national and international tourist market, as well as stay ahead of their competitors, Polish spas should adjust their policies to the needs and determinants of the contemporary market, providing a proper product – preferably an individualised and integrated one, sufficient for the challenging triple-segmented (patient, patient-tourist, tourist) market.

The general spa tourist product comprises of [Middleton V.T.C., 1996]: the infrastructure and services in the spa; the tourist values of the spa; the transport accessibility of the spa; the image and the reputation of the spa; the price paid by the consumer. Each of these elements is a foundation for the creation of the tourist product. For the patient and the tourist, the product itself is the sum of their impressions and experiences at home, during travel, at their destination, since only through acknowledging all these elements one can evaluate whether all of the needs which are the impulse to journey to a given place have been fulfilled [Dziedzic E., 1998]. The spa tourist product is a complex tourist product of a given area. One has to view this type of element as a whole, focusing not only on the subject itself, but also the variety of subjects responsible for its development and co-creation.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SPA

The origins of the town are traced back to the late 13th and early 14th century. The oldest written sources come from the year 1326. Since its beginnings, the village was the property of the owners of the Pszczyna land. In the middle of the 19th century, it was passed to the German Hochberg family, whose members were appointed the title of Pszczyna princes (von Pless) in 1905, and had all the assets at their disposal until the end of the Second World War.

In 1856, a search for black coal and salt commenced in the area and its vicinity. That is when rich sources of iodide-bromide brine have been discovered. This discovery marked the beginning of the spa's development. Its official founders were Wilhelm Czech, Heinrich Schiller, Josef Lustig, and Adolf Babel. The memorial stone near the central walking alley has been donated in their memory.



Photo 1. The memorial stone near the central walking alley dedicated to the founders of the spa (photo by the authoress, July 2012)

The first curative facilities: bathrooms, the Spa House, the Water Drinking Facility, the guest houses have been built at that time. Until 1932, the spa was privately owned. The two neighbouring towns of Goczałkowice Górne and Goczałkowice Dolne have been merged into the single village of Goczałkowice-Zdrój, gaining the status of a spa. After the Second World War, the spa facilities have been rebuilt and modernised.

NATURAL THERAPEUTIC MINERALS

The area of the spa contains the following documented medical natural resources: 7.5% chloride-sodium mineral water (brine), iodide water, ferruginous water from the “Goczałkowice Nowy-1” (GN-1) and “Goczałkowice-21” (G-21) boreholes; 6.3% chloride-sodium mineral water (brine), iodide water, ferruginous water from the “Goczałkowice Nowy-2” (GN-2) borehole; medical clay

(peloid) from the “Rudołtowiec” deposit. The so-called “Zdrojowisko” (Spa House) has been built in Goczałkowice as early as 1856. At the time, spa towns were very fashionable among all social groups in Europe. During the search for new coal beds and salt seams, brine water, bromide water and ferruginous water sources have been discovered.

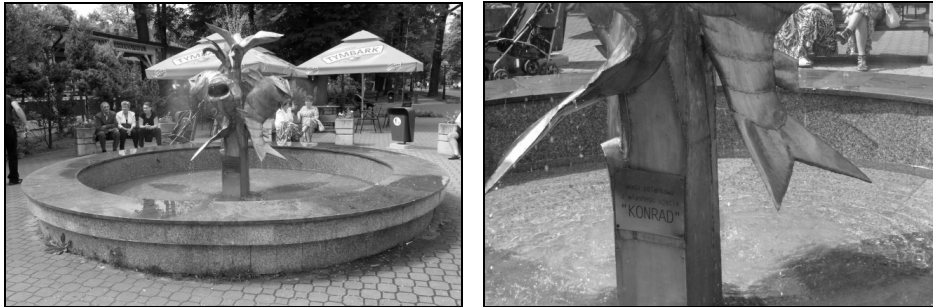


Photo 2. Brine fountain in the shape of a fish by the central walking alley, the Konrad spring (photo by the authoress, July 2012)

THE MEDICAL PROFILE OF THE SPA

The medical profile in Goczałkowice includes treating rheumatic conditions (rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis), respiratory system conditions, connective tissue diseases, orthopaedic diseases and injuries, peripheral arterial diseases, diabetes, female-specific diseases, osteoporosis and certain neurological conditions (in adults and children).

The treatment utilises brine waters, bromide waters, iodide waters, ferruginous waters, peloid waters. Most popular treatment methods include tub baths and pool baths, peloid treatments and apitherapy (treatment using bee honey and its derivatives) [Łazarkowie M. i R., 2007].

SPA INFRASTRUCTURE

The spa therapy facilities in Goczałkowice-Zdrój include the following [from the Spa Statute, 2009]:

1. Facilities owned by the Independent Public Health Care Centre “Goczałkowice-Zdrój Spa” Voivodeship Rheumatological-Rehabilitation Centre:
 - The Children's Spa Hospital “Stokrotka”, Uzdrowska st. 49;
 - Natural Therapy Facility in the Children's Spa Hospital “Stokrotka”;

– Rehabilitation Sanatorium for Adults, Uzdrowskowa st. 54, with the following six pavilions: “Magnolia”, “Wrzos”, “Azalia”, “Limba”, “Jaśmin”, “Krokus”;

– Natural Therapy Facility of the Rehabilitation Sanatorium for Adults, with five pavilions;

– The Spa Clinic, Uzdrowskowa st. 63.

2. Facilities owned by the “Gwarek” Locomotor System Rehabilitation Sanatorium And Hospital Complex, Uzdrowskowa st. 51;

– The “Gwarek” Locomotor System Rehabilitation Spa Sanatorium, Uzdrowskowa st. 51;

– Natural Therapy Facility in the “Gwarek” Locomotor System Rehabilitation Spa Hospital and Spa Sanatorium.

The sanatorium compound of the Goczałkowice-Zdrój spa is mostly distributed along a carefully maintained, aesthetically pleasant walking alley. It also runs across the entire town, which does not contain any typically rural, agricultural buildings. The monumental buildings date back to the beginnings of the spa's functioning, some come from the 70s. They are diversified with respect to size and form. Most of them, especially during the last years, have been professionally renovated. The overall impression is that of an ordered, well-groomed town, though there is a number of single buildings which require modernisation. The town is properly governed and equipped in small architecture elements. On the longest street, i.e., the walking alley, one can find many strolling patients.



Photo 3. Walking alley
(Photo by the authoress)



Photo 4. Small architecture –
park sculpture
(Photo by the authoress)

Most of the spa architecture dates back to the 19th century. The large “Gwarek” sanatorium has been built in the 1970s (currently the “Gwarek” Locomotor System Rehabilitation Sanatorium and Hospital Complex – modernised and undergoing remodelling). It remains autonomous to the existing architecture and its distribution and number of storeys make it an urban dominant.



Photo 5. The “Gwarek” Locomotor System Rehabilitation Sanatorium and Hospital Complex by the central walking alley as the spa's urban dominant (Photo by the authoress)

The spa infrastructure also contains the Mineral Water Drinking Facility and the “Limba”, “Azalia”, “Wrzos” and “Magnolia” Sanatorium Pavilions, the “Stokrotka” Children's Rehabilitation Sanatorium being part of the “Goczałkowice-Zdrój Spa” Voivodeship Rheumatological-Rehabilitation Centre.

The well-maintained Spa Park, situated in the “A” Zone and equipped in elements of small architecture (benches, trash bins, information boards, public toilets) is an important part of the spa.

The equipment used in the spa treatment includes [from the Spa Statute, 2009]:

– Medical-Rehabilitation Pool, located in the Natural Therapy Facility, pavilion I. Pool size: 16 x 9.5m, depth: 1.0-1.7m. Filled with brine (water-diluted). The pool is adapted for the disabled and equipped with exercising gear.

– Rehabilitation Pool located in the “Stokrotka” Spa Hospital. Pool size: 10.6 x 3.7m, depth: 0.8-1.1m. Filled with water suitable for drinking by humans (from the public water supply system). The pool is adapted for the disabled and equipped with exercising gear.

– The “Goczuś” Rehabilitation Pool, located at Powstańców Śląskich st. 3. The rehabilitation pool complex includes: a 25x16m sports pool, depth: 1.3-1.8m; a 15x8.5m training pool, depth: 1.10-1.35m; a 1m depth wading pool; a 3.5x2.5m brine tub; a 3.5x2.5m hydro massage tub; a sauna; a pipe slide. The facility uses water suitable for drinking by humans. The pool is adapted for the disabled and equipped with exercising gear.

Small architecture elements include park sculptures and a brine fountain by the central walking alley. The latter is surrounded by benches, so that the patients may rest and enjoy brine inhalation at the same time.

Each year, around 10 thousand tourists visit the Goczałkowice-Zdrój spa for treatment and recreation. It is the largest rheumatological treatment centre in the Silesia voivodeship. Taking into account services related to recreation, biological regeneration, single day and multiple day stays, the number of customers exceeds even 16 thousand people per year.

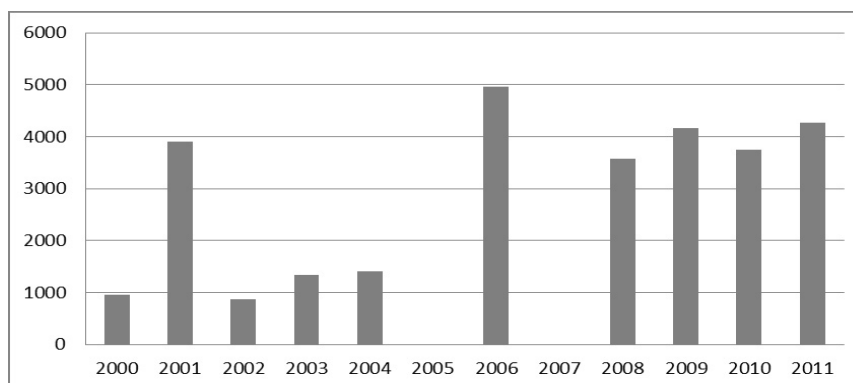


Figure 1. Curative therapeutics in Goczałkowice-Zdrój, both stationary and non-stationary, between 2000-2011 (Own elaboration based on data retrieved from the Katowice Statistical Office)

DISCUSSION

The main changes and tasks which are required in Goczałkowice-Zdrój in order to create a professional tourist product include: creating a professional promotion centre for the spa, centred around the idea to promote the tourist product; creating a professional tourist information centre with the goal of providing relevant information regarding the town, its curative values, tourist attrac-

tions and cultural events, as well as selling tickets for various events, providing informative materials in different languages, and maintaining I.T. integrity with other centres and spas in the country and abroad; building new curative-recreational infrastructure, e.g. cycle routes, fitness trails, viewpoints; creating attractive routes for pedestrians; setting up professional information boards regarding the monuments, the park and the curative assets of the town; maintaining proper trade and catering aesthetics in the town; designing and creating a specific type of memento from Goczałkowice-Zdrój.

SUMMARY

Summing up the above research one has to stress that Goczałkowice-Zdrój, being a small spa town and Silesian village, has to continually develop and update its offer in order to make itself more attractive. Looking at other spa towns in Poland of comparable size (e.g. Przerzeczyn-Zdrój, Długopole-Zdrój), it is justified to argue that a lot of work is necessary to create a proper tourist attraction package. This task is not easy, yet through proper and sensible tourist product management and sufficient cooperation with local groups of representatives from the tourist industry, it is possible to further develop the town and improve upon its image.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

1. Along with the growing popularity of spa tourism in a broad sense, there is a growing effort towards the modernisation of spa facility buildings.
2. The search for new, individualised products in towns and regions, directed towards the complex fulfilment of the needs expressed by tourists-patients, mixing tourist and curative products, thus creating an integrated spa tourist product available all year, is becoming more popular.

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