

TOURIST ASPECTS OF THE LUBUSKIE VOIVODESHIP – THE REGION'S DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

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Purpose: The publication presents the tourist aspects of the Lubuskie voivodeship, which are of great importance for regional development in terms of tourism, supra-regional and national.

Design/methodology/approach: The method of statistical data analysis and source materials was used in the work.

Findings: In the analysis of the relationship between tourist attractiveness and the development of the competitiveness of the Lubuskie voivodeship, the presence of the market process of interaction between tourist traffic and the number of entities from the tourism sector was noticed. The Lubuskie voivodeship has many tourist attractions, which constitute the region's great potential. It should be added that the Lubuskie voivodeship, as one of the few regions in Poland, can offer ecotourism as an attraction.

Originality/value: The analysis carried out in the article is aimed at people interested in regional policy in terms of the impact of tourism on the development and competitiveness of Polish regions.

Keywords: regional development, region, tourism, competitiveness.

1. Introduction

Tourism has become a widely recognized factor in regional economic development. The effects are visible especially in areas with tourist attractions that attract visitors. Inviting destinations generate tourist traffic, which translates into an increase in expenditure stimulating the creation and development of economic entities related to tourism and local economy. The above processes are dynamic and changeable because the tourism market is evolving. The source of changes is, among other things, the increase in the income of society, which contributes to the increased demand for tourist products providing new experiences as well as the search for new destinations (Kozak, 2009, pp. 125-126). As a consequence, maintaining competitiveness becomes a strategic challenge for the region and leads to constant competition for tourists. Its key element is the activities of local administrative authorities

aimed at improving transport accessibility and the development and improvement of tourism infrastructure at the level of international standards, as well as the supply of new tourism products by private entities (Gołembski, 2015, p. 8).

The aim of the study is to analyse the tourist attractiveness of the Lubuskie voivodeship and the scale of using the region's development potential in this regard. For this purpose, the statistical data published by the Central Statistical Office and the Development Strategy of the Lubuskie Voivodeship 2030 were used. The analysis was carried out at the voivodeship level on the basis of the latest available publications.

2. Tourist attractiveness of a destination – terminological explanations

According to A. Rapacz, the factor stimulating the development of the tourism economy is tourism traffic, which has a fundamental impact on the development of the tourism function in areas with an appropriate tourism potential (Rapacz, Jaremen, 2015, p. 134). In the literature, the tourism function is defined in various ways. One of the definitions is the statement that the tourist function is a socio-economic activity aimed at serving tourists and which a town or area meets in the national economy system (Miazek, 2020, p. 7).

The development of the tourist function is defined by local resources (natural, landscape and cultural). According to G. Gołembski, the presence of tourist values in a particular area determines the development of tourism, but the strength of attracting tourists is determined by the degree of tourist attractiveness of the region (Gołembski, 2006, p. 7). As M. Żemła writes, an attractive tourist destination “can attract visitors by producing and providing them with higher value for the buyer than the competitive area” (Żemła, 2011, p. 39). Thus, the attractiveness of the destination encourages tourists to come, spend time and expenses in a particular place.

In the literature, the concepts of tourist attractiveness and competitiveness are sometimes used interchangeably. Most often, however, tourist attractiveness is treated as a component of competitiveness. Although there is no generally accepted definition of tourism attractiveness, it is a key factor influencing consumer decision (Gorączko, 2020, p. 41). This is due to the fact that, as G. Gołembski writes, tourist attractiveness is a concept that integrates tourist values with the conditions for satisfying tourist needs and contains many different subjective elements (Gołembski, 2006, p. 8).

The tourist attractiveness of a destination is a subjective measure, the value of which depends on the perception of buyers – tourists. It is assumed that the basis of tourist attractiveness is the assessment of tourist values, tourism development and transport accessibility (Kurek, 2008, p. 24; Kozak, 2009, pp. 191-194). Additionally, tourist attractiveness is shaped by the media image of the destination. As M. Kozak points out,

the lack of an unequivocally adopted definition of the attractiveness of a destination causes problems in its assessment.

The factor that has a significant impact on the attractiveness of a destination is the saturation of space with the number of tourist attractions. The accumulation of attractions creates a synergy effect, which in turn contributes to the perception of the destination as more attractive than the value of its individual elements would suggest. This creates a cluster effect. It can be deepened by the diversity and complementarity of attractions, which makes it possible to meet the individual needs of tourists (Borkowska-Niszczota, 2015, p. 39).

3. Characteristics of the Lubuskie voivodeship

The Lubuskie voivodeship is located in western Poland (Figure 1). It was established in 1999 as a result of an administrative reform in most territories of the former provinces: Zielona Góra, Gorzów and a small part of Leszno. The seat of the voivode is in Gorzów Wielkopolski, and the authorities of the voivodeship self-government – in Zielona Góra (www.polska.travel...).



Figure 1. Location of the Lubuskie voivodeship on the map of Poland. Source: Regiony i miasta, <https://www.polska.travel/pl/regiony/lubuskie>, 10.11.2021.

As shown in Figure 1, the Lubuskie voivodeship borders from the north with the West Pomerania voivodeship, from the south with the Lower Silesia voivodeship, from the east with the Greater Poland voivodeship, and from the west – with Germany (Saxony and Brandenburg).

The name of the voivodeship comes from the historical land – the Lubuska land. It includes the former lands of Lower Lusatia, Lower Silesia, Lubuskie and Greater Poland. There are two city counties (poviats) in the voivodeship, 12 counties, 9 urban communes, 34 urban-rural communes and 39 rural communes. The administrative division of the voivodeship is shown in Figure 2. According to information from the Central Statistical Office of Poland, at the end of 2019, the area of the Lubuskie voivodeship was 13 987,93 km², and the data at the end of 2020

indicates that the population was 1 007 145 million inhabitants, which was second only to the Opole voivodeship in terms of the least numerous voivodeship in Poland. The average salary in 2021 increased compared to the previous year and amounted to PLN 5 145,11. On the other hand, the interest rate decreased and in August 2021 it amounted to 5,4% (zielonagora.stat.gov.pl...). The administrative division of the voivodeship is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Administrative division of the Lubuskie voivodeship Source: Regiony i miasta, <https://www.polska.travel/pl/regiony/lubuskie>, 10.11.2021.

The most important cities in the Lubuskie voivodeship include Gorzów Wielkopolski with a population of over 100 000 and Zielona Góra. Significant cities are also: Żagań, Nowa Sól and Żary. The distance from Warsaw is approx. 450 kilometres, and the capital of Germany – Berlin – 182 km from Zielona Góra and 134 km from Gorzów Wielkopolski, respectively. In the described voivodeship, trade and services are very well developed, the recreational offer and hotel base are increasing every year as well as the industry is developing. Many international entities invest here, creating a large base of jobs. The most important trade partner of the Lubuskie voivodeship is the Federal Republic of Germany. Almost 50% of goods and services exported by Lubuskie companies go to the German market (www.investinlubuskie.pl...).

4. Tourism in the Lubuskie voivodeship

Tourism means the activities of visitors who travel to a principal destination outside their usual surroundings for a period of less than one year for any principal purpose, including business, leisure or other personal purpose other than employment by a local entity for the place visited (GUS, 2020, p. 16). The participants of tourism are visitors, who can be divided into (Wiśniewski, 2013, p. 134):

- tourists (i.e. visitors who have stayed at the visited location for at least one night),
- one-day (no-night) visitors.

The values of tourist traffic provided by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) cover only a part of the actual tourist traffic.

The Lubuskie voivodeship is constantly investing in the development of tourist infrastructure. This happens, among other things, through the implementation of the “Lubuska Tourist Base” program, which is an initiative aimed at creating conditions for the development of tourism infrastructure. As part of the project, support for investment tasks is financed, which contributes to the development of the tourist potential of the voivodeship (www.lubuskie.pl...).

Lubuskie is the most forested region in comparison to other voivodships in Poland, it is rich in numerous natural attractions, among which the national park (“Mouth of the Warta”) stands out. Tourists are also attracted by other post-military attractions (Międzyrzecki Fortified Region) and historic attractions (e.g. Castle in Łagów). In the analysed area there is also an object entered on the UNESCO list, i.e. the Muskauer Park. The forests abound in mushrooms and berries, and large rivers such as Odra, Nysa, Warta, Obra and Bóbr flow through the voivodeship, as well as many smaller ones, perfect for canoeists and anglers. Of the 500 lakes, the largest (830 ha) is the “Silesian Sea”, i.e. the Sławskie lakes – its name is to come from a water girl, Witosława, kidnapped by nymphs (www.polska.travel...).

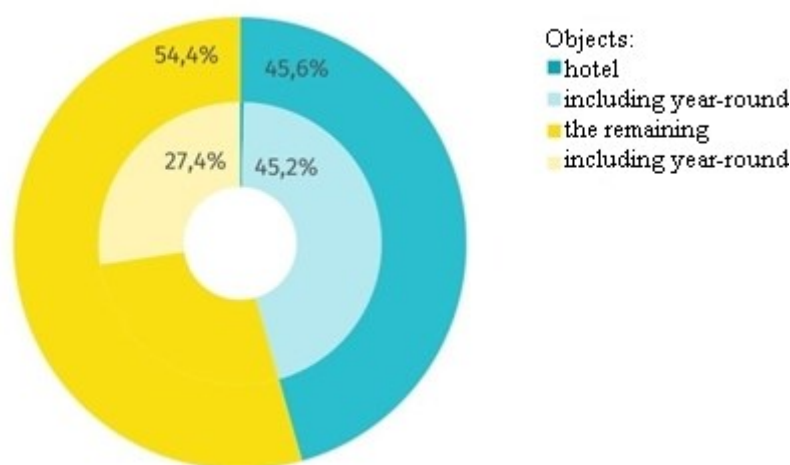


Figure 3. The structure of tourist accommodation facilities by type in 2020. Source: GUS (2021). *Turystyka w województwie lubuskim w 2020 r. Informacje Sygnalne*, p. 2.

According to data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland, at the end of July 2020, there were 281 tourist facilities offering accommodation services in the Lubuskie voivodeship¹, including 204 facilities offering year-round accommodation. In total, 3722 rooms were waiting for tourists, of which 98,8% were equipped with a bathroom and toilet, and 2,2% were adapted to accommodate people with mobility impairments. There were 18,0 thousand bed places in the above-mentioned facilities, i.e. 2,3% of the total number of bed places in Poland.

Table 1.
Tourist accommodation facilities – As of the end of July

DESCRIPTION	Facilities			Accommodation			Accommodation for 1 facility		
	2019	2020	2019=100	2019	2020	2019=100	2019	2020	2019=100
IN TOTAL	302	281	93,0	19818	18038	91,0	66	64	97,0
including year-round	219	204	93,2	11595	11002	94,9	53	54	101,9
Hotel facilities	134	128	95,5	7801	7572	97,1	58	59	101,7
Hotels	70	67	95,7	5196	5113	98,4	74	76	102,7
Motels	13	12	92,3	549	513	93,4	42	43	102,4
Guesthouses	13	13	100,0	698	711	101,9	54	55	101,9
Other hotel facilities	38	36	94,7	1358	1235	90,9	36	34	94,4
Other facilities	168	153	91,1	12017	10466	87,1	72	68	94,4
Youth hostels and school youth hostels	7	7	100,0	461	416	90,2	66	59	89,4
Holiday centres	26	25	96,2	2965	2833	95,5	114	113	99,1
Camp centres	4	4	100,0	561	436	77,7	140	109	77,9
Training and recreation centres	23	22	95,7	2397	2214	92,4	104	101	97,1
Tourist cottage complexes	22	19	86,4	1277	1136	89,0	58	60	103,4
Campsites	5	6	120,0	805	874	108,6	161	146	90,7
Camping fields	9	9	100,0	1402	1035	73,8	156	115	73,7
Hostels	3	3	100,0	171	171	100,0	57	57	100,0
Guest rooms	21	19	90,5	436	289	66,3	21	15	71,4
Agritourism accommodation	27	22	81,5	500	421	84,2	19	19	100,0
Other facilities	21	17	81,0	1042	641	61,5	50	38	76,0

Source: GUS (2021). *Turystyka w województwie lubuskim w 2020 r. Informacje Sygnalne*, p. 3.

The data from the Central Statistical Office indicate that on average, there were two accommodation establishments per 100 km² of the Lubuskie region (three in the entire country). On the other hand, there were 18 beds per 1000 inhabitants of the voivodeship (compared to the whole of Poland – in Poland it was 20 beds per 1000 inhabitants). When analysing the data from 2020 and 2019, a decrease in the number of accommodation facilities can be observed by 21 units, which accounted for 7% of all facilities. Three hotels and two other hotel facilities were closed² and one motel. Table 1 shows the number of tourist accommodation establishments at the end of July 2020 in the Lubuskie voivodeship.

¹ With 10 and more accommodation places.

² This group includes hotels, motels and guesthouses, which have not been assigned any category, as well as facilities that provide hotel services – guesthouses, villas, castles and roadside inns. Hotel services include, among others, making beds daily, cleaning rooms and washing sanitary facilities.

The accommodation base in Lubuskie voivodeship included a total of 128 hotel establishments, the remaining facilities were 153. The largest group, as in previous years, were hotels – there were 67 of them, fewer other hotel establishments were recorded in 2020 (36 establishments). Among the remaining facilities, the most numerous were holiday centres in the number of 25, as well as training and recreation centres and agritourism accommodation (22 in total). The average tourist facility offered 64 beds (two less than in the previous year). Figure 3 shows the Central Statistical Office data presenting the structure of accommodation facilities by type in 2020 (GUS, 2021, p. 1).

The enterprises that, according to the valuation of companies, were most severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis, operate in the field of raw material extraction, tourism, recreation, air transport, metal processing, insurance, banking, household goods, cars and utilities. The restrictions introduced in mid-March 2020 relating to the movement of people and, from the beginning of April 2020, to operating activities related to hotel services, resulted in a significant decrease in the number of people using overnight stays in tourist accommodation establishments compared to the previous year. After removing these restrictions in May, some accommodation facilities did not resume operations and despite the gradual increase in the number of tourists using the accommodation facilities, the use of facilities did not reach the level of the same periods last year (Stradomski, Schmidt, 2020, pp. 199-200).

In Poland, the months with the peak of the tourist season are July and August. Then, nearly 1/4 of all tourists who come to the Lubuskie voivodeship during the year use the tourist facilities. In the previous years, the data relating to the utilization status of accommodation facilities was almost twice as large as in the winter months. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way people travel, stay overnight, and visit tourist attractions. The use of tourist accommodation facilities is shown in Table 2.

Table 2.
Use of tourist accommodation facilities

DESCRIPTION	Beneficiaries			Accommodation granted		
	2019	2020	2019=100	2019	2020	2019=100
IN TOTAL	720799	399845	55,5	1480010	934056	63,1
including year-round	647288	341297	52,7	1180328	721012	61,1
Hotel facilities	564401	297355	52,7	897037	534610	59,6
Hotels	419999	221941	52,8	648781	394657	60,8
Motels	40028	19732	49,3	54640	28786	52,7
Guesthouses	37854	24235	64,0	72870	48668	66,8
Other hotel facilities	66520	31447	47,3	120746	62499	51,8
Other facilities	156398	102490	65,5	582973	399446	68,5
Youth hostels and school youth hostels	3329	1387	41,7	20920	14363	68,7
Holiday centres	44456	33207	74,7	168226	137706	81,9
Camp centres	2788	1687	60,5	17652	11529	65,3
Training and recreation centres	42958	24553	57,2	143318	78859	55,0
Tourist cottage complexes	14336	8883	62,0	54015	30834	57,1
Campsites	8034	8780	109,3	30884	27156	87,9
Camping fields	6979	7863	112,7	34899	17448	50,0

Cont. table 2

Hostels	1812	1178	65,0	13512	21645	160,2
Guest rooms	11699	4737	40,5	32173	16922	52,6
Agritourism accommodation	7599	4219	55,5	25285	17016	67,3
Other facilities	12408	5996	48,3	42089	25968	61,7

Source: GUS (2021). *Turystyka w województwie lubuskim w 2020 r. Informacje Sygnalne*, p. 5-6.

According to the GUS data, 399,8 thousand people stayed in tourist accommodation establishments located in the Lubuskie voivodeship in 2020, i.e. as much as 44,5% less than in 2019. Tourists were granted 934,1 thousand places compared to 2019, a decrease of 36,9% was noticed.

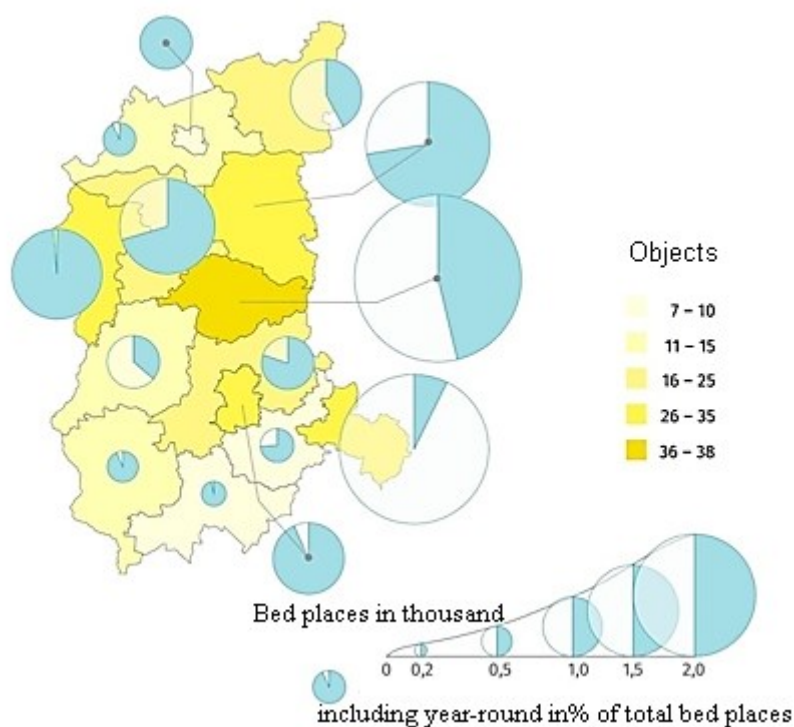


Figure 4. Accommodation facilities and places by counties in 2019 Source: GUS (2021). *Turystyka w województwie lubuskim w 2020 r. Informacje Sygnalne*, p. 8.

Among the total number of people visiting the Lubuskie voivodeship, 326,7 thousand were domestic tourists (81,7%) and 73,2 thousand foreign tourists (18,3%). As in previous years, travellers most willingly stayed in hotels (55,5%), where 394,7 thousand accommodation places were granted. Fewer people opted for (GUS, 2021, p. 8):

- holiday centres (8,3%),
- other hotel facilities (villas, inns, castles – 7,9%),
- training and recreation centres, guesthouses (6,1%),
- motels (4,9%).

The number of people who used the accommodation decreased significantly. The largest (nearly 60%) decrease took place among people staying in guest rooms, and the smallest in holiday centres (a decrease by 25,3%). More tourists stayed at camping fields and campsites – by 12,7% and 9,3%, respectively (GUS, 2021, p. 9).

The Lubuskie voivodeship is heterogeneous in terms of the development of tourist infrastructure – it is characterized by a significant degree of spatial concentration (Figure 4). Most (about 60%) tourist accommodation establishments operate in the northern and central part of the voivodeship (with the exception of Wschowa county). In July 2020 (with an average number of 20 facilities per county), the largest number of tourist accommodation establishments was located in the county of (GUS, 2021, p. 10):

- Świebodzin (38),
- Międzyrzecz (35),
- Zielona Góra city and Wschowa (29 facility each),
- Słubice (27),
- Sulęcín (24),
- Żagań (7 facilities).

Counties with the largest number of accommodation facilities concentrated a total of 12,4 thousand bed places (68,7% of the total number of beds in the voivodeship). The most numerous accommodation places among the counties of the Lubuskie voivodeship were offered by establishments located in the Świebodzin county (18,3% of all beds in the voivodeship) and in the Wschowa and Międzyrzecz counties (15,3% and 11,8%). The highest values of the accommodation density indicator were distinguished by county cities – Gorzów Wlkp. (979 beds per 100 km²) and Zielona Góra – (475), as well as counties: Wschowa (443) and Świebodzin (353 beds per 100 km²) (GUS, 2021, p. 11).

5. Conclusions

The degree of tourist attractiveness of a particular town or region is determined by: tourist values, tourist development and tourist accessibility (Lubuskie... Part II program, p. 77). The natural environment is one of the main values that determine the tourist attractiveness of a particular place. In view of the complexity of the issue, it is impossible to demonstrate exactly the motives behind tourist traffic without a detailed analysis. Assuming, however, that tourist traffic is the final measure of the attractiveness of a tourist destination, its relationship with economic development can be examined. The most attractive tourist destinations are characterized by the highest tourist traffic due to the synergistic effects that cause the phenomenon of accumulation.

The Lubuskie voivodeship has many tourist attractions, which constitute the great potential of the region, and the proximity to Germany provides additional opportunities for attracting foreign visitors. Accommodation and catering services turned out to be particularly sensitive to the scale of tourist traffic. The number of entities in the field of accommodation and catering business turned out to be the most correlated with the number of tourists compared to the other

sections. The accommodation base and the gastronomic base are well-developed components of the tourist attractiveness of the Lubuskie voivodeship. The quantitative specification of the accommodation base, in particular in terms of the number of inhabitants of the region to the number of beds in the voivodeship, allows determining the development of the accommodation base as more than satisfactory (Lubuskie... Part I audit and analytical, p. 69). A thorough examination of the scale of economic benefits from tourism requires an analysis of the structure of entities from the tourism sector located in a particular region and their links with other sectors and households. For this purpose, detailed statistical data, such as the size and types of tourists' expenses, are used. The obtained results are an incentive to verify them and to deepen the analysis through further research.

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