

## INVESTMENTS IN SEASIDE APARTMENTS AS A FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL POMERANIA

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**Abstract:** The aim of the paper is to discuss the problem of asymmetry in the development of Central Pomerania. In the coastal communes, there is an investment boom related to the creation of modern apartment, apartotel and hotel complexes; however, the towns located farther from the sea, despite their high tourist attractiveness, have been characterized by high unemployment rate and limited location of pro-development investments for years. On the basis of the research, it was stated, that the dynamic development of coastal tourism and the associated modern accommodation does not support the development of tourism in the central part of the region in a sufficient way. Focusing the efforts of local governments on creating and promoting attractions in the central part of the region among tourists staying by the sea could significantly support the reduction of unemployment and give an opportunity for development.

**Keywords:** Central Pomerania, investments, seaside apartments.

### 1. Introduction

The subject of the analysis is the problem of asymmetry in the development of Central Pomerania and leveraging its tourist values and investments in the process of increasing its competitiveness. The economically successful coastal communities, which effectively attract investors and tourists, are the pride of the region. Not only private small apartments are developed by the sea – apartment and apartotel complexes are built intensively with a wide range of spa and wellness offers, playing fields, beauty salons, toddler clubs, restaurant and bar facilities. On the other hand, towns located further from the sea, although also rich in tourist attractions, are not as effective in locating investments and for years have been struggling with the problem of high unemployment.

Considering the above, the aim of the research was to determine the main causes of this state and to answer the question whether, due to the identified asymmetry, the investment boom on the coast is used in the process of increasing competitiveness and development of the areas of Central Pomerania, not bordering directly with the coastline. The inspiration for the research

was the conviction that the construction of modern apartment and aparthotel complexes in the coastal zone contributes to the extension of the tourist season and provides new jobs.

The paper is based on a thesis, that the dynamic development of coastal tourism and related modern accommodation does not support the development of tourism in the central part of the region in a sufficient way. Communes located a little further from the sea do not benefit significantly from the tourist boom that takes place on the coast, despite the fact that the landscape and tourist values of the entire Central Pomerania are very high. The efforts of local authorities to create and promote attractions in the central part of the region among tourists staying by the sea could be an important support for areas affected by high unemployment rate.

Before proceeding with the implementation of the adopted objective of the work, research problems were formulated in the following questions:

1. What are the main reasons for asymmetry in development of Central Pomerania, with regard to the problem of the region's transport accessibility and the development of tourism?
2. What are the main initiatives taken in order to increase the competitiveness of the region (in terms of transport accessibility and tourism development)?
3. Do investors of modern apartment and aparthotel complexes perceive the area located in the central part of Central Pomerania as an attractive destination for tourists visiting seaside resorts?

## **2. Sources of Information and Research Methods**

The main sources of information used in the research were secondary sources. The knowledge base included scientific articles, printed and online tourist guides, data from Statistics Poland, Statistical Office in Szczecin, Labor Office in Koszalin, articles in industry magazines, websites of coastal construction investments (apartments), the timetable data of Intercity trains, data from Google Maps and the Association of Polish Counties. The following search engines were used for the research: booking.com, google.com, intercity.pl. The knowledge was also acquired through participatory and non-participatory observation: the author grew up on the coast and, for many years, has been observing the changes taking place in Central Pomerania, from the perspective of the current place of residence (central Poland) and while visiting her hometown.

Methods of analysis and synthesis were used in the research. The analysis covered the literature on Central Pomerania, especially regarding the development of tourism, as well as data obtained from search engines and the websites of construction investments.

The analysis included checking the status of accommodation reservations on the coast during the holiday season using the booking.com search engine, which allows booking accommodation in guest rooms, private accommodation, apartments, holiday homes, hostels, hotels, guest houses and holiday resorts all over the world. The analysis covered the peak season, i.e. the period from July 27 to August 10, 2019. The reservation of facilities was examined 4 days before the start of holidays, i.e. on July 23, 2019, for stays commencing on July 27, and on July 30 for stays commencing on August 3, 2019. The following assumptions were made in the course of the analysis:

- length of stay: 7 days,
- stay from July 27 to August 3 and from August 3 to August 10, 2019,
- booking accommodation for a family of 2+2 (two adults and two children up to 12 years old),
- the whole family stays in one room (which also meant one apartment or one holiday home).

In total, the analysis took into account 13 towns located on the coast of Central Pomerania and 24 towns located outside this region, but of course also by the Polish sea.

Figure 1 shows sample data obtained from Booking.com. This data refers to the town of Pobierowo, where 98% of accommodation, meeting the above criteria, was booked on the Booking.com website on July 23. At that time, only three sites met the selection criteria.

The screenshot shows the Booking.com search interface. On the left, the search criteria are: destination 'Pobierowo', dates 'sobota 27 Lipiec 2019' to 'sobota 3 Sierpień 2019', 'Pobyt na 7 nocy', '2 dorosłych', '2 dzieci', '1 pokój', and '12 lat'. The main search results area displays a 98% booking rate for Pobierowo, with a price of 604 zł per night. It lists 3 objects found in Pobierowo, with a rating of 8.1 and 96 reviews. The search results also show a map of Pobierowo and a link to 'Widok mapy'.

**Figure 1.** Sample data obtained from booking.com for the town of Pobierowo on July 23, 2019.

The booking.com website did not always reveal the level of booking. According to the author's own observations, this was the case when the reservation rate in a given place did not reach at least 75%. However, this information is not officially confirmed by booking.com.

Websites of construction investment projects carried out on the coast were also analyzed. The research was conducted using the results obtained from the Google search for the phrase “apartments by the sea for sale”. The search was repeated many times, so that the results were more complete (each time, the Google search engine returns results in a different order). The analysis included only the construction investments, which always appeared on the first

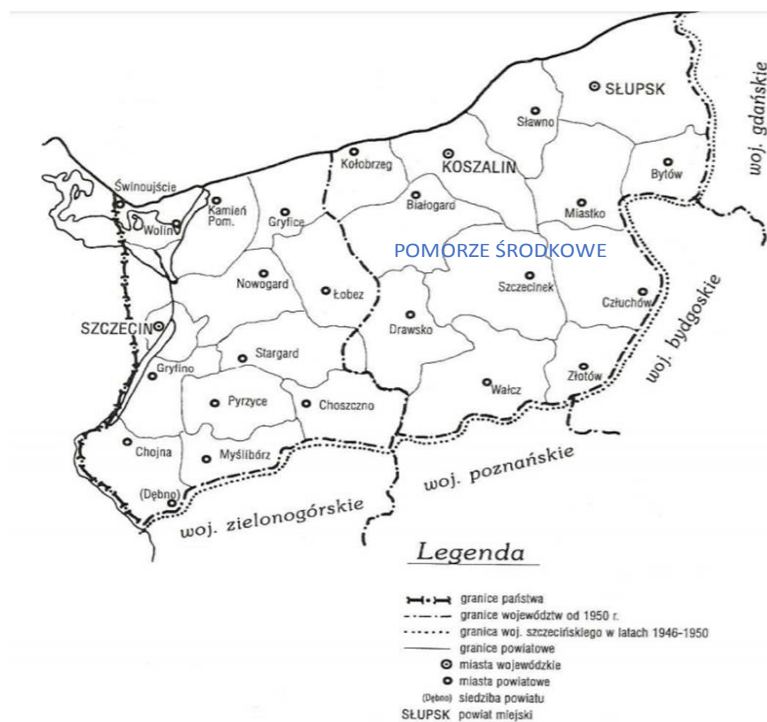
three pages of the search results and were located in the region of Central Pomerania or in its immediate vicinity.

The information provided on the construction investments' websites was analyzed for the marketing name of the complex under construction, its location, the rate of return on investment, declared or guaranteed by the investor, the number of units built, the price per 1 sq.m of premises, tourist attractions in the nearest and distant surroundings, distance from the sea, characteristics of the object.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Location of the Central Pomerania Region

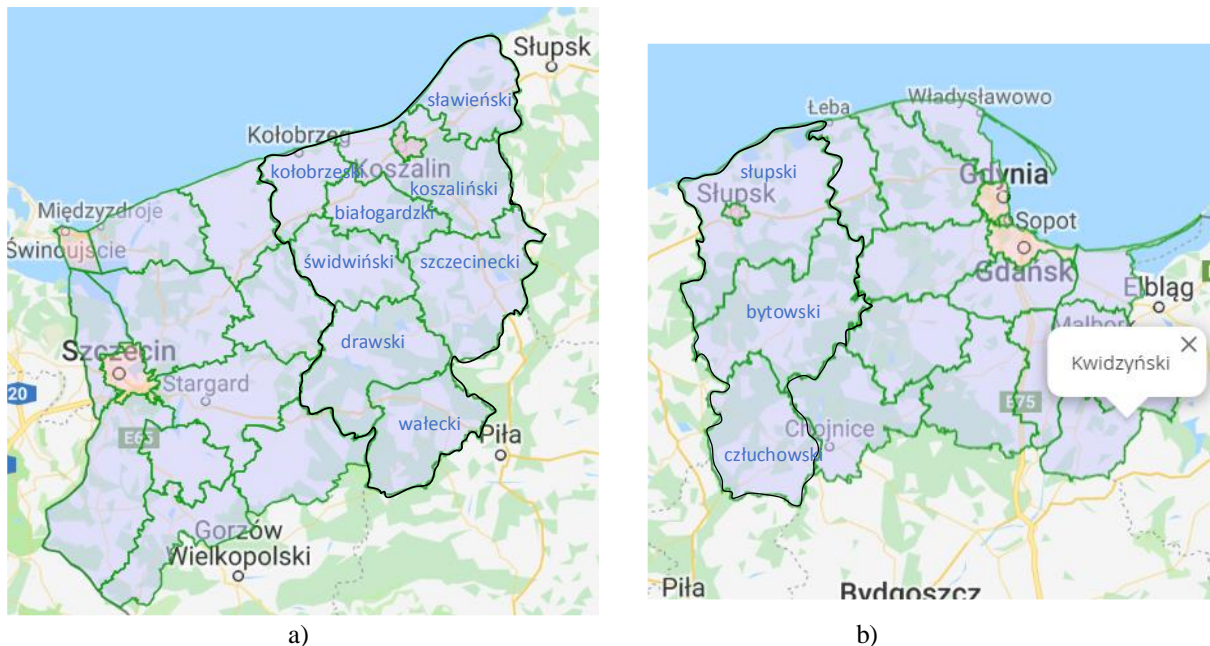
The Central Pomerania region is located in the northern part of Poland and includes a part of Western Pomerania, which was created shortly after World War II (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Administrative division of Central Pomerania in the years 1946-1954. Adapted from: "Pomorze Środkowe – region zmarginalizowany w obecnym podziale administracyjnym" by M. Jasiulewicz, M. Suszyński. Copyright 2016 by Zeszyty Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Ekonomicznych Politechniki Koszalińskiej, no. 20, pt. 2, p. 42, after: "Podziały administracyjne Pomorza Zachodniego w latach 1800-1970" by T. Bialecki, M. Mazurkiewicz, A. Muszyński. Copyright 1970 by Instytut Zachodniopomorski, Szczecin, pp. 74-78.

As a result of administrative reforms in the country, Central Pomerania was initially located in the Koszalin Voivodeship (since 1950), and in 1975-1999 in the Koszalin and Słupsk Voivodeships. The current administrative division of the country, in force since 1999, divided

the Central Pomerania region into two voivodeships: West Pomeranian and Pomeranian (Figure 3: counties of Central Pomerania marked with a black outline).



**Figure 3.** Counties located in Central Pomerania in West Pomeranian (a) and Pomeranian (b) voivodeships, according to the administrative division in force since 1999. Adapted from: the Association of Polish Counties' website, <https://www.zpp.pl/mapa-polski>.

In West Pomeranian Voivodeship, Central Pomerania comprises of the following counties: kołobrzeski, świdwiński, białogardzki, drawski, wałecki, szczecinecki, koszaliński, sławieński and the city of Koszalin as a county; and in Pomeranian Voivodeship: słupski, bytowski and człuchowski and the city of Słupsk.

### 3.2. Tourist Attractions, Unemployment and Transportation Exclusion of Central Pomerania

The location of Central Pomerania by the Baltic Sea strongly predisposes the region to the development of tourism. Even before World War II, when Pomerania belonged to Germany, seaside towns attracted crowds of patients. To this day, you can still find many villas on the coast, which were built in the first four decades of the twentieth century. Later, in the Polish People's Republic, many company holiday resorts and private small pensions were built in seaside towns. The accommodation base was relatively wide, but today its standard is perceived as rather low, not meeting the requirements of a customer searching for luxury and comprehensive service offer.

The tourist value of Central Pomerania is very high. The landscape of the region is associated with the sandy, sunny Baltic coast and the woody "land of a thousand lakes", picturesquely shaped by nature. The wooded and diversely shaped Drawsko Lakeland, which is a part of the Pomeranian Lakeland, is an essential element of the landscape, next to the sea coast. It is an area of frontal moraine, with numerous characteristic hills and elongated deep

lakes (*Koszaliński Informator Turystyczny*, 1976). Central Pomerania creates very good conditions for mass relaxation. There are springs of healing waters and deposits of healing mud and brine (Uzdrowisko Kołobrzeg).

Apart from the development of tourism in Central Pomerania, for many years, agriculture, maritime economy and the agri-food industry have been playing a significant role. Natural qualities create particularly favorable conditions for the development of dairy and meat cattle, farming and potato cultivation.

Central Pomerania is characterized by significant development asymmetries. A string of rich coastal communes is clearly visible in the region, where cities such as Kołobrzeg, Słupsk and Koszalin drive the development. Kołobrzeg focuses on activities related to maritime economy, including its core components: port services, passenger transport, coastal tourism and fishing. Koszalin and Słupsk, although not located directly by the sea, are treated as coastal communes according to the Eurostat definition (*Turystyczne obiekty...*, 2018). They serve as regional socioeconomic, scientific and cultural centers. The economic situation in other communes of Central Pomerania, not directly bordering with the sea, is much more difficult. After 1990, it was here, that some of the lowest average earnings and the highest unemployment levels were recorded. At the end of July 2019, when the unemployment rate for the whole country was 5.2% (Labor Office in Koszalin), and 6.5% for West Pomeranian Voivodeship, in Central Pomerania, it was at the level of two or even three times higher. For example, in the county of Koszalin, it was 10.8%, in the county of Sławno – 11.5%, in the county of Drawsko – 12.3%, in the county of Szczecin – 13.5%, in the county of Białogard – as much as 16.1% (Voivodeship Labor Office in Szczecin). Such high levels of unemployment, which persist in this region, despite the significant economic growth dynamics of the whole country, require a strong response in the regional policy.

Among the important problems of the region, determining its relatively low competitiveness – and, as a result, influencing the low economic growth and high unemployment – there is transport exclusion, unprecedented in the scale of the whole country. This is due to the relatively poorly developed express road network, low standard of local roads, lack of highways, as well as significant distance from large cities. It is estimated, that Central Pomerania is the only larger area in Poland, that is beyond the reach of big agglomerations (Jasiulewicz, and Suszyński, 2016). For example, Białogard is 150 km away from Szczecin and 220 km away from Gdańsk and Poznań. These distances are so large, that, together with the poor quality of access roads, they effectively limit the activity of the local population in seeking work in big agglomerations, where unemployment is lower. Similarly, entrepreneurs may perceive the location of Central Pomerania and the poor quality of local roads as a major limitation for business development.

Some towns of Central Pomerania are located not only far from agglomerations, but also from the sea (140-170 km), which also does not have a positive impact on the possibility of generating income from tourism.

The transport exclusion of the region is also related to the distance between Central Pomerania and the state administration centers located in Warsaw, which eliminates weekend tourism of the capital's inhabitants. Koszalin is 430-450 km away from Warsaw, depending on the chosen road, which means at least 6 hours of continuous driving. Therefore, the journey takes too long to travel safely in both directions within one day and discourages the inhabitants of central Poland from short recreational trips on Saturdays and Sundays. The beaches of the Tricity and the surrounding area are much closer: the trip time from Warsaw is about 3.5-4 hours.

The situation is equally difficult for the rail network. The railroad from Warsaw to Koszalin goes through Gdańsk or Szczecin. Currently, the shortest travel time on this route, offered by PKP Intercity S.A., is about 5 hours, but this connection is available only once a day. Most trains travel for a very long time on this route: from about 6.5 to almost 13.5 hours (PKP Intercity). The narrow-gauge railway network, which was built by the Germans before the war and was still used during the period of the centrally planned economy, was seriously dismantled in the 1990s.

The last problematic issue, with regard to transport accessibility of Central Pomerania, are the limited possibilities of supporting the expansion of the airport in Goleniów or the construction of a new airport in the vicinity of Koszalin by local authorities. It is thought, that West Pomeranian Voivodeship should support efforts to increase the number of domestic flights and flights from other airports, such as Frankfurt, Munich, Berlin and Scandinavia. The investment in Goleniów airport may have a strong impact on the development of tourism and accommodation. Until now, the port was treated as an airport primarily for Szczecin, yet there is a need to look at it from a wider perspective: as an airport serving also the cities of Kołobrzeg, Świnoujście, Międzyzdroje and Koszalin. Local entrepreneurs regret that there are no good air connections with Scandinavia, and the base for foreign tourists is the airport in Berlin, not in Goleniów. There is also no ferry connection with Copenhagen (Kołobrzeg nie narzeka..., 2017).

### **3.3. Investments in the Region: Construction of Expressways, as well as Apartment and Aparthotel Complexes**

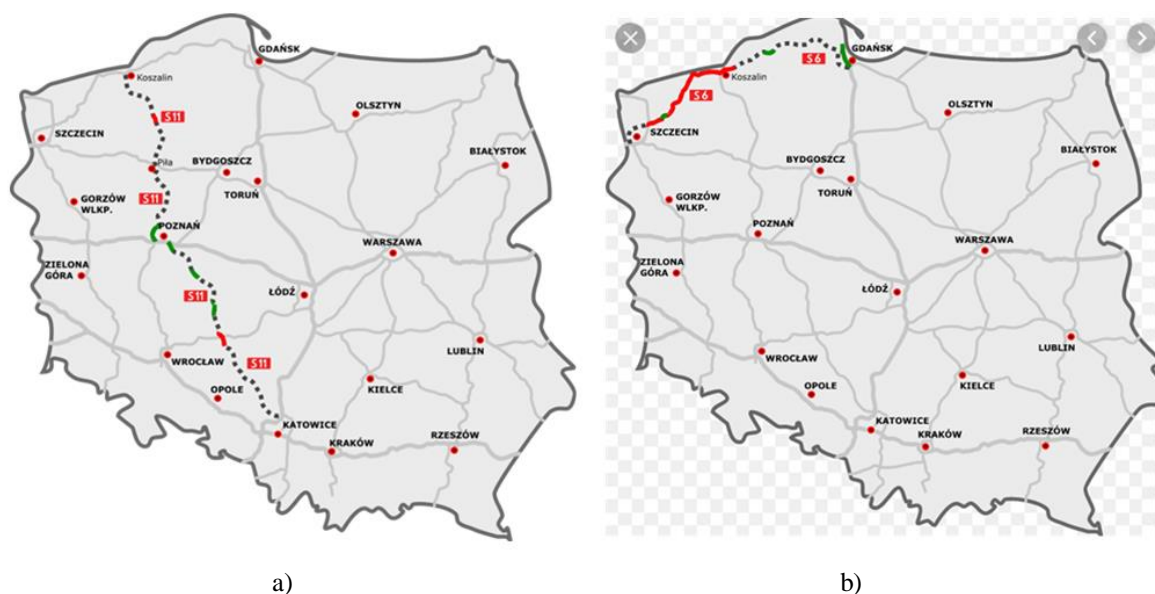
In the light of the information provided, it can be stated, that there is a great need to take actions to increase the competitiveness of the Central Pomerania region.

For the time being, the inhabitants have been unsuccessful in undertaking initiatives aimed at creating Central Pomeranian Voivodeship, and thus centralizing power in the region. The results of the population survey of the former Koszalin and Słupsk voivodeships, conducted in 2000, indicated that as many as 75% of people saw the need to create an additional voivodeship (Partacz, 2005). This topic often returns to the local media during elections in Poland.



After several years of Poland's accession to the European Union, there's an acceleration of works leading to a better connection of the coast, including Central Pomerania, with other regions – through modern express roads. The investments mainly concern the S6 and S11 roads.

The S11 express road (Fig. 4a) will span across four voivodeships: West Pomerania, Greater Poland, Opole and Silesia, and its aim is to connect the resorts on the central Baltic coast with Silesia, Greater Poland, Poznań and Piła. The planned length of the route is 550 km, 90 km of which have been built so far and 18 km are under construction.



**Figure 4.** Planned route of the S11 (a) and the S6 (b) expressways. Adapted from: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Droga\\_ekspresowa\\_S11\\_\(Polska\)](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Droga_ekspresowa_S11_(Polska)), [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Droga\\_ekspresowa\\_S6\\_\(Polska\)](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Droga_ekspresowa_S6_(Polska)).

Another important investment, aimed at improving transport accessibility of the coast and connecting the two agglomerations of Szczecin and Tricity, is the construction of the S6 expressway (Fig. 4b). Historically, the construction of the road dates back to the 1930s, when Germany planned to connect Berlin with Königsberg (today's Kaliningrad). At that time, a 119-kilometer-long four-lane segment was built, as well as bridges and overpasses. Currently, the total length of the route is 330 km. Long part of it will be almost parallel to the coast. It is assumed, that the route will shorten the travel time from Szczecin to Koszalin by almost one hour (Budowa S6...), increasing the comfort and safety of the journey.

As a result of these road investments, better transport accessibility of Pomerania should have a positive impact on the development of tourism and general economic development of the region.

Tourism on the Coast has been experiencing a boom for several years. The press, statistical offices and investors publish information that points to a dynamic growth in the number of tourists. Kołobrzeg is ranked third in terms of the number of beds (4.4 million in 2017) (Kołobrzeg nie narzeka..., 2017). The tourist season has also been noticeably extended. During the communist era, the beaches in Mielno and its surroundings were filled mainly from



mid-July to mid-August. Currently, the tourist season by the sea begins in May and lasts until September; tourists also come on school, national and church holidays. For example, during May in 2019, despite rainy and cold weather, the streets of Mielno were filled with tourists. Looking back 30 years ago, there were basically no tourists in Mielno at that time.

A characteristic feature of the development of seaside tourism is the tendency to transform spa resorts into wellness hotels. In order to increase sales, swimming pools are added, rooms are modernized, new restaurants are opened and marketing actions intensify. As a result, some hotels notice an increase in the number of foreign tourists, including Scandinavians and Germans. For example, Zdrojowa Invest (Kołobrzeg) has a high occupancy rate throughout the year, except for November and December. In the season, prices are usually very high, with a Polish individual being the dominant customer. In the low season, there are numerous German groups that pay less thanks to travel agencies (Kołobrzeg nie narzeka..., 2017).

In terms of tourism and accommodation in seaside resorts, there is also another important trend. The Polish coast is being built up with complexes of big apartment buildings and aparthotels with large swimming pool zones, playgrounds, restaurants, cafes, toddler clubs and beauty centers. During the construction of apartment buildings, modern seaside construction technologies are often used, high quality of finish and energy efficiency are important. The complexes have a 24-hour reception desk, an exclusive, prestigious character and professional rental management for buyers of premises. Such an investment for the owner of the apartment is unmanned. Based on the analysis of the current investment offers in apartment and aparthotel complexes (Table 1), it was found that the achievable rate of return ranges from 6% to 8% of the gross value of the apartment on an annual basis.

**Table 1.**

*Sample investments in seaside apartments (2019): Central Pomerania, Rogowo and Łeba*

No.	Town	Name of the investment	Number of units	Description – selected information	Price per 1 sq. m
1	Kołobrzeg	Westin House Resort	.	850 m from the seashore	PLN 8,600
2	Kołobrzeg	Porta Mare Baltica	336	750 m from the seashore, 16 buildings	PLN 7,500-9,700
3	Kołobrzeg	Apartamenty Koło Brzegu	96	750 m from the seashore, 2 cozy buildings, high standard	.
4	Kołobrzeg	Solny Resort	150	Condo hotel, guaranteed profit 7% p.a.	From PLN 8,950
5	Mielno/ Unieście	Dune City	.	Project of a huge investment scale (36 ha): 5* hotel, several Boutique and Condo hotels, apartment complexes; project suspended	.
6	Mielno	Dune Resort	330	Luxury complex on the seaside promenade	average price PLN 13,000
7	Gąski	Nadmorskie Apartamenty	.	100 m from the seashore, at the entrance to the beach, four-story building	PLN 7,000-8,000 gross
8	Gąski	Let's Sea Baltic Park	425	17 m to the beach, an aparthotel complex with a sports zone	.

9	Darłówko	Baltic Korona	63	500 m from the seashore, near the port and the Darlowo promenade	from PLN 6,900
10	Darłówko	Natural Baltic Darłówko	78	At the beach, sea view, in high season the facility managed as a hotel	.
11	Darłowo	Marina Royale	300	Three luxury residences, sea view, income 4-7-5.6% net p.a.	PLN 13,220-24,945 (price includes finishing)
12	Rowy	Lubicz Apartamenty	.	4 apartment buildings in the center of Rowy	PLN 7,500 net
13	Ustronie Morskie	Holiday Park	222	Condo hotel, sports and leisure complex, 6-8% of income per year	PLN 10,000
14	Sarbinowo	Baltin Blue	over 170	An exclusive leisure complex, 450 m from the seashore, income up to 8% per year	from PLN 8,900 gross
15	Sianożęty	5 mórz	213	5 apartment buildings, 250 m from the seashore	PLN 8,118-10,450
16	Sianożęty	Błękitne Tarasy	135	3 apartment buildings, fitness 330 sq. m	PLN 8,500
17	Łeba	Osada Morska	.	Income 8% p.a.	.
18	Łeba	Łebska Ostoja	60	Declared return on investment 6.2-8.6% p.a., view on moving dunes, Łebsko Lake	.
19	Rogowo	Shelter Hotel & Apartments	730	Aparthotel complex with swimming pools	.
20	Rogowo	Rogowo Pearl	500	Luxury complex of 5 apartment buildings between the Baltic Sea coast and Resko Lake	PLN 9,200-19,000

Adapted from: Google.com search results and <https://www.otodom.pl/oferta/westin-house-resort-kolobrzeg-ID41CGv.html>, <http://www.apartamenty.portamare.pl/kolobrzeg/>, <https://kolobrzegu.com/pl/lp-kolobrzegu-com>, <http://solnyresort.pl/>, [https://www.firmusgroup.pl/inwestycja/dune\\_city/](https://www.firmusgroup.pl/inwestycja/dune_city/), <https://www.duneresort.pl/>, <http://nadmorskieapartamenty.com.pl/>, <https://www.lets-sea.pl/>, <https://baltickorona.pl/>, <https://naturaldarlowko.pl/>, <https://marina-royale.pl/>, <https://www.apartamentyrowy.pl/>, <https://holidayparkinvest.pl/>, <https://www.baltin.pl/blu/partamenty-na-sprzedaz>, <http://piecmorz.pl/>, <http://www.blekitnetarasy.pl/>, <https://www.osada-morska.pl/leba>, <https://lebskaostoja.pl/>, <https://shellter.pl/>, <https://rogowopearl.pl/>.

For example, Solny Resort in Kołobrzeg guarantees a profit of 7% per year, Osada Morska in Łeba and Baltin Blue in Sarbinowo – up to 8%. On the Łebska Ostoja website, profitability ranges from 6.2% to 8.6% p.a., based on 100 facilities leased for 10 years. In reality, however, it must be taken into account, that the actual rate of return achieved by the buyer of the apartment may be lower, not only because of an investment risk. When calculating the projected rate of return, developers often include the net value of the apartment (which may affect the final results, because not every buyer will be eligible for a VAT refund) or the value of the apartment shell – without the cost of finish and/or equipment, which in the case of rental is not only mandatory, but also must meet certain requirements.

Some of the facilities presented in Table 1 operate as condo hotels. In addition to that, we can distinguish between aparthotels, holiday apartments with the option of managing the rental, apartments in the timeshare system and private apartments rented by professional Internet platforms (Szubstarski, 2014). These objects settle accounts with apartment owners in different ways. Baltin Blue's offer in Sarbinowo assumes that 80% of rental profit will go to the landlord

and 20% to the rental operator. In the case of investments in Apartamenty Koło Brzegu, 70% of income is to be allocated to the owner and 30% to the operator. The owners will be able to spend 30 days in their apartments during the year, but not during the high season. For most offers, the duration of the owner's stay is between October and April, but there are also cases, where the owner is allowed to stay for two weekends in the high season.

The scale of investment in apartment and hotel complexes on the coast is very large. The research conducted in August 2019 on the first three pages of Google search results revealed links to 16 investment developments in Central Pomerania (presented in Table 1). It should be noted, however, that the number of apartment complexes currently under construction is much higher. Many developments have already been completed and for years have been successfully operating by the sea.

Analysis shows, that the complexes under construction range from a few dozen to about 200-500 units. Shelter Hotel & Apartments (730 units) is definitely the largest development in progress, while in Mielno, the construction of a large, unprecedented hotel and apartment town is planned (currently the project is suspended).

Prices of apartments were not always published on websites. According to available information, prices usually start from PLN 7,000 per sq.m. The most expensive apartments are sold for a dozen or even more than twenty thousand per one square meter of space.

The profitability of investments in apartments is strongly influenced by the demand for short-term rent of accommodation. The analysis of press reports and Statistics Poland indicates, that the demand for accommodation at the Polish seaside is very high. This assessment was complemented by Author's own research, which relied on checking accommodation reservations in selected seaside resorts on booking.com, a specialist international website.

The results of the analysis are surprising. The accommodation sales effectiveness with booking.com is very high. For stays from August 3 to August 10 in the analyzed towns and cities of Central Pomerania, an average of 97% of the accommodation places were reserved four days before the start of the stay (Table 2). For the stay from July 27 to August 3, the result was slightly worse, but only for 4 smaller towns (Dąbki, Mielenko, Unieście, Gąski), for which the service did not disclose data, probably due to the fact that the minimum level of accommodation reservations was not reached.

**Table 2.**

*Reservation of accommodation in selected seaside resorts of Central Pomerania for 2+2 families for weekly stays between July 27 – August 3 and August 3 – August 10, 2019. (booking.com)*

No.	Town	August 3 to August 10, 2019		July 27 to August 3, 2019	
		Reserved objects	Number of free objects	Reserved objects	Number of free objects
1	Grzybowo	98%	3	98%	2
2	Kołobrzeg	95%	64	99%	8
3	Darłówko	96%	5	98%	2
4	Ustka	98%	4	99%	2

5	Rowy	98%	3	99%	1
6	Jarosławiec	98%	2	98%	2
7	Dąbki	100%	0	.	17
8	Mielno	96%	10	98%	4
9	Mielenko	97%	1	.	14
10	Łazy	95%	1	95%	1
11	Unieście	91%	1	.	14
12	Gąski	98%	1	.	20
13	Sarbinowo	99%	1	99%	1
	<b>Average</b>	<b>97%</b>			

Source: own research based on booking.com as of July 23 and July 30, 2019.

The results obtained from booking.com in Central Pomerania were confronted with the results for towns located on the coast, outside of Central Pomerania: in West Pomeranian and Pomeranian Voivodeships. Table 3 shows the results: average occupancy rate was 96% for the first week of August. In the week at the turn of July and August, the results were similar, except in the case of 5 towns, in case of which the service did not provide data, probably due to low level of bookings made (the seaside resorts affected: Jurata, Dębki, Chałupy, Rogowo, Pustkowo).

**Table 3.**

*Booking accommodation in selected seaside resorts in Poland (excluding Central Pomerania) for 2+2 families for weekly stays between July 27 – August 3 and August 3 – August 10, 2019. (booking.com)*

No.	Town	August 3 to August 10, 2019		July 27 to August 3, 2019	
		Reserved objects	Number of free objects	Reserved objects	Number of free objects
1	Świnoujście	96%	28	99%	3
2	Międzywodzie	99%	1	98%	2
3	Rewal	97%	7	99%	1
4	Pogorzelica	97%	2	89%	10
5	Mrzeżyno	94%	3	97%	1
6	Jastarnia	95%	5	99%	1
7	Jurata	100%	0	.	42
8	Dębki	100%	0	.	25
9	Karwia	100%	0	75%	26
10	Władysławowo	95%	24	97%	15
11	Jantar	94%	3	94%	3
12	Stegna	97%	2	98%	1
13	Kąty Rybackie	94%	2	94%	1
14	Krynica Morska	89%	17	99%	8
15	Sopot	90%	160	97%	38
16	Chałupy	100%	0	.	52
17	Rogowo	100%	0	.	16
18	Dziwnówek	98%	2	89%	8
19	Pobierowo	97%	8	98%	3
20	Łukęcin	97%	2	95%	8
21	Pustkowo	94%	1	.	9
22	Dziwnów	99%	1	89%	11
23	Międzyzdroje	96%	15	99%	2
24	Łeba	93%	21	98%	5
	<b>Average</b>	<b>96%</b>			

Source: own research based on booking.com as of July 23 and July 30, 2019.

The research showed, that the demand for accommodation in the holiday season at the Polish seaside is very high, the effectiveness of accommodation sales by booking.com in the peak season of 2019 in coastal towns was close to 100%, and there were no significant differences in the occupancy rate of facilities between the towns of Central Pomerania and other coastal regions in Poland.

The obtained results of occupancy rates in the booking.com system at the average level of 96-97% are consistent with the information published by one of the large investors of an aparthotel complex, built in West Pomeranian Voivodeship, who estimated, that the occupancy rate of hotels in the Kołobrzeg county in the summer season is 97-98%, with an average price of PLN 550 per night (Shelter Hotel & Apartments). This information, however, differs from the data of the Statistical Office in Szczecin, according to which the total bed occupancy rate in accommodation facilities in West Pomeranian Voivodeship in 2018 was 51.6%, while 58.7% in hotels alone. In August, the highest rate was recorded: 63.5% in total and 72.6% in hotels only. Despite the existing discrepancies, it can be stated that the level of accommodation capacity utilization, as it appears from the Statistical Office and booking.com data, is very high. Moreover, in the coastal areas, in 2018, there was a strong upward trend in the number of overnight stays (a 7.7% increase when compared to 2017). In 2018, the accommodation occupancy rate in the coastal region was equal to 50.6% (Turystyka..., 2018).

The last stage of the analysis was to assess the attractiveness of Central Pomerania – its tourist, health and entertainment values – based on the descriptions of apartment sale offers provided on construction investments' websites included in Table 1. It was checked, whether and to what extent, investors indicate the attractiveness of the region as a factor encouraging to buy an apartment. The analysis shows that only the closest surroundings of the complex under construction are important for buyers, especially the beach, greenery, dunes, the sea, the center of the town, where the investment is carried out (e.g. Darłówko, Łeba, Kołobrzeg), the nearby lake (e.g. Łebsko), the nearby protected areas (e.g. Słowiński National Park, biosphere reserve, Protected Landscape Area of the Koszalin Seaside Belt), bicycle routes. One of the investment websites mentioned the nearby dinosaur park and horse-riding opportunities. No website mentioned the Koszalin aquapark, which was built to increase the investment attractiveness of the region, monuments in Central Pomerania, forest areas, lakes (outside the strict coastline), shopping centers in Koszalin, the Koszałek ferry crossing on Jamno Lake, German bunkers and other attractions of Central Pomerania. Based on the analysis of investment offers, it can be concluded, that the most important factors for apartment buyers are the sea, beach and attractiveness of the nearest neighborhood. Further part of Central Pomerania is of no or secondary importance when investing in the seaside apartments.

This means, that investors and tourists do not pay much attention to areas outside the strict coast. It can be assumed, that they probably do not know the value of the whole Central Pomerania and their attention during their stay by the sea is focused on the attractions directly related to it. For this reason, the apartment complexes being built contribute primarily to the

development of coastal towns and resorts. Their impact on the development of the entire Central Pomerania is rather limited and may possibly be related to the creation of new jobs on the coast and thus reducing unemployment among people commuting from further corners of the region. The above theses require confirmation in further research, which would take other factors into consideration, e.g. opinions of investors and tourists.

Finally, it is worth mentioning other arguments on the websites of particular investments, that encouraged the purchase of an apartment in a given location:

- increase in apartment prices over time,
- higher income than in a bank deposit,
- development of tourist infrastructure,
- possible cooperation with companies managing property rental,
- high interest of tourists in accommodation rental,
- a sudden boost of popularity of recreation in Poland for safety reasons,
- increased interest of foreign tourists in holiday stays in Poland.

#### **4. Summary**

Serious problems for Central Pomerania are transport exclusion and high unemployment rate. The best developing seaside communes are the coastal ones, where there is a very high demand for tourist services and an investment boom related to the construction of modern apartment and aparthotel complexes, with extensive spa and wellness zones. The possibility to spend time in such zones in an attractive way, especially when the weather is unfavorable, is one of the factors that influence the extension of the tourist season and encourage to stay by the Baltic Sea in the face of threats of terrorist attacks in other popular tourist destinations.

Accommodation by the sea is booked in advance. In the peak holiday season of 2019, most holiday offers displayed on booking.com were unavailable a few days before the start of the stay, and the effectiveness of selling accommodation was close to 100%. As a result, there are lots of tourists in seaside resorts during summer.

Hotels and apartment complexes under construction are changing the face of the Polish coast, which – after the political transformation – was dominated by company holiday resorts and private guest houses. The analysis of seaside apartment sales offers on the primary market showed that, according to investors, this is an attractive market for potential buyers, due to several key factors, including a relatively high rate of return (as compared to a bank deposit) and the possibility of unmanned rental of an apartment. In addition to that, in their offers, developers paid attention to the benefits resulting, among other things, from the increase in prices of apartments in time and the attractions of the coast. However, there were no references to the tourist attractions offered by the towns of Central Pomerania, not located directly by the

sea. This may cause concerns, that tourists are not interested in the values of neighboring communes, do not visit them and do not know how to make their stay by the sea more attractive. This, in turn, means that the presence of a huge number of tourists by the sea and the resulting construction of apartment complexes on the coast has, so far, stimulated mainly the development of coastal communes, but does not directly affect or has a limited impact on the development of relatively poor, more distant locations of Central Pomerania. Possible confirmation of these conclusions in further research would indicate the need to include the entire Central Pomerania in the strategy of coastal tourism development. This would require the efforts of local authorities to create and promote tourist attractions located not only in the immediate vicinity of beaches, but also in the farther corners of the region. The benefits could be tremendous for local communities, especially that the region, even in the era of a significant economic development of Poland, is struggling with the problem of very high unemployment.

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