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Health Tourism Spas as Places of Physical Recreation for Families

Abstract. Today, practicing physical recreation together as a family is gaining importance, which is influenced by many factors. Physical recreation as a family plays a role in the education of young generations to value recreation, but is also important for the maintenance of health. A big factor of this is social conditions. One opportunity to participate in the practice of recreational physical activity is during various tourist stays, for example, in a spa. The aim of the work was to demonstrate the feasibility of physical recreation as a family in spas.

Keywords: family physical recreation, spa areas, recreational health services

1. Introduction

Nowadays, practicing the family physical recreation together is gaining importance, which is influenced by many factors. Sports activity of this type does not only play a role in the education of young generations for recreation, but it is also important for the creation of health. Social conditions should be also taken into consideration. Common physical recreation in the family is often a means to rebuild family ties undermined by the current dynamic lifestyle in which different kinds of responsibilities mean that parents do not have time not only for themselves but also for their children. Therefore, systematic and shared physical rec-

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recreation has an impact on the integration of the family. In addition, it allows you to “vent” different stresses and psychosomatic tensions, at the same time, having the meaning for “rebuilding” the appropriate level of relaxation of a person.

However, the above positive and varied impact on practicing physical recreation for family members is possible if this type of recreational behavior is systematic and takes place over a period of time. Of course, it is the best if the process of physical recreation is present within a person’s life. However, it is not always possible. Therefore, it is not rare that even a common practice of recreational physical activity during a tourist trip, e.g. the holiday has a broad positive impact on the family. One of the destinations of the optimal “parameters” for active rest is a spa area. The aim of the work is to demonstrate the importance and feasibility of family physical recreation in spa areas. Hence the following research questions were posed:

1. What conditions do health resorts create for the realization of recreation and active tourism in the family?
2. How important are the selected forms of physical recreation for the surveyed families in the Upper Silesian spas?
3. Why spas are a source of creating awareness of health and recreation for families?

2. Material and methods

In connection with the purpose of research and posed research questions, the following test methods: analysis of literature, diagnostic survey and observation surveys were conducted during the summer of 2012 among randomly selected guests of the statutory Upper Silesian spas (Ustroń and Goczałkowice). The questionnaire consists of 14 thematic questions and 7 demographic questions handed over to three hundred respondents – representatives of the families.

Questions had mostly closed and open nature. For statistical analysis 223 correctly completed questionnaires were taken into consideration. This article uses only questions where respondents had to assess the validity of the recreational offer given to family in resorts in Upper Silesia on a 0 (an offer not valid) to 5 (a very important offer) scale.

3. The family and other conditions of participation in physical recreation

Despite many changes which a family has experienced and are experiencing, it remains one of the most important social institutions, especially in the implemen-

tation of the younger generation in systems of values and social norms ...including those patterns relating to recreation and leisure. T. Wolańska [1994] thinks indeed that “patterns [in terms of physical recreation and tourism] learned from the family home leave a lasting impression for the whole life” [Wolańska 1994: 8]. Even if this statement is a little bit offensive by its radicalism – especially considering the hard, sometimes divergent results of empirical research – it does not alter the fact that the “flood” of impacts which we consciously and unconsciously are subject to and the impact we have on other people, those impacts which are “exchanged” between the family members have a huge influence on us. This is determined by such factors as the highly emotional nature of the relationship between family members, the frequency of mutual contacts and their long duration, and for children and teenagers also it is an early start to exert influence on their socializing characteristic for the period of the most vivid personality development.

Taking the latter into account G. Szymańska [1995] claims that “structures” which a child acquires within the family, although they may be modified in the course of establishing their new social contacts, they never cease to exert influence on the shape of their personality, even in adult life. T. Wolańska [1994] quoted earlier, believes that the importance of family within the field of education to participate in physical culture is noted mainly in arousing and satisfying the needs of physical activity in children, and encouraging adults to overcome barriers to participation in sport, tourism and recreation maintaining and developing physical fitness and motor skills of family members. Mechanisms through which such effects occur are usually reduced to two categories: modeling, so an increase in readiness to behaviors that are observed in significant people, becoming a kind of examples to follow, and social support, which is a concept referred to all kinds of influences created by some people, which lead to the strengthening of the behavior of other people [Gracz 1993; Gottlieb 1994].

Although the data on the impact of the first of these mechanisms is only empirical, they are also quite divergent (see e.g. Trost 2003), but it is difficult to question the significance of his impact especially in relationships between generations, because “personal example of parents [...] in particular their participation in the making active forms of recreation by family, for a generation of children is not only an additional opportunity to participate in sport and tourism in their spare time, spend in the family circle, but also a role model for the future [Marczewska & Wolańska 1988: 31]. In addition to giving a personal example of behavior in the field of recreation, people also affect their behavior through activities such as the supply of sports-tourist equipment, being interested in the pastime and encouraging to spend their free time in an active manner. Moreover, there are other impacts for example: motivating and helping to break down the barriers in recreation, providing positive feedback about changes in appearance, behavior etc.

They are referred to as instrumental, emotional, informational and evaluation support. Although not all of them were the subject of empirical research, however, at least for instrumental (including logistics) and emotional support it can be said about the documentation of their importance for the behavior of free time people. For example, in the international study conducted by a team of T. Stahl and others [2001] it has been concluded that among people declaring receiving little support from family (family, friends) the probability of passive leisure time was almost twice higher than among those declaring high level of received social support.

The social environment, even the most supportive and which is the best example for the behavior of recreational, however, will have a limited impact on people demanding formation and/or changes in forms of spending their free time, if they will not have a place to pursue these behaviors. Therefore, the physical environment, especially being a product of human hands, urban solutions supporting the activity, proximity and safety of use of the sports and recreation infrastructure, health-promoting potential of various values, etc. are factors perceived as even stronger determinants of human choice behavior than cognitive mechanisms [Owen et al. 2004].

Even if this view is somewhat exaggerated, considering after all, a large diversity of behaviors of people living in the same environment, they reside in an environment defined in the literature as “stimulating” [Stahl et al. 2001] facilitates the promotion of physical activity and its role cannot be underestimated. First of all, according to McElroy [2002] two factors are decisive here: firstly, that the environment is such a rich source of visual stimuli as “reminder” for active recreation, directing the attention of a man and thus it could increase the likelihood of its adoption. Objects such as walking paths, parks, swimming pools, fitness, family recreation areas and etc., which are located near the place of residence, they provide the stimuli which increases the availability of attitudes toward active behavior, and thus the likelihood of behavior to which they pertain. Secondly, such an environment reduces some of the barriers to recreation, as the time to reach the place of exercise, a lack of ability to organize activities, or simply a lack of places where one could enjoy preferred forms of activity.

The aforementioned family behaviors in their free time in such an environment can be defined as a family form of physical recreation.

4. The notion of family physical recreation

Recreation as it is emphasized in the literature is an integral part of leisure time [Kwilecka 2006]. The term “recreation” comes from the Latin word *recreo*, or

“bring to life,” “revive,” “enhance” [Plezi 1974]. Contemporary literature gives three meanings of recreation i.e.:

- team of behaviors carried out in their free time,
- the process of relaxation after work includes recuperation, removing the effects of fatigue, restitution of the body,
- the socio-cultural phenomenon associated with an increased amount of free time and a lot of forms of human behavior [Winiarski 1989].

The features of recreations include:

- recreational activity undertaken only in their spare time,
- the existence of various forms of recreation, the choice of which is determined by individual preferences and social influences,
- the voluntary behavior of leisure,
- making the analyzed activity for leisure and not being idle or bored
- difference to activities related to work, family responsibilities, and others,
- selflessness, or the lack of economic motives,
- fun and entertainment provided through participation in recreation,
- the socialization and educative role of recreational activity [Winiarski 1999].

In the literature, taking into account the type of free time activity, the division of recreation is made:

- physical recreation (physical),
- creative recreation,
- cultural and entertainment recreation,
- recreation through social activities [Kielbasiewicz-Drozdowska & Siwiński 1998].

The practice of recreation, taking into account the level of involvement of psychophysical it forces the division between active and passive recreation¹ [Toczek-Werner 1998]. Active recreation is also divided into:

- activity of predominant mental effort,
- forms of predominant exercise called as physical recreation (physical) [Winiarski 1989].

To sum up this part of the work bearing in mind a frequently cited definition of recreation by T. Wolańska [1997] we can say that “family physical recreation is all these activities of mobility – sport or tourism content, when family members together dedicate themselves to their own desire in their free time, for leisure, pleasure and developing their own personality treated autotelicly or utilitarian as an expression of concern for health, fitness and physical condition.”

Physical recreation is performed at the place of residence, but often a good place is the area where the family goes on a holiday break or a leisurely stay. Tak-

¹ Examples of passive recreation are: listening to music, watching TV, or sunbathing.

ing the defined concept of “family physical recreation” into consideration, it seems that spa areas are the best from the tourist areas.

5. Spa areas as the venue of family physical recreation

Spa areas belonging to the tourist village², next to the statutory functions of healing, have the potential for the realization of tourist services, especially health tourism, in which recreational behaviours are also present. This is done especially by the specific conditions of the natural resorts, which together with the spa socioeconomic determinants differ from those in urban areas and industrialized countries.

Healing areas are the main forms of implementation of health tourism, hence the spa area (spa) is one of the most important tourist destinations. The main goal is therefore to improve the health or maintaining an appropriate level through prevention (including wellness and spa), rehabilitation or spa treatment, which provided naturopathy treatments are essential for guests.

Health tourism in spas, in addition to typical forms of healing, is moreover carried out by the rest tourists, qualified tourism and wellness tourism with many services of physical recreation. In these forms of tourism care to attain a high state of health often it proves to be more possible than in the tourism health treatment. This is due to the fact that in these types of activities the people who have no visible disease, including people using recreation are mainly involved. Leisure tourism in the form of holidays, camps, winter camps, weekend stays, outdoor schooling allows areas to realize the need for a health and psycho spa of a person, using the existing natural factors, primarily climate and water [Gołembski 2005]. Such forms of health tourism provide opportunities for behavior as a part of the family physical recreation.

From the economic point of view in the resorts there are different behaviors, including physical recreation, “are implemented in the form of pro-health services, which are valuable – useful product in socioeconomic terms, mainly intangible, produced by human labor (eg. doctors, physiotherapists, trainers) in

² The term “tourist” in the literature is controversial because there are discernible different approaches to the nature of the problem. Generally speaking, the tourist town “... is such a settlement unit, which is due to tourist attractions and transport accessibility is the destination point or staged migration tourist” [Gaworecki 2007]. Types of tourist attractions, their functions and the type of tourist development permit to distinguish the tourist village from next to the spa, the village of a therapeutic-recreation and holiday resorts (holiday-the vacation, villages of interest), village tourism sightseeing and village tourism transit [Warszyńska & Jackowski 1978].

the production process, as a result of exposure to a man (their state of health, psychological, physical, emotional state), by activating the potential of aiming to meet the previously identified needs including especially the motive for human health.”

Services of physical recreation in spa areas are mainly feasible at a high level due to the requirements of “being” a resort. Spa area status is given for tourist locations:

- having deposits of natural medicinal resources of proven medicinal properties on the terms specified in the Act,
- an area where there is a climate of medicinal properties proven under the terms of the Act,
- where plants and equipment of spa treatment are located, prepared to conduct spa treatment,
- fulfill those regulations on environmental protection requirements in relation to the environment,
- having technical infrastructure in the field of water and wastewater, energy, transport, and waste management facilities.

It can be argued that many of the aforementioned “factors” are important not only for spa areas, but also give them the feasibility of family physical recreation.

6. Results

In this work the diagnosis the individual elements validity of the recreational and sport offer (forms and infrastructure recreational sports and proposals in the field of active tourism) was performed on the basis on a survey of families representatives among spa guests (Table 1).

Analyzing the importance of infrastructure offers for recreation and sports it should be noted that, by far, indoor swimming pools were given the highest validity by visiting families in resorts in Upper Silesia (rating 3.83). In turn, the very low importance for the respondents was an offer of potential use of golf course in their spare time.

In the next study group of a recreational and sports activities offer walks turned out to be the most important. This is probably due to the popularity of this type of activity in the resorts, the appropriate conditions (spa gardens) and the domination of the elderly in spas.

The last analyzed bid group were selected forms and types of active tourism, which, as illustrated by the concept of Wolańska [1994, 1997] are part of physical recreation. Studies have shown that families visiting Upper Silesian spas appreci-

Table 1. The validity of the potential offer elements of sports in the opinion of surveyed families guests in Upper Silesian spas ($n = 223$)

Elements of the offer	The average importance of offer meaning		
Recreation and sports infrastructure			
Indoor swimming pool	3,83	Fitness gym	2,91
Jacuzzi	3,71	Volleyball court	1,97
Salt cave	3,33	Bowling club	1,85
Sauna	3,27	Tennis court	1,81
Outdoor swimming pool	3,25	Billiards	1,69
Indoor thermal pool	3,08	Football pitch	1,67
Outdoor thermal pool	2,91	Golf course	1,22
Recreation and sport activities (altogether)			2,61
Recreation and sports activity			
Walking	4,20	Dancing	2,31
Aerobik	2,73	Tai Chi	1,70
Yoga	2,32	Horse-riding	1,29
Recreation and sport activities (altogether)			2,42
Types and forms of active tourism			
Nordic walking*	3,35	Downhill skiing*	1,11
Lowland hiking	3,03	Sailing*	1,05
Mountains hiking	2,86	Canoeing*	1,05
Bicycle trips	2,48	Cros-country skiing*	0,96
Kinds and forms of active tourism (altogether)			1,99
I + II + III (altogether)			2,40

* depending on the covered space it can be a recreational and sports activity (in the area of the spa) or active tourism (moving outside the resort).

Source: own elaboration.

ate the opportunities of Nordic Walking the most. Furthermore, they prefer different forms of trips, especially hiking lowlands.

7. Discussion

In most of the analyzed validity components of sports offer was below 4. This means that, for various reasons, the recreation and sports elements did not have too much significance for respondents. The study of consumer behavior concerning the validity not only proposed, but also the future spa tourism offer results in a better adaptation of the components of the curative product to the needs and preferences of families. The offer spa based only on typically medical com-

ponents is not modern enough from the point of view of the needs of families who go to spas. Now, families 'demand' more diversified basket of benefit, not only in the field of balneology and physical medicine, as well as other services, including wellness. This is confirmed by studies of Polish spas [Hadzik, Kantyka & Szromek 2009; Górna 2011]. Families motives of "trips to the waters" do not only apply to therapeutic and rehabilitation motives, but also more and more important for many of these travelers is the preventive motive, which is an important form of physical recreation. This is important because the implementation of the preventive motive in spas can be done through the use of various forms of physical activity and active tourism.

Probably not the highest importance of many analyzed elements of the potential offer results from a small experience of the respondents in terms of the possibility of using various forms of recreational sports and active tourism for example golf. However, if we want to compete with other destinations for family arrivals Polish resorts are forced to diversify their offer by introducing new offers to spas often, also in the field of physical recreation.

8. Summary

The main conclusions of the study are:

1. Family physical recreation in spas is one of the important activities of increasing importance, and is one of the tools of creating physical culture in the society.

2. The practice of family recreation in resorts provides opportunities for the implementation of many recreational functions and human needs, especially in terms of human health. In particular, family recreation resorts fulfills the need: rest and relaxation, psychophysical activity (traffic, excess energy discharge), change mode and living environment (variety), contact with nature, emotion and pleasure sensations, reduce the level of self-control (spontaneity, freedom, carefree, fun), contacts (informal), achievement, competition, and new experiences, knowledge and skills [Piotrowska 1995].

3. The best conditions in terms of family physical recreation the tested spas create for a family active tourism (hiking, biking), Nordic walking and walking.

Among the potential offers in the field of physical recreation walking had the highest importance, which has been highly rated in terms of importance (score above 4).

4. Indoor swimming pools and a Jacuzzi were the most preferred recreational and sports infrastructure among the respondents in Upper Silesian spas.

In the future, more research is needed for assessing the validity of potential forms of recreational physical activity in order to create optimal spa offer designed for families.

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Uzdrowskie obszary turystyki zdrowotnej jako jedno z miejsc rodzinnej rekreacji fizycznej

Streszczenie. Wspólne uprawianie rekreacji fizycznej w rodzinie nabiera dziś coraz większego znaczenia, na co wpływ ma wiele czynników. Rekreacja fizyczna w rodzinie odgrywa istotną rolę w wychowaniu do rekreacji młodych pokoleń, ale jest również ważna dla zdrowia. Znaczenie mają ponadto uwarunkowania społeczne. Jedną z możliwości uczestnictwa w tego typu aktywności jest wspólne uprawianie rekreacyjnej aktywności fizycznej podczas pobytów turystycznych, np. uzdrowskich. Celem pracy jest pokazanie możliwości realizacji rodzinnej rekreacji fizycznej w uzdrowskich.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzinna rekreacja fizyczna, obszary uzdrowskie, rekreacyjne usługi zdrowotne