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## Development and Evaluation of Spa Tourism in the Area of Podkarpackie Voivodeship and Lviv Region

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Submitted 10/09/21, 1st revision 04/10/21, 2nd revision 27/10/21, accepted 20/11/21

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**Abstract:**

**Purpose:** The aim of the study is to assess spa tourism in Podkarpackie voivodeship and Lviv region on the basis of a diagnostic survey conducted in 2020 among tourists from Poland and Ukraine. The aim is also to assess the attractiveness of health resorts on both sides of the border.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The configuration and methodological requirements of the research process were based on own survey research, available literature, observation and available data from health resorts in Podkarpackie voivodeship and Lviv region.

**Findings:** The research will contribute to the formation of promotional strategies in the specified regions, and increasing tourist traffic may have an impact on the development of these regions and greater interest in the naturally valuable areas, and consequently create new jobs for the local population. The results of the research showed which of the attractions in the examined areas charm tourists and testify to the attractiveness of border regions.

**Practical implications:** Reliability and universality of research is becoming an absolute requirement at the present time and is a decisive argument for the effectiveness of analyses and evaluations. Due to universality of the research methodology presented in the study, can be used in any region to evaluate the attractions and attractiveness of health resorts on the Polish and Ukrainian side in the Carpathian region.

**Originality/Value:** The presented research methodology a comprehensive studies based on pragmatic assumptions with the support of specialised literature and observations due to the residence of the authors of the study in the researched areas. It also defines the scope and authenticity of the results in the presented topic.

**Keywords:** Carpathian spas, spa tourism, Poland, Ukraine.

**JEL codes:** O3, L83, Q26, R11.

**Paper Type:** A research study.

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## **1. Introduction**

The beginnings of spa tourism development can be traced back to ancient times. Already in Ancient Greece people travelled e.g., to the island of Euboea to take advantage of the health properties of mineral water springs (Kaczmarek, 2005). Ancient Romans were also fascinated by places that showed healing character. Places with hot springs were also popular, being the destination of trips of Roman magnates. The tradition of Roman thermal baths was also cultivated in the Middle Ages, when bathing sites were established at newly discovered springs. Such tradition reached also Poland. Already in the 13th century the dukes of Świdnica used the thermal springs in Cieplice. The development of spa tourism in the Carpathians falls on the 19th and 20th century (Małecka and Marcinkowski, 2007).

Spa tourism is closely related to a health resort. Within the meaning of the Act of 28 July 2005 on spa treatment, spas and areas of spa protection and on spa communes (consolidated text Dz. U. of 2012, item 651) is a separate area where spa treatment is carried out in order to use and protect the natural medicinal resources located in its area. The term "spa" is derived from the word "heal", i.e., to restore health by means of appropriate medicines or treatments, and from the word "zdrój", i.e., a place in the ground from which water flows. In colloquial opinion a health resort is perceived as a tourist place where one can be treated (Słownik, Języka, and Polskiego, 1989). Health resorts in Poland are rich in tourist attractions, such as: museums, parks, sacral and residential monuments, which abound in permanent artistic events, especially musical, often of international rank. A major attraction of many resorts is their specific spa and treatment infrastructure, not found in other holiday destinations (Deutscher Heilbäderverband, 2005).

Spas have mineral water pump rooms, natural healing facilities, spa clinics, thermal bathing pools, brine graduation towers, as well as attractive spa parks and walking areas, widely used by both patients and tourists. Some localities have a well-developed sport and recreational infrastructure, which makes them popular centres of winter and water sports, as well as bases for qualified mountain tourism (Krupa and Wołowicz, 2010).

Spa tourism is one of top of mind Poland's brand products. Poland is at the top of the European ranking in terms of the number of spas, which puts the country in a good starting position when it comes to competing for foreign clients. In this rivalry the diversity of individual spas plays an important role, which creates favourable conditions for satisfying various needs among clients. Spa tourism is a form of health tourism, which is an element of the tourism market separated due to the motivations for practicing tourism (Tourism, 2020). However, part of the specialised spa tourism offer may be the basis for shaping the demand of tourists coming to resorts for purposes other than therapeutic.

Thanks to its varied terrain, unique landscape and exceptional flora, Podkarpackie voivodeship is an attractive area for tourists. Mountainous and submontane areas, forest complexes, rich fauna and flora, mineral and curative resources as well as monuments of material culture and folklore make Podkarpackie voivodeship an attractive region for every visitor (Skała and Szpara, 2007). A special place on the tourist map of Podkarpackie voivodeship is occupied by four health resorts such as: Iwonicz Zdrój, Rymanów Zdrój, Horyniec Zdrój and Polańczyk as well as four potential health resorts. These are: Czarna, Rabe, Komańcza and Lipa. A characteristic feature of these areas is the presence of therapeutic water deposits and specific microclimate.

Spas in Ukraine fulfill a similar function. The political transformation that took place in its area was also observed in the tourism sector, which caused systemic changes in the functioning of regions and tourist resorts in this country. The greatest transformations have been registered in the sphere of ownership relations of tourist infrastructure and in the spatial arrangement of areas receiving and generating tourist traffic. The political transformation in Ukraine has made it possible for spa tourism to emerge as a factor of socio-economic activation of many regions.

Lviv Oblast has a well-developed spa and sanatorium sector. Therapeutic boarding houses, prophylactic sanatoriums, holiday homes, hostels and other recreational facilities operate in this area (Shabliy, 2017). The most important localities for spa tourism are, Truskavets, Morshyn, Lubin Veliky, Nemyriv, Shklov, Rozdol and Shodnitsa. Lviv Subcarpathian, is one of the most famous spa areas in Ukraine and the Carpathians of global importance. It owes its fame mainly to three health resorts - Truskavets, Morshyn and Skhidnytsya, where dozens of sanatoriums, holiday homes and other therapeutic and recreational facilities are located. The healing waters of Naftusia and Moršinske are unique in their properties. The uniqueness of these resorts is also emphasised by the possibility of using curative natural wax, the largest deposits of which are found in the Lviv region. Patients stay in comfortable accommodation facilities with a full range of additional services such as national cuisine, herbal bars, swimming pools, Russian baths, solariums, conference rooms, sports equipment hire. The stays are varied by numerous trips to castles, historical towns and natural reserves.

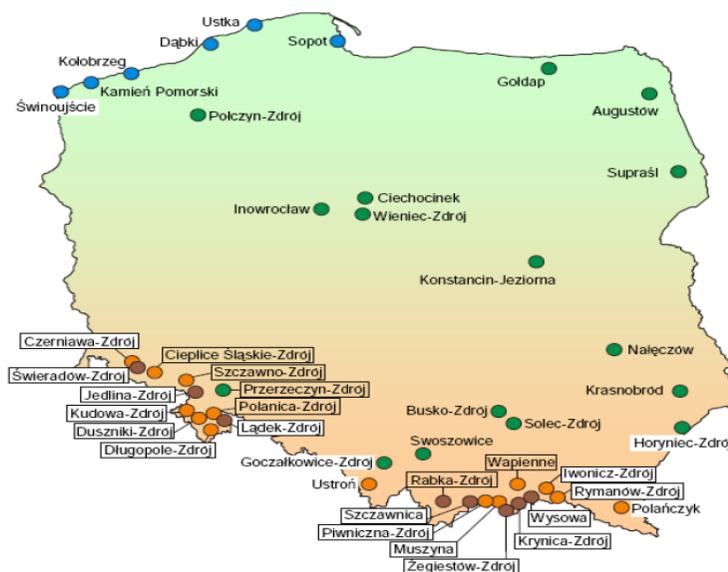
Polish and Ukrainian Carpathian spas are a source of health and vitality. As a result of mineral water treatment, one can get rid of many diseases and keep the body in good shape (Szromek, 2010). Thanks to a complex of health-promoting treatments, including drinking mineral waters, life-giving baths and mud, toxins are removed from the body, chronic fatigue syndrome disappears and blood pressure normalises.

## **2. Spa Tourism in the Podkarpackie Voivodship**

One of the best known health resorts where spa tourism may develop is the town of Iwonicz-Zdrój (Figure, 1). It is one of the oldest and best known resorts in Poland. It

is located in the Low Beskids, 80 km from the regional city of Rzeszów. Chloride, bicarbonate and iodine-bromide waters, flowing from the springs, they are used for healing baths, it can be also used as a drinking water or for the production of Iwonicz healing salt. Health resorts in Podkarpackie voivodeship are renowned for the high level of qualifications of their medical staff, who obtained their qualifications abroad. Spas in Iwonicz-Zdrój are considered to be particularly beneficial for people with diseases of neurological, orthopaedic, rheumatological, laryngological, gynaecological as well as digestive system nature. Iwonicz Zdrój specialises in the treatment of osteoporosis, psoriasis, obesity, rehabilitation of women after mastectomy ([uzdrowisko-iwonicz.com.pl](http://uzdrowisko-iwonicz.com.pl).)

**Figure 1.** Map of Poland with spas in the Podkarpackie voivodship



**Source:** Mountain and foothill spas, [mpola.pl](http://mpola.pl).

Another of the well-known spas in Podkarpackie voivodeship is Polańczyk - a holiday resort located in the Bieszczady Mountains, in the Solina municipality (Figure 1). It is the youngest health resort in Podkarpacie. It has a very large number of sanatoriums and rest houses. The basic values of Polańczyk Spa are the climate and two types of waters: Polanczynka, containing sodium bicarbonate, iodine and boron and Solinianka, containing chlorides, sodium bicarbonate, bromine and iodine. These waters are used for drinking and bathing. Polańczyk specialises in the treatment of orthopaedics, neurology, rheumatology, laryngology, pulmonology, diabetology, obesity, endocrinology and osteoporosis. It is situated on the Solina lagoon and is naturally conducive to the development of water sports. On the shoreline of the lagoon (over 160 km) there are several dozens of sailing bases, marinas, resorts. Almost all resorts located in Polańczyk have recreational facilities

with sports fields, tennis courts and recreational areas. In winter, in addition to wellness treatments, skiing is offered (Łazarkowie, 2010).

Another well-known resort in the area is Horyniec-Zdrój (Figure 1). It is surrounded by picturesque hills and vast forest areas of the Roztoczanski National Park and 99 km east of the regional capital, Rzeszow. Horyniec-Zdrój specialises in the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of people with musculoskeletal diseases, rheumatism, as well as various gynaecological and skin diseases. In addition, the spa's medical centres treat diseases of the upper respiratory tract and digestive system, metabolic disorders and heavy metal poisoning. During treatment procedures, high-quality natural resources are used in the form of sulphur-sulphide waters and deposits of highly mineralised mud (Kłos, 2000). It is worth adding that the sulphur baths of this resort have a salutary effect on the skin, mainly the treatment of acne, psoriasis, keratosis of the epidermis. Hydrogen sulphide baths also treat rheumatic and degenerative joint diseases, gout and musculoskeletal disorders (Jawor, 2005).

An attractive health resort is Rymanów-Zdrój (Figure 1), situated in a forested valley of the Tabor river, among mountains called Rymanów Hills, at the altitude of 375 m. w. m. The site is located on the border of two Carpathian regions, Beskid Niski and Pogórze Bukowskie, in the valley of the Tabor river and its right tributary - the Czarny Potok. Rymanów-Zdrój has five sanatorium facilities. The therapeutic profile of the facility, based on its therapeutic qualities, covers mainly prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of respiratory system diseases, including: bronchial asthma, chronic inflammatory conditions of nasal cavity, throat, tonsils and bronchi, chronic pneumonia, conditions after resection of lung tissue. In children, ailments of the upper and lower respiratory tract, locomotor organs, urinary tract are treated, while in adults - disorders of the respiratory tract, circulatory system, locomotor organs and rheumatic diseases (Madeyski, 1998). In the area of the health resort there are recreational facilities, such as: a spa park, an outdoor swimming pool, a tennis court, a ski lift, hiking trails and spa paths in the Protected Landscape Area of the Beskid Niski (info.rymanow.pl).

### **3. Spa Tourism in Lviv Region**

The Lviv region is one of the main places in Ukraine with attractive recreational facilities. These facilities are also well known outside the country. They are famous for their unpolluted mountain environment and mineral springs (Hamkało and Kudła, 2011). The mineral waters of the Carpathians are unique in terms of their composition, as they are distinguished by a particularly high amount of gases and salts dissolved in them, thanks to which they acquire special properties and can be used for health purposes. Water from such sources is effectively used for treatment of various organs and prevention of many diseases. There are about 400 springs in Transcarpathia, which differ in their chemical composition, healing properties and temperature (Szromek, 2010).

One of the well-known spas located in the Lviv region is the Truskavets spa (Figure 2). It has 13 curative mineral springs, among which five are the most famous. These are, "Maria", "Naftusya", "Yuzya", "Sofia" and "Bronislava". The water "Naftusya" has a pleasant taste and a faint smell of oil. Its effect is anti-inflammatory, analgesic, detoxifying, promotes the removal of small stones and sand, is a good agent for their prevention, increases the activity of certain glands. The water contributes to the elimination of toxins and radionuclides from the body. Bronislava spring water is used to treat the upper respiratory tract, for gargle and nasopharyngeal irrigation. Yuzya" water has positive effects on skin, mainly it makes it more elastic. This is possible thanks to the substances of glycerine origin contained in this water. The waters "Sofia" and "Maria" are used to treat diseases of the digestive tract (Smolij, 2013).

Figure 2. Lviv region with spas



Source: Cross-border cooperation strategy, euroregionbug.pl.

One of the richest spas in the Lviv region and Ukraine is Nemirov, situated in a pine forest, on the outskirts of the town. It is famous above all for its highly mineralised waters in Ukraine. The concentration of hydrogen sulphide reaches up to 180 mg/l in Nemirov waters. Due to their chemical composition, they belong to sodium-calcium-sulfide and hydrogen-sulfide groups. The following diseases are treated here:

- skin diseases (psoriasis and similar diseases, acne, seborrhoeic dermatitis, conditions after skin burns);
- diseases of the locomotor system and spine (ankylosing spondylitis, arthritis, discopathy, post-operative conditions, disc prolapse, muscle and tendon diseases)
- diseases of the central and peripheral nervous system (organ neuroses, chronic neuralgia, painful root complaints, paresis of the limbs)
- diseases of the heart and circulatory system, (hypertension, obesity);
- diseases of the genital organs of men and women (prostate, painful menstruation, inflammation of the small pelvis);
- diseases of the digestive system (diabetes, latent iron deficiency).

When practicing spa tourism, one can benefit from a range of treatments that will improve the physical and mental health of each visitor (Report, 2012). An attractive health resort in this area is Morszyn. The main advantages of this spa are the presence of numerous mineral water springs with exceptional healing properties, modern medical facilities, qualified medical staff, rooms upgraded according to European standards and the unique location of the buildings (Weiermair 1997]). The mineral springs of the area, thanks to their increased content of sulphate and magnesium salts, are effective in the treatment of digestive system disorders and diabetes. In the area of Morszyn, which has the status of a protected area, it is forbidden to carry out any works that may deteriorate the environment. It is a recreational area where the original oak and beech forest has been preserved.

A significant use in this spa is mud and ozokerite, which in terms of physical and chemical properties is a highly mineralised medicinal raw material of high quality, consisting of silicon anhydride, iron oxide, aluminium and other components (Lazarkowie, 2007). Other spas located in the Lviv region include, Shklo, Lubien Veliky, Rozdol, Schodnica. From this brief characterisation of the best known spas in the Carpathian Mountains on the Ukrainian side, a picture emerges of how important they can be for the development of spa tourism.

#### **4. Material and Methods**

A total of 100 people took part in the research, 50 from Poland and the same number from Ukraine. The majority of respondents, both Polish and Ukrainian citizens, were women (66% and 72% respectively). In both nationality groups, the majority were people aged over 60 (46% and 44% respectively) and 40-60 (44% and 42%

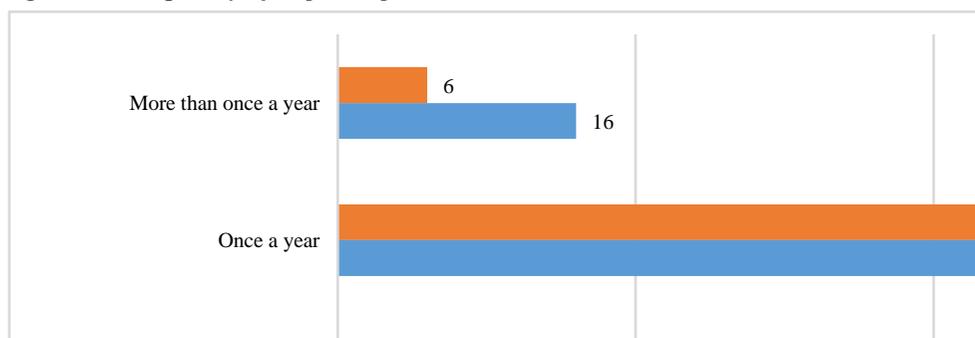
respectively). The survey research used the survey technique, in which the research tool was a properly prepared survey questionnaire with a metric. The questionnaire consisted of 38 questions and had two language versions: Polish and Russian. The Russian version was addressed to the inhabitants of the Lviv region (Ukraine).

The results of the survey were statistically processed using the chi-square test. With its help it was possible to assess differences in the perception of attractiveness of the Carpathian spas by Polish and Ukrainian respondents. The collected research material was presented in graphical and tabular form. Due to the epidemiological situation, it was not possible to carry out a typical field research, therefore the survey questionnaire was placed on the Internet. The Microsoft Teams platform was used, where the questionnaires were uploaded (with an appropriate link) for filling in, while maintaining full anonymity. The study used a non-random selection method, referred to as non-probabilistic selection. The snowball method was used here, which means that the researcher, knowing certain people of the population who meet a given criterion, involves them in the further part of the research. Their task was to encourage other people they knew to take part in the research (Babbie, 2004).

## 5. Research Findings and their Analysis

Respondents, both Poles and Ukrainians, most frequently travel to health resorts once a year (Figure 3). A higher percentage of Poles declared that they use holidays in spa resorts more often than once a year and Ukrainians less often than once a year. However, the differences were insignificant and it can be concluded that the frequency of Poles and Ukrainians travelling to spa resorts was comparable.

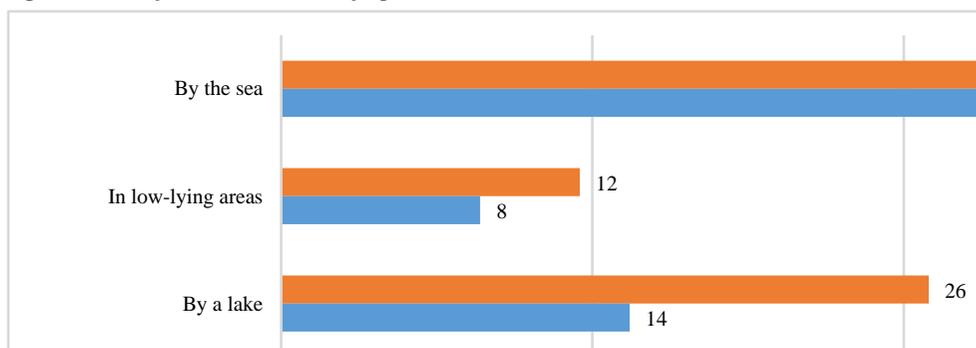
**Figure 3.** Frequency of trips to spa resorts



*Source:* Own elaboration.

When asked to choose a health resort, the highest percentage of both Poles and Ukrainians indicated resting in resorts located in the mountains, followed by the seaside (Figure 4). Ukrainians were more likely than Poles to choose resorts located by lakes. However, these differences were not found to be statistically significant.

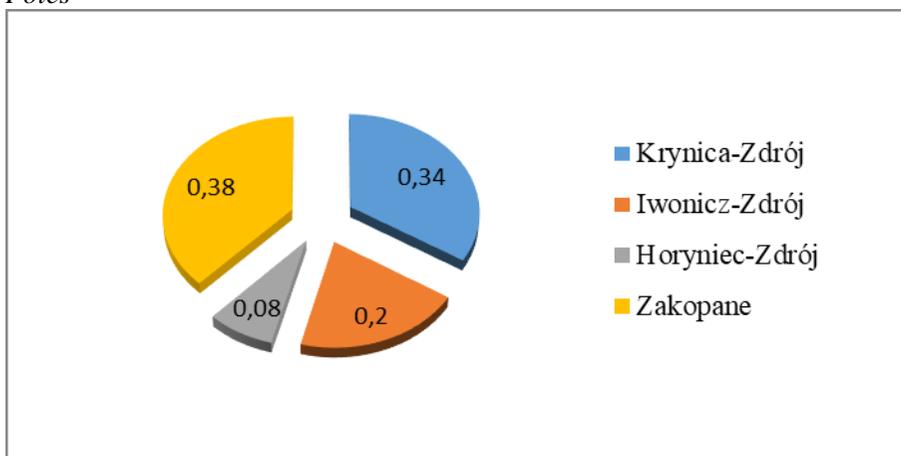
**Figure 4.** Preferred location of spa towns



*Source:* Own elaboration.

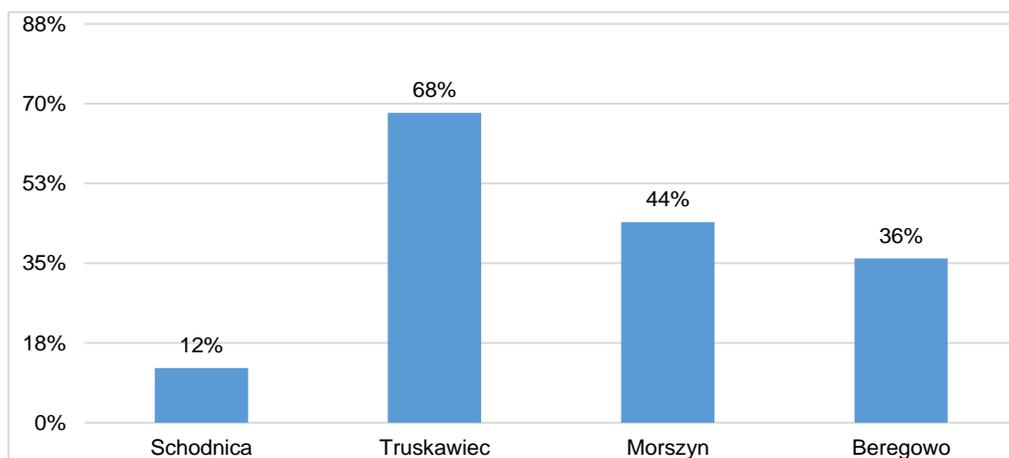
Asking Polish respondents which spa towns in Poland they find most attractive (Figure 5), most respondents opted for Zakopane (38%) and Krynica-Zdrój (34%), but also every fifth respondent indicated Iwonicz-Zdrój (Podkarpackie voivodship).

**Figure 5.** The most attractive health resorts in the Polish Carpathians according to Poles

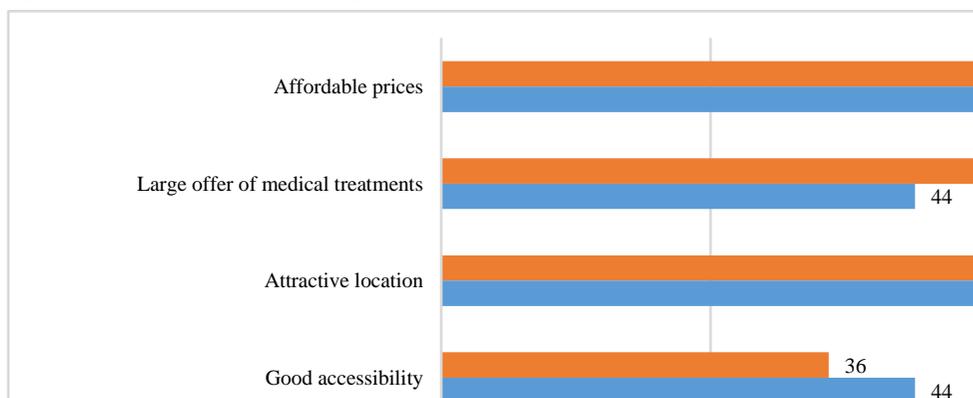


*Source:* Own elaboration.

Ukrainians were asked a similar question - which spa towns located in the Ukrainian Carpathians are most frequently visited (Figure 6). The largest number of respondents indicated Truskavets (68%) - Lviv region. Morshyn was also very popular and Schodnica (12%), also Lviv region, was the least popular. Figure 7 shows what the respondents were guided by when choosing a holiday in a particular spa. The survey shows that affordable prices were the most important motive for the respondents when choosing a particular health resort, and this motive was more important for Ukrainians than for Poles. More than 50% of respondents in both groups were also motivated by the attractive location. Accessibility to cultural attractions was of least importance to the respondents.

**Figure 6.** Health resorts in the Ukrainian Carpathians visited by Ukrainians

*Source:* Own elaboration.

**Figure 7.** Motives for choosing a particular health resort

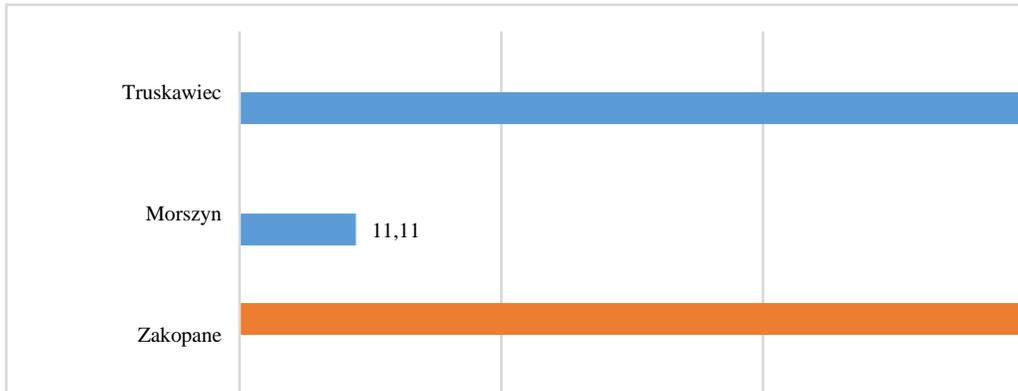
*Source:* Own elaboration.

Figure 8 shows which spa resorts were visited by Ukrainians in the Polish Carpathians and by Poles in the Ukrainian Carpathians (for Lviv region and Podkarpackie voivodeship).

All Ukrainians who declared that they had stayed in Carpathian spas located in Poland stated that it was Zakopane. Among other health resorts only Krynica-Zdrój was mentioned (18,18%), i.e. they did not visit spas in Podkarpackie voivodeship. On the other hand, among Poles the most popular resort in Ukrainian Carpathians was Truskavets, which was visited by 94,44% of respondents. Morshyn (11,11%) was much less popular. Thus it can be concluded that Zakopane and Truskavets on the Ukrainian side are the most popular among both Poles and Ukrainians.

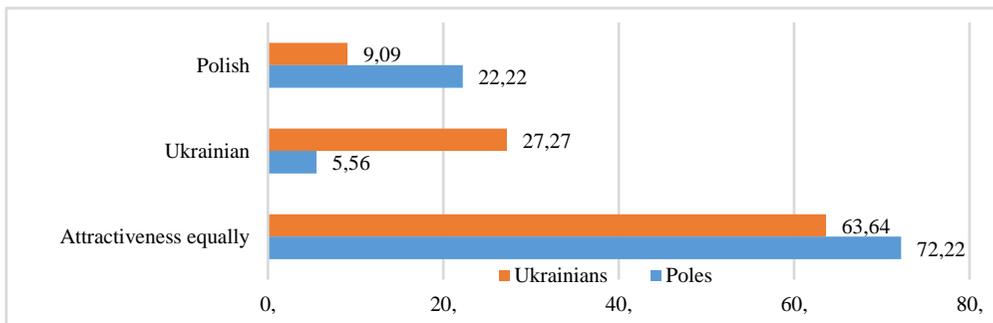
Respondents who visited health resorts outside their countries were asked which health resort (located in Ukraine or Poland) is more attractive. The answers to this question are presented in Figure 9.

**Figure 8.** Health resorts visited by Poles in Ukraine and Ukrainians in Poland



Source: Own elaboration.

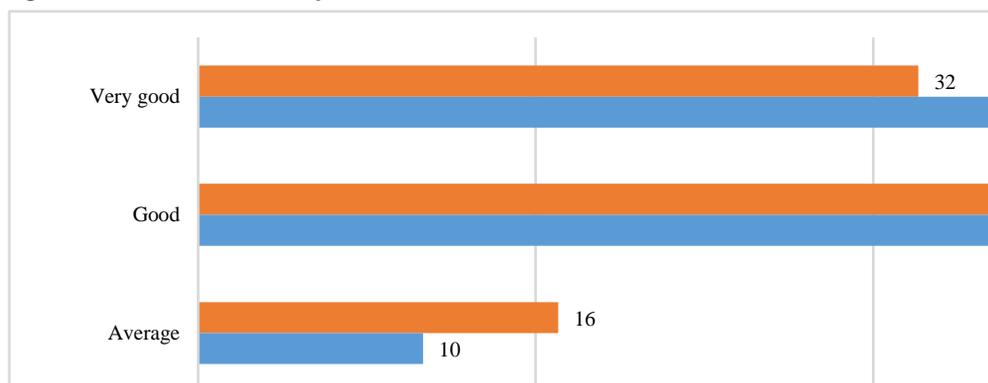
**Figure 9.** Attractiveness of Polish and Ukrainian spas in the Carpathian Mountains according to respondents



Source: Own elaboration.

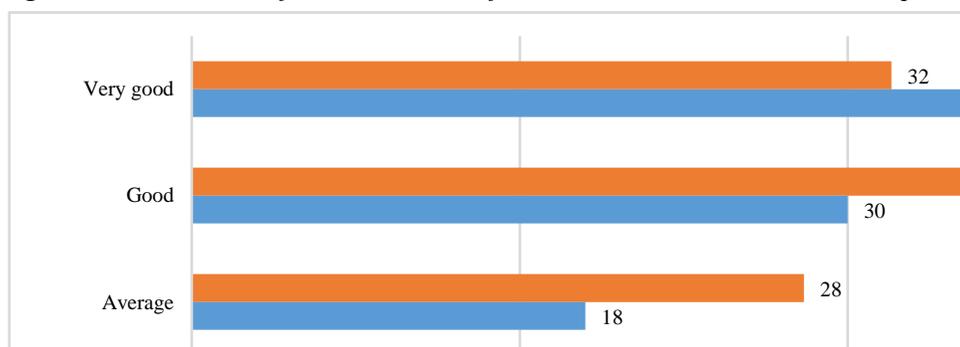
The majority of Poles and Ukrainians surveyed found Polish and Ukrainian spas equally attractive. Only a few Polish respondents indicated that Ukrainian resorts were more attractive. More than 20% of respondents from both groups were in favour of higher attractiveness of resorts located in their countries, which may be explained by sentiment to their own country.

The research shows that the vast majority of Poles would like to use health resorts in Ukraine and Ukrainians would like to use health resorts in Poland. Figure 10 shows how respondents rated the overall attractiveness of health resorts in Podkarpackie voivodeship and the Lviv region.

**Figure 10.** *Attractiveness of health resorts in Poland and Ukraine*

*Source:* Own elaboration.

The data shows that both Poles and Ukrainians positively evaluated the attractiveness of the Carpathian spas. None of the respondents gave an extremely negative assessment. Nevertheless, a higher percentage of Poles than Ukrainians rated the attractiveness of health resorts located in the Ukraine better. Figure 11 shows the evaluation of the accommodation base of health resorts on the Polish and Ukrainian sides. The chart shows that both Poles and Ukrainians rated the accommodation facilities positively, with a higher proportion of Poles (52%) than Ukrainians (32%) rating the facilities as very good.

**Figure 11.** *Evaluation of accommodation facilities in Polish and Ukrainian spas*

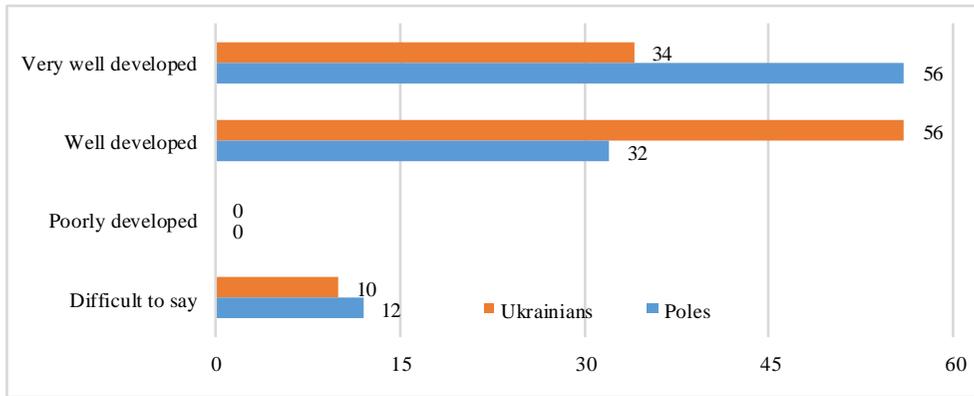
*Source:* Own elaboration.

In turn, Figure 12 presents an assessment of the catering facilities in Polish and Ukrainian spas.

Also in this case the majority of respondents from both Poland and Ukraine assessed the base as very well or well developed. It should be added, however, that a higher percentage of Poles than Ukrainians marked the answer "very well developed". In the case of the answer "well developed", the situation was the opposite. The value of

the probability coefficient calculated in the chi-square test was 0,048 (Table 1), which indicates that there were statistically significant differences in this respect.

**Figure 12.** Evaluation of catering facilities in Polish and Ukrainian spas



*Source:* Own elaboration.

**Table 1.** Assessment of catering facilities in Polish and Ukrainian spas - chi-square test

Significance level	0,05
Liczność	100
Statistics $\chi^2$	6,053
degrees of freedom	2
p-value	0,048*

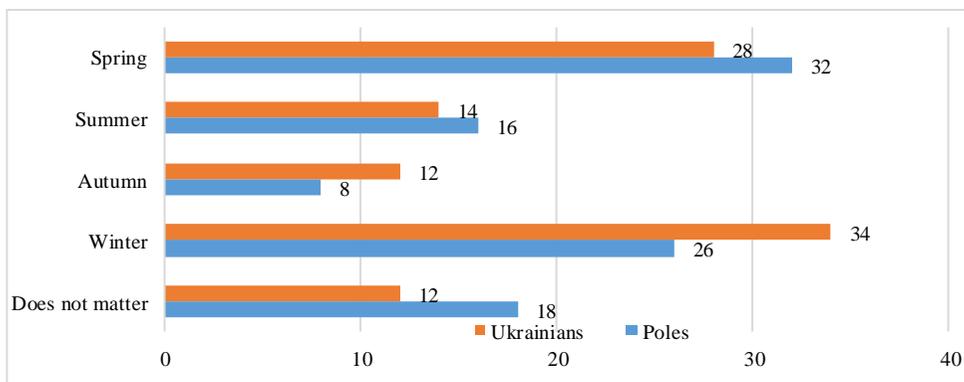
*Source:* Own elaboration.

Figure 13 shows which time of year the respondents found the most attractive to stay in the surveyed health resorts. The majority of Poles and Ukrainians surveyed stated that the most appropriate time of year to relax in a health resort is winter and spring. The fewest respondents in both groups indicated autumn. For 18% of Poles and 12% of Ukrainians the time of year did not matter much. The chi-square test did not show that the responses between the two groups were statistically significant ( $p=0,785$ ).

Figure 14 shows for what reasons respondents visited health resorts in Poland and Ukraine. Most Poles and Ukrainians said they visited the Carpathian spas for recreational purposes, with slightly more Polish respondents indicating this answer. In second place was the therapeutic purpose, indicated by 52% of Ukrainians and 48% of Poles. Health prophylaxis and biological regeneration were of lesser importance for the respondents. Figure 15 shows which attractions were most often

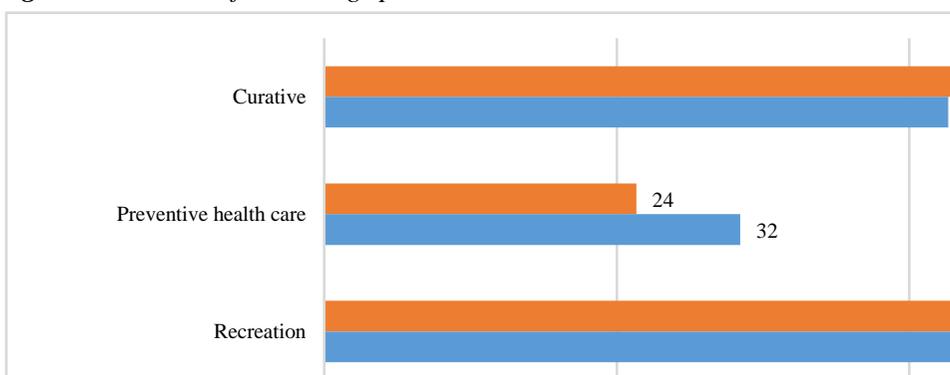
used by the respondents during their stay in health resorts on both sides of the border.

**Figure 13.** *The most suitable seasons for relaxation in Carpathian spas*



*Source:* Own elaboration.

**Figure 14.** *Reasons for visiting spa resorts in Poland and Ukraine*

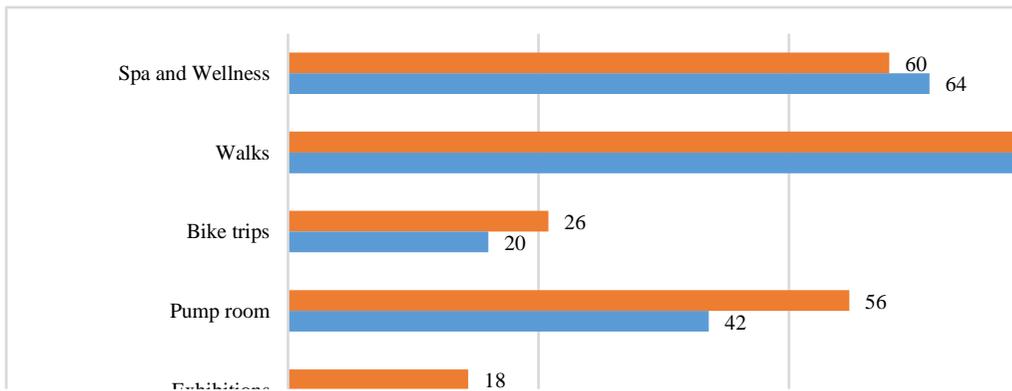


*Source:* Own elaboration.

All respondents, both Poles and Ukrainians, used active forms of recreation in health resorts in the form of walking, cycling trips were less popular. The use of SPA and Wellness, which has a therapeutic character, was very important. Ukrainians were more interested in water pump rooms than Poles (56% vs. 42%). The least popular activities in both groups were cultural attractions such as visiting exhibitions or attending concerts. Figure 16 shows which medical procedures were used by the respondents during their stay in the Polish and Ukrainian spa resorts.

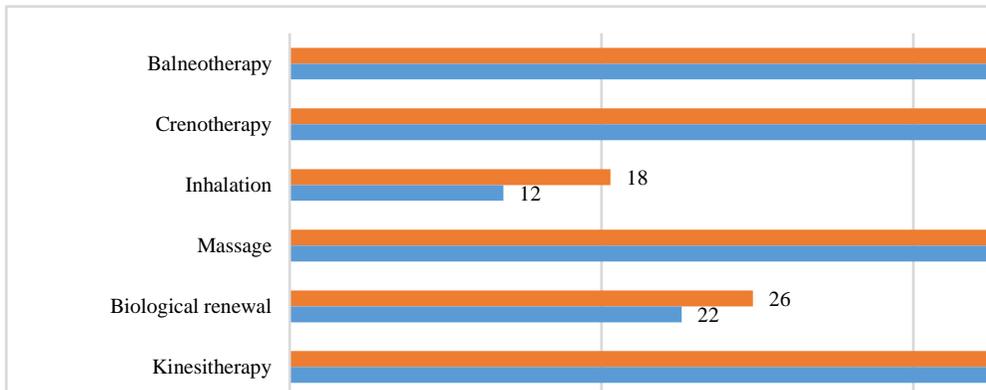
The study showed that both nationality groups used the same therapeutic procedures to a similar extent. More than 50% of respondents in both groups used such treatments as balneotherapy, kinesitherapy, massage and crenotherapy. The least number of respondents used inhalation therapy.

Figure 15. Spa attractions used by respondents



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 16. Treatment procedures in spas used by respondents



Source: Own elaboration.

## 6. Summary and Conclusions

On the basis of the research carried out, it was concluded that the most popular spa resorts in Poland were Zakopane and Krynica-Zdrój - not belonging to the Podkarpackie County, while on the Ukrainian side it was Truskavets and Morszyn from the Lviv Region. In both cases these are attractive, very well-known places and therefore attracted the attention of visitors.

Poles and Ukrainians positively evaluated the attractiveness of health resorts in Podkarpackie voivodeship and Lviv region in terms of catering and accommodation facilities. Both research groups were convinced that health resorts in Poland and Ukraine are equally attractive, therefore the majority of respondents were of the opinion that they would like to use the spa offer of resorts located outside their countries. The main purpose of staying in Carpathian spas was, above all, to enjoy recreation, and for more than 50% of the respondents treatment-related objectives

were important. Among treatments that respondents underwent in spas on the Polish and Ukrainian side the following were predominant: walking, SPA and Wellness, water treatment. Biological regeneration and inhalations were less popular.

According to the respondents, the most decisive factor in choosing a particular health resort was its location and affordable prices, while accessibility to cultural attractions was of least importance. The chi-square test did not show that Poles and Ukrainians differed in their evaluation of the attractiveness of the Carpathian spas (the exception was the evaluation of the catering facilities). The vast majority of Poles and Ukrainians most willingly used health resorts located within their country, but 36% of Poles said they stayed in spas in the Ukraine and 22% of Ukrainians visited Polish spas.

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