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THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURAL TOURISTS WHO VISIT URBAN JEWISH HERITAGE CENTRES: THE CASE STUDY OF VISITORS TO THE WHITE STORK SYNAGOGUE IN WROCŁAW

Abstract: Since the White Stork Synagogue in Wrocław has been restored, opened to visitors and become a part of the so-called *District of the Four Faiths* promoted by the city council, both the synagogue and its neighbourhood have become tourist attractions which support Wrocław's image as a multicultural city. Therefore, the aim of the article is to identify the characteristics of tourists visiting the synagogue which could help understand the specific features of those attracted by urban Jewish heritage. As a result of research with the use of surveys, interviews and observation, the highly emotive cognitive approach of tourists has been determined as the dominant feature in this niche market. Moreover, its strongly international character and its specific age and education structure have been pinpointed. These features form the basis for the conclusion that the tourists attracted by urban Jewish heritage form a very specific niche market which can be targeted especially by large cities through the development of themed tourist products.

Keywords: cultural tourism, Jewish heritage, Wrocław.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of cultural tourism has attracted the attention of researchers in recent years. Responding to this trend are both decision-makers and non-governmental stakeholders in large cities who make use of cultural heritage to form new tourist products. This is especially interesting in the case of Poland where the heritage of both national and ethnic minorities, formerly rejected and hidden by the socialist government, has been rediscovered due to the changes brought about by the transformation process initiated in 1989. Democratic development included a law on association (Ustawa z dnia 7 kwietnia 1989 r.) which lifted the restrictions applied to registration and therefore allowed many organizations representing minorities to be established. From around 1995 the number of events devoted to different cultures, including Jewish, started to increase, culture trails have been laid out, new museums opened and many historical buildings restored with a cultural and educational offer (Duda-Seifert 2017, Małkowska-Bieniek 2009). The Festival of Jewish Culture organised in Kraków has become the most well-known event promoting the Jewish minority in Poland (DUDA-SEIFERT 2016b,

KRUCZEK 2014, WILKOŃSKA 2010), while the White Stork Synagogue in Wrocław is part of the category of restored historical buildings. It dates back to 1829 and was re-consecrated after the renovation process in 1998 and finally opened to visitors (Fig. 1). The Bente Kahan Foundation launched in 2006 takes care of both the material and intangible heritage of the Jewish minority in the city (http://fbk.org.pl). The Jewish Culture and Education Centre (Centrum Kultury i Edukacji Żydowskiej) established in 2005 makes the synagogue accessible on a constant and free-ofcharge basis to individuals, while organized groups are charged the entrance fee. The synagogue is open from Monday to Thursday from 10.00 to 17.00, on Friday between 10.00 and 16.00, and on Sunday between 11.00 and 16.00, except for Jewish religious holidays, concerts and rehearsals (http://wroclaw. jewish.org.pl). There is a permanent exhibition 'A History Reclaimed: Jewish Life in Wroclaw and Lower Silesia' in the second floor gallery whereas the third floor hosts temporary exhibitions (DUDA-SEIFERT 2016a). Therefore, the city has been enriched with a new site which fits perfectly into the multicultural

image of Wrocław that has been built up by both its local government and intellectual elite from the 1990s (Dolińska & Makaro 2013). There are also other sites of Jewish heritage and commemoration but excepting the Old Jewish Cemetery at Ślężna Street, accessible as the Museum of Sepulchral Art, they do not function as tourist attractions yet (Duda-Seifert & Mikołajczak 2012).



Fig. 1. White Stork Synagogue, Wrocław in July 2016: the entrance is on the left Photo: M. Duda-Seifert

Furthermore, it is even more remarkable that on the basis of the local Jewish community's experience a new project has been initiated leading to the creation of the District of the Four Faiths, known also as the District of Mutual Respect. This is located between Włodkowic, św. Antoni, Mikołaj and Kazimierz Wielki Streets in the south-western part of the old city where leaders and members of the four faiths cooperate. They represent four communities: Catholic from St Antony's Church, the Augsburg Lutheran Church of Divine Providence, the Orthodox Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Jewish community of the White Stork Synagogue (Dzielnica... 2010). It was the then President of the Jewish community, Jerzy Kichler, who invented the idea in 1995, supported seven years later by the City Council which led to the development and adoption of the local spatial development plan (Miejscowy... 2005). In 2005 the District of Mutual Respect of the Four Faiths Foundation was launched (http://www.fundacja4 wyznan.pl). The concept of the Cultural Path of the Four Faiths was added by the Wrocław Development Office. The path was to link the churches and the synagogue, although it is not marked out, only marked on the old city plan of the information tableau at the entrance to the district and introduced on the project website (DUDA-SEIFERT 2016a; http://www. fundacja4wyznan.pl). The whole district is undergoing

a revitalisation process, implemented by many partners including city council, housing cooperatives, the municipal housing management board and local foundations (KOWALSKA 2012). It has become not only the working platform for multicultural education and tolerance but is also treated by the city council as a unique tourist product in comparison to other Polish cities (GÓRALEWICZ-DROZDOWSKA & GRUSZKA 2011; http://bip.um.wroc.pl/artykul/638/23235/atrakcjeturystyczne-wroclawia).

The cultural tourism segment concerning Jewish heritage in Poland has so far attracted very little attention from researchers. The tourism of cultural heritage has been defined by A.M. ROHRSCHEIDT (2008, p. 53) as a trip where acknowledging the monuments, historic settlements and sites which are officially and generally recognized as world, national or regional cultural heritage has become its main purpose. According to the same author the selection of places to be visited on such a trip includes uniqueness, state of preservation and accessibility. A.M. ROHRSCHEIDT (2008) defined this kind of tourist as those for the most part 'culturally motivated', most often middle-aged or elderly and with a higher education. Moreover, they are also familiar with European cultural heritage and often have already gained experience in this kind of travel in the different countries visited. The other group is 'tourists interested in culture' for whom visits to cultural monuments add variety of the tourist program. Monuments of Jewish heritage can also become sites visited by so-called ethnic tourists who travel to countries or places connected with their own or their family's origins or related to their ethnic identity (ROHRSCHEIDT 2008, p. 108).

The potential of Jewish heritage in Poland for tourism was the subject of research by E. MAŁKOWSKA-BIENIEK (2009) who mentions the numbers of visitors to Jewish cemeteries e.g. the 5300 who visited the Old Jewish cemetery in Wrocław in 2008. She also writes about high visitor rates to the Old Synagogue in the Kazimierz district in Kraków which reached 86 000 in 2008, and the number of visitors to Celejowska Kamienica (which displays paintings of the old Jewish District) which grew from 12 000 in 2006 to 16 000 in 2008. B. GŁADYŚ (2009) analyses the phenomenon of Jewish tourism in Poland and indicates an increase to 70 000 by 2007. The main aim however is first to visit a martyrology site and secondly sites related to the history of the Jewish minority in Poland. Wrocław is not the important destination for them.

The trial to evaluate the potential of Jewish heritage in Poland for the development of tourist products has been undertaken by L. KOZŁOWSKI (2013). He states that Kazimierz (the Kraków district) constitutes the only mature, complete and real such tourist product whereas Jewish Łódź can be called

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a product in the process of being shaped. According to him the number of visitors to the Old Synagogue in Kazimierz reached almost 120 000 in 2012 which, compared to the E. Małkowska-Bieniek data, indicates growth in recent years averaging 10% annually. The only research findings concerning the evaluation of consumer behaviour of those interested in Jewish heritage have been published by A. WILKOŃSKA (2010). They concerned however only those selected from the broader spectrum of respondents visiting Kraków and Łódź in 2008. Therefore, research has not been targeted at Jewish heritage visitors specifically. Among the Jewish heritage sites mentioned in Kraków synagogues came first (about half of the sample), while in Łódź a synagogue was mentioned only by a small percentage, a result of the different numbers of such monuments in the cities (in Łódź only one has survived). Nevertheless, there is still a lack of complex research dedicated to a market analysis of tourists visiting Jewish heritage sites in Poland which could identify this kind of niche market. Therefore, the author tries to fill this gap with the first of a series of planned research.

2. AIM AND METHODS

The purpose of this article is to define the features of cultural tourists attracted by the Jewish heritage in cities based on the case study of visitors to the White Stork Synagogue in Wrocław. The research was to reveal how important an attraction the synagogue really is, what sort of tourists it attracts and why, and finally what the features of this segment of cultural tourism are. The existence of special characteristics of the target market was hypothesized as well as the strong cognitive motivation. A diagnostic survey was carried out to collect data based on an anonymous questionnaire prepared for the purposes of the present study. Both observation and unstructured interviews with representatives of the Jewish community in Wrocław have been used additionally.

The questionnaire comprised nineteen questions and also concerned the socio-demographic features of the respondents. Eighteen questions were closed and the one concerning emotions aroused during a visit to the synagogue was open. The general characteristics of the tourists, their motivations and feelings together with their interest in other Jewish heritage sites in Poland were the subject of the questionnaire. It was prepared in three language versions: Polish, German and English, which made it widely accessible. The research was carried out in 2016: 16th and 17th of August (37 and 31 questionnaires respectively) and in September: 7th (26), 8th (27), followed by 16th and 18th

(15 and 32 respectively). Different weekdays were selected purposefully in order to reach visitors using both different time schedules and communication links for arriving in Wrocław: Tuesday, Wednesday (twice), Thursday, Friday and Sunday. The survey population was restricted to individual visitors to the synagogue since they had made their decision to visit it spontaneously as opposed to group visitors following a tour-operator's program. The inhabitants of Wrocław were also excluded. However, one-day visitors were taken into consideration due to the fact that this group creates a large demand for cultural tourist products (MIKOS V. ROHRSCHEIDT 2008). A nonsampling purposeful selection method was used. One person from every non-organized group was asked to fill in a questionnaire as well as all individual visitors. Almost all requested did it apart from those who refused because of time. The interviewer worked during the opening hours on the days selected. The average daily total of 80-90 visitors was determined based on observations, therefore, since 30 questionnaires were filled daily (except the 16th September), the sample was considered representative. Altogether 168 questionnaires were gathered during six days and which have undergone further examination. The results are presented below.

3. DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES OF THE RESPONDENTS AND THE CHARACTER OF THEIR TOURIST STAY IN WROCŁAW

Women account for 57% of the sample. Over 60s are dominant, but those at pre-retirement age also present quite a large proportion, while those less than thirty constitute less than a District (Fig. 2). Such an age structure corresponds to the A. MIKOS V. ROHRSCHEIDT (2008) results as far as culturally motivated tourists are concerned.

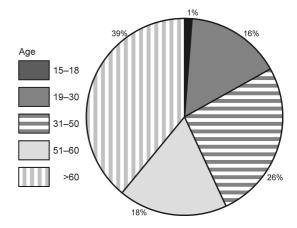


Fig. 2. Age structure of the sample Source: author

Those at work account for more than half the sample (54%), with a large number of pensioners (33%). Only every tenth is a student or pupil. The education levels of the synagogue visitors supports that cited in the literature related to cultural tourists in general (WILKOŃSKA 2010) because only 12% of respondents had reached only secondary education whereas over three Districts had graduated from higher education or were about to finish. The author's assumption about the especially high proportion of those with higher education was proven by a quite large representation of PhDs (Fig. 3).

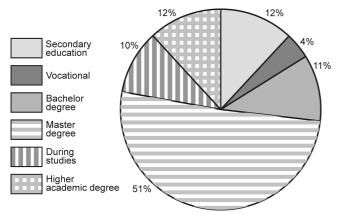


Fig. 3. Education level of respondents Source: author

Foreigners constitute nearly three quarters of the sample, the largest being Germans (with Poles second), followed by Israel, the US and Great Britain respectively. Denmark, Belgium and Turkey are represented by three respondents each (Fig. 4) and there were also French, Dutch, Swedes, Italians, Spaniards, Austrians and Canadians in the sample. Analysis of the entries in the commemorative book displayed at the entrance to the exhibition has highlighted those from other countries as well, including Switzerland, Russia, Indonesia and Chile. The proportion with relations to the city or synagogue (either themselves or their families) is however much smaller than anticipated. This is determined by both the Holocaust and the post-war emigration of Polish Jews. However, according to Justyna Molasy-Dumais from the Jewish Information Center, quite a large number of former Breslau (German name of the city) inhabitants survived the Holocaust, because they left the country warned sufficiently early by its internal policy. Nowadays their heirs are scattered over many countries in the world, including the US, Israel and Australia.

Large numbers from certain countries in the sample can be explained by transport accessibility, e.g. some Germans from Dresden use the weekend railway connection between two cities launched in 2016 because Wrocław had become the European Culture

Capital. British visitors (for instance from South-West England) use the cheap flights offered by low-cost carriers directly between Bristol and Wrocław on weekends as well. 54 Polish respondents arrived from twelve provinces with only four unrepresented: Lubuskie, Lubelskie, Łódzkie and Podlaskie. The 73 Germans originated from all the German Länder with more originating in Berlin (11), Saxony (10) and North Rhine-Westphalia (9), which are closer to Lower Silesia and Wrocław and have a large demographic potential (Fig. 4). 113 respondents (67%) were visiting Wrocław for the first time, while 55 had come for a second time or more (33%).

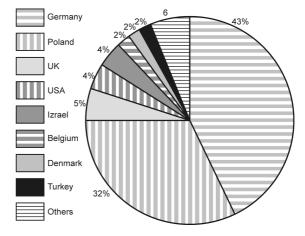


Fig. 4. Origin of respondents Source: author

Sightseeing is the most often mentioned motive to visit Wrocław (62%) followed by visiting friends and relatives, sentimental reasons or participation in a cultural event (declared by 19, 18 and 18 respectively, together 11%). 18 respondents mentioned the sentimental character of the journey related to their own or their family's entanglement with the city, including study or earlier periods of education. Six respondents lived in Wrocław in the post-war period while four are heirs to city inhabitants from before the Second World War. Such results confirm other research conclusions indicating cognitive and sentimental motives to be important drivers of ethnic tourism, however in the case of Wrocław this is especially German tourism of former Lower Silesia inhabitants. When respondents mention an event as the purpose of the visit, this was related three times to the program of European Culture Capital (ECC), while one respondent indicated the ECC title to be the main motive for his journey. One person arrived to take part in the international Deborah Conference, organized for the eighth time, and this time in Wrocław from the 1st-4th of September by the Bente Kahan Foundation together with Berliner Bet Debora and the Kraków association Czulent on the subject of 'Creating Alternatives For

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Jewish Women in Europe' (https://www.bet-debora. net/activities/8th-conference). Only eight respondents mention business as the main motive (5%).

Respondents travel most often with one of their family members (37%), in the majority of cases a partner. The second most popular way is with friends (29%). Larger family groups are also popular (13%) while some respondents prefer to visit Wrocław alone (14%). The latter is a characteristic feature for both cultural tourism and visiting friends and relatives. Twelve mentioned travelling with both partner and friends (7%).

Respondents most often visited Wrocław during a trip lasting between two and three days or from four days to a week (35 and 37% respectively). The third most popular period of travel was from eight days to two weeks (14%). So-called one-day visitors constitute 8% of the sample (14).

The results concerning the time spent in the city are more striking since 61 respondents (36%) spend at least four days in Wrocław, while a smaller but still quite numerous group is those who stay for two or three days (36%). One-day visitors account for 12% (20). These results are very positive from the point of view of both the city council and the tourism industry since they offer prospects for greater tourism spending.

4. NUMBERS OF VISITORS TO THE SYNAGOGUE, THEIR MOTIVATIONS AND IMPRESSIONS

The numbers of visitors to the White Stork Synagogue, according to the author's observations and data received from Jerzy Kichler from the Jewish community, is estimated at around 20 000 a year, and 55% by individual visitors; this is around one sixth of the number to the Old Synagogue in Kraków (MAKOW-SKA-BIENIEK 2009). This can be explained by both its shorter time on the tourist market and the much lower level of promotion undertaken. Nevertheless this attendance allows it to be compared to second category museums of tourist attractiveness such as the Ethnography Museum (attracting 26 000 annually) or the Museum of Posts and Telecommunications (23 000 visitors a year in 2013) (DUDA-SEIFERT 2011, Rocznik statystyczny Wrocławia 2014). According to Justyna Molasy-Dumais from the Jewish Information Center a growth in the number of visitors to the White Stork Synagogue has been found in recent years together with a tendency for certain national groups to be more numerous based on newly-opened direct air links from Wrocław airport.

The respondents' sources of information about the synagogue depend mostly on printed guidebooks,

including *Dolny Śląsk* by J. CZERWIŃSKI (2009), *Spacerownik...* by B. MACIEJEWSKA (2008) and foreign ones such as the Dumont, City, Baedecker and Lonely Planet series. The large proportion of older visitors could be a reason since they tend to use traditional sources of tourist information. The internet is only second while quite a large group followed recommendations from friends or relatives (Fig. 5). From among those mentioning other sources, five learnt about the synagogue by chance during a visit to the city, six from local guides (including *FreelValking Tours*) two benefited from their general historical knowledge as well as three others who indicated their own knowledge of Jewish culture.

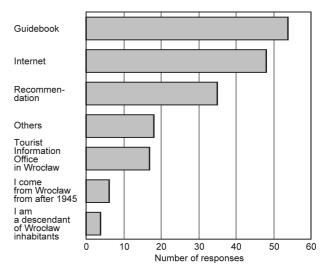


Fig. 5. Sources of information about the White Stork Synagogue (answers do not sum to 100%)

Source: author

Interest in Jewish culture was the main motive to visit the synagogue referred to by 110 respondents. For around one third it was just one of many interesting monuments in the city, while ten indicated its close relation to their own or their family's history. A general interest in history was mentioned by two and one was brought to the site by a friend.

Earlier knowledge of the *District of the Four Faiths* was declared by only 25 respondents (15%), including ten from Poland which means that this attraction has not yet been well positioned on the tourist market. 98 respondents (58%) revealed the will to visit the district (58%), including a majority of those who had heard about it before arrival (20 out of 25). Unfortunately, those who actually did were dissatisfied with both the scarcity of information provided and the lack of an opportunity to visit two of the four temples in the district i.e. Orthodox and Lutheran churches.

The White Stork Synagogue made the most positive impression on the majority of respondents, since only six would not recommend it to their relatives or friends. One person wrote that, although the monument is

'trim and pretty' it is however 'nothing special', in two cases the reason for a bad opinion was the lack of explanatory notes in German on the permanent exhibition and a lack of an audio guide. One respondent mentioned the depressing character of the exhibition, while another that the site was too 'far from everything', a difficult one to explain since its location is within the walking distance of the Old City Market. One respondent did not explain the reason for not wanting to recommend it.

The profile of visitors to the synagogue can be described as those both actively and reflectively approaching the places visited, since 128 (76%) shared their impressions while answering the open question. These opinions concerned the beauty and the very good state of preservation of the building, information about the exhibition, but also the emotions induced (sadness, depression, agitation). The necessity for tolerance and respect for other nations and joy at the revival of the Jewish community in Wrocław were also declared. Former inhabitants of the city shared their profound emotion and happiness at the way the synagogue has been cared for and that it is a living place. The need to add the German explanatory notes to the exhibition however was indicated. A proposal was also put to produce and offer a commemorative stamp while another recommended a video presentation devoted to the history of the Jewish minority in Wrocław.

5. INTEREST IN OTHER JUDAICA IN WROCŁAW AND POLAND

Many respondents wanted to visit another site related to Jewish culture in Wrocław (71 - 42%), most often the Old Jewish Cemetery being a branch of the Municipal Museum of Wrocław (Fig. 6). Respondents often asked about its accessibility during the research nevertheless, they were repeatedly discouraged by its distant location and difficulties in accessing it by public transport. Others indicated included are the Memorial to the Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto, located close to the entrance to the District of the Four Faiths, and the monument to the Synagogue in the Pasture (Na Wygonie) which was destroyed during Kristallnacht in 1938. Another site mentioned is the New Jewish Cemetery at Lotnicza St established in 1898 which is nowadays the burial place for members of the Jewish community, however it is difficult to visit. One person referred to sites related to the life of Edith Stein who was born into a family of German Jews, but after conversion entered the Carmelite Sisters' monastery and after canonisation was proclaimed one of the six patron saints of Europe by the Catholic Church (http://www.edytastein.org.pl/pl/4-edyta-stein/1sladami-edyty-stein/). One fourth (42) of the respondents took part in an organised walk through the city, but in only six cases was its subject the *District of the Four Faiths* while in two others the history of the Jewish inhabitants of the city. There was also a question concerning knowledge of the Jewish culture festival, *Simcha*, organised in Wrocław by the *Pro Arte* Foundation organised for the 18th time in 2016 (DUDA-SEIFERT 2017) but only 13 respondents knew of it (8%).

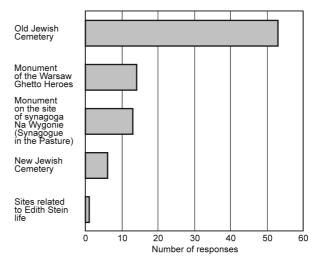


Fig. 6. Interest displayed by respondents in other sites and commemorations of the history of the Jews in Wrocław (by number)

Source: author

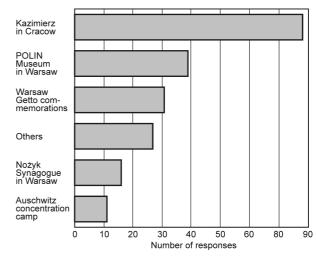


Fig. 7. Knowledge of other sites of Jewish heritage in Poland as declared by respondents (according to number of responses – answers do not sum to 168)

Source: author

A large number of respondents had either visited already or planned to visit other sites in Poland related to Jewish history and culture 110 (65% of the sample), so more than for *Judaica* in Wrocław. Most often indicated are Kazimierz in Kraków and sites in Warsaw (Fig. 7). Others include the former Nazi con-

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centration camp in Auschwitz (Oświęcim) and other sites of martyrology and Holocaust such as Majdanek, Treblinka, Bełżec, Sztutowo or Jedwabne. Large cities were also mentioned such as Łódź, Lublin, Gdańsk and Białystok, as well as smaller ones, often known for their Jewish monuments, including Tykocin, Leszno, Włodawa, Zamość, Szczebrzeszyn, Kazimierz Dolny, Biłgoraj, Chmielnik and Dzierżoniów. Synagogues were mentioned (in Przysucha and Tykocin) while some wrote about Jewish cemeteries either as a category of places or listing exact locations (Sopot, Głogów, Szlichtyngowa). A few mentioned sites related to Jewish culture outside Poland such as Prague, Budapest and Riga.

The results of research on the Wrocław Synagogue confirmed the importance of the Jewish Festival of Culture in Kraków as the most recognised event devoted to Jewish culture in Poland, since every second respondent knew of it (84).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The sample surveys carried out in the White Stork Synagogue in Wrocław during August and September 2016 enable the general characteristics of tourists visiting it to be described, and to explain the motivations and emotions attached to the visit and the degree of interest in other Jewish heritage sites both in Wrocław and the whole of Poland. These features can be generalised as typical for a certain segment of cultural toruists interested in Jewish heritage in Polish cities.

Those visiting the synagogue are distinguishable from other tourists visiting the Lower Silesia region (*Badanie ruchu...* 2015). The share of the elderly is higher as well as the proportion of those with higher education. These features are typical for the cultural tourism market segment. However, what is even more outstanding is the proportion of international tourists within this group. The largest are Germans representing the 19th c. and later history of the city having belonged to Germany until 1945. However, the geographical range of origins is extremely wide, not only by country but also of German and Polish regions. The multi-nationality and multi-culturality seems to be a unique and interesting feature.

A very high degree of emotional involvement and interest in learning about a different culture seems to create another special feature, proven by answers both to the open question in the questionnaire and the explanations given during discussion with the author. The cognitive motive was the one most often cited which proves the high potential of the synagogue as a unique representation of the formerly rich Jewish

heritage in Poland. In such a case it was the Jewish minority that contributed a great deal to Wrocław's development in the past and became an important part of its multicultural identity. High positive emotions are generated not only by the uniqueness of the monument itself, but also because of its high quality, being a masterpiece of art and in an excellent state of preservation attributed to the high level of renovation, and finally by virtue of the educational value of its exhibition. The interest displayed by other faiths in Judaism is especially heartening as well as their openness to the knowledge and values of tolerance and respect towards ethnic and religious minorities.

The research has demonstrated the criteria determining the choice of the Jewish heritage site to be visited based on its uniqueness, accessibility and state of preservation.

Nevertheless, knowledge of the other commemorations and Jewish heritage sites in Wrocław turned out to be rather low except for the Old Jewish Cemetery. The only Lower Silesian festival dedicated to the Jewish culture is practically unknown. The *District of the Four Faiths* cannot be treated as a tourist product yet since it remains unknown to the wider public. Additionally, when it is visited, critical opinions are overwhelming especially concerning its low accessibility and poor information.

Another feature presented by the majority of respondents proves Rohrscheidt's thesis about the wider knowledge and experience of cultural tourists interested in specific themes. At least every second respondent displays a knowledge of other Jewish heritage sites and commemorations in Poland and some exhibit an insight into such sites in other cities of Central Eastern Europe. More than a half of the sample were familiar with the Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków.

In conclusion, the White Stork Synagogue constitutes an important attraction in the offer of the city which is in a perfect state of preservation, fully accessible and presenting rich educational content. It can be treated as one of the city's important tourist attractions with attendance levels close to museums of the second category of attractiveness. Moreover, it attracts a very specific target market of cultural tourists and meets their needs to a high degree, carrying at the same time a deeper meaning. The tourists attracted create a multinational and multicultural group deeply interested in a different culture, displaying very strong cognitive motivations and at the same time an emotional engagement often declaring respect for a religious minority. This niche market can be therefore treated as potential for the development of tourism based on monuments and commemorations of Jewish heritage in Poland. However, it still requires further research.

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