

JEWISH TRAIL IN LEŻAJSK AS A ROUTE ACCOMPANYING TO CHASID TRAIL (PODKARPACIE PROVINCE)

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Keywords:

- Jewish Trail,
- tourist product,
- tourism,
- Leżajsk,
- Jewish culture.

Abstract:

The main aim of concept was to create new tourist product as well as to introduce a strategy of tourist trail's promotion as a trademark product of Podkarpackie Province. The authors used direct and indirect observation methods, what made it possible to have direct contact with analyzed practice as well as to verify it thanks to „desk and field research” methods. Among merits of the trail is authenticity of some of its buildings and the possibility of visiting them. This kind of product would bring social and economic benefits, first of all to local communities and then to the whole society of Podkarpackie Province.

Amongst limitations of research and conclusions one should mention a lack of possibility of “trying the trail” because of immaterial character of tourist services. Practical implications of the concept are visible and profitable for local people, travel agencies and of course tourists because high demand of this kind of product (Jewish tourist trail) in Leżajsk (town connected with Jewish culture and history) is perceptible.

The authors of the paper believe that the work is original and authentic because they didn't meet any other proposal of creating such a trail in the town in the subject literature. The product has a chance to become a sensation not only in the region but also amongst foreign religious tourists. The paper presents theoretical concept based on observations and “desk and field research” methods.

INTRODUCTION

Leżajsk – a centre of the district, one of the most beautiful and the oldest towns in south-east Poland in Podkarpackie Province with a rich history, culture and tradition. Thanks to cultural, sacral heritage and natural environment as well as inhabitants and local authorities – the town is a great tourist attraction visited by tourists, music lovers and pilgrims [18].

Thanks to two religious centres, Roman-Catholic and Jewish pilgrim's movement was developed in the town. Leżajsk is also famous for XVII century Monastery and its baroque organs that attract various people from all over the world. On the other hand, Jews come to the town to pray and celebrate a grave of Chasidism founder – zaddik Elimelech Weissblum [14].

Tourist trail in opinion of Z. Kruczek [7] is seen as: „trail blazed in tourist space for visitors' needs (not always marked properly), leading to the most attractive places (buildings) being aware of many rules, for example concerning security or protection of attractions.”

Trail – as tourist product – is addressed to concrete customers, depending on the role that can play:

- to Jews, inhabitants of Poland as well as Jews living abroad, in sentimental journeys,
- to children, youths and whole societies:

- in education, what is particularly noticeable in supporting societies' cohesion policy,
- in culture education, in handing down systems of values, culture heritage keeping,
- to local communities: it can be a source of economic benefits, factor influencing economic development of the region, a tool against unemployment [8].

Tourist trails in Poland were seen for a long time as elements of tourist infrastructure or tourist attractions. Relatively not long time ago one pointed that these trails can be treated as separate, specific tourist products [4, 16, 8]. Tourist trail is a product that determines tourist attractiveness of the region and it demands a kind of support from local authorities. From the economic point of view the support can be justified on the base of public values theory [11] or substantive values theory [12].

Moreover, one should underline the idea of culture trail, which is land, water or mixed type of route, marked physically and characterized by its own historical dynamic and functionality, showing the genesis of human beings as a permanent and multidimensional exchange of goods, ideas, knowledge as well as values within countries and regions [1].

This paper constitutes proposal of tourist trail's initiative, being a supplement of Chasid trail, representing culture heritage values of Leżajsk inhabitants. Additionally, the authors tried to point some solutions concerning visiting other (than Fathers Bernardines' Monastery) places that are worth seeing. The contents of the work can enrich and promote knowledge about Jewish culture and its role nowadays. The proposal of a new tourist trail can be decisive when talking about region's attractiveness in the eyes of potential visitors.

When talking about tourists services, one should underline that there is a significant difference between the so called material trails that fulfill all the criteria of tourist product and virtual trails remaining in the sphere of concepts, ideas and virtual fantasy. The material trail is characterized not only by name but also the offer's durability (the trail can not be seasonal, short-term or disposable offer) as well as the own trademark. It implements four basic criteria:

- accessibility – all or almost all the buildings on the trail should be accessible to visitors;
- “in situ” mark – fundamental condition of the trail is its location in the original or natural place or site. The material trail should have homogeneous marking “on the spot”, which means markings in the area, on the routes between villages and towns being located on the trails, not far away from buildings and next to the objects;
- justified subject matter – except for adequate name to the subject matter, the trail should contain important objects;
- coordination – in the moment of creating or giving the material status of the trail, its coordinator will be established as well. Local authorities, bodies, entrepreneurs, institutions, association or other formal groups of people can be established as trails' coordinators [3].

Classification of tourist trails, assessment methods of their potential and importance for culture tourism is widely presented by Mikos and Rohrscheidt [9].

AIM OF THE PAPER

The main aim of the concept was to mark the Jewish Trail as a accompanying route to Hasid Trail, that would arouse historical interest of the region among both tourists and local people as well as provide them with information concerning cultural heritage of Leżajsk in a permanent and friendly way. Within the proposed trail local communities (both children and youths and adults) will have a chance to take part in a trip which enriches their historical knowledge.

The trail will contain places that are directly connected with curious and well-known Jewish people from Leżajsk and its neighbourhoods, people of science, leading interesting social life and their places of residence and activity – houses and manors, which nowadays are adapted for other purposes.

The proposal is aimed at active tourists interested in cultural heritage of the Jews society in Leżajsk. When talking about the heritage, one has to focus on all its fields: cultural, social, and physical (natural). Since the heritage is not an anonymous product but the effect of common local and regional activities on a cultural, social, intellectual, religious, ethical, technical as well as esthetic field.

A preliminary survey of the library holdings was the base to the article.

The main research problem has been presented in the following questions:

1. Does Jewish trail can influence attractiveness of the region and how?
2. Which Jewish remains are still present in Leżajsk?
3. What can remind tourists of bygone years?
4. What should be undertaken to attract tourists to visit other (except the Monastery) places in Leżajsk?

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The authors used direct and indirect observation methods, what made it possible to have direct contact with analyzed practice as well as to verify it thanks to „desk research” method. In the so called “field research”, direct observation method, the authors focused on the analysis of tourist infrastructure through personal contact with chosen persons responsible for tourism development in Leżajsk. Moreover, the owners of separate worth-seeing places were interviewed by researchers, (by instance, in the aim of seeing building from inside). There was also another research method used – “desk research”, which is seen as indirect observation method as well as materials collecting (search query) in institutions directly or indirectly engaged in tourist movement service (e.g. travel agencies, accommodation). Making an attempt of learning sensations, motivations and beliefs of the society, the authors also used oral individual interview method. The project has been presented in a descriptive way, with illustrations of the trail’s plan.

Nowadays, there is Chasid Trail in Leżajsk, as well as Nordic Walking route network, translands memory house (it presents rural and urban culture heritage of the region), park of wooden toy. Moreover, there are such events as international festival of organ music organized in Leżajsk. Each subsequent event or tourist infrastructure are well seen by tourists. One can point Ecomuseum with sustainable tourism trails in the range of presentations, availability as well as interpretation of natural, cultural and historical heritage.

TRAIL’S ROUTE

To correct functioning of the proposed trail one should point an associating infrastructure as well as its accessibility. According to many authors [6] and researchers as well as tourists’ experience, accommodation and the whole infrastructure connected with hotel services plays a very important role in the process of tourist movement services. Furthermore, a significant meaning is ascribed to gastronomy, means of transportation and also to sport and recreational facilities. Diversity of tourists’ stay can be seen in cultural and entertaining institutions as for instance: museums, cinemas, culture centres, discos, galleries, etc.

Leżajsk is rich in such facilities and objects that can enrich and improve the offer connected with the trail’s route proposed in the paper. Among others, one can enumerate network of Nordic walking trails, memory house called “translands” (it presents heritage of rural and urban culture of the region), wooden toys park as well as the Chassidic trail. When

talking about events, one can not forget about international festival of organ music organized annually. Every next event, festival or infrastructure and facility are welcomed by tourists. The best example is Ecomuseum with sustainable tourism routes in the range of presentations, interpretations and access to natural, cultural and historical heritage of the region.

The proposed route is a kind of infrastructure and facility which can enrich all the initiatives brought by local bodies, institutions by attracting more and more tourists from all over the Europe or even the world.

The main route is not complicated, it runs from Mickiewicz Street to the very end of the same street. It consists of 19 points, which show almost all the most important points of Jewish activities, local craftsmen as well as old houses and manors. In the aim of seeing other interesting places one should visit neighbouring streets. The path counts 3 kilometres and takes about one hour to look it through. One needs half a day to see the whole town and its attractions. It can last shorter when we use car but it is better to visit all the Jewish places on foot. The trip could start from the old Jewish synagogue, which was situated on Mickiewicz Street 82 in the past. The Synagogue is called Bożnica or Bet Kneset (from Hebrew) – it is a place of meetings – Jewish house of prayers. The Synagogue serves both as a house for collective prayers or messes and education and reading books. In the past, each synagogue had a table on the east wall or a symbol pointing direction to Jerusalem (the Holy City). Tora (hand-written book on parchment) is usually stored on the same wall. It was removed during messes and holidays. “Bima” (i.e. “high place” for sacrifice) was sometimes located in the middle or aside and fragments of the Holy Book were read from there. Education and singing took place on the same object. The first mention of the synagogue comes from 1629, when “Kahal” was created there in the middle of XVIII century. The Synagogue was devastated and burnt completely during the Second World War. “Bank Ochrony Środowiska” (the Environment Protection Bank) is located in here nowadays.

Next, we direct to Górna Street where the Jewish cemetery is located – “macewa” (gravestones) and “ohel” (grave chapel) of Elimelech Weissblum (1717-1787) “st. zaddik”, celebrated not only by 36 co-religionists. Jewish cemetery is called in different ways: „kirkut” „Bet Olam” (from Hebrew) – house of eternity, “Bet Chaim” – house of life, or “Bet ha-Kwarot” or Der gute Ort (a good place). Jews were always very religious people, therefore they took care about graves and read advices from the Old Testament and Talmud carefully. That is why each community had its own fenced and protected cemetery. Old and big communities had two or even four cemeteries. Even the poorest Jews were buried worthily thanks to Chewr Kadisz initiative – funeral fraternity present in almost every district. The cemetery in Leżajsk was probably established in the first half of XVIII century and it has 2,06 hectares. During occupation the cemetery was completely devastated by Nazi, who also destroyed wooden zaddik’s “ohel” (from Hebrew “tent”) and its gravestone. In 1962 on rabbi Friedman’s from Vienna initiative and with help of rabbi Mendel Reichberg, a new brick “ohel” was built, which was renovated in 1988 thanks to Nissenbaum’s family foundation.

Next, we go out the same gate as we came in and then we go right in direction of Janina Ordoczyńska’s house. Her house is located on Łazienna Street (Górna Street 12 at present), where she lived before the Second World War. It was one of few Catholic facilities amongst Jewish tenement houses because Janina was brought up with Jews. It was the one who was given a “saint key” to zaddik’s Boruch Safir “ohel”. Janina Ordoczyńska was responsible for entering the cemetery to the pilgrims. She died in 1990 because she was waken up suddenly in the night (it was heart attack probably). The key was given to her daughter, Krystyna Kiersnowska, who also died on heart attack.

The next point on the map is „Mykwa” on Studzienna Street 2 – there is a synagogue mainly for Jews who pilgrim to zaddik Elimelech Lippman “ohel”. The synagogue was built thanks to initiative of Leżajsk-Polska Chasidism Foundation, where there was an official

opening and entering new “Tora” which was founded by Dawid Fisher from Israel. The route runs from Targowy Square, Krótka Street, Górna Street to Studzienna Street. Many rabbis and pilgrims from all over the world took part in the ceremony of opening the Synagogue. Since 1998 Chasides can use the old hotel on Studzienna Street with “mykwa” (swimming pool with running water). There is a special system of gutters that makes it possible to have rain water in the pool. Rabbi (coming from London or Jerusalem) has to be present during water exchange because it is a kind of ritual purification and ablution. One should immerse the whole body in the water. Every man is obliged to have the ritual before Jom Kippur holiday. Orthodox Jews (women) are obliged to have the ritual after each menstruation and before wedding and after childbirth.

Synagogue was completely buried by Germans in September 15th, 1939. The remains were taken and the square had been made of it. Many years later, during its renovation the remains were taken to the municipal dump. Nowadays, there is a restaurant, firstly called “Targowa” (Targowa Street 6B), but at present it is called “Helena”. It is curious because the Jews do not order any meals there because they have kosher food brought with them. In spite of the fact mentioned above, there is a bakery in Leżajsk where bread and breadrolls are made on Israel leaven.

Afterwards, we direct to Rzeszowska Street. All the Jews were interested in a trade because they were able to adjust to fast changing conditions. As the example, one should present Jewish bakery of Gold Tanzman on Rzeszowska Street 17 with bread rolls with poppy – nowadays there is a public administration office. On the same street (Rzeszowska Street 13) there was kosher meat made by Abraham Reinhental, where only Catholics bought “unclean” meat, i.e. rear parts of beef. There is a shop at present. Next to the square, there was zaddik Elimelech’s manor (Targowa Street 8), there is a bank nowadays.

Elimelech Ben Eleazar Lippman known as Elimelech from Leżajsk (born in 1717; died in 1787) – one of the most distinguished representatives of Chasidism. He was a student of Dow-Ber from Międzyrzecze and he became his successor after his death. After years of education and pilgrimages he stayed in Leżajsk. There are many legends connected with Elimelech. He probably could talk to animals and treat incurably ill people. Annual of his death (21st day of Jewish calendar known as “adar”) gathers in Leżajsk thousands of Jews from all over the world.

Next, we direct to Targowy square, also called Bożnicka Street, where synagogue was located – was buried by Germans; nowadays a mall is situated there. First Rabbi’s schools were established after II World War in USA, as well as in Canada, England and South Africa, Australia and South America. Rabbi’s school in Leżajsk was located on Krótka Street – nowadays it is empty and for sale.

Then, we direct to Górna Street 7, where Chaji Gruber’s shop was located. There was a possibility to buy the needed things even in the Sabbath. The building is inhabited nowadays. Afterwards, we see Jewish tavern on Jarosławska Street 10 (where shop is located at present), next there was photographer, Natan Rosenblüth’s “Art” (the Square 15), then, on Mickiewicz Street 3 there was “kantyczek” printing-house of Izaak Kuhl; on the same street (Mickiewicz Street 5) there was “Łokciowe sklepy bławatnych” of Alter Anfang – a shop with various materials. A grocery of Salomon Weinstein was full of bananas, oranges, bread, halva and other things. The former Hollendr Greissman’s restaurant (Mickiewicz Street 8) is the next point on the trail. The last and ending point on the route is Leżajsk’s Land Museum (Mickiewicz Street 20), where rich history of the town is presented by many exhibits (for instance: photographs, postcards of Leżajsk from the first half of XX century) [4, 7].

The proposal of the trail in Leżajsk met with the acceptance of local authorities, local travel agencies and all the bodies responsible for tourism development in the region. All the people and institutions engaged in travel industry in Leżajsk claimed (through telephone

conversations) that it would be a great introduction to development of another form of culture tourism.

STRATEGY OF TOURIST TRAIL PROMOTION

There are lots of positive changes in Polish tourism economy, for example Polish brand products' programme has been introduced. The main factors influencing decision about destination will be amongst others: a quality of services and natural environment [Ministry of Economy...2001]. Poland spends about 20 billion USD on foreign promotion, whereas Czech Republic spends 40 billion USD, Hungary – 86 billion USD. Domestic promotion also should be enhanced through development of technical infrastructure, tourism sector and its services, bringing the need of high quality of services to local authorities attention as well as the quality of hospitality [8].

According to research results of Tourism Institute, people who took into account promotional activities and it was the base of decision making process, are in majority in comparison to those who visited Poland for the first time [2]. In the aim of higher effectiveness of promotion, it is needed to concentrate activities both in the aspect of tourist products and markets. It means the necessity of making choice of created products, having more chances of commercialization. A choice of the most effective marketing instruments is also very important thing [15]. Publicity and public relations are the most effective marketing tools.

One of the first promotion activities of the trail will be its marking in the open area (for instance according to PTTK's instructions), giving boards next to buildings – points of the trail. Subsequent promotion tools will be used: promotion materials, video, CDs and DVDs. Expositions, workshops, tourist fairs – these are also forms of trail's promotion with the use of maps, guides, catalogues, etc.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leżajsk it is a town with a great cultural diversity of Jews and Catholics history. Leżajsk is famous for its XVII century Monastery and organs that play during the most popular festivals all over the world [17]. Moreover, ethnic tourism develops very fast in the town because of Jews coming each year to Leżajsk. They cultivate zaddik Elimelech's grave and pilgrimages are very popular in there. Great number of pilgrims caused that the town makes profits from it. Unfortunately, there is no integration of societies because of very few contacts and possibilities of meetings with the local people [13]. Therefore, it is worth saying that tourist route/Jewish trail (as an accompanying trail) would be a great chance for all the tourists (not only Jews) to make Leżajsk' attractions interesting.

The trail has a very good system's coverage that refers to cultural heritage of Jews. Local authorities can influence promotion and publicity of the town by organizing Jewish Culture Days, thanks to which they try to attract both older and younger societies. A strong side of the trail is the authenticity of its buildings. Moreover, the trail proposed by the authors crosses with another one, which means with Chasidism Trail established by the Association of Jewish Communities in Poland as well as the World Jewish Organization to Restitution. Additionally, one should mention about a high cultural value of some buildings, i.e. cemetery or "ohel". All these buildings are located close to each other and thanks to it tourists can visit all the places easily. Furthermore, the authors want to propose Jewish Trail to be a part of bicycle path for people who want to spend their free time in an active way. Moreover, a big cultural potential of the trail has to be used in a proper way. It is also very important to finance it efficiently and use the help of coordinator (the trail's take carer). The authors suggest that there should be a coordinator's office established with its seat and correspondence address, mail box, access to media (as Internet, e-mail, phone, etc.). The office should take part in activities of trail's buildings or objects as well as ease organizing

different both group and individual cultural events, trips, etc. The office would cooperate with touroperators, individual tourists, tourists portals, schools, and all the potential receivers of the offer. It would send brochures and folders with the tourist products. Moreover, cultural events in Leżajsk (as for instance Three Cultures' Meeting) could encourage tourists to visit the town. According to the authors, introducing local packages concerning cultural heritage as well as promoting it amongst local people and tourists would influence the whole life in the town.

The trail's coordination should also take into account an educational tourism. Visiting and propagating chosen objects of the trail should be included in programmes of local trips.

The next significant issue is creation of professional portal of the trail, leaded by the coordinator. The portal would be written both in Polish and English languages as well as in German because of many German-speaking tourists. Furthermore, one should be aware of the importance of culture tourism and its benefits. The most important thing is that the object/building being on the route, should be available to tourists, for example by giving a phone number to coordinator or other information concerning opening hours.

Except visiting various places, tourists have to have an access to tourist facilities, as for instance: toilets, gastronomy points, car parks and its proper marking. There should be tourist package created including the trail, at least its chosen parts and elements. The offer can have various scope: from a possibility of renting a bike with a map and mini-guide to a few days package including accommodation, tickets to museums, monastery and other buildings.

The authors tried to present and near the history of the town and its inhabitants from before 60 years. One wanted to present a specify of Jewish culture that would interest not only Jews but also other tourists and local communities. The paper shows old Leżajsk in a different way than it was done before by other authors and their publications. Inhabitants and the local authorities can be proud of the town thanks to information shown in the way above. The responsibility of tourism development in the town lies mainly on its inhabitants who should take care of the history and the activities of the local authorities.

Intensive tourists movement of Jews and other nationalities in Leżajsk could have a positive impact on town's promotion. Skillfully used trail could be a good occasion to develop tourist facilities in Leżajsk. The trail could be a chance for trade and gastronomy development in town. Moreover, didactic path would have a positive impact on a local aspect by education of the society, knowledge promotion ensuring active relax. What is more, one should take into account stereotypes concerning minorities living in foreign country, to approach their cultural achievements and to make people aware of their dissimilarity that does not have to separate nations.

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