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Needs and Attitudes of Visitors to Historic Aristocratic Residences in Poland

Abstract

The article is based on the results of a questionnaire survey of visitors to two major aristocratic residences in Poland (Castle Museum in Łańcut and Castle Museum in Pszczyna). Sketching the specificity of this type of museums and heritage sites as the background for further analysis, in the text several key issues important from the perspective of management of such institutions and getting financial support for them are discussed. These include: an up to date socio-demographic profile of visitors (direct users of the museums' offer), their motivations to visit, local spending patterns linked with the visitors' stay in a given town, the level of satisfaction with the visit, shortcomings of the museums or their surroundings from the perspective of tourists. Undertaking this sort of audience studies might also, as shown by research results, provide a broader perspective on the social perception of museums, supplying them with evidence on the complexity of values that might be linked with such heritage institutions by society in general.

Keywords: audience research, values, attitudes, historic house museums, Poland

Słowa kluczowe: badania publiczności, wartości, postawy, muzea rezydencjonalne, Polska

Introduction

Historic royal or aristocratic residences are often among most spectacular heritage sites and most frequently visited museums in a given country by domestic and foreign visitors alike [Butcher-Young 1993; Pinna 2001; Young 2017]. Country houses in England are considered “deeply emblematic of a sense of England’s national heritage” [Smith 2006: 119]. In other European countries residential museums are also regarded as major, recognised and ‘authorised’ heritage places. For example, the

number of visitors to Versailles in 2017 surpassed 7,7 million, 3,8 million persons visited Schönbrunn Palace, while admissions to interiors and grounds of King John III's Palace at Wilanów reached 3,3 million. Among 25 top museums in Poland in terms of number of visitors in 2017 over one third (9) are historic castle or palace and park complexes [Statistics Poland 2017], distinguished as an important type of museum institutions [Folga-Januszewska 2011; Jaskanis 2012]. Understanding the attitudes and behaviour patterns of their guests or more broadly understood audiences and stakeholders [Scott 2003; Jacobsen 2016; Murzyn-Kupisz 2016; OECD, ICOM 2018] thus seems to be especially interesting, not only in order to provide guidelines for the management of particular institutions but also as an opportunity to gain a deeper insight into attitudes of contemporary museum audiences, in particular visitors to major tourist attractions.

As follows, the aim of the article is to analyse the attitudes and needs of visitors to two major aristocratic residences in Poland (historic house museums in Łańcut and Pszczyna) as reflective of a broader, specific museum type, taking into account motivations for visits and perception of values of such heritage institutions and sites, level of satisfaction with the visit and possible reasons for dissatisfaction or shortcomings of services and amenities offered to visitors. Research results with respect to audience profile and attitudes will also be compared to earlier studies of country house audiences done in England, to see to what extent the attitudes and needs of Polish, or more broadly speaking Central and Eastern European visitors, differ from those of their English counterparts. Specific research questions posed to fulfil the above goal include:

What is the current socio-demographic profile of visitors to major residential museums in Poland?

- How is their tourist trip organised and what local spending does it involve?
- What are the main motivations to visit such museums?
- What values dominate in the non-specialist visitor perception of such institutions' significance and meaning?
- What is the level of satisfaction with the visits and what visitor needs are fulfilled to an insufficient extent?
- Are the Polish audience profile and attitudes different from their Anglo-Saxon counterparts?

Specificity of historic residences and challenges linked with researching their audiences

Historic house museums, including aristocratic residences, are a particular genre of museums which to some extent overlap with other museum types such as art museums, national museums, natural history museums but are different from them.

A working definition of historic house museums developed by ICOM (International Council of Museums) in 1997 presents them as:

Museum homes which are open to the public as such, that is, with their furnishings and collections (...) and which have never been used to display collections of a different provenance (...) the specific character of this type of building is the indissoluble link between container and contained, between palace/house/apartment and permanent collections/furnishings/ornamental fixtures [Pavoni 2001: 17].

The same idea was formulated by Giovanni Pinna [2001: 4] who stresses that:

historic houses, when they are open to the public and conserved in the original condition (i.e. with the furnishings and collections made by the people who used to live in them) and have not been converted to accommodate collections put together from different sources, constitute a museum category of a special and rather varied kind.

Similar thoughts are expressed in the Polish context by Paweł Jaskanis [2012: 79]:

Every museum 'deals' with history. Yet a residential museum is something more: it is a 'historic home' (...) one based in a genuine time-honoured building where the architectural and interior furnishings have been preserved, in frequent cases along with the representational function of the residence, the latter enhanced by its garden-park surroundings.

Therefore, as noticed by Linda Young [2017: vii]:

The difference springs from the defining and framing role of the house as not only a museumized object (with all its contents and sometimes its setting) but also a 'home', an idea loaded with personal, social, and cultural meanings.

According to the same author [Young 2017: 14]:

Houses are intricate artefacts, comprising real estate, built fabric, arranged or decorated settings, items of furnishing, household equipment, and fittings. They contain the intangibles of human associations past and present.

Their existence as a specific museum category stems from the fact that they are "used to conserve, exhibit and reconstruct real atmospheres (...) bringing together original furnishings and collections from one or other of the historic periods in which the house was used" [Pinna 2001: 4]. The uniqueness of such museums thus results from their complex, composite character – the fact that they accommodate and combine material and immaterial heritage items and meanings, which grew

'organically' during the particular house's existence and use for residential purposes. In addition they are usually inseparable from the surrounding green areas – gardens and parks which form their integral backdrop and setting, and may be regarded as an important part of their collection. This interconnectedness of the tangible and intangible values linked with specific indoor and outdoor settings and people who lived in them offers unlimited possibilities to capture the imagination of visitors and connect with them, and constitutes an important advantage historic houses have over other museum institutions. According to Pinna [2001: 7]:

More than any other kind of museum, the historic house museum in fact has the power to evoke and create links between the visitor and the history present in the house itself, or which it seeks to represent. Unlike other museums, the historic house does not derive its importance from a range of objects with a symbolic significance of their own. It is highly evocative because not only does it contain objects, it also embodies the creative imagination of the people who lived and moved within its walls, who made daily use of the objects that were the original furnishings.

Historic house museums are also themselves quite diverse and pose specific classification problems. Existing typologies are most often linked with the main reasons for establishing museums in such properties which include commemoration of a particular inhabitant, recognition of the unique aesthetic and artistic character of the house or its authenticity, significance of the collection housed in it or the wish to explain and narrate a certain type of social history. For example Rosanna Pavoni [2001] looking mainly from a European perspective distinguishes such historic house museum types as: palaces, residences and homes of famous people and artists, houses representing particular periods or styles, homes of collections, family homes reflecting the passage of time, houses representing homogenous social groups and historic residences that have become settings for collections unrelated to the history of the property itself. Similarly, in the British and American context Young [2017] differentiates between hero houses, artwork houses, collectors' houses, social history houses, country houses, not-very-important houses. In reality however, many historic house museums, in particular the most culturally significant ones, do not fit this taxonomy easily as they fall under several categories at once as country houses or palaces which are artistically valuable homes of famous persons, housing interesting art collections in a picturesque setting and serving as narration places on general and social history of regions and states [Jaskanis 2012].

Accordingly, heritage specialists and curators, visitors and general public as such might attach a variety of cultural values to such heritage sites and museum institutions ranging from historic and aesthetic, artistic or environmental to social, symbolic and identity-related on different levels (from local to national). For example in the

study of guests to country houses in England [Smith 2006: 138], over one third of visitors (37,5%) related the value of country houses (understood in this study as a depiction of history linked with something or someone) as representative of the history of aristocracy or aristocratic families and only 17% as a representation of the nation's history. Links with local or regional history (5,7%), architectural values (2,9%) or personal links (private heritage values) (4,8%) ranked significantly lower. Though as Laurajane Smith notices the two interpretations might overlap and all in all country houses carry significant nationalistic meanings as well as provide the feeling of historic continuity of the nation ('national heritage icons'), even if these are coupled with a certain feeling of lack of links with own personal identities of visitors (48%). The same seems to be relevant in the European, in particular Italian, context where historic houses: "are places in which the collective memory is created and preserved, places where the members of these communities and nations find their own identity" [Pinna 2001: 5].

Values attached to such heritage sites and institutions by art historians and connoisseurs do not necessarily overlap with actual motivations of the general public to visit them. From a more straight forward, practical angle visitors are likely to visit historic houses as one of the options to spend leisure time in a nice, safe setting, accompanied by family and friends, with no special importance attached to particular artistic qualities, objects or educational opportunities offered by such institutions. For example, two most important reasons for making a visit to a country house in England were recreation (25,6%) and the desire for an experience of going to a country house which may be interpreted as a specific tourist experience (19,4%). The wish to see the collection in the house, a specific exhibition or see the gardens as such ranked next (10,1–12,6%). Spending leisure time with children, education, appreciation of architectural merits and fulfilment of specific interests or deriving aesthetic pleasure were less important (4,8–6,2%) [Smith 2006: 139]. Looking from a more abstract, psychological perspective in the age of mass tourism the contemporary visitors to historic residences are most often motivated by the wish to experience a 'commodified hedonistic fantasy' [Vagnone, Ryan 2015] or a 'creative fantasy' [Tinniswood 1989; Young 2017] which fits very well with the postmodern taste for celebrity one can be easily proud of or identify with. In the words of Young [2017: 24] "visitors come to mine the house for the raw materials of imaginative bricolage and to share the experiences with their family and friends." Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan [2015] describe a tour to a country house as

the *entr e* to the spacious privilege and tasteful riches, where visitors can imaginatively cast themselves as players, sharing or deploring ("I love/hate the yellow sofa") and costing and evaluating ("I would/wouldn't give ten pounds for that") the material trappings of aristocratic culture.

Deeper examination of visitors' attitudes in the earlier study of Smith [2006: 139] also revealed that:

The country house visit was often seen as an 'authentic' experience for many visitors because it engendered emotions and feelings that helped visitors make sense of and legitimize their social experiences in the present – or those experiences were made more comfortable and thus acceptable... the country house made them feel 'comfortable, proud and contented'.

Not everyone is equally likely to visit museums, in particular historic residences though. They are expected to have a rather exclusive, older, female and middle class audience [Young 2017]. Visitor profile of historic country houses in England confirms these expectations. A typical visitor is likely to be a woman (62%), over 40 years of age (70%), linked with managerial and professional or other occupations associated with the middle class (75%) and a university graduate (47%) [Smith 2006].

The critique of such institutions often includes this issue. For instance, the authors of *The Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* [Vagnone, Ryan 2015] stress that their collections and narrations might be elitist and culturally old-fashioned, reflect political and social propagandas, 'fossilised' to an extent that they do not offer an experience engaging enough to satisfy contemporary audiences. They also scorn such institutions for having not enough links with next door surroundings and local communities and lack of imaginative guiding that would spur the imagination and bring the house and its interiors to life. In other publications the issue of sanitization and aestheticization of the past, enforcing the dominant narrative of more wealthy social groups is stressed, too [Smith 2006].

Challenges of historic residences audience research and practical implementation of its results as managerial guidelines

Taking the above factors into account, several challenges emerge with respect to audience research in this type of cultural institutions. First of all the issue who should be surveyed or interviewed, as such museums usually have several different audience types, and the division line between local visitors and tourists seems to be particularly important. Secondly, is it enough to research the socio-demographic characteristics and behaviour patterns of actual visitors, or should attitudes of the broader local and non-local general publics also be taken into account, especially that some of such residences function as national heritage sites and are supported with general taxpayers' money? As already mentioned, for many potential visitors such residences might not only, using terminology of cultural economics [Throsby 2001; Klammer 2013; Murzyn-Kupisz 2016], represent direct use value of the actual visit but also diverse

passive use and non-use values linked with national or regional identity, sense of pride and belonging in addition to option value or bequest value as assets for future generations. As such residences are often supported with public money on regional or national level, with little or no direct support of the local authorities, there might also be tensions between local expectations with respect to museum functions and services and museum managers' and managing bodies' point of view.

There are also important limitations linked with historic house museums' practical possibilities to respond to some of visitors' wishes and demands taking into account that providing access to and interpretation of heritage is only a part of the more complex mission of such institutions which also includes preservation, conservation and study of their sites and collections. Important limitations relate most of all to the specificity of residential museums and their exhibitions. In the case of historic residences for the most part they are not, as with respect to other museum types, designed by exhibition curators but should by definition focus on showing existing interiors with original historic furnishings, fixtures and fittings amassed and used by their owners in the course of the residence's existence. Consequently: "House museums face the awkward fact that they come 'as is' – a fully formed product, almost never developed in response to customer needs" [Young 2017: 16]. Their managers therefore have to balance between preservation, access and safety, while the curatorial activities should be sensitive and as unobtrusive as possible. The curatorial choice in this case should consist not so much of selection and arrangement of objects but rather their imaginative interpretation. Many historic houses offer a great narrative potential thanks to the fact that "the house is received [perceived – M.M.K.] by the public through fewer critical filters than are applied during visits to museums in general: the house is 'real' because it reflects a cognitive code that has been applied and tested in everyday life" [Pavoni 2001: 18]. This advantage is however more than often offset by difficulties linked with managing large visitor flows through rooms and spaces which were originally intended as private interiors visited by a limited number of people.

Authenticity (or perception as authentic), originality and integrity of interiors is often what visitors appreciate a lot in such museums, yet preservation and maintenance of these qualities is not only costly and demanding but often means that there is little room to accommodate contemporary audience needs (e.g. architectural barriers, limitations linked with introduction of multimedia, interactive, new or explanatory elements in the exhibition). Historic garden and park grounds are an integral part of such sites' historic, aesthetic and natural values appreciated by visitors usually as pleasurable leisure grounds, yet again due to conservation prerogatives and requirements they frequently cannot be significantly altered and transformed to suit contemporary needs, either (e.g. paving garden lanes, greater number of seating places and other types of garden furniture, playgrounds for children, etc.). Introduction of new amenities is difficult and must take into account preservation of the integrity and unique character of such complexes.

As such major residences are historic sites of supralocal importance they are often financed and managed by public authorities on the regional or national level rather than municipal ones. This however means that immediate surroundings of such complexes, either park grounds or vicinity of park grounds where visitor oriented infrastructure is needed are usually only partly or not under jurisdiction and management of museum institutions. In fact they are often beyond any control of them [Murzyn-Kupisz et al. 2018]. Due to large numbers of non-local visitors, day trippers or tourists, there might also be tensions and contradictions between local needs and uses with respect to such heritage sites and tourists' wishes and needs. This does not mean that residential museums do not engage with local audiences. They frequently serve as main leisure grounds as well as major cultural institutions offering special programmes for local communities [see e.g. the case of Wilanow in Poland, *Spędzanie wolnego czasu...* 2015]. Still the actual level of local enjoyment and visitation of such museums and their surroundings is often hard to measure as many local visitors enjoy green surroundings of such venues free of charge and are usually not fully included in recorded visitor numbers [Murzyn-Kupisz, Działek 2016].

Research methods and design

Two major residential museums were selected as case studies for the analysis of visitors' profile and attitudes. The Castle Museum in Łańcut is a historic palace and park complex located in a little town in south-eastern Poland, in Podkarpackie region. It was developed as a residential site in the form of a fortified palace (*palazzo in fortezza*) in the early 17th century, reconstructed in late baroque style and then in the middle of the 18th century transformed into a palace and park complex without defensive functions. The historic residence was continuously modernised and served as an aristocratic home for leading Polish aristocratic families Lubomirski and, until 1944, Potocki family. The lavish residence survived the destruction of World War II and quickly became a historic interiors' museum and one of the best known tourism sites of this type in communist Poland [Mikułowski-Pomorski 1971]. It is famous for baroque, neoclassical and 19th century interiors, art collections, extensive park grounds and the best historic coach collection in Poland. The second institution taken into account, the Castle Museum in Pszczyna (German: Pless), is a comparable, though smaller, residential complex in a small town in Silesian region in south-western Poland. Built on a castle site from the Middle Ages, it was first a renaissance building, then turned into a baroque palace and finally underwent major restoration and refurbishment in the spirit of historicism in the second half of the 19th century as the residence of Hochbergs, princes von Pless, an important Prussian aristocratic family, remaining in their hands and use until World War II and in 1946, similarly to Łańcut, turned into a public museum.

The two residences were selected as research sites for three main reasons. First of all they are among the few historic aristocratic houses in Poland with authentic, original fixtures and fittings from the times of former owners, with broadly acknowledged artistic and historic values. Next, they attract a significant number of visitors. In 2017 – Łańcut welcomed 429 thousand visitors and Pszczyna was visited by 294 thousand persons (15th and 23rd place among most often visited museums in Poland respectively) (Statistics Poland 2017). In addition, although they are located in regions with quite different development paths, historical experiences, identity and cultural landscape, they are both main sites and reasons to visit small historic towns where they are based, easily accessible both from the nearest major regional urban centres and within an easy reach of major motorways.

The empirical part of the text is based on the results of an in-depth questionnaire survey of visitors to the two historic residential sites in July and August of 2015 (350 and 351 questionnaires respectively) done within the framework of a broader research project focused on willingness to pay (WTP) for museum tickets and a hypothetical museum tax [Murzyn-Kupisz, Działek 2016]¹. While reaching this main scientific aim, the study elicited a lot of additional, interesting information on the visitors' profile, visitor needs with respect to the museums and their surroundings, visitor spending outside the museums (direct economic impact in a given municipality) and values linked by audiences with such museums. Both close-ended and open-ended questions used as the background for the WTP study included, among others, issues such as the visitors' place of residence and their socio-economic profile (including variables such as: age, gender, occupation, educational attainment, earnings, involvement in the cultural sector and in the activities of political or non-governmental organisations), organisation of the tourist trip (mode of transport, duration of their stay in Łańcut or Pszczyna, spending on goods and services during the visit), the issue of values, motivations and needs linked with such museums (personal opinions with respect to the justifications for public spending on such heritage institutions, motivations to visit a given museum, level of satisfaction and reasons for dissatisfaction or shortcomings noticed during the visit). The questionnaires were administered by a professional polling firm on a face-to-face basis. Taking into account possible differences in opinion of respondents visiting both residences on different days of the week (e.g. weekend day-trippers, likely to come from the nearest bigger cities, persons benefiting from free entry day on Mondays) the survey was administered

¹ Naturally, museum audiences should be understood more broadly than just actual visitors. Accordingly, the project also involved, among others, a parallel questionnaire survey of potential visitors – residents of the regional capitals such as Rzeszów and Katowice and a pilot survey of local residents in both towns conducted in the course of 2015. Results of these surveys are however not the subject of this text.

on Sunday, Monday and on two other working days of the week. Respondents were selected at random (in Łańcut every 20th visitor to the castle grounds on a given day, in Pszczyna – every 10th). At most one person from a given family or acquaintance group was interviewed. While analysing open ended questions, all responses were read through and main answer categories and themes identified.

Research results

Visitor profile and spending

A typical visitor to both residences is more likely to be a woman than a man (over 60% share of females among visitors) (Table 1). Almost half of adult visitors to the two museums are below 40 years of age (almost identical shares of 49,9% and 49,7%). Approximately one fourth of guests to the historic houses fall in the 41–50 years old category, though the shares of younger adults in two younger age categories are not much lower. One in ten visitors is over 60. They confirm the usual museum visitors' profile – with a high educational attainment (50,6% university graduates in Łańcut and 42,4% in Pszczyna, in comparison to the national average of 17,4%). A higher share of persons with secondary education in the case of Pszczyna might be linked with the specificity of the region as a restructuring post-industrial conurbation where many people might have secondary technical education. Persons who are active in the labour market dominate among them, with negligible participation of the unemployed and a sizeable share of persons who currently study at the postsecondary level. Taking the latter into consideration the actual share of museum visitors who either completed or were in the course of completing higher education is even higher. Relatively few respondents reported very low income. The monthly net disposable income per person in a household in the case of most of them was above the national average (in 2015 PLN 1 386). They also reported rather high level of satisfaction with their life situation. It was assessed as good or very good by 71,3% survey participants in Łańcut and 72,9% in Pszczyna. Cultural capital and social capital continue to play an important role as a determinant of museum visitation, including historic residences. In the analysed sample not only were the respondents relatively well educated but also a much higher share of them than the national average were persons engaged in political or non-governmental activities and persons who were either employed in cultural institutions or had family members working in such organisations (had direct links with the cultural sector). Taking into account low cultural participation rates in Poland (i.e. 80% of adult Poles did not visit any museum in 2013), visitors to aristocratic residences are very active cultural consumers. Almost a third of visitors to Łańcut museums

and one in eight respondents in Pszczyna reported visiting museum at least once a month.

Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of visitors to castle museums in Łańcut and Pszczyna in 2015

Feature	Characteristics	Łańcut	Pszczyna
Gender	share of women (%)	61,2	64,3
Age	less than 20	6,9	4,6
	21–30	22,3	21,0
	31–40	20,6	24,1
	41–50	23,8	26,4
	51–60	17,2	12,6
	more than 60	9,2	11,2
Educational attainment	elementary and vocational	8,4	8,9
	secondary	41,0	48,7
	post-secondary (university)	50,6	42,4
Source of income	self-employed	10,9	7,7
	public sector employment	33,9	32,3
	private sector employment	27,9	33,7
	pension	9,5	12,9
	unemployment allowance	0,0	0,6
	student	12,1	8,6
	other	5,7	4,3
Monthly net income per person in a household	less than PLN 1000	6,1	8,3
	PLN 1001–2000	38,8	39,3
	PLN 2001–4000	30,0	25,5
	more than PLN 4000	4,4	5,4
	no answer	20,7	21,5
Subjective assessment of life situation	very good	12,9	10,9
	good	58,3	62,0
	average	27,3	27,1
	bad	1,4	0,0
Membership in a non-governmental or political organisation		17,6	13,2
Respondent or her/his family member employed in a cultural institution		11,5	7,8
Frequency of visits to museums and galleries	once a month or more often	30,9	13,2
	two to six times a year	40,3	58,6
	once a year or less often	28,9	28,3
Repeat visit to this historic house		56,2	41,4

Source: own elaboration based on survey results.

Both historic residences attract domestic tourists from all over Poland as well as Polish tourists from abroad. They are most often either recruited from the same region, nearby regions, mainly in southern Poland or regions with larger metropolitan centres (Mazovia, Małopolska and Pomerania). Two in five visitors to Łańcut castle come from the same region, one fourth of them from neighbouring Małopolska (Krakow) region. A significant share of visitors travel to Łańcut from the capital region of Mazovia, from Pomerania and Silesia (4,9–5,7% from each region). In the case of Pszczyna the dominance of residents from the same region is even greater. Over half of visitors to the museum are inhabitants of the Silesian region. One in seven visitors to Pszczyna comes from the nearby Małopolska region. Pomerania and Mazovia supply 4,6% and 4,8% of visitors respectively. Podkarpackie region comes fifth but the share of its residents as visitors in Pszczyna is only 2,8%. All in all, in both cases the same, five regions mentioned above are responsible for over 80% of both historic houses' tourist attendance (Figure 1).

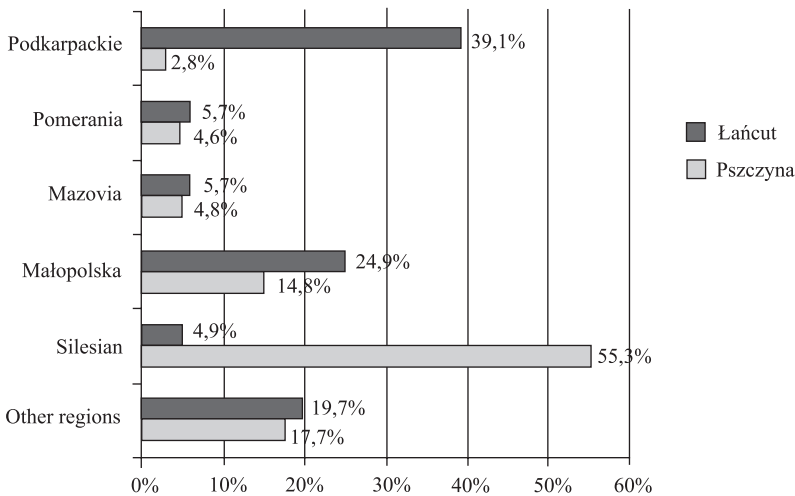


Figure 1. Regions of residence of visitors to residential museums in Łańcut and Pszczyna

Source: own elaboration.

In the summer season individual tourists dominate in Łańcut (93,6%) and even more so in Pszczyna (99,1%). In the former case organised groups are recruited from tourists on longer stays in the nearby spa resorts Iwonicz and Rymanów or employee and education tours. The dominant mode of transport to Łańcut and Pszczyna are private cars (84,3% and 86,5% respectively). A certain share of visitors make use of public and private organised transport means such as buses and minibuses, especially connections to Rzeszów in the case of Łańcut and the train to Pszczyna (in the Polish

context a relatively high share of 10,9% of all visitors reflective of the success of modernisation of the regional railroad connection between Pszczyna and other Silesian cities).

Visits to both residences are rarely spontaneous. Four in five visitors (over 80%) plan them in advance. They tend to be day-trippers (68,9% in Łańcut and 93,4% in Pszczyna) who spend 3 to 4 hours in the town (50% visitors to Łańcut and 48,1% in Pszczyna) and usually visit the residential museum (70% and 87% respectively) – the main aim of their trip to the area. Many of them are returning visitors, too (over half in Łańcut and two fifths in Pszczyna). Almost all tourists who decide to visit the museum exhibitions in Łańcut visit the castle interiors (93,5%), almost three fourth (73,1%) the famous stables and coach house. Newer offers such as the reconstructed orchid greenhouse (40,4%) and the orangery (31,4%) also attract many persons. Other additional exhibitions (orthodox religious art, history of Łańcut) or attractions (private coach ride in the park) are less popular. In Pszczyna all tourists who decide to visit the museum tour the castle interiors. Many of them also visit other exhibitions in the building such as the armoury (55%), the exhibition on its famous resident – princess Daisy von Pless (a smaller share – 18,5%) or the newly renovated historic stables with temporary shows (8,9%). Other exhibitions such as the miniatures' cabinet are visited less frequently.

In addition to the purchase of entrance tickets to the museum, on average every tourist spends PLN 54 in Łańcut (a median of PLN 50) and PLN 59 in Pszczyna (a median of PLN 50 as well). Over three in four visitors to Pszczyna and almost 70% of visitors to Łańcut are customers of some local catering establishment (a restaurant, a café or a bar) (Figure 2). Over half of them (53%) in Pszczyna and over two thirds in Łańcut purchase something in a local grocery shop or an ice cream parlour. Slightly less than a third of tourists in both towns purchase souvenirs, too. Spending on books, information materials and maps, gasoline or parking was mentioned by one in ten respondents in each case. Due to lack of promotion and limited accessibility of other potential tourism attractions in Łańcut, in particular the renown baroque synagogue building and the historic alcohol manufactory, only 2% of tourists prolong their stay to visit these sights in addition to the visit to the castle. In contrast, almost one fifth of visitors to Pszczyna castle also decide to see other points of tourist interest in its vicinity. These include the very popular Bison Centre opened to the public since 2008 and the Open-Air Museum of Pszczyna Farmhouses, thoroughly renovated with the support of EU funds in the recent decade.

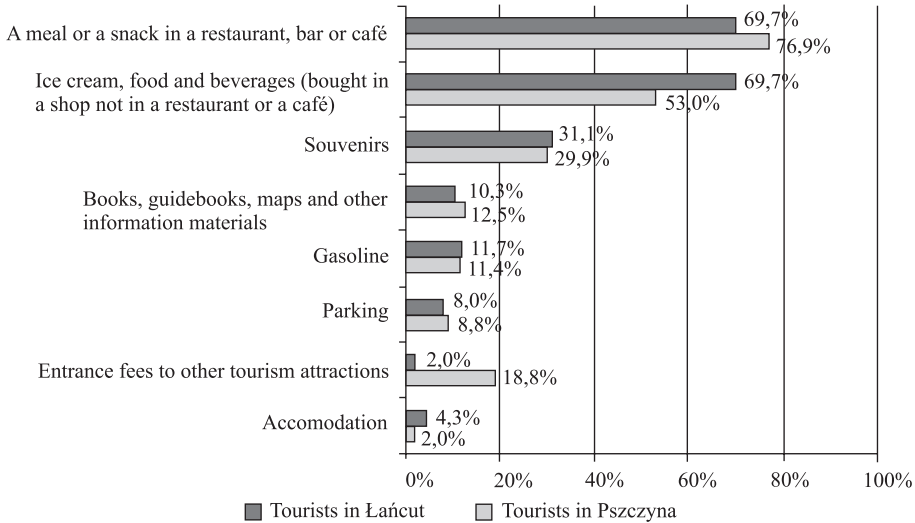


Figure 2. Most important expenditures incurred by visitors to castles in Łańcut and Pszczyna*
 * share of visitors who spent some money on a given good or service apart from buying museum tickets

Source: own elaboration.

Motivations to visit and values linked with the two heritage institutions

The main reasons for visits to such historic properties are the desire to see beautiful buildings and artefacts in a pleasant, aesthetically pleasing green setting (aesthetic motives), the wish to see a well-known, famous place – a prestigious heritage site (prestige related motives) and spend pleasurable leisure time with family or friends, enjoying the interiors and green surroundings, showing them something or accompanying them (personal leisure and social bonding motives – strengthening interpersonal relations) (Figure 3). Rationales linked with learning and education, development of specific knowledge or participation in a cultural event or programme are less frequent.

Again a more nuanced picture of attitudes to such institutions comes out of indirect questions on their values and significance. In the case of this study an open-ended question on the reasons and rationales for spending a significant amount of public funds on running such museum institutions, the preservation, upkeep, maintenance and provision of services in the two heritage sites provided such information².

² In total 457 specific responses were provided by survey participants in Łańcut and 428 by respondents in Pszczyna. Individual, spontaneous responses were carefully read and arranged according to more general categories defined by the author on the basis of the analysis and literature review.

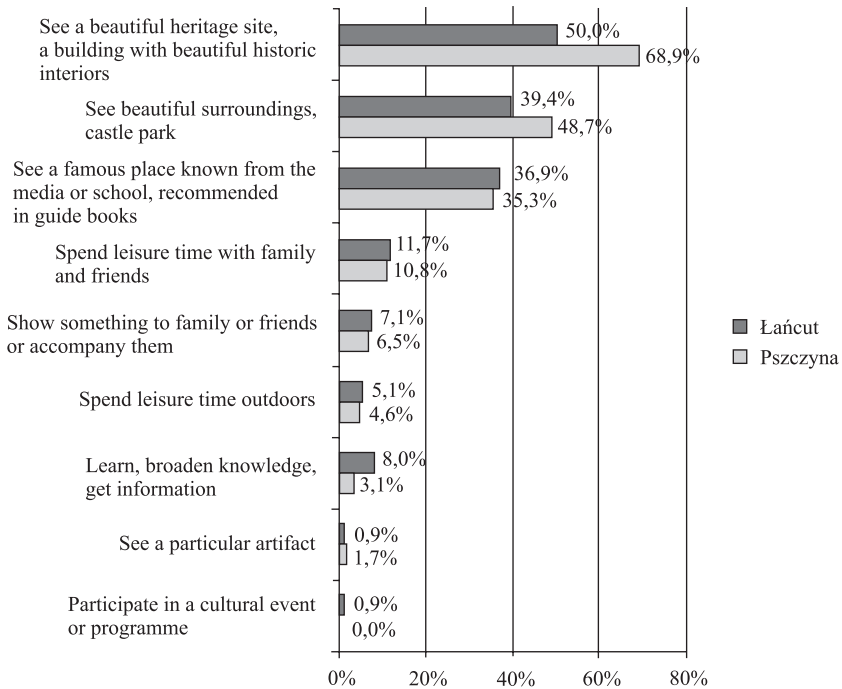


Figure 3. Main reasons to visit the castle museums in Łańcut and Pszczyna

Source: own elaboration.

Although the questionnaire survey was conducted among active users (visitors) to the two historic sites and actual consumers of their cultural offer who admitted that aesthetic, social, recreational and leisure motives have been main reasons for their visit, the two aristocratic residences are perceived by them as valuable from a much broader perspective. Responses to an open-ended question on the rationales and justifications for spending significant amounts of public money on the preservation, maintenance of buildings, collections and their surroundings, ensuring accessibility and provision of services at the two museums³ were much more diverse and linked most of all with the cultural values embodied in them, especially from a general cultural perspective and a national heritage and identity perspective, rarely taking into account the specific local and regional context (Table 2).

³ Yearly budget of the Castle Museum in Pszczyna exceeds PLN 6 million, that of the Castle Museum in Łańcut PLN 12 million. Approximately 70–75% of these sums are provided by public authorities who are their owners and supervising bodies, i.e. the regional government of Silesia in the case of Pszczyna and jointly the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and regional authorities of Podkarpackie region in the case of Łańcut castle.

Table 2. Perception of values of the castle museums in Łańcut and Pszczyna by visitors to both sites

Specific value types	Number of respondents who pointed to a given value category as a share in the total number of respondents (%)		Share of a given response category in the total number of spontaneous responses (%)	
	Łańcut	Pszczyna	Łańcut	Pszczyna
General cultural values, including:	–	–	41,8	43,9
Historic value	16,9	19,1	12,9	15,7
Recognition as cultural heritage	10,0	10,0	7,7	8,2
Recognition as a monument with an immanent (existence) value	9,4	10,5	7,2	8,6
Authenticity, uniqueness, scarcity	7,4	7,1	5,7	5,8
Aesthetic values	9,1	5,4	7,0	4,4
Values of cultural landscape and nature, including the beauty of the green setting and its health enhancing properties	1,7	1,4	1,3	1,2
National cultural values, including:	–	–	27,4	19,9
Recognition as national heritage	20,3	8,5	15,5	7,0
Historic values and traditions one identifies with, worthy of preservation	10,3	9,7	7,9	7,9
Culture one identifies with	4,6	4,8	3,5	4,0
Connection to history of important aristocratic families	0,6	1,1	0,4	0,9
Cultural values of local or regional character/ in the local or regional context, including:	–	–	0,7	2,8
Connection to local history and cultural offer	0,9	2,3	0,7	1,9
Values linked with multicultural heritage of the area	0,0	1,1	0,0	0,9
Bequest value (as a 'legacy' to future generations)	19,1	20,8	14,7	17,1
Educational and cognitive value as a publicly accessible site, in particular for education of children and youth	10,6	14,2	8,1	11,7
Economic values, including:	–	–	7,4	4,7
Leisure and recreational values	5,1	1,4	3,9	1,2
Economic and promotional value as a tourism attraction for domestic and foreign visitors	4,6	3,7	3,5	3,0
Values linked with the potential to stimulate creativity	0,0	0,6	0,0	0,5

Source: own elaboration.

Two in five responses underlined the importance of general cultural values. Apart from aesthetic values, these included historic values, immanent 'monument' values, values linked with the sites' uniqueness, authenticity and scarcity and (to a lesser extent) the values of cultural landscape and green setting of both building complexes. One in four responses in Łańcut and one in five in Pszczyna stressed the national cultural values of the castle complexes including their recognition as 'national heritage' expressing historic and cultural values or traditions one identifies with (or, in other words, citizens of Poland can identify with). These values were especially visible in the perception of Łańcut castle as a site linked with prominent Polish aristocratic families, to a slightly lesser extent in the case of Pszczyna as a piece of heritage located and linked with the turbulent multicultural history of Silesia. Conversely, although few visitors related values of the two castles to the particular local or regional context, this was done to a greater extent in the case of Pszczyna. All in all gentry and aristocratic culture is regarded as a part of main stream cultural legacy in Poland to a greater extent than in other countries, therefore respondents (e.g. in contrast to research results in England) saw no major contradictions between their own identity and the grandeur of both sites or their aristocratic roots (they espoused them as an immanent part of the generally accepted contemporary Polish identity) [Davies 2001; Smoczyński, Zarycki 2017].

Regardless of present day uses and actual enjoyment of both sites by respondents, they were also seen by them as an important legacy for future generations from the point of view of bequest value (one in five respondents in both cases, a slightly greater share of respondents in Pszczyna than in Łańcut). One in ten respondents in Łańcut (10,6%) and one in seven in Pszczyna (14,2%) stressed the importance of educational and cognitive values of the two museums and sites as publically accessible venues, especially from the perspective of education of younger generations.

Values linked with present day direct or indirect economic significance and uses of both sites were far less often underlined. As few as one in twenty visitors to Łańcut and approximately one in seventy tourists in Pszczyna saw leisure and recreational values as important justifications for their public support. Similarly, only approximately one in twenty respondents in Łańcut and one in thirty respondents in Pszczyna rationalised public support by referring to the economic and promotional values of the two castles as tourism attractions. Interestingly two respondents in Pszczyna also noticed the potential of the castle as an inspiration for present day creative activities and endeavours.

Visitor satisfaction and shortcomings of the current museum and the two little towns' tourism offer

Almost three thirds of visitors to the castle in Pszczyna (73,9%) and 58% of tourists in Łańcut are fully satisfied with the museum visit. The share of persons who are disappointed with the museums and their offer is relatively low (4,0% in the case of Pszczyna and 6,9% in the case of Łańcut). What could be a reason for a certain doze of concern however is the rather high share of persons who had no opinion on the issue (almost one third in Łańcut (32,2%) and over one fifth in Pszczyna – 21,1%) and were unable to assess their visiting experience, which may be interpreted as the share of persons indifferent to the castles' offer. In addition, the share of tourists who assessed their visiting experience as 'well beyond expectations' was marginal (2,9% in Łańcut and 1,0% in Pszczyna). As follows, visitors get what they expected but do not go back home with the positive sense of a better experience than anticipated prior to the visit.

Despite the high level of satisfaction, visitors to both towns notice important shortcomings of some aspects of their tourism offer (Figure 4, Figure 5). Several main themes are visible in the responses of visitors to the two museums, five of them similar in both towns. Firstly, the matter of parking lots, their poor organisation and insufficient accessibility. Secondly, the general issue of better signposting the two museums and other tourism attractions in their vicinity as well as access to them by foot and by car. Next, the problem of the state of repair of the castle park grounds including park alleys, smaller pieces of architecture and their furnishing with benches. Less obvious though noticed is the issue of provision of good quality yet affordable catering services and the need for improvement of tourism information both on the spot and on-line.

In addition, visitors to Pszczyna notice the bad state of repair and lack of sufficient maintenance of historic buildings and public spaces nearby the castle as well as the fact that souvenir stalls and their assortment offered next to the castle visibly clash with the prestigious historic surroundings. All of the above desiderata in the case of Pszczyna are however linked with responsibilities of the local authorities rather than the museum itself, as it does not manage the park grounds surrounding the residence nor is it responsible for the concessions to souvenir stalls, the organisation of parking lots and signage in the little town. The only major complaint of tourists which could be addressed directly by the museum management was better accessibility of guided tours voiced by some visitors. Other problems could be solved only thanks to active, significant involvement and investment of financial means by local authorities and their better cooperation with the museum.

Guests to the Castle Museum in Łańcut also complained about some other issues both within and beyond control of the museum linked with its accessibility

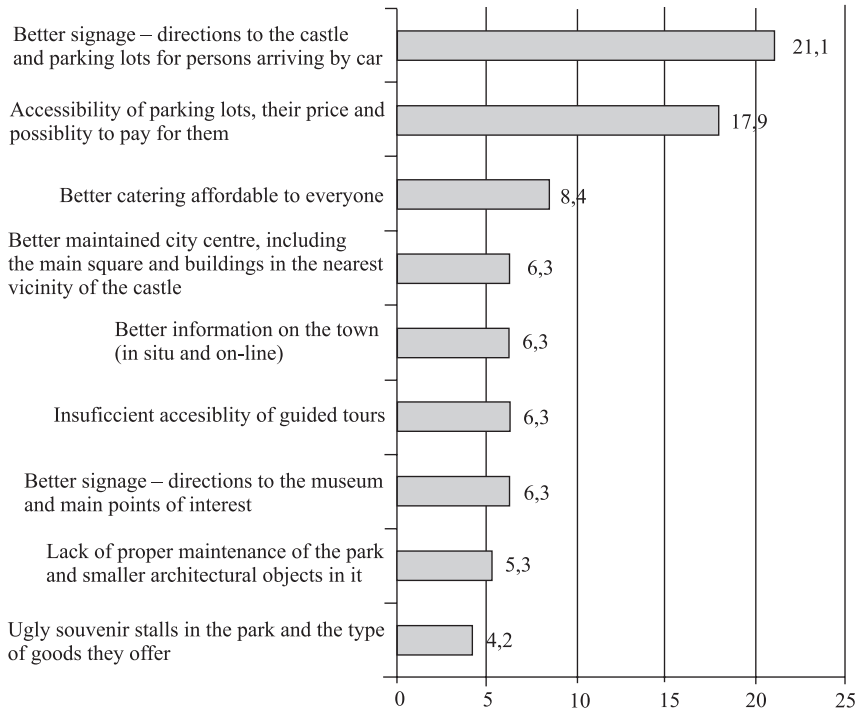


Figure 4. Problems and shortcomings noticed by visitors to the Castle Museum in Pszczyna

Source: own elaboration.

to the disabled and persons with small children, restrooms, limitations of visits on free entrance days, attractions for children and youth, the ban on taking photos in museum interiors and limited accessibility of other tourism attractions, especially the synagogue next to the castle grounds. On the one hand, in the case of Łańcut many of the concerns of tourists could be answered (at least to some extent) directly by the museum itself as it is the manager of extensive park grounds around the residence and also the manager of some broader tourism amenities. On the other hand, just as in Pszczyna, the issues of road and parking lot access, signage or accessibility of other attractions are beyond the museum's control. Its possibility to impact on them has actually weakened in recent years (e.g. the museum no longer manages the attractive historic synagogue next to its grounds). Implementing of some of the tourists' desiderata would be very costly, others are not possible for conservation reasons.

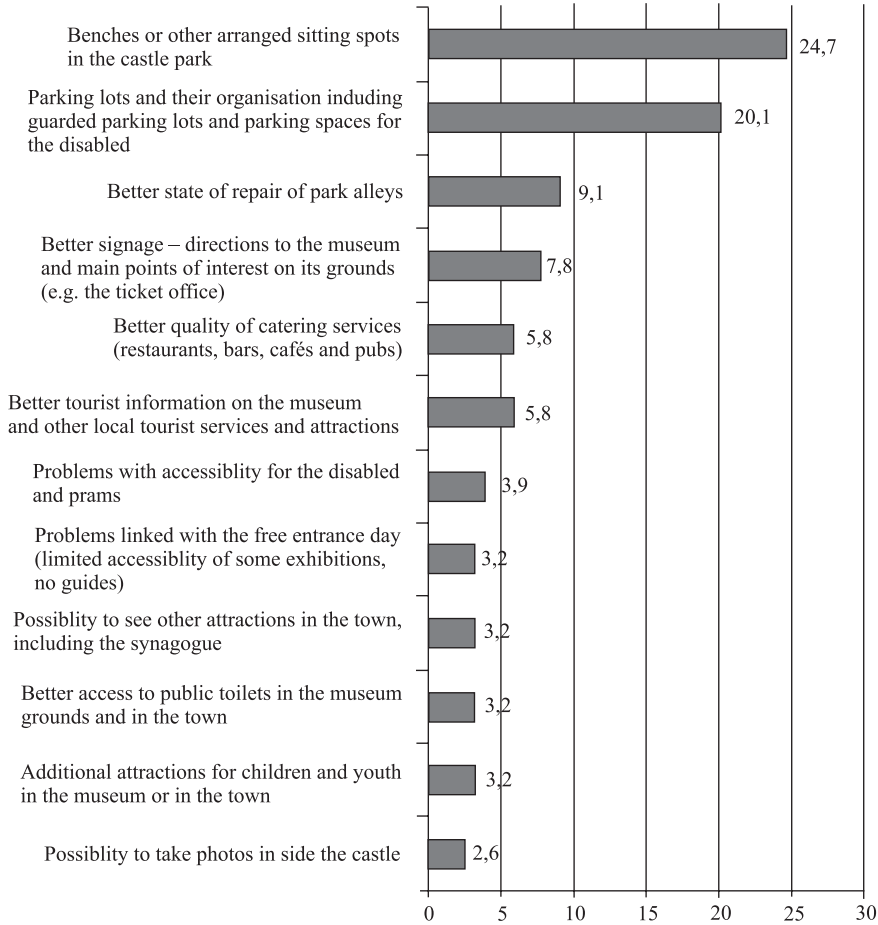


Figure 5. Problems and shortcomings noticed by visitors to the Castle Museum in Łańcut

Source: own elaboration.

Discussion of results and conclusions

Audience research, including visitors research is one of the possible tools to measure or inform the attempts to measure impact and performance of museums [Jacobsen 2016]. Taking into account that museums cater to the needs of many stakeholders [Scott 2003; Murzyn-Kupisz 2016] audience research might be an important part of a broader data set guiding museum management and transformations of their offer.

Research results in Poland do not only testify to the relative stability of the socio-economic profile of residential museums' audiences in Poland [cf. Mikułowski-Pomorski 1971], similar to other countries [Smith 2006; Young 2017] in terms of

gender, educational attainment and frequent middle class background, but also point to some possible long term visitor profile changes and international differences. For example, the audience of historic house museums in Poland is more balanced in terms of gender than in England (i.e. weaker dominance of females with a higher share of male visitors) and age (i.e. higher shares of younger visitors, overall more balanced structure of visitors in terms of different age groups, lack of dominance of older age groups). The study also underlines the more universally applicable need to consider additional social characteristics which may impact on current visitation frequency and attitudes towards museums. Apart from objective levels of earnings or educational attainment (i.e. traditional delineators of cultural consumption) nowadays more complex, interrelated and subjective features linked with well-developed cultural capital, life style choices and general, subjective assessment of situation in life might be decisive in determining frequency of museum visitation, attitudes towards this type of cultural institutions and WTP for them in the form of tickets or taxes [Murzyn-Kupisz, Działek 2016].

General global changes and the socio-economic transformation taking place in Poland since 1989 have significantly impacted on the way domestic visits to residential museums are organised and experienced (i.e. individually organised visits by families and acquaintances arriving to them mainly by private car rather than organised, larger group bus tours). Today's Polish visitors to historic house museums still appreciate their authentic interiors and picturesque surroundings and in general do not desire the introduction of more 'modern' multimedia or other 'revolutionary' changes in the existing, organically developed exhibitions, understanding them 'as given'. They are however much more demanding: have higher expectations in terms of access for the disabled and parents with children, imaginative face-to-face guiding which interprets the museum collections in an interesting and relevant way and engages all senses linking the past and the present or provision of new attractions for different age groups, not only in the museum itself but also in its surroundings. Fulfilling these demands by historic residences but also by other tourism attractions in a particular small town would (and in Pszczyna already does to some extent) enhance their satisfaction and prolong their tourist stay (and economic impact in the local context). It would also, similarly to what is advocated in the American case [Vagnone, Ryan 2015], enhance their overall positive image and perception as socially relevant to contemporary visitors who often want to have some freedom in interpreting what they see and share their experiences of a museum visit using different means (e.g. the need to resolve the issue of taking photos in museum interiors still controversial and forbidden in some historic house museums in Poland). Engaging visitors with a house's history or its historical context can be done not only through guiding but in the form of imaginative workshops referring to functions and activities linked with a given place (e.g. artisanal, cooking, gardening and apiary traditions or other productive functions of a historic estate) showing it as a lively

space and emphasising connections with the surrounding communities [Vagnone, Ryan 2015]. Historic house museums in Poland have begun to introduce such offers to their visitors, though still to a limited extent.

Visits to historic residences in Poland are mainly motivated by the wish to fulfil leisure-related and social bonding needs, to some extent cognitive and prestige related aspirations. The two case studies' findings confirm that residential museums are very specific heritage sites in which one can speak (also in terms of complexity of perceptions, management challenges and tourism services) of the integrity of visitors' experience comprising of the palace or castle building (or buildings), its interiors and landscaped and/or urban surroundings. From a non-local visitor's perspective a historic residence is the focal point and an integral, inseparable part of the broader perception of the entire little town where it is located. The boundaries between public museum grounds and public space managed by other bodies (e.g. local authorities, private property owners) are not distinguishable to an average visitor despite different spheres of influence and responsibility of museum management and other bodies such as the local authorities.

Beyond immediate impressions and actual uses as attractive leisure, social bonding and general educational spaces from a broader perspective such museums are perceived by non-local visitors mainly through the prism of cultural values as such or as emblematic of national culture and heritage. The connection between such sites and understanding of national identity is very important, so is their perceived uniqueness and rareness, authenticity, aesthetic qualities and bequest values to future generations or educational values for younger age groups. Though some recent narratives on museums impact might emphasise their economic values and potential, from the perspective of the Polish general public this is still not a key argument for public support of their existence, maintenance and provision of services. Museums' ability to satisfy higher rank needs, especially identity and quality of life related ones, dominates as an accepted argument for their support from the public purse.

The above independent study of visitors to two Polish residential museums points to a promising area of research on museums and their offer, going beyond audience profiles to offer a deeper understanding of motivations and values linked with such institutions. Some limitations of the study and possibilities of further research must therefore also be pointed out. First of all the study focused on behaviour patterns and perceptions of one specific group of museum stakeholders (i.e. their actual, active, non-local users), whose needs and insights are expected to be different from other stakeholder groups also worthy researching [Murzyn-Kupisz 2016]. Secondly, it concerned two residential museums located in similar settlement types (small towns) where they are major tourism attractions. The functioning of residential museums in larger cities which are a source of more development pressures but also supply large numbers of tourists and local audiences might be to some extent different than the two analysed sites. Less known historic residences

in peripheral areas might be perceived differently as well. Another interesting issue could be whether audience profiles, visiting patterns and values associated with such museums are similar or perhaps different in the case of other museum types, even if narrowed down to such institutions which also include landscaped green surroundings or settings (e.g. open air museums, museums of science and technology). As an increasing number of museums in Poland, including residential museums [cf. *Spędzanie wolnego czasu...* 2015; Murzyn-Kupisz et al. 2018], undertake their own more and more complex, and more and more often periodic and cross-sectional audience research efforts or commission them to external researchers, such comparisons might soon become an interesting, fruitful new field of analysis both for scholarly and practical management purposes.

Lastly, solutions to many problems noticed by visitors require cooperation and broader recognition of multidimensional values of museums by local authorities who are in charge of or may significantly impact on spatial planning, the provision of amenities and services in the surroundings of museums. Such close collaboration between museums and local authorities and mutual recognition as partners in local development is recently strongly advocated by both major museum organisations such as ICOM and leading economic development organisations such as OECD. This trend is testified by their joint, recently elaborated and published manual entitled *Culture and local development: maximising the impact. Guide for local governments, communities and museums* [OECD, ICOM 2018] within the framework of which national pilot studies testing its methodology were conducted in several countries including Poland.

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