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Crafts as a marketing tool in the development of sentimental tourism in Opole Silesia

Rzemiosło jako narzędzie marketingowe w rozwoju turystyki sentymentalnej na Śląsku Opolskim

Abstract

Sentimental tourism, which refers to journeys to one's birthplace or ancestral homeland, gained prominence in East-Central Europe after 1980 in the context of post-war geopolitical divisions. It focuses on emigrants and their descendants, with emotional ties to the homeland shaped by the circumstances and timing of their emigration. This article examines the role of craftsmanship as a marketing tool in promoting sentimental tourism in the Opole Silesia region, where interest in this type of tourism has been declining, especially among younger generations. The hypothesis suggests that craftsmanship, as a tangible representation of cultural heritage, can effectively support the development of sentimental tourism. Findings indicate that craftsmanship, by enhancing the authenticity of experiences and fostering connections with local culture, has the potential to revitalize sentimental tourism. Collaboration with local artisans and organizations, including the German minority, can enable more effective promotion while engaging the local community and preserving the cultural heritage of the region.

Keywords
sentimental tourism, migration, German minority, crafts, economy of culture

Streszczenie

Turystyka sentymentalna, odnosząca się do podróży do miejsca urodzenia lub ojczyzny przodków, zyskała na znaczeniu w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej po 1980 r., w kontekście powojennych podziałów geopolitycznych. Koncentruje się na emigrantach i ich potomkach, a ich emocjonalne więzi z ojczyzną zależą od okoliczności i czasu emigracji. Artykuł analizuje rolę rzemiosła jako narzędzia marketingowego w promocji turystyki sentymentalnej na Opolszczyźnie, gdzie odnotowano spadek zainteresowania, szczególnie wśród młodszych pokoleń. Postawiono hipotezę, że rzemiosło, będące materialnym przejawem dziedzictwa kulturowego, może skutecznie wspierać rozwój tej formy turystyki. Wyniki badania wskazują, że rzemiosło, poprzez wzmacnianie autentyczności doświadczeń i więzi z lokalną kulturą, może ożywić turystykę sentymentalną. Współpraca z lokalnymi rzemieślnikami i organizacjami, w tym mniejszością niemiecką, umożliwi skuteczniejszą promocję, angażując społeczność lokalną i zachowując dziedzictwo kulturowe regionu.

Słowa kluczowe
turystyka sentymentalna, migracja, mniejszość niemiecka, rzemiosło, ekonomia kultury

JEL: Z10, Z30, M30, L11

Introduction

In recent years, a new term "sentimental tourism" has emerged to describe one of the various purposes and motivations behind embarking on a tourist journey. Similarly, in American literature, there is a concept known as "roots syndrome tourism" or "ethnic tourism." While a direct equivalent is not yet firmly established in German literature, the term "Heimattouristik" is utilized.

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The crux of this matter revolves around individuals visiting their birthplace, often undertaken by emigrants or their descendants. Broadly speaking, it also involves visiting the ancestral country. While this form of tourism has existed for a considerable period, it has gained renewed attention in East Central Europe, transforming into a significant source of income. Sentimental tourism focuses on a distinct group of individuals who have permanently emigrated from their home country (Baraniecki & Wisniowa, 2011).

The utilization of memories associated with a location and feelings of nostalgia as catalysts and drivers for travel play pivotal roles in the establishment of sentimental tourism (Torabi Farsani & Peymanfar, 2017). In contemporary times, certain travellers embark on journeys to explore destinations tied to their ancestral roots or historical migrations of their family and compatriots (Russell, 2008).

In fact, sentimental tourism is associated with traveling to the places of origin, previous residence of the tourist, or their ancestors. It is considered a niche in tourism (Perera & Dilshani, 2021). Motyka (2016) characterizes sentimental tourism by the following distinguishing elements:

- Motivated by emotional needs,
- Feelings accompanying visits to important places hold value,
- Serves identity nurturing,
- Tourists may have ethnic identity with the visited places,
- Similar culture becomes a tourist attraction,
- Enables exploration of places important to tourists,
- Significance of material culture,
- Does not require intermediaries,
- Has a minimal impact on the visited environment,
- Does not generate threats to the visited communities.

For "sentimental" tourists, visited places and objects have a personal character and are associated with a friendly emotional attitude. This relationship can be linked to cultural heritage, sentiment toward language or lifestyle, but not necessarily with the previously visited space. A related concept to sentimental tourism is nostalgic tourism, where the tourist feels nostalgia for a place or object where they have been before. In Polish literature, both terms are sometimes used interchangeably (Tomczewska-Popowycz, 2016). Similarly, in this article, both terms, though not entirely synonymous, will be used together due to their interchangeable use by respondents – craftsmen.

Tomczewska-Popowycz (2016) also includes other concepts related to sentimental tourism, such as diaspora tourism (family history, roots exploration), cemetery tourism (travel to places associated with death and one's own roots), genealogical tourism (archives, libraries, places associated with the founders of a family), roots tourism (search for ethnic roots and culture), and family tourism (visiting or searching for relatives).

The theme of sentiment and nostalgia as factors influencing consumer choices, including tourists' choices, is explored by researchers in various types of tourism, including eco-tourism, film tourism, sports tourism, and cultural tourism (including heritage tourism).

Results of a study conducted by Tang et al. (2020) indicate, among other things, that individual nostalgia of eco-tourists affects their pro-environmental behaviours. The role of nostalgia in the engagement and behavioural intentions of potential film tourists, including imitative memories, was investigated by Kim et al. (2019). Aspects related to the development of a nostalgia scale useful for determining the behavioural intentions of sports tourists were examined by Cho et al. (2017). Cultural tourism issues (including heritage tourism) are associated with the understanding of traditions and history of a region, indicating, among other things:

- A greater quantity of nostalgic products is consumed in countries that are more geographically distant and characterized by a higher level of individualism and lower masculinity (research conducted by Palomino-Tamayo et al. (2020), on the Venezuelan diaspora traveling to Colombia, Peru, Chile, Ecuador, and Panama).
- In the case of reuse of heritage sites, authenticity does not play as significant a role as in the case of general heritage tourism (research conducted in Foshan Lingnan Tiandi in Guangdong Province, China, by Gao et al. (2020)).
- "Nostalgic" tourists are more likely to choose tourism products that evoke past moments and feelings of nostalgia, as well as encourage a strong intention to repurchase the same tourism product in the future (research conducted in Sri Lanka by Perera & Dilshani (2021)).
- Ukrainian cultural heritage in Poland and Polish heritage in Ukrainian lands (particularly in the Lviv and Volyn oblasts) and eastern Poland (Lublin and Podkarpackie Voivodeships) provide a strong foundation for the development of sentimental tourism (Kozoviy, 2018).
- Sentimental tourism is undertaken by almost all nationalities, and examples include ethnic tourism by German-speaking citizens to regions of Poland where they lived before 1945

(such as the Opole Voivodeship) and Jewish tourists to Polish cities (Motyka, 2016).

The second group of scientific papers focuses on nostalgic advertisements in the context of tourists' destination choices. According to Su et al. (2023), nostalgic advertising (containing cues and motifs related to the past) induces a "sense of history" and a desire to visit a particular place. However, non-nostalgic ads (i.e., those focused on the present) have a much greater impact on encouraging audiences to visit due to their appeal to prevailing trends. Other related texts concern aspects of memory and sensory visual marketing. They include, for example, the promotion through rich visual elements in situations related to attributing sentimental value to products, i.e., value created based on positive associations with specific individuals (primarily close ones) or events that trigger the desire to remember (Huang et al., 2023). Sentiment in the context of tourism, evoking emotions, is examined, among other reasons, to provide information to both product and service providers and marketing organizations about areas requiring improvement (Alaei et al., 2023).

Sentimental tourism pertains to a distinct group of individuals who have permanently left their home country. These individuals exhibit differences due to varying times and circumstances of their emigration. These factors play a pivotal role in shaping their sentiment towards the "old country." From this perspective, potential participants in sentimental tourism within the East-Central European region can be categorized as follows: (1) emigrants to non-European countries during the era of major economic migration, (2) emigrants from the World War II period, (3) displaced persons from the World War II era, (4) post-World War II displaced individuals, (5) post-World War II emigrants. A rough estimate suggests that the cumulative number of potential sentimental tourists within these categories could approach 50 million people. German sentimental tourism primarily targets the western and northern regions of Poland, which were inhabited by Germans prior to World War II. The key participants of these tourist excursions are former war refugees and displaced individuals. Moreover, family-oriented tourism is rapidly burgeoning, with participants hailing from both directions. This entails members of the German national minority in Poland visiting their relatives in Germany, as well as Germans journeying to visit their relatives in Poland. This particular type of tourism is especially concentrated in the Opole region and Upper Silesia. The potential scale of the German tourist group is significant, stemming from historical factors. Following post-war deportations and subsequent emigrations from Poland up until 1989, approximately 4.2 million Germans were involved in this movement. Additionally, about 3 million individuals fled from the advancing fronts during the war itself.

Tourism is inherently intertwined with culture. It could even be said that they complement each other and form a cohesive whole. It is a significant factor in attracting tourism resources and obtaining "cultural pleasure." The concepts of culture and tourism are often described as inseparable, and cultural factors are recognized to have a substantial impact on consumer decisions (Liang et al., 2021). Cultural experiences also influence the development of positive emotions during travel (Cao et al., 2023), particularly engaging cultural experiences that positively impact tourism (European Commission, 2022).

Research conducted by Smagina and Ludviga (2020) points out that the craft sector holds potential in terms of creativity. Moreover, it continues to play a role in preserving national traditions and cultural heritage. Both material and non-material aspects of craftsmanship have been compared to a time machine, influencing future economies (European Commission, 2022). Even less optimistic forecasts, related to the necessity for Europe to adopt a more pro-innovative direction, suggest that in a scenario of the future innovative powerhouses of the USA and China, the old continent will be known for craftsmanship and tourism (Czubkowska, 2018).

Undoubtedly, culture undergoes commercialization, adhering to market principles. Traditional craftsmanship and handicrafts, within the context of cultural tourism, can be attractive not only to local authorities and communities but also to tourists as a tourism asset. It can influence the region's image creation, attract investors, and generate new jobs (Machowska, 2016). Craftsmanship becomes a tourist attraction for a specific region and, through tourism, plays an important role in regional development.

In this article, sentimental tourism is analysed in relation to the acquisition of crafts from Opole Silesia and a specific group of recipients of this craft – those of German origin. The aim of the article is to attempt to answer the question of whether emotionally charged tourism in Opole Silesia is a forward-looking form of tourism, and whether marketing strategies focused on the past continue to be a space worth developing.

The objective of the article is to explore the potential of utilizing the resurging craftsmanship as a means of promoting sentimental tourism within the region. The research hypothesis asserts that there has been a deceleration in sentimental tourism across Opole Silesia throughout

the years. Consequently, this prompts the inquiry of strategies to counteract this trend. Can craftsmanship effectively serve as a promotional instrument in nurturing the growth of sentimental tourism?

Material and methods

Based on the analysis of the subject literature and the current state of research in this area, the authors noticed a research gap concerning the lack of detailed analyses regarding the effectiveness of using craftsmanship as a marketing tool in promoting sentimental tourism in a specific region, i.e., in the Opole Silesia area.

The article presents the results of two stages of conducted research on the craftsmanship from Opole Silesia – desk research and in-depth interviews. The first stage encompasses desk research and involves the analysis of published materials dedicated to the topic of sentimental tourism among individuals declaring German nationality in Opole Silesia, as well as the specifics of their consumer behaviour. The second stage consisted of in-depth interviews conducted in April 2023. These interviews were carried out orally, individually, with 11 craftsmen – creators from Opole Silesia. The authors planned to conduct as many interviews as possible. Following the report by Klekot et al. (2022), the authors assumed that the number of interviews conducted with craftsmen representing traditional crafts should be at least 10.[1] The difficulty in recruiting respondents was using telephone numbers obtained from craftsmen, which did not result in an agreed interview (no answering of telephones). Respon-dents were selected using a non-random method (snowball sampling).

The interview date was previously agreed upon by phone directly with the craftsman (10 interviews) or through another recommending craftsman with whom the interview had been conducted previously, i.e., in the case of an unavailable telephone number (one interview). The first four craftsmen were encouraged to participate in interviews during the CILRAID scientific conference organized by the Faculty of Economics and Management of Opole University of Technology, and the Craftsmanship and Entrepreneurship Guild – Employers' Association in Opole, as well as during workshops organized in Opole. Contact with the remaining seven individuals was established through recommendations from previously interviewed craftsmen. Eleven craftsmen represented eight crafts of Opole Silesia (listed in alphabetical order): artistic ceramics, embroidery, blacksmithing, weaving, gingerbread making; hand decorating porcelain; handicraft sewing of bags, backpacks, and similar accessories, and leatherworking.

During the conversation, a previously developed interview script was used as a reference. The questions posed during the interviews focused on the subject of sentimental tourism – its impact on the sales of regional craft products and future directions – opportunities associated with increasing the sales of local handicrafts. The developed interview script included 16 primary questions and eight questions in a fixed order so that a direct reference to sentimental tourism appeared only in the final part of the interview. Additional questions were not asked if they were answered in the craftsmen's statements. Topics mentioned in the questions included:

- Observed reasons for participating in workshops conducted by craftsmen;
- Directions of development of craft products, their popularity, and observed trends;
- Offering or planning to sell handicrafts;
- Specifics of buyers of regional handicraft products;
- Origin of the buyers of the produced works/products;
- Features of products described as attractive to domestic and foreign recipients of crafts;
- Observation of an increase/decrease in interest in local craft products (divided into individual recipient groups) and proposals for actions to increase interest in local craft products;
- Willingness to cooperate with local/regional authorities to promote the sale of regional handicraft products (modes, types of activities, and accompanying opportunities);
- Willingness to use available places of sale for regional craft products
- Demand for facilities related to starting/running a business related to handicrafts;
- Interests in trademarks (plans, concerns);
- Readiness to act under the patronage of a given institution/indicated organization;
- The impact of sentimental tourism on the sale of handicrafts (observations, impact on sales volume);
- The role of regional products as a tool for promoting the region in Poland/Europe/the world;
- Proposals of products that showcase the region.

Some of the results obtained from this stage have been used in texts dedicated to craftsmanship treated as a developmental potential of the region (Mazur-Włodarczyk et al., 2023), as well as the promotion of craftsmanship and through craftsmanship (Mazur-Włodarczyk, 2024).

Results

Tourism of Germans in Poland with a particular focus on sentimental tourism in Opole Silesia

The development of sentimental tourism in Poland began in the 1990s. Germans, especially those who were forced to leave the areas of present-day western and northern Poland after World War II, began to revisit these regions as tourists to visit places from their childhood, cemeteries, or to reconnect with old friends and relatives. According to research conducted by the Opole Regional Tourist Organization, it is evident that approximately 13% of German tourists visiting the Opole Voivodeship still visit their ancestral places. Younger Germans, including the children and grandchildren of those who lived in this region before World War II, are increasingly coming to visit (Opole Regional Tourist Organization, 2023). The process of political transformation created an opportunity for Poland to establish closer ties with the European Union (EU). Formally, this collaboration was initiated with the signing of the European Agreement on 16 December 1991, between the Republic of Poland and the EU. This agreement covered various aspects of cooperation, including the realm of tourism. Primarily, it focused on simplifying the exchange of tourists and enhancing the flow of information by leveraging international networks. Moreover, a support initiative named "Phare" was devised to aid Poland, concentrating on both restructuring efforts and non-repayable financial assistance. Within the scope of tourism, this program was executed in multiple stages under the "Tourin" subprogram. One of its outcomes was the establishment of 9 macro-regions in Poland to foster the growth of the regional tourism industry. During the early 1990s, there was a notable increase in cross-border collaboration. This was practically demonstrated through the establishment of 13 euroregions, distributed with four located along the western border, six along the southern border, two along the eastern border, and one along the northern border. The formation of the "Nysa" Euroregion in 1991 bore significant importance for advancing Polish–German cross-border cooperation, representing the pioneering instance of its kind in Poland and across Central and Eastern Europe. Spanning from 1991 to 1993, this euroregion laid down the foundational institutional framework for cross-border cooperation. The primary objective of the "Nysa" Euroregion, as well as the three other euroregions adjacent to Poland's western border ("Pomerania," "Pro Europa Viadrina," and "Sprewa–Nysa–Bóbr"), was to facilitate collective endeavours aimed at fostering equitable regional development and cultivating closer bonds among inhabitants and institutions on both sides of the boundary. Financial support from the "Phare" program contributed to the expansion of Polish-German youth exchanges. Notably, the "Pomerania" Euroregion hosts an annual Polish-German Youth Festival, alternating between the Polish and German territories.

Following Poland's accession to the EU, there was an initial increase of in the number of German tourists visiting the country. According to data from the Central Statistical Office, as early as 2004, 1.38 million Germans used Polish tourist accommodation facilities. In 2016, the number of German tourists reached 1.66 million, and by 2019, it rose to 1.91 million. Due to the pandemic, there was a decline in 2020, with 797 thousand German tourists. The situation is gradually normalizing, and the number of tourists from Germany is increasing. In 2022, there were 1.4 million of them (GUS. Geostatics Portal, n.d.). Notably, research focusing on the German tourism market positions Poland within the top ten preferred foreign holiday destinations for Germans, securing the eighth position among European nations. The country's prominent standing in the German ranking is significantly shaped by its geographical proximity and its incorporation into the Schengen zone in 2007.

Official data do not account for German tourists who stay with their relatives; they only consider tourists using accommodation facilities. It can thus be presumed that the number of German tourists is significantly higher than what official data indicate. This also corresponds with the fact that among foreigners, visiting family and friends is considered the main reason for traveling to Poland for tourism purposes. In the Opole Silesia the number of German tourists using Polish accommodation facilities is notable. However, it's worth noting that Opole Silesia is unique in this regard. This is because it stands out with the highest percentage of German-origin population in Poland. They have families in Germany who often visit them, and they don't necessarily need to use accommodation facilities since they can stay with their families.

Based on data from the Central Statistical Office in Poland, the primary reason for foreign tourists visiting the country was to connect with relatives or acquaintances (39.9%), followed by business-related purposes (21.3%), and leisure activities, recreation, and vacations (19.2%). Among day-trippers, the main motivation for their

visits was shopping (74.7%), followed by business-related reasons (6.9%), and leisure activities, recreation, and vacations (5.9%) (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2023). Furthermore, in 2022, more than half of the incoming foreign visitors were in the age group of 35 to 54, approximately one in every six visitors were aged 55–64, and around one in every seven visitors were aged 25–34. The smallest portion of travellers to Poland were individuals aged 24 and under, as well as those aged 65 and over (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2023). In the year 2022, similar to previous years, German residents continued to dominate the group of tourists visiting Poland, constituting the largest proportion among both total tourists and day-trippers – accounting for 32.7% and 52.6% respectively (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2023).

Foreign visitors to Poland during the year 2022 incurred expenses amounting to PLN 44.8 billion, both prior to their travels in their home countries and during their stays in Poland. This figure marked a substantial increase of 56.6% compared to the year 2021. Of this total, tourists contributed to expenditures of PLN 26.4 billion (representing a 70.3% increase from 2021), while day-trippers accounted for expenses totalling PLN 18.5 billion (reflecting a 40.4% increase from 2021).

In the year 2022, the collective expenditures of tourists and day-trippers from the neighbouring countries of Poland reached PLN 31.1 billion, comprising 69.5% of the overall spending by non-residents. This marked an increase from the preceding year, which accounted for PLN 21.2 billion (at 74.1%). Specifically, among Poland's neighbouring countries, the highest expenses in 2022 were attributed to tourists and day-trippers from Germany, totalling PLN 17.4 billion (constituting 55.7% of the combined expenditures from neighbouring nations). This was followed by Ukraine with PLN 4.9 billion (15.9%), the Czech Republic with PLN 3.8 billion (12.3%), Slovakia with PLN 2.3 billion (7.5%), Lithuania with PLN 1.3 billion (4.1%), Belarus with PLN 1.2 billion (4.0%), and Russia with PLN 0.2 billion (0.5% of the total expenditures from neighbouring countries). Importantly, it should be noted that for neighbouring countries within the Schengen Area, the majority of expenditures by foreigners originated from day-trippers, while for countries beyond the Schengen Area, it stemmed from tourists. For the entire set of seven countries, expenses from day-trippers accounted for 57.9% (in 2021 – 60.6%). The cumulative expenditures of tourists and day-trippers in 2022 for travels to Poland surpassed the previous year's figures for the majority of neighbouring countries (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2023).

Within the category of tourists, foreign visitors from Germany registered the highest expenditures attributed to their journeys to Poland – totalling PLN 8.0 billion (equating to 30.4% of the overall tourist expenses in 2022). This was followed by Ukraine with PLN 3.3 billion (12.6%), the United States with PLN 2.5 billion (9.5%), and the United Kingdom with PLN 1.3 billion (4.8%). Similarly, among the ranks of same-day visitors, travellers from Germany also held the lead in terms of expenses associated with their trips to Poland – amounting to PLN 9.4 billion (comprising 50.6% of the total expenditures of same-day visitors in 2022). This was followed by the Czech Republic with PLN 3.6 billion (19.3%), Slovakia with PLN 2.2 billion (11.7%), Ukraine with PLN 1.6 billion (8.7%), and Lithuania with PLN 0.8 billion (4.4%) (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2023).

The tourism of Germans to Poland has undergone transformations over the years. In the past, Poland was extremely popular among German retirees, however, now it is evident that Poland also attracts families with children and young Germans. Currently, active tourism is becoming increasingly popular. It's worth mentioning a new trend called "Multiaktiv Reisen," which is gaining popularity among Germans. There are even travel agencies specializing in organizing such trips. For instance, the 300-kilometer Mazurian Bike Loop, a cycling route around the Great Masurian Lakes, is an excellent location for this type of activity. Health tourism and active recreation are currently the two fastest-growing forms of German tourism in Poland. This has been primarily influenced by changes in the German healthcare reimbursement system. Almost all insurance companies cover the costs of Germans' stays in Polish health resorts. German tourists also value leisure in natural areas, away from mass tourism.

Sentimental journeys of the older generation of tourists to Wrocław, Gdańsk, and Silesia are gradually becoming less prominent. According to observations by the German tourism industry offering trips to Poland, there is an increasing interest in city breaks to other major cities, including Krakow, Poznań, and Warsaw (due to a well-developed offer of budget airline connections), as well as to coastal cities such as Kołobrzeg, Międzyzdroje, and Świnoujście.

It should be emphasized that sentimental tourism developed primarily in Opole Silesia, as the Opole Voivodeship is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in Poland. This is due to the fact that, after the post-war border changes, a significant concentration of German-origin population persisted within its territory. This population is not only ethnically distinct from other Polish residents but also historically existed within a different cultural-civilizational sphere, characterized by different value systems and

behavioural patterns (Jończy & Łukaniszyn-Domaszewska, 2018). These individuals are also marked by formal and legal distinctiveness, as they possess, in addition to Polish citizenship, German citizenship or the right to obtain it due to their origins. The political transformation in 1989 enabled this group to undertake various activities and initiatives, focused within organizations and associations of the German minority (Łukaniszyn-Domaszewska, 2021; 2022; Łukaniszyn-Domaszewska & Jończy, 2021).

Interviews with craftsmen – questions concerning sentimental tourism

Craftsmen, when asked about the buyers of regional craftsmanship, mentioned tourists in both individual and institutional recipient groups. Within the individual recipients, these included individuals who:

- reside in other regions of Poland,
- are Polish nationals living abroad and visiting Opole Silesia,
- are foreigners.

In the context of institutional recipients, participants in business tourism were highlighted. This refers to individuals who visit state budgetary units such as city and regional offices, as well as Opole universities) for business purposes (such as attending official meetings and conferences). In this group, tourism-related aspects were also linked to private enterprises that commission artisans to create specific products, subsequently selling them to others, including tourists.

According to artisans, sentimental tourism influences the sale of handicrafts. This type of tourism was interpreted as both sentimental and nostalgic tourism. It was seen as travel connected to nostalgia for one's place of origin and/or childhood/youth spent in Opole Silesia, as well as acquiring craftsmanship during visits due to sentiment, fond memories – for example, previous interactions with a particular handicraft product or craftsmen. It is visible in responses of craftsmen from Opole Silesia presented below:

"Indeed, definitely. Generally, many people who come here return and talk about buying a bag from Byczyna. Keychain cases with the word 'Byczyna' on them, that's something that reminds them of us." (respondent 1)

"Sure, people have been coming from Germany for a few years, talking, buying. It matters." (respondent 3)

"Of course. I always bring something back as a souvenir from my trips. It's best when they are items directly related to the region I have a sentiment for." (respondent 4)

"Yes. The bread tastes best from the local baker. The environment is crucial for artisanal products." (respondent 5)

"It has a lot of significance. Grandmothers come and buy for their grandchildren, and they choose me only because I am from this town. And I see that other businesses also confirm that there is sentimental tourism." (respondent 6)

"It does have an impact. People living partly in Poland and mainly abroad. They buy magnets, but sentiment is there. Not just Germans, there are many people in Belgium, the Netherlands, the United States, and even in the East – Belarus, Latvia." (respondent 7)

"I think it does. Wherever I travelled, there was amazing surprise. I could have been in the same city in France 3–4 times, and every time there was surprise. If it resonates with someone – yes, definitely." (respondent 8)

"My whole family lives in Germany. They are given items they choose themselves. Yes, it is, however, too time-consuming for tourists to create such products themselves." (respondent 11)

However, a lot depends on the location of the shop/stand and the distance from recognized tourist spots, as well as the size of the offered products:

"Stores that offer local products and are easily accessible, usually located near the market, do well." (respondent 2)

"The question is how many times one can buy the same souvenir. How much can one buy and take... Sometimes, it's difficult. Small details gain direction and sales faster." (respondent 5)

Sentimental tourism is considered challenging in terms of promotion:

"It's very difficult to reach this target group, how to direct marketing towards them. It's a highly diverse group. If it were possible to somehow consolidate this group, it's a group interested in craftsmanship, and I see a chance." (respondent 2)

Sentimental tourism is an opportunity for current craft development, but it might not be the path for the future, considering sentiment is mainly among individuals currently labelled as older or even elderly:

"Yes, but not entirely, I think. Our safest bet is the locals." (respondent 3)

"I don't see a chance for the future." (respondent 7)

"Given that our region is unique, many people go abroad to Germany and come here for vacations or holidays. This is still the generation of the '70s. This generation is sentimental. However, I fear that our children's generation might not be the same." (respondent 8)

"It should have, only the question is where these tourists are. I believe that these tourists are fewer now. Ten years ago, there were many. They

are elderly people who come here sentimentally. If the product was displayed and available for purchase in the right place, they would probably still be willing to buy. Tourists spend little time on-site. Their numbers are decreasing; it's not like buses full of tourists used to arrive here. The younger generation doesn't feel the same sentiment. (...) it's a past trend." (respondent 10)

"Rather not, it's a past trend." (respondent 10)

In conclusion, craftsmanship constitutes a significant aspect of the landscape of Opole Silesia, which greatly benefits from collaboration with tourism. Sentimental tourism appears to be an ideal solution in this case, both in terms of promoting craftsmanship and enhancing tourism services in the region. These two elements are closely interconnected and mutually dependent. The development of tourism can contribute to the popularization and flourishing of traditional craftsmanship, while craftsmanship can also contribute to an increase in sentimental-based tourist activities. However, surveyed craftsmen emphasize that sentimental tourism is currently a crucial element in promoting craftsmanship, but it may not necessarily hold the same significance for future generations of tourists. Thus, it's important to emphasize the roots, discover one's origins and ancestral traditions, or "root" new sentiments within the younger generation.

Discussion

Sentimental tourism in Opole Silesia is characterized by its focus on emotional connections, memories, and personal ties to the region's past. This form of tourism involves visits to sites of historical, cultural, or familial significance, including heritage landmarks, traditional settings, and everyday spaces such as former residences or schools. By engaging with these locations, tourists aim to reconnect with their personal or ancestral histories, fostering a deeper understanding of the region's cultural and historical identity. Opole Silesia, with its rich cultural heritage and historical legacy, offers a diverse array of monuments, museums, and cultural events that serve as key attractions, enabling visitors to experience the region's traditions while eliciting a strong sense of nostalgia and emotional resonance. Russell (2008) suggests that nostalgia tourism tends to attract senior tourists more often. However, in the context of this specific analysis, we argue that the visitors may not only include seniors with personal ties to Opole Silesia but also younger tourists interested in its historical significance. In our view, nostalgia tourism can also enjoy significant popularity among younger tourists, as indicated by the research findings of Thurnell-Read (2009). Nevertheless, this requires the implementation of properly tailored marketing strategies that address the needs of younger individuals.

Therefore, two issues arise. The first concerns the overall slowdown in sentimental tourism. The second issue pertains to the fact that young people do not seem to be interested in this form of tourism.

Both the interviews conducted among craftsmen and the desk research analysis confirm the hypothesis of a slowdown in sentimental tourism in Opole Silesia. Therefore, it is necessary to consider what can be done to somehow halt this trend and revive sentimental tourism in Opole, especially given the enormous potential represented by the local German minority.

In the context of global economic transformations, sustainable development has become a key focus in tourism, with researchers emphasizing the importance of local community involvement (Lee, 2013). This is particularly relevant to sentimental tourism, including ethnic tourism, which showcases the traditions and identities of ethnic minorities and often overlaps with ancestral homelands (Smith, 1977; Chen et al., 2016). The success of such tourism depends on positive local attitudes, as community interactions significantly influence the visitor experience (Sharpley, 2014; Yang, 2011). Resident support for tourism has been a focus of research since the late 1970s, addressing diverse perspectives (Doxey, 1975) and host-guest dynamics (Smith, 1977). Studies emphasize that residents' perceptions of tourism impacts strongly predict their support for development (Gursoy et al., 2010; Lee, 2013), influenced by factors such as perceived benefits and drawbacks (Lee, 2013), personal gains (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017), community attachment (Lee, 2013), quality of life (Liang & Hui, 2016), and empowerment (Chen et al., 2016). Support for tourism development among residents is typically driven by two main factors: economic and non-economic motivations. Economic motivations are rooted in residents' perceptions of the tangible benefits of tourism, which influence their supportive behaviours (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). In contrast, non-economic factors focus on emotional aspects, such as place attachment and empowerment, which shape residents' attitudes toward tourism based on personal feelings and community connections (Stylidis et al., 2014; Strzelecka et al., 2017; Strzelecka et al., 2021). Despite the dual rationales that underlie resident support, scholars have typically anchored their models in a singular rationale (Dyer et al., 2007;

Gursoy et al., 2010; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). Simplistic economic perspectives have surfaced in diverse tourism studies probing the support of ethnic residents, primarily hinging on economic gains (Trupp & Sunanta, 2017; Yang, 2011). In contrast, Stylidis (2014) observed that numerous studies have only furnished a partial comprehension of residents' supportive behaviours by solely referencing psychological constructs.

Residents' attitudes toward tourism are shaped by both economic and non-economic factors. In ethnic tourism destinations, which often serve as residents' living environments, support can stem from both personal benefits and emotional connections (Yang, 2011; Chen et al., 2016). Despite growing recognition of non-economic factors like place attachment, few studies have integrated these with economic motivations, creating a gap in understanding how these factors interact to influence residents' support for tourism (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Wang & Xu, 2015).

Conclusion

Sentimental tourism can significantly contribute to regional development by generating economic benefits, promoting cultural heritage, and creating employment opportunities. Tourists, drawn by sentimental connections, tend to increase local spending, which stimulates the economy and leads to the establishment of businesses such as hotels and restaurants, thereby providing jobs for local residents. Furthermore, sentimental tourism aids in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, including craftsmanship, a vital component of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, n.d.), fostering cultural awareness and encouraging communities to safeguard their traditions. The economic growth resulting from tourism can enhance the quality of life for local residents, while the preservation of cultural assets strengthens community pride and overall well-being. However, it is important to ensure that sentimental tourism is developed in a sustainable and responsible way. This means that tourism development should be balanced with the protection of natural and cultural resources, the preservation of the local environment, and the involvement of local communities in tourism planning and development. Therefore, sentimental tourism can contribute to regional development in a positive and sustainable way.

Additionally, the cultural dimension of sentimental tourism extends beyond relaxation and reconnecting with family. It also involves personal enrichment through education. Tourists gain insights into the history of their families and regions. The presence of numerous tourist amenities further amplifies the substantial potential for the growth of this form of tourism.

Interviews conducted with craftsmen indicate that among the recipients of craftsmanship are "sentimental"/"nostalgic" tourists, and currently, this group influences the sale of craftsmanship. However, not all artisans know how to reach this audience or direct promotional activities towards them. Sentimental/nostalgic tourism is not considered a future trend according to our respondents' opinions.

It seems that, in the development of sentimental tourism in Opole Silesia, a variety of promotional tools can be utilized to capture the attention of potential tourists and encourage them to visit this area. Table 1 presents selected promotional tools enabling the development of sentimental tourism in Opole Silesia.

Craftsmanship, currently undergoing a renaissance, serves as a crucial instrument in the promotion of sentimental tourism by re-inforcing authenticity, preserving cultural heritage, and facilitating meaningful engagement with local traditions. Its integration into tourism strategies can attract both domestic and international audiences, offering culturally significant and memorable experiences while supporting heritage conservation in an era of multiculturalism and migration. Craftsmanship constitutes a significant component of sentimental tourism, fostering meaningful connections with regional culture and heritage. Handcrafted souvenirs serve as tangible representations of local traditions, while workshops and live demonstrations enable tourists to engage directly with artisans and traditional techniques, deepening cultural appreciation. Initiatives such as craft trails, cultural festivals, and guided tours integrate craftsmanship with historical and cultural narratives, encouraging active exploration and immersive experiences. Digital tools, artisan collaborations, and accommodations incorporating locally crafted elements further enhance the personalization and authenticity of the tourist experience.

The German minority in Opole Silesia provides an additional dimension to sentimental tourism by contributing unique cultural and historical value. Their historical landmarks, traditions, and cultural activities attract visitors, particularly those with ancestral ties to the region. By acting as a cultural intermediary, the German minority facilitates connections with German-speaking tourists while preserving and promoting regional heritage. Collaborative approaches with local stakeholders foster integrated tourism initiatives

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Table 1. Promotional tools in developing sentimental tourism in Opole Silesia

Marketing tool	Proposal
Website and social media	Creating an appealing website and actively managing social media profiles on platforms like Instagram and Facebook can facilitate the promotion of unique sentimental attractions in Opole Silesia. Posting photos, descriptions, stories, and information about places of sentimental significance can engage the audience
Online advertising campaigns	Leveraging online advertising campaigns can help reach a specific audience interested in sentimental tourism. Google Ads, Facebook ads, and Instagram ads can be used to effectively target potential tourists
Brochures and promotional materials	Designing attractive and informative brochures, folders, or leaflets containing descriptions of sentimental places, their history, and local attractions (ex. Opole Culinary trail BIFYJ, Opole castles and palaces trail, Odra River – cultural and natural traces along the Odra, Opole blooming for children, Visit Opole)
Thematic events organization	Planning events related to the history and heritage of Opole Silesia, such as festivals, exhibitions, workshops, or concerts, can capture the interest of tourists seeking unique experiences
Collaboration with local media	Collaborating with local radio stations, TV channels, and newspapers can help promote sentimental attractions among local residents and a broader audience
Partnerships and collaborations	Partnering with local businesses, restaurants, accommodations, and attractions can create comprehensive packages for sentimental tourists. Packages that include various cultural heritage-related activities can attract more attention
Virtual tours and multimedia	Developing virtual tours, interactive maps, and multimedia presentations that narrate stories and showcase sentimental attractions in an engaging manner can intrigue online tourists
Loyalty programs	Designing loyalty programs or discount cards for tourists that offer discounts and additional benefits during visits to sentimental places
Guides and thematic maps	Creating guides or thematic maps featuring descriptions of sentimental places and suggested travel routes across Opole Silesia
Collaboration with travel agencies	Establishing partnerships with travel agencies can aid in promoting sentimental tourism through vacation packages

Source: own study.

that combine the cultural assets of the German minority with broader community interests. Together, the integration of craftsmanship and the German minority's heritage offers a multidimensional, emotionally resonant tourism experience, reinforcing the region's identity and appeal. There are also certain limitations in this study, including the focus on a small number of conducted interviews. It's valuable to compare our results with responses from a more diverse group of artisans, particularly considering the division into artisan groups and the ethnic affiliation declarations of artisans. Additionally, expanding the questions related to craftsmanship as a regional tourist attraction, especially concerning the components of experienced sentiment or nostalgia, as well as evolving or emerging new sentiments and needs that craftsmanship could fulfil, would be worthwhile.

Based on the conducted analyses, two dominant problems can be identified. The first concerns the fact that sentimental tourism in Opole Silesia is becoming less significant. The second problem arises from generational shifts and pertains to the lack of interest in this form of tourism among the younger generation. Therefore, it is worth considering what could be done to counteract this trend. Harnessing craftsmanship as a promotional instrument for fostering sentimental tourism in the region appears to be a viable concept, in addition to establishing partnerships with organizations representing the German minority. Establishing partnerships with local craftsmen and organizations representing the cultural heritage of the region, including the German minority, can contribute to more effective promotion of sentimental tourism in the Opole Silesia area.

Notes/Przypisy

[1] This number of interviews was conducted in the qualitative research published in the report *Things and People. The identity of Polish crafts* (*Rzeczy i ludzie. Tożsamość polskiego rzemiosła*) with craftsmen representing traditional crafts.

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