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## A TOWN OVERSHADOWED BY A MUSEUM: PROBLEMS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN OŚWIĘCIM

**Abstract:** The article presents issues of tourism development in Oświęcim – a town that remains in the shadow of the former genocide site of Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp. The authors' aim is to present the results of research on the image of the town, as well as activities leading to a change of the unfavourable image of Oświęcim: "a town overshadowed by a museum". They are included in "The Strategy for Tourism Development in Oświęcim, 2018-2030", developed with the support of the authors of this article. The paper also presents an analysis of tourism development and tourist assets with respect to using them to create a supplementary offer for tourists visiting the *Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum*.

**Keywords:** Oświęcim, *Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum*, image, strategy.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Oświęcim is the most important settlement in Western Małopolska, with an 800-year-old history and a thriving chemical industry. It performs the function of an economic centre, but is mainly associated with the former Nazi concentration camp, currently open to the public as the *Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum* (Folga, 2011, pp. 195-201). The town has significant historical and cultural tourism resources including renovated historical monuments and recreation areas on the Soła River. An important advantage is its location on the border of Silesia (the largest Polish agglomeration) and Kraków, while also being near the airports in Balice and Pyrzowice as well the A4 motorway. Within a close distance from Oświęcim are the largest amusement parks in Poland at Zator and Inwałd.

The town of Oświęcim does not take full advantage of these assets; tourists limit their activity to visiting the *Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum*, without using local accommodation or gastronomic facilities

(Ziarnicka-Wojtaszek, Bednarczyk, 2013). Incoming tourism is of little economic importance to a town overshadowed by a museum. It is not a rare situation, however, as can be observed in Wieliczka, outshone by its salt mine, or in Malbork, dominated by its castle. Oświęcim, nevertheless, is one of the most recognizable places in the world. However, the fact that an enormous number of tourists visit the Museum does not mean that other products offered by the town are not visited, just that they are not well integrated or properly combined.

The predominant form of tourism in Oświęcim is 'thanatotourism' or 'dark' tourism (Seaton, 1966; Tanaś, 2013) and the behaviour of people visiting the *Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum* has been presented in a work entitled *Turystyka martyrologiczna w Polsce* (Berbeca, 2012). We should also mention publications discussing the problems of delimiting the zones of tourist activity in Oświęcim (Ziarnicka-Wojtaszek, Bednarczyk,

2013), as well as the images of places particularly affected by history (Folga, 2011).

The authors' aim is to present the results of research on the image of Oświęcim, as well as those activities leading to a change in its unfavourable image: "a town overshadowed by a museum". They are included in "The Strategy for Tourism Development in Oświęcim: 2018-2030", developed with the support of the authors of this article. The paper also presents an analysis of tourism development and tourist assets with respect to using them to create a supplementary offer for those visiting the museum. The authors point to a significant dilemma: Is the museum a flagship tourist attraction or just a commemoration site?

The work is based on desk research including a review of available literature, the inventorying of tourist resources and analysing the results of surveys conducted by the authors as a part of their work on the strategy of tourism development in Oświęcim for 2018-2030.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. TOURIST ASSETS AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AT OŚWIĘCIM

Oświęcim lies in the middle of the Oświęcim basin between the Carpathian Foothills and the Silesian Uplands. It is cut by the River Soła, a tributary of the Vistula. The town covers an area of 30 km<sup>2</sup> and is populated by 40,000 inhabitants.

The town is over 800 years old and its history is connected with the history of Silesia, Małopolska and the Bohemian Crown. It was the capital of the Duchy of Oświęcim, and after being annexed to the Polish Crown, a seat of the royal *starosta*. In 1939, Oświęcim was incorporated into the Third Reich and the largest Nazi concentration camp (KL) was established there. It has been placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List under the official name of *Auschwitz-Birkenau: German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945)* (see UNESCO).

KL Auschwitz Birkenau has become a symbol of terror and genocide. It was set up by the Nazis in 1940 on the outskirts of Oświęcim which had then been incorporated into the Third Reich. Originally intended for the large numbers of arrested Poles, with time it also became a centre for the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews inhabiting those areas occupied by Germany. All the camps and sub-camps were isolated from the outside world and surrounded with barbed wire fencing. The area, administered by a camp commander and controlled by SS members from the KL Auschwitz group, covered 40 km<sup>2</sup>. The local population – Poles and Jews living in the neighbourhood – were resettled. The camps and sub-camps were where about 1.5 mil-

lion people, mostly Jews, Poles, Gypsies and Soviet war prisoners lost their lives (Piper, 2010, pp. 184-188).

The words 'Oświęcim' and 'Auschwitz' are for many present (and future) generations symbols of the most atrocious genocide and crime in the history of mankind. Foreign tourists visiting the museum often do not realize that there is a town called Oświęcim nearby (Bebeka, 2012, p. 21).

Contemporary Oświęcim is a town with an interesting history documented by historical monuments, such as the Piast dynasty castle on the Soła River, currently accommodating the Castle Museum. It was opened on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010, but is not popular with foreigners – 90% of the visitors are Polish tourists. Interesting historical monuments incorporated within the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century urban layout include a Salesian church and chapel complex. Other interesting sites include the Roman Catholic cemetery, situated near the Serafite sisters' nunnery, a 'Wedding Palace' from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as *Dom Śleberski* situated on the central marketplace. We should also mention the Jewish Museum, commemorating the history of the Jewish community, as well as the *Chewra Lomdei Misznajot* Synagogue which is open for tourists. Before the outbreak of World War II, Jews constituted the majority of Oświęcim's population building a rich and varied culture. Therefore, in September 2000, a Jewish Centre was established whose aim is to cultivate the memory of Jews as inhabitants of the town, as well as to educate future generations about the danger of a lack of understanding and intolerance (see Auschwitz Jewish Center). According to Oświęcim Town Hall, the Jewish Centre is visited by about 35,000 people every year.

Today, Oświęcim wants to be a place for breaking barriers, and for reflection and dialogue, so congress tourism is developing, organized by the Kraków Centre for Information, Meeting, Dialogue, Education and Prayer, and the International Youth Meeting Centre set up in 1994.

A tool used for the purpose of creating a positive image are organized events as they are very important for a town which evokes negative associations (Folga, 2011). The most significant include the International Festival of Amateur Films and Photography Biennale: *Kochać człowieka* (For the love of humanity), the International Folklore Festival: *Darujmy światu pokój* (Let's give peace to the world), as well as the *Children's Peace Initiatives*. We must also mention *Life Festival Oświęcim* – an annual event featuring concerts, exhibitions and open-air cinema shows (see Tauron Life Festival Oświęcim). Oświęcim does not have any natural assets which might generate tourism (Ziarnicka-Wojtaszek, Bednarczyk, 2013), but the Soła boulevards are a perfect place for recreation. In nearby places, we can find fish ponds and rare plant habitats (which might have an influence

on the development of tourism in the town), the landscape reserves of *Żaki* and *Lipowiec*, and the Tenczynek Landscape Park.

In order for tourism to develop, it is necessary to create an appropriate tourism infrastructure. According to data provided by the Tourism Information Centre for 2018, the tourism infrastructure in Oświęcim consists of 29 accommodation facilities, one 4-star hotel (*Hampton by Hilton*), three 3-star hotels as well as other facilities offering the total of 1272 beds. Two facilities – the *Olecki* Hotel and the Dialogue and Prayer Centre (together with a camp site) – are located close to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial. The *Hampton by Hilton* and the guest rooms at the *Bosko* Salesian Mission are located in the centre of Oświęcim, and the *Olimpijski* and *Galicja* Hotels in its eastern part.

Gastronomic services are also crucial to fulfil the needs of visitors to the town. The Oświęcim Tourism Information Centre enumerates 24 restaurants, 7 fast food facilities, 3 canteens and 5 cafés/patisseries. The gastronomic facilities are distributed all over the town but most of them can be found in the centre close to the Memorial, the railway station and bus terminal (Ziarnicka-Wojtaszek, Bednarczyk, 2013). Gastronomic services are also offered by the International Youth Meeting Centre and the Dialogue and Prayer Centre.

In conclusion, it should be said that cultural assets predominate but they have not been used for the purpose of creating an attractive tourist product that might 'compete' with the *Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum*. The accommodation and catering facilities provide only a partial service for museum visitors who arrive for half-day visits and do not stay overnight. Moreover, the public transport in the town, which could be used by individual tourists, is inadequate.

### 3. THE AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM: A FLAGSHIP TOURIST ATTRACTION FOR MAŁOPOLSKA OR A COMMEMORATION SITE?

Oświęcim is a unique tourist reception destination, dominated by the disturbing background (Banaszkiewicz, 2018, p. 53) created by the former German concentration camp: KL Auschwitz-Birkenau. It is currently a 'dark' tourism site (Berbeka, 2012), representing the *Dark Camps of Genocide*, commonly regarded as symbols of evil and telling a terrifying story about human suffering (Komsta, 2013, p. 54; Niemela, 2010, pp. 13-14; Stone, 2006).

As early as 1947, at the place of the former KL Auschwitz-Birkenau, a museum was created which has been functioning until today as the *Auschwitz-*

*Birkenau State Memorial and Museum* (the official name since 1999). It is not only a vast area with historical camp buildings as its resources include tens of thousands of camp prisoners' belongings, which represent the exceptional character, expression and symbolism of the site. The entrance gate, with the words *Arbeit Macht Frei* over it, is the first and at the same time probably the most recognizable museum exhibit.

The main exhibition has not been changed since 1995, but an idea for a new exhibition has appeared, called "Memory – Awareness – Responsibility", which will enlarge the capacity of the museum. One person who has made a substantial contribution to the changes started 12 years ago by the present museum director, is Professor Władysław Bartoszewski – an authority on the Polish-Jewish relations, but also a former prisoner of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the new exhibition, the museum exhibits will be presented on the ground floor of the former camp's blockhouses. Modern technological media and the latest research findings will be used, and the individual experiences of both victims and the torturers will be presented (Bartyzel, Sawicki, 2016). A new visitor centre will be erected including a parking lot, hotel and an underground passage. There are plans to adapt the Old Theatre to the needs of the International Centre for Education on Auschwitz and the Holocaust. The transport infrastructure and the appearance of the Museum's surroundings will also be improved. The new exhibition will be gradually included into the visitor's trail starting from 2021, and the whole venture will have been completed by 2025.

The *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum* has the highest visitor rate among museums in Poland. This success is owed to two key elements: the preservation of its cognitive, academic and historical value while maintaining maximum authenticity, as well as the ability to attract the maximum number of visitors. In the case of this particular museum, it is quite a challenge. Due to the origins and unique character, marketing activities aimed at increasing the number of visitors are not conducted. Advertising in the media is also not appropriate for a place representing such a difficult theme. Despite that, since 2007, the number of visitors has exceeded one million every year, and in 2017 it reached 2.1 million (Fig. 1). To compare, the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków was visited by 1,199,000 people during the record year of 2017, and this was achieved due to the large number and diversity of the museum's departments, as well as the establishment of a special unit to deal with marketing and promotion.

The highest turnout at the museum is in August when the museum is visited by nearly 250,000 people, while the lowest is in January, with only 76,000 visitors (Fig. 2).

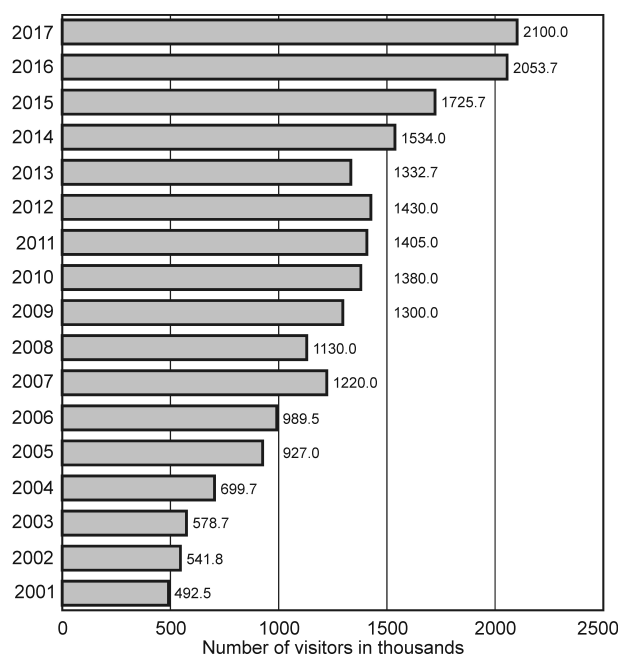


Fig. 1. Comparison of visitor numbers at the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum: 2001-2017*  
Source: *Memorial Auschwitz Birkenau. Miejsce Pamięci* (2017, p. 25)

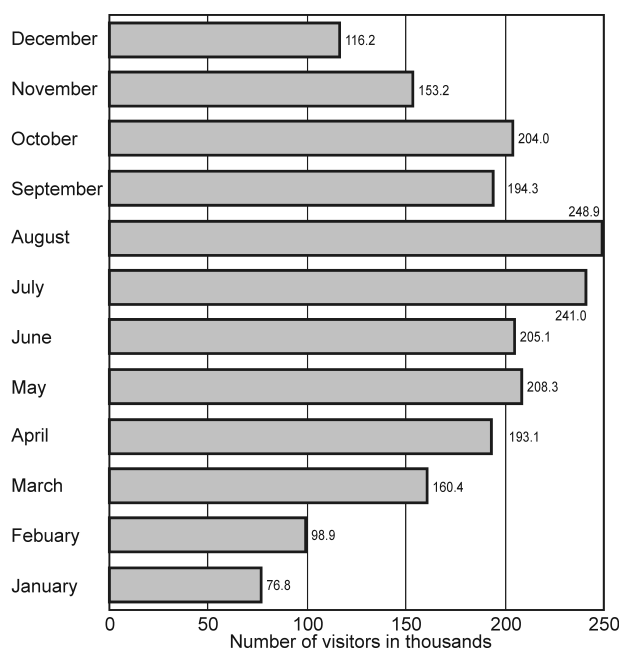


Fig. 2. Visitors to the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum in 2017: by month*  
Source: *Memorial Auschwitz Birkenau. Miejsce Pamięci* (2017, p. 25)

The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum attracts an international audience but for the obvious reason of proximity, the largest group consists of Poles (23% of all visitors) (Table 1). The museum is visited primarily by tourists from Great Britain (16.1%), the USA (8.7%), Italy, Germany, Israel, Spain, as well as France

and the Czech Republic. The top ten also includes Sweden.

The majority (two thirds) of the visitors are young people, which is very often made possible due to special grants established by governments, regions or non-profit organizations which see the value of such education on the way to adulthood. Half of the visitors (from 111 countries) arrive at the museum in organized groups. They are taken around the former Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau by 320 guides and nearly all visitors have an opportunity to see both parts of the former camp. Auschwitz I includes exhibitions presenting all the camp's functions and periods of activity. Birkenau, on the other hand, strikes with its vastness and the authenticity of the preserved spaces.

Table 1. Visitors to the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum in 2017: by country*

	Country	No. of visitors	%
1	Poland	483 300	23.0
2	Great Britain	339 400	16.1
3	United States	183 300	8.7
4	Italy	115 400	5.5
5	Spain	101 200	4.8
6	Germany	85 300	4.1
7	Israel	83 100	4.0
8	France	74 700	3.6
9	Czech Republic	53 100	2.5
10	Sweden	44 700	2.1
11	Slovakia	41 600	1.9
12	Ireland	40 400	1.8
13	The Netherlands	39 200	1.8
14	Norway	32 100	1.5
15	Australia	29 300	1.4
16	Hungary	28 900	1.4
17	Japan	28 000	1.4
18	Canada	21 800	1.0
19	Belgium	21 700	1.0
20	South Korea	16 300	0.8

Source: author, based on *Memorial Auschwitz Birkenau. Miejsce Pamięci* (2017, p. 25).

After considering the opinions of experts, the visitor trail at Birkenau now starts from the place where the trains brought Jews from all over Europe. Next, visitors are led along the railway line to the remains of the gas chambers and crematoria and to the International Memorial to the Camp Victims. The visit to Birkenau ends with a presentation of the history of this part of the concentration camp and a visit to the prisoners' blockhouses.

The results of a study on tourism in Kraków indicate a relationship between the tourists arriving in there and

those visiting Oświęcim. The Pearson coefficient of linear correlation between the number of tourists in Kraków and the number of visitors to the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum* equals 0.85. This signifies a strong correlation between tourist numbers in Kraków and the museum. The growth of in-coming tourism in Kraków has a positive influence not only on the city itself, but also on visitor rates at the museum (Seweryn, 2012).

Research conducted among visitors to the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum* shows a lowering of standards and nearly 39% of the visitors pointed out that the 'psychological carrying capacity' was exceeded. It is a sign for the museum management to possibly limit the number of visitors by means of administrative or economic tools.

The KL Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp established by the Nazis during World War II has given Oświęcim a recognizable image and the town usually brings these specific associations to mind (Folga, 2011). The camp occupies one of the top positions among the most visited Polish tourist attractions, despite the controversy of naming it a tourist attraction. The museum meets the criteria of being a tourist attraction however (Kruczek, 2011), as it is a very wide term. According to Davidson (1996), "every natural asset (object), human creation, a device or an event, which attracts visitors to a given place, can be a tourist attraction".

The planning and development of tourism destinations largely depends on the diversity of the status and significance of tourist attractions. The literature identifies flagship attractions and icons with the former being understood as 'the best and the most important' (Leask, Fyall, 2006). Their characteristic features include uniqueness, international significance, large size and substantial economic effects. 'Icons', on the other hand, are sites considered to be representative symbols of culture; authentic sites, commonly accepted symbols, and perceived as such both by tourists and the local community (Jenkins, 2003).

In the light of the definitions quoted above, the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum* should be regarded primarily as an 'icon', although the visitor rate and the international significance are attributes of a flagship attraction (Kruczek, 2017, p. 53).

#### 4. "A TOWN OVERSHADOWED BY A MUSEUM":

##### THE IMAGE OF OŚWIĘCIM FROM A SURVEY

An image is most often defined as a simplified picture, a total of imagined concepts, experiences, impressions and thoughts, functioning in the awareness and minds

of people who have direct and indirect contact with a given site (Nawrocka, 2013; Niezgodna, 2017). Szromnik (2007) points to the positive role of information and defines the town image as "the total of the subjective ideas of the reality, which was formed in the minds of people, as an effect of perception, the impact of the media and informally conveyed information". Studying the image is a necessary element in the evaluation of the destination, especially for the implementation of a marketing strategy which will not be adequate without knowing the market, the consumers, or the attitudes of local communities and institutions (Kruczek, Walas, 2010, p. 157).

The image is examined mainly in the context of tourist reception area attributes which include both natural and cultural elements, tourism material resources, aesthetics, entertainment, the inhabitants' attitudes and the local atmosphere, infrastructural amenities and tourist services (Nawrocka, 2013; Niezgodna, 2017). These attributes have an influence on the quality and standard of services, but shaping the image is more complicated because the most significant are emotional elements, impressions and experiences (Niezgodna, 2017).

The image of Oświęcim was studied by means of a diagnostic survey using the CATI technique<sup>2</sup> in May 2017, on a sample of 400 respondents. The questions referred to tourist behaviour and preferences, as well as their associations forming an image of the town. It was a representative study, conducted on a sample of domestic tourists from all over Poland, some of them visiting Oświęcim and some others declaring their willingness to visit it. The majority were aged over 65 (20.0%), followed by respondents aged 45-54 (18.3%), 25-34 (18%), 55-64 (17.5%), 35-44 (14.8%) and 18-24 (11.5%).

41% of the respondents had completed higher education, 38% - secondary, 30% - elementary; 10% - basic vocational and 7% - post-graduate education. 13.8% of them came from Masovia Province, 13% Podkarpackie, 12.3% Silesia, 10.8% Małopolska, and 6.3% came from each of Silesia, Wielkopolska and West-Pomerania Provinces.

The respondents associate Oświęcim mostly with the former KL Auschwitz-Birkenau (99.5% of the 400 survey participants), followed by the Jewish Centre in Oświęcim (17.8%), the historical marketplace (11.5%) and Oświęcim Castle (5.8%). The answers to this question do not sum to 100% as respondents could choose more than one answer (Fig. 3).

30% of the 400 respondents (120) had visited Oświęcim before (2.35 times, on average). The profile of a tourist who had been to Oświęcim earlier shows the dominance of three provinces: Silesia (19%), Masovia (16%) and Małopolskie (12%). Most of the visitors were inhabitants of urban centres of 20-50 000 people (25%), aged 65+ (25.8%) and 55-64 (22.5%); with the

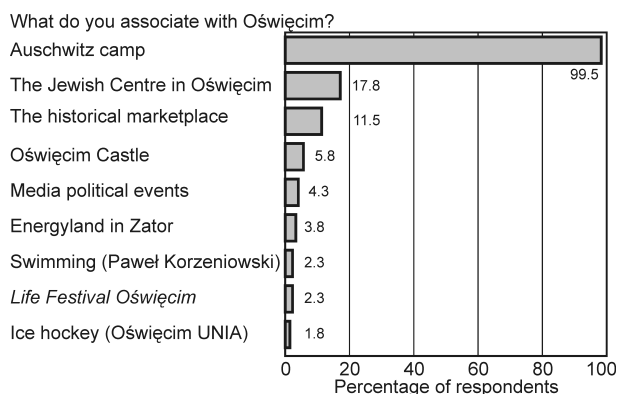


Fig. 3. Respondents' associations with Oświęcim: N=400  
Source: author

lowest being young people, aged 18-24 (10%). They were well educated (40% declared university education) and 'in a lasting relationship' (53.3%).

As many as 89.2% of the sample indicated visiting the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum* as their main purpose, 12.5% were in transit, and 11% were visiting friends or family. For 6.7%, the aim involved work or business, and the same number of respondents indicated visiting this part of Poland as their aim (Fig. 4).

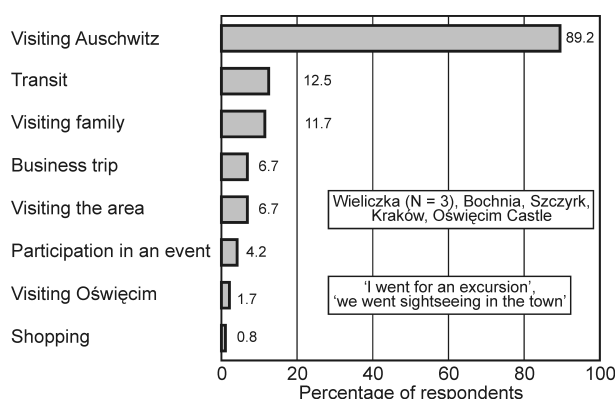


Fig. 4. Motivations for visiting Oświęcim reported by respondents, n=120  
Source: author

A statistical respondent usually stayed in Oświęcim for a few hours (30%). Only one in five (25) stayed there for longer than one day. In this group, 60% stayed at their family's or friends' house, and 24% at a hotel or guesthouse.

The tourist assets of Oświęcim listed by the respondents included the following: the former KL Auschwitz-Birkenau (97%), the proximity of the Beskidy Mountains (39%), the historical character of the town (22.4%) and the location at the border between Silesia and Małopolska Provinces (11.3%) (Fig. 5).

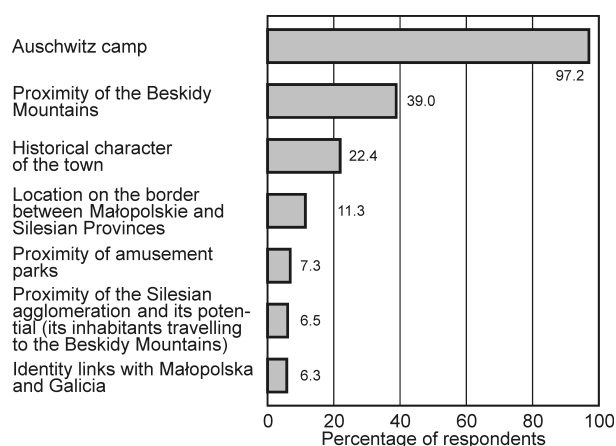


Fig. 5. The tourism assets of the town of Oświęcim indicated by the respondents, n=400  
Source: author

A total of 72% of the respondents would have decided to combine a visit to Oświęcim with other places (41% – rather yes and 31% – definitely yes), 19% had not decided (14% – rather not, 5% – definitely not), and 9% did not have an opinion. The respondents giving a positive answer (290) would have combined a visit to the museum with urban and cultural tourism involving sightseeing in Oświęcim and the surrounding area (84.5%), participating in a cultural event (34.1%), active tourism (25.9%), as well as sports tourism and recreation.

The research indicates that the thesis put forward in the title ("A town overshadowed by a museum") has been confirmed. The first association with the name of the town is in almost 100% of cases connected with KL Auschwitz-Birkenau. The main motivation to visit Oświęcim, quoted by 90% of the respondents, is to visit the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum*; the respondents stress that the main tourist asset of the town is the former KL Auschwitz-Birkenau.

## 5. THE MAIN ASSUMPTIONS OF THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR OŚWIĘCIM

The Tourism Development Strategy in Oświęcim for 2018-2030, developed in cooperation with the authors of this article (*Strategia rozwoju...*, 2018), includes strengthening the position of tourism and creating a new image for the town. A mission has been established, which assumes that:

Oświęcim is an important town on the international arena, which is a significant centre for implementing ideas of peace. It has modern infrastructure and tour-

ism industry, as well as a potential to organize exceptional events, taking into account the needs of the inhabitants.

The tourist mission of Oświęcim is:

to develop cultural and educational tourism, based on the peace message sent out by the town due to its historical heritage, as well as to ensure exchange of experiences, inspiring reflection and imparting knowledge about human rights, tolerance and respect.

The tourism strategy recommended for Oświęcim is a strategy of expansion, based on the advantages of strengths in 'inner potential' and of opportunities in the external environment. With this type of strategy, the town should maximally focus on using its assets and favourable conditions for development. In the case of Oświęcim, the key strategic advantages include the idea of a 'Town of Peace', the Polish-Jewish tradition and the history of Holocaust, peace and human rights initiatives, active cultural and educational institutions, supporting the town in the domain of peace education, the international character of the town, as well as the constantly growing number of tourists visiting the museum.

The development of the museum and the tourist offer related to it, are key elements of the long-term development goals (Fig. 6). They concern tourism infrastructure, tourist products, promotion, as well as cooperation for the benefit of tourism development. There are a number of important investments including the construction of a new Visitor Centre, adjusting the Old Theatre to the needs of the *International Auschwitz and Holocaust Education Centre*, as well as developing and modernizing the transport infrastructure.

Integrating tourism infrastructure with the character of the town and the museum will be the priority. The infrastructure serving the purpose of peace education

will be developed, enlarged, modernized and supported with additional elements of tourism infrastructure. It will also be important to raise the standard of the para-tourist infrastructure facilities (streets, car parks, site infrastructure) used by both tourists and inhabitants.

The main tourist product proposed in the Tourism Development Strategy is "Oświęcim – the Town of Peace". It will be supplemented, however, with a set of complementary products which will not only support the offer based on the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum*, but will also become separate offers for different segments of the tourism market. These products will be primarily based on those parts of the town's tourist potential which have not been fully used so far. New tourist products will also make the tourists visiting the memorial and museum more interested in the town itself. New tourists will be attracted to Oświęcim and the inhabitants of Silesia travelling to the Beskidy or Tatra Mountains will be willing to stop off there more frequently and for longer.

Implementing the strategy requires the cooperation of all the stakeholders, above all the management of the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum* and the town authorities, as well as a stronger involvement in the implementation of the strategy on the part of the tourism sector and cultural institutions.

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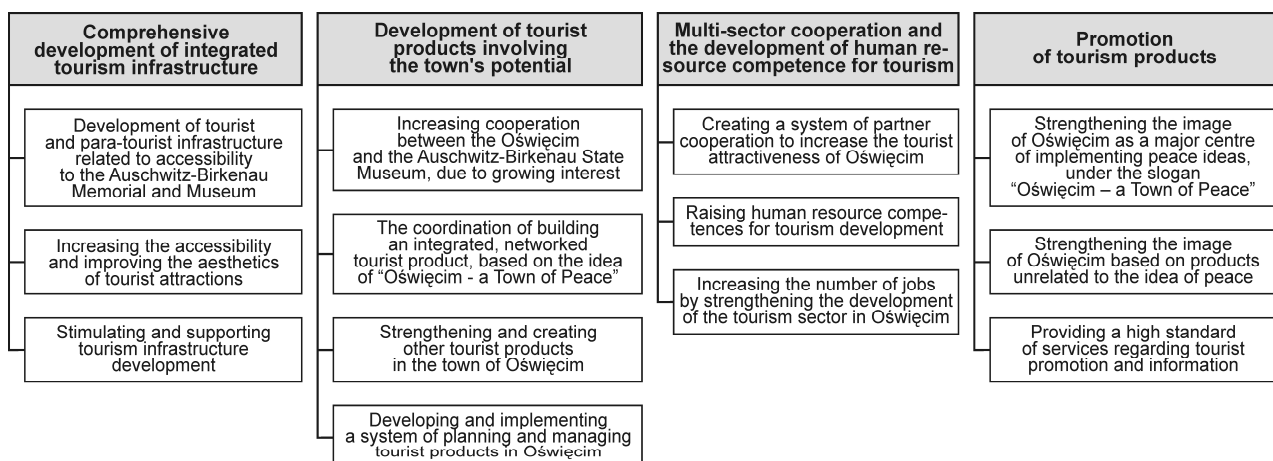


Fig. 6. The strategic aims of tourism development in Oświęcim

Source: author

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## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Tourism in Oświęcim is above all related to the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum*, which is the main zone of tourist penetration. As demonstrated by the study, tourists very rarely visit the Old Town and its historical monuments. The town has tourist assets to offer, but due to the fact that it is dominated by the former Nazi concentration camp, other human assets are underrated.

Both in Poland and globally, Oświęcim is perceived from the perspective of the museum, the tragic site related to mass extermination. It is not a favourable image for a developing town. We can even risk saying that Oświęcim is "a town overshadowed by a museum". It can be assumed that a town so strongly connected with the Holocaust will always be stigmatized by the past. The authorities of Oświęcim are responsible for creating a place of human understanding, tolerance among nations, cultural dialogue, respect for other cultures, races, attitudes and nationalities. Through education, dialogue, understanding of the site of the gravest genocide but thanks to other human and natural assets, Oświęcim can be remembered as the 'Town of Peace'. This is one of the goals set in the tourism development strategy for 2018-2030.

The vision proposed in this document for local authorities assumes sustainable development, a major issue in contemporary times. The town and its surroundings are to serve tourists by offering them a wide range of tourist products other than the museum by creating appropriate conditions for recreation. The main theme will still be the memorial and museum, but other forms of cultural tourism, related to the rich heritage of the town and its vicinity should also develop, including entertainment tourism (the largest amusement parks in Poland are at Inwald and Zator) (*Strategia*, 2018).

The particular character of the tourism structure highlights the problem of the short-term tourist stay in Oświęcim. The development potential lies in the scale of tourism, but also in the certainty that tourists will continue to visit the site in such great

numbers. The town should be seen as one related not only to thanatourism, but also to other forms such as culture, sport or congress. In order to achieve this goal, the town authorities must do their best to encourage tourists to prolong their stay and take advantage of the interesting and varied offer. The rich cultural offer of Oświęcim, including a wide range of cultural events based on the town's medieval history and modern times, invites tourists to discover it from a different perspective and not only as a place where the Nazis committed the crime of genocide during World War II. All the actions should result in changing the town's image and pull it out from the 'shadow' of the *Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum*.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> A report by 2BA – Strategic Consulting from Nysa and IPC Research Institute in Wrocław, prepared by a team of authors: Agnieszka Nowak, Leszek Nowak, Zygmunt Kruczek and Artur Kotliński, UM Oświęcim 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing.

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