Who Could Afford to Buy a Guidebook? Socioeconomic Determinants of the Development of Tourism in the Polish Lands in the 19th Century

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Abstract:

Purpose: The aim of the paper is to characterize Polish tourist guidebooks of the 19th century in terms of their accessibility for the readers of the time. Major barriers to accessing this type of literature were identified, including the poor state of education, lack of financial resources to travel, and the high prices of guidebooks (especially those published in the first half of the century).

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research methodology is based on the analysis of sources from the period discussed, especially the guidebooks and journals containing information about them. The research findings were confronted with the scientific literature on tourism development and guidebook publications from this period.

Findings: The research has shown that a great number of Polish tourist guidebooks were written in the 19th century despite the fact that the country was then divided into partitions. Most of the analyzed publications concerned cities, but there were also guidebooks to specific monuments, health resorts, and mountains. The readers of the guidebooks were primarily educated people with at least an average standard of living, who had a regular income that allowed them to travel and purchase books. The prices of the oldest guidebooks were high, but over time, these publications became relatively much cheaper.

Practical implications: The study may have an impact on the development of academic research on the economic aspects of tourism in the 19th century. The findings may also serve the creators of contemporary guidebooks, indicating the desired features of these publications from the tourists’ point of view.

Originality/Value: The paper broadens the knowledge on socioeconomic aspects of the functioning of Polish guidebooks in the 19th century and presents these issues in the broader context of European guidebook literature of the period.

Keywords: Socioeconomic history, tourism, tourist guidebooks, 19th century.

JEL classification: N93, Z13, Z30, Z32.

Paper type: Research study.

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1. Introduction

A travel guidebook is sometimes defined as “a book designed to help travelers” (Cuddon, 1993). The genre is highly eclectic by nature and may include such elements as travel reports, maps, geographical findings, information about historical sites, lists of restaurants, hotels, and other useful addresses (Koshar, 1998). Guidebooks were already known in antiquity, and the earliest surviving example is the Pausanias’ Helládos Periēgēsis (Description of Greece) from the 2nd century AD (Freitag, 1996). In the Middle Ages and the modern era, travel accounts and guidebooks were created for pilgrims visiting the Holy Land, Rome, or Santiago de Compostela (Parsons, 2007). Further development of the guidebooks was related to a very important cultural phenomenon of educational journeys of noble and aristocratic youth, called Grand Tour. Participants of these journeys, developing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, went to foreign universities, especially French and Italian, but sometimes Flanders, the Netherlands, and the countries of the German Reich were also visited (Sweet, 2012). Grand Tour created a demand for literature for travelers, not only guidebooks but also various types of handbooks and manuals (Ziarkowski, 2021).

However, guidebook publications did not begin to appear on a larger scale until the 19th century, which was caused by the unprecedented growth of tourism that occurred in that century. At that time, guidebooks with a modern structure began to be created, with suggestions of sightseeing routes, and much practical information, which was a kind of novelty compared to previous publications of this type (Zuelow, 2016). During this period, Poland did not have its statehood, as its territory was divided by the three invaders (Prussia, Austria, and Russia) at the end of the 18th century. Nevertheless, a great number of Polish guidebooks were written during the analyzed period, and some of their authors adapted solutions developed in foreign publications (Ziarkowski, 2019).

Old travel guidebooks are often the subject of historical, literary, and cultural research. Among the most important studies is a comprehensive synthesis of the historical development of guidebooks by Nicholas T. Parsons (2007). Other authors have undertaken the characterization of guidebooks for selected cities, especially Rome (Boudard, 2002; Caldana, 2003; Pazienti, 2013) and London (Dobraszczyk, 2012). In addition to previously published biographies of guidebooks published by Baedeker (Hinrichsen, 1991) and Murray (Lister, 1993), there were also more detailed studies on books „manufactured” by these publishers (Palmowski, 2002; Bruce, 2010; Goodwin, 2013). A historical study of Polish guidebooks published until 1914 was prepared by Dariusz Opaliński (2012).

Rarely, however, does research on guidebooks draws attention to the fact that these publications can be excellent sources for the reconstruction of the economic aspects of tourism development. This is particularly true of nineteenth-century publications, which usually contain information on, among other things, the prices of means of
transport, and accommodation and catering services in the areas covered in the book. Knowledge of the prices of old guidebooks confronted with the earnings of representatives of various professions helps identify the social groups that could afford to buy these publications and participate in tourism.

The present paper aims to characterize Polish tourist guidebooks of the nineteenth century and to present their readers, taking into account the socioeconomic conditions of tourism development in that period. First, the development of guidebook literature in Europe will be presented, followed by a discussion of Polish guidebooks of the time. Finally, an analysis of the changing prices of these publications and identification of other barriers to their availability will be presented.

The research was conducted using available sources of the time (primarily the guidebooks themselves, but also the press) and scientific literature on old guidebooks. The achievements of the linguistic turn, which focuses on linguistic issues (Rothy, 1967; Nakoneczny, 2013) were helpful in textual research. A comparative method was also used to compare similar phenomena occurring at the same time (Wellek, 1979; Griffiths, 2018). This method was used to identify similarities and differences between the guidebooks studied, including their subject matter, purpose, and prices. The conclusions of the study should extend the knowledge of the development of tourism and guidebook literature in the 19th century and encourage similar research with regard to guidebooks published in other countries.

2. Development of Tourism and Guidebook Literature in the 19th Century

The 19th century saw an unprecedented growth of tourism in Europe, made possible primarily by profound economic changes. The Industrial Revolution, which began in England as early as in the second half of the 18th century, and then spread to other countries, creating new conditions for the development of traveling. Not only the representatives of the formerly privileged social classes (nobility and aristocracy), but also merchants, financiers, small businessmen, and later also the employees of the then-emerging companies and corporations could afford tourism. A strong factor in the quantitative growth of tourism was also the dynamic growth of the urban population, who needed holiday trips (Kulczycki, 1982).

Many European countries, such as France, Prussia, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Switzerland, realized that tourism could be an important source of income, so they tried to attract foreign tourists by removing passport and visa restrictions. Paid leave also emerged, initially for civil servants and later for other professional groups (Stegner, 2015).

The real revolution in travel was marked by the invention of the railroad. The first passenger railroad was built in England in 1830, but it was not long before “iron roads” began to be built in other European countries and the United States. Steam
trains offered travel much cheaper than traditional stagecoaches and were faster and more comfortable. For example, an overland trip from Paris to St. Petersburg in 1800 (i.e., before the railroad era) took as long as 25 days, whereas in 1900, it took only 36 hours (Stegner, 2015; Zuelow, 2016). The expanding rail network was used by the first travel agencies. The oldest agency was founded in 1841 in England by Thomas Cook (Hamilton, 2005).

The above-mentioned phenomena were also noticeable in the Polish lands, although often to a lesser degree, which was influenced by the difficult political situation. The division of the country into partitions made it difficult to cross the borders between them. The economic development was not as dynamic as in the most developed European countries, and the railway network was not very dense. The situation was relatively best in the Prussian partition and worst in the Kingdom of Poland (Russian partition). Another significant problem was that railway routes connected the Polish lands primarily with the partitioned countries, and there were very few connections between the partitions (Stegner, 2015). The policy of the invaders also hindered the emergence of tourist and regionalist organizations that were active in other countries (Ziarkowski, 2020).

The significant increase in the number of tourist trips in the 19th century created a demand for useful guidebooks to help organize and make the trips. Gradually, more and more publications of this kind were written, stimulated by the improvements in the way books were made around 1830. Small format, lightweight, cloth-bound publications started to be produced, and the whole process has become much faster and cheaper than before (Bruce, 2010). The demand for guidebooks was so high that some publishing houses started to specialize in creating this kind of studies. Among them, two played the most important role: German Baedeker’s and English Murray’s publications (Palmowski, 2002). The first guidebook from the publishing house of Karl Baedeker, which was located in Koblenz, came out in 1828. This was a guidebook to the Rhine (Rheinreise von Mainz bis Köln) by Johann August Klein (Bruce, 2010). John Murray’s famous London publishing house began publishing guidebooks in 1836 (Parsons, 2007).

Murray’s and Baedeker’s guidebooks were aimed at the educated middle class and the bourgeoisie, facilitating travel arrangements and providing solid and well-researched information on everything that needed to be seen in the countries and cities visited. Over time, Baedeker’s publishing house gained the upper hand, and the word “bedeker” itself became synonymous with a travel guidebook (Palmowski, 2002). As if in the shadow of these two great publishers, other guidebooks were also created in Europe. They were published by, among others, Thomas Cook’s company, which specialized in creating concise publications focused primarily on practical information (Walton, 2010). Some of them were very popular. For example, in 1878, as many as 20,000 copies of a guidebook written for the great world exhibition in Paris were sold (Palmowski, 2002). Furthermore, guidebooks were also created for readers with higher expectations, especially those who wanted
to learn about art. Mountain and health resort guidebooks can be enumerated as separate categories (Ziarkowski, 2018).

3. Polish Guidebooks of the 19th Century

Polish 19th-century guidebooks began to appear from the beginning of the third decade. At first, they were not very numerous, but with time, more and more of them were created. The publishing activity in the field of the discussed books intensified in the last quarter of the century, especially in its last decade. In total, up to and including 1900, as many as 174 Polish guides had been published (Ziarkowski, 2021). The growth dynamics for the publications studied by decade, taking into account the typological diversity of the guidebooks, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number and division of Polish guidebooks published in the 19th century by type and decade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>To Poland</th>
<th>Regional</th>
<th>To cities</th>
<th>To health resorts</th>
<th>To monuments, museums, and exhibitions</th>
<th>To foreign countries</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1821-1830</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831-1840</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841-1850</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851-1860</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861-1870</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871-1880</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-1890</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-1900</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s own elaboration.

Definitely, most guidebooks were devoted to cities, among which Kraków was the most often described, followed by Warsaw, Lviv, Vilnius, and Poznań. Furthermore, guidebooks to smaller towns (especially health resorts), specific regions (mostly mountainous), and specific objects, especially monuments, also begun to be created. Polish guidebooks to foreign countries constitute a separate category. These included selected European countries and cities such as Paris, Rome, Vienna, and Prague (Ziarkowski, 2021).

However, the division of Poland into partitions effectively hindered the creation of guidebooks of national range (within its pre-partition borders). In the 19th century, only one attempt of this kind was made successfully, and it came in the form of Józef Wawrzyncz Krasiński’s Przewodnik dla podróżujących w Polsce i Rzeczypospolitej Krakowskiej (Guidebook to Travellers in Poland and the Republic of Cracow) Interestingly, this publication was first published in French in 1820, and only a year later in Polish (Opaliński, 2002).
It is worth noting that the Polish guidebooks of the 19th century co-created the European trend in guidebook writing by adapting many solutions introduced in foreign books, e.g. those published by Baedeker and Murray. These influences were most noticeable in the formal characteristics of the publications (preference for small book formats, space-saving through small typeface) and in the overall layout with an introduction and practical information placed at the beginning and sometimes distinguished by separate Roman pagination. The partitioning of Poland was therefore not a barrier preventing the adaptation of European solutions in Polish guidebooks.

At the same time, however, the political situation influenced the specificity of domestic publications, manifesting itself in a strong emphasis on patriotic and religious content (often intertwined). Despite the censorship, efforts were made to emphasize the Polish nature of the areas and objects described, citing a lot of historical data as well as highlighting the national significance of specific places and monuments (Ziarkowski, 2019).

4. Readers of the Guidebooks and Barriers to their Use

Attempts to identify the audience of 19th-century guidebooks can be made using information often included in the titles of the publications studied, indicating their potential addressees. However, other aspects must also be taken into account, especially objective barriers, such as those related to the level of education and wealth of different social groups, as not everyone could afford tourist trips or even the purchase of a guidebook during the period under study.

The aforementioned diversification of guidebook literature that occurred in the 19th century also affected the diversification in terms of the readers. In the titles of the analyzed guidebooks, most frequent information was that they were addressed to “travelers” (Krasiński, 1821; Flasieński, 1851; Szalaj, 1857; Przewodnik dla podróżujących za granicę..., 1873; Łuszczkiewicz, 1875; Kleczkowski, 1882) and “visitors” (Skimborowicz, 1847; Turski, 1868; Zieliński, 1876; Polkowski, 1881; Dorszewski, 1886; Przewodnik dla zwiedzających zamek..., 1889). The titles of some of the health resort guidebooks were addressed to “the sick” (Dworski, 1881; Kołączkowski, 1883; Skórczewski, 1883; Głuchowski, 1888). There were also publications intended for specific tour groups (Przewodnik dla gości galicyjskich..., 1868; Przewodnik dla pielgrzymów..., 1877; Gretschel, 1883; Przewodnik do wycieczki..., 1887; Dunikowski, 1892) and for pilgrims (Lompa, 1860; Romanowski, 1893). As a kind of curiosity, one can mention two guidebooks addressed in their titles to “cyclists” (Poturaj, 1894; Hemerling, 1898).

The fact that the majority of Polish guidebooks published in the 19th century were intended by their authors for travelers or visitors shows that these publications served primarily as aids to travel. It can be assumed that early guidebooks to cities such as Krakow, Warsaw, or Lublin also sparked the interest of their inhabitants.
Later publications were almost exclusively oriented towards visitors, although it can be noted that even in the preface to a guidebook to Warsaw from 1893 (*Ilustrowany przewodnik po Warszawie...*, 1893), a hope was expressed that the publication would serve not only visitors but also Varsovians.

The statement that the majority of potential recipients of the guidebooks were tourists allows for a significant narrowing of the group of recipients of the publications studied. This is related to barriers to participation in tourism, such as lack of leisure time and the financial resources needed, which were still considerable, even despite the spread of a cheaper means of transportation, such as railway. Although the less affluent social strata such as workers and peasants also participated in tourism, they were mainly interested in one-day railway trips and pilgrimages. It would be difficult to consider these groups (especially peasants) as recipients of guidebook literature because a significant obstacle was not only the material status but also the level of education. Longer expeditions were undertaken by the intelligentsia and the more enlightened landed gentry, and especially by the aristocracy, unfettered by financial constraints, who enjoyed trips to foreign cities and health resorts. Merchants, the bourgeoisie, and some artists also traveled abroad (Opaliński, 2012). Therefore, it is not surprising that Jan Flasieński (1851), in the preface to his guidebook to Europe, wrote about his readers as a “famous public”.

Not only the services used by travelers were expensive, but also specialized equipment, e.g., for cycling tourism (which may explain the fact that only two guidebooks of the time for cyclists were published). At the end of the 19th century, a bicycle in the Kingdom of Poland cost about 50 roübes. It is worth mentioning that one of the cycling enthusiasts and members of the Warsaw Cyclists’ Society founded in 1884 was Bolesław Prus (1847–1912), who, as already an acclaimed writer and journalist, had problems with covering the costs of buying a bicycle (Kulczycki, 1977).

Finally, it must be stressed that for some of those potentially interested in the guidebooks, the price of the books may have been an obstacle to buying them. This was especially true of early publications, issued in the first and early second half of the 19th century. For example, a guidebook by Józef Wawrzyniec Krasiński cost 15 Polish zlotys. To illustrate this price, it exceeded the average value of a modius (i.e., 125 l) of wheat, which in 1825 in Warsaw cost on average 13.31 Polish zlotys. In 1825, the average daily wage of an unskilled worker was 51.50 grosz, so it is easy to calculate that the price of Krasiński’s guidebook was the value of about a month of his or her work (Opaliński, 2012). Average salaries in Warsaw in the 19th century are presented in Table 2.

The prices of some guidebooks were provided in press announcements concerning the issuing of a publication. They confirm that early high-volume publications were relatively expensive. The price of the fourth edition of Ambroży Grabowski’s *Kraków i jego okolice (Kraków and its environs)* was 12 Polish zlotys (Biblioteka
Warszawska, 1844), and Flasienski’s guidebook to Europe from 1851 cost as much as 21 Polish zlotys (Biblioteka Warszawska, 1851). Smaller booklets, published around mid-century, were much cheaper. For example, Skimborowicz’s *Przewodnik dla zwiedzających Częstochowę* [Guidebook for visitors to Częstochowa] cost 2 Polish zlotys (Biblioteka Warszawska, 1847), whereas Sobieszczański’s *Przewodnik po Warszawie* (Guidebook to Warsaw) cost 50 kopecks, which corresponded to 3 Polish zlotys and 10 groszy (Biblioteka Warszawska, 1857).

Over time, as books became more common and printing techniques improved, guidebook prices began to fall. They were often included in the publications themselves (on covers or title pages). This is how it is known that, for example, an illustrated version of Kleczkowski’s guidebook to Cracow (Kleczkowski, 1882) cost 1.6 Rhine zlotys (Austro-Hungarian guildens), while Grzegorz Smolski’s guidebook to Vienna (Smolski, 1886), published a few years later, was not much cheaper, 1.50 Rhine zlotys, which corresponded to 1.20 rubles and 2.50 marks. Much cheaper were guidebooks of small volume, such as the guidebook to Rome published in Lviv for pilgrims (*Przewodnik dla pielgrzymów*..., 1877), with a note on the title page saying that the price of 10 cents was “to cover printing costs”. A guidebook to the Podhorce castle cost 16 cents (*Przewodnik dla zwiedzających zamek*..., 1889), while books on the Wieliczka salt mine could be bought for 35 cents (*Przewodnik z katalogiem salin*..., 1879) and 20 cents (*Ilustrowany przewodnik*..., 1893).

In the last decade of the 19th century, even comprehensive and illustrated guidebooks could already be purchased for an inexpensive price. For example, a guidebook to Warsaw by Wiktor Czajewski cost only 45 kopecks, and 55 kopecks in hardback. In the case of this publication, the price was reduced with the proceeds of numerous advertisements placed in the book. The low price was also due to the poor quality of paper and printing, which was typical of a large part of late-nineteenth-century guidebooks. Nevertheless, the author could write about his book with satisfaction: “Anyone can easily come to it, even the most indigent because we have set the price per copy so affordable that it does not actually cover the cost of publishing” (Czajewski, 1892). Indeed, the price of the guidebook was relatively low – it corresponded to the value of 18 loaves of wholemeal bread or a day’s work of an unskilled worker, who in 1890 earned an average of 56.55 kopecks in Warsaw (Table 2). The second edition of Czajewski’s guidebook (1896), enriched with a city plan, was only slightly more expensive (70 kopecks). In Galicia, railroad guidebooks published in Vienna were among the very cheap publications. Each book carried the price of 60 halers on its cover, or 30 cents (Smolski 1893; Smolski 1894; Obogi 1894a; Obogi 1894b; Il lender 1894). One had to pay 75 cents for a decently illustrated and bound guidebook to Krynica by Franciszek Kmi towicz (1899), which was not an exorbitant amount either.

The relatively low price of guidebooks published in the late 19th century meant that potentially many people could afford to buy them. In practice, however, the guidebooks were primarily of interest to those involved in tourism, as it entailed
much higher expenses than the cost of the publications studied. It can be assumed that the real readers of the guidebooks were educated people, with at least an average standard of living, who had a steady source of income allowing them to buy books and travel. These conditions were met by better-off representatives of the bourgeoisie, intelligentsia, aristocracy, and landed gentry (Opaliński, 2012). Taking into account a large number of the 19th-century publications and the fact that many of them lived to see several editions, it can be concluded that the guidebooks evoked great interest and were an indispensible element of tourists’ luggage at that time.

Table 2. Average salaries in Warsaw in the 19th century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Bricklayer (daily wage)</th>
<th>Unskilled labourer (daily wage)</th>
<th>President (annually)</th>
<th>Clerk (annually)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>92.50 grosz</td>
<td>51.50 grosz</td>
<td>12,000 Polish zloty</td>
<td>1,350 Polish zloty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>107 kopecks</td>
<td>42.80 kopecks</td>
<td>3,750 roubles</td>
<td>150 roubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>167.50 kopecks</td>
<td>56.55 kopecks</td>
<td>6,000 roubles</td>
<td>187.50 roubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>337 kopecks</td>
<td>97.60 kopecks</td>
<td>11,000 roubles</td>
<td>200 roubles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Siegel, 1949.

5. Conclusions

The dynamic development of tourism observed in the 19th century was connected with a spectacular development of tourist guidebooks. Publications of this kind were also created in the Polish territories divided into partitions. They facilitated visiting cities, monuments, spas, mountain areas, and foreign countries. Old guidebooks are excellent sources for the history of tourism, used in research by historians, cultural studies, and literary scholars (Ziarkowski, 2017).

The results of the research presented in this paper lead to the conclusion that the 19th-century guidebooks offer a valuable source of knowledge in the field of socioeconomic determinants of tourism development in the age of steam power and electricity. The use of the information contained in Polish guidebooks, other historical sources, and in scientific works on the period studied allowed for the identification of the recipients of these publications, i.e., people who were interested in tourism and at the same time could afford not only to buy useful books but also to travel for tourism purposes. Undoubtedly, this socioeconomic aspect has so far been poorly highlighted in the research on old guidebooks. Therefore, it is necessary to undertake similar research problems, which will allow for a more complete understanding of the complex phenomena related to the development of tourism in the past.

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