

# Bogusław Sawicki, Andrzej Soroka

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## Characteristics of Tourist Flows in Rzeszow-Jasionka Airport

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**Bogusław Sawicki\***

**Andrzej Soroka\*\***

University of Life Sciences in Lublin

## CHARACTERISTICS OF TOURIST FLOWS IN RZESZOW-JASIONKA AIRPORT

### Abstract

The paper presents a discussion upon the tourist flows at Rzeszow-Jasionka Airport. Both its quantitative and qualitative features were considered. The study was conducted in 2013 among travelers and administrative staff of the airport. The method of diagnostic survey including poll techniques with original questionnaire, direct interviews, and analysis of documents. Among adult passengers, 800 questionnaires were distributed, of which 683 were properly filled. The study took into account the number of serviced passengers, their age, education, frequency of traveling, the way of airport reaching, and travel motives. Respondents were also asked about the weakest traits of the airport and elements of its environment. A special attention was paid to a different perception of many features and components of travel by men and women. The paper was completed with applicable conclusions.

**Keywords:** tourist flow, air travel, Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport

### Introduction

Such elements of the tourism market as supply, demand, and price function within a very complex environment of interrelationships that exert some remarkable impact on the market mechanisms. The transport services, that are

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\* Email address: boguslaw.sawicki@up.lublin.pl.

\*\* Email address: wachmistrz\_soroka@o2.pl.

integrally related to the tourist flow, operation of tourism, occupy a prominent place.<sup>1</sup> However, the tourist flows cannot be identified with the demand, because this flow's entities, i.e. tourists, are the carriers of needs for goods and services.<sup>2</sup>

The tourist flow itself is defined as *a whole of voluntary and temporary spatial displacements beyond the domicile undertaken to achieve the recreation, cognitive, health, and entertainment purposes*.<sup>3</sup> This definition, however, lacks a compatibility with the tourism terminology recommended by WTO, which means that professional purposes (excluding those, the main objective of which is a gainful activity) should be included as well.<sup>4</sup> This supplement would allow to include the participants of a business tourism, that is becoming increasingly important, into the tourist flow.

In the context of the above statements, it can be assumed that the passenger traffic at the international airport is referred to as the tourist movement that requires specialized services, and all passengers are tourists, since the flight to another country is usually associated with accommodation. Thus, it can be said that the airport staff is a specific and extremely important part of the tourist services.<sup>5</sup> It is also worth to underline that the airport is a very significant factor of globalization that allows for technical and economic availability of tourist destinations to all corners of the world in the case of a tourist economy.<sup>6</sup>

The aim of present paper is to characterize the tourist flows at the International Airport Rzeszów-Jasionka. The research included both its quantitative and qualitative features, which is important for the promotion and development of the domestic airport as well as the tourist economy.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ekonomika turystyki*, A. Panasiuk (ed.), Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, 2009, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> G. Gołębowski, *Kompendium wiedzy o turystyce*, Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa-Poznań, 2002, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Terminologia turystyczna. Zalecenia WTO, Warszawa 1995, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Obsługa ruchu turystycznego*, B. Meyer (ed.), Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> J. Hawlena, 2012. *Konkurencja na rynku lotniczych przewozów pasażerskich w warunkach globalizacji*, Wyd. UE w Katowicach, p. 144.

## **1. Methodology**

The research object was Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport. The method of diagnostic survey including questionnaire, direct interviews, and document analysis techniques, were applied. The poll was carried out in 2013. Eight-hundred questionnaires were randomly distributed among adult passengers (more than 18-years-old and after approval) waiting for departure. As a response, 683 correctly completed questionnaires were achieved. Besides, three interviews among the airport administration employees were performed and available documents were analyzed. Following scientific hypothesis was assumed after the initial insight: the tourist flows are still developing in the airport under study, the airport is of regional character, and depends on further broadening and improving the airport-related and auxiliary services. For obvious reasons, the survey could not be too absorbing, hence it contained only ten questions to allow verification of the assumed hypothesis. Other research results were obtained from the interviews and analysis of available documents.

## **2. Characterization of Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport**

The Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport is localized 10 km from Rzeszów near two national roads (No. 19 Rzeszów – Lublin and No. 9 Rzeszów - Warsaw). The A4 highway and S19 expressway will be situated near the airport soon, while at present, they are being built. The connection with the railway station in Rzeszów is provided due to special L line of the city transport. Other nearest airports are: Cracow-Balice (150 km), Lublin-Świdnik (180 km), Warsaw Okęcie, and Warsaw Modlin (300 km).

Establishment of the airport dates back to 1937 and is closely associated with the Central Industrial District. In practice, the airport has functioned under the Polish management only for two years, and then it was used by the Nazis, then by Russians. In 1949, it was taken over by Polish Airlines Lot. In the late 50's, the airport was modernized, and in 2012, modern passenger terminal was put into operation. According to the ICAO definition (Annex 14 Aerodromes), the discussed airport meets the requirements for the international airport.<sup>7</sup> Nowadays,

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<sup>7</sup> W. Rydzkowski, K. Wojewódzka-Król, *Problemy transportu w rozszerzonej UE*. Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2010, p. 145.

it has 13 permanent connections with several Western European countries (England, Spain, Ireland, Germany) and seasonal connections with Bulgaria, Egypt, Greece, Tunisia, and Turkey). The terminal cooperates with three air carriers: Ryanair, Lufthansa, PLL LOT.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Analysis of data from Table 1 reveals gradually increasing number of serviced passengers. Since 2008 till 2013, a 107.3% increase in the tourist flows occurred. In 2011, quite sudden drop in the percentage growth rate was observed, which can be accounted for by the terminal improvement, whereas in 2012 after the investment complete, previous growth rate was achieved again. These results should be considered as satisfying, even when compared with well-recognized English airports.<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly, this should be counted as the success of the airport, that runs a good system of communication with the market and applies an adequate sales promotion.<sup>9</sup>

Table 1

Number of serviced passengers in Rzeszów–Jasionka Airport in 2008–2013

No	Specification	Years					
		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1.	Number of serviced passengers	323838	383184	454203	491325	564992	671381
2.	Increase of the passenger number in relation to 2008 (in %)	100.00	18.3	40.3	51.7	74.5	107.3
3.	Increase of the passenger number in relation to every following year	-	18.3	18.5	8.2	15.0	18.8

Source: own study according to the Marketing Section of the Airport

<sup>8</sup> S. Holloway, *Straight and Level: Practical Airline Economics*. 2nd Edition. Ashgate Publishing Ltd., Aldershot 2008, pp. 78–81.

<sup>9</sup> A. Panasiuk, *Marketing usług turystycznych*. Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006, p. 136.

Analysis of collected polls reveals that the survey subject consisted of 41.7% women and 58.3% men. Considering the respondent's age, it was found that mainly 18 to 50-year-old tourists (78.6%) were passengers, while the remaining proportion was 21.4% (Figure 1). Therefore, further detailed recognition of needs of mentioned age groups and preparation of special offers, would be helpful, which does not mean to neglect the niche groups.

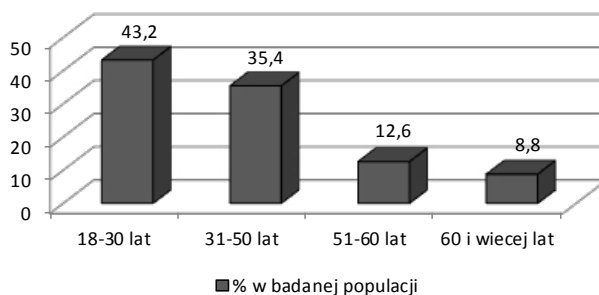


Fig. 1. Age of respondents (% in surveyed population)

Source: own study.

Considering the educational level of surveyed population, travelers with secondary education prevailed (62.3%), then with higher education (31.6%), and the professional education was represented by the lower percentage of tourists (6.1%) (Figure 2).

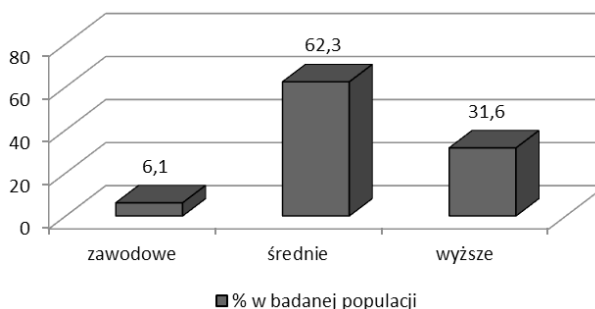


Fig.2. Education of respondents (% in surveyed population)

Source: own study.

Taking into account the area of the tourism generation, Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport is a regional airport, which is confirmed by results of this study: as many as 86.7% of travelers came from the Podkarpackie, while only 6.8% from the nearest Lublin and 1.4% from Świętokrzyskie province. It should be noted, however, that there was 5.1% of travelers from Slovakia. Above presented survey results are a good material to target the marketing efforts.

Based on the analysis of collected material, it was found that 59.1% of passengers used the airport once a year and women were the dominant group. Only 17% of respondents travelled by air several times a year, but there were more than twice as men as women in that group. Very similar relationships were also present in the case of traveling several times a month. In other cases, gender had little effect on the travelling frequency (Figure 3). Results of presented study are consistent with the social profile of the tourist flow participants, which is confirmed in other studies.<sup>10</sup>

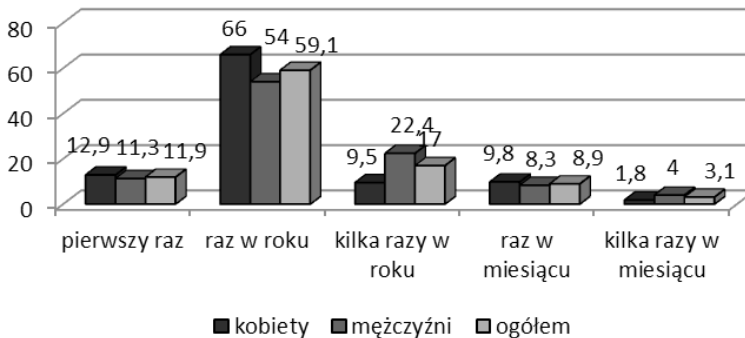


Fig. 3. Frequency of respondents' air travels depending and regardless of a gender (in %) Source: own study.

Competitiveness of a passenger airport increases not only with the number of connections with air hubs, but in this case, the access the connection's to the terminal play some remarkable role.<sup>11</sup> Among surveyed passenger popula-

<sup>10</sup> B. Meyer, *Obsługa ruchu turystycznego*. Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006, 2, pp. 27–28.

<sup>11</sup> E. Dziedzic, *Wpływ transportu lotniczego na wykorzystanie bazy noclegowej w Polsce*. in: *Nowe trendy rozwoju turystyki*, E. Gołębski (ed.), Wyd. PWSZ Sulechów 2008, pp. 141–141.

tion, 82% reach the airport by own car, 16% use the bus, and only 2% use rail and commuting bus from Rzeszow. Despite of this, 28% of respondents indicated the need to connect the airport by a rail link from Rzeszow.

When respondents were asked about the convenience of the airport access from Rzeszów, 26% of them had a good opinion, 39% were dissatisfied of the connections, and as many as 35% of travelers did not have a decided opinion, which can be interpreted that they were not interested in this problem at all.

The travel motivation is an important issue in the analysis of tourism, hence respondents of the survey were asked about the purpose of air travel. It appeared that regardless of gender, business objectives prevailed (70.7%); it was declared both by women (67.4%) and men (73.1%). The second place was ranked by visits (18.2%); also in this case either of genders was not predominated (18.2% and 18.1%). In contrast, a holiday destination was declared only by 9.5% of women and 5.8% of men. Only 3.8% of respondents indicated other not specified destination purpose (Figure 4).

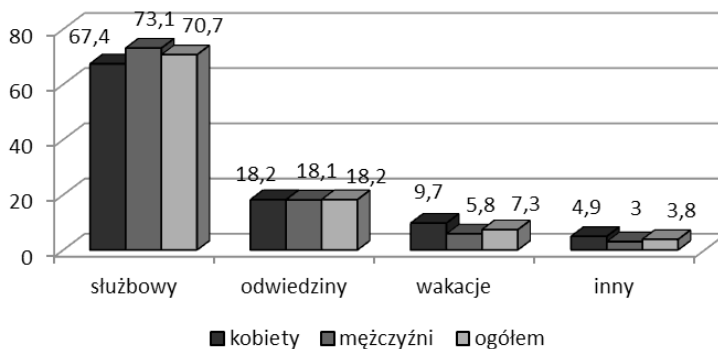


Fig. 4. Purpose of respondents' air travels depending and regardless of a gender (in %) Source: own study.

These results are very surprising, because the seasonal distribution of tourism at Rzeszow-Jasionka Airport is similar to that at other airports, so its apogee falls in July and August, and passengers declare mainly the corporate flights. The reasons for this phenomenon should be seen not on a ground of favorable natural conditions in the summer months, but in social and economic conditions. Interviews suggested that many inhabitants of Podkarpacie province travel by air to seasonal jobs in other European countries, and probably they declared



the business purpose in the survey, because it obviously was not a holiday journey. Such an interpretation of achieved results is confirmed in other studies.<sup>12</sup>

From the marketing point of view, the overall image of the terminal is very important. In the case of Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport, travelers were asked to rate the weakest points of the airport. In general, the largest proportion of respondents mentioned the destination connections (62.1%), promotion of air services was ranked at the second place (59.6%), third place was the architecture and aesthetics of the airport (37.8%), quality of passenger service was at the fourth place (24.7%), while following issues were ranked at further places: price tickets (21.1%), and the punctuality of flights (15.4%) (Figure 5). Great disparities in the assessment of some of the airport weaknesses seen by particular genders, are noteworthy. Women perceived promotion, connection network, architecture and aesthetics, quality of service and punctuality of flights much harder than men, while there was no difference in the assessment of ticket prices.

Taking the interviews as a basis, it can be concluded that travelers treated the airport promotion as a tourist information, thus it can be seen how important is the role of a research upon traveler's needs and trends in the tourism demands.<sup>13</sup>

When analyzing the respondent's answers to the summarizing question concerning the overall satisfaction with Rzeszów-Jasionka Airport services, it was reported that only 8.3% rated them "very high", the largest group of surveyed assessed as "high" (47.4%), 25.7% of travelers ranked the proposed services as "medium level", while 18.6% assessed them as "poor".

In the tourism economy, transportation plays a very important role, and air transport makes available to tourists those areas that traditional transport remains very inaccessible, as the journey would take most of time that tourists can spend on this type of escapade. In addition, available prices of air travel play an important role.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, there is a need to put a special emphasis on the research related to the air transport in Poland, where number of regional airports still grows.

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<sup>12</sup> A. Niezgodą, P. Zmysłny, *Popyt turystyczny – uwarunkowania i perspektywy rozwoju*. Wyd. AE w Poznaniu 2003, pp. 65.

<sup>13</sup> A. Tokarz, *Badania rynku jako źródło danych dla systemu informacji turystycznej*, Uniwersytet Szczeciński, *Zeszyty Naukowe, Ekonomiczne Problemy Turystyki* 2006, 7, p. 366.

<sup>14</sup> J. Hawlena, *Determinanty kształtowania cen usług transportowych*, Wyd. Akademii Ekonomicznej w Katowicach, 2004, p. 45.

## Conclusions

1. The assumed hypothesis has been fully proven as the tourist flows on the discussed airport have constant increasing trends. Rzeszow-Jasionka Airport can be defined as regional, since in 86.7% it services the passengers from Podkarpackie province and the remaining portion comes from Lublin and Świętokrzyskie provinces. It should be noted, however, that 5.1% of travelers came from Slovakia that neighbors the Podkarpacie province.
2. It has been found that the main segment of passengers consists of persons aged 18-50 years (78.6%), hence there is the need to recognize their motivations to travel, in order to prepare adequately satisfactory air travel offer. For the same reasons, also attention should be paid to people with secondary (62.3%) and higher education (31.6%).
3. For marketing reasons, a detailed study upon the frequency and purposes (motives) of the journey should be carried out, because it is a very complex issue. The concept of a business travel, that has been a bit overestimated during the survey, should be also clarified. Furthermore, different perspective on the assessment of travel elements by women and men, is also worth appreciation.
4. Elements of the airport surroundings play an important role. For example, it should be emphasized that 39% of respondents were dissatisfied with communication links from Rzeszow to the airport. Perhaps the current bus service is inadequate, and the need to bring the rail link to the airport terminal in Jasionka, should be considered; 28% of the surveyed population opted for such solution. It would be an action for sustainable development in transport.

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- Rozporządzenia Ministra Infrastruktury z dnia 17 czerwca 2008 roku w sprawie warunków i sposobu działania służb ruchu lotniczego, zgodnie z treścią Załącznika 11 do Konwencji o międzynarodowym lotnictwie cywilnym.

## CHARAKTERYSTYKA RUCHU TURYSTYCZNEGO W PORCIE LOTNICZYM RZESZÓW - JASIONKA

### Streszczenie

W opracowaniu omówiono ruch turystyczny na Lotnisku Rzeszów – Jasionka. Zwrócono uwagę zarówno na jego stronę ilościową jak i jakościową. Badania przeprowadzono w roku 2013 wśród podróżnych i pracowników administracji lotniska. Zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego, a w niej techniki ankiety z autorskim kwestionariuszem ankiety oraz wywiadu bezpośredniego i analizy dokumentów. Wśród dorosłych pasażerów rozdano 800 ankiet, z czego uzyskano 683 poprawnie wypełnionych. W badaniach uwzględniono liczbę obsługanych pasażerów, ich wiek, wykształcenie, częstotliwość podróży, sposób dojazdu do lotniska i motywy podróży. Pytano także o określenie najsłabszych stron lotniska i elementy jego otoczenia. Zwrócono uwagę na odmienne postrzeganie wielu cech i elementów składowych podróży przez kobiety i mężczyzn. Opracowanie zakończone aplikacyjnymi wnioskami.

**Słowa kluczowe:** ruch turystyczny, podróże lotnicze, Port Lotniczy Rzeszów-Jasionka