

## **ECONOMICAL ASPECTS OF FOLK CULTURE AS AN ELEMENT OF BALANCED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract.** Folk culture holds a significant position in social and scientific interests. Except for economy, it covers a wide range of scientific concepts. However, the lack of economical empirics does not mean, that peasant's culture has not been observed from the economical point of view. Capitalism, and later Poland's entering the European Union imposed and somehow forced on folk creators the need of creating enterprising behaviour. Thesis below is only a key to the gate of the garden of broader research and constitutes an introduction on tricky ground of economic ground of folk culture.

**Key words:** folk culture, enterprise, enterprising behaviour, economical awareness, country tourism

### **INTRODUCTION**

The present comeback to the so-called folk design can be dictated by the escape of XXI century man from his own existence into the countryside and its culture. A modern folk culture receiver is a homo oeconomicus, turning to the aspect, which in his meaning tends to be original and non-commercialized. In a way, his second nature, homo socius, imposes on him such behaviour [Karwińska 2007]. The question is, to what extent folk culture can be called non-commercialized? Modernization, which theoretically drove away the products of folk art caused, as the name suggests, that the human turned to them. Globalization creates a new attitude towards regional traditions. Commercialization and marketing successfully promote the image of each region [Ciechocińska 1994]. But Brzozowska-Krajka [2010] notices, that globalization in reali-

ty creates a new approach to regional traditions, making them more attractive from the market point of view. In XXI century, to a high extent thanks to Poland's accession to the European Union we can observe rebirth of folklore. Powerful companies, such as Vox or Solar and Chanel use folk design in their new collections. Advertisements are soaked with folk elements, which are also used in TV series. Internet portals connected with folk culture and the UE projects also gain a lot of interest. The National Strategy of Regional Development for 2004-2013 defines culture as one of the factors of regional development. Every investment in peasant's sphere of folk culture is beneficial [Narodowa... 2004]. With the support from structural means of partly forgotten elements of folk culture we should make an interesting and attractive product out of it. From the ethnographic point of view the problem is, that it is reproduced from the former forgotten forms and used by the commercialized market [Brzozowska-Krajka 2010]. There are, apart from big companies, folk artists. Adequacy of their economical awareness and carrying out enterprising actions according to the current economical situation should be put under empirical verification.

The following culture researcher, Sulima [1997], it can be stated, that the folk itself is dead and nowadays we only deal with its mythologizing. The others (i.e. F. Jakuczak, J. Chałasiński, B. Falińska, A. Tatariewicz) discuss about it as a new culture, modified creation, which partly adapted mass culture [Dobroński 1997]. Similar view on folk culture has Gołębiowski [1997], who claims that it awakes from deep sleep from time to time and evolves, adopting the elements of modern culture. Thus the observation is that the commercialization of culture, which is observed by Polish ethnographers with disgust, initiated again in regional culture such economic phenomena as development of enterprising behaviours or creation of social capital. We could discuss about the death of the culture when its components would not exist both in the essence of offered products and the service. And now, although commercialized, its certain elements are alive and it can be stated that they are more and more "fashionable".

The purpose of this thesis it to present the level of economic awareness of the folk culture promoters, with regard to the present market and to elaborate issues of relevance of the peasant's culture in modern times. The empiric chapter is an analysis of the research conducted in 2010 among craftsmen in the east and west of Poland.

## THE ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUES AND THE DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Ethnographers suggest interchangeable application of the notions: the folk, peasant, country culture, on qualification of the same designatum [Gałąj 1997]. Defining the folk culture itself caused a lot of problems. It had the largest investigative interest on the breakthrough of the XIX and XX centuries, being one of the elements of the romantic programme, it was considered as the mainstay of the nationality and assembled the attention of the universities, Skill Academy of Cracow, also specialist publishing houses and folk companies came into being [Drozd-Piasecka and Paprocka 1985]. From the economic point of view, positivism is a more interesting epoch for the development of the folk culture. It paid the attention to functions of the utilitarian and economic productions of the country. The development of the countryfolk industry was one of the elements of the help programme for the economic country population. The following insti-

tutions were created: the Office of Folk Industry, Company of the Supporting the Folk Industry, the Association of the Industry Trade Mutual Aid which called and supported the folk production. The Patronage of Handicraft Objects and the Small Industry created the professional courses, also credited companies established by the graduates, it also maintained bazaars of the peasant industry, and finally it assigned the loans to the purchase of the material. In the country and abroad, agricultural and industrial exhibitions were organised, of which the main goals were economic issues, main aspiration was to maintain the outcome of the rural craft [Drozd-Piasecka and Paprocka 1985]. The presence of economical phenomena on the folk culture grounds is not something new.

People have already aspired to engage the country community to non-agricultural activity connected with the folk craft or tourism.

Most of the recognized ethnographers defining the notion of the culture follow Joseph Burszta, recognizing him as a part of the national culture, peculiar phenomenon, connected his origin with shaping the feudal system, and also being the reflection of the situation of his promoter-nation [Burszta 1974]. The peasant culture stayed in the large correlation with the culture of elite layers, which Bystroń [1947] notices, claiming that we can meet the contents of the folk culture in the culture of all social layers, to a large extent by shaping historically the social conditions, thus many of them survived exactly in the folk culture.

The researchers amicably agree that the notion of folk culture sounds a little bit archaic, therefore they gradually replace it with analogical notions. The peasant culture is defined as a culture of less urbanized region, where folk culture functioned in the past. It is the sum of past values, which accepted the previous elements [Gałaj 1997]. The notion of country culture is similar to folk or peasant and it is to underline the separation of peasant individualism on the background of the other cultures [Gałaj 1997].

Basically, following S. Czarnowski, we can divide the culture into spiritual (beliefs, customs, language) and material (craft, art) [Gałaj 1997].

More or less we assume that in Poland the rural areas and their community are the basic elements of national culture, noted by the ethnographers as a folk, country or peasant culture.

Developing economy caused changes in the economical awareness of the craftsmen and community promoters. Karwińska [2007] following G. Simmel justifies this fact as a mutual influence between economy and culture. Economical elements have their explanation in the culture, which defines what belongs to it and imposes the rules of behaviour. Under the notion of economical awareness we can understand the knowledge of the notions connected with economy, and the processes taking place inside it. Flejterski [2008] distinguishes deep and shallow economical awareness. The former is the result of the registration of the images and notions implied by the community and the media. The latter is a result of a long and complex process of an economical education i.e. at the school level.

Folk creation to a large extent features peasant environment. Economical activity of the society from less urbanized regions is commonly called rural enterprise [Hałasiewicz and Kaleta 2000].

## THE ECONOMICAL AWARENESS OF FOLK CULTURE CREATORS

Analysing economical awareness and enterprise actions of folk creators, one must define the way and frequency of occurrence of such elements as: forms of selling the products and services, marketing tools usage, European Union grants and funds, or participation in trainings. The research on selected creators is going to be held by the means of a questionnaire, consisting of 50 open and closed questions, connected with the country culture undertaken by the respondent. The author used the form of a personal interview among the people promoting craft and folk art in the east (Lublin and surroundings) and west (Zielona Góra and surroundings) of Poland. The majority of the respondents are folk craftsmen specialising in: embroidery, carving, painting, costumes and folk puppets – 92%, the rest 8% of the respondents are the units connected with groups offering services in music or folk dance. The questions regarded enterprise behaviour, such as: the awareness of the need of commercials and other marketing actions, establishing own company business, participation in trainings, subsidies gaining, traditional and innovative means of offering products and services, and cooperation with other creators on national and international market. It is impossible to analyse all the questions and conclusions in such a short paper, so only the most essential elements will be focused on.

In XXI century the folk culture, its products, went outside the local market and started searching more non-agricultural receivers. For the time being, more and more creators decide on establishing and registering their own businesses. The respondents explained it by the need of securing main (in case of losing previous employment) or additional source of income, or self-check. It is presented in Figure 1.



Fig. 1. Activity in folk culture  
Source: own research (2010).

Rys. 1. Działalność w sferze kultury ludowej  
Źródło: badania własne (2010).

Another important aspect is the form of selling the products or services on a local market (Fig. 2).

To a large extent the creator sells his products using all the above methods simultaneously.

The respondents also noticed the possibility of using advertisings as a successful weapon against the competition (Fig. 3).

It is worth stressing here that the direct information type of advertising is used by all the respondents. It is also worth mentioning that none of the respondents used commercials in media. Most of them (80%) see advertising as a successful weapon against

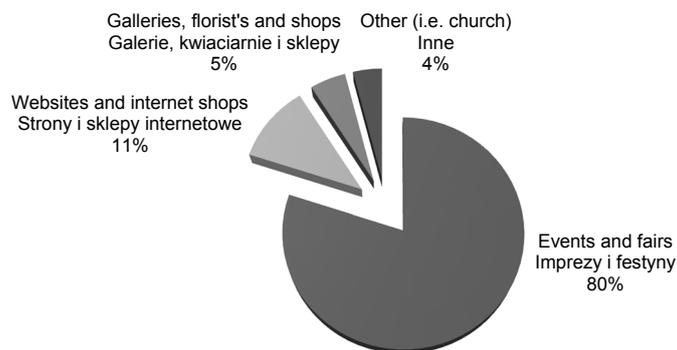


Fig. 2. Products and services sales on a local market  
Source: own research (2010).

Rys. 2. Sprzedaż produktów i usług na lokalnym rynku  
Źródło: badania własne (2010).

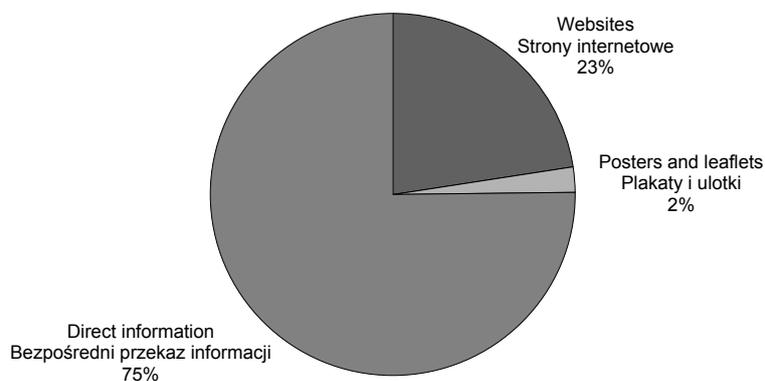


Fig. 3. Advertising  
Source: own research (2010).

Rys. 3. Reklama  
Źródło: badania własne (2010).

competition, and eagerly would use it, but they resign due to e.g. lack of funds, whereas the rest (20%) because they are either too old or see no need.

It is claimed that the economical awareness of the respondents, the fact of attending is proved by different projects and trainings. After joining the European Union, it can be observed that majority of the districts prepared for the local development mainly with the use of national heritage. Big backwardness of the Polish country in comparison with other European countries caused launching many support programs and projects (i.e. Sector Operational Program "Restructuring and modification of catering sector and rural areas development", Integrated Sector Operational Program of Regional Development, Leader Associate Initiative and many more). Big emphasis is also put on the education

of country's society, preoccupied with many forms of craft within the branch of enterprise. To do so, the districts hold trainings granted by the European Union, individual projects appear e.g. Purpose – Enterprise in Culture, thematic Internet service regarding wide notions concerning enterprise environment, culture and creativity. As a part of the above project, the Agroarte program was managed to be started, which main goal was to promote the professional activity in folk art creation and craftsmanship and improvement of employment in Łowicz province. The participants were trained the basics of enterprising such as: offer creation, promotion and product marketing, adapting creation to market needs and so on. One of the outcomes of such enterprise in an Internet website and the creators' portfolio. Also interesting projects are introduced by the Center of Promotion and Support of Agricultural Enterprise, which works in order to improve the local communities in Poland i.e. project "Folk craft as a source of income for the inhabitants of former Sandomierz land". Such initiatives have been appearing frequently in our country in recent years, and it as a result, the problem of preserving cultural values is considered by the European Union as very essential. National Strategy of Regional Development underlines the concept of national patronage over folk culture which covers: patronage over the creators, national and abroad promotion, cultural education [Narodowa... 2004].

Among 100 of respondents, several of them attended different types of trainings or grants, but all commonly agreed that Poland's accession into European Union has influenced and will influence positively the further development of folk culture. The situation is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Awareness of the benefits after joining the European Union

Tabela 1. Świadomość respondentów w zakresie ewentualnych korzyści, wynikających ze wstąpienia Polski do UE

The category – Kategoria	Yes – Tak
The participation in the Union trainings Udział w szkoleniach unijnych	22%
Using the grant within the programs and the EU projects Korzystanie z dotacji w ramach programów i projektów unijnych	20%
The frequency of using the EU grants Częstotliwość korzystania z dotacji unijnych	3% out of 20% respondents used more than once 3% na 20% badanych korzystało więcej niż jeden raz
Did entering the EU influence profitably the development of folk culture and its branches? Czy wejście Polski do UE korzystnie wpłynęło na rozwój kultury ludowej i jej gałęzi w Polsce?	60% definitely yes 6% rather yes 60% zdecydowanie tak 6% raczej tak

Source: own research (2010).

Źródło: badania własne (2010).

Elder people do not completely realise the purpose and the granting of their presence in the EU projects. They only know that the district or the other local associations, fulfilled the task of activation or social integration, but they do not know who sponsored

them. Therefore, a little correction has to be taken in this research, and to show some scrupulosity and detailed information (e.g. financing the trainings) should be confirmed with the project creator.

People, who claim that Poland's entry to the European Union influenced beneficially the folk culture development are guided by the possibility of using different trainings and grants. The others noticed, that thanks to the opening of the borders e.g. on German market, the competition grew significantly, which in turn forced them to lower the prices either of the product or services.

Another fact proving the enterprising activity of the creators, is growing sale and cooperation with enterprises on international markets. In the past there was a rule that the promoters of folk culture sold their products only on local markets, during various events. And even today on large scale it is the easiest and cheapest form of offering own craft and services, the folk artists go beyond and eagerly cooperate with galleries and folk shops in all Polish cities and abroad. Beyond the local market, the products and services are offered by respondents (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Sale of products and services beyond the local market  
Source: own research (2010).

Rys. 4. Sprzedaż produktów i usług poza lokalnym rynkiem  
Źródło: badania własne (2010).

Similarly, as on the regional market, some of the creators use different forms of sale simultaneously. Due to the establishment of National Strategy of Cultural Development there is a possibility of using the structural and other European funds in order to realise certain actions and for example trainings connected with creation of enterprise behaviour (Fig. 5).

The organization itself, as the participation in the mentioned trainings or other activities are dependant on cooperation with local government units. It is them, who support the local activity as a part of the national patronage. Figure 6 shows how it looks in the respondents awareness.

Small awareness has been reported among the folk creators about the benefits of possessing own trademark or logo of the company or product. The basic deed here is the act on 30.06.2000 – the industrial property law [Ustawa... 1001] in the art. 120 d. 1 is placed a definition of trademark – trademark can be every label, which can be – first of all – presented graphically, on condition that such a label of products and services can

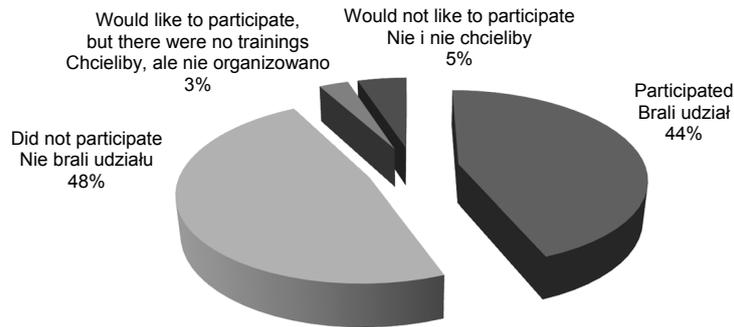


Fig. 5. Participation in trainings connected with the creation of enterprise behaviour

Source: own research (2010).

Rys. 5. Udział w szkoleniach dotyczących kreowania zachowań przedsiębiorczych

Źródło: badania własne (2010).

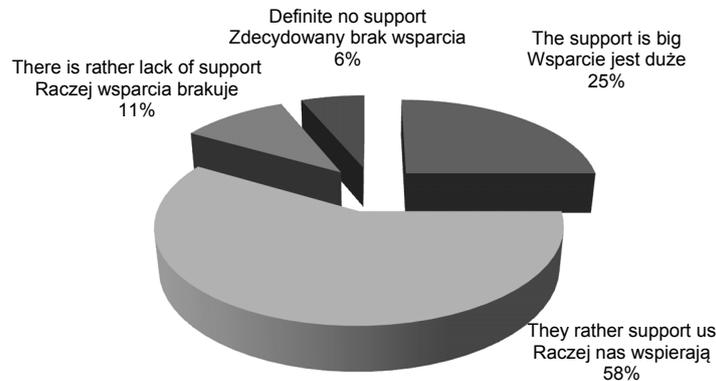


Fig. 6. The Municipal Council support

Source: own research (2010).

Rys. 6. Wsparcie ze strony Urzędu Miasta czy Gminy

Źródło: badania własne (2010).

be distinguished from that of another enterprise. The trademark can be a name, symbol, graphics or domain, as well as a colouristic structure, or a space form. It follows from the respondents' replies that only 1% of the products and services connected with folk culture have a trademark. This is a result of lack of the respondents' knowledge in this branch of marketing.

The investments connected with establishing farmers' additional activity resulted in the development of tourism. In the recent years the notion of *cultural tourism* has appeared, as one of the elements of the country's tourism, based on cultural heritage. A. Mikos von Rohrscheit [Jędrysiak 2010, p. 20] under this concept perceives every tourist venture even more significantly, where the main aim is less urbanized region,

and the most important motive of such tourism is to acquaint people with the culture of a given region. Such type of tourism causes agricultural growth of a given region, mobilizes the unemployed and encourages the folk artists to undertake agritourism some enterprise actions. The development of every type of service connected with agritourism is also dependant on awareness of the inhabitants, whether their region belongs to a tourism region (Fig. 7).

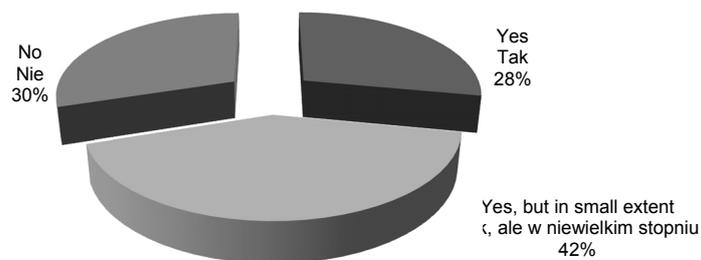


Fig. 7. Does the region, where the activity takes place, belong to the tourist region?

Source: own research (2010).

Rys. 7. Czy region, w którym jest prowadzona działalność należy do regionów turystycznych?

Źródło: badania własne (2010).

Cultural tourism has a chance of fulfilling different functions in shaping social life of the region or country. Folk artists will benefit not only economically, but also they will have self-esteem, and find some sense in cultivating the national heritage. The question is, to what extent do they realise, that their activity brings about tourism development (Fig. 8)?

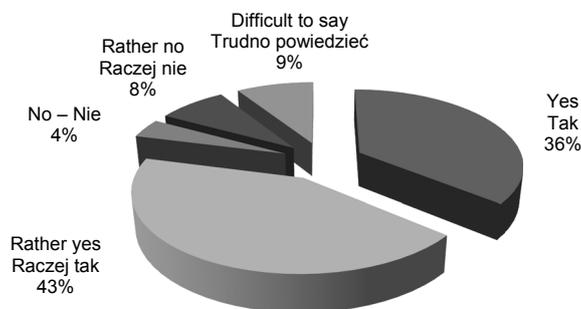


Fig. 8. Does your activity bring about tourism development?

Source: own research (2010).

Rys. 8. Czy Państwa działalność przyczynia się do rozwoju turystyki?

Źródło: badania własne (2010).

Awareness of the impact of tourism development incentives such as folk artisans to adapt to the needs of tourists or for business expansion is confirmed.

## CONCLUSIONS

Apart from undisputed folk culture popularity, the awareness of its promoters within such phenomena as e.g. raising the EU funds, is rather small. It stems from the fact that folk craftsmen in this research are older; their average age is about 47. Their younger friends show greater tendency to tolerate the globalization of the reality. They eagerly use the grants, they feel the need of advertising or selling products and services via the Internet. The reality of registering own business is also different. The respondents, who did not do it (54%), explain it by the lack of any kind of concessions for the artists, or old-fashioned form of organisation and law, which does not take changes in the economy into consideration.

The products of our national folk art frequently find their receivers abroad. More than 50% of the respondents sell their products mainly in: Germany, Denmark, The Netherlands, Belgium, Japan and the USA. Work with the Municipal Councils and Labour Offices is impressive. More and more folk artists participate in different types of economical trainings, which affect beneficially their awareness in the issue of enterprise actions. From the conducted research, it seems that economical awareness of folk craftsmen is vague. The respondents often do not realise that the given training is financed, or they do not understand its purpose, whereas they are excellent at gaining the material and selling their products abroad. The changes after the year 1989 caused, that in young generation deep economical awareness appeared and started developing [Karwińska 2007]. The elder generation uses generally shallow awareness, or only those elements of deep awareness, which are essential for them, and they discard of the rest. The respondents perceive positive sides of the globalization, i.e.: the growth of the self-government or non-agricultural receiver interests in the folk. As a disadvantage, they perceive the increase of the competition as a result of the import of cheaper Chinese products.

As Jędrysiak [2010] notices, in present times, endangered folk professions are becoming a chance for the unemployed from the rural areas. The research shows, that promoters of the folk culture are aware of the positive influence of their own activity on the development of the tourism and decrease of the unemployment.

The ethnographers commonly agree, that the peasant' culture is and will be a nation's mainstay, and in the present times we can observe its gradual renaissance. Thanks to the globalization and commercialization we can look for certain economical aspects in it, and also examine the awareness among Polish folk artists. The actions within peasant' culture significantly contribute to the development of the tourism in particular regions, and the economic growth as well. How and to what extent? – the research on global scale will show that, but one should have hope, that economical infiltration of folk culture will not deprive it from mythical robe, but it will serve as a guideline for its promoters and a chance for its further development.

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**EKONOMICZNE ASPEKTY KULTURY LUDOWEJ JAKO ELEMENT ZRÓWNOWAŻONEGO ROZWOJU LOKALNEGO**

**Streszczenie.** Celem powyższego referatu jest ukazanie ekonomicznych aspektów kultury ludowej i przedstawienie świadomości ekonomicznej jej twórców. W obecnych czasach obserwujemy renesans kultury chłopskiej. Człowiek XXI wieku szuka enklawy i ucieczki od szeroko pojętej globalizacji w stronę tradycji, której namiastkę dają np. wyroby oparte na ludowych wzorach. Coraz bardziej popularna staje się turystyka wiejska, której elementarną częścią jest turystyka kulturowa. Wszystko to daje możliwość rozwoju propagatorom kultury ludowej (rzemieślnikom, kapelom, stowarzyszeniom itp.) na polskim rynku. W dużej mierze kapitalizm, a następnie wejście Polski do Unii Europejskiej wywarły znaczny wpływ na rozwój świadomości ekonomicznej wśród twórców i promotorów ludowości. Jednym z założeń Narodowej Strategii Rozwoju Kultury na lata 2004-2013 jest wspieranie tej części kultury narodowej, gdyż uważa się ją nie tylko za ostoję narodowości, lecz także za jeden z walorów turystycznych i determinantów rozwoju gospodarczego. Nie bez znaczenia jest zatem kształtowanie przedsiębiorczości i świadomości gospodarczej wśród twórców rzemiosła lub innej gałęzi kultury ludowej. Autorka podejmuje próbę przybliżenia i wyjaśnienia zachowań przedsiębiorczych, implikowanych przez ludowych twórców oraz ich absencję w niektórych przypadkach. Badania prowadzone na

szerszą skalę pokażą, jaka jest świadomość ekonomiczna ludności zamieszkującej w większości obszar mało zurbanizowany, trudniącej się ludową działalnością, a także to, czy i jak ta działalność przyczynia się do rozwoju gospodarczego danego regionu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** kultura ludowa, przedsiębiorczość, zachowania przedsiębiorcze, świadomość ekonomiczna, turystyka wiejska

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