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The significance of the Renaissance in Poland according to tourists' opinions on TripAdvisor concerning three major Renaissance landmarks

Abstract. The purpose of the study was to analyze the role of the Renaissance in Poland and the way it is reflected in tourists' reviews. The authors focused in particular on tourists' awareness concerning the importance of three major Renaissance landmarks located in three Polish cities, namely the Wawel Royal Castle in Cracow, the Town Hall in Poznań and the Old Town in Zamość. Methods used in the empirical part include an analysis of reviews posted on the Trip-Advisor website by Polish tourists who have visited these sites, taking into account the historical conditions underlying the development of the Renaissance in Poland and its characteristic features. The authors used the desk research method. The pilot study described in the article is an introduction to further, in-depth qualitative research. The results indicate that only 10% of all tourists' reviews referred to the Renaissance character of the sites. The reviews indicate that most tourists lack a solid knowledge of history and architecture, and were most likely not inspired to visit the analyzed sites because of their links to the Renaissance. No reviews were found demonstrating any personal background in history or suggesting that the Renaissance was the reason for visiting these particular sites. So far, references to the Renaissance in tourists' reviews of Polish landmarks have not been discussed in the literature. The article can, therefore, be regarded as a first contribution to the study of this issue.

Keywords: Renaissance, travel motivations, tourist reviews, TripAdvisor

JEL Codes: Z32, Z11, J26

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1. Introduction

The early modern period introduced a series of interesting artistic styles, including the Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque, Rococo, and Classicism - all of which drew inspiration from the achievements of past periods, including the Antiquity and Middle Ages, and creatively used them for their own purposes. The heritage of any historical period includes relics of both material and spiritual culture. The former include architectural landmarks, which very often become tourist attractions. One artistic style that made a particular impact on the image of towns is the Renaissance. It arrived in Poland in the early 16th century as an already established and mature style, and continued to develop for the next 150 years. King Sigismund I (1467-1548) from the Jagiellonian dynasty was its great advocate and promoter. The new style was disseminated in Poland by Italian artists brought to the royal court in Kraków by the wife of king Sigismund I, Italian duchess Bona Sforza, and their son, Sigismund II Augustus. It is also noteworthy that the 16th century is referred to as "the Golden Age of the Polish culture" and that the distinctive architectural masterpieces of the Polish Renaissance are important contributions to the European Renaissance heritage. Currently, as tourist attractions, they can be an inspiration to visit a certain place. Following the hypothesis concerning the importance of individualization and an increase in education levels among modern consumers [Reich, Pechlaner, Hoelzl 2006; Niezgoda 2013b, 2017], the authors pose the following question: how interested are Polish tourists in Renaissance architecture in Poland and what do they know about it? The purpose of this article is to analyze the role of the Renaissance in Poland and the way it is reflected in tourists' reviews. The emphasis is placed on tourists' awareness concerning the importance of three major landmarks located in three Polish cities, namely: the Wawel Royal Castle in Cracow, the Town Hall in Poznań and the Old Town in Zamość. The sites were selected because of their special significance in the development of Renaissance art in Poland.

2. Features and development of the Renaissance in Poland

The Renaissance spread throughout Europe in the 16th century and became a great artistic, philosophical, and religious movement. It had arisen one hundred years earlier and made direct references to the achievements of Roman and Greek Antiquity. Italian humanists followed the principle of *Homo sum*, *humani nihil a me alienum esse puto* – so the man became the center of their attention, along

with earthly life and all its beauties. This entailed a weakening of the Catholic Church's role, and therefore challenged the medieval concepts of theocentricism and universalism. In the previous era, clergymen were in charge of art and its canon. In the Renaissance, individualism took the front stage, supported by the ancient institution of patronage.

The Reformation, initiated by Martin Luther in 1517, brought about new religious doctrines and new denominations, which gained many followers among the upper classes. This led to a decrease in the number of new Catholic churches in Poland. The one exception is the collegiate church in Zamość, which was the only entirely new temple built during the "Golden Age" in the 16th century [Rożek 2015]. In most cases, old Gothic churches were renovated or their interiors adapted to the new style.

On the other hand, the number of secular and private works of art increased, including stylish estates, villas, and palaces, as well as portraits and gravestones. In the category of religious buildings, private funerary chapels – which commemorated and glorified magnates, noble families, or church officials – became particularly popular.

The Renaissance arrived in Poland – at the capital, Cracow – in the early 16th century, but its initial impact was limited to the royal court and aristocracy. The provincial part of the country remained under a heavy influence of the Gothic art for many more years. However, the new style quickly gained popularity and blended in with the local tradition. Pointed arches were replaced by classic Roman arches; lierne, cross-ribbed, and diamond vaults were abandoned and replaced by coffered ceilings; and the dome was back in style. Facades and courtyards were decorated with loggias and galleries. Attics were a characteristic feature popular in this period. These decorative walls adorning the topmost part of the facade were found on palaces, manors, townhouses, and town halls, and are strongly associated with the Polish Renaissance. Renaissance works of art were generously embellished with ornaments inspired by ancient art (astragal, pearl, palmette, arabesque, mauresque etc.). Under the influence of the Dutch Renaissance, elements such as scrolls, panoplies, herms and putti also gained popularity.

In the Polish Renaissance architecture, three major periods can be distinguished¹ [Kozakiewicz, Kozakiewicz 1976; Orzechowska-Kowalska 2003; Rożek 2015]:

- 1500-1550 the rule of Sigismund I the Old, strong Italian influences (mainly Florence), with Gothic elements blended with the Renaissance;
- 1550-1580 the period of the patronage of Sigismund II Augustus and Anna Jagiellon; the style becomes more popular in Poland and is adapted to the

 $^{^1}$ In Kozakiewicz, Kozakiewicz [1976]: 1500-1545 (early period), 1545-1575 (the style settles), 1575-1640 (bloom and slow demise).

local needs thanks to Italian artists brought to Poland from the Italian-Swiss borderland; attics become widespread and increase in grandeur;

- 1580-1640 - the period of the first elected kings, the emergence of Mannerist forms under the influence of the Dutch Renaissance (Gdańsk), as well as elements foreshadowing the next style to come - the Baroque.

Among many diverse buildings of the Polish Renaissance, two types of secular constructions prevail: manors and bourgeois townhouses. They were often constructed on the basis of existing Gothic buildings or built from scratch.

3. The Wawel Royal Castle, the Poznań Town Hall, and the Old Town in Zamość – prime examples of Renaissance architecture in Poland

When the Gothic castle in the Wawel Hill became the residence of the next king from the Jagiellonian dynasty, Sigismund I the Old, a patron well-aware of the new artistic trends, it underwent massive refurbishment as early as the first half of the 16th century, which made it the greatest Renaissance palace in this part of Europe. Under the rule of king Alexander (1501-1506), the extension of the western wing was started, which was meant to be the residence of the king's mother, Elizabeth of Austria. Sigismund I, like his brothers, was educated in the spirit of humanism by an Italian teacher, Filippo Buonaccorsi, called Callimachus. He later stayed at the court of his brother Vladislaus in Hungary, but came into contact with Renaissance art even earlier, at the time of the rule of Matthias Corvinus, the previous king of Hungary. When he assumed the Polish throne, he continued the work, which was completed in 1535. His patronage set new examples in Polish art. Beyond any doubt, this was also due to his marriage to an Italian duchess from the great house of Sforza, famous for its patronage over artists.

The residence for the royal couple in Wawel owes its shape to architects brought to Poland by the king from Florence: Francesco Fiorentino, and Bartolomeo Berrecci, as well as Benedykt Sandomierzanin [Przybyszewski 1948; Ratajczak 2011]. The work of art created under their supervision over 30 years combined elements of Gothic and Renaissance art. The real novelty of the castle were the distinctive galleries surrounding the courtyard, heavily ornamented with polichrome, which were both functional and decorative (Fig. 1). The interiors of the castle, particularly the impressive second floor, also referred to as the *piano nobile*, were completely changed. The so-called Audience Hall was adorned with a coffered ceiling featuring a set of sculpted human heads (the so-called Wawel heads), made by the German wood artist, Sebastian Tauerbach.



Fig. 1. The Wawel Royal Castle Courtyard

Source: Izabela Wyszowska. Private collection.

After the reconstruction of their main residence, the Jagiellonians went on to refurbish their castles in Vilnius, Warsaw, and Niepołomice. What the royals did in terms of bringing the Italian trends to Poland was widely acclaimed, and subsequently copied by Polish noblemen, who built or rebuilt their estates to resemble the Wawel castle. Examples include properties in Ogrodzieniec, Pieskowa Skała, Kurozwęki, Książ Wielki, and later in the period of Mannerism, in Krasiczyn or Baranów Sandomierski.

Along with the refurbishment of the Royal Castle, the king decided to build a funerary chapel of the Jagiellonian house (the so-called Sigismund's Chapel) next to the Kraków cathedral (Fig. 2). The work was supervised by Bartolomeo Berrecci, and the resulting building was considered a gem of the Florentine Renaissance north of the Alps, and a second (after the Wawel Castle) archetype strongly affecting Polish architecture. Both the small square building with a dome, magnificent interiors and rich ornamentation, and the double-storied gravestone housed inside, typical for the Polish Renaissance and initiated in Wawel by Sigismund I and his son Sigismund Augustus, inspired a number of bishops, magnates,



Fig. 2. Sigismund's Chapel. The Wawel Cathedral

Source: Izabela Wyszowska. Private collection.

noblemen, and even rich burghers, who copied the royals on a large scale. In the years 1580-1620, almost a hundred funerary chapels similar to this one were built in Poland. Examples include the Firlej chapel in Bejsce, the Kościelecki chapel in Kościelec near Inowrocław, and the chapel of bishop Padniewski in Wawel and bishop Uchański in Łowicz, to name a few [Kaczorowski 1991; Łoziński 1973]. In Greater Poland alone, one can find many examples of inspirations drawn both from the Sigismund Chapel and the form of the Sigismund's' gravestone (the most notable example is the Górka family gravestone in the Poznań cathedral, made by an Italian sculptor working in Kraków, Girolamo Canavesi, who decorated the cornice of the gravestone with his elaborate signature).

In the second half of the 16th century, artists from the borderland of Lombardy and Switzerland became the dominant group among Italian artists working in Poland. They came from three small states – the cantons of Ticino and Grisons, and the area near Lake Como north of Milan, so they were referred to by their origin: Ticinese, Grigioni, and Comaschi. They emigrated from their native land to seek employment throughout Europe. The Comaschi specialized

in architecture and sculpture, and practically monopolized these services. They worked in Poland until the times of Enlightenment, and made an impact on the Polish Mannerism, Baroque, and Classicism [Kaczorowski 1991]. One notable Comasco was Giovanni Battista di Quadro from Lugano, who came to Poznań and performed the reconstruction of the Town Hall in the years 1550-1560. In the Renaissance, reconstructions of Gothic town halls were common, with a varying number of new Renaissance elements and decorations added to the existing structures. The Poznań Town Hall exemplifies this strategy, and other examples can be found in Chełmno, Szydłowiec, Tarnów, and Sandomierz.

G.B. Quadro elongated the original Gothic structure of the Poznań Town Hall towards the west, giving it its rectangular shape, and added a third story with an attic. He decorated the facade with a beautiful three-leveled loggia, inspired by the landmark of ancient Rome – the Colosseum (Fig. 3). In his work, he followed an architectural treatise by Sebastiano Serlio, which provided many solutions used during the reconstruction. Owing to G.B Quadro, the interiors of the Poznań Town Hall gained a luxurious, impressive design, including the magnificent vault in the Renaissance Hall, also referred to as the Great Hall. Imagery on the facade of the Town Hall corresponded with the iconography of the vault, portraying the essential knowledge of the Renaissance, with heraldic, mythological, biblical, and astrological motifs. The meaning of these portrayals is the source of heated debates. It is accepted that they depict bravery as the most important virtue, needed to provide the city and the country with prosperity, and rewarded with an afterlife in heaven (paradise). The author of this artistic form was, in all likelihood, the mayor of Poznań of the time, Kasper Goski - known for his interest in astrology [Pazder (ed.) 2003: 72]. The well-preserved vault is a unique decoration of the former seat of municipal authorities.

The Central European model for towns was shaped in the late Middle Ages, in accordance with the principles of the so-called Magdeburg Law. Until the 18th century, towns were built based on a plan and institutions developed in the Middle Ages, during the rule of Piast and Jagiellonian dynasties. However, in Renaissance Italy, a new concept for towns was born, called *citta ideale*. In Poland, the "ideal town" concept was implemented on a large scale by Jan Zamoyski, the Grand Hetman and Chancellor of the Crown, one of the most prominent characters in the history of Poland. Having acquired wealth and position in Poland, he decided to erect a new town as the capital of his estate – Zamość. Built from scratch in 1580, by the late 16th century, it had become one of the most important economic and cultural centers of the country. Bernardo Morando from Venice was commissioned to design the town. He managed to achieve a balance between a harmonious architectural arrangement and functionality required in a town. It is in the shape of a pentagon with a "chessboard" composition and a square palace of its founder within. Two great axes were created as transport routes. One led



Fig. 3. Poznań Town Hall

Source: Izabela Wyszowska. Private collection.

to the Zamoyski residence through the market with the Town Hall and auxiliary markets (Salt and Water markets), and the second – from the collegiate church to the Zamoyski Academy [Orzechowska-Kowalska 2003].

The life of people in town was centered around the square market, which was surrounded by arcaded townhouses with stores on the ground floor. Houses were capped with impressive attics (the most interesting examples include the Tellani, Link, and "Armenian" townhouses). As opposed to the medieval market, the central part of the square in Zamość remained empty. The Town Hall, decorated with

a high tower, was incorporated into a row of townhouses (Fig. 4). Many Poles, Armenians, and Russians came to the new town. Zamość became a strong trade center, a modern, unconquered fortress, the residence of the landowner and the capital of his estate. Its collegiate church, built in a Mannerist style, was also the final resting place for the Zamoyski family, and its unique and decorative interiors were a source of inspiration for many.

The above-mentioned landmarks – the refurbished Wawel Castle, the Poznań Town Hall and the "ideal town" of Zamość, were an important artistic contribution to the cultural heritage of the Renaissance in Poland, and shaped the subsequent stages of its development. The Old Town in Cracow (including the Wawel Castle) and the Old Town in Zamość are included in the prestigious UNESCO World Heritage List and are therefore particularly attractive for tourists. But the Poznań Town Hall also has high artistic value, with one of the first modern facades in Poland, and attracts large numbers of tourists to the capital of Greater Poland. It is located in the city center, and apart from its Renaissance beauty, it



Fig. 4. The market in Zamość

Source: Izabela Wyszowska. Private collection.

features daily "Poznań goats" shows, which are a symbol of the city and a distinctive tourist attraction.

The extent to which tourists are prepared to appreciate these gems of the Polish Renaissance, how aware they are of their significance, and how motivated they are to travel in order to see them with their own eyes, is demonstrated by the conducted study.

4. The Renaissance in travel motivations and its reflection in tourists' reviews – empirical evidence

The contemporary tourist market is characterized by individualization – tourists seek to satisfy their travel needs according to their own interests [Butler 2006; Reich, Pechlaner, Hoelzl 2006; Niezgoda 2013b; 2017]. The described Renaissance historical sites are tourist attractions, which means they influence people's willingness to visit a certain location. One can perceive them as "motivators", factors that provide a sense satisfaction with their presence [Kozioł 2013: 136] For tourists, such satisfaction arises when they visit their desired destination. Thus, this desire is rooted in the human system of needs and the process of motivation. For the purpose of the present article, it can be assumed that people who post reviews on social media want to share information with other users (potential tourists). Therefore, it can be expected that a voluntary and spontaneous review is based on a personal perception of the visited location, includes the most striking impressions formed during the visit, and covers those features of the site which they consider the most important. The purpose of analysis undertaken in the study was to describe the evident content of reviews posted by tourists [Szczepaniak 2012].

The analysed reviews were posted on Trip Advisor, one of the most popular social media websites. Such data can be used for qualitative analysis of the content and intentions of the author [Zajadacz 2017; Nowacki 2017; Niezgoda 2017].

5. Study design

In order to verify how the Renaissance affects various people, tourists were selected as a study group. A non-reactive research method was selected for the study, specifically the *desk research* method. Given its exploratory in character, the study aimed at recording facts rather than codifying or valuating data. The

authors primarily focused on qualitative analysis of the reviews, i.e. examining authors' intentions as well as recording frequently occurring categories and ones that were missing.

The analysis only included reviews posted by individual tourists, in order to avoid bias caused by the presence of a tour guide. The sample consisted of 300 most recent reviews posted before the start of data collection (August 12-15, 2019), 100 per every landmark: the Wawel Royal Castle in Cracow, the Poznań Town Hall, and the Old Town in Zamość. It was assumed that for the purpose of qualitative content analysis the sample should be large enough to reflect motivations and knowledge of respondents and does not have to represent characteristics of the population [Flick 2011] and that the researcher defines the population and selects instruments for collecting and analyzing data that are fit for the research purpose and the questions posed. At the same time, in this kind of study, there is no need to focus on the characteristics of respondents [Pasikowski 2015; Szczepaniak 2012]. Therefore, the only relevant information about respondents was the fact that they visited, on their own, one of the three above-mentioned landmarks and posted a review in Polish on the Trip Advisor website.

The content of a review reflects the significance of elements noticed by its author. In order to avoid the impact of seasonality on respondents' impressions, we collected reviews posted over the period of one calendar year (August 1, 2018 – August 1, 2019). 100 reviews about each of the three landmarks were selected.

6. Results

It was assumed that tourists who visited any of the three sites described their impressions according to their interests, knowledge and education, and therefore each entry reflects their main impressions and suggestions for other tourists who would like to visit the site. It was found that only 5% of the 100 analyzed reviews of the Wawel Royal Castle include any reference to the Renaissance. Among those, three mention Queen Bona, and one mentions Italy. The castle is beautiful thanks to Queen Bona, it has some elements characteristic not only of the Renaissance, but also of northern Italy.

With respect to the Poznań Town Hall, references to the Renaissance appear in 11% of the reviews, including four mentions in the title of the review: The Renaissance town hall (2), A magnificent, spectacular and without any doubt the most beautiful Renaissance town hall in Poland; One of the most beautiful Renaissance landmarks in Poland.

4 reviews of the Poznań Town Hall, mention the architect, G.B. Quadro, and 3 contain a reference to his Italian origins. In one review, the author describes the

architectural (Renaissance) features of the Town Hall in detail and with evident architectural knowledge.

Among the three analyzed sites, the Old Town in Zamość (along with the Old Town in Cracow) is listed in the UNESCO World Heritage List, and maybe this was why the number of reviews including a reference to the Renaissance was the highest (14%) for this site. 5 reviews include references to the Renaissance in the title: Renaissance (2), the Renaissance gem (2), This is a real gem of Italian Renaissance. Tourists correctly associate the style of the site with the Italian Renaissance.

5 reviews mention Italy, and 3 contain a direct reference in the title (e.g. A beautiful town in Italian style, The Florence of the north). In this case, it is easy to trace the link between the visited Renaissance sites and the birthplace of this style – Florence. The reviews do not contain any references to the architect (Bernardo Morando), but 6 do include the phrase Zamość is the ideal town, which was the goal for both its builders and founders, and is also the reason for its inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The analyzed reviews of Zamość are superficial, and none seems to be based on solid historical knowledge.

7. Conclusions, discussion, limitations

The introduction of the most important elements of the Italian Renaissance and humanist ideas in Poland undoubtedly fostered the flourishing of culture, science, and arts, and affected the perception of religious tolerance and internal peace in the country. In this period, the role of the Polish Commonwealth in Europe significantly increased. The 16th century is referred to as "the Golden Age of the Polish culture" [Knaflewska, Kot 2008]. The above-mentioned distinctive masterpieces of the Polish Renaissance architecture are important contributions to the European Renaissance heritage. Now, they attract tourists, who can (with a lesser or greater degree of awareness) appreciate the works of the Renaissance artists.

The presented results indicate that only 10% of all reviews in the sample referred to the Renaissance features of the sites: including 5 reviews of the Wawel Royal Castle in Cracow, 11 reviews of the Poznań Town Hall, and 14 reviews of the Old Town in Zamość. The reviews indicate that the vast majority of tourists do not have a solid knowledge of history or architecture, or that they were most likely not inspired to visit the analyzed sites because of their links to the Renaissance. After a thorough analysis of the reviews it can be concluded that most tourists posted their reviews under the influence of emotions and experiences, often focusing on issues concerning the service, restaurant menus, facilities, or general

ambiance. No reviews were found demonstrating tourists' personal background in history or suggesting that the Renaissance was the reason for visiting these particular sites. However, it can be concluded that by visiting popular historical landmarks, the tourists engaged in cultural tourism, which is characterized by a willingness to learn more about people, their lifestyle, arts, and architecture [Panich et al. 2014: 49]. Cultural tourism involves many senses and is part of "experience tourism" [Niezgoda 2013b; Hall, Zeppel, 1990]. Therefore, descriptions that involve an emotional approach and personal experiences of tourists cannot be ignored [Niezgoda, Nowacki 2020]. It is exemplified by an excerpt from a review of Zamość: *It's like you go back in time. A completely out-of-this-world experience*.

Modern tourists want to see and experience as much as possible [Niezgoda 2013a], but their consumerist and aesthetic attitudes are mixed. This affects their opinion on landmarks and tourist attractions. According to the concept developed by William Gartner [1993], the image of a place is composed of the following elements:

- the cognitive element: knowledge regarding the place,
- the emotional (affective) element: the feelings towards the place,
- the behavioral element: the willingness to undertake certain actions related to the place.

The present study indicates that the image of the analyzed sites in the sampled reviews was dominated by the affective element. Owing to superficiality and speed of information transfer, modern tourists replace the cognitive element (knowledge about the place) with the emotional one. It must also be noted that in studies based on content analysis, a freedom of interpretation is the natural consequence of the instability of meanings in the written text, however this does not preclude an in-depth reflection on the content and character of the mass media texts [Szczepaniak 2012].

The authors are aware that the reliability of presented findings is limited by the spontaneous and hasty nature of reviews and the general overabundance of information in the media, especially in the Internet [Niezgoda 2013b]. Similar studies are also burdened with the so-called "humanistic coefficient" [Znaniecki 1934], since they are based on data collected for another purpose than what authors of these studies had in mind, and therefore are affected by experiences of data providers (in our case, tourists posting reviews on Trip Advisor).

The three sites were selected as most representative examples for a practical examination of the research problem addressed in the article. Because the study was not strictly quantitative, the authors did not analyse any patterns in different categories of statements made by particular groups of respondents. Moreover, when an Internet website is used as a source of information, it is often difficult to obtain precise information about respondents. An in-depth analysis of motivations of particular individuals would probably lead to more specific conclusions.

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Znaczenie renesansu w Polsce w opinii turystów na portalu TripAdvisor na przykładzie Krakowa, Poznania i Zamościa

Abstrakt. Celem artykułu jest analiza roli renesansu w Polsce i jej odzwierciedlenia w opiniach turystów. W szczególności skoncentrowano się na świadomości turystów dotyczącej znaczenia i rangi trzech najważniejszych zabytków tej epoki, które wybrano dla potrzeb artykułu (Zamek Królewski na Wawelu, Ratusz w Poznaniu oraz Stare Miasto w Zamościu). Na tle historycznych uwarunkowań rozwoju renesansu i jego cech w Polsce, w części empirycznej artykułu dokonano analizy opinii na portalu TripAdvisor polskich turystów odwiedzających te obiekty. Autorki zastosowały metodę badawczą desk research (analizę danych zastanych). Badanie ma charakter pilotażowy, a artykuł stanowi wstęp do dalszych pogłębionych badań jakościowych. Wyniki wskazują, że tylko 10% wśród wszystkich badanych opinii turystów odnosiło się do renesansowego charakteru tych obiektów. Zatem jako konkluzję można przyjąć, że na podstawie opinii nie można stwierdzić, że turyści posiadają rzetelną wiedzę historyczną i architektoniczną ani że renesans stanowił inspirację do odwiedzenia analizowanych miejsc. Zasadniczo nie znaleziono komentarzy, które świadczyłyby o przygotowaniu historycznym, a przede wszystkim o znaczeniu epoki odrodzenia w wyborze obiektów jako motywacji podróży turystycznej. W literaturze dotyczącej opinii turystów nie poruszano dotąd odniesień do zabytków renesansu w Polsce. Artykuł może mieć zatem charakter przyczynkarski do analizy tego problemu.

Słowa kluczowe: renesans, motywacje podróży, opinie turystów, TripAdvisor



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