

Chapter 8

Attitudes of Tourists Towards Hoteliers' Aid for Refugees From Ukraine in Krynica–Zdrój: A Case Study

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the chapter, three hotels' representatives and touristic town of Krynica Zdrój representatives were interviewed to find out about the context of exceptional in numbers hosting of Ukrainian refugees by local hoteliers. The results were used to conclude tourists' attitudes towards the humanitarian choice by the hoteliers. Krynica Zdrój is a small touristic location in South-East Poland, not too far from Ukrainian borders, which is helping on a large scale to accommodate Ukrainians, but nevertheless is vulnerable to tourist attitudes; before the Covid pandemic Polish tourists tended to choose the location more and more often, generating income to hotels and town. The results show, among others, that the situation and also tourists' attitudes are determined by political bias, mixed feelings towards charity efforts and possible media inflammatory coverage. The study, tackling a current issue with global dimensions, contributes to the development of emergency situations culture in the hospitality sector and building of good practices that could be used by hoteliers during emergencies.

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of war in Ukraine on February 24, 2022 quickly led to an understandable exodus of civilians to neighbouring countries not at war. According to UNHCR data, Poland accepted the largest number of refugees, around 1.5 million (United Nations, 2023). Government and private efforts (families, associations) intertwine to provide assistance to refugees. An important element was and is the help of the hotel industry. The owners of the hotel infrastructure managed to offer accommodation to the fleeing residents

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of Ukraine in a short time. According to a survey conducted by the Polish Hotel Industry Chamber of Commerce in April 2022, 60% of hotels in Poland welcome refugees, offering 70,000 overnight stays in March alone, including 41%, i.e. an average of 8 nights a day for free (Izba Gospodarcza, 2022). Volunteer assistance has been supported by the government and local government for hoteliers¹.

The subject of accommodating refugees in hotels must have been and is sensitive for hoteliers in Poland, because apart from humanitarian considerations, they must also take into account economic considerations (keeping a business, earning a living, paying tax and legal obligations, and paying salaries to employees), as well as those related to maintaining a good brand and interests among tourists – hotel guests. Shortly after the outbreak of the war, in April and May (Easter and the so-called May long weekend), the traditional dates of rest of the Poles came, when hotels in tourist and health resorts fill up for the first time in the new year, announcing the opening of the season. Shortly after, at the end of June, came the challenge of providing accommodation for holiday tourists, who often booked hotels in attractive destinations well in advance, but nevertheless did not shy away from helping refugees at the beginning of the war. It was the first-post pandemic holiday, so the hotel industry and the tourists themselves hoped for returning back to normal. As even the indicative data and context of 2022 indicate, when the newly arrived refugees from Ukraine have not yet managed to “get back on their feet”, secure their income and thus accommodation on the free market by renting apartments and in that circumstances the hotel accommodation was still needed, it must have been a year that revealed certain attitudes of tourists – hotel guests towards the humane choice of hoteliers.

The goal of this chapter is to examine the attitudes of tourists towards the hoteliers' helping the refugees and to understand if and how it affected and can affect the hospitality industry. The research was executed in one of the most famous tourist and health resorts in Poland, located relatively close to Ukraine, where hoteliers have hosted and still host Ukrainians on an exceptional scale even in Polish conditions.

BACKGROUND

Krynica is a 10,000 spa and tourist town located in south-eastern Poland in Beskid Sądecki, about 330 km from Lviv in Ukraine and about 230 km from the Polish-Ukrainian border. The spa properties of the local springs were recognized already in the 18th century, and in the 19th century spa activities were carried out in facilities built for this purpose. It is also a mountain tourist town, known for its hiking trails and winter sports. The following mountains are the attractions: Jaworzyna Krynicka, the Park Mountain, as well as cyclical events: Festival of Jan Kiepura, the Running Festival or the Economic Forum, referred to as the “Polish Davos”.

Historically, Krynica was under the so-called Austrian partition when Poland was erased from the pages of history from the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 20th century, and more specifically, it belonged to the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria, functioning in the years 1771-1918 under the Habsburg Monarchy, and then, after 1967 of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. During the First World War, after the escape of the authorities of Galicia and Lodomeria from the Russians from the capital in Lviv, Krynica was even a substitute capital of the Kingdom for some time. As history shows, Krynica is very close to Ukraine in terms of common history and socio-political experience from the past, which may explain the attitudes of the local authorities, hoteliers and the population. Let another example of this not only geographical proximity be the fact that the name of the city also functions in the Lemkos

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