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The subject of this dissertation is the evolution of the hostel market in Krakow over the years 2001-2020 and changes in the profile and behavior of clients of Krakow's hostels during this period. Backpack tourism, which has been developing dynamically around the world over the last few decades, has also become an important segment of Krakow's tourist economy. Among the many publications in Poland devoted to the hotel market, only a few treatises focus on the issues of the hostel and backpackers market. The presented dissertation attempts to fill this gap in the research.

The main objective of the dissertation is to investigate and characterize the tourist behavior of clients of Krakow's hostels. Ten specific objectives have also been identified, including:

- assessment of the process of changes in the market of accommodation services provided by hostels in Krakow over the years 2002-2020;
- creating a customer profile of hostel services in Krakow and analyzing changes in this profile over the years 2006-2020.

The following main hypothesis was formulated in this publication: "The behavior of consumers using accommodation services in hostels in Krakow is significantly different from the behavior of other customers in the tourist market". Additionally, nine partial hypotheses were formulated.

In order to answer the research questions and verify the hypotheses, empirical research was conducted on tourists staying overnight in Krakow hostels. The research was based on the author's many years of entrepreneurial practice, running a network of hostels in Krakow and other locations. Surveys were carried out in the years 2006-2020 on samples ranging annually from 450 to 1248 respondents (a total number of 8686 people), staying overnight in six Krakow hostels. The collected data was subjected to basic statistical analysis. Chi-square independence tests were performed for selected issues. The C&RT classification tree model was used to illustrate the segments of tourists staying in hostels.

The following PhD thesis is theoretical, empirical and interdisciplinary. The first three chapters, based on numerous Polish and foreign publications, focus on theory, addressing issues such as: classification of accommodation facilities, legal issues related to hotels, characteristics of accommodation facilities in Poland, the origin of the "hostel" as an accommodation facility, models of consumers, especially in the market of tourist services, typology of tourists, history and genesis of backpacker tourism. The third chapter also covers the presentation of Krakow as a tourist destination. The fourth presents the research method, and Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are devoted to the description of the hostel market in Krakow and the presentation of the results of the empirical research.

The obtained research results confirmed most of the hypotheses, namely the continuous evolution of the hostel market, changes in the profile and behavior of the customers who use them, as well as significant differences between the customers of hostels and the customers of other collective accommodation facilities. These results, as well as conclusions from the analysis of supply changes in the hostel market in Krakow, have a practical dimension and can be used by entrepreneurs, potential investors and public entities in order to optimize processes and maximize profits, and should prove helpful in the rational management of the tourism economy in Krakow.