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### TOURISM DURING WARTIME – CHANGES IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY OF BEREHOVE

**Abstract.** Currently (2025), Ukraine has become synonymous with global social and scientific interest, as the majority of countries have been following the events unfolding there since 2022. Consequently, numerous studies have already examined the impacts of military operations, primarily addressing economic and human losses based on the available knowledge at the time. Within these deficits, significant changes in tourism are also evident. Wartime generates multifaceted impacts on the territories of the warring countries and induces notable transformations in neighbouring ones as well.

A realistic picture of these conditions is usually obtained through comprehensive surveys conducted after the cessation of hostilities. Although the war in Ukraine has not yet ended, sufficient time has elapsed to allow for the exploration and identification of essential changes. The primary aim of the research was to reveal the current operational conditions of hospitality establishments in Berehove and to assess their



future prospects in light of wartime transformations. As a research method, structured interviews have been employed, using a questionnaire to uncover the actual conditions. The findings paint an intriguing picture; despite the expected negative impacts of military activities, the research indicates that not all changes have been entirely detrimental. Some establishments suffer severe downturns in traffic, while others report increased activity. The significant differences between these outcomes are attributable to numerous factors, which will be analysed in detail in this study.

Beyond immediate operational effects, the study also considers the wider social and economic context of Berehove. The war has altered mobility patterns and local demand, creating new challenges and opportunities for hospitality businesses. Some establishments have adapted successfully to changing clientele, including internally displaced persons and temporary workers, demonstrating resilience and flexibility. These observations suggest that wartime transformations are not uniformly negative, and local responses vary according to resources, networks, and strategic decisions. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for evaluating the current state and future prospects of tourism in the region.

**Keywords:** war, tourism, resilience, forced tourism, Transcarpathia.

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## **ТУРИЗМ ПІД ЧАС ВІЙНИ – ЗМІНИ В ЗАКЛАДАХ СФЕРИ ГОСТИННОСТІ БЕРЕГОВА**

**Анотація.** На сьогоднішній день (2025 р.) Україна стала синонімом глобальної соціальної та наукової зацікавленості, оскільки більшість країн



стежать за подіями, що відбуваються там з 2022 року. Відповідно, численні дослідження вже вивчали впливи військових дій, головним чином зосереджуючись на економічних і людських втратах на основі доступних на той час даних. У цьому контексті також помітні суттєві зміни в туристичній сфері. Війна створює багатогранні впливи на території країн-учасниць конфлікту та спричиняє значні трансформації у сусідніх регіонах.

Реалістичну картину цих умов зазвичай отримують через комплексні опитування після завершення бойових дій. Хоча війна в Україні ще не закінчилася, минуло достатньо часу, щоб дослідити та виявити важливі зміни. Основною метою дослідження було виявити поточні умови функціонування закладів гостинності в Берегові та оцінити їхні перспективи в світлі трансформацій, спричинених війною. Для збору даних використовувалися структуровані інтерв'ю з опитувальником, щоб з'ясувати реальні умови. Результати малюють цікаву картину: незважаючи на очікувані негативні наслідки військових дій, дослідження показує, що не всі зміни були повністю шкідливими. Деякі заклади зазнали значного зниження відвідуваності, тоді як інші повідомляють про збільшення активності. Значні відмінності між цими результатами пояснюються численними факторами, які будуть детально проаналізовані у дослідженні.

Окрім безпосередніх операційних наслідків, дослідження також враховує ширший соціально-економічний контекст Берегова. Війна змінила схеми мобільності та локальний попит, створюючи нові виклики й можливості для закладів гостинності. Деякі установи успішно адаптувалися до зміни клієнтури, включаючи внутрішньо переміщених осіб та тимчасових працівників, демонструючи стійкість і гнучкість. Ці спостереження свідчать про те, що трансформації, спричинені війною, не є однорідно негативними, а локальні реакції різняться залежно від ресурсів, мереж і стратегічних рішень. Розуміння цих динамік є ключовим для оцінки поточного стану та майбутніх перспектив туризму в регіоні.

**Ключові слова:** війна, туризм, стійкість, вимушений туризм, Закарпаття

**Problem statement.** Scientific research is considered most effective when the chosen topic and its related circumstances arouse interest among the readership. In many cases, the success of a study depends on the author's style and expressive ability. In contrast, in others, the chosen subject matter and the associated body of knowledge play the key role.

The ongoing war in Ukraine for several years has provided sufficient grounds to attract strong global attention in both political and economic arenas. These events occurred unexpectedly, as few anticipated the emergence of a potential buffer zone in Eastern and Central Europe in the 21st century. Nevertheless, the existence of military



operations has entirely transformed the established order in Ukraine and the neighbouring states.

Nothing illustrates the adaptability and resilience of tourism under wartime conditions more clearly than its immediate reaction to the crisis. As early as 2022, disaster tourists appeared in some parts of the country, drawn to areas most severely affected by the Russian invasion (Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel, and Borodyanka). Capital Tours, a Kyiv-based travel company, was the first to organise tours in these locations. According to the company, these excursions aimed to provide visitors with a first-hand understanding of the realities of war and served as a form of shock therapy. Participants included military analysts, journalists, and even conventional tourists. Inevitably, war tourism provoked resentment among some Ukrainians [1], yet this unusual manifestation of tourism is employed worldwide.

This research focuses on the westernmost region of Ukraine, Transcarpathia, specifically examining the changes induced by the war in hospitality establishments in Berehove. Although the investigation does not employ a representative sample, it provides an accurate portrayal of current conditions based on data supplied by various types of hospitality businesses.

**Literature Review.** Tourism has grown into a leading sector of the economy in many countries worldwide [2]. Its development potential, productivity, and rapid adaptability to social changes are unparalleled. Although its trajectory is generally positive, it is also vulnerable to negative influences such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, pandemics, and *wars*. Recent crises have triggered responses within the sector that demonstrate its regenerative capacity, increasingly in an inclusive, innovative, and sustainable manner [3]. Despite temporary setbacks, tourism development has never ceased entirely. Following transitional periods, the revival of tourism in various regions and countries underscores its strong *resilience* [4; 5; 6].

Numerous countries worldwide are plagued by internal political conflicts leading to civil wars or other armed struggles. When such disputes escalate to an international level, inter-state confrontations occur [7]. If these disputes manifest in armed clashes, they are defined as wars [7]. Among contemporary conflicts, the Afghan war claimed the most lives, while the Russian-Ukrainian war has dominated since 2022 [8]. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains the world's longest-running hotspot, dating back to 1948 [9].

Military offensives invariably entail risks, altering the safety indicators of tourism in affected areas. Even under normal circumstances, a destination's perceived safety plays a critical role in its tourism appeal [10]. Significant changes in population movements are also observed in these areas; outward migration from the given region becomes characteristic.

According to a study published by the European Travel Commission (ETC) in September 2024 - projected on the basis of the Russian-Ukrainian war - a prolonged



conflict could result in losses of up to USD 14 billion in the global tourism industry, based on 2022 conditions [11]. Although military operations are confined to the territories of two countries, the interconnected nature of the global economy results in revenue and traffic declines worldwide – overall, a tourism deficit is generated. As a tourism destination, Russia and Ukraine account for only 4% of European international tourist arrivals, and consequently, revenue amounts to merely 1% [11].

Hall and colleagues (2017) wrote about the stability of complex systems such as economies, ecosystems, societies, and the tourism sectors associated with them, emphasising the vulnerability of the tourism industry in their work [5]. However, for the seamless operation of tourism, the other side of the coin cannot be ignored. The examination of the resilience of tourism organisations against crises is also considered necessary [12], as their professional work is indispensable for initiating cooperation. For instance, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in collaboration with other communities, formulated recommendations after the decline of the coronavirus pandemic aimed at reviving the tourism sector. These proposals not only support the recovery of the industry but primarily aim to achieve a more sustainable future in tourism. The recommendations are grouped around three key areas: crisis management and impact mitigation; stimulation and acceleration of recovery; and preparation for the future [13]. This crisis management system can also be applied to wars.

Following a crisis, it is observed that tourism is unable to demonstrate growth as quickly as other industries once the event has ended. This is primarily because, during a prolonged conflict, travellers lose their loyalty to a particular destination and seek new ones. In many cases, they do not return to the previous destination even after the crisis ends. Additionally, it is common that tourism enterprises lack sufficient capital, making rapid recovery unattainable [14; 15; 16].

An excellent example of post-crisis revival is demonstrated by the fact that, after the 2014 conflict in Eastern Ukraine, Ukrainian tourism once again embarked on a path of development. However, this positive outlook proved to be short-lived, as COVID-19 completely halted the slow progress of tourism. Subsequently, the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in early 2022 entirely impeded further development of tourism [17].

According to the 2021 analysis of the Oeconomus Economic Research Foundation (*Helyzetkép a turizmus 2020-as évéről*), the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the state of tourism back to levels seen nearly a decade earlier. Furthermore, the economic and energy crisis caused by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict also exerts a strong influence on the tourism sector, particularly in European countries. The most significant factor to be mentioned is that the rising price of petrol increased transportation and travel costs, thereby intensifying social uncertainty [18;]. Based on UNWTO data from 2024, the destinations most affected – apart from the warring Russia and Ukraine – include the Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, Latvia, and Finland. In Moldova, for instance, the number of flights participating in air traffic decreased by



69% since 24 February 2022 compared to 2019 levels. The same indicator for Slovenia is -42%, for Latvia -38%, and for Finland -36% [19; 20; 21].

The Russian-Ukrainian war has severely affected Ukrainian tourist destinations; nevertheless, there are regions where tourism has remained operational. Based on the information provided by the Ukrainian statistical database – often described as incomplete – it can be concluded that the sector continues to generate profit despite the war. The clearest evidence of this is that commercial and non-commercial accommodation establishments paid 39% more in taxes in 2022 compared to the previous year (although the disruptive influence of COVID-19 can be observed here, as its impact on tourism was still significant in 2021). This increase is largely attributable to the heightened demand for temporary accommodation in certain regions among those fleeing the war zone. Data from travel agencies also indicate growth, as a 41% increase in contributions to the state budget was recorded compared to 2021. However, some analysts believe that these statistics may have been positively influenced by pre-booked trips purchased by Ukrainians prior to the outbreak of the war [22].

According to data from the State Tourism Development Agency, a significant portion of Ukraine's recreational areas is either considered active war zones or occupied territory. However, the western and central parts of the country are regarded as safe regions; therefore, many tour operators specialising in domestic tourism resumed their operations in these areas. As a result, tourism has increased in Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Transcarpathia, and Cherkasy regions. This is primarily explained by the favourable security perception of the aforementioned regions. Among them, Transcarpathia stands out as the safest region, earning the designation “island of peace” since no combat operations have taken place there since the outbreak of the war (the region has been struck only once, affecting an electrical substation and a railway station). Despite Transcarpathia's security advantage, more people chose the Ivano-Frankivsk region as a temporary place of residence, mainly due to the presence of larger cities and a wholly Slavic environment [23; 24].

Inbound travel by foreigners did not cease after the outbreak of the war. According to data from the Ukrainian State Border Guard Service, 825,000 foreign nationals entered Ukraine in January–February 2022, 280,000 during March–April, and 710,000 between May and August. The main countries of origin were Hungary, Romania, Poland, and Moldova. Smaller numbers arrived from the United States, Belarus, Turkey, Lithuania, the United Kingdom, Germany, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. In most cases, the primary destination of travellers was the capital city. The majority of foreigners entered Ukraine for private purposes or to provide assistance [25].

**Research Aim.** The aim of the study was to explore how the ongoing military events in Ukraine have altered the tourism characteristics of Transcarpathia. The extent and direction of these changes were sought to be identified, and the losses brought



about by the hostilities were intended to be highlighted. Additionally, the operational conditions under which local hospitality businesses currently function were aimed to be determined, and their prospects for *resilience* within the sector were intended to be assessed once the negative influences on tourism cease. Research Methods: the most effective approach for uncovering present conditions is through surveys and interviews. In this study, we combined these methods by conducting structured interviews based on a questionnaire comprising three thematic sections:

1. Questions concerning the operation of hospitality establishments;
2. Questions regarding future prospects;
3. General questions about personal data.

The research was conducted within a relatively small area, focusing on the city of Berehove (see Figure 1), the administrative centre of Berehove Raion and a key hub for the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia.



Fig. 1. Location of Berehove

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Subcarpathia\\_Ukraine\\_districts\\_en.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Subcarpathia_Ukraine_districts_en.svg)  
(accessed: 2025)

During the secondary research, the tourism of locations directly affected by armed conflict (e.g., Israel, Afghanistan) was examined; however, the study was conducted in a region that, although located within a country at war, was not physically affected by the hostilities, and only their socio-economic consequences were experienced.

In the selection of interviewees, the primary criterion was that prominent individuals within the respective hospitality establishments should be engaged, namely the owners or managers, as the most comprehensive and accurate insight regarding the establishments could be provided by them.



The interview process allowed for personal conversation, so in addition to the narrowly defined, pre-formulated questions, issues that emerged during the discussions were also addressed, resulting in more nuanced findings. The data from 17 structured interviews were entered into Microsoft Excel, and the aggregated results were analyzed.

**Presentation of the main material.** Among the most important findings, it was observed that 70% of the hospitality establishments considered their operations to be least effective in the period following the outbreak of COVID-19, while 12% indicated that the post-war months were the most challenging. Only 32% of the establishments reported a negligible decrease in revenue. According to the respondents, the customer base of 50% of the establishments underwent significant changes, with 19% clearly serving primarily domestic Ukrainian clientele.

The 17 hospitality establishments (Figure 2), as previously mentioned, possessed diverse profiles and were located in various parts of Berehove. Some establishments were favourably situated along transit routes, whereas others occupied more peripheral locations.

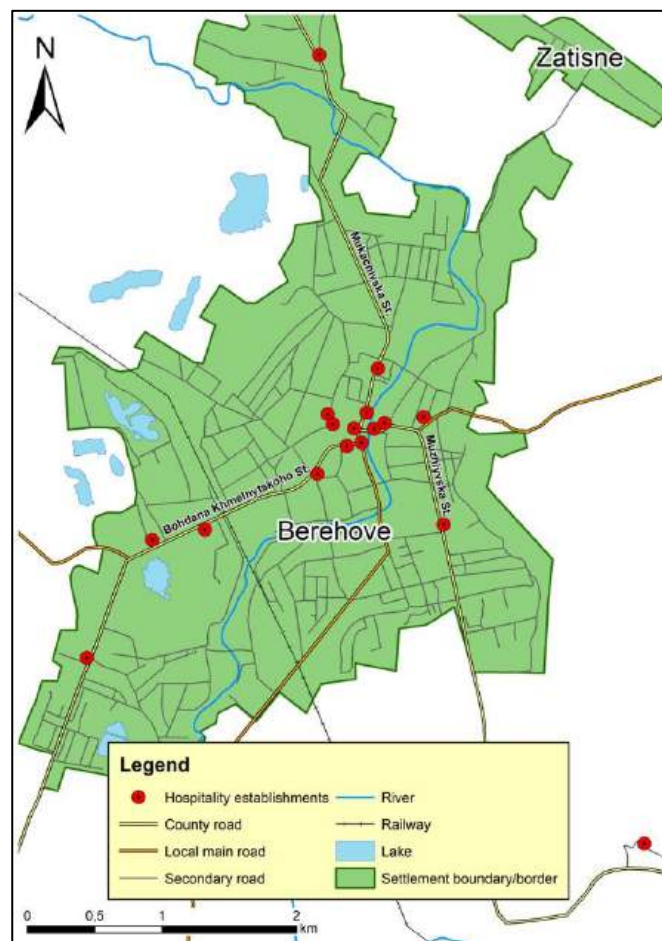


Fig.2. Location of the hospitality establishments



The quality and nature of their clientele may also be relevant in this context. Among the visited locations, hotel-restaurant type establishments represented the largest proportion, covering 35% of all establishments. Cafés accounted for 23%, constituting the second largest category of establishments.

Pizzerias appeared in the smallest proportion, representing only 6% (Figure 3).

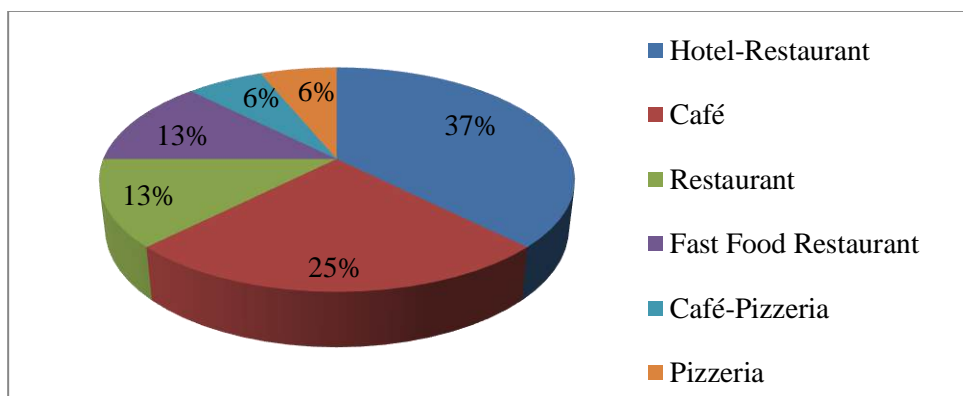


Fig. 3. Profiles of the hospitality establishments

In the subsequent part of the research, changes in the turnover of the examined hospitality establishments over the past five years were investigated. The COVID-19 pandemic, which reached its peak in 2020, resulted in a noticeable decline across all establishments, although temporary decreases had also occurred prior to the pandemic. Although only a small proportion (12%), some establishments reported that their overall turnover remained satisfactory during the investigation period (Figure 4). A largely consistent finding among the examined establishments was that the least profitable period was associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, as 70% of the establishments indicated.

It is important to note that, for this indicator, some respondents (12%) identified the few months following the outbreak of the war as the most deficit-prone period. Concurrently, certain complexes (50% of the surveyed locations) experienced an increase in customer traffic during the first weeks of the war. This was primarily observed in establishments located along transit routes. In Berehove, substantial cross-border traffic toward the Ukrainian-Hungarian checkpoint (Asztély–Beregsurány) exists, which benefited the revenue of hospitality establishments situated along this route.

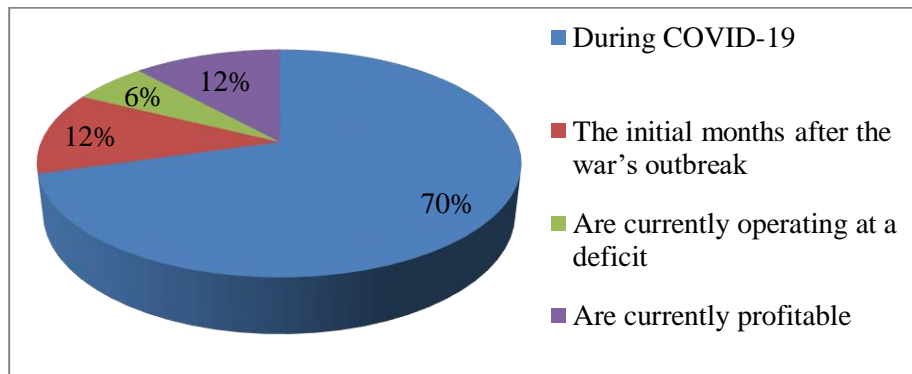
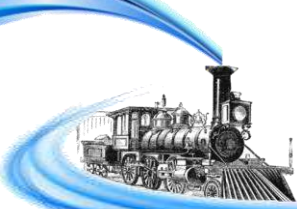


Fig. 4. The least profitable period

Further, respondents were asked specifically how the military events affected the turnover of the surveyed hospitality establishments. The distribution of responses revealed a highly variable picture (Figure 5). In 31% of the establishments, customer traffic was reported to have halved, whereas 32% reported only negligible decreases.

The most notable outcome was observed in establishments where an increase was reported despite the war; 19% of the surveyed hospitality units reported growth in this regard. Some studies in the literature have reported a 10% growth in Ukrainian tourism, thereby providing additional support for our findings [26].

It should not be inferred that the effects of military actions are being suggested as beneficial; rather, the intention is to highlight that the tourism sector is capable of comprehensive adaptation to ensure its survival.

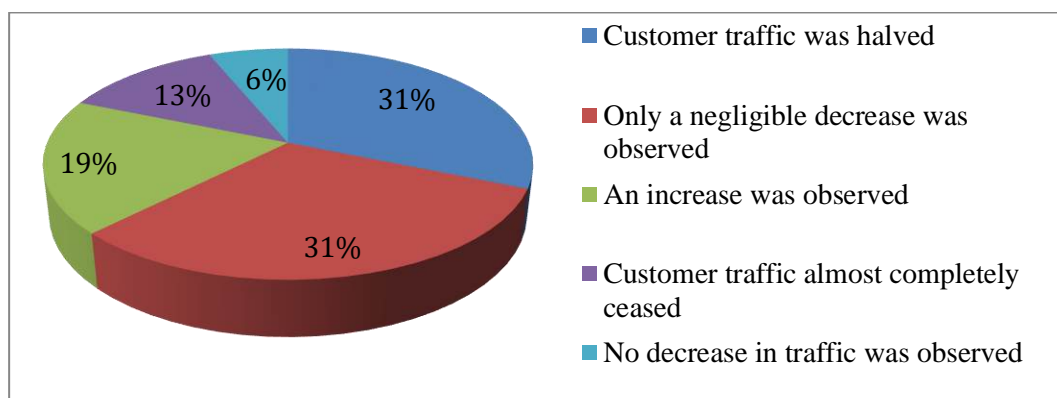


Fig.5. Changes in customer traffic due to the war

The transformation of the customer base as a result of the war is presented in Figure 6. It was assumed that significant changes would be observed in this indicator, based on the directions of population movements. Westward relocation was characteristic of all members of the mobile population: the local residents - in the vast majority of cases - left Transcarpathia for Hungary, while a substantial number arrived in the westernmost county from the internal regions of Ukraine. Some of these individuals subsequently left the country and moved to other Western European states.



According to Ukrinform, more than 400,000 internally displaced or relocated persons currently reside in Transcarpathia, of which approximately 200,000 are officially registered [27; 28].

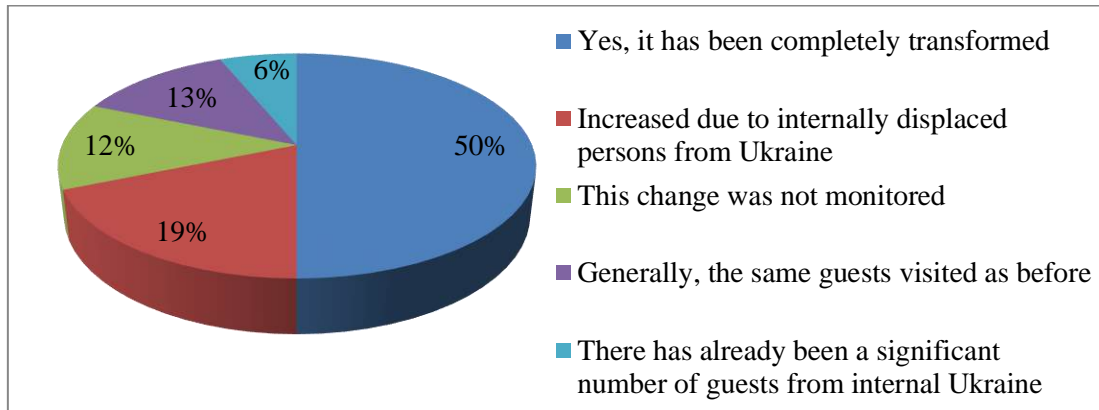


Fig. 6. Transformation of the customer base

Among the surveyed hospitality establishments, 50% reported that their customer base had been completely transformed as a result of the war. During the interviews, 19% specifically noted an increase in clients arriving from the internal regions of Ukraine. As a counterexample, 6% of establishments reported no such change, indicating that they had previously served clients from other Ukrainian regions.

The study also addressed the perspective of the hospitality establishments regarding future development (Figure 7). The aim was to examine the extent to which owners were prepared to invest capital in their businesses under the current circumstances, i.e., whether they were considering development projects or merely maintaining operations. Responses on this matter were varied.

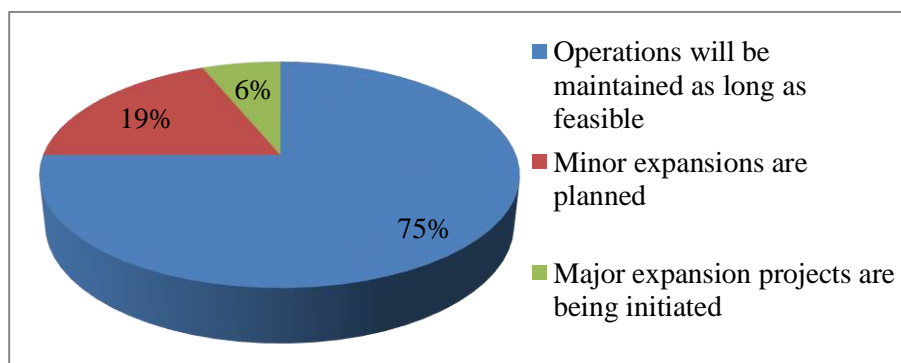


Fig.7. Future outlook of the hospitality establishments

Seventy-five per cent of interviewees indicated that they would maintain operations and, while opportunities allowed, no major investments were planned.



However, it is noteworthy that some managers had already planned small or large expansions during the interview period. The time elapsed since the research has confirmed this, as by September 2024, positive developments were observed in two establishments. In one case, expansion had already been in progress prior to the outbreak of the war, so only the completion of the ongoing work was noted. In another establishment, significant developments occurred in the summer of 2024, resulting in the complete renovation of both the facade and interior spaces of the complex.

**Conclusion.** The results of the research confirmed or partially validated some of the initial hypotheses, whereas other assumptions were not substantiated, as indicated by the findings of the secondary investigation.

Overall, the changes induced by the Russian-Ukrainian war have indeed resulted in negative developments. One of the primary pieces of evidence for this is the change in the perception of safety, which is the most significant factor influencing the tourism sector. Tourism is often referred to as the “peace industry,” and it is self-evident that security constitutes one of the most essential conditions for its operation. During wartime, this condition is entirely absent. The negative consequences of the Russian-Ukrainian war have been documented in several UNWTO analyses, often in connection with safety concerns in tourism [29].

In this study, tourism revenue increases were observed at certain complexes. While no profit is generated in locations directly affected by hostilities, some level of growth was detectable in areas distant from the conflict zone. This finding was confirmed during our investigation and is supported by other sources. According to Makronóm research, tourism increased in the western Ukrainian regions of Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, and Transcarpathia due to the favorable security conditions in these areas [30].

Periods of war and armed conflict have a dramatic impact on tourism. As a result of these negative events, not only are individual sectors affected, but in many cases the entire economic sector experiences significant destruction, accompanied by repercussions in the social sphere. Wars carry far more serious consequences than the mere decline or deficit observed in tourism. Human losses are an inevitable legacy of every military conflict, which cannot be restored even after peace is established.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, armed offensives typically induce political instability within a region or country, while the perceived safety of the area is also affected at the international level. Damage to infrastructure constitutes a significant influencing factor, as, without reconstruction, the area will remain unsuitable for tourism activities even after the conflict ends. Alongside infrastructure, cultural and historical heritage – which represents one of the most significant attractions in tourism – is also compromised. The resulting changes and losses are undeniable.

The temporal factor is also crucial during wartime; the longer the conflict persists, the longer it will take to restore the original conditions within the affected



area. This is relevant both for the recovery of the economic and social spheres and for the revival of tourism.

Post-war tourism in Ukraine, particularly in Transcarpathia, will depend on the interplay of multiple factors. Key determinants will include the political situation, socio-economic rehabilitation, and both local and international cooperation. The further development of a country or region rich in tourism resources will also depend substantially on the resilience and adaptive capacity of the affected area.

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