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TOURISM POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF WAR

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Abstract. *The article analyzes the transformation of Ukraine's tourism policy in the context of full-scale war. Key challenges for the sector are identified, including infrastructure destruction, the loss of a safe national image, shifts in consumer behavior due to internal displacement, and institutional uncertainty. An assessment of the tourism sector's financial performance for 2022–2024 demonstrates potential for recovery driven by increased tax revenues and sustained local demand. The article summarizes the main directions of Ukraine's adaptive tourism policy: the development of domestic tourism, digitalization, international cooperation, and decentralization of governance. The international experience of post-war tourism recovery is examined, confirming the relevance of institutional support for "memory tourism" and regional initiatives. The study concludes that updating the national tourism strategy and integrating tourism into the country's post-war recovery policy is essential.*

Keywords: *tourism policy, war, domestic tourism, tourism infrastructure, recovery*

Introduction

The development of an effective tourism policy during wartime represents a national-level challenge that intersects security, economic, humanitarian, and cultural dimensions. As part of the creative economy and a tool of socio-economic mobilization, tourism has the potential to support territorial recovery, facilitate the integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs), preserve national identity, and shape the international image of the state.

According to the UNWTO (2024), tourism can become one of the fastest-recovering economic sectors in post-crisis conditions, provided there is effective strategic planning, institutional support, and cross-sectoral coordination. However, in the context of armed conflict, the loss of infrastructure, a decline in travel safety, and



general economic destabilization require a rethinking of tourism policy approaches.

The development of an adaptive, resilient, and innovative tourism policy can not only minimize sectoral losses but also transform tourism into a powerful instrument for post-war recovery. Therefore, studying new models of tourism governance—considering both international experience and domestic challenges—is of significant academic and practical importance.

The aim of this article is to analyze the transformation of Ukraine's tourism policy under martial law and to outline the directions for its adaptation to the challenges of today.

Research Methodology

The methodological foundation of this study is based on a systemic interdisciplinary approach that integrates tools from economic analysis, public administration, sociology, and regional studies. To achieve the study's objectives, a combination of general scientific and specialized research methods was applied:

1. Analytical Method. Used to examine the current state of tourism policy in Ukraine under wartime conditions. This included a review of relevant legislative acts, governmental documents, analytical reports from the State Agency for Tourism Development of Ukraine (SATDU), the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, and other institutions.

2. Statistical Method. Applied to process official statistical data for the period 2022–2024 to identify trends in tax revenues, the number of tourism enterprises, and impacts on infrastructure. The method also included an evaluation of survey results concerning barriers to travel during martial law (SATDU, 2023).

3. Comparative Analysis. Used to compare Ukraine's experience with international practices in post-conflict tourism recovery. The comparison focused on aspects such as the role of tourism in reconstruction, types of supported tourism, and institutional and financial policies.

4. SWOT Analysis. Employed to identify internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats to the development of tourism policy in wartime and post-war contexts.



5.Expert Evaluation. Used to clarify practical trends in the tourism sector through expert opinions based on international reports (UNWTO, OECD, UNDP) and national analytical materials.

Results

The war in Ukraine has radically altered the functioning of the tourism sector, which prior to 2022 made a significant contribution to GDP, supported the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, created jobs, and promoted the country's international image. The destruction of infrastructure, temporary occupation of territories, safety threats, internal population displacement, and economic uncertainty have led to a deep crisis in tourism.

According to a 2023 survey conducted by the State Agency for Tourism Development, the main barriers to travel within Ukraine under martial law are: high level of danger – 57.4% of respondents; high prices – 42.2%; loss of access to seaside resorts – 24.4%; logistical challenges – 20.9%; lack of information about operational facilities – 9.8%; availability and condition of accommodation facilities (tourist bases, hotels, hostels) – 9.8%; and 5.9% of respondents reported no barriers (Fig. 1). (State Agency for Tourism Development, 2023).]

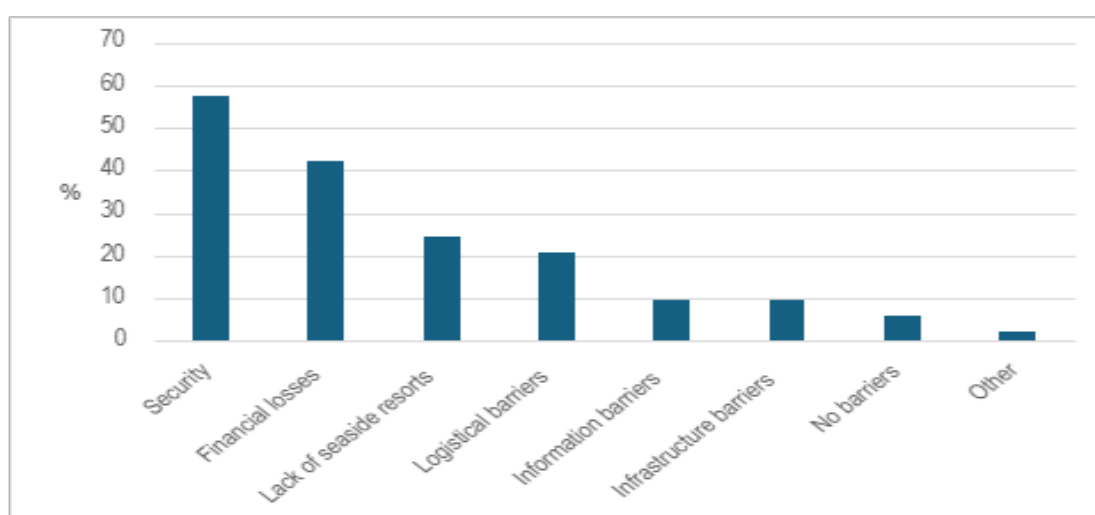


Figure 1 - The biggest barriers to travel in Ukraine during the war

According to preliminary estimates by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), as of 2023, the war has already caused damage to



cultural tourism sites amounting to USD 1.1 billion and to historical tourism assets estimated at USD 19.3 billion (Strategic Roadmap, 2024). A significant portion of the hotel and restaurant sector, transportation infrastructure, and tourism facilities in the Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kherson, Donetsk, and Luhansk regions has been destroyed. This situation has led to a geographic reorientation of tourist demand toward the central and western regions of Ukraine.

To assess the financial indicators of the tourism sector during wartime, we refer to the data presented in Table 1:

Table 1 - Key Performance Indicators of Ukraine's Tourism Sector

Indicator	2022	2023	2024	Change in 2024 compared to 2021, %
Amount of tax revenues, million UAH.	1551	2 049	2 938	189,4
Number of taxpayers, units	18125	16465	17649	97,4

Source: (SATDU, 2025)

Analytical assessment of key tourism sector indicators indicates a significant increase in tax revenues from tourism activities across the country. This metric demonstrates an 89.4 % rise compared to the baseline year of 2022. Regarding the number of tourism entities, a minor contraction of 2.6 % is observed. The overall upward trend in tax revenue evidences sustained domestic tourism demand and highlights prospects for the sector's further development in Ukraine.

Since the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation, Ukraine's tourism policy has undergone substantial transformation. Specifically, the reorientation of governmental priorities toward security and defense meant that no comprehensive national tourism strategy has yet been formulated, which remains a critical impediment for the sector.

State-led tourism policy initiatives have focused on several key directions:

- Promotion of domestic tourism: In 2022–2023, increased relocations to safer western regions fueled the development of local tourism products, including glamping, ecotourism, and cultural-historical routes.



- Availability of financial resources: Limited government funding has constrained coordinated marketing campaigns and support for small businesses.
- International cooperation and donor assistance: Joint projects with UNDP, USAID, and GIZ target tourism service digitalization and international promotion.
- Decentralization of tourism governance: Regional authorities and communities initiated tourism clusters (e.g. “Tourism in Zakarpattia”), inventory of heritage sites, and new route planning—demonstrating the growing importance of subnational tourism governance.

Consequently, under wartime conditions, Ukraine’s tourism policy operates at the tactical-response level, with emerging elements of strategic planning. Its effectiveness depends on the ability to balance security priorities with soft power, cultural diplomacy, and economic recovery tools.

Consequences of the war for tourism.

Destruction of tourism infrastructure. The conflict has resulted in substantial economic losses and the closure of tourism heritage sites, cultural, and religious institutions. From 2022 to August 2023 alone, 823 cultural heritage objects were damaged or destroyed—109 of national significance and 650 of local importance (Strategic Roadmap, 2024).

Loss of safe national image. A decline in travel safety indices and shifting priorities among international travelers have nearly halted inbound tourism.

Internal displacement. Millions of IDPs have altered tourism consumption patterns, simultaneously creating opportunities for social tourism and local initiatives in safer regions (Zakarpattia, Lviv, Bukovyna).

Legislative and institutional uncertainty. Key issues include the absence of an adaptive tourism recovery strategy, fragmented policies, underfunding of SATDU, and the loss of sector personnel.

Proposed policy directions during wartime include:

Development of regional adaptation plans for tourism under martial law (Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, and other rear regions with tourism potential).



Activation of domestic tourism, including patriotic routes, weekend tourism, gastronomic and eco-tourism.

Digitalization: development of mobile applications, interactive maps, VR tours.

Promotional campaigns (“Travel Ukraine Now”, “Discover Ukraine”) to support domestic demand.

Engagement of international donors to fund tourism infrastructure in secure areas.

International experience of post-war tourism development

Historical examples from conflict-affected countries demonstrate tourism’s pivotal role in post-war recovery. In Croatia post-1990s, tourism became a cornerstone of economic growth—by five years after conflict end, tourism revenues exceeded 15 % of GDP and international arrivals surpassed 5 million (UNWTO, 2001).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the government fostered “memory tourism,” involving visits to war memorials and museums; similarly, in Cambodia and Rwanda, tourism served not only for reconstruction but for fostering national narratives and reconciliation (Tymoshenko et al., 2024).

According to OECD (2022), successful tourism recovery depends on integrating digitalization, security, public-private partnerships, and local tourism support. For example, post-conflict Colombia invested significantly in domestic tourism, developed the “Colombia Realismo Mágico” brand, and established safe tourism routes in peaceful regions.

Key lessons relevant to Ukraine include:

- ✓ Institutional support for “memory tourism” (museums, memorial routes, cultural diplomacy).
- ✓ Strategic investments to enhance the security of tourism infrastructure.
- ✓ Target programs supporting local tourism businesses, particularly eco-tourism as a regional recovery driver.
- ✓ Use of innovative promotion tools (digital mapping, international exhibitions).
- ✓ Integration into the European tourism framework (EU programs: COSME, Routes4U, EDEN).
- ✓ Public-private partnerships in tourism infrastructure restoration.



Summary and conclusions.

The state of war in Ukraine has profoundly remodeled tourism policy —triggering a deep sectoral crisis characterized by infrastructure loss, diminished safety, population displacement, and economic instability. Nevertheless, analysis reveals an evolving adaptive model centered on domestic tourism, regional empowerment, digitalization, and international collaboration.

The 2024 uplift in tax revenues, despite challenging conditions, indicates sustained internal demand and sectoral resilience. However, structural challenges—lack of strategic planning and inadequate funding—necessitate immediate action, including the adoption of an updated Tourism Development Strategy, activation of regional tourism clusters, and stronger cross-sector coordination.

International experiences confirm the effectiveness of focused recovery strategies, such as memory tourism, secure infrastructure, eco-tourism, and public-private partnerships.

In conclusion, tourism can become a pivotal engine of Ukraine's economic and social recovery—provided it is incorporated into the national post-war reconstruction framework as a key component of humanitarian policy, cultural diplomacy, and sustainable regional development.

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