



Economy and tourism

UDK 338.48(477.83)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17112596>

Historical and economic development of the tourism industry in Western Ukraine: the feasibility of reproducing post-war experience in the post-conflict period

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Accepted: 29.08.2025 | Published: 13.09.2025

Abstract: Purpose: *This study aims to explore the development and adaptability of the tourism sector in the case of some regions of Western Ukraine, where the innovative use of historical models of recovery to address current post-conflict issues is possible. The study is premised on the necessity to define useful tools of regional socio-economic revitalization via the assessment of long-term development trends and strategic mechanisms of regime recovery already applied in the post-war environments. Great concern is paid to realizing how the previous models of the institution and infrastructure-driven patterns can be reworked to fit the requirements of a contemporary, decentralized, and risk-sensitive tourism landscape.*

Methods: *The methodological portion lies within a comparative approach over regions through secondary statistical information, expert opinions, and official publications by government. The diachronic approach is made with the possibility to compare 2000-2024 tourism dynamics in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zakarpattia, and*



Chernivtsi regions. The research includes the quantitative evaluation of tourist flows and the contribution of the sector to regional GDP, as well as the qualitative evaluation of approaches to recovery and obstacles discovered by local stakeholders. Historical benchmarking is applied to compare and contrast the redevelopment efforts in war-marred lands with those of post-WWII.

Results: *According to the results, there is a great drop in tourism performance because of the continued conflicts, and recovery is reflected in the domestic tourism indicators by 2024. There is maximum rebound registered in Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk which can be explained by their diversified infrastructure and cultural capital. We find that through a comparison that the old model of recovery focused on centralized solutions and the restoration of monuments whereas a contemporary recovery mechanism not only necessitates integrated, multi-level governance but also on public-private partnerships. The main obstacles to recovery are the infrastructural deterioration, financial constraints, and labor shortage, and regulatory uncertainty. The study outlines what can be done in terms of adapting specific post-war solutions including the investment in the cultural resources and specific state funding to those existing in modern digital and decentralized systems.*

Conclusions: *The research finds that a historically informed approach toward tourism recovery strategies can effectively stimulate a turnaround in the long-term resilience and economic renewal of a given region when properly attuned to the present realities of institutional realities and strategic planning theory. The results can be used both as theoretical discourse in the post-crises development and as practice in tourism governance of transitional societies. It is suggested that the focus of further research should be devoted to the exploration of long-term sustainability indicators, as well as the development of adaptive regional policy models in the context of long-term uncertainty.*

Keywords: *regional resilience, cultural economy, decentralization, institutional recovery, public-private cooperation, domestic mobility, conflict-*



affected territories, heritage-based regeneration, risk-sensitive governance, strategic tourism planning.

**Історико-економічний розвиток туристичної галузі у Західній Україні:
доцільність відтворення післявоєнного досвіду у постконфліктний
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Анотація: Мета: *Це дослідження має на меті дослідити розвиток та адаптивність туристичного сектору у випадку деяких регіонів Західної України, де можливе інноваційне використання історичних моделей відновлення для вирішення поточних постконфліктних проблем. Дослідження базується на необхідності визначення корисних інструментів регіонального соціально-економічного відродження шляхом оцінки довгострокових тенденцій розвитку та стратегічних механізмів відновлення режиму, що вже застосовувалися в повоєнному середовищі. Велика увага приділяється усвідомленню того, як попередні моделі інституційних та інфраструктурних моделей можна переробити, щоб відповідати вимогам сучасного, децентралізованого та чутливого до ризиків туристичного ландшафту.*

Методи: *Методологічна частина дослідження полягає в порівняльному підході по регіонах за допомогою вторинної статистичної інформації, експертних думок та офіційних публікацій уряду. Діахронічний підхід застосовується з можливістю порівняння динаміки туризму за 2000-2024 роки у Львівській, Івано-Франківській, Закарпатській та Чернівецькій*



областях. Дослідження включає кількісну оцінку туристичних потоків та внеску сектору до регіонального ВВП, а також якісну оцінку підходів до відновлення та перешкод, виявлених місцевими зацікавленими сторонами. Для порівняння та зіставлення зусиль з реконструкції постраждалих від війни територій з тими, що були після Другої світової війни, застосовується історичний бенчмаркінг.

Результати: Згідно з результатами, спостерігається значне падіння туристичної ефективності через триваючі конфлікти, і відновлення відображається у показниках внутрішнього туризму до 2024 року. Максимальне відновлення зареєстровано у Львові та Івано-Франківську, що можна пояснити їхньою диверсифікованою інфраструктурою та культурним капіталом. Порівняння показує, що стара модель відновлення зосереджувалася на централізованих рішеннях та реставрації пам'яток, тоді як сучасний механізм відновлення вимагає не лише інтегрованого багаторівневого управління, але й державно-приватного партнерства. Основними перешкодами для відновлення є погіршення стану інфраструктури, фінансові обмеження, нестача робочої сили та регуляторна невизначеність. У дослідженні окреслено, що можна зробити з точки зору адаптації конкретних повоєнних рішень, включаючи інвестиції в культурні ресурси та спеціальне державне фінансування, до тих, що існують у сучасних цифрових та децентралізованих системах.

Висновки: Дослідження показує, що історично обґрунтований підхід до стратегій відновлення туризму може ефективно стимулювати зміну довгострокової стійкості та економічне оновлення певного регіону за умови належного врахування сучасних реалій інституційних реалій та теорії стратегічного планування. Результати можуть бути використані як теоретичний дискурс у посткризовому розвитку, так і як практика в управлінні туризмом у перехідних суспільствах. Пропонується, що подальші дослідження мають бути зосереджені на дослідженні показників



довгострокової стійкості, а також на розробці адаптивних моделей регіональної політики в контексті довгострокової невизначеності.

Ключові слова: *регіональна стійкість, культурна економіка, децентралізація, інституційне відновлення, державно-приватне співробітництво, внутрішня мобільність, території, що постраждали від конфліктів, відновлення на основі спадщини, управління з урахуванням ризиків, стратегічне планування туризму.*

Statement of the problem. Tourism industry in Western Ukraine has a historical and economic development which is distinctive case in regard to a greater context of post-war and post-conflict regions recovery [1]. Although this region has a rich cultural heritage, a variety of natural scenery and formerly vibrant cross-border tourism flows, the tourism industry has experienced repeated turbulence through the unstable geopolitical environment, economic shocks, and recent full-scale military conflict. The status quo of the industry indicates both the physical and infrastructural destruction of war and a serious set of structural as well as institutional vulnerabilities that impede their recovery and adaptation process [2]. These extenuating circumstances highlight the urgency to examine how and whether the post-war experiences of the region can be applied to understand the best strategies in the post-conflict phase of revitalization.

The inherent issue this work seeks to solve is the lack of an evident structure in using the historical models of recovery in the current context and post-conflict conditions of tourism industry. Although the experience of the past, primarily the period after WWII, provides us with some important lessons of how to reconstruct the sphere of culture and infrastructure and local economy, there is still no research, which systematizes the knowledge of the past and relates it to the real life needs of tourism governing. Specifically, developments in the structure of the tourism economy, the significance of the digital platforms, development of diaspora engagement mechanisms, and the dynamics of the security landscape require a new



conceptualization of the ability to use past experiences and adapt them as opposed to reproducing them.

This issue has close relation to some general scientific and practical tasks. Scientifically, the work makes an addition to the discussion on crisis management, regional sustainable development, and social economic roles of cultural tourism in the reconstruction of a post-war area. It presents an empirical synthesis on how to develop general models that take into consideration both continuity and ruptures in the past and at the present. At the practical level, the research fills the gap of Western Ukraine and other conflict-torn areas that need policy direction to reinvigorate local economies using tourism. It can assist decision-makers at the municipal, regional, and national levels and the international donors and non-governmental organizations helping Ukraine on its way to recuperation.

This research is important in that it can address an overlapping gap in theory and practice. It covers critical areas that include the shifting of tourism demand, regional variation in the capacity to recover, and institutional preparedness to support the deployment of identified development initiatives. The article provides a starting point of reimagining tourism as a business, but also as a form of strategic planning with respect to social integration, cross-border cooperation, and territorial fortification by placing the identified issue in two contexts: the past (historical precedent) and the present (given global pressures). This means that the paper is not only timely, but also relevant to the current academic discourse and pertinent social demands.

Analysis of recent research and publications. During the last five years, an increased scope of scholarly works has been created to address the ambiguous processes and possible pathways of tourism recovery in Ukraine during the circumstances of war and post-conflict transition. Such studies provide valuable contributions on the nature of crisis response mechanisms, post-war planning and also socio-economic functions of tourism in regional rebound. Nevertheless, there are still a number of gaps, especially with regard to continuity and historical



perspectives, trans regional comparisons, and the realization of past experiences into modern day strategic planning.

Another central contribution was that of But, who analyzed the conceptual background of post war recovery of the report in the Ukrainian tourism industry and discovered fundamental issues of governance, including fragmentation of institutions and the lack of coordination between the central and the local levels of power [3]. This work is a step towards seeing how there are wider systemic obstacles to recovery but it does not go as far as taking a historical perspective to the specific region. In like manner, Yermachenko et al. also highlighted the presence of viable tourism models in the reconstruction of territorial communities, particularly the aspects of environmental and cultural sustainability though the historical-economic aspect is underdeveloped [4].

According to a study presented by Bogdan et al., the authors measured the adaption issues and the redesign of tourism business models in wartime, defined adaption strategies at this short period and suggested future perspectives of innovation with the post-war planning [5]. This study does not have a retrospective structure analyzing long-term development patterns, although it can be useful concerning the contemporary resilience processes. Nosyriev et al. added structural policy assessment of tourism and hospitality industries to the post-bloodshed national economic policy in terms of macro-level planning, yet not regional inequity in Western Ukraine [6].

Dedilova et al. presented a strategic vision of the rebuilding of the tourism potential of Ukraine with the emphasis on the restoration of trust in the institutions and interregional cooperation [7]. Yet, the experience of the previous periods of post-war recovery is not used in the study. Puzyrova, in her turn, proposed a new business model of the public-private partnership and clusters strategy proposing that recovery could be more effective with decentralization, though, without being put into a historical perspective [8].



This is due to the fact that a study conducted by Sira et al. was an early-stage study of post-war tourism recovery routes, and highlighted the immediate necessity of state interventions to stabilize the sector [9]. This goes in line with the empirical investigation conducted by Bobek et al., where the authors analyzed the war impact on the Ukrainian tourist travel patterns and underlined a sudden shift towards the domestic and non-hazardous destinations [10]. However, both papers fail to explain how such transitions were handled in the preceding post-conflict eras or even how effective such approaches can be in the long-term.

Lastly, the article by Tomej and Bilynets provides the system-theory vision of the transformations of tourism in wartime Ukraine, which refers to tourism as regeneration and adaptation [11]. Though quite deep in theoretical expounding, the study is not rooted empirically in any particular regional history or economic statistics.

In short, although the literature available has already provided a beneficial backdrop against which the concept of wartime disruptions and post-war planning could be undertaken with regard to the tourism industry, there are still some critical gaps. One of those is poor assimilation of historical development paths, and especially Western Ukraine into modern policy making agendas. Second, the empirical studies that assess the responsiveness of the post-WWII models of recovery to the current circumstances of decentralized governance, digital tourism, and transnational coordination are scarce. Third, not many studies apply regionally differentiated solutions taking into account differences in infrastructure, institutional capacity and participation among the stakeholders of the western oblasts.

The limitations of this article are met by carrying out a historically integrated economic analysis of the tourist industry in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, and Zakarpattia. It is a continuation of earlier studies, but it presents a new perspective as it provides a comparative aspect to past and current recovery mechanisms. The results are valuable not only to scholarly debate but also to the real-world in decision



making in the management of tourism, economic renewal, and post conflict policymaking in Ukraine.

Highlighting previously unresolved parts of the overall problem. Despite some historical and regional literature that briefly contemplates the post-war revival of the tourism sector in Western Ukraine, a series of important facets have not been satisfactorily examined yet. In particular, it is missing the analysis of comprehensive nature of potential application of historical recovery mechanisms to the post-conflict environment of today determined by the outcomes of modern soci-political, economic, and technology conditions. The literature is biased towards either macro-economic effects or isolated case studies of regions not linking historical trends with modern-day strategic planning. In addition, the importance of local governance, the involvement of the private sector, or international donor coordination was not adequately analyzed in earlier studies in the context of effective tourism recovery in the territories with the presence of armed conflict.

Another unanswered question regards the real possibility to reproduce or borrow the previous post-war experiences in a way that takes into consideration the structural shifts in the tourism economy, including digital transformation, consumer patterns, and emerging demands of safety, sustainability, and resilience. Whereas the recovery models of the past were focused on the state-centered reconstructions of infrastructures as well as culture preservation, the realities of today necessitate more decentralized, participatory, and innovation-oriented solutions. This makes it apparent that the gap in knowledge about the way post-war tourism development strategies can be transformed and implemented into a reality in a multidimensional and fast developing post-conflict environment exists.

This article is intended to explore the history and economics of tourism industry in Western Ukraine and to evaluate the prospect of using post-war recovery schemes in the present post-conflict stand. It involves providing a thorough analysis of tourist flow dynamics, regional economic contributions of the industry, policy tools employed in various historical times and the present-day challenges being



faced by the tourist operators in the process of rebuilding their businesses and services.

Formulation of the article's goals (task statement)

The following is the study objectives:

1. To examine the long-term development of the tourism sector in the main areas of Western Ukraine-Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, and Zakarpattia-both in times of growth and, of times of crisis decreases.
2. To define and analyze recovery mechanisms employed following the WWII era and to contrast them with the tools that will be used in the post-conflict era (2022-2024).
3. To understand the existing challenges to recovery as mentioned to tourism actors in the area and the assessment of institutional, financial and infrastructural constraints prohibiting sustainable redevelopment.
4. In order to decide on how historical strategies can be transformed to the contemporary context, and, in case, offer the model, which suggests post-conflict tourism revival in the modern conditions that also meets the contemporary realities and strategic development objectives.

The purpose set out offers a logical, detailed scheme of the article organization and is put in the balance with both scientific control and practical application. This study provides a new avenue of contribution to the sphere of post-conflict regional development and tourism planning by talking about the unresolved aspects of the larger issue. It provides a backbone on how policy recommendations should be made which are evidence-based and can be used to develop resilience, speed up socio-economic develop of regions affected by violence and conflict, not only in Ukraine, but also in other areas in the world needing to recover.

Presentation of the main research material. This article shows the major findings of the research in regard to the historical and economic development of the tourism industry in Western Ukraine with a view to discovering most replicable



recovery practices that have occurred during the past post-war intervals. The analysis is a combined analysis of the statistical data, economic indicators and strategic concepts of the chosen areas, especially Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, and Zakarpattia oblasts. This would be to evaluate the potential of drawing upon past experience in the field of regional development and tourism rehabilitation to inform the post-conflict strategies towards sustainable development. Under both tables, an analysis narrative has been developed to draw context out of the given data and come to conclusions.

Table 1 shows the tourist flows development with four Western Ukrainian regions over the period 2000-2024. The role of the tourism sector is reflected in the stable growth in the number of tourists over the period of time the pre-crisis period (2000-2019).

Table 1

Tourist flow dynamics in Western Ukraine for the period 2000–2024

Year	Lviv Region	Ivano-Frankivsk Region	Chernivtsi Region	Zakarpattia Region	Total (thousands)
2000	432	285	118	260	1,095
2010	873	614	215	494	2,196
2019	1,456	936	377	822	3,591
2022	297	189	83	158	727
2024	624	432	174	301	1,531

Source: author's development using data from [12-21].

There was however a nosedive in 2022 because of the full-scale military conflict and tourism activity in the region was down to under a quarter of the level in 2019. In 2024, the first signs of recovery appeared, and Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk experienced the most significant recoveries because the infrastructure there was relatively intact and there were extensive domestic tourism promotion efforts.

The examination of the data proves that the tourism industry is well-grounded in Western Ukraine but at the same time highly susceptible to exogenous shocks. The rise between 2000 and 2019 can be explained by the investments in the sphere



of cultural heritage, international promotion and cross-border cooperation in tourism. Although the post-2022 recovery is encouraging, it implies that systematic state assistance and interrelation with local administration are likely to be necessary. The earlier post-war recovery plans that emphasized domestic tourism and the participation of the diaspora can seem to be repeated in the present post-conflict situations. Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi are behind the pack in the recovery, which can probably be attributed to the weakness of logistics and marketing, pointing to the guidelines in the regional tourism policy.

The economic contribution of the tourism industry to the GDP compositions of regions can be observed in Table 2. The largest growth was observed in 2019 in Lviv Region (6.7%), although other regions also showed a considerable rise in the value recorded in 2005 to 2019. The 2024 figures show that the GDP share of tourism sectors is halved demonstrating not only the drop in the absolute revenues but also the shift of the economic activity to the emergency and humanitarian fields.

Table 2

Contribution of tourism to regional GDP (%), selected years

Year	Lviv	Ivano-Frankivsk	Chernivtsi	Zakarpattia
2005	2.1	1.4	0.9	1.3
2015	5.4	3.8	2.6	3.2
2019	6.7	4.5	3.1	4.2
2024	3.2	2.1	1.3	1.9

Source: author's development using data from [12-21].

The trends of GDP share indicate the strategic role of tourism in the economic diversification in the region, particularly in Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk where tourism has traditionally been an anchor attraction. The 2024 plunge demands narrowly focused investment giving a recovery to tourism contribution to economy. Tourism development policies including eco-tourism support and regional branding, according to the 2015-2019 trajectories have significant returns, which serves as the basis of models that can be replicated. The reactivation of cross-border tourism and



cultural heritage routes strategically can raise the levels of GDP contributions lost due to the crisis within five to seven years.

Table 3 reports on the comparison of post-war recovery instruments applied in the context of two post-conflict periods in the Western part of Ukraine. Post-WWII reconstruction was state-driven and focused on building physical infrastructure and restoring monuments, whereas the contemporary reconstruction process is more diverse and entails the inclusion of the diaspora and cultural economy projects. It is important to note that, educational and festival tourism have gained prominence in the modern time, but the logistic infrastructure is lackluster.

Table 3

Key post-war recovery instruments in the tourism sector
(case comparison: 1945–1955 and 2022–2024)

Instrument	Post-WWII (1945–1955)	Post-Conflict (2022–2024)
Rehabilitation of historical landmarks	Yes	Partial
Expansion of rail and road infrastructure	Moderate	Weak
Involvement of diaspora	No	Yes
Cultural festivals as economic stimulants	No	Yes
State subsidies for small hotels	Yes	Pilot programs only
Educational tourism programs	Minimal	Moderate

Source: author's development using data from [12-21].

The analogy is seen in that just like the reconstruction process after the WW II was centered towards material reconstruction through centralized governance, modern reconstruction is more participatory and more diversified. The use of diaspora and regional identity formation through festivals and educational tourism are good tools that were previously lacking [22]. However, inadequate expenditure on transport and digital infrastructure impedes such initiatives. The statistics indicate that the hybrid methodology, which is the combination of the infrastructure renewal



and the socio-cultural programming, will probably be the most efficient long-term recovery technique.

The findings of a survey of 112 local tourism operators by a 2024 survey across four regions will be summarized in Table 4. The barriers that have been cited most are damaged infrastructure (68%), absence of financing (61%) and low international arrivals (56%). Other issues include vague government policies and fears of the security. The lack of talented employees is somehow less severe but still presents a challenge to almost a third of all businesses.

Table 4

Survey of local tourism operators on barriers to recovery (2024)

Barrier	% of Respondents
Damaged infrastructure	68%
Lack of financing	61%
Loss of international tourists	56%
Regulatory uncertainty	42%
Security concerns	35%
Workforce shortage	28%

Source: author's development using data from [12-21].

This information indicates a complicated recovery situation in which material and policy-related factors are intersecting. Those conclusions based on GDP and tourist flows data are also supported by the high rate of complaints linked to infrastructure. The fact that there is no shown financing is an indication that there is an urgent need to employ financial means like tax holidays, subsidized credit, and international donor financing. Regulatory ambiguity is addressed by the combined local and national actions placement to boost investor confidence. The rest of the workforce-related concerns also indicate the necessity of specific retraining programs in the industries of tourism and hospitality.

In general, these findings indicate that the tourism sector in Western Ukraine is experiencing the challenging process of a revival that can be both short-lived and sustainable. A mix of infrastructure rebuild, diaspora outreach, regional branding,



and culture programming, however, could provide a way forward, according to both historical evidence and recent trends as of the post-WWII period. Nevertheless, effective replication of the previous approaches should be modified towards current challenges, especially regarding flexibility of regulations, funding, and the incorporation of digital technologies. Information on tourist flows, contribution of the GDP, institutional arrangements and surveys of people in the private sector further support the existence of a holistic multi-level approach that is built around regional identity and intimacy.

Conclusions. The paper itself has examined the historical development and the actual financial relevance of the tourism sector in Western Ukraine, especially with regard to evaluating the practicality of implementing post-war recovery measures within the framework of the current development of post-conflict issues. As the analysis established, tourism has always been one of the most important generators of regional development, particularly in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, and Zakarpattia regions. Nevertheless, the industry is still exposed to shocks despite having impressive results during the pre-crisis period and it needs to have well-planned recovery plans.

Among the central conclusions, it can be noted that the experience of post-war reconstruction in terms of history has significant lessons, which are, however, not universally applicable. This post WWII development strategy of infrastructure development is centralized in nature, and fails to address in the reorganization of any present tourism economy, where issues of digitalization, security and decentralized governance play a part in creating the tourism economy of today. However, some of the fundamental concepts which were used in the past, including investment in cultural properties, selective state subsidence, local resource mobilization can be modified to suit the contemporary situation using innovative and participatory frameworks.



The research also showed key blockers in the road to recovery that include damaged infrastructure, lack of finances, unclear regulations, and decreased demand on international tourists. Such difficulties underline the necessity of united action of both the state institutions and local authorities and the international partners. The most viable way forward seems to be a hybrid model of the recovery based on both material reconstruction and strategic socio-economic programming.

Every aim, which was set at the start of the study is attained: the regional tourism development dynamics were examined; the historical and contemporary mechanisms of recovery are compared; the actual challenges were defined with help of the stakeholders; the possibility of the use of the ancient strategies in the present-day environment was discussed. Nevertheless, further studies are needed to evaluate the sustainability of post-conflict tourism development plans, especially on the impact of global climate uncertainty, economic uncertainty, and security uncertainties. The prospective works of research should also aim to create region-specific policy toolkits and monitoring functions, the availability of which guarantees versatility, strength, and inclusiveness of the reconstruction process.

To make a conclusion, this study highlights the significance of past-oriented but prospective approach towards tourism revival in post-conflict Western Ukraine. As long as it has a clear and lucrative strategy, wise investment and cooperation with the stakeholders, the region can not only restore its tourism industry but can also make it the core of the process of regional regeneration.

Thank you notes. None.

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