

UDC 332

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THE IMPACT OF ECOLOGY ON TOURISM DURING THE WAR

Tourism is one of the main sectors of Ukraine's economy, the development of which contributes to an increase in revenues in many sectors of the economy, growth in employment and self-employment, involvement of small and medium-sized businesses in export activities, and improvement of living conditions of the population on the ground. Tourism also plays a significant role in smoothing out the imbalances in the development of certain areas of the country affected by global environmental changes.

The purpose of the study is to determine the impact of ecology on tourism in Ukraine during the war.

Since February 2022, tourism has faced another challenge – the Russian-Ukrainian war, which, despite its limited geography, has affected the state of tourism on a global scale. Undoubtedly, tourism has suffered the most, not only in Europe as a whole, but especially in Ukraine. Despite the fact that western Ukraine is relatively safe for tourists, there are few of them today. The amount of tourist tax in Ukraine decreased by 24% compared to the previous year and amounted to UAH 178948 thousand against UAH 235461 thousand in 2021 [1]. The drop was recorded almost

throughout the country [2]. Significant declines are observed in those regions that are or have been in the war zone. For example, in Kherson region, the amount of tourist tax decreased by 95%, in Mykolaiv region - by 90%, and in Donetsk region – by 83%. In Odesa and Luhansk regions, the decrease was 80%, in Zaporizhzhia region – 78%, and in Kharkiv region – 61%. At the same time, due to internal migration of the population in safer regions of Ukraine, an increase in tourist tax was recorded last year. These are primarily Western and Central Ukraine: Lviv region with a 79% increase, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Cherkasy and Kyiv. Tourism is also negatively affected by the environment, which suffered problems during the war. One of the most important environmental problems in Ukraine during the war was air, water, and soil pollution. Constant bombardment and shelling of cities and towns resulted in the release of large amounts of toxic chemicals into the environment.

These chemicals contaminated the soil, water sources, and air, causing a number of health problems for the local population, including respiratory diseases, skin irritation, and various types of cancer.

Another serious environmental problem in Ukraine during the war was the destruction of forests and wildlife habitats. The constant bombardment and shelling of the forests has caused significant damage to the ecosystem, and many plant and animal species have been forced to leave their homes. This has had a significant impact on the biodiversity of the region, as well as affecting the livelihoods of local communities that depend on the forest for food, fuel, and other resources.

The war also caused significant damage to Ukraine's infrastructure, including factories, power plants, and oil refineries. This resulted in spills and leaks of hazardous materials such as oil, chemicals and radioactive substances into the environment. This has led to further air, water and soil pollution, causing long-term health and environmental problems for the population of Ukraine.

In addition to the damage caused by the war, the ongoing conflict has also hampered efforts to address environmental issues in the regions. The lack of stability and security has made it difficult for environmental organizations to access areas in need of attention, and the limited resources available for environmental protection

have been redirected to other needs, such as health and food security.

It should be noted that flora and fauna suffer from fires, water pollution, and hazardous gases. From 1950 to 2000, more than 80% of the world's major armed conflicts took place in the most vulnerable areas of biodiversity - in biologically rich regions that are most at risk [2], and thus the development of sports, recreational, medical and health tourism associated with natural resources.

Researchers have shown that populations of animals for natural resource development tended to be stable in peacetime and declined during war, and the more frequent the conflicts, the greater the decline.

Even now, when the fighting in Ukraine is still ongoing, many cases of ecocide (degradation of ecosystems, soil, water, and air pollution) have been identified and recorded, which poses a threat to the entire Eastern Europe.

Researchers and environmental experts believe that it could take years to clean up the atmosphere, soil, and rivers of Ukraine and neighboring countries from pollutants.

Military operations are underway in 44% of Ukraine's protected areas, many of which, including the famous Askania Nova, have lost their infrastructure support. Since the beginning of the war, eco-activists have been collecting information on environmental crimes in our country in order to document ecocide in the country (Fig. 1).

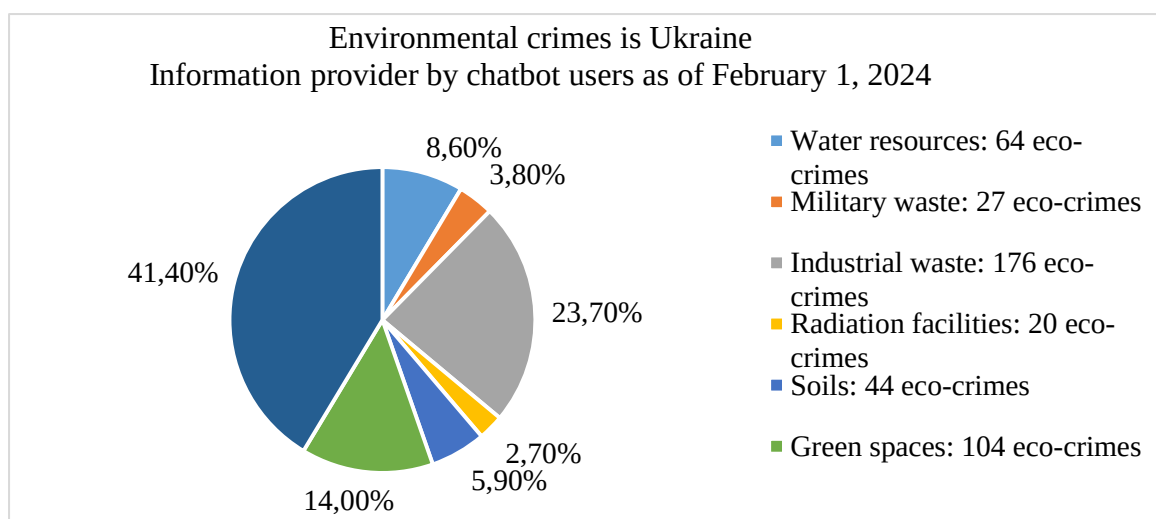


Fig. 1 – Number of war crimes against the environment in Ukraine as of January 2024 [4]

Environmental crimes in Ukraine caused by the military actions of the Russian Federation have a negative impact on the country's tourism resources, thereby worsening the environmental situation not only globally, but also causing devastating damage to the tourism industry of Ukraine, which will take years to recover.

However, tourism in Ukraine has nevertheless adapted to the conditions of war and gradually shifted to other formats.

Now, instead of foreign tourists from the EU or the Middle East, hotels are now hosting foreign diplomats, civic activists, journalists from all over the world, and various volunteers.

For example, in 2022 alone, about 2 million foreigners visited Ukraine, 1 million of whom came during the full-scale invasion of Russia [5].

It should be noted that the main problems in the environment and tourism development in Ukraine during the hostilities were identified as the following: especially polluted territories of Ukraine; war crimes against the environment; complete reorientation of some tourist infrastructure from tourism activities to other areas; complete cessation of work due to lack of economic profitability; partners in tourism activities have ceased to function or do not accept tourists; a significant number of tourist facilities in the occupation zone; destruction and damage to UNESCO World Heritage sites; tourism industry workers have left for other countries; emotional exhaustion of the remaining employees and their unwillingness to work.

Despite these challenges, some efforts are being made in Ukraine to address environmental issues. International organizations, such as the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), are working to support the country in cleaning up contaminated areas and restoring damaged ecosystems. The Ukrainian government is also taking steps to improve environmental protection, including adopting new laws and increasing funding for environmental initiatives.

The war in Ukraine is having a devastating impact on the environment and the health of the Ukrainian people. Despite the challenges, efforts are being made to address the environmental problems caused by the conflict, and it is important that the international community continues to support these efforts to ensure a sustainable future for the country and its people.

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