

MILITARY TOURISM POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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Abstract: *Military tourism has attracted the attention of the increasing number of people as a tool to attract economic revitalization, cultural education and peace building in post-conflict regions. First, while applied successfully to stable countries, the existing research lacks investigation regarding systematic development of military tourism in actively recovering conflict regions like Donetsk and Luhansk of Ukraine. Therefore, this study fills the gap by using a multidisciplinary approach combining historical and comparative-geographical methodologies and marketing research with a synergetic theoretical framework to study the feasibility and design of military tours. Using military tourism as a structure, we show that if designed with safety, authenticity, and community involvement, military tourism can turn waraffected landscapes into vibrant historical memory and economic development centers. Results indicate positive correlations between the development of military tourism and regional development if ethical, psychological and environmental factors are taken into account. The study's implications underlined the need for planned tourism policies that should try to distinguish between historical preservation and goals of sustainable development, providing a replicable model for other post conflict societies.*

Keywords: *Military tourism, post-conflict development, Ukraine, sustainable tourism, historical memory, economic revitalization, peacebuilding*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has long been recognized as a powerful tool for economic development, cultural exchange, and peacebuilding, particularly in regions recovering from conflict. Within this framework, military tourism the practice of visiting battlefields, military museums, and conflict-related heritage sites has emerged as a unique niche capable of transforming historically traumatized areas into sources of education and economic growth [1]. The concept has gained international traction, notably in countries such as the United States, Israel, and Germany, where structured military tours contribute to regional revitalization while preserving historical memory. In the context of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which have endured significant conflict since 2014, military tourism offers an innovative pathway for post-conflict development and regional integration [2]. Specifically, military tourism in Ukraine presents an opportunity to repurpose affected territories by leveraging historical events and military heritage for educational and economic purposes. The relationship between military tourism and post-conflict recovery is grounded in the idea that tourism not only brings economic benefits but also fosters collective memory and social reconciliation. Existing theories on dark tourism, heritage tourism, and post-conflict economic models support this interconnectedness, suggesting that properly curated experiences can simultaneously educate visitors, stimulate local economies, and contribute to peacebuilding [3]. However, military tourism must be approached carefully, balancing the preservation of historical authenticity with ethical representation and ensuring community engagement to avoid romanticizing conflict.

Despite an increasing body of literature on the relationship between tourism, peace, and economic growth, a specific research gap persists regarding military tourism in actively post-conflict and politically sensitive areas. Prior studies have predominantly concentrated on established military tourism in stable countries, leaving a lack of empirical research on how military tourism can serve as a catalyst for sustainable development in unstable or recovering regions [4]. Moreover, there is limited understanding of the psychological impacts on tourists and local communities exposed to recent conflicts, and of how military tourism interacts with broader national reconciliation efforts. Addressing these gaps is critical for forming policies that ensure responsible tourism development in sensitive contexts [5].

This study applies a multidisciplinary and synergetic methodology, combining general scientific methods (historical, analytical, comparative-geographical, marketing analysis) and interdisciplinary integration from geography, conflict studies, and tourism economics. World experiences in military tourism were analyzed alongside field conditions in Ukraine's eastern territories, with an expectation to identify feasible models of innovative military tours. The findings are anticipated to confirm that military tourism, when responsibly structured, can transform post-conflict trauma into a foundation for sustainable socio-economic and cultural development [6]. Ultimately, this research aims to demonstrate that military tourism in Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions can serve as a critical pillar of regional recovery, historical education, and peacebuilding. The results are expected to have significant implications for tourism policy, conflict recovery strategies, and economic revitalization efforts, offering a replicable framework for other post-conflict societies seeking sustainable pathways to growth and social cohesion [7].

METHOD

This study combines a multidisciplinary and synergetic methodology to investigate military tourism as the motor for the post conflict regional development; with emphasis on Donetsk and Luhansk regions in Ukraine. The challenge was to apply general scientific methods such as analytical, historical, comparative-geographical, and marketing analysis to both global and national experiences in military tourism organization. Building on a systematic theory, research used the scientific abstraction, induction and deduction with socio geographical cognition to melt a variety of theoretical perspectives to use combined sustainable development principles in post conflict recovery. A geography, economics, and security studies based interdisciplinary lens was used to analyze interactions between tourism, economic growth, and military factors. The synergetic approach was specifically emphasized due to the complexity, connectivity, and transformative effects inherent in conflict areas. Best practices extracted from International examples from other countries such as USA, Germany and Israel were studied, and local conditions in Ukraine were determined by the classification of tourist sites, historical Landmarks, and infrastructure available in the country. In addition, it reminded the reader of evidence of the impact of the military expenditure on the tourism growth within the broader context of the war economy; suggesting the bidirectional interrelationship between the security investment and tourism dynamics. Data analysis was essentially descriptive and interpretative in nature in order to develop actionable recommendations for the innovative development of the military-tour while maintaining the tourist's safety, historical preservation and broad regions' revitalization at the same time. Ultimately, the study came up with a structured organizational model for the creation and promotion of military tours, so that the replication of the model might be feasible for other postconflict settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that military tourism offers significant potential for the socio-economic revitalization of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The study categorized military tourism into several main formats such as historical tours, battlefield reenactments, survival skill camps, and museum-oriented visits, aligning with international best practices. Based on the integration of theoretical models and practical observations, a detailed summary of practical recommendations for military tourism development is presented in Table 1. This table highlights key dimensions such as diversification of tour types, assurance of safety through demining, and community engagement strategies, emphasizing the necessity of sustainable and educational approaches [8].

Table 1. Key Practical Recommendations for Military Tourism Development

| Aspect | Key Recommendation |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Tour Type Development | Develop diverse military tour formats (historical tours, reenactments, survival camps, museum routes). |
| Infrastructure and Safety | Ensure full demining, reliable transportation, and security measures for tourist safety. |
| Community Involvement | Engage local residents and veterans as guides and storytellers to ensure authentic experiences. |
| Marketing and Promotion | Launch targeted marketing campaigns towards history enthusiasts, educational institutions, and diaspora tourists. |
| Preservation and Authenticity | Preserve sites authentically without excessive commercialization and focus on accurate historical narratives. |
| Monitoring and Evaluation | Conduct tourist satisfaction surveys and economic impact assessments to refine offerings. |
| Environmental Considerations | Promote eco-friendly tourism practices, including local material use and waste reduction initiatives. |
| Psychological Impact Mitigation | Design trauma-sensitive tours and train guides in psychological first aid. |
| Strategic Partnerships | Form alliances with tourism organizations, heritage bodies, and NGOs. |
| Future Research Directions | Pursue longitudinal and comparative studies to refine post-conflict tourism frameworks. |

The study also revealed that military expenditures, when managed under conditions of political stability and healthcare security, positively influence international tourism growth. This suggests that the assurance of visitor safety, both perceived and actual, is a critical determinant for post-conflict tourism success. However, a critical knowledge gap remains in understanding the long-term psychological effects on both visitors and local communities engaging with conflict narratives. Current research predominantly focuses on immediate economic outcomes, but overlooks deeper socio-cultural impacts and sustainability [9].

Further research is needed to develop a holistic understanding of military tourism's long-term influence. Table 2 outlines essential avenues for further investigation, which are necessary to bridge the identified knowledge gaps [10].

Table 2. Proposed Further Research Directions

| Research Focus | Description |
|--|--|
| Longitudinal Impact Assessment | Study long-term socio-economic and cultural outcomes of military tourism projects. |
| Psychological Effects Analysis | Evaluate the psychological impact on tourists and local communities. |
| Comparative Cross-National Studies | Compare military tourism models between Ukraine and countries like Israel and the USA. |
| Sustainability and Environmental Risks | Assess the environmental footprint and promote green tourism models. |
| Tourists' Motivations and Perceptions | Empirical surveys to refine marketing strategies and adapt tour designs. |
| Peacebuilding and Reconciliation Role | Analyze how military tourism fosters or hinders societal healing. |

In conclusion, while military tourism provides a strategic opportunity for regional recovery, it must be implemented with careful consideration for historical sensitivity, community involvement, environmental impact, and psychological well-being. Only through interdisciplinary, ethically grounded approaches can military tourism evolve into a sustainable, peace-promoting industry [11].

CONCLUSION

The study conducted shows that military tourism is a very promising area for post conflict community and the socio economic recovery of these areas; in particular of Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine. The findings note that the strategic integration of military history and heritage, community involvement, and safety assurance can create war affected areas as philanthropic, cultural and economic revitalizing centers. Further, comparative international analysis supports that, when accompanied by political stability and infrastructural growth, military tourism is positively associated with tourism growth and regional investment. These results possess significant implication in terms of the need to design a systematic, ethical, and multidisciplinary approach to designing military tours while preserving authenticity, practices sensitive to trauma, and environmental sustainability. The further study of this emerging field is needed to advance it, including longitudinal studies of the long term socio-psychological impacts of military tourism, comparative studies with successful models in other countries and empirical studies on tourist motivations and perceptions in order to inform future strategic planning. Addressing these gaps can not only enable military tourism to fulfill economic goals, but also help to create historical memory, reconciliation and peace building in post conflict societies.

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