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TOURISM IN CONFLICT AND POST-CONFLICT SETTINGS: LESSONS FROM CYPRUS, UKRAINE AND SRI LANKA

Tourism is an important sector for economic recovery in post-conflict regions, contributing to job creation, new investments, and destination branding. The countries analysed in this study are Cyprus, Ukraine, and Sri Lanka, which represent different post-conflict contexts. Cyprus experienced political division after 1974 (a split between Cyprus and Turkey), affecting political governance and destination image. Before the division, the island had experienced rapid tourism growth, with international arrivals increasing from 25,700 in 1960 to approximately 264,000 in 1973. Although there was recovery in the southern region of Cyprus, the northern part has remained constrained by limited recognition of infrastructure challenges, highlighting the long-term impact of the division on tourism productivity [1; 2; 6].

Ukraine is facing an ongoing war that has disrupted infrastructure and international arrivals; however, researchers still recognise the potential of tourism to support both financial and psychological recovery [7]. Sri Lanka has recovered from a civil war that lasted for three decades (1983–2009) and, following the Easter attacks in 2019, has used tourism as a tool for reconstruction and community empowerment, even though post-war tourism productivity continues to face challenges related to militarisation and local exclusion [3; 1].

This study adopts a productivity-oriented perspective and examines how tourism contributes to economic recovery and business resilience in post-conflict settings. These three countries were selected because each represents a different type of conflict and (actual or potential) recovery pathway. Cyprus is characterised by a long-lasting political divide, Ukraine is in the midst of an active war, and Sri Lanka has ended its civil war but continues to face new challenges. Comparing these three cases enables an assessment of how tourism recovers at different stages of conflict and under different governance arrangements [4; 7; 8].

The research question guiding this work is: How do different conflict and post-conflict recovery processes shape tourism productivity, governance, and business resilience in Cyprus, Ukraine, and Sri Lanka?

Tourism in post-conflict states can serve as an instrument of reconstruction and peacebuilding, provided that economic growth is combined with social inclusion. Tourism is an important sector for economic recovery in post-conflict regions and contributes to job creation, new investment and destination branding.

The case of the island of Cyprus demonstrates that frozen conflicts result in structural imbalances in the tourism sector, including uneven tourist flows and fragmented, disproportionate investment patterns. The Republic of Cyprus (the southern part of the island) is a member state of the European Union and is integrated into the global tourism market. By contrast, the northern part of the island remains dependent on the Turkish market, which constrains the development of hotel chains and encourages the expansion of dark tourism and the gambling industry [5].

Under the conditions of full-scale war in Ukraine, the tourism sector is characterised by a reduction in international tourist arrivals, a reorientation towards the domestic market, the development of niche formats (including dark tourism) and an increasing role of local businesses.

In Sri Lanka, post-conflict tourism recovery has led to an uneven distribution of income between coastal urbanised resorts (Colombo, Galle, Bentota) and other regions of the country [2; 3].

Dark tourism, understood as visiting places associated with traumatic events and wars, constitutes a distinct tourism phenomenon. The examples of the abandoned tourist district of Varosha (the city of Famagusta in Northern Cyprus), the military fortifications in the north of Sri Lanka (the Jaffna and Mullaitivu areas) and former and current battlefields in Ukraine demonstrate that dark-tourism practices create additional economic opportunities for countries and serve as an instrument both of economic upturn and of the construction of public (national) memory. At the same time, dark tourism generates a range of moral and ethical challenges that require a specific approach to tourism organisation in order

to preserve a balance between commercialisation and societal morality, including the avoidance of the glorification of past narratives and the dissemination of destructive or traumatic experiences [4; 5; 9].

In summary, in all of the countries under consideration, dark tourism – understood as visiting places associated with traumatic events and wars – has emerged and continues to develop as a distinct form of tourism. In these contexts, dark tourism functions as a tool both for economic revitalisation and for the construction of collective (national) memory.

It should be noted, however, that the expansion of dark tourism in post-conflict countries generates a number of moral and ethical challenges, which necessitate a specific approach to tourism planning and management. Such an approach is required to maintain a delicate balance between the commercialisation of dark-tourism experiences and the preservation of ethical norms and social sensitivity in post-conflict societies [10; 11].

The practical significance of the findings lies in the formulation, based on a comparison of post-war tourism in Cyprus and Sri Lanka, of applied directions and recommendations for the development of post-war tourism policy. These recommendations concern the promotion of domestic tourism as the foundation of the tourism industry (an approach that has demonstrated effectiveness in the European Union), the use of tourism clusters (interconnected business processes), the attraction of private investment combined with state support (public–private partnerships), the expansion of tourism infrastructure, the improvement of marketing, the regulation of dark-tourism development through the elaboration of ethical standards and the diversification of tourism products with an emphasis on domestic tourism and contemporary innovations. The implementation of these recommendations in the tourism policy of Ukraine will enhance the stability of the tourism sector and ensure its resilience.

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