



Local tourism as financial and economic development driver of the community: Management aspect

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to analyse the role of local tourism in strengthening the financial and economic potential of the community through the optimisation of management processes and implementation of sustainable development strategies. The research methodology included an analysis of various areas of tourism, such as cultural, ecological, gastronomic, event and medical, which affect the development of the local economy, support small and medium-sized businesses and contribute to the creation of new jobs. The study is based on the analysis of local tourism in the Poltava region, which has a rich historical and cultural potential and significant natural resources. The results showed that local tourism significantly stimulates the development of the regional economy by increasing revenues to local budgets and supporting entrepreneurs. At the same time, it promotes the preservation of cultural heritage and natural resources, ensuring responsible use in the context of sustainable development. An important part of local tourism is cultural exchange, which deepens the interaction between tourists and local communities, promoting mutual understanding and preserving national identity. The impact of COVID-19 on the growth of interest in domestic tourism, as well as the impact of the war in Ukraine on the tourism industry, was highlighted. The war has created significant challenges, such as a decline in tourist flows due to security threats and the destruction of infrastructure. However, the role of domestic tourism, and volunteer and patriotic initiatives is growing, contributing to the economic support of local communities. Rebuilding infrastructure and developing new tourism products after the war will be essential for regional economic recovery and social stability. The study highlights the importance of cooperation between the state, business and local communities to ensure sustainable tourism development in the post-war period.

1. Introduction

In the modern context of decentralisation and regional development, the issues of ensuring economic stability and increasing the financial potential of local communities are relevant. One of the relevant ways to achieve these goals is the development of local tourism, which can become an important factor in economic growth, improving living standards and strengthening the financial independence of communities (Tsurkan and Oliynyk, 2024). Tourism not only creates new jobs, but also contributes to the development of small and medium-sized businesses, infrastructure, and increases the attractiveness of the region and attracts investment.

The research relevance is determined by the need to find new

approaches to managing local resources, which will ensure the sustainable development of communities in the context of global economic and social changes. Ukraine's regions have significant tourism potential, but its use often remains insufficient due to inadequate infrastructure, poor promotion of tourism products and the lack of comprehensive tourism development strategies (Matviichuk et al., 2023). Thus, there is a need to develop effective management solutions that would allow for the maximum use of tourism resources and create conditions for their sustainable development. The main challenges faced by communities in the context of local tourism development include the lack of a coherent tourism strategy, insufficient funding for tourism projects, a shortage of professional staff, and poor coordination between government, businesses, and local communities (Yudina et al., 2024; Trusova et al.,

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2020). The issue of environmental sustainability is also relevant, as tourism development should be balanced and not lead to excessive use of natural resources or environmental degradation.

The Poltava region, with its rich natural and cultural heritage, is well-positioned for ecotourism ([Development of craft production in the region: A business forum is held in Poltava.](#), 2023). Its vast forests, national parks, and historical sites offer an ideal environment for sustainable tourism initiatives. Ecotourism aligns with the region's goals of preserving natural resources and fostering economic development ([Tkachenko and Maslov, 2024](#)). Natural assets like Pyriatyn National Nature Park and rivers present opportunities for nature-based tourism activities like hiking, birdwatching, and eco-friendly water sports. The development of ecotourism supports regional development goals, particularly in promoting environmental sustainability and economic recovery ([Nurgaliyeva et al., 2018](#)). As Poltava rebuilds its tourism infrastructure post-war, ecotourism offers a pathway to revitalize the local economy and safeguard its environmental legacy. By creating ecotourism routes, the region can engage local communities in sustainable tourism practices, generate employment, and bolster local businesses while maintaining the integrity of its natural landscapes. Ecotourism can serve as a key driver for the region's long-term economic stability, creating a sustainable balance between growth and environmental stewardship ([Naumenkova et al., 2023](#)).

The theoretical aspects of local tourism management include the study of sustainable development concepts, innovative approaches to management, as well as strategic planning based on the unique characteristics of each region ([Ivanova et al., 2024](#); [Stoliarchuk et al., 2022](#)). Marketing strategies aimed at shaping a positive image of the region and attracting new travellers are also significant ([Bakalo et al., 2018](#)). In this context, it is necessary to consider how local communities can apply these approaches to improve the effectiveness of their management decisions and promote economic development through tourism.

In the scientific literature, the development of local tourism is defined as a way for the financial and economic development of communities, which attracts the attention of many researchers. For instance, [Shpak et al. \(2022\)](#) emphasised that strategic planning in the tourism sector is key to the successful development of regions. They argued that communities that formulate long-term strategies with a focus on sustainable development can attract more tourists and investment, which directly affects economic growth. In parallel, [Fang et al. \(2021\)](#) studied the impact of tourism on the local labour market, emphasising that the development of this sector creates not only new jobs in the service sector but also activates other industries, such as construction and production of local goods.

The issue of tax revenues and their efficiency was studied by [Rikayana and Nurhasanah \(2020\)](#), who believe that a developed tourism sector can provide communities with significant financial resources through various types of taxes and fees. At the same time, [Lee and Chen \(2021\)](#) addressed the environmental component of tourism development, emphasising that sustainable development is possible only if natural resources are preserved. They argued that the development of tourism services should be environmentally balanced to avoid the degradation of natural ecosystems.

Equally important is the study by [Garcia et al. \(2019\)](#), which analysed the introduction of innovative technologies in tourism projects. The authors pointed to the potential of digitalisation and the development of smart tourism as one of the ways to increase the competitiveness of regional tourist destinations. The social aspect of the impact of tourism was studied by [Ramkissoon \(2023\)](#). The author argued that the development of tourism infrastructure not only increases the attractiveness of the region but also improves the quality of life of residents.

Marketing strategies were addressed by [Avraham \(2020\)](#), noting that to successfully promote local tourism products, it is necessary to effectively use modern digital marketing and regional branding tools. In addition, [Graci \(2020\)](#) emphasised the importance of cooperation between local authorities, businesses and non-governmental

organisations, as effective coordination between these stakeholders is a prerequisite for the successful development of tourism infrastructure.

The problems of cultural identity and heritage preservation were analysed by [Bulatović and Stranjančević \(2019\)](#), who focus on religious tourism and its role in underdeveloped destinations, rather than on the integration of local culture into tourist routes. Their study highlights the importance of developing religious tourism models to foster socio-economic growth in these areas. The issue of investment attractiveness of local tourism research was studied by [Dzwigol et al. \(2019\)](#). The authors argued that those communities that actively invest in infrastructure development create favourable conditions for attracting foreign investment, which ensures financial stability.

A comprehensive analysis of the works of these authors demonstrates the diversity of approaches to the development of local tourism while confirming its significant potential as a tool for economic growth and socio-cultural development of communities. Several important aspects of local tourism research remain insufficiently studied. The problem of interaction between different sectors (government, business, communities) in the context of sustainable tourism development requires more detailed study to find effective models of cooperation. The environmental sustainability of local tourism is considered in terms of preserving natural resources, but tools for integrating environmental standards into management strategies remain insufficiently considered.

The study aims to analyse effective management approaches to the development of local tourism that contribute to the financial and economic development of communities. The objectives of the study are multifaceted:

- to analyse the impact of innovative management strategies on the development of tourism infrastructure in local communities;
- to identify effective tools for integrating environmental sustainability into local tourism management processes;
- to examine the role of different subtypes of local tourism, such as cultural, ecological, gastronomic, event, and medical tourism, in stimulating regional economic growth;
- to assess the impact of the war in Ukraine on the tourism industry, including changes in tourist flows, security risks, and the destruction of infrastructure;
- to explore the potential of domestic tourism and volunteer initiatives in supporting local economies during and after the war.

2. Materials and methods

The examination of local tourism in the Poltava region employed many methodologies to attain a comprehensive understanding of its socio-economic influence on regional development. The primary approach involved the examination of accessible data, encompassing details on cultural heritage ([Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine, 2024](#)), rural green tourism in the Poltava region ([Department of Agro-Industrial Development of the Poltava Regional State Administration., 2021](#)), and the tourism and resort development program in the Poltava region ([Poltava Regional Military Administration, 2020](#)). The selected sources were determined by their legitimacy and the authoritative nature of the entities supplying them, so guaranteeing the dependability of the data. The Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine is an official government entity overseeing cultural heritage, whilst the Department of Agro-Industrial Development manages rural tourist data in the region, providing accurate and locally pertinent insights. The Poltava Regional Military Administration actively engages in regional planning and policy, delivering current strategy documents. To alleviate any biases, data was corroborated with other sources, including regional and national tourism statistics, and augmented with firsthand observations from local events, guaranteeing a fair and thorough approach.

The advancement of local tourism was contrasted with other regions of Ukraine. This comparative analysis facilitated the identification of

distinct characteristics and trends in the evolution of tourism in the Poltava region, along with its distinctive advantages. This study utilised available reports from the Ukrainian Ministry of Culture and independent regional studies to mitigate subjective interpretation and ensure the data accurately reflected broader national trends.

Significant focus was placed on the cultural dimension of local tourism, encompassing the examination of cultural interactions between travellers and residents, along with its influence on the conservation of the region's cultural heritage. Local festivals, fairs, and other cultural activities were evaluated to determine their significance in promoting the region and enhancing tourist influx. The monitoring process was informed by event attendance numbers and qualitative surveys from guests and local people, which were utilised to corroborate and triangulate the findings from the primary data sources.

The research methodology also included an analysis of the impact of local tourism on sustainable development. This included studying approaches to the preservation of natural and cultural resources, the introduction of environmental practices in tourism activities, and the evaluation of initiatives aimed at supporting small businesses and local producers. In this context, the contribution of gastronomic tourism to the region's economy was investigated, through support for local food producers and participation in festivals dedicated to local gastronomic traditions.

The data from the [Gourmet routes \(2024\)](#) gastronomic map was analysed, which is an interactive resource that indicates the places of local production of food and dishes. This platform shows the locations where traditional food products, part of the cultural heritage of the Poltava region, are made. The study reviewed the key locations where artisanal foods are produced, including farms, markets and small production facilities. The study also analysed data on the participation of local artisans in maintaining cultural heritage through authentic products representing regional gastronomic traditions.

The impact of the war on the development of local tourism was also analysed. This aspect of the study included an assessment of changes in tourist activity, a decrease in the number of tourists, security risks for tourist facilities and infrastructure, and prospects for the recovery of post-war tourism. Particular attention was devoted to the role of volunteer initiatives and domestic tourism during the war, which became key areas of support for the local economy.

In addition, the study addressed innovative aspects of tourism development in Poltava region. The study analysed approaches to integrating digital technologies into the tourism industry, as well as management strategies, focused on infrastructure modernisation and investment attraction. Particular attention was devoted to mechanisms for engaging small and medium-sized businesses in cooperation with local governments to create new tourism products, develop eco-friendly routes and promote sustainable development in the region.

Thus, the materials and methods used in this study allowed for a comprehensive analysis of the impact of local tourism on the economic and social development of the Poltava region. The sources selected were verified for reliability, and measures were taken to mitigate potential biases by cross-referencing data from multiple independent, authoritative sources.

3. Results

3.1. Impact of local tourism on economic development

Local tourism, as a socio-economic phenomenon, is gaining in popularity around the world, becoming a significant element in the development of local communities. It consists of tourist trips and exploration of local attractions within a domestic country or region. Local tourism covers a variety of areas, such as history, architecture, archaeology, culture, and urban planning, allowing travellers to dive deeper into the specifics of the region, and contributing to its socio-economic development. The promotion of local tourism has a huge

impact on the development of the regional economy ([Uslu et al., 2020](#)). One of its main tasks is to support the economic activity of local communities. An increase in the number of visitors in a particular area increases local budget revenues, which contributes to the creation of new jobs, the development of small and medium-sized businesses, and an increase in the overall standard of living. This is reflected in the number of tourists visiting local restaurants, hotels and other infrastructure facilities, which helps to stimulate economic development in the region. Moreover, this approach helps to preserve the cultural and natural resources of the region, which is especially important in the context of sustainable development.

It is important to distinguish local tourism from domestic tourism. While domestic tourism refers to travel within one's own country, local tourism is more focused on exploring smaller territories, such as one's native region or local area. This distinction is crucial for understanding the specific impacts and opportunities associated with each type of tourism.

The aspect of cultural exchange in local tourism plays a key role in building strong ties between travellers and locals. This type of tourism involves not only the exchange of information but also a deep interpenetration of cultural traditions, values and practices ([Tomasí et al., 2020](#)). Tourists, immersed in local culture through participation in festivals, workshops and excursions, gain a unique experience that differs significantly from standard tourist programmes. At the same time, for residents, such interaction becomes a way to share culture, which helps increase self-esteem and preserve cultural heritage and identity.

3.2. Cultural exchange and tourism

Cultural exchange also has a long-term positive effect on the development of the region, as it contributes to the creation of a favourable tourist atmosphere that attracts new visitors. Local communities can use their traditions as an active resource for economic and social growth, emphasising their uniqueness and cultural identity. Such exchanges not only facilitate the rapprochement of different cultures but also lay the foundation for mutual understanding, which is critical for the development of tolerance and the preservation of national and regional values.

An important element of local tourism is its contribution to sustainable development. This type of tourism supports the development of local infrastructure and stimulates small and medium-sized businesses, by supporting local producers and entrepreneurs. At the same time, special attention is paid to the balanced use of resources, which ensures the preservation of the natural and cultural environment for future generations. Thus, local tourism not only contributes to economic growth but also actively supports environmentally responsible behaviour. The COVID-19 pandemic has given a strong impetus to the development of local tourism, as a significant part of the population has limited their travel opportunities abroad and focused on exploring countries and regions of origin. Many people began to look for new experiences not outside their country, but at home, discovering little-known attractions and authentic places. This process has contributed to the formation of new approaches to travel, which involve not only exploring natural or cultural sites but also diving deeper into the lives of local communities, their traditions and culture ([Nientied and Shutina, 2020](#)).

A principal characteristic of local tourism is the emphasis on sustainable tourism practices. Responsible tourism denotes travel practices that mitigate adverse effects on the environment, society, and economy, while fostering beneficial contributions to local communities and cultures. It urges travellers to consider their influence on the destinations they explore, guaranteeing that tourism advantages local communities and safeguards natural and cultural assets. Cultural tourism underscores the significance of safeguarding and enhancing cultural heritage. It promotes engagement between tourists and local communities, cultivating mutual understanding while honouring local traditions and lifestyles. Ecotourism prioritises sustainability and seeks to safeguard the

environment while offering visitors the chance to discover natural landscapes, highlighting conservation, education, and reverence for nature. Gastronomic tourism enables travellers to discover a region's culinary heritage while supporting local farmers, artisans, and small enterprises. This type of tourism fosters genuine cultural experiences via cuisine and beverages. Community-based tourism prioritises the active participation of local communities in decision-making, guaranteeing that tourism yields direct economic and social advantages for them. Wellness tourism emphasises health and well-being, encompassing trips to locations that provide physical, mental, and spiritual health services, including spa treatments, yoga retreats, and medical tourism, while maintaining environmental and social responsibility.

Their development fosters the preservation of cultural heritage and bolsters local communities, which serve not only as hosts to visitors but also as engaged participants in cultural exchange. Exploring local markets, restaurants, festivals, and other genuine venues enables visitors to comprehend the essence of local life and traditions, rendering travel both educational and culturally enriching. Integrating local tourism with other tourism modalities can significantly enhance visitor influx and foster the development of tourist destinations within a specific community. This method encompasses a broad spectrum of tourist interests, offering diverse options that align with contemporary standards of the tourism sector. The article analyses the responsible forms of tourism that can be considered components of local tourism and examines how they contribute to the development of the region.

Cultural tourism aims to explore the cultural aspects of a particular region or its heritage. This can include visits to historical sites, museums, galleries, festivals and other cultural events. Such trips allow travellers to gain a deeper understanding of local culture and traditions, which raises awareness and contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage (Lin and Hsu, 2022). In addition, cultural tourism can serve as a powerful tool for promoting a region on the international stage, attracting foreign tourists who want to explore the cultural uniqueness of the area. Event tourism focuses on the participation of tourists in various events, such as festivals, concerts, exhibitions, sporting events, conferences and fairs. This is one of the fastest-growing segments of tourism, which can significantly contribute to the development of the region's economy by increasing the number of visitors, boosting sales of goods and services, and creating new jobs (Mohanty et al., 2022). The organisation of such events is also an effective way to promote the region, attract the attention of participants and spectators, and create a positive image of the destination.

Ecological or "green" tourism is one of the most important areas of the modern tourism industry, focused on a harmonious combination of leisure and a careful attitude to nature. This type of tourism not only promotes the enjoyment of natural landscapes but also focuses on the need to preserve ecosystems and raise environmental awareness among visitors (Sevastyanov and Donchenko, 2023). Travellers visiting national parks, nature reserves and eco-trails can take part in active environmental protection activities, such as cleaning up areas, planting trees or monitoring the condition of natural sites. The main principle of eco-tourism is to minimise environmental impact. This includes using environmentally friendly vehicles, restricting tourist flows in certain areas and adhering to the rules of conduct in protected areas. Green tourism often supports local sustainability initiatives by employing local people in the tourism industry, which helps to improve their living conditions without harming ecosystems.

Gastronomic tourism provides a culinary experience and is a way to learn local cuisine. Tourists can visit restaurants, markets, farms, and wineries, take part in masterclasses on cooking national dishes and taste local products. Such tourism not only allows tourists to enjoy new flavours but also deepens their understanding of the regional cultural traditions through its culinary heritage (Dixit, 2019). It also helps to support local producers and strengthen the economy by increasing demand for local products. Heritage tourism involves visitors visiting various attractions such as historical sites, and cultural and natural sites.

The main purpose of such trips is to gain new experiences and broaden horizons and knowledge of the region's culture. Heritage tourism can cover a wide range of places, from ancient castles and temples to natural wonders such as waterfalls or canyons. It promotes interest in the historical and cultural values of the region and ensures that they are promoted to a wide audience.

Adventure tourism is designed around active recreation and extreme experiences. It can include various sports, such as cycling, hiking, climbing, and water tourism. This type of tourism attracts those looking for adrenaline and new challenges while stimulating the development of infrastructure for active recreation in the region (Gross and Sand, 2020). This may include the organisation of tourist routes, the construction of special venues for extreme sports, and the development of related services.

Wellness tourism is aimed at improving the health of travellers through medical procedures, the use of natural healing resources and specialised wellness programmes. These may include trips to resorts, sanatoriums, and spas, where tourists can receive the necessary medical or health services. Wellness tourism is an important component of local tourism, as it contributes to the development of medical infrastructure and increases the attractiveness of the region as a place for recreation. Poltava region is a region with a huge potential for local tourism development due to its historical, cultural and natural resources. The development of local tourism in this region can be significant for the economic development of communities and the preservation of their unique heritage. Poltava region has a significant historical and cultural heritage, famous architectural monuments, natural landscapes and a rich cultural tradition, which makes it attractive to visitors from all over Ukraine and the world.

The Poltava region is known as a place of outstanding historical events, such as the Battle of Poltava in 1709, which was a turning point in European history. This creates significant opportunities for the development of historical and cultural tourism. State Historical and Cultural Reserve Field of the Battle of Poltava is a popular tourist attraction that attracts visitors interested in military history and political events of the past. The preserved monuments, museum exhibitions and annual events dedicated to the battle stimulate interest in the region. In addition, the Poltava region is the birthplace of prominent Ukrainian writers such as Ivan Kotliarevsky and Nikolai Gogol. Memorial museums and themed tours dedicated to their work allow travellers to learn about Ukrainian literature and culture.

The Poltava region contains a significant number of historical, architectural and archaeological sites of both local and national significance. One of the most effective ways to preserve them is to attract them to tourism, as it helps to create awareness of the social value of historical and cultural heritage. Fig. 1 shows the structure of the historical and cultural heritage of the Poltava region according to the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine as of 2021.

The natural resources of the Poltava region, particularly Pyriatyn National Nature Park, are important for the development of eco-tourism. Tourists can explore eco-trails and engage in outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, and birdwatching. Sites such as the Sorochinsky Levada and the region's forests also offer opportunities for ecological and rural tourism, particularly in terms of agritourism. The Poltava region is rich in landscapes, rivers and places that could be suitable for the development of active tourism, including cycling, kayaking on the Vorskla River and camping. This attracts young and active travellers who seek new experiences and emotions in the wilderness. Natural resources have an impact on the development of health and wellness tourism. Table 1 shows the main types of natural and geographical resources available in the Poltava region.

Climate resources contribute to the development of health tourism in forest resorts such as Myrhorod and Velyka Bahachka. Land resources, in particular the dominance of black soil, open up opportunities for the development of agritourism and environmental projects. Biological resources, represented by national parks and nature reserves, are the basis

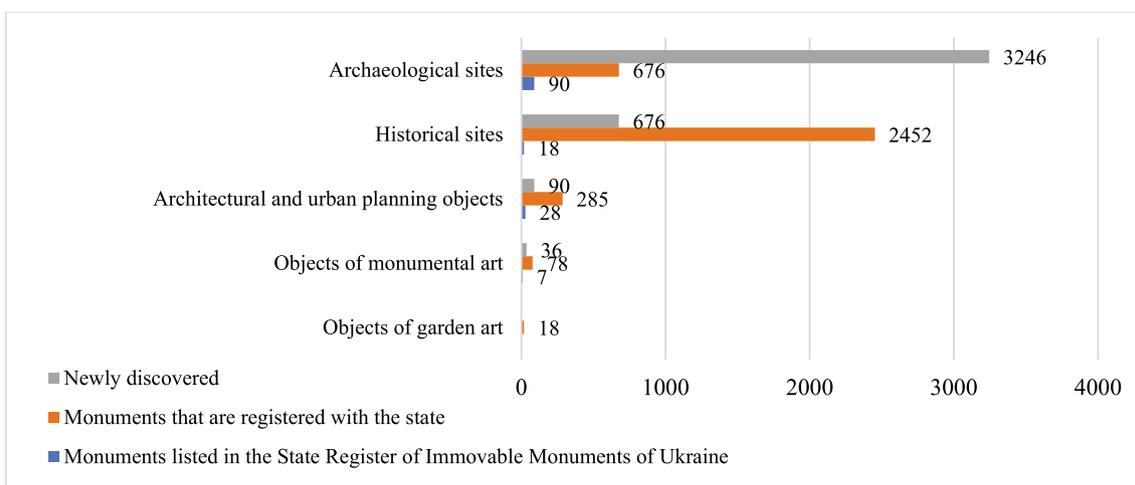


Fig. 1. The structure of the historical and cultural heritage of the Poltava region. .
Source: compiled by the authors based on the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications of Ukraine (2024)

Table 1
The main types of natural and geographical resources available in the Poltava region.

Types of natural and geographical resources	The main components are available in Poltava region
Climate resources	Poltava region is in a temperate continental climate zone, which provides sufficient heat and moisture. The region's forested nature has contributed to the development of climate resorts in cities such as Hadiach, Myrhorod and Velyka Bahachka.
Land resources	The region is in the central part of Ukraine and covers an area of 28.7 thousand km ² , with black soil dominating the soil cover. Its neighbours are Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Dnipro, Kirovohrad and Cherkasy regions.
Biological resources	The Poltava region's nature reserve fund covers 142,000 ha and includes Pyriatyn National Nature Park and Nyzhnosulskiy National Nature Park and various nature reserves.
Mineral resources	About 20 mineral water deposits have been discovered in the region, which are sodium chloride and sodium chloride-bicarbonate and are used for medical treatment. Peat mud is actively used in the Mirgorodkurort and Sosnovy Bor sanatoriums.
Hydrological resources	The water bodies cover an area of 282,500 ha, and the river system includes one large river – the Dnipro, and eight medium-sized rivers (Merlo, Psoyl, Sula, Vorskla, Orzhytsia, Khorol, Oril, Uday), 137 small rivers and more than 1,600 streams and watercourses. The region is also washed by the waters of the Kremenchuk and Dniprodzerzhynsk reservoirs.

Source: compiled by the authors based on the study of O.I. Tsurkan and N.P. Oliynyk (2024).

for nature-based tourism. Mineral and hydrological resources, including numerous mineral water springs and river systems, contribute to the development of health resort treatment, recreation and water tourism.

An important part of tourism development in the Poltava region is event tourism. One of the biggest events is the National Sorochynskiy Fair, which is visited by thousands of guests every year. It is not only a trade event, but also a cultural event, centred around folk crafts, music, dance and Ukrainian traditions.

Poltava's cuisine is known for its unique dishes, such as Poltava dumplings, which are not only part of the gastronomic tradition but have also become a cultural symbol of the region. Poltava regularly hosts the "Poltava Galushka" Festival, where tourists can try different variations of this traditional dish and learn about its history. Gastronomic

tourism allows for the development of local businesses such as farms, restaurants, and cafes offering traditional cuisine. Poltava region also has the potential to develop wine and agritourism. Visiting local farms, where travellers can participate in harvesting or tasting local products, is becoming an increasingly popular leisure activity that allows them to learn more about local culture through gastronomy.

Poltava's craft products are an important component of local tourism, representing the region's authenticity and traditions through unique gastronomic products. Poltava artisans preserve ancient recipes while adding modern approaches to production, making their products attractive not only to locals but also to visitors. Craft products are becoming an important element of gastronomic tourism, offering authentic taste experiences and supporting the local economy. In Ukraine, there is an interactive gastronomic map called Gourmet Roads, which shows craft producers and farmers. They offer meat, beer, oysters, wine, eggs, vegetables, fruit, bread and other products. Fig. 2 shows the craft producers in the Poltava region.

3.3. Impact of war on the tourism sector

The war in Ukraine has a significant impact on the development of tourism in the Poltava region, creating new challenges but also opening certain prospects. A significant challenge is security, as persistent battles and the risk of shelling have dissuaded numerous tourists from visiting, even in comparatively safe regions. This has resulted in a significant decrease in tourist numbers, especially among international visitors who are apprehensive about travelling to a war-affected nation. The war has imposed significant economic hardship, restricting the ability to invest in tourism infrastructure. Numerous local enterprises engaged in tourism have encountered financial losses or shutdowns as a result of diminished client traffic and infrastructural damage. This effect encompasses both tourist destinations and associated services, including restaurants, hotels, and transportation providers.

The destruction of cultural heritage sites is a significant concern. The conflict has intensified the difficulty of safeguarding historical and architectural landmarks, many of which have suffered damage or destruction as a result of conflicts. The Russian invasion has resulted in the devastation of notable cultural landmarks, including the collection of artworks by Ukrainian artist Maria Prymachenko, the Chernihiv Museum of Ukrainian Antiquities, and the residence of the Koenig estate manager in the Sumy region. These losses signify a cultural catastrophe and a substantial detriment to the region's tourism potential, rendering the restoration of these landmarks essential for post-war rehabilitation (Mosiuk et al., 2020).

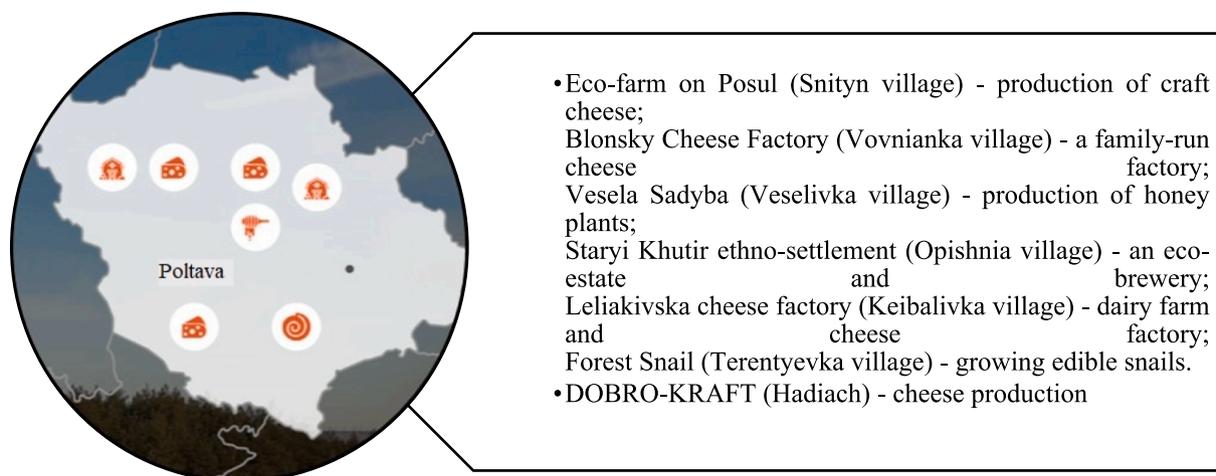


Fig. 2. Craft producers of the Poltava region.
Source: Gastromap ([Gourmet routes, 2024](#))

Notwithstanding these limitations, novel prospects for local tourist advancement have arisen. Domestic tourism has gained significance as overseas travel has become more challenging. A significant number of Ukrainians have begun to investigate novel tourist itineraries within their nation, rendering domestic travellers a crucial demographic for the region's tourism sector. Moreover, the conflict has catalysed the expansion of volunteer and event tourism, frequently associated with patriotic activities and projects aiding the military and internally displaced individuals. Engagement in volunteer initiatives, exploration of historical conflict sites, and patronage of local communities and small enterprises can provide fresh incentives for visitors pursuing significant and dynamic leisure activities.

The potential for local tourist development post-war resides in the reconstruction of infrastructure, the creation of innovative tourism offerings, and the enhancement of marketing methods. Government and international donor support will be crucial for the reconstruction of tourist amenities and the attraction of investment. Targeted initiatives to enhance local tourism in the present context include obtaining financial support and resources from national and international organisations to rehabilitate damaged tourist attractions and infrastructure, particularly the restoration of historical and cultural monuments impacted by the conflict. Fostering collaboration between local authorities and private investors via public-private partnerships can facilitate the funding and implementation of infrastructure projects, modernising existing facilities and constructing new ones to satisfy current tourism requirements.

Advancing sustainable tourism practices and creating cultural tourist offerings that emphasise the region's distinctive heritage is essential. This may involve the establishment of new eco-trails, cultural pathways, and culinary excursions that highlight regional cuisine and culture. Utilising digital solutions like online booking systems, virtual tours, and interactive maps can improve the tourist experience and increase information accessibility.

Implementing focused marketing strategies to entice domestic tourists, highlighting the safety and distinctive attributes of the location, is essential. Employing social media and digital platforms can facilitate access to a broader audience. Upon the enhancement of the security situation, it is imperative to undertake international marketing initiatives to restore the region's reputation as a secure and appealing tourism destination. Engaging with travel agents and influencers can enhance global promotion of the region.

It is essential to offer subsidies and grants to assist local firms, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, in their recovery and expansion efforts. Facilitating seminars and training programs to elevate the competencies of local artisans and tourism service providers enables them to satisfy the expectations of contemporary travellers. Establishing

new marketplaces and sales channels for local crafts and products, both nationally and globally, is also essential.

The Poltava Regional Military Administration has already invested substantial efforts into supporting the region's craft producers. As of 2023, there were more than 4,000 enterprises, including 2,500 farms, with about 70 % having an area of up to 100 ha. These small producers can also focus on craft production. Additionally, there are 150,000 individual peasant producers in the region who can join this segment of craft production (Fig. 3).

Interaction between different sectors – government, business and local communities – is a key element of sustainable tourism development in the Poltava region, especially in the context of post-war recovery. Successful development of the tourism industry requires coordination of efforts, a clear strategy and cooperation between all stakeholders. Local governments and state institutions should play a leading role in developing tourism infrastructure, supporting small and medium-sized businesses, and creating conditions for attracting investment. The authorities can initiate funding programmes to restore tourist facilities destroyed during the war and promote the development of new routes and products focused on domestic tourism. In addition, local authorities can stimulate the development of ecological and cultural tourism by implementing programmes to preserve natural heritage and support traditional crafts.

The business sector, especially small and medium-sized businesses, plays a central role in the provision of tourism services and the creation of new tourism products. Hotels, restaurants, tour companies, craft workshops and farms are the backbone of the local tourism industry. They can contribute to the development of sustainable tourism by offering eco-friendly and authentic services that meet the demands of modern tourists (Seow et al., 2021). Local communities are an important component of sustainable tourism development, as they not only host travellers but also preserve and promote cultural and natural heritage. The active participation of local people in tourism development allows them to create unique experiences for tourists, underpinned by authenticity and in-depth knowledge of local traditions and history. Communities can also initiate the creation of tourism cooperatives or associations that will allow the development of new rural, agricultural or cultural tourism destinations (López-Sanz et al., 2021).

The Programme of Economic and Social Development of the Poltava Region (Poltava Regional Military Administration, 2024) continues to support the agricultural sector and is focused on the economic and social development of small and medium-sized businesses, including craft production. Financial support for craftspeople during the war is crucial for their survival and the preservation of the region's cultural heritage.

There are several ways to provide such support in conflict settings.

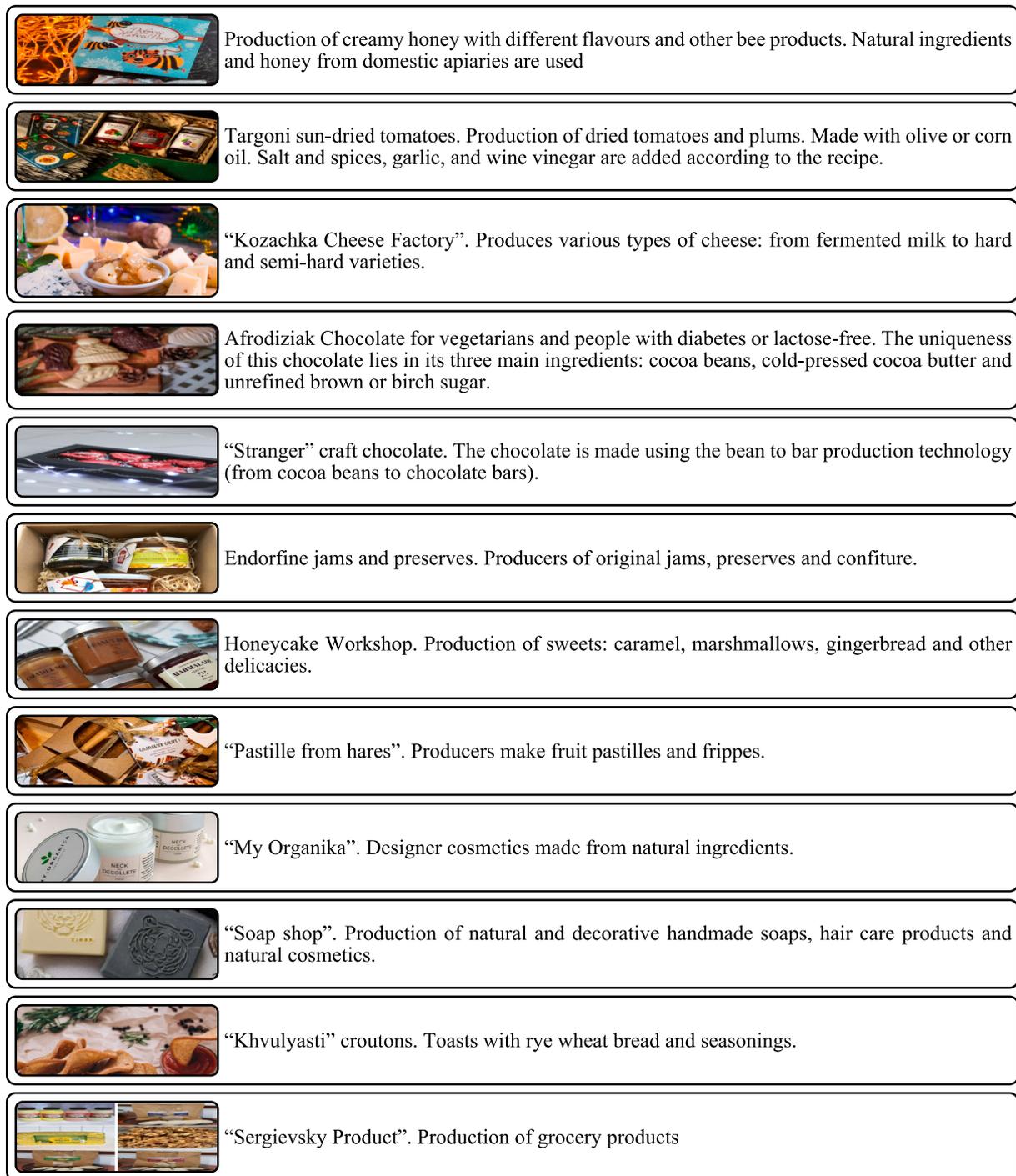


Fig. 3. Examples of handicrafts produced in the Poltava region. .
Source: compiled by the authors

These include grants and financial assistance, which involves providing subsidies or grants to support craft producers in the production and sale of their products. It is important to organise workshops, which include funding and support for the organisation of events to improve the skills of craftsmen and promote their work. The third area is market development, aimed at establishing new contacts and selling local crafts. In addition, it is necessary to initiate promotion activities, including funding for advertising campaigns and events to popularise products among a wider audience.

3.4. Innovative management strategies

Innovative management strategies play a key role in the development of the tourism infrastructure of local communities in the Poltava region. In the context of rapid socio-economic changes and challenges, including the war, the introduction of new management approaches is becoming an integral part of the development of both tourism and the community. Strategic planning, digital technologies, public-private partnerships, and sustainable development are becoming the main vectors that influence the expansion and modernisation of tourist facilities (Verhun et al., 2022).

One of the main aspects of innovative strategies is the integration of digital technologies into the tourism industry. The creation of digital platforms for promoting the region, convenient online resources for booking tours and accommodation, and apps for exploring local attractions simplify tourists' access to information and make the Poltava region more attractive to visitors. Digitalisation also facilitates more effective communication between travellers and local businesses, allowing them to respond quickly to changes in tourist needs and introduce new services. Another important factor is public-private partnerships. Local community authorities, joining forces with private investors, can provide financial and resource support for infrastructure development. Involving businesses in management decisions allows for the implementation of large-scale projects to develop hotels, restaurants, and tourist routes, which becomes an additional incentive for the development of small and medium-sized businesses (Chojnacka, 2021). In addition, support for craft production, organisation of events such as the National Sorochinskiy Fair, and the development of gastronomic tourism significantly increase the economic attractiveness of the Poltava region.

An important component of innovative management strategies is an emphasis on sustainable development. Tourism, focused on preserving cultural and natural heritage, provides a long-term perspective for the region's economic development. Authorities, businesses and local communities should work together to avoid excessive pressure on resources and preserve natural landscapes and cultural sites for future generations. Such approaches not only help attract visitors but also ensure the sustainable development of community infrastructure.

Management innovations also include investing in training and professional development for tourism workers. Educational programmes for local entrepreneurs, tour guides, tour operators and other professionals ensure the quality-of-service delivery and improve the level of tourism services. This, in turn, stimulates the creation of new jobs and contributes to the socio-economic development of the region.

3.5. Environmental sustainability in tourism

Integrating environmental sustainability into local tourism management in the Poltava region is an important step towards preserving natural resources and ensuring the region's long-term attractiveness to guests. One of the key tools for integrating environmental sustainability is the introduction of environmental standards in the construction and operation of tourist facilities. Local communities in the Poltava region can encourage the use of environmentally friendly materials in the development of hotels, restaurants and other tourist facilities, as well as introduce energy-efficient technologies that reduce the negative impact on the environment. In particular, the use of solar panels, rainwater harvesting systems or renewable energy sources can reduce the use of traditional energy sources and help preserve natural resources.

Environmental education for travellers and local people is also an important tool. Educational events can be organised in local communities to raise awareness of the importance of nature conservation. In addition, local businesses can promote responsible use of resources, for instance, by offering plastic-free products, and organic materials, and supporting waste reduction and reuse initiatives.

The development of ecotourism is another important area for integrating environmental sustainability. Poltava region, with its natural resources and landscapes, has great potential for developing this type of tourism. Local communities can create special eco-tourism routes for visitors to enjoy nature without harming the environment. This may include hiking, cycling or water tours where tourists not only explore nature but also learn conservation practices. Such routes can be organised through the national parks and nature reserves of the Poltava region, which will also create new jobs for residents and boost tourist traffic. Introducing programmes for responsible consumption and use of resources at tourist sites is also an effective tool. Local businesses can actively introduce waste sorting, encourage the use of reusable

materials, and implement waste reduction policies. This will not only contribute to environmental sustainability but will also increase the attractiveness of the Poltava region for travellers who value a responsible and conscious approach to tourism.

Thus, innovative management strategies are becoming significant in the development of the Poltava region's tourism infrastructure. They help to modernise tourist facilities, attract investment, develop businesses and preserve cultural and natural heritage. Integrating environmental sustainability into the development of local tourism in the Poltava region is a multifaceted process that requires a systematic approach. Stimulating environmental responsibility through education, infrastructure and ecotourism development, as well as supporting local environmental initiatives, are important steps towards sustainable development in the region. This will not only preserve the natural resources of the Poltava region but also create an attractive and competitive tourism product that will become the basis for further development of local communities.

4. Discussion

The results of the study demonstrate the important role of local tourism in the development of the regional economy and social life. One of the key aspects is to increase the economic activity of local communities by attracting tourists. The growth in the number of tourists contributes to an increase in local budget revenues, which helps create new jobs and support the development of small and medium-sized businesses. Gastronomic tours are particularly popular, as they support local producers and promote their products. Local artisans, farmers and entrepreneurs play an important role in maintaining authentic cultural traditions by creating unique products that attract travellers. Boiko et al. (2021) in their work emphasised that gastronomic tourism is one of the key factors of economic growth. They emphasised that attracting visitors to locally produced gastronomic products provides additional income for farmers and restaurateurs. Rachão et al. (2019), highlighted the importance of collaboration between local producers, organisations and entrepreneurs to create effective gastronomic routes. The current results confirm these theses, noting that gastronomic tours have a positive impact on the region's economy, but the authors do not focus on cultural festivals, which are important elements of gastronomic tourism.

An analysis of the Gourmet Road gastronomic map demonstrated that the Poltava region's craft producers are a significant element of local tourism. Tourists can buy authentic products such as meat, vegetables, fruit, beer, and wine, and take part in cooking classes. This contributes to the development of both gastronomic tourism and increased demand for local products, which in turn has a positive impact on the region's economy. In addition, such events increase the cultural self-esteem of local communities, strengthening their connection with visitors through joint activities. In addition to the economic benefits, local tourism development encourages environmentally responsible behaviour. Visits to national parks and nature reserves as part of ecotourism contribute to the conservation of natural resources and raise environmental awareness among both travellers and residents (Brovina and Sallaku, 2024). Poltava region has significant potential for the development of this area due to its forests and rivers, which can be attractive to outdoor and nature lovers. Baloch et al. (2023) studied the impact of ecotourism on the conservation of natural resources. They noted that the growing interest in ecotourism encourages local communities to take care of the environment. Nguyen (2022) drew attention to insufficient infrastructure and lack of information about ecological routes as barriers to the development of this area. The current findings also point to the importance of the environmental aspect of tourism, but attention should be paid to technological solutions that can improve access to information about eco-trails. This highlights new opportunities that were not considered in the authors' research.

Irawan et al. (2022) also pointed out that the development of ecotourism can help to preserve natural resources and improve

environmental awareness. The authors also emphasise the importance of cooperation between local communities, government agencies and tourism companies to implement environmentally friendly projects. The current findings partially coincide with these conclusions, as the need to preserve the environment in the context of tourism development was emphasised. The authors describe specific examples of environmental initiatives that could be implemented at the regional level, which could be a valuable addition to the current findings.

Another important element is cultural exchange, which is made possible through the participation of guests in local festivals, fairs, workshops and excursions. This exchange not only broadens the cultural horizons of tourists but also helps to preserve the national identity and traditions of local communities. Events such as the National Sorochinskiy Fair or the “Poltava Galushka” Festival become platforms for presenting the cultural richness of the region, where residents are active participants in the cultural process. Debeş (2020) argued that cultural tourism plays an important role in preserving national identity. The author addressed local festivals that provide tourists with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the culture of the region and emphasised the importance of integrating young people into the cultural process through participation in such events. The current findings partially coincide with the author’s conclusions, as the importance of festivals was also mentioned, but there was no emphasis on the role of youth, which could be an additional aspect to consider.

Bitušíková (2021) also highlighted the role of cultural tourism in shaping regional identity and attracting travellers. The author explored how cultural attractions, traditions and events can serve as important elements of a tourism product. She provided examples from different regions where cultural tourism has become the basis for local economic development. The current findings are consistent with these conclusions, as there was also an emphasis on the importance of culture and traditions in attracting visitors. Calero and Turner (2020) argued that the development of tourism in the regions leads to a decrease in unemployment but can also cause social conflicts due to increased competition between entrepreneurs. The authors emphasised the importance of finding a balance between community and business interests. The current findings also highlight the economic benefits of tourism development but do not focus on conflicts between residents and businesses. This may indicate the need to investigate the social aspects of tourism development.

The importance of innovative management strategies in supporting the development of local tourism should be noted. The digitalisation of tourism services, the creation of online booking platforms, as well as digital maps and apps for exploring local attractions can significantly improve tourists’ access to information and simplify travel arrangements (Teymurova et al., 2024; Butenko et al., 2023). It also facilitates more effective interaction between travellers and local entrepreneurs, allowing them to respond quickly to changes in demand and introduce new services. Gössling (2020) also highlighted new trends in the tourism industry, such as digitalisation and sustainable development. The author noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to changes in consumer preferences to an increase in demand for environmentally friendly tourism products. The current results also focus on digitalisation, which shows a significant overlap. However, this has been examined in the context of local tourism, while the author has looked at general trends.

It is worth noting that global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, have had a significant impact on the development of local tourism. The pandemic led to a sharp decline in the number of tourists due to travel restrictions and border closures (Rexhepi et al., 2024; Hadasik and Kubiczek, 2022). At this time, local tourism took on a new meaning, as many people began to discover regional tourist routes, avoiding travelling abroad. Full-scale war, however, had an even more devastating impact on the tourism industry. The occupation of certain territories, the destruction of infrastructure, the devastation of natural resources, and the displacement of a large portion of the population led to a severe decline in tourist arrivals and

the collapse of entire tourist destinations (Dykha et al., 2024). Tan and Cheng (2024) discuss the significant effects of the Russia-Ukraine war on tourism, noting how geopolitical instability, media narratives, and security concerns have led to a marked reduction in international tourism to Ukraine. They highlight how war and media portrayals together discourage travellers, exacerbating the economic losses in the tourism sector. Skare et al. (2021) analyzed the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry, noting that most traditional tourist routes were affected. The authors pointed to an increase in demand for domestic tourism and renewed interest in lesser-known destinations. The current results support this thesis, noting that domestic tourism became more popular during the pandemic. However, the present study focuses more on specific initiatives and strategies that can stimulate tourism development, while Škare et al. (2021) analyzed only general trends without delving deeply into the specifics of individual types of tourism.

In general, the development of local tourism, particularly in the Poltava region, has a huge potential for economic growth, preservation of cultural heritage and support for an environmentally responsible lifestyle. The joint efforts of local authorities, businesses and the public can ensure the sustainable development of the region in the face of current challenges, even in the post-pandemic world and in the process of post-war recovery.

5. Conclusions

The study of local tourism as a socio-economic phenomenon has highlighted its growing popularity in the world, as well as its importance for the development of local communities. The main essence of local tourism is travelling and exploring local attractions within one’s own country or region. This type of tourism covers various areas, such as history, architecture, archaeology, culture and urban planning, which allows tourists to dive deeper into the specifics of the region and contributes to its socio-economic development. The study results showed that the development of local tourism has a positive impact on the region’s economy. The growth of tourist flows contributes to an increase in local budget revenues, which, in turn, leads to the creation of new jobs, the development of small and medium-sized businesses and an improvement in the overall standard of living. In addition, local tourism contributes to the preservation of cultural and natural resources, which is an important aspect in the context of sustainable development. The study addressed the aspect of cultural exchange, which is an integral part of local tourism. This type of tourism encourages closer interaction between travellers and locals, enriching both sides with cultural knowledge and experience.

The impact of COVID-19 on the development of local tourism was highlighted. The pandemic changed travel preferences: many people discovered home countries and regions, which has led to an increase in the popularity of domestic tourism. This opens new prospects for the development of tourist destinations in the Poltava region, which has a rich cultural and natural potential. However, the war in Ukraine has created new challenges for tourism development in the Poltava region. First, the security situation and the threat of hostilities have led to a significant decrease in the flow of visitors, especially foreign tourists, who have become cautious in choosing destinations. This, in turn, has affected the financial performance of tourism businesses and infrastructure.

The Poltava region has enormous potential for local tourism development due to its historical, cultural and natural wealth. The study highlighted that support from government and local authorities, as well as investment in tourism infrastructure, could be crucial factors for the recovery and development of tourism in the post-war period.

Thus, the results of the study show that local tourism is an important factor in socio-economic development, preservation of cultural heritage and sustainable use of resources in the Poltava region. It opens new opportunities for economic development, improving the quality of life of residents and creating unique tourist offers that may be of interest to

both domestic and international travellers.

Limitations of the study include a lack of up-to-date information on the impact of the war on tourism infrastructure and limited access to data on tourist flows in the region. Further research could analyse the long-term effects of the war on local tourism and explore effective strategies for restoring and developing tourism infrastructure in the post-war period.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Nadiya Bakalo: Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Viktoriia Makhovka:** Writing – original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Iryna Krekoten:** Writing – original draft, Project administration, Formal analysis. **Alla Glebova:** Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis. **Svitlana Kulakova:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Investigation, Formal analysis.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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