

Resilience and adaptability of tourism in EaP region - a systematic literature review

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Abstract

Tourism in the Eastern Partnership countries experienced a sinuous evolution in the post-Soviet period. The abandonment of the classic circuits, economic stagnation, the shock suffered after the events and periods of political crisis, and lately, the frozen activity during the health crisis, make resilience a way of being of the actors in this field. The paper aims at a systematic analysis of studies targeting the forms of tourism in the Eastern Partnership countries, highlighting the development models followed, the areas of tourist concentration and the recommended strategies. From a methodological point of view, the research was staged, having an initial quantitative approach, and then a qualitative one - a content analysis highlighting the key guidelines of the analysed studies. The conclusions of the article aim at mapping the research areas covered by the articles studied, while highlighting the intensely frequented areas and the „white” areas.

Keywords: literature review, tourism, resilience, post-soviet space

Introduction

Tourism is considered an important sector for developing economies. It allows the capitalization of local resources, contributes to job creation and can lead to a high profitability. EaP countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine) have broken away from a closed, centralized system, including in the field of tourism, and have set different strategies for tourism development. A comparative analysis of the main tourism indicators shows us different priorities of this sector (see Table 1). Although Ukraine has the highest flow of visitors, the other indicators show a relatively low importance of tourism in the economy. The highest rates of tourism contribution to GDP, employment and exports are registered in Georgia and Armenia. High contributions to export are also documented in Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova, the latter

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having the lowest contribution to GDP. However, too much dependence on tourism can make their economies vulnerable to regional and global crises.

Table 1. Summary of the main tourism indicators in EaP countries

| Indicators (2019) | Armenia (ARM) | Azerbaijan (AZE) | Belarus (BLR) | Georgia (GEO) | Moldova (MDA) | Ukraine (UKR) |
|--|------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| International arrivals of tourists (millions) | 1.9 | 2.9 | 2.2 | 5.1 | 0.2 | 15 |
| Total contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP (%) | 11.8 | 7.2 | 6.4 | 26.3 | 3.9 | 6.1 |
| The contribution in total of exports (%) | 25.2 | 11.1 | 2.9 | 39.5 | 14.5 | 3.8 |
| The contribution of Travel and Tourism to employment (%) | 12.5 | 7.7 | 6.7 | 27.7 | 7.6 | 6.2 |

Source: World Tourism Organization (2020) and World Travel & Tourism Council (2020)

Our research has as premises two main aspects. On the one hand, the fact that in the six countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) tourism is not well developed. Thus, in the top of competitiveness after the tourism field (achieved on approximately 140 countries), the six countries considered occupy places in the second half of the ranking, with volatile evolutions (see Table 2).

Table 2. Overall competitiveness index for EaP countries (ranking) vs. number of publications in WoS

| Year | ARM | AZE | BLR | GEO | MDA | UKR |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2007 | 74 | 75 | - | 66 | 95 | 78 |
| 2008 | 89 | 79 | - | 72 | 98 | 77 |
| 2009 | 91 | 76 | - | 73 | 93 | 77 |
| 2011 | 90 | 83 | - | 73 | 99 | 85 |
| 2013 | 79 | 78 | - | 66 | 102 | 76 |
| 2015 | 89 | 84 | - | 71 | 111 | - |
| 2017 | 84 | 71 | - | 70 | 117 | 88 |
| 2019 | 79 | 71 | - | 68 | 103 | 78 |
| Number of publications (WoS) | 23 | 52 | 22 | 73 | 31 | 242 |

Source: World Economic Forum (2019)

The best placed are Georgia and Azerbaijan, with relatively low volatilities, then Ukraine and Armenia, and Moldova is placed at the bottom of the ranking, with high volatility. Belarus does not appear in this ranking. In close connection with the level of development of tourism competitiveness we can consider that there is also the number of scientific articles, which leads us to a relatively small

number of publications in the field of tourism for the analysed countries. In this context, as opposed to the abundance of literature on tourism practices in top countries, studies on tourism practices in EaP region are less present within the research in the field. Thus, for the country in the first position of the ranking, Spain, the search revealed a number of 2643 results in Web of Science core collection, while for the studied countries, the number of articles in the same database varied between 22 and 242.

Secondly, all the analysed countries have known in the last 30 years major events with a negative impact on tourism (secessionist incidents in Georgia in 1991-1992 and 2008, in Moldova in 1990-1992, conflicts between Ukraine and Russia from 2014 till present, conflicts between Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding Nagorno-Karabakh region in 1980-1994, 2016 and 2020, autocratic regime in Belarus from 1994 till present, economic crisis in 2009 and health crisis in 2020) and, as a result, resilience is a key concept for the actors in the tourism field. Starting from the definition of resilience: “the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner” (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2017), we oriented the research towards highlighting the situations of recovery, renewal, resistance, re-orientation, adaptation, transformation from the tourist systems of the analysed countries. Tourism in EaP countries has gone through reorganization (by moving from the old organization system to systems adapted to the market economy), reorientation (for new target groups and to mitigate the impact of political events), introduction of new forms of tourism resistant to major negative processes - dramatic migration, wars, natural disasters. In this context, resilience seems to be a way of being of the actors in the field of tourism in these countries.

Bibliometric research in tourism is relatively scarce (Koseoglu *et al.*, 2016). Our paper aims at a systematic analysis of studies targeting the forms of tourism in the countries of the EaP, revealing the development models followed, the areas of tourist concentration and the recommended strategies. The way in which these aspects relate to the dimensions of resilience has been constantly monitored and highlighted.

1. Methodology

From a methodological point of view, the research was staged, having an initial quantitative approach, and then a qualitative one. First of all, the articles subject to analysis were searched by the keywords “tourism” and the name of the country (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine), within the Web of Science core collection and the Scopus/ Elsevier database. This stage with a quantitative approach was continued with a qualitative approach.

Table 3. The stages of the analysis and the deliverables

| Step | Activity | Country | No. of items | |
|---|--|---------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| | | | WOS Collection | Core Scopus & Elsevier |
| Identification | Keywords: | ARM | | 23 |
| Papers in databases | „tourism” combined with countries’ names | AZE | | 52 |
| Web of Science | | BLR | | 22 |
| & | | GEO | | 73 |
| Elsevier / Scopus | | MDA | | 31 |
| | | UKR | | 242 |
| Quantitative analysis. Output: list of titles and abstracts related to tourism | | | | |
| Screening | Removing duplicates; | ARM | | 23 |
| Records (title / abstract screened) | Removing items referring at regions with similar names (Azerbaijan/ Iran; Georgia / USA; Moldova / Romania) | AZE | | 36 |
| | | BLR | | 18 |
| | | GEO | | 35 |
| | | MDA | | 18 |
| | | UKR | | 230 |
| | Excluding articles that do not focus on tourism or refer to different regions | ARM | | 21 |
| | | AZE | | 30 |
| | | BLR | | 15 |
| | | GEO | | 26 |
| | | MDA | | 12 |
| | | UKR | | 199 |
| Quantitative analysis. Output: 481 individualised titles and abstracts focused on tourism. | | | | |
| Qualitative analysis. Output: main features of the studies in tourism | | | | |
| Eligibility | Full-text papers were | ARM | | 14 |
| Full-text articles assessed for the eligibility | excluded: Not accessible Not in English Editorials / commentaries | AZE | | 12 |
| | | BLR | | 11 |
| | | GEO | | 22 |
| | | MDA | | 9 |
| | | UKR | | 152 |
| Quantitative analysis. Output: list of individualised full papers focused on tourism | | | | |
| Inclusion | Balanced lots of papers for | ARM | | 10 |
| Total included studies | the six selected countries; Including other studies / reports for analysis. | AZE | | 7 |
| | | BLR | | 5 |
| | | GEO | | 9 |
| | | MDA | | 6 |
| | | UKR | | 22 |
| Quantitative analysis. Output: 76 full papers focused on tourism in EaP countries | | | | |
| Qualitative analysis. Output: The variables related to the tourism industry | | | | |

Source: own representation

The selected articles were analysed according to the targeted period, the form of tourism included in the study, the national or international approach. The results were interpreted in a comparative manner. A content analysis highlighting the key guidelines of the analysed studies - the frequency of key terms related to EU support, resilience, adaptability was carried out at the end of

this qualitative approach. A detailed presentation of the analysis stages, highlighting the number of analysed articles is presented in Table 3.

It should be mentioned that the largest number of publications is not found in the case of the country best placed in the competitiveness ranking, but in the case of Ukraine. The explanation comes from the development of university centres and the number of national scientific publications indexed in the studied databases, clearly superior in the case of Ukraine compared to other countries. The selection of the articles included in the study was made starting from the need for a balanced number of publications for each country, as well as for highlighting the forms of representative tourism, in order to outline the tourist profile of each country.

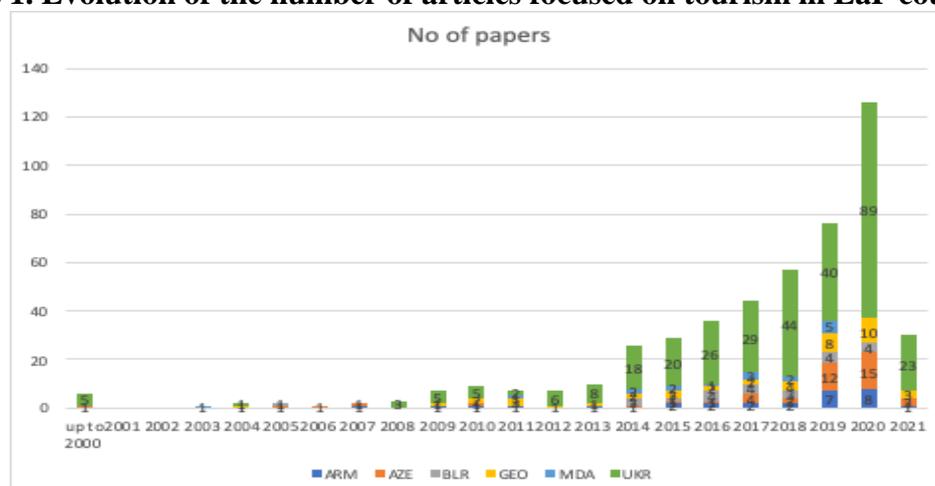
2. Results

From the analysis of the papers that have as subject tourism in the countries of the Eastern Partnership, we were able to deduce several characteristics. The results of the quantitative analysis aim at the evolution of the number of articles, the extent to which they are oriented towards different aspects of tourism and the category of the field in which they fall. The results of the qualitative analysis aim at the common characteristics of the studied countries, as well as the tourist profile of each country, as it is reflected in the analysed articles.

2.1. The results of the quantitative analysis

An impressive increase in the number of works in recent years, focusing on tourism in the EaP, can be noticed (see Figure 1).

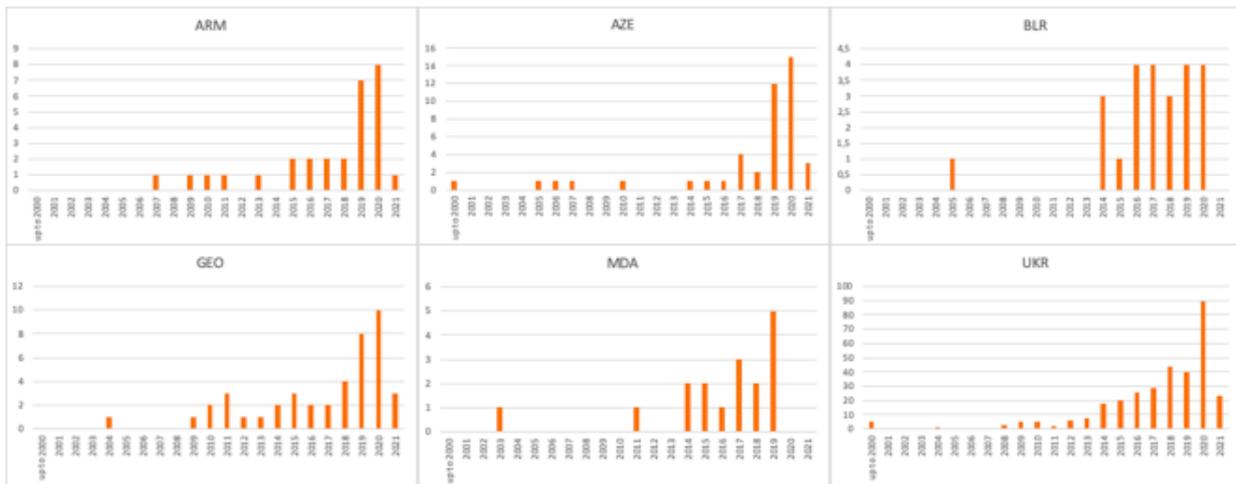
Figure 1. Evolution of the number of articles focused on tourism in EaP countries



Source: own representation

However, there is a more balanced distribution per year of the number of works in the case of Belarus and Moldova - the countries with the lowest number of works in total (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Evolution of the number of articles focused on tourism in each EaP country



Source: own representation

According to the field of publications, as they are catalogued in the databases, there are major differences between the 6 countries studied (see Table 4). The multidisciplinary character of the tourism field is observed, with the predominance of economic and environmental sciences.

Table 4. The types of domains in which the analysed publications fall

| Main scientific category of publication | ARM | AZE | BLR | GEO | MDA | UKR |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Management | 7 | 5 | | 7 | | |
| Geography | 4 | | | 13 | 5 | 36 |
| Astronomy | 3 | | | | | |
| Economics | | 11 | | 6 | | 48 |
| Regional urban planning | | 7 | | | | |
| Hospitality Leisure Sport Tourism | | | 5 | | | 20 |
| Environmental sciences | | | | 20 | | 19 |
| Secondary scientific category of publication | | | | | | |
| Management | | | 2 | | 2 | 14 |
| History | 2 | | | | | 13 |
| Geography | | | 2 | | | |
| Business | | 3 | 2 | 3 | | 12 |
| Regional urban planning | | | | 4 | | |
| Hospitality Leisure Sport Tourism | | 3 | | 5 | 2 | |
| Environmental sciences | 2 | | 2 | | | |
| Education | | | | 3 | | |

Source: own representation

According to the main approach of the article - domestic or international tourism - we also have a different distribution for the countries studied (see Table 5). The only country for which the international approach in tourism articles predominates (62%) is, paradoxically, Belarus. For two countries the approach is relatively balanced, the orientation towards domestic tourism slightly exceeding that towards international tourism - Armenia (55%) and Moldova (59%), and for the other three countries the orientation towards domestic tourism is clear - Azerbaijan (82%), Georgia (81%) and Ukraine (74%).

Table 5. Distribution of articles according to the main approach on tourism

| | ARM | AZE | BLR | GEO | MDA | UKR |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Domestic | 16 | 36 | 9 | 35 | 10 | 241 |
| International | 13 | 8 | 15 | 8 | 7 | 83 |

Source: own representation

According to the major topic considered in the article, we classified the works into two main categories - those focused on a certain form of tourism (basic or niche) and those with a managerial approach, at the level of international cooperation, at national, regional, local or organizational level (see Table 6).

Table 6. The main topics addressed in the analysed articles

| Main topics | | ARM | AZE | BLR | GEO | MDA | UKR |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Tourism type | | | | | | | |
| Major | sustainable/ green/ natural resources | 4 | 12 | 4 | 16 | 5 | 46 |
| | cultural/ heritage/ historic | 8 | 4 | 2 | 9 | 2 | 40 |
| | rural/ agri-tourism | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 18 |
| | health | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 14 |
| | marine/ coastal | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| | urban | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| | events | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | border | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Alternative/ niche | wine | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| | sport events | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| | scientific/ archaeology/ astronomy | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | dark | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| International/ National/ Regional/ Organizational level | | | | | | | |
| strategic/ infrastructure | 2 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 55 | |
| risks/ crises | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 28 | |
| partnerships | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 22 | |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| human resource/ education in tourism | 3 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 14 |
| hotel/ agencies management | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 20 |
| marketing/ brand | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 12 |
| technological factors | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 |
| financial management | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| comparative analysis | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: own representation

The predominance of the orientation towards sustainable tourism can be seen, of the one based on natural resources and those of patrimony, but also the existence of a large number of articles that aim at alternative forms, of niche, of tourism. Also, a significant number of articles address the need for a strategic vision, the risks and crises in the field of tourism and the advantages of partnerships.

2.2. The results of the qualitative analysis - country profile according to studies

The countries included in the analysis could not take advantage of the international dimension of tourism until the 1990s, due to their closed economic systems (Majidli, 2020). They still bear the striking features of Eastern European and post-socialist states - quasi-centralized systems, lack of local initiatives, uniformity, cumbersome formalities of crossing supplies, and the problems of newly established countries - increased migration, anaemic economic structures, mistrust in the system (Khartishvili *et al.*, 2020). Tourism has suffered as a result of regional conflicts, both in terms of tourists' perceptions of safety and in terms of the destruction of tourism infrastructure and facilities (Radvanyi and Muduyev, 2007). Partnerships, although seen as development solutions (Golumbeanu *et al.*, 2014), are poorly developed, and universities are often ignored as driving forces for social innovation (Keryan *et al.*, 2020). Their competitive advantages still include low prices (Van Zyl *et al.*, 2019), and the orientation towards innovation and sustainability is at an incipient level (Melnyk *et al.*, 2019; Dzyad *et al.*, 2020). The analysed research reveals different orientations towards types of tourism, specific problems and different strategic approaches for each country.

Armenia

Most articles on tourism in Armenia are oriented towards cultural resources - heritage and history. Armenia is described as a country with centuries of history, culture and traditions, the first to officially adopt Christianity as its state religion. It has important resources in the development of religious, historical, cultural, medical, gastronomic, adventure, agri- and eco-, scientific, educational tourism. In a survey conducted among Armenian foreign tourists (Tovmasyan, 2020), the key defining terms associated with Armenia are: history, culture, Christianity. As a peculiarity of this

heritage tourism is the significant proportion of the diaspora among visitors, some of them being involved in investments or volunteer actions (Darieva, 2017).

The form of niche tourism approached in research is scientific tourism (Farmanyan and Mickaelian, 2019), in particular astronomical tourism (Farmanyan *et al.*, 2019), Armenia's resources in this field being considerable, but insufficiently capitalized.

Tourism marketing and tourism infrastructure in Armenia have serious problems. The aspects indicated by tourists as important, but poorly covered are related to the availability of tourist information, the presence and conditions of public toilets in tourist areas, greening of tourist areas (Tovmasyan, 2019). Also oriented towards the development of different forms of tourism are research aimed at developing rural tourism - marketing, language barriers, infrastructure (Tovmasyan *et al.*, 2020), as well as urban tourism, by strictly concentrating maintenance and promotion activities on monuments in self and neglecting their integration in the urban space to which they belong (Mamyan *et al.*, 2016).

The solutions target partnership/ cluster initiatives, identifying a model adapted to Armenia, of collegial coordination through state bodies or representatives of universities and the private sector (Sahakyan *et al.*, 2019).

Azerbaijan

The profile of tourism development in Azerbaijan is complex. On the one hand, the importance of tourism in the economy is recognized, as many articles are focused on strategic aspects. On the other hand, the associated problems and risks are highlighted, especially related to pollution resulting from the development of industrial and oil sectors. Consequently, the need for guidance towards the sustainable development of tourism, based on natural resources, is clearly emphasized.

The forms of tourism with high potential in Azerbaijan are multiple (Gandilova, 2018): rural, natural tourism, ethno-tourism (especially in north-western Azerbaijan on the Silk Road route), leisure, extreme, medical and health tourism, maritime tourism and beach, event tourism, gastronomic and sports tourism. The potential of mega-events is highlighted - such as concerts, festivals (Ibrahimova, 2020) -, as well as their positive impact on urban sustainability, even if they involve new constructions and increase the level of pollution (Mirzayeva *et al.*, 2020). However, a study that investigates the long-term impact of tourism development on the ecological footprint for the period 1996-2014 shows that the EKC (Environmental Kuznets Curve) hypothesis is not verified in the case of Azerbaijan (Mikayilov *et al.*, 2019). Nonetheless, autocratic regime given the increasing number

of tourists and implicitly, the demand for transport and energy, a set of regulations is recommended to support the sustainable development of the tourism field.

A comparison between the country's provinces shows a different distribution of pollution problems (Mamedov and Mustafayev, 2007). Thus, in large cities, environmental systems are overloaded, while in the peripheral provinces there is significant potential for the development of rural and leisure tourism.

The development of tourism in Azerbaijan is burdened by the inherent risks, systematically analysed both for the hotel industry and for the field of tourism in general (Rza-Zadeh and Dvořák, 2020). The problems stem from poor training of industry personnel (Serafini and Szamosi, 2015), land and natural resource use conflicts in national parks (Burmester, 2005), but can also have harder-to-manage causes, such as the terrorist threat, which stresses the need for development of crisis plans and immediate action within the tourist facilities (Aliyev, 2020).

The recommendations for the systematic restart of the tourism sector after the end of the COVID-19 crisis are subsumed under the community's orientation towards domestic tourism, respectively ecological tourism and ecotourism (Rahmanov *et al.*, 2020).

Belarus

At the national level, natural resources are not available for tourism - the country has flat relief and no access to the sea. The main forms of tourism are cultural, business, as well as rural tourism and ecotourism (Tarasionak and Nikitsin, 2017). The main attractions are several resorts with a well-developed tourist infrastructure, national parks, castles, and occasionally events, such as festivals and sports.

Although there have been numerous factors that have hindered tourism development, some rural tourist destinations have maintained their attractiveness, especially for domestic tourism. Rural tourism farms represent the highest growth segment at national level (Danskikh and Traskevich, 2018), imposing an orientation towards capitalizing on local resources, functional autonomy and infrastructure of the destination in terms of marketing various sustainable tourism products, while creating a value chain of tourism.

Another promising direction of development is given by cross-border tourism. The visa regime is a barrier to increasing tourist flows, creating a visa-free border space between Belarus and Poland is an opportunity for cultural tourism and ecotourism. Successful examples are significant tourism development along the Augustów canal (Cyargeenka and Więckowski, 2020), through tourism clusters (Pirozhnik, 2020).

Although the sustainability orientation of tourism is stated in the national development strategies (Maksimieniuk and Timakova, 2020), the management of natural areas with tourist potential is subject to permanent threats through the use of land and natural resources for agricultural or industrial purposes (Galay *et al.*, 2016).

Belarus' negative political image abroad, the country's poor reputation in the international tourism market, the existing visa regime, compulsory health insurance, poorly developed infrastructure due to lack of tourism prioritization for a long time, poor quality of services (Tarasionak and Nikitsin, 2017) are factors that impede a significant increase in tourism in the next period.

Georgia

Georgia is a country with remarkable natural landscapes. In addition to its natural features, Georgia has a civilization of over 4,000 years, resulting in a multitude of cultural heritage sites. Being one of the first countries in the world to adopt Christianity, the country's religious heritage is the basis of cultural tourism. Here is a mixture of Asian and European influences, many original customs and traditions being preserved in isolated mountain areas (Metreveli and Timothy, 2010). Even before 1989, Georgia was one of the most popular holiday destinations for Soviet tourists. Currently, in order to attract more visitors, the industry is looking for niche areas with great potential, especially winter tourism, wine and gastronomy, medical, wellness and gambling (Khartishvili *et al.*, 2019). In a study aimed at the purpose of international visits (Cappucci *et al.*, 2015), the preponderance of leisure or recreation destinations, visiting friends or relatives, transit, shopping and business/ professional travel was highlighted. Georgia has very good conditions for the development of ecotourism. Cultural and ethnic aspects - traditional cuisine and local wine - are extremely important in shaping Georgia as a tourist destination.

Most studies are oriented towards rural tourism, eco- and ethno-tourism. Mountainous regions are considered natural resources with significant potential for the development of regions. Thus, the Caucasus is considered one of the 34 "hotspots" of biological diversity, and Georgia is considered among the 200 global ecoregions, making the importance of ecotourism a topical issue at the strategic level (Paresashvili, 2014).

New development directions have been adopted in the mountainous regions of Georgia. Culture and tourism have a synergistic relationship, the experience of the inhabitants of the mountainous areas based on tradition has led to the creation of authentic services for tourists. This competitive advantage of mountain destinations creates socio-economic benefits, while preserving the long-term cultural identity of the host community (Gugushvili *et al.*, 2019). Tourism in mountain regions has the

potential to create or revive related economic activities, but can also lead to the reduction or abandonment of certain traditional activities (Salukvadze *et al.*, 2019). However, in the later stages of tourism development, it is assumed that it will be necessary to consolidate the supporting economic sectors. An excessive orientation towards more profitable tourism can lead to a vulnerability of the locals to avoid the potential decreases of the tourism. This meaning a insufficiently exploited tourist infrastructure, developed mainly to the detriment of the agricultural lands (Salukvadze and Backhaus, 2020). Within the supply chain, most local producers are deficient from the perspective of tourism actors. They do not have certifications in agricultural production and food safety, the capacity to provide product delivery services, the marketing skills and propose a supply unstable due to seasonality and volatile quantity, which leads to a feeling of instability for long-term collaboration between local suppliers and recipients.

It is clear that rural tourism in Georgia is at an early stage of its development, generating challenges and constraints for further strategic development. An approach that emphasizes the concept of community tourism and integrated rural development can generate positive effects for all parties involved (Khartishvili *et al.*, 2019). Although there are areas with internationally recognized potential, much remains to be done in terms of tourism image, which does not have adequate international promotion, and for the development of tourism facilities, still far from complying with international standards (Cappucci *et al.*, 2015). The mountainous areas respond differently to similar challenges - a comparative study between the mountainous region of northern and southern Georgia shows that, although their socio-ecological systems were similar, the Skhalta Gorge is rapidly depopulating, whilst in the Upper Svaneti the population is stable (Tevzadze and Kikvidze, 2016). Modern ways of governing, involving decentralization and involvement of locals (Svajda *et al.*, 2020), as well as project-type initiatives with the support of non-governmental organizations (Hirsch and Lacour, 2004), are ways of sustainable tourism development in these areas.

Another interesting development direction for Georgia's tourism is medical tourism, which can provide comprehensive health services - curative, preventive and rehabilitation, with the main advantage of low prices for these services and the climate suitable for recovery. In order to gain a competitive advantage in the health tourism market, hospitals need to improve the quality of services, especially those that are complementary, such as hospitality services, and should meet patients' expectations (Verulava and Jorbenadze, 2018).

The effects of the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia are considered significant for the insufficient development of the sector at the national level, highlighting the damage that the war has generated on tourist sites, wildlife and vegetation, tourist infrastructure, and image, tourists,

especially international ones, avoiding the areas adjacent to conflicts (Menghi *et al.*, 2011; Metreveli and Timothy, 2010). There are indications that Georgia could use war heritage for tourism purposes, especially for tourists from the diaspora, but the balance of the war for tourism is obviously negative. There is also evidence of the negative impact of tourism on the environment, the effect of EKC being also considered to be present in Georgia. As tourism has a significant role in CO₂ generation (Fethi and Senyucel, 2021), the traditional consumption methods must give way to sustainable methods.

Republic of Moldova

The Republic of Moldova has a rich cultural heritage, with over 140 cultural heritage sites; it is an amalgam of many nationalities and cultures with many traditions, languages, folklore, cooking. The main forms of tourism in Moldova are: rural tourism, wine-growing, cultural, health (Stratan *et al.*, 2015). A systematic analysis of the development needs of the sector (Tribe, 2003) highlighted the following types of tourism with potential: adventure; religious; Business; in the nature; balneary; cultural; of heritage; educational; wine-vineyards; of events; urban. However, there are a number of factors that may jeopardize the sustainable development of tourism in Moldova, most of which stem from poor management. Thus, regarding the development of cultural tourism, one can notice the deplorable state in which there are many architectural monuments, as well as the low involvement of the population in cultural and tourist events (Stratan *et al.*, 2015).

The tourist and recreational potential of natural resources is also under-exploited. Only 47 lakes (12%) are used mainly for recreational purposes (Bacal *et al.*, 2019), the main causes of this under-use being related to the unsatisfactory state of aquatic areas, the massive depopulation of the rural area, the insufficiency of the tourist infrastructure. Landscape attractiveness must be capitalized by introducing areas with geo-tourism potential in the existing natural or cultural routes and by conservation measures of relatively stable landforms (Cocean *et al.*, 2019).

Including in the promotion and development of Moldovan wine tourism, a field in which there are first-rate attractions at the international level, certain limitations are highlighted: low number of foreign tourists at the national level, due to low visibility, low flexibility in package design tourist for different categories of visitors, high price/ quality ratio; limited information on the value of the tourist heritage owned by the rural community, insufficient capacities. insufficiently qualified staff, limited financial resources for the development of the sector, with a low share of business expansion projects in wine and wine tourism (Iațișin and Colesnicova, 2017).

The development of forms of tourism with real potential in the Republic of Moldova will depend overwhelmingly on the training of staff involved in tourism. Therefore, in policy terms, designing training programs would be helpful (Tribe, 2003).

Ukraine

Ukraine has rich natural, climatic, recreational, historical and cultural resources, which are important preconditions for the development of a unique tourist offer for leisure, education, culture or other niche needs (Mazaraki and Voronova, 1994; Chernega *et al.*, 2019; Borysova *et al.*, 2020). Although the tourism field is considered a perspective direction for the development of the national economy, the impact of tourism on the economy is negligible. Ukraine is at a low level of attractiveness and value of its national tourism brand, with a low level of competitiveness on the world market (Melnychenko *et al.*, 2021). There is a major imbalance between potential and capitalization of tourism resources (Boyko *et al.*, 2020). The causes that led to this imbalance are multiple: political and economic instability, negative image, lack of prioritization at government level, lack of an efficient management and regulatory system, incomplete reforms, cumbersome border crossings, corruption, lack of strategic cooperation tourism business entities (Mazaraki and Voronova, 1994; Kovalska *et al.*, 2020; Boiko *et al.*, 2017). Tourism has not become the key sector in Ukraine due to the many problems it faces: underutilization of tourist attractions, low level of services, non-compliance with environmental regulations, low level of public safety, poor transport and infrastructure, low qualification of human resources and language barriers (Sass, 2020).

One of the events with a significant negative impact on the current situation is the 2014 conflict and the annexation of Crimea. The immediate effects of political instability include a dramatic drop in the number of tourists, declining revenues and rising costs for tourism operators. The major summer tourist destination has been lost, but the biggest threat remains the feeling of insecurity among potential tourists, even in regions far from the conflict zone and relatively safe. Ukrainian hotels were severely affected, their revenues declining and total costs rising; moreover, the general economic situation has worsened, thus negatively affecting the internal market of tourism (Webster *et al.*, 2017). Internally, well-developed cities with a diverse range of tourism products and sustained marketing have benefited from the redirection of tourist flows from conflict-affected areas (Tomczewska-Popowycz and Quirini-Popławski, 2021).

The multitude of tourist resources and the different socio-economic conditions determined the researchers to approach the issue of regional differentiation of the tourist services market. The unitary approach of tourism development was considered inefficient, the most important spatial polarization

factors being the differences in the distribution of natural resources, climatic characteristics, cultural and historical conditionality, disproportionate placement of transport infrastructure, communication, asymmetry of recreational resources distribution (Gorina *et al.*, 2020).

The tourist traffic of Ukraine has undergone a structural change, the development trends of the tourism market being: a substantial disparity of regional development; reorientation of flows from southeast to northwest; the concentrated development of cultural tourism in the northern regions and the lack of extensive diversification; unavailability of southern and eastern regions, previously known as popular tourist destinations (Chernega *et al.*, 2019). Clear priorities have been identified for the development of certain types of tourism in a geospatial context: northeast - business; south - recreational; west - balneary; centre - cultural and historical (Vysochan *et al.*, 2021; Kovalska *et al.*, 2020).

Tourism was perceived as one of the keys to solving economic problems, especially in certain regions, in order to overcome the subsistence level. However, the researchers emphasize the incipient level of development of different types of tourism, both main and niche, as well as the problems that affect their development.

For the development of health and wellness tourism, it is considered that Ukraine has important advantages: natural conditions, resources, resorts with specific infrastructure, modern methods of treatment. Despite positive development trends, there are a number of problems: small number of medical and leisure entities; lack of a well-developed network of alternative means of accommodation; inconsistency of the price / quality ratio for medical and health services; limited use of reservation computer systems; lack of funding and qualified specialists for the restoration of historical, cultural and architectural monuments (Melikh *et al.*, 2019). In close connection with medical tourism, the idea of inclusive, social rehabilitation tourism appeared. In Ukraine there were several specific conditions to encourage the development of this form of tourism: on the one hand, the increase in demand due to the expansion of the range of diseases and disabilities due to declining living standards, deteriorating environmental quality, armed conflicts, there is a group significant target; on the other hand, there is the offer, in the form of concentration of recreational and tourist resources, the operation of specialized rehabilitation institutions and facilities of auxiliary infrastructure - social, transport (Bielousova and Lyubitseva, 2019).

Religious tourism in Ukraine is oriented towards the domestic space more than towards the international one, although there are wooden church architecture objects that are included in the UNESCO World Heritage. Having a strong potential for the development of religious tourism, including through the organization of educational circuits, Ukraine has not used it effectively, the reasons including the lack of signs and information on available resources and routes; weak links

between travel agencies and religious organizations; the lack of qualified staff in this field, especially of specialists in the development of quality tourist routes. In order to develop cultural and religious tourism projects, the state-private partnership is recommended (Borysova *et al.*, 2020; Yaromenko *et al.*, 2019).

Ecotourism in Ukraine has huge potential, but is at an early stage (Shvedun *et al.*, 2019). Travelers are attracted by the availability of organic products and recreational areas, which is a significant competitive advantage (Kyrylov *et al.*, 2020). Although only a few hotels and beaches have received ecological certification (Kalaitan *et al.*, 2021), in the rural area important steps have been taken in the development of agri-tourism, laying the foundations of a regional network of farms, which can be used as a marketing tool (Ulyanchenko *et al.*, 2019). In the post-pandemic period, it can be assumed that the demand for ecotourism will increase, the recommendations for the development of the sector being the reorientation towards the internal market, the elaboration of new proposals and products focused on individual tours and small groups, the development of new ecological routes (Borysova *et al.*, 2021). Marine tourism, in the Black Sea region, has a significant development potential, the main problem being the poorly developed peripheral infrastructure. The development of coastal infrastructure must be done considering the sustainable dimension of tourism and the conservation of recreational resources (Stryzhak *et al.*, 2020).

Alternative modes of tourism are identified and analysed in many researches, Ukraine being the country with the most potential forms of tourism among EaP countries. An interesting direction is given by visiting heterotopias, defined as symbols of crisis and deviation. The aristocratic heritage was converted in the times of the USSR, being used as orphanages and hospitals. Heterotopies propose a different approach to the past, they serve as “pieces of the multidimensional puzzle of the multicultural past of Ukraine” (Sarapina, 2016). Another niche sector is that of industrial tourism, extreme. There are offers to visit mines, metallurgical plants, quarries, winery bases (Chernega *et al.*, 2019). Photo tourism is emerging as an innovative trend in active tourism. In Ukraine there are destinations for landscape and panoramic photos, destinations for historical and cultural heritage, but also culinary photography of Transcarpathian cuisine, a promising and innovative element. The Chernobyl exclusion zone has become a particularly interesting photo location. However, there is a low availability of photo tour proposals and problematic accessibility of locations (Chyr, 2018).

For urban destinations, especially oriented towards cultural, educational and event tourism, a diversification of the tourist offer can be achieved by highlighting the murals. The creation of routes can be done so as to follow the change of the image of the urban environment, of the buildings built

in the Soviet period that did not present architectural decorations or variety of forms, under the influence of street art (Olishevskaya, 2020).

A unique destination, defining for dark tourism, is Chernobyl. The complexity of the destination derives from the multitude of types of tourism that can be promoted - cultural, cinematic, active, scientific, conference, dark, sentimental, adventure, extreme, industrial, business, event, diplomacy and ecotourism, from the stage of its shaping as a tourist destination (from illegal visits to mass tourism). The narrow segmentation of the product, the predominance of foreign tourists, the influence of the games, television and film industry determined the stability of tourism in the area (Romanova, 2020).

Methods for reducing the effects of political instability have varied. Managers of hotels and tourist offices in Ukraine have been more likely to make marketing efforts than to lower prices or labour costs; Eastern museums have been actively oriented towards temporary interactive exhibitions (Chernega *et al.*, 2019).

Tourism is a multifunctional industry, and its development will depend on logistics, the development of the information and communication sphere, the climate of innovation and investment, the financial and legal support of the state (Kovalska *et al.*, 2020). An integrated approach to domestic tourism, cross-border cooperation in tourism through programs and projects developed in partnership (Hrynokh *et al.*, 2019), the creation of tourism clusters are opportunities for development of tourism actors and generate multiplier and synergistic effects, increase benefits competitive (Boiko *et al.*, 2017).

3. Discussions

Some common characteristics can be deduced from the analysis of articles focused on tourism in EaP countries, but also considering the situation presented in various other studies. Resilience in tourism only appears explicitly in two of the analysed researches, but links with specific aspects of resilience can be detached in a contextual way.

Strategic approach

The strategic orientation of EaP countries in terms of tourism differs (Talmaciu *et al.*, 2020), and the forms of tourism presented in research as potential are not found in national strategies as a priority. The orientation towards domestic tourism predominates in the articles, while the national strategies emphasize the international dimension of the touristic offer. This orientation towards domestic tourism has certain advantages in crisis conditions, when the international flow of tourists decreases

considerably. The strategic approach in the researched articles (see Table 7) also includes the institutional reconstruction of the last 30 years, as a result of the detachment from the Soviet bloc.

Table 7. Synthesis of studies oriented towards strategic analysis

| Authors | Keywords |
|--|--|
| Mikayilov <i>et al.</i> (2019); Dzyad <i>et al.</i> (2020); Fethi and Senyucel (2021); Mazaraki and Voronova (1994); | tourism modelling; role of tourism in social development; sustainable development of tourism industry; environmental consequences of tourism; input-output models; economic-driven tourism growth; main challenges of tourism development; structure of tourism; institutional tourism organizations |

Source: own representation

Miscellaneous forms of tourism

Although for incipient stages of tourism development and a limited competitiveness of the offer, a consolidation of traditional forms of tourism - cultural and heritage, ecotourism and rural, coastal - would be expected, for most countries included in the analysis, a diversification of the types of tourism considered with potential was identified, some of them with a strong innovative character (see Table 8).

Table 8. Synthesis of studies oriented towards different forms of tourism

| Authors | Keywords |
|--|--|
| Farmanyan and Mickaelian (2019); Radvanyi and Muduyev (2007); Ibrahimova (2020); Dansikh and Traskevich (2018); Pirozhnik (2020); Khartishvili <i>et al.</i> (2019); Paresashvili (2014); Tevzadze and Kikvidze (2016); Salukvadze and Backhaus (2020); Stratan <i>et al.</i> (2015); Iațișin and Colesnicova (2017); Bacal <i>et al.</i> (2019); Shvedun <i>et al.</i> (2019); Stryzhak <i>et al.</i> (2020); Chyr (2018); Iaromenko <i>et al.</i> (2019) | astronomical tourism sites; mining vs. recreation; challenges facing the mountain peoples; UNESCO world heritage potential; cultural tourism routes; music management; “youth culture and dark tourism; impact of mega-events; agri-tourism in Belarus resilience in development; increasing rural destination resilience; cross-border spatial development; rural tourism in peripheral regions; rural tourism in Georgia in transition; ethno-ecological contexts; wine tourism; use of lakes; marine and coastal tourism; photo tourism; wooden sacral architecture; culinary tourism; health-improving tourism; diversification as a tool of anti-crisis strategy; surrogacy and procreative tourism |

Source: own representation

Thus, for Armenia is astronomical tourism, for Azerbaijan dark tourism, for Belarus cross-border tourism, for Georgia tourism of mountainous peripheral regions, for Moldova, wine-wine tourism, while Ukraine appears to benefit from the most diversified offer - tourism for photos, gastronomic, dark, social inclusive, medical, artistic urban, industrial. The support of orientations in

tourism depends fundamentally on the system of national values (Talmaciu, 2015), there being a clear connection between cultural, historical, natural patrimony and the possibility of capitalization through the tourist offer.

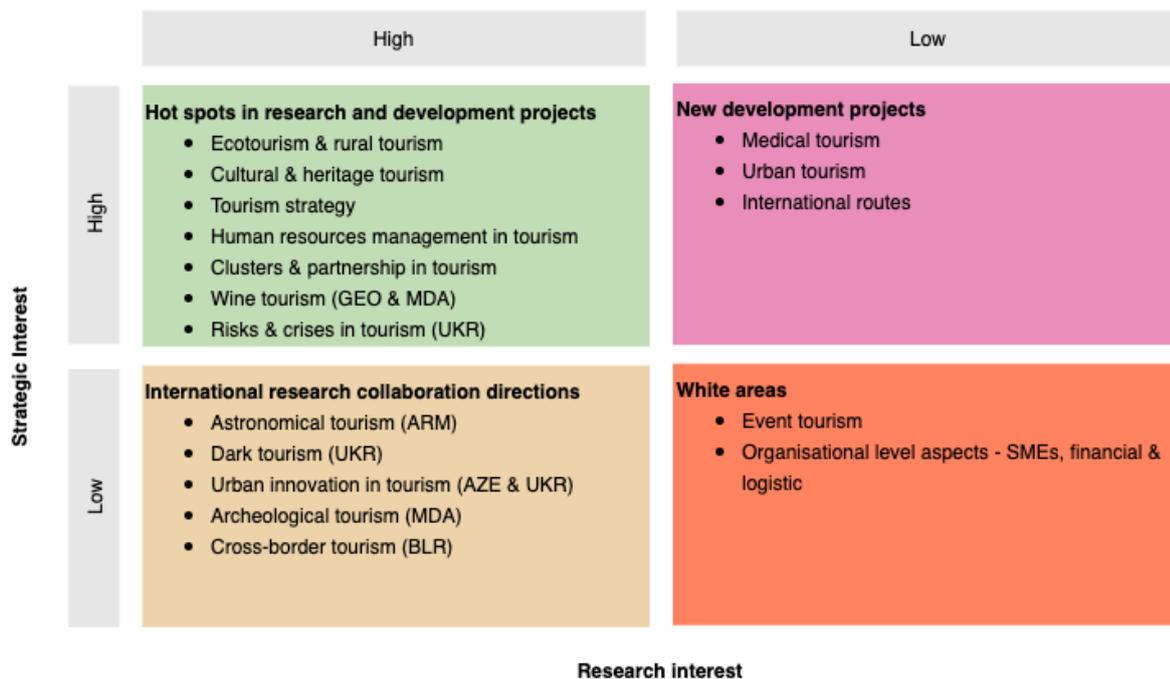
The diversification of the tourist offer and the capitalization of all niches are constituted as tools for diminishing the risks and maintaining the number of tourists at a level that would allow the survival of the tourist destinations.

Overlapping the areas encouraged by national strategies in the field of tourism and the types and aspects of tourism found predominantly in the interest of research, we can identify 4 categories of topics in the field of tourism (see Figure 3).

In the high-high quadrant, which is defined by high strategic and research interest we find the topics that can be themes of future articles, for which there is already relevant consistent literature, but also directions for the development of entrepreneurial projects.

In the low-low quadrant we find topics for which there is no consistent research, and entrepreneurial development can take the form of pilot, local projects. In the quadrant of low interest from researchers, but with major strategic interest, we expect to develop entrepreneurial projects. Finally, in the quadrant with high interest from researchers, but low strategic interest, multi-national research can be carried out, with the involvement of teams of extensive research.

Figure 3. Matrix of research - development directions in the field of tourism



Source: own representation

The long shadow of the Soviet regime

Although 30 years have passed since the EaP countries gained independence and broke away from the Soviet regime, references to its still-living legacy are prominent in the articles analysed (see Table 9). The situation in this post-Soviet area can be explained by the difficulty of reforming a consolidated system, especially when domestic political orientations are not convergent and when being marked by significant events, such as direct conflicts or crises related to Russia during this period.

Table 9. Synthesis of studies aimed at highlighting post-Soviet influences

| Authors | Keywords |
|---|--|
| Metreveli and Timothy (2010); Tomczewska-Popowycz and Quirini-Popławski (2021), Kovalska <i>et al.</i> (2020); Sarapina (2016); | tourism - roots - ideology; Russia-Armenia tourist flows; diasporic cosmopolitanism in post-soviet Armenia; cooperation between Azerbaijan and Russian Federation; soviet era; military history of Russia; cultural heritage of Russian; effects of the August 2008 War; conflicts about architectural cultural heritage; ideology in the urban cable network; depopulation in the Central Caucasus; political transit countries; political instability equals the collapse of tourism; epoch of economically - politically reforms and war; geopolitical trial; the context of the conflict; memory heterotopias; contested memories; dissonant heritage; economically depressive regions; memories of the Gulag and post-communist ethnic construction; disaster in Chernobyl; contested landscape |

Source: own representation

It is the characteristic in which the dimension of resilience appears significant, both through the transformations supposed by the transition from a centralized system to independent, entrepreneurial systems, and through the resistance of tourism to the implicit shocks to the armed conflicts in the region.

National brand affected by crises and risks

Several researches identify as the main cause of the low competitiveness of tourism the image affected by internal and external crises (see Table 10). Tourists avoid countries affected by armed conflict and terrorism, but they extend the negative perception to the entire region. There is also the phenomenon of boycotting regimes that they consider undemocratic.

It is interesting to note that the conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine are frequently presented as reasons for poor tourism development, but secessionist incidents in the Republic of Moldova and territorial disputes between Armenia and Azerbaijan regarding the autonomy of the Nagorno-Karabakh region are not mentioned in any of the analysed articles. A possible explanation is given by the attempt of these countries to manage their image and by the limited effects of those incidents.

Table 10. Synthesis of studies aimed at analysing the country brand

| | Keywords |
|--|--|
| Tovmasyan (2020); Rza-Zadeh and Dvorak (2020); Melnychenko <i>et al.</i> (2021); | effectiveness of tourism marketing and branding; tourist satisfaction index; country image formation, stability, and change; tourists' perceptual maps; risk strategic management in hospitality sector; environmental awareness; the evolution of the image of Belarus; mutual image of Poland and Belarus; nation branding in transition countries |

Source: own representation

During crises, tourism becomes quite vulnerable. However, it responds quickly to changes that occur and its recovery period is relatively short. At the same time, the demand for its services and products is declining, but not disappearing. This demonstrates the historical stability of tourism, its ability to recover quickly and to create new jobs after the global crisis has ended.

The influence of the pandemic on tourism

International tourism is one of the most affected sectors of the economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the most vulnerable to changes in the global situation are the countries with a high percentage of tourism revenues from the country's GDP, which places the analysed countries in the area of insignificant losers from this point of view - there are few studies on these issues (see Table 11).

Table 11. Synthesis of studies about the influence of the pandemic

| Authors | Keywords |
|---|---|
| Rahmanov <i>et al.</i> (2020); Krylyov <i>et al.</i> (2020); Borysova <i>et al.</i> (2021); | tourism management: impact of COVID-19; increasing globalization risks; ecological tourism: pandemic lessons; |

Source: own representation

Unlike other types of tourism, the relatively developed forms of tourism in EaP countries - ecotourism, heritage and educational tourism, religious tourism have certain advantages during this period. They require a relatively small infrastructure, which does not pose major problems to profitability. As these are not forms of mass tourism, but individual or group, they are adapted to the conditions of health crisis. For instance, in the case of religious tourism, pilgrimage still maintained a high motivation among visitors.

The importance given to the development of human resources in tourism

The subject of education and of the development of specific human resources appears frequently, both as a success factor, and especially as a cause of the insufficient development at national level (see Table 12). Proper training of employees at the level of functional organizations, but also at the level of tourist attractions, contributes to the adaptation of the tourist offer to the requirements of visitors (Manolescu *et al.*, 2008).

Table 12. Synthesis of studies focused on the importance of human resources

| Authors | Keywords |
|---|---|
| Serafini and Szamosi (2015); Tarasionak and Nikitsin (2017) | requirements of tourism labour market; improving tourism education; impact of human capital; HRM in five-star hotel; effects of professionalism; connections between research and education in tourism; educational work in tourism; cross-cultural adjustment stress in universities; challenges of the educational programmes; multicultural component in the system of professional training of tourism; mass labour migration; employer branding of the tour operator |

Source: own representation

Insufficient, outdated education programs that do not correspond to the skills required by organizations active in the tourism market, low concern and insufficient investment in human resource training at the organizational level, and migration of qualified human resources are the most commonly cited negative issues related to human resources in the field of tourism.

Development solutions through extended collaboration

A surprisingly large number of articles touch on the issue of tourism clusters as an integrated solution for local and regional development (see Table 13). International thematic routes, among which New Silk Road deserves a special mention, are also seen as success factors in the development of international tourism (Manolescu and Borza, 2015), considering the relatively small size of some of the countries analysed. Other proposals for international routes are those specific to wine tourism, those related to the Soviet heritage, gastronomy and landmarks of minority heritage. Cross-border tourism is mentioned through successful case studies, which reduced the problems of border crossing formalities and implemented joint projects with non-reimbursable funding. East-West collaboration is also seen as a success factor in human resources projects, both at the level of tourism organizations (especially through the transfer of knowledge within hotel chains) and at the level of universities, through European-funded projects (Ulian and Castraveț, 2015).

Table 13. Synthesis of studies oriented towards extended partnerships

| Authors | Keywords |
|---|--|
| Sahakyan <i>et al.</i> (2019); Khartishvili <i>et al.</i> (2020); Keryan <i>et al.</i> (2020); Hrynokh <i>et al.</i> (2019); Gorina <i>et al.</i> (2020); Ulyanchenko <i>et</i> <i>al.</i> (2019); | tourist clusters; community-based tourism; university- community cooperation; activated networks in a rural destination; cooperative approaches; cluster strategy; interregional cooperation; New Silk Road Initiative; cross- border cooperation; integrative view of international experience |

Source: own representation

The involvement of several stakeholders in the development of tourism, at local and regional level, as well as international partnerships, is the platform for finding solutions for crisis situations, facilitates the transfer of information and supports the implementation of development projects.

Conclusions

The academic environment, through its research and projects, can boost the targeted sectors, especially in the case of a field as applicative and entrepreneurial as tourism. Knowledge of the main topics of interest for researchers in a given region is the premise for international collaborations, both in academia and by developing projects in extended partnerships. The paper highlighted the areas of interest for research and development in the EaP countries, as well as the areas not covered by the relevant literature in the field or by the strategic documentation, through the two-dimensional matrix of the research directions.

In EaP countries, tourism had to face major obstacles, through institutional reconstruction, reinvention through entrepreneurship, rebuilding infrastructure and the image affected by political and military crises, staff retraining and adapting educational programs to the new skills required by the labour market. Resilience acquires a special relevance in this context. Both the problems of the system and the potential solutions are found in the analysed researches, the common preoccupations being able to be grouped around six key characteristics: strategic approach, diversification of tourism forms, (still) strong post-Soviet influences; the need to consolidate the national brand; increased need for human resource training and openness to decentralization, clustering and international partnerships.

The strategic approach in the researched articles includes the institutional reconstruction of the last 30 years, as a result of the detachment from the Soviet bloc, and emphasizes the orientation towards domestic tourism. This orientation has certain advantages in crisis conditions, when the international flow of tourists decreases considerably.

Despite incipient stages of tourism development and limited competitiveness of the offer, a diversification of the types of tourism considered with potential was identified, some of them with a strong innovative character. The high diversity of tourism types has an essential role in the survival of tourist destinations, the reorientation towards personalized tourism being a possible alternative.

Several researches identify the image affected by internal and external crises as the main cause of the low competitiveness of tourism. The dimension of resilience appears significant, both through the transformations supposed by the transition from a centralized system to independent, entrepreneurial systems, and through the resistance of tourism to the implicit shocks to the armed conflicts in the region.

The extensive collaboration between the various parties involved in tourism, with adequate staff training is considered the key factor in the rapid identification of problems and the appropriate response. The role of universities thus becomes extremely important, both by providing relevant studies and by ensuring the staff able to cope with difficult situations.

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