

Svitlana Tymchuk

*Candidate of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor at the Department of Tourism
and Hotel-restaurant Affairs
Uman National University of Horticulture*

RECREATIONAL TOURISM AS A TOOL FOR ENHANCING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

Summary

In the study dedicated to analyzing recreational tourism as a tool for enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy, its theoretical foundations, current state, and development prospects in Ukraine were highlighted, along with strategies aimed at strengthening its role in shaping the country's economic competitiveness. It was determined that recreational tourism plays an important role in stimulating economic growth, creating new jobs, developing infrastructure, and enhancing the investment attractiveness of regions. The research examined key theoretical approaches to assessing tourism's impact on the economy, which allow for a comprehensive evaluation of its potential. The state of recreational tourism development in Ukraine was analyzed, focusing on its strengths, problems, and barriers restraining the industry. Prospects for adapting the international experience to Ukrainian realities were explored, emphasizing sustainable development, digitalization of services, and the integration of cultural heritage. The research findings demonstrate that the development of recreational tourism requires a systematic approach that includes investments in infrastructure, improving service quality, implementing innovative technologies, and creating an effective marketing strategy. The conclusions highlight the necessity of integrating tourism into the national economic development strategy as a key factor in enhancing Ukraine's competitiveness on the international level.

Introduction

Recreational tourism is a cornerstone of the modern tourism industry, significantly influencing the economic, social, and cultural landscapes of nations. This multifaceted sector serves not only to fulfill the growing demand for leisure, wellness, and nature-based experiences but also acts as a catalyst for economic growth. By stimulating complementary industries such as transportation, hospitality, retail, and cultural services, recreational tourism generates substantial added value, making it a crucial driver of sustainable regional and national development.

In the context of an increasingly competitive global economy, countries vie for a share of the growing international tourist flows. This competition underscores the strategic importance of recreational tourism as a mechanism to enhance national competitiveness. Beyond its economic benefits, the sector contributes to soft power by improving a nation's image, fostering cultural exchange, and promoting environmental conservation.

The relevance of examining recreational tourism within the framework of economic competitiveness is heightened by the need to adapt to evolving international trends while addressing local and regional challenges. For Ukraine, a country endowed with diverse natural landscapes, a rich cultural heritage, and untapped tourism potential, recreational tourism offers a strategic avenue for economic transformation. However, this potential remains underutilized due to barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited international visibility, and policy constraints.

Studying the theoretical underpinnings of recreational tourism provides a foundation for understanding its role as a driver of economic potential. A comprehensive analysis of the current state and development opportunities in Ukraine reveals critical challenges, including gaps in infrastructure, service quality, and environmental sustainability. At the same time, these challenges present an opportunity to innovate and implement targeted strategies that align with global best practices.

This research focuses on identifying and adapting effective development strategies for recreational tourism. These strategies encompass the adoption of sustainable tourism principles, the integration of cultural heritage into tourism offerings, the digital transformation of marketing and service delivery, and the diversification of seasonal activities. By aligning these strategies with Ukraine's unique geographical, cultural, and economic conditions, the sector can achieve sustainable growth and contribute to the country's broader financial goals.

In essence, this study explores the theoretical, analytical, and practical dimensions of recreational tourism development, emphasizing its potential as a tool for economic growth and international competitiveness. Through a systematic approach, it seeks to uncover pathways for Ukraine to position itself as a compelling destination in the global tourism market, leveraging its natural and cultural resources to their fullest potential.

Chapter 1. Theoretical foundations of recreational tourism in the context of economic competitiveness

Recreational tourism is one of the key components of the global tourism market, playing a significant role in the socio-economic development of countries. It contributes to population health improvement, infrastructure

development, and the creation of new jobs, which collectively establish conditions for enhancing the competitiveness of national economies.

In the current context of globalization and intensifying competition among countries for tourist flows, recreational tourism is becoming a strategically important tool for ensuring economic stability and growth [1, p. 379].

Recreational tourism is a vital segment of the tourism industry, aimed at restoring individuals' physical and mental well-being and meeting their spiritual, cultural, and social needs [2, p. 32]. Its uniqueness lies in its multifaceted impact on both individuals and society.

Recreational tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon that integrates wellness, leisure, and restoring individuals' psychophysical state through natural resources. Its uniqueness is defined by a strong connection with natural conditions, shaping its seasonality, short duration, and focus on diverse categories of tourists. [3, p. 158].

Thanks to its natural resource base and broad target audience, recreational tourism plays a vital role in ensuring the physical and psychological well-being of the population while contributing to the creation of a high-quality tourism product.

Recreational tourism is a complex and multifunctional phenomenon that influences various aspects of social life, the economy, and culture [2, p. 30]. Its features are determined by both natural and socio-economic factors, shaping the specific nature of this type of tourism activity.

Table 1 presents the main characteristics of recreational tourism, highlighting its distinctive features and mechanisms of influence on the development of the tourism market.

Table 1

Key features of recreational tourism

Feature	Description
Multifunctionality	In addition to wellness, recreational tourism often combines educational, cultural, sports, and entertainment functions.
Dependence on environmental condition	The success of recreational tourism directly depends on the state of the environment, as tourists prefer eco-friendly and natural areas.
Infrastructure integration	The efficiency of this type of tourism requires developed infrastructure, including hotels, sanatoriums, transport links, and recreational facilities.
Social significance	Recreational tourism supports national health, reduces healthcare costs, and enhances labor productivity.
Regional specificity	Recreational tourism is closely tied to the geographical and cultural characteristics of a region, creating unique tourism products for each area.

Source: grouped by the author

The features of recreational tourism presented in Table 1 emphasize its multifaceted nature and strategic role in ensuring both individual well-being and regional economic growth. Its multifunctionality, ecological orientation, infrastructure importance, and regional specificity highlight the need for an integrated approach to developing this type of tourism, aimed at harmonizing the relationship between nature, society, and the economy [4, p. 37].

Recreational tourism encompasses a wide range of activities that cater to the diverse needs and preferences of tourists. Its classification is based on the nature of natural resource use, travel purposes, and methods of organizing leisure. The variety of recreational tourism forms ensures its accessibility to different population groups and contributes to the comprehensive development of the tourism industry.

The information outlines the main types of recreational tourism, reflecting its multidimensional character and its importance for wellness, leisure, and environmental conservation [3, p. 101].

Types of recreational tourism:

- Climatic tourism involves using climatic conditions for wellness purposes (e.g., seaside resorts).
- Sanatorium and resort tourism focuses on treatment and disease prevention at specialized institutions.
- Active recreation refers to tourism related to sports or extreme activities (e.g., ski resorts, hiking tourism).
- Ecotourism includes trips to natural areas for relaxation and ecosystem conservation.

Recreational tourism plays a key role in ensuring the harmonious development of individuals, not only contributing to their wellness but also fostering new social and cultural connections. Its development is a crucial factor in enhancing the quality of life and the competitiveness of the national economy.

Recreational tourism serves essential functions in the socio-economic development of society, contributing not only to the restoration of physical and mental well-being but also having a positive impact on economic growth, social stability, and ecological balance [4, p. 36].

Thanks to its multifunctionality, this type of tourism promotes the development of infrastructure, creates jobs, strengthens the nation's health, and improves living standards. Studying the functions of recreational tourism helps understand its central role in fostering harmonious societal development.

The functions of recreational tourism in socio-economic development include: wellness, economic, social, ecological, and regional. Recreational tourism helps strengthen the physical and mental health of the population, which, in turn, positively affects labor productivity and quality of life. Through the development of tourism infrastructure, recreational tourism stimulates

economic activity, generates revenue for the budget, creates new jobs, and supports the development of related industries such as transportation, hospitality, and food production. This type of tourism fosters societal integration, providing access to leisure for various population groups, creating new social connections, and supporting cultural exchange.

Recreational tourism enhances awareness of the importance of nature conservation, fostering an environmentally responsible attitude towards the environment and supporting environmental protection initiatives. Tourism contributes to regional development by promoting the use of their natural, cultural, and historical potential, which in turn helps reduce regional development disparities.

Recreational tourism has a significant impact on economic growth and regional development, providing both direct and indirect effects for the local economy and society.

Firstly, tourism creates jobs in various sectors, such as hospitality, food services, transportation, tour guiding, and entertainment activities. This reduces unemployment and increases household income.

Secondly, recreational tourism stimulates investments in regional infrastructure development, including the construction of roads, hotels, sanatoriums, and recreational zones. This not only improves conditions for tourists but also enhances the quality of life for local residents.

Thirdly, tourists spend money on local products, services, and souvenirs, which generates revenue for local budgets through taxes. These financial resources can be reinvested into further regional development.

Fourthly, tourism supports the preservation of natural and cultural resources, as they become sources of income. This motivates local communities to take a responsible approach to their environment [2].

Finally, recreational tourism helps improve the image of regions, making them more attractive for investment, business, and other activities. In this way, recreational tourism acts as a catalyst for regional economic development, activating their natural, human, and cultural potential.

The development of recreational tourism is an important factor in shaping a competitive national economy. Tourism, as an industry, has a unique ability to integrate various sectors of the economy, contributing to job creation, investment stimulation, and increasing revenue to the state budget. In the modern globalized world, countries with developed recreational tourism not only strengthen their economic positions but also improve their international image by attracting new tourists and investors. Studying the relationship between the development of this sector and economic competitiveness helps identify priority areas for state policies and economic growth strategies.

Recreational tourism directly impacts the improvement of national economic competitiveness through several mechanisms.

Firstly, it contributes to the development of infrastructure, which is the foundation of economic activity. The construction of hotels, transportation networks, and recreational facilities enhances the logistical accessibility of regions and creates additional opportunities for businesses [5, p. 41].

Ukraine's tourism sector is an important component of the national economy, making a significant contribution to the state budget through tax revenues. However, the military actions that began in 2022 have significantly affected its operations, reducing income and the number of active taxpayers. The table below presents data on taxes paid in the tourism sector from 2021 to 2024, which allows tracking the dynamics of changes related to both the impact of the war and the recovery of the sector in subsequent periods (Figure 1).

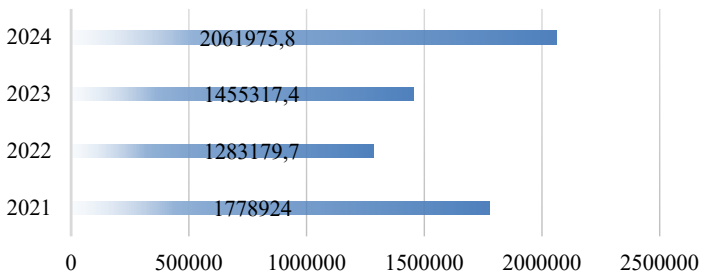


Figure 1. Taxes and fees in Ukraine's tourism sector, in thousands of UAH

Source: data from the State Tourism Development Agency for the first nine months of 2024 [6]

Taxes paid in the tourism sector show an unstable trend throughout the studied period. In 2022, tax revenues decreased by 28% compared to 2021, due to the onset of the full-scale war. The number of taxpayers decreased by 17%, especially among legal entities (by 24,5%). Military actions, infrastructure destruction, and a general decline in economic activity were the main reasons for this decline. In 2023, there was a gradual increase in revenues to 1.46 billion UAH (+13% compared to 2022). This figure demonstrates the adaptation of tourism enterprises to the conditions of the war and the gradual recovery of the sector.

In the first nine months of 2024, taxes paid increased to 2.06 billion UAH (+42% compared to 2023). This indicates the active recovery of the tourism sector, expansion of services, and attraction of more tourists. The highest revenue figures were recorded in Kyiv and tourist-attractive regions (Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kyiv, Odesa). Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv regions showed an increase due to domestic tourism, while Odesa and Kyiv saw a decline.

The largest tax revenues were recorded from hotels and sanatoriums, though their share decreased by 30% in 2022. Meanwhile, the activity of resorts used as shelters grew by 39%. Travel agencies also showed an increase (41%), which was related to pre-war bookings, while revenues from tour operators fell by 21%.

The dynamics of tax revenues in Ukraine's tourism sector from 2021 to 2024 highlight the significant impact of the war on the industry's activities. The sharp decline in 2022 was caused by the destructive consequences of military actions; however, the gradual growth in 2023–2024 demonstrates the industry's ability to adapt and recover [6]. The largest revenues come from hotels and sanatoriums, although segments related to housing people also showed positive trends. Regional analysis confirms the importance of domestic tourism for the recovery of the sector. Overall, the tourism sector remains a key economic driver, even in the challenging conditions of war.

Secondly, recreational tourism provides a significant influx of foreign currency through international tourism. Foreign tourists spend money on services and products, creating additional income for the country. According to the State Tourism Development Agency, there are almost no tourists planning trips specifically to Ukrainians for this are clear: firstly, most foreigners believe that cities are destroyed, and battles are taking place everywhere.

Secondly, the foreign ministries of many countries do not recommend their citizens visit Ukraine. In addition, insurance companies refuse to provide services to those who want to visit Ukraine at present. This rule applies to all cases, even those unrelated to military actions.

Thirdly, tourism increases employment, creating jobs in both large cities and remote regions. This contributes to improving the standard of living and reducing socio-economic inequality.

In addition, recreational tourism supports the development of related industries, such as agriculture, transportation, souvenir production, and cultural services. This multiplier effect strengthens the economy at both local and national levels.

Tourism also influences the international image of the country, contributing to its positioning as an attractive and stable state. This stimulates not only tourist flows but also investments in other sectors. Therefore, the development of recreational tourism is a powerful tool for enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy, as it combines economic, social, and cultural benefits that form the foundation of the country's sustainable development.

Ukraine boasts a rich diversity of recreational resources, creating significant potential for tourism development. Among the natural resources contributing to tourist flows are the Carpathians, which attract visitors with their picturesque landscapes, opportunities for winter sports, and summer recreation. Crimea, despite occupation, previously played an important role in the tourism industry

due to its beaches, therapeutic muds, and historical landmarks. The Polissya region, with its forests, lakes, and rivers, offers unique conditions for eco-tourism, fishing, and mushroom picking. The Black Sea coast remains a popular destination for beach vacations, water sports, and sea cruises.

Ukraine's historical and cultural resources include significant landmarks and cultural centers such as Kyiv, Lviv, and Odesa. Kyiv stands out for its rich history, numerous museums, cathedrals, and architectural monuments. Lviv, known for its unique architectural heritage, cultural festivals, and cafes, is a hub for cultural tourism. Odesa combines European culture with Ukrainian traditions, attracting tourists with its beaches, theaters, and atmospheric literary cafes.

A special place is held by the country's therapeutic resources. Ukraine has numerous mineral water deposits used for treating various ailments, particularly in spa towns such as Truskavets, Morshyn, and Myrhorod. Therapeutic muds are also widely used, with the largest deposits located near the Azov Sea and in the Carpathians.

Moreover, Ukraine is rich in unique natural sites that are protected within national parks and reserves. An exceptional example is the Singing Terraces, which add exclusivity to the region and enhance its tourism appeal [7, p. 98].

Based on these resources, Ukraine has the potential to develop various types of tourism, including eco-tourism, cultural tourism, therapeutic tourism, active tourism, and religious tourism. Eco-tourism involves travel aimed at exploring nature and enjoying outdoor recreation. Cultural tourism focuses on visiting historical landmarks, museums, and festivals. Therapeutic tourism is aimed at health improvement through the use of mineral waters and therapeutic mud. Active tourism includes mountain tourism, cycling trips, rafting, and kayaking. Religious tourism is based on visits to churches, monasteries, and other religious heritage sites.

However, the development of tourism in Ukraine is hindered by several factors, including political instability, economic difficulties, insufficient infrastructure, and low service quality. To overcome these barriers, important measures include attracting investment in infrastructure, improving service quality, developing new tourist products, and actively promoting Ukraine as a tourist destination on the international market [7, p. 103].

Ukraine has significant potential for tourism development due to its wealth of natural and cultural resources. If the aforementioned measures are implemented, the country could become one of the most attractive tourist destinations in the world.

There are numerous models of recreational tourism development worldwide that have demonstrated success in different countries. Studying and adapting these models to the Ukrainian context could contribute to the more effective

use of Ukraine's recreational resources and the overall development of the tourism industry.



Figure 2. Models of recreational tourism development successfully used in other countries

Source: grouped by the author

In the Scandinavian countries and Canada, sustainable tourism development models are being implemented, focusing on preserving the natural environment and integrating local communities into the tourism process. These projects include the creation of eco-friendly routes, development of energy-efficient infrastructure, and the organization of campsites and bike paths in conservation areas [8].

Hungary and the Czech Republic have created successful models for the development of health and wellness tourism, based on the use of thermal springs and mineral waters. Resorts such as Karlovy Vary (Czech Republic) and Hévíz (Hungary) have become globally renowned due to their combination of high-quality services and developed infrastructure.

Italy and France focus on the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. For example, interactive museums, thematic routes, and innovative guiding systems have been created in Florence and Paris. Tourists are offered unique cultural events, such as festivals or gastronomic tours.

The USA and Japan are developing theme parks (such as Disneyland, Universal Studios) and integrated tourist clusters that combine entertainment, educational, and recreational functions. Australia and New Zealand successfully combine conservation efforts with tourism development. Visitors are offered tours, camping, and educational programs focused on the unique flora and fauna.

International experience in recreational tourism development serves as a valuable source for adapting effective models in Ukraine. Integrating advanced practices with Ukraine's unique resources can enhance the competitiveness of

the tourism sector and contribute to the country's socio-economic development. The success of such initiatives depends on government support, attracting investments, and active collaboration with foreign partners.

Chapter 2. The state and prospects of recreational tourism development in Ukraine

Recreational tourism in Ukraine is one of the most promising areas for the development of the national economy. Due to its diverse natural and cultural resources, Ukraine has significant potential to attract tourists both from the domestic and international markets. However, realizing this potential requires a comprehensive approach that considers both internal opportunities and global trends in the tourism industry. Recreational tourism encompasses not only nature-based leisure but also health resorts, cultural-historical routes, and other activities that cater to the growing needs of modern tourists.

However, the development of this tourism sector in Ukraine faces a number of challenges, including infrastructure limitations, political instability, and economic difficulties. Given the relevance of these issues, it is necessary to investigate not only the current state of recreational tourism development in Ukraine but also its prospects in the context of the changing global tourism market and the internal situation in the country.

Recreational tourism is one of the key areas for the development of Ukraine's tourism sector, based on the country's rich natural, cultural, and therapeutic resources. Currently, this type of tourism is undergoing transformation, influenced both by internal factors and global changes in the world tourism industry.

Ukraine possesses significant recreational resources, including the Carpathian Mountains, the shores of the Black and Azov Seas, Polissya, and numerous reserves and national parks. The country is also famous for its mineral water resorts, such as Truskavets, Morhin, and Myrhorod, which provide favorable conditions for the development of health tourism. Despite this, Ukraine's tourism potential is not fully utilized. The most detailed description and location of recreational facilities across Ukraine are available on the interactive tourist map by Discover [9].

Since the onset of military actions in 2014 and their escalation in 2022, recreational tourism in Ukraine has experienced a significant decline. The occupation of certain territories, such as Crimea, which was once one of the key centers for recreational tourism, as well as the destruction of tourist infrastructure in conflict zones, led to a decrease in tourist flows. However, in safe regions, there has been an adaptation to the new conditions and a restoration of tourism services, particularly through the development of domestic tourism.

Data show a gradual recovery of interest in domestic tourism. For example, the Carpathians, Lviv and Zakarpattia regions are becoming increasingly popular among tourists due to their safety, developed infrastructure, and accessibility to natural resources. At the same time, Ukrainians are paying more attention to ecological and active tourism, which aligns with global trends favoring nature-based travel.

Despite positive trends in some regions, the industry faces numerous challenges, including deficiencies in tourist infrastructure, low service quality, insufficient funding, and the complex political and economic situation. Many regions lack modern transport and logistics solutions, which complicates access for tourists to remote destinations [10, p. 96].

A significant role in the recovery of recreational tourism is played by government and local initiatives. In particular, tourism development programs are being implemented that focus on supporting infrastructure projects, promoting tourist destinations in both domestic and international markets, as well as creating new tourism products.

Thus, the current state of recreational tourism in Ukraine can be described as transitional. Despite the challenges, the industry demonstrates the potential for recovery and further development, especially with effective government support, investment attraction, and the use of international experience. Recreational tourism can become an important tool for socio-economic development, contributing to regional growth and the creation of new jobs.

Ukraine possesses rich recreational resources that create significant potential for the development of recreational tourism. These can be conditionally divided into natural, cultural, and historical resources, each of which plays a crucial role in the formation of tourism products. The natural landscapes of Ukraine are the foundation for recreational tourism development. The Carpathian Mountains, with their picturesque landscapes, dense forests, mountain rivers, and waterfalls, attract tourists year-round. In winter, they offer ski resorts such as Bukovel and Dragobrat, while in summer, there are opportunities for hiking and eco-tourism [7].

The Black Sea and Azov Sea offer a wide range of recreational opportunities, including beach tourism, water sports, sea cruises, and health treatments using mineral waters and therapeutic muds. Coastal areas provide numerous opportunities for tourism and leisure, such as swimming, sunbathing, boating, snorkeling, reef walking, and diving [1, p. 378].

The Polissya region is famous for its lakes, swamps, and forested areas, which create unique conditions for eco-tourism, fishing, and mushroom picking. This region is home to numerous reserves and national parks that protect its unique flora and fauna.

Additionally, the mineral waters in resorts such as Truskavets, Morhin, and Myrhorod contribute to the development of medical tourism, which remains popular among both domestic and international tourists.

Ukrainian culture plays an essential role in tourism development, especially due to its diversity and richness. Cities such as Lviv and Kyiv have preserved architectural landmarks, museums, theaters, and cultural traditions, which are key attractions for tourists. Lviv, for example, is known as the cultural capital of Ukraine due to its festivals, museums, and culinary tours.

Ethnographic resources hold particular significance. The Carpathian region is famous for the unique culture of the Hutsuls, which includes traditional crafts, folklore, and gastronomy. Festivals showcasing the wealth of Ukrainian culture also have significant potential, from opera festivals in Lviv to folk celebrations in various regions [7].

Ukraine's historical heritage includes numerous landmarks that testify to the country's rich and centuries-old history. The Saint Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv, the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, and the Kamianets-Podilskyyi Fortress are UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Historic cities such as Odesa, with its multinational history and unique architecture, and Chernivtsi, often referred to as the "Ukrainian Vienna," attract tourists from around the world. Special attention should be given to routes that include places of memory, such as battlefields, castles, and ancient religious structures.

Thus, Ukraine's natural, cultural, and historical resources create an exceptional potential for the development of recreational tourism. Proper utilization and integration of these resources into modern tourism products can ensure not only industry growth but also enhance Ukraine's competitiveness in the international tourism market.

Recreational tourism in Ukraine has significant potential; however, various problems and barriers exist that complicate its development (Table 2).

In recent years, the political situation in Ukraine, particularly due to military conflicts and the annexation of Crimea, has created serious challenges for tourism development. Many international tourists are hesitant to visit the country due to security concerns. This, in turn, limits the potential influx of foreign tourists, especially in areas close to the conflict zone.

Infrastructure is one of the biggest limitations for the development of tourism in Ukraine. Poor road quality, limited access to many tourist destinations, and a lack of modern tourist infrastructure (hotels, restaurants, transport) significantly reduce the comfort of travel. Outdated equipment at resorts and the absence of modern tourist services deter tourists both from Ukraine and abroad. Economic instability, inflation, and the devaluation of the national currency create barriers for the tourism industry. Most Ukrainian citizens cannot afford to travel abroad or frequently visit domestic resorts due to the

high cost of services. Additionally, the low income levels in many regions of the country limit the potential demand for tourism services.

Table 2

**Main problems and barriers
in the development of recreational tourism in Ukraine**

Problem/Barrier	Description of the Problem
Political instability	War, conflicts in the eastern part of the country, and the occupation of Crimea lead to uncertainty, reduced security, and consequently, a decrease in tourist flows.
Low quality of infrastructure	The lack of adequate transport, communication, and hotel infrastructure limits the opportunities for tourism development in various regions.
Economic difficulties	Financial constraints, declining incomes, and investment instability hinder the development of tourism businesses and the creation of new jobs.
Low service quality	Unsatisfactory service levels in hotels, restaurants, and other tourism establishments deter both foreign and domestic tourists.
Underdeveloped marketing and branding	Insufficient promotion of Ukraine as a tourist destination on the international level. Only a limited number of tourists are aware of the opportunities for leisure in Ukraine.
Legal uncertainty	The absence of clear legislative frameworks for the tourism industry creates legal barriers for investments and the development of new projects.
Lack of qualified personnel	The low level of professional training of personnel in the tourism industry affects service quality and the overall reputation of the country.
Poor environmental situation	Climate change, environmental pollution, and insufficient attention to ecological tourism lead to the degradation of natural resources that are the basis of tourism.

Source: grouped by the author

The Ukrainian tourism sector suffers from poor service quality. This includes not only hotel services but also restaurants, transport, and other tourist services. Many tourists note the low qualification of staff, carelessness in service, and the mismatch of service levels with international standards. This creates a negative impression among tourists and discourages repeat visits.

Ukraine still lacks a clearly developed national tourism brand in the international market. Although the country is rich in natural and cultural resources, they are not actively promoted abroad. This also applies to the insufficient development of tourist routes and programs that could attract foreign tourists and ensure long-term visits.

The lack of a clear legal framework and the complexity of permit procedures for the development of tourism projects create additional difficulties for

investors and entrepreneurs. Bureaucratic obstacles often slow down the processes of opening new resorts or upgrading infrastructure.

Some regions, popular among tourists, suffer from environmental problems: water and air pollution, degradation of natural resources, which negatively affects their tourist appeal. In Ukraine, there is also insufficient attention given to the issues of sustainable tourism development and environmental conservation.

Insufficient government funding and investment in tourism infrastructure, particularly in regional areas, limit opportunities for tourism development. The absence of effective financial programs and incentives for entrepreneurs, as well as difficulties in attracting foreign investment, further complicate the situation.

The low level of qualification of tourism industry workers is also a significant barrier to development. Ukraine lacks professionals with expertise in tourism, such as guides, tourism managers, marketers, and specialists in the development of recreational infrastructure.

Thus, the development of recreational tourism in Ukraine faces a number of serious barriers, among which the most significant are political instability, underdeveloped infrastructure, economic difficulties, low service quality, and the lack of a clear strategy for promoting tourism resources. To improve the situation, a comprehensive approach is necessary, including the improvement of infrastructure, development of human resources, environmentally sustainable development, and increased investment in the tourism sector [3, p. 95].

Recreational tourism is one of the most dynamic sectors in the world, and countries worldwide are developing new approaches to attract tourists and create sustainable tourism destinations. Ukraine has enormous potential for the development of this sector, and many international trends can be adapted to national realities (Figure 3). In recent years, ecotourism has become one of the main trends in global tourism. It includes travel to natural areas with minimal environmental impact and a focus on the conservation of natural resources. Ukraine already has the potential to develop ecotourism due to its numerous national parks, reserves, and natural landscapes such as the Carpathians, Polissia, and the Black Sea. Attracting tourists to these areas with an emphasis on nature conservation and sustainable development can significantly enhance the country's appeal in the international tourism market.

International practice shows that resorts focused on health and wellness have become an important trend in tourism development. Ukraine has many natural resources for medical tourism, including mineral waters and therapeutic muds in Truskavets, Morshyn, Myrhorod, as well as in the Carpathians and the Sea of Azov. Adapting international standards in medical tourism (as seen in

countries like the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary) could be a significant step toward expanding the offerings of Ukrainian resorts.

Prospective Directions for the Development of Recreational Tourism in Ukraine	Ecotourism and Sustainable Development
	Health and Medical Tourism Development
	Cultural Tourism and Heritage
	Digitalization and Technology in Tourism
	Agro-tourism
	International Festivals and Events
	Local Communities and Social Tourism
	Tourism for All

Figure 3. International trends in the development of recreational tourism that can be adapted to Ukrainian realities

Source: grouped by the author

The global trend towards the increasing popularity of cultural tourism has great potential for Ukraine, which boasts a rich cultural heritage, numerous historical landmarks, architectural sites, and festivals. This includes the development of museums, cultural centers, historical tours, and gastronomic tourism, which is already actively developing in other countries (e.g., Italy, France, Spain). In Ukraine, it is worth focusing on local traditions, cultural peculiarities, and gastronomy to attract tourists from around the world.

The growing trend of digitalization in tourism is evident in the development of online services, such as online booking, virtual tours, and the use of apps for tourists. Creating interactive platforms for trip planning, using virtual reality for tours, and integrating modern technologies into tourist services (e.g., smart hotels) could be important areas for the development of tourism in Ukraine, based on the international experience of countries like Japan and Singapore [11, p. 16].

Agri-tourism, focused on visiting rural areas, farms, participating in agricultural production, and cultural events, is becoming popular in Europe, the USA, and Canada. Ukraine has significant potential for the development of agri-tourism due to its rural landscapes, traditions, and culinary features [12, p. 550]. The development of this type of tourism will help preserve rural areas, support local communities, and attract tourists seeking peaceful and authentic experiences [13].

Other countries actively use the organization of international festivals and events as an important factor for attracting tourists. For example, in Spain, there is the «La Tomatina» festival, and in the USA, there are carnival events in New Orleans. Ukraine has potential in this area, as it has rich traditions of folk celebrations, musical, and cultural events that can be actively promoted on the international stage. This will not only increase tourist flow but also create new jobs and support the local economy.

The trend of social tourism, focusing on interactions between tourists and local communities, has become popular in many countries, including Norway and Sweden. In Ukraine, the development of such tourism could involve organizing programs that promote mutual cultural exchange between tourists and locals, as well as participation in social and environmental projects.

The development of inclusive tourism for people with disabilities is a relevant issue in many developed countries, such as Germany and the UK. Creating accessible routes, hotels, and services for people with disabilities is an important step for tourism development in Ukraine, ensuring that leisure activities are accessible to a wider range of tourists.

The adaptation of international trends in recreational tourism development to Ukrainian realities is highly promising. The use of innovative approaches in areas such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, technology, agri-tourism, and the development of inclusive tourism can significantly enhance Ukraine's tourist appeal. However, to achieve this, it is necessary to address several issues, such as improving infrastructure, enhancing service quality, and actively promoting the country as a tourist destination on the international stage.

Chapter 3. Strategies for the development of recreational tourism as a factor of competitiveness

Recreational tourism is a crucial component of the economic development of many countries, as it has significant potential for attracting investments, creating jobs, and developing local communities. For Ukraine, which possesses diverse natural, cultural, and historical resources, recreational tourism is one of the key strategic sectors that can contribute to increasing the country's competitiveness in the international tourism market.

The competitiveness of recreational tourism largely depends on the effectiveness of strategic approaches to the development of this industry. Development strategies should include a comprehensive approach to utilizing natural and cultural resources, infrastructure investments, improving service quality, and marketing tourism products. Since the tourism industry is highly competitive, strategies must be designed not only to meet the current needs of tourists but also to focus on long-term development goals.

In this regard, it is important to explore the most effective strategies for the development of recreational tourism that can enhance Ukraine's

competitiveness as a tourist destination. This includes identifying key factors affecting the development of recreational tourism and considering ways to adapt international experience to Ukrainian realities [14].

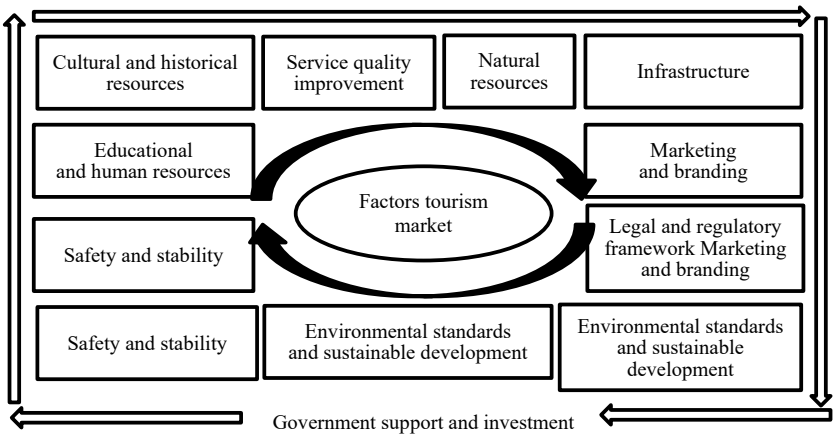


Figure 4. Factors influencing the competitiveness of recreational tourism in Ukraine

Source: grouped by the author

The main factors influencing the competitiveness of recreational tourism in Ukraine encompass various aspects, both natural and socio-economic (see Figure 4). Ukraine has rich natural potential for the development of recreational tourism, particularly in regions such as the Carpathians, Crimea (prior to annexation), the Black Sea, Polissia, and others. The presence of unique natural features, such as national parks, nature reserves, lakes, rivers, and mountain ranges, serves as the foundation for the development of ecological, mountain, adventure, and wellness tourism.

Ukraine also possesses a rich cultural and historical heritage, including architectural monuments, museums, festivals, traditions, and folk art. All of these resources can be utilized for the development of cultural and historical tourism. The cultural heritage of cities like Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, and Chernivtsi also holds significant potential for attracting tourists [7].

The presence of well-developed infrastructure is one of the key factors for the competitiveness of tourism. This includes transport accessibility (air, rail, bus transport), the quality of hotel services, restaurants, active recreation facilities, sanatoriums, and spa complexes. Insufficient infrastructure remains one of the major barriers to tourism development in Ukraine.

Service quality at all stages of tourist activity – from the reception of tourists to the organization of excursions, catering, and accommodation – is an important factor for competitiveness. Low service quality can negatively impact the country's image as a tourist destination. Creating and promoting Ukraine's image as a tourist destination is a crucial aspect of attracting foreign tourists. An effective marketing strategy, which includes the use of digital platforms, advertising campaigns, and participation in international tourism exhibitions, can help promote recreational tourism [15].

The presence of a clear and stable legal system regulating tourism activities is an important factor for attracting investment into the tourism sector. Transparency in land use, environmental regulations, and permits can also influence the development of tourism. Political stability and security for tourists are crucial aspects of competitiveness. Security risks in Ukraine may deter foreign tourists, so it is necessary to ensure proper conditions for a comfortable vacation.

The growing demand for eco-friendly and sustainable tourism requires the implementation of sustainable development principles in the tourism industry. This includes environmental protection, the preservation of natural resources, and supporting local communities. The presence of qualified personnel in the tourism sector, as well as an effective system for professional training and retraining of specialists, is critical for improving service quality and the competitiveness of tourism services.

Development strategies for recreational tourism that promote investment in the industry can significantly enhance tourism competitiveness in Ukraine. Including tourism in national development strategies, creating investment incentive programs, and supporting small and medium enterprises in the sector are essential for ensuring sustainable growth.

In today's world, recreational tourism is one of the key factors in socio-economic development, contributing to the growth of people's well-being and the formation of international competitiveness of countries. Leading nations are actively implementing strategies aimed at the efficient use of natural and cultural resources, infrastructure development, improving service quality, and promoting national tourism brands. Successful international experiences in this area are an important source of ideas for improving Ukrainian recreational tourism, which has significant potential but faces numerous challenges [11, p. 19].

Adapting foreign strategies to Ukrainian conditions requires consideration of national characteristics, such as geographical, economic, and socio-cultural factors. This allows for the development of an effective growth model that maximizes the use of existing resources and addresses problem areas. In this context, studying international experience becomes a key element in shaping successful approaches to the development of recreational tourism in Ukraine.



Figure 5. Strategies for developing recreational tourism in other countries and the opportunities for their adaptation in Ukraine

Source: grouped by the author

Various countries around the world apply diverse strategies for the development of recreational tourism, which can serve as examples for other nations. In Scandinavian countries, the main concept is sustainable tourism development, which involves implementing eco-friendly practices, preserving natural areas, and minimizing the ecological impact of tourism activities. Tourist sites in this region are certified according to sustainable development standards, ensuring long-term ecological sustainability.

In Italy and France, considerable attention is given to integrating cultural heritage into tourism programs. Promoting local culture, gastronomy, and historical landmarks becomes the foundation for creating tourist routes that consider the unique cultural heritage of the regions. These approaches attract tourists interested in learning about traditions and art [8].

In Austria and Switzerland, an effective strategy of seasonal expansion is applied, aimed at developing alternative types of tourism. For example, in mountain regions, conditions are created for summer tourism, which helps reduce the dependence on seasonal fluctuations in the tourism industry.

The United States and China demonstrate significant success in digitalization and marketing in the tourism sector. The use of digital platforms promotes tourism products, provides convenience in booking services, and creates interactive routes, making tourism more accessible to a wider audience.

In Japan, an important tool for tourism development is the public-private partnership. This model involves effective cooperation between the state and the private sector for the financing, development, and management of tourist sites, allowing the creation of high-quality infrastructure and attracting substantial investments.

Ukraine can adopt these approaches while considering its own resources and specifics. For example, sustainable tourism development can be implemented through the creation of protected natural areas and eco-routes in the Carpathians or Polissya. The integration of cultural heritage is possible by developing tourist routes in Kyiv, Lviv, and Odesa, where cultural landmarks will become the basis for attracting tourists.

Seasonal expansion can focus on promoting winter sports in the Carpathians and summer tourism along the Dnipro River or the Black Sea. Digitalization can include the creation of a national tourism platform that integrates booking services, virtual tours, and route information.

Ukraine should also focus on developing public-private partnerships to modernize infrastructure and attract investment. An important step would be to encourage government support for the tourism sector through legislative initiatives and tax incentives for investors.

The adaptation of international strategies for the development of recreational tourism to Ukrainian conditions should be based on integrating best practices while taking into account the country's natural, cultural, and economic resources. This would allow Ukraine to create a competitive tourism product and integrate into the global tourism market.

In the modern world, innovations are becoming the driving force behind the development of recreational tourism, helping to increase its competitiveness and adapt to the rapid changes in tourist demands. Successful tourist destinations actively implement the latest technologies, ecological solutions, and modern approaches to customer service [14].

Innovative strategies not only improve service quality but also create unique tourist products that attract the attention of international tourists and generate sustainable demand in the market. Innovations in the recreational tourism sector cover various areas, including digitalization, ecological approaches, the development of smart tourist destinations, service improvements, and the introduction of new forms of tourism [15].

Digitalization of tourism services involves the active use of online platforms for booking, payment, and organizing tours, which significantly simplifies the trip planning process. Additionally, the development of mobile apps with navigation features, personalized recommendations, and interactive maps makes the tourist experience more convenient and personalized. The integration of virtual reality (VR) allows users to preview tourist sites, creating an immersive experience before the actual trip.

Ecological innovations focus on the implementation of green technologies, such as the use of renewable energy sources in tourist facilities. Special emphasis is placed on the development of eco-tourism, which supports the preservation of natural areas. Furthermore, an essential component is the

certification of tourist sites according to environmental standards, such as ISO or Green Globe.

Smart tourist destinations involve the creation of infrastructures based on Internet of Things (IoT) technologies, enabling efficient management of tourist flows. By using Big Data to analyze tourist preferences and forecast demand, services can be tailored to meet the real needs of customers.

Innovations in service delivery include the implementation of robotic systems in hotels and restaurants, which enhance efficiency and reduce costs. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is used to automate customer inquiries, while personalized tourist itineraries are created based on the analysis of individual preferences.

New forms of tourism also play a crucial role in the industry's development. Immersive tourism, which includes cultural and historical reconstructions and interactive tours, is gaining popularity. Wellness and medical tourism, leveraging innovative treatment methods, attracts additional demand among travelers. Additionally, gamified tourist routes stimulate active participation from tourists, creating a new level of engagement.

Thus, innovations in tourism contribute to enhancing competitiveness, meeting the modern demands of tourists, and opening new perspectives for the development of the sector.

For Ukraine, the adaptation and implementation of these strategies provide a roadmap to harness its rich natural and cultural assets. The Carpathians, Polissia, and Black Sea regions, alongside cultural hubs like Kyiv and Lviv, are prime examples of untapped potential. However, to unlock these resources, Ukraine must overcome significant barriers, including infrastructure gaps, service quality issues, and limited international visibility.

Key strategies identified include sustainable tourism development through ecological innovations, digital transformation of marketing and service delivery, and the enhancement of service quality via training and technological advancements. Additionally, seasonal expansion and the promotion of niche tourism forms, such as wellness and immersive tourism, offer opportunities to diversify offerings and attract a broader audience.

Public-private partnerships, as demonstrated by Japan, stand out as a pivotal approach for modernizing infrastructure and attracting investments. Legislative and fiscal policies that support these collaborations are essential for creating a conducive environment for tourism sector growth.

Furthermore, innovation serves as a cornerstone of competitiveness. The integration of smart technologies, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality, coupled with eco-friendly practices, enables the creation of unique, personalized, and sustainable tourist experiences. This not only meets the evolving demands of global tourists but also positions Ukraine as a forward-thinking destination on the international stage.

In conclusion, the successful development of recreational tourism in Ukraine depends on a systematic and innovative approach. By leveraging its unique geographical and cultural assets, aligning with international best practices, and fostering sustainable development, Ukraine can enhance its competitiveness and establish itself as a premier global tourism destination. This chapter provides a comprehensive framework for achieving these goals, emphasizing the importance of strategic vision, innovation, and collaboration in transforming Ukraine's tourism sector into a key driver of economic growth and international recognition.

Conclusions

Recreational tourism is a powerful tool for enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy, as it generates new jobs, stimulates infrastructure development, attracts investments, and supports regional development. The analysis of the theoretical foundations of this form of tourism confirms its significance as an element of comprehensive economic development, contributing to the integration of natural, cultural, and socio-economic resources into a unified system that generates added value and improves the country's international image.

The study of the state and prospects of recreational tourism in Ukraine revealed its considerable potential, based on rich natural resources, historical and cultural heritage, and a growing interest in environmentally responsible leisure. However, the industry faces several challenges, such as insufficient infrastructure, poor service quality, inadequate government support, and a complex economic and political situation. Nevertheless, the prospects for development are linked to adapting international experience, implementing ecological and digital innovations, and developing new forms of tourism, such as immersive and wellness tourism.

The examination of strategies for the development of recreational tourism in terms of increasing competitiveness emphasized the importance of implementing sustainable development, seasonal expansion of tourism offers, integrating cultural heritage, and innovative marketing. These approaches allow for more efficient resource utilization, ensure high service quality, reduce negative environmental impacts, and enhance the tourist appeal of regions.

Thus, recreational tourism plays a significant role in improving the competitiveness of the national economy. To realize this potential, a systematic approach to industry development is needed, which includes improving infrastructure, implementing innovations, supporting small and medium-sized businesses, and active government support in shaping a positive tourism image of Ukraine.

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