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THE INTERRELATION BETWEEN THE CLASSIFICATION OF TYPES AND INDICATORS OF BLUE TOURISM¹

The contemporary vector of global development dictates a radical change in the attitude toward natural capital. Over the recent decades, the travel and leisure industry premised upon the utilization of marine, coastal, and inland water resources has transformed into an autonomous, highly dynamic economic sector – blue tourism [1]. Today, it extends far beyond the conventional service sector, evolving into one of the vanguard dimensions of sustainable development and natural capital restoration.

In Ukraine, this economic sector has historically developed under an inertial scenario: prior to 2022, water-oriented tourism remained constrained within an underdeveloped market of resort and recreational services, lacking a coherent state strategy or a conceptual integration into the maritime economy. Nonetheless, domestic demand for such services remained monumental. According to metrics provided by the SATD [4], in the pre-war period, nearly 38% of Ukrainians regularly traveled domestically, with leisure emerging as the primary motive in 72% of cases, where beach tourism was the absolute favorite, capturing 48% of preferences.

As of 2026, despite the fact that the full-scale Russian war has dealt a devastating blow to maritime tourist-recreational ecosystems and infrastructure, an optimistic scenario for post-war revitalization presents a unique window of opportunity to relaunch the blue tourism industry in accordance with advanced European standards.

Contemporary scholarly discourse [1–3; 5; 6] reveals a pronounced deficit in systemic research within this domain. The absence of a unified terminological framework and the insufficient exploration of the linkages connecting tourism infrastructure with interconnected industries impede

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the development of nature-oriented and, specifically, blue tourism. To bridge these theoretical gaps, an urgent imperative has arisen to expand relevant taxonomical approaches and formulate a multi-tier system of analytical indicators.

In the author's view, blue tourism is an integrated system of tourist and recreational activities operationalized during travelers' stays at destinations spatially or functionally linked with marine, coastal, riverine, or other aquatic ecosystems. Correspondingly, the economy of blue tourism is construed as a specific architecture of economic relations unfolding within maritime and water-oriented territories. It organically coalesces the classical laws of the tourism services market with the imperatives of blue growth, relying on the synergy of resort infrastructure, interconnected industries, and the principles of social inclusion and ecological sustainability.

For a comprehensive rendering of the structure and intrinsic linkages within the blue tourism sector, the taxonomy of its types is classified as follows:

- spatial criterion / type of aquatic recreational object – marine, coastal, riverine, lacustrine, and estuarine;
- functional criterion / primary motive of travel – recreational, health-improving, cultural, business, and sports;
- highly specialized recreational criterion / specifics of direct water space utilization – beach and cruise blue tourism, water sports, and sport fishing;
- resort criterion / level of integration with the resort and medical economy – sanatorium-based, SPA, wellness, rehabilitative blue tourism, and climatotherapy;
- ecological criterion / degree of preservation and restoration of the natural environment – ecotourism, conservation tourism, innovative blue carbon tourism;
- economic criterion / level and character of integration into the general macroeconomic system – direct, interconnected, infrastructural, and supporting types of blue tourism;
- institutional criterion / form of activity organization and ownership structure – public, private, and mixed;
- innovation criterion – smart and digital blue tourism;
- social criterion / degree of orientation toward host communities and accessibility – local, inclusive, and community-based tourism;
- sustainability criterion / depth of ecological and social integration – traditional, sustainable, and regenerative tourism;

- scale of functioning – local, regional, national, and international;
- interconnected activities criterion / coverage of any water- and coastal-associated activity within the domain of hotels, restaurants, transportation, etc.

For the practical implementation of measures associated with the developed taxonomy, a robust apparatus for quantitative and qualitative measurement is required, anchored by a comprehensive matrix of indicators, namely (selected metrics corresponding to the aforementioned classification are presented below):

- by the spatial criterion: for marine tourism, key metrics include the total number of marine tourists, aggregate revenues from marine tourism, the intensity of beach zone utilization, and the total length of the exploited coastline; coastal tourism is measured through the density of tourist facilities, the coefficient of coastal anthropogenic load, and the development level of coastal infrastructure; riverine tourism is evaluated by the number of operational water routes, the volume of riverine tourist streams, and the quality of embankment development; estuarine tourism is analyzed via the consumption volume of specific natural resources and the marginal recreational carrying capacity threshold of vulnerable ecosystems;

- by the functional criterion: for the recreational type – the number of vacationers and the average length of their stay at the destination; for the health-improving type – the number of active SPA centers and sanatoriums, as well as the gross volume of health services rendered; for the cultural type – the frequency of hosted thematic events and the attendance rate of heritage sites; for the business type – the number of organized conferences, etc.;

- resort criterion indicators include: for the sanatorium type – the total bed-capacity and its mean annual capacity utilization coefficient; for SPA – the aggregate volume of services provided and the value of the average check; for the rehabilitative type – the number of patients who completed a course and the mean duration of treatment; for the climatic type – seasonality indices and the dynamic fluctuation of tourist flows across different periods of the year;

- sustainability and innovation indicators are systemized into five analytical dimensions: 1) economic: direct revenues accrued from tourism, tourist population dynamics, restaurant sector turnover, the net count of newly deployed infrastructure objects, and localized production growth rates; 2) ecological: water quality indices, the integrated status of aquatic and coastal ecosystems, biodiversity conservation levels, ecological

carrying capacity metrics, and chemical and plastic pollution coefficients; 3) social: employment rates of the local population within the sector, household income dynamics, host community participation indexes in destination management, the guarantee of physical and legal public access to coastlines, and the general resident satisfaction index regarding tourism expansion; 4) innovative: the penetration level of service digitalization, the development index of smart destinations, IT infrastructure utilization volumes, and the adoption rate of innovative business; 5) regenerative: the total area of restored natural ecosystems, capital investments channeled into regenerative actions, the direct participation rate of tourists in environmental protection, and restoration metrics for both natural and local cultural capital.

The conducted study permits the formulation of the following definitive conclusions: a multi-criteria classification of blue tourism types has been developed, seamlessly synthesising spatial, functional, ecological, economic, social, innovative, and other parameters; this eliminates the historically fragmented perception of the industry and establishes a rigorous foundation for its holistic analysis. An expanded matrix of indicators has been constructed, maintaining a strict logical linkage with the taxonomy of blue tourism types. In future applications, this methodological approach will significantly enhance the implementation of strategic audits of tourism potential in maritime regions.

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