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Bakalo NadiyaCandidate of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor
National University «Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic», Ukraine**Бакало Надія Віталіївна**

кандидат економічних наук, доцент

Національний університет «Полтавська політехніка імені Юрія Кондратюка», Україна

ORCID 0000-0002-3260-412X

Levchenko Iryna

PhD, Associate Professor

National University «Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic», Ukraine

Левченко Ірина Василівна

доктор філософії, доцент

Національний університет «Полтавська політехніка імені Юрія Кондратюка», Україна

ORCID 0000-0001-7068-8320

Makhovka Viktoriia

Candidate of Economic Sciences

National University «Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic», Ukraine

Маховка Вікторія Михайлівна

кандидат економічних наук

Національний університет «Полтавська політехніка імені Юрія Кондратюка», Україна

ORCID 0000-0001-7985-7792

RECREATION AS A STRATEGIC DIRECTION IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM AND HOTEL AND RESTAURANT MANAGEMENT

Abstract. *The article examines the sphere of recreation as a strategic direction in the management of international tourism and hotel and restaurant business, which is becoming particularly relevant in the context of globalization and the constant growth of demand for quality recreation services. The authors note that recreational services perform a multifunctional role: they not only increase the level of comfort and customer satisfaction, but also shape the competitiveness of tourism and hotel and restaurant enterprises in the global market. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of modern trends in the development of the recreational sector, including the integration of innovative technologies, digitalization, personalization of services, and the growth of interest in ecological and wellness tourism. It has been determined that effective management of recreational processes contributes to increasing customer loyalty, improving the image of institutions, increasing revenues, and ensuring sustainable development of territories.*

Special attention is paid to the prospects for the development of recreational services in Ukraine. The author proves that under the conditions of proper management, the use of innovative technologies, international quality standards and the preservation of natural and cultural potential, Ukraine can occupy a significant place in the international tourism market. The development of the recreational sphere is defined not only as an economic necessity, but also as a socio-cultural factor that contributes to the harmonization of social life, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the popularization of a healthy lifestyle. Thus, the study emphasizes the importance of recreation as a strategic direction in the management of international tourism and hotel and restaurant business, combining economic, social and cultural dimensions, opening up new opportunities for increasing competitiveness and sustainable development.

Keywords: *recreation, international tourism, hotel and restaurant business, strategic management, recreational services, innovation, sustainable development.*

СФЕРА РЕКРЕАЦІЇ ЯК СТРАТЕГІЧНИЙ НАПРЯМ У МЕНЕДЖМЕНТІ МІЖНАРОДНОГО ТУРИЗМУ ТА ГОТЕЛЬНО-РЕСТОРАННОГО БІЗНЕСУ

Анотація. *У статті розглянуто сферу рекреації як стратегічний напрям у менеджменті*



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міжнародного туризму та готельно-ресторанного бізнесу, що набуває особливої актуальності в умовах глобалізації та постійного зростання попиту на якісні послуги відпочинку. Авторами зазначено, що рекреаційні послуги виконують багатофункціональну роль: вони не лише підвищують рівень комфорту та задоволення клієнтів, а й формують конкурентоспроможність туристичних і підприємств готельно-ресторанного сектору на світовому ринку. Особливу увагу приділено аналізу сучасних тенденцій розвитку рекреаційної сфери, серед яких інтеграція інноваційних технологій, цифровізація, персоналізація послуг, зростання інтересу до екологічного та wellness-туризму. Визначено, що ефективно управління рекреаційними процесами сприяє підвищенню лояльності клієнтів, покращенню іміджу закладів, збільшенню доходів та забезпеченню сталого розвитку територій.

Окрему увагу приділено перспективам розвитку рекреаційних послуг в Україні. Автор доводить, що за умов належного менеджменту, використання інноваційних технологій, міжнародних стандартів якості та збереження природно-культурного потенціалу, Україна може зайняти вагоме місце на міжнародному туристичному ринку. Розвиток рекреаційної сфери визначено не лише як економічну необхідність, але й як соціокультурний чинник, що сприяє гармонізації життя суспільства, збереженню культурної спадщини та популяризації здорового способу життя. Таким чином, дослідження підкреслює важливість рекреації як стратегічного напрямку в менеджменті міжнародного туризму та готельно-ресторанного бізнесу, що поєднує економічний, соціальний та культурний виміри, відкриваючи нові можливості для підвищення конкурентоспроможності та сталого розвитку.

Ключові слова: рекреація, міжнародний туризм, готельно-ресторанний бізнес, стратегічний менеджмент, рекреаційні послуги, інновації, сталий розвиток.

Formulation of the problem. The field of recreation in the modern world acts as a key factor in the development of international tourism and the hotel and restaurant industry. The growth of global population mobility, rising income levels, urbanization, and changes in sociocultural needs stimulate demand for various forms of recreational services, including wellness, cultural, and active leisure activities. In this context, the recreational industry is becoming not only an additional component of the tourism product but also an important tool for forming competitive advantages of enterprises in the international market.

At the same time, the lack of an integrated approach to the strategic management of recreational resources and their incorporation into the activities of tourism and hotel and restaurant enterprises reduces the efficiency of their utilization, which negatively affects the competitiveness of tourist destinations.

Effective management of recreational resources and their integration into the development strategies of tourism and hotel and restaurant enterprises are gaining particular relevance, as they contribute to improving service quality, building customer loyalty, and creating a positive image of a country as a tourist destination.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2024 the travel and tourism sector supported 357 million jobs worldwide, accounting for approximately 10% of total global employment, while its contribution to global gross domestic product (GDP) reached USD 10.9 trillion. The growth in both domestic and international tourist spending indicates a significant recovery of the industry following the COVID-19 pandemic [18].

Similar recovery and growth trends are observed in the hotel and restaurant industry. In 2024, the global hospitality market reached USD 4.9 trillion, while the number of international tourists during the first nine months of the year increased to 1.1 billion. Under these conditions, the issue of recreation as a strategic direction in the development of international tourism and hotel and restaurant management requires in-depth scientific analysis and systematization.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Modern research emphasizes the multifunctional role of recreation in international tourism. According to the World Economic Forum [15], the implementation of innovative recreational programs has a positive impact on customer loyalty and stimulates repeat visits to tourism and hospitality establishments. Bogomolova E. and Dovlatova A. [2] note that the integration of recreational services into the hotel and restaurant business contributes to service differentiation and strengthens competitive positions in international markets by providing additional value for tourists and vacationers. At the same time, García R. et al. [4] emphasize that insufficient planning of recreational activities may negatively affect the effectiveness of management strategies and the economic performance of enterprises, indicating the need for a systematic approach to the development of recreational infrastructure and the optimization of management processes.

The recreational sector encompasses a wide range of services, including sports and wellness programs, cultural and educational events, tourist routes, wellness services, outdoor activities, and other forms of leisure. Effective management of these resources involves not only ensuring their accessibility and safety but

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also providing a high level of organizational support, service personalization, the application of innovative technologies, and adaptation to the evolving requirements of modern tourists.

In the context of global competition, enterprises that implement comprehensive recreational programs demonstrate higher attendance and profitability levels, as well as more stable positions in the international market [2].

The relevance of this study is driven by the need to develop effective strategies for managing recreational resources, which can improve the quality of tourism products, enhance enterprise competitiveness, and promote the sustainable development of international tourism. In this context, strategic planning of recreational activities involves the analysis of market trends, assessment of consumer needs, identification of priority areas for development, and the integration of modern technologies. Of particular importance is an approach that combines economic, social, and cultural dimensions, enabling the creation of sustainable and attractive tourism products that meet the needs of contemporary tourists.

Thus, research into the recreational sector within international tourism and the hotel and restaurant industry represents a relevant and significant scientific and practical task. It allows not only for the identification of key factors influencing the effectiveness of recreational services but also for the development of recommendations aimed at optimizing management strategies, increasing enterprise competitiveness, and ensuring the sustainable development of tourist destinations. In the context of globalization, changing tourism demands, and intense competition, recreation is becoming a strategic tool capable of ensuring the stable development of the tourism industry, enhancing the attractiveness of hotel and restaurant establishments, and creating new opportunities for the growth of international tourism.

The purpose of the article is to examine recreation as a strategic direction in the development of international tourism and hotel and restaurant management, to determine its role in enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations and hospitality enterprises, as well as to identify the main trends and prospects for integrating recreational services into modern management strategies in the tourism and hotel and restaurant sectors.

The main material presentation. The concept of «recreation» in the scientific literature is interpreted in many ways, which is due to different approaches to its definition. In the traditional etymological aspect, the term *recreatio* (from Latin – «recovery») is considered as the process of restoring a person's physical and spiritual strength after work [11]. In the socio-cultural dimension, recreation is defined as a form of organizing free time, aimed not only at rest, but also at personal development and satisfaction of cultural needs [9]. In the economic aspect, it is an integral part of the tourism and hospitality industry, which ensures the creation of added value and contributes to the economic development of destinations [18]. The geographical approach focuses on the spatiotemporal use of natural and cultural resources for the organization of recreation. From the standpoint of medical and biological sciences, recreation is considered as a tool for preserving and restoring human health [14], while in psychology - as a means of reducing stress and harmonizing the psycho-emotional state [8]. In modern research, a comprehensive approach prevails, which treats recreation as an integral socio-economic phenomenon that combines health, cultural, economic and environmental functions, ensuring the harmonization of the interaction of man and the environment [5].

Recreation in modern scientific research is considered not only as a sphere of rest, but also as an important strategic factor in the development of tourism and hospitality. It performs a number of interrelated functions that form its significance in the international context. First of all, it is worth highlighting the restorative function, which consists in restoring the physical, mental and spiritual strength of a person after professional activity [14]. In the field of international tourism, this function is implemented through wellness and SPA programs, sanatorium and resort treatment, ecological and medical tourism.

No less important is the health function, which involves maintaining and strengthening human health. The function is especially relevant in the hotel and restaurant business, where the demand for the integration of health practices (fitness halls, swimming pools, diet menus) into traditional services is growing [8]. The socio-cultural function is to promote socialization, the development of communicative ties, cultural enrichment and the formation of a positive image of destinations. The involvement of recreational elements in tourist and hotel and restaurant products increases their cultural attractiveness and contributes to the growth of international mobility [5].

It is worth emphasizing the cognitive function, which is implemented through cultural and educational forms of recreation – excursions, ethnographic trips, gastronomic tours. They ensure the integration of recreational activities into the sphere of international tourism, orienting it to meet intellectual and cultural needs [16].

The economic function of recreation is also important, which manifests itself in the creation of added value and new jobs, the development of related industries (transport, food, entertainment), as well as in the

formation of competitive advantages for hotel and restaurant enterprises [17].

The functions of recreation in international tourism and the hotel and restaurant business are complex and provide not only rest and recovery, but also the formation of sustainable economic, cultural and social development. In modern conditions of globalization, the recreational sphere is gaining strategic importance in the management of international tourism. Its importance is determined by the growing demand for various forms of recreation and recovery that integrate cultural, natural and economic resources into a competitive tourism product. According to the World Tourism Organization, more than 40% of international travel is associated with recreation and recreational activities, which indicates the key role of this sphere in the structure of global tourism [16]. Figure. 1 presents the key reasons for the development of the recreation sector as a strategic direction.

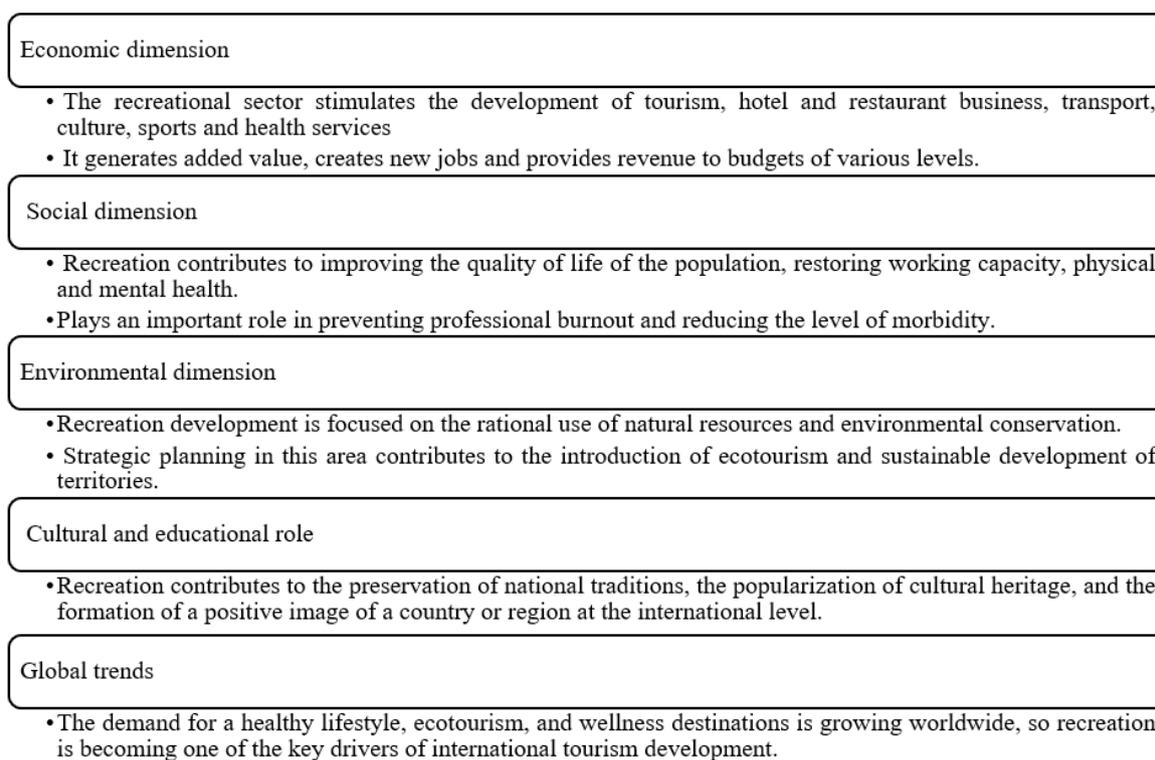


Fig. 1. Key reasons for the development of the recreation sector as a strategic direction

Source: summarized by the author

Thus, recreation is a strategic direction, as it combines economic benefits, social benefits, environmental balance and cultural development, ensuring sustainable development of society. It becomes a key element in the formation of a modern tourism product, integrating economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects of development.

Modern priorities of international tourism consider the recreational sphere not only as a means of rejuvenation, but also as a strategic tool that determines tourist flows and stimulates the economic growth of regions [1]. At the strategic level, recreation serves as a tool for differentiating tourist destinations, allowing them to stand out in the global market and attract target segments of tourists. The use of recreational resources in management involves comprehensive planning that takes into account the natural potential of the territory, the state of infrastructure, cultural features and needs of tourists [4].

According to the research of Bogomolova, E., & Dovlatova, A. [2], effective implementation of the recreational potential of regions based on the concept of SMART specialization contributes to the creation of competitive advantages and sustainable development of tourism. For example, in Transcarpathia, the emphasis on green tourism, health resorts and inclusive tourism practices corresponds to modern global trends and market needs [5].

Similarly, Switzerland, Sweden and Iceland have built their own tourism brands based on natural recreational resources (mountains, lakes, thermal springs) [6], while Japan is actively developing health and recreational practices, focusing on wellness tourism and traditional onsen (Japanese thermal resorts). For example, Switzerland is actively promoting ski resorts with comprehensive recreational programs: ski routes, SPA services, trekking and cycling tours. The tourist receives not only accommodation, but also a full range

of activities for physical and psychological recovery. Iceland offers natural recreational resources: thermal springs (Blue Lagoon), volcanic tours, ecotourism. Tourists combine active recreation with health recovery. Hotels and tour operators are developing package tours that include accommodation + recreational services. This increases the average check and customer loyalty.

Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of recreational brands in Switzerland, Sweden, Japan, Norway, and Iceland.

Table 1

Comparative analysis of recreational brands in Switzerland, Sweden, Japan, Norway and Iceland

Country	Major recreational brands	Natural resources	Official/ tourist slogan
Switzerland	Alpine tourism (ski resorts Zermatt, Davos, St. Moritz); wellness and thermal resorts; hiking and mountaineering; lakeside recreation	Alps, mountain lakes, glaciers	Swiss Made of Nature
Sweden	Ecotourism and national parks; ICEHOTEL in Lapland; skerries and sea vacations; Scandinavian wellness (saunas, swimming in ice holes)	Lapland, Baltic Sea, forests	Sweden – The Swedish Lapland Experience
Japan	Onsen (hot springs); ryokans (traditional spa hotels); meditation, tea ceremonies; mountain routes (Mt. Fuji, Japanese Alps)	Volcanoes, hot springs, mountain ranges	Japan. Endless Discovery
Norway	Fjord tourism (cruises, eco-tours); hiking (Preikestolen, Trolltunga); winter sports; northern lights	Fjords, mountains, polar zones	Norway – Powered by Nature
Iceland	Geothermal tourism (Blue Lagoon, hot springs); ecotourism; volcanic routes; northern lights	Volcanoes, geysers, glaciers, geothermal areas	Inspired by Iceland

Source: compiled by the authors

Strategic management in international tourism involves taking into account the recreational potential of territories when developing marketing strategies, investment programs and state policy in the field of tourism, etc. [7]. At the same time, special attention is paid to the combination of recreational resources with modern service technologies, which allows the formation of innovative tourist products [14]. The importance of recreation is increasing in the context of growing demand for wellness tourism, medical and recreational travel, ecological and active recreation. Thus, recreational tourism is increasingly integrated into the strategic priorities of managing international tourist flows [15].

Recreational flow management includes infrastructure planning, the formation of recreational clusters, the diversification of tourism products, and the introduction of innovative technologies. Researchers note that the effective use of recreational potential allows countries to position themselves on the global market not only as places for recreation, but also as centers of sustainable development [4].

An important trend is the growing role of sustainable recreation management. In international practice, the principles of «green economy», conservation of natural resources and development of eco-oriented services are increasingly being implemented. This meets the expectations of modern tourists who prefer destinations with a high level of environmental safety and a comfortable environment for recreation [13].

Recreation occupies a strategic place in international tourism management, as it determines the prospects for the competitiveness of tourist destinations, stimulates innovative development of services and ensures a balance between economic, social and environmental aspects of development [14]. As modern researchers note, it is the recreational component that increasingly determines the value of the tourist product, as it meets the growing demand for quality recreation and health improvement [5].

An important component of this process is the hotel and restaurant business, which, by integrating recreational services, provides a harmonious combination of rest, nutrition, and cultural and health practices [4]. Thus, the analysis of recreational services in the hospitality sector allows us to more deeply reveal the practical dimension of recreation as a strategic direction for the development of international tourism.

In modern conditions, the hotel and restaurant business is transforming from a traditional service sector into a comprehensive system of service provision, which includes elements of recreational activities [4]. A modern tourist expects not only a high level of accommodation and food, but also opportunities for active recreation, relaxation, health improvement and cultural enrichment. In this context, it is recreational services that are becoming a strategic factor in increasing the competitiveness of hospitality enterprises in the international market [8]. Thus, in the UAE, premium hotels offer a wide range of recreational services: fitness programs, yoga, aromatherapy, special detox programs, etc. This allows them to stand out from the background of standard hotel services and attract international tourists. Restaurant establishments are also actively integrating recreational services into their activities. For example, restaurants at resort complexes

in Spain and Italy organize culinary master classes, tastings of local products and wines, which are both entertainment and educational recreational services. The practical combination of gastronomy and recreation increases guest satisfaction, stimulates repeat visits and positive reviews on online platforms [10].

Recreational services in the hotel and restaurant business constitute an important segment of the tourism industry, as they are aimed at restoring the physical and psychological strength of visitors, ensuring their full rest and increasing the level of comfort of their stay. According to researchers, recreation in the hospitality sector is one of the key factors in forming competitive advantages of tourism enterprises and the hotel and restaurant complex.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council [17] for 2024, the travel and tourism sector continues to demonstrate a significant economic impact at the global level. In particular, in 2024 its contribution to the world gross domestic product (GDP) amounted to 10.9 trillion US dollars, which is 10% of the total volume of the world economy. The obtained data emphasize the importance of recreational services as a strategic direction in the management of international tourism and hotel and restaurant business. The integration of recreational elements into tourism offers not only increases the competitiveness of enterprises, but also contributes to economic growth and job creation in the industry.

The main areas of recreational services include health and wellness services, including swimming pools, saunas, baths, fitness centers and SPA procedures. Such elements of the recreation complex are especially appreciated by modern tourists who are focused on combining travel with health care and prevention of stress. An important place is occupied by medical and recreational services, in particular balneology, hydrotherapy, dietary nutrition and specialist consultations. Their implementation allows you to form the image of a hotel and restaurant establishment as a health space that meets the principles of modern medical tourism [19].

Cultural and recreational services ensure the integration of tourists into the socio-cultural space of the destination. This includes the organization of excursions, animation programs, concerts, master classes and tasting events. As scientists note, it is the cultural component of recreation that contributes to the formation of the uniqueness of a hospitality establishment and increases its attractiveness for different segments of tourists [3].

Separately, it is worth highlighting active recreational services that involve sports, equipment rental (bicycles, skis, kayaks), organizing hikes or boat trips. Such types of recreation stimulate tourists to stay longer in the destination and increase spending on additional services [1].

Recreational and landscape services play an important role in creating a favorable environment for recreation. This includes the arrangement of parks, beaches, green areas and terraces for relaxation. The landscape organization of space has a positive effect on the emotional perception of tourists and contributes to the formation of a harmonious recreation environment [3].

Recreational services in the hotel and restaurant business perform a multifunctional role. They not only increase the level of comfort and satisfaction of guests, but also contribute to the formation of customer loyalty, ensure the competitiveness of establishments and form a positive image of the tourist destination as a whole. Thus, recreational services are becoming an important strategic element of modern tourism product management.

Examples of successful integration of recreational elements in the hotel and restaurant business are international chains and individual hotels:

Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas (Maldives, Thailand, Portugal) positions itself on the market through the concept of wellness and eco-tourism, offering individual detox, yoga and meditation programs;

Badrutt's Palace Hotel (St. Moritz, Switzerland) combines luxurious accommodation with unique SPA treatments based on alpine herbs and mountain minerals;

Nobu Hotel (Tokyo, London, Miami) develops gastronomic recreation, offering culinary master classes, tastings and signature cuisine as part of the tourist product;

Radisson Blu Resort & Spa (Dubrovnik, Croatia) specializes in wellness tourism, offering comprehensive «rest + treatment» programs using the marine resources of the Adriatic;

Hilton Dead Sea Resort & Spa (Jordan) focuses on medical recreation, offering therapeutic treatments based on Dead Sea minerals and mud.

Thus, recreational services in the hotel and restaurant business are not just an additional service, but a strategic direction of development. They improve the quality of service, form consumer loyalty and strengthen the competitive position of enterprises in the global tourism market.

The recreational sphere in international tourism and the hotel and restaurant business constantly faces a number of challenges that necessitate strategic planning and the implementation of innovative management. Among the key problems are economic instability, seasonality of demand, insufficient level of personnel qualification, increasing requirements for service quality and safety, as well as the negative impact of global environmental factors [5].

The current challenges of development include several strategically important trends. First, digitalization and technological transformation. Modern tourists expect widespread use of digital solutions: mobile applications, online booking, VR tours, personalized services that increase the convenience and quality of the tourist experience. Second, environmental problems and the need for sustainable development. Intensive tourist flows can lead to the degradation of natural resources, so the implementation of eco-programs and principles of responsible management of recreational areas is relevant. Third, changes in consumer behavior. Tourists increasingly prefer wellness, medical and active tourism, which requires the transformation of business models of hotel and restaurant enterprises [15].

Despite significant challenges, the prospects for the development of the recreational sector remain positive. Among the main directions, several key vectors of development can be identified.

1. Integration of wellness and medical tourism. An example is the Six Senses chain and the Dead Sea hotels in Jordan, which successfully combine traditional methods of health improvement with modern technologies.

2. Development of digital and innovative solutions. Virtual tours, mobile applications for booking, online consultations with experts in the field of wellness and fitness contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the tourism product.

3. Eco- and sustainable tourism. The introduction of the concept of «green» hotels, the organization of eco-tours and the focus on the use of local resources allow preserving the natural environment and forming a positive image of tourist destinations [5].

4. International partnership and cooperation. Cooperation between hotels, restaurants and tour operators contributes to the creation of complex recreational products that combine health improvement, active recreation and cultural programs.

Thus, effective management of the recreational sector in tourism and hospitality requires a comprehensive approach that integrates strategic planning, innovative technologies, customer orientation and environmental responsibility. The implementation of these strategies allows to increase the competitiveness of enterprises, expand the offer of the tourism product and ensure the sustainable development of destinations at the international level.

Conclusions. The recreation sector is emerging as a strategic direction for the development of international tourism and hotel and restaurant business, as it provides a comprehensive socio-economic effect and increases the competitiveness of destinations. The study confirms the need for integrated management of recreational resources, the introduction of innovative technologies and partnership models of interaction. Practical recommendations are to develop sustainable development strategies, improve professional training of personnel and standardize service in accordance with international requirements. Further scientific research should be directed at the analysis of state policy, the impact of global challenges on the recreation sector and the adaptation of successful international practices in the national context.

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