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Urban Tourism and New Forms of Leisure in Cities

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ABSTRACT

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The relevance of the study is determined by the growing need to conceptualize urban tourism as a factor of sustainable urban development capable of integrating economic activity, cultural identity, and social interaction. In the context of the spatial transformation of Ukrainian and European cities, the problem of integrating transport, recreational, and digital infrastructures become crucial, as it defines the comfort and quality of the urban environment. The lack of systematic management of tourist flows, fragmented analytical data, and uneven development of urban spaces highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to organizing urban tourism. The purpose of the article is to examine the specific features of urban tourism and to substantiate methodological approaches to the formation of urban tourist routes and new leisure formats based on the rational use of recreational potential, cultural resources, and infrastructure. The research results made it possible to establish that the effectiveness of urban tourism is determined not by the number of attractions but by the level of integration between cultural, social, and transport environments. The main problems identified include imbalances in transport development, fragmentation of recreational spaces, and the absence of unified statistical monitoring. It has been proven that the use of digital technologies – such as electronic visitor cards, interactive route mapping, and real-time flow analytics – can reduce these disparities and ensure polycentric tourism development. Conclusions confirm that urban tourism is transforming from a traditional recreational activity into a component of urban governance aimed at improving spatial comfort, balancing visitor flows, and preserving cultural heritage. It is recommended to implement unified digital platforms, develop barrier-free infrastructure, and involve local communities in route planning.

KEYWORDS

urban tourism, tourist routes, city leisure, recreational potential, geoinformation systems, tourism infrastructure, digital technologies, sustainable urban development, cultural heritage, tourist mobility.



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Урбаністичний туризм і нові форми дозвілля в містах

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СТАТТЯ

АНОТАЦІЯ

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Актуальність дослідження зумовлена зростаючою потребою концептуалізації міського туризму як чинника сталого міського розвитку, здатного інтегрувати економічну діяльність, культурну ідентичність, соціальну взаємодію. У контексті просторової трансформації українських та європейських міст проблема інтеграції транспортної, рекреаційної, цифрової інфраструктур стає вирішальною, оскільки визначає комфорт та якість міського середовища. Відсутність системного управління туристичними потоками, фрагментовані аналітичні дані, нерівномірний розвиток міських просторів підкреслюють необхідність комплексного підходу до організації міського туризму. Метою статті є дослідження специфічних особливостей міського туризму та обґрунтування методологічних підходів до формування міських туристичних маршрутів та нових форматів дозвілля на основі раціонального використання рекреаційного потенціалу, культурних ресурсів, інфраструктури. Результати дослідження дозволили встановити, що ефективність міського туризму визначається не кількістю визначних пам'яток, а рівнем інтеграції культурного, соціального та транспортного середовища. Основні виявлені проблеми включають дисбаланс у розвитку транспорту, фрагментацію рекреаційних просторів та відсутність єдиного статистичного моніторингу. Доведено, що використання цифрових технологій – таких як електронні картки відвідувачів, інтерактивне картографування маршрутів та аналітика потоків у реальному часі – може зменшити ці диспропорції та забезпечити поліцентричний розвиток туризму. Висновки підтверджують, що міський туризм перетворюється з традиційної рекреаційної діяльності на компонент міського управління, спрямований на покращення просторового комфорту, збалансування потоків відвідувачів та збереження культурної спадщини. Рекомендується впроваджувати уніфіковані цифрові платформи, розвивати безбар'єрну інфраструктуру, залучати місцеві громади до планування маршрутів.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

урбаністичний туризм, туристичні маршрути, міське дозвілля, рекреаційний потенціал, геоінформаційні системи, туристична інфраструктура, цифрові технології, сталий розвиток міст, культурна спадщина, мобільність туристів.

1. Introduction

In modern conditions of rapid urbanization, urban space is turning into a key center of social, economic and cultural dynamics, which leads to a rethinking of the role of tourism as a factor in sustainable urban development. Urban tourism takes on a new meaning, going beyond the traditional visit to historical and cultural monuments and focusing on integrated forms of leisure that combine cognitive, communication, creative and digital practices. The problem lies in the need to form a balanced model for the development of urban tourism, which would take into account the interests of the community, the needs of tourists and the requirements of environmental and social sustainability. The scientific significance of the study lies in finding out the mechanisms of adaptation of the urban environment to new formats of leisure – from event and gastronomic tourism to digital and virtual routes that form a new spatial identity of cities. In practical terms, this is due to the need to develop effective tools for planning tourist flows, managing recreational loads, improving the urban branding system and creating conditions for inclusive and safe leisure. The solution of these tasks will contribute to increasing the competitiveness of cities, expanding the economic opportunities of local communities and forming a holistic policy for the development of urban tourism as a component of the modern strategy of urban management.

2. Literature Review

The analysis of modern research on the problems of urban tourism and new forms of leisure in cities allows us to identify four interrelated scientific areas. The first direction covers the theoretical and methodological foundations of the formation of urban tourism. In the work of S. I. Dychkovsky, the essence of tourist development of the socio-cultural space of the city as a complex system of interaction of architectural, cultural and social structures that form the tourist identity of the urban environment is revealed [1]. V. Khudaverdiyeva studies the development of urban tourism in the largest historical centers of the world, emphasizing the relationship between the preservation of cultural heritage and the modernization of infrastructure to increase the competitiveness of urban destinations [2]. A. Pilchenko analyzes the world experience in the development of urban tourism, identifying the possibilities of adapting innovative management practices, city branding and cultural strategies to the conditions of Ukraine [3]. Thus, within this direction, urban tourism is considered as a socio-cultural phenomenon that integrates spatial, cultural and managerial components.

The second direction is devoted to the study of local aspects of the development of urban tourism and its impact on territorial communities. T. Kolesnyk and V. Bagneta analyze the peculiarities of the development of recreational tourism in territorial communities, considering it as the basis for the formation of a local welfare economy based on cultural and natural resources [4]. L. D. Bozhko and M. M. Zaitseva define the socio-cultural and economic foundations of urban tourism, emphasizing its role in strengthening social capital and developing innovative forms of leisure [5]. S. J. S. J. Page and J. Connell propose a systematic approach to urban tourism management, which combines spatial planning, mobility, culture and digital communications [6]. This direction defines urban tourism as a key factor in the socio-economic integration of territories.

The third direction concerns cultural innovations and new forms of urban leisure. G. Richards characterizes urban tourism as a form of cultural tourism focused on the creation of creative experience, interaction of local communities and tourists, and the development of the cultural economy [7]. A. Eldridge analyzes the phenomenon of night tourism, which forms new social leisure practices, changes the perception of urban space and influences the dynamics of urban culture [8]. A. Gonia and A. Jezierska-Thöle propose the concept of sustainable urban tourism, which combines urban areas with nature reserves, creating new forms of ecological recreation and harmonization of space [9]. This direction demonstrates the transition from traditional forms of tourism to creative and socially oriented practices that transform the city into an environment of integrated cultural experience.

The fourth direction covers digital, managerial and post-pandemic aspects of urban tourism development. A. Morrison and C. Maxim substantiate the need to create integrated urban tourism management systems based on digital analytics, strategic planning and smart technologies [10]. Q. Yu et al. investigate the tourism experience reflected in social networks and demonstrate the potential of

Big Data to analyze tourist behavior and personalize services [11]. A. Jiricka-Pürerer and co-authors study changes in urban tourism before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the importance of climate adaptation, eco-management, and safe leisure formats [12]. N. Petrukha and co-authors propose the introduction of flexible Agile methods in the management of IT projects of urban tourism, which ensures adaptability and increases the efficiency of digital tourism systems [13]. Within this direction, urban tourism acquires the characteristics of a smart ecosystem capable of ensuring sustainable development and rapid response to environmental changes.

Despite scientific developments, the issues of a systematic understanding of urban tourism as an integrated phenomenon that combines spatial, cultural and digital factors remain unresolved. The methodology for building urban routes using GIS technologies has not been sufficiently developed, the mechanisms for the effective use of natural and socio-cultural resources have not been defined, and there is a lack of a unified system of statistical monitoring.

The proposed study fills these gaps by combining spatial-analytical and socio-cultural approaches, creating a methodology for integrated planning of tourist routes and forming an analytical model of urban tourism as a tool for sustainable urban development.

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of the article is to study the features of the development of urban tourism and substantiate methodological approaches to the formation of urban tourist routes and new forms of leisure on the basis of effective use of recreational potential and infrastructure.

To achieve the goal, the following tasks have been set:

1. To determine the essence of urban tourism and its role in the transformation of the urban environment.
2. To substantiate the methodology for the formation of urban tourist routes using digital and geographic information technologies.
3. To identify problems and develop recommendations for the development of infrastructure and improvement of the system of organization of urban tourism.

4. Methods and Materials

The methodology is based on systemic and spatial-functional approaches using cartographic and statistical analysis.

5. Results and Discussion

Urban tourism is one of the most dynamic forms of the modern tourist movement, which arises at the intersection of socio-cultural, economic and spatial processes in cities. Its essence lies in the knowledge of the urban environment as a multi-level system, where cultural heritage, architectural landscapes, event practices, gastronomic routes, creative spaces and innovative leisure infrastructure are combined. The specificity of urban tourism is that it simultaneously performs the function of economic development, cultural representation and social integration. In the process of transformation of the urban environment, it becomes an indicator of the quality of life, the level of openness of the city to innovations and its ability to adapt to the needs of different target groups of tourists, from cultural and business to educational or event. The growing role of digital technologies and hybrid travel formats is shaping a new paradigm of urban tourism, where traditional models of visiting attractions are complemented by interactive routes, virtual reality and inclusive leisure solutions (Table 1).

In modern urban conditions, the mechanism for implementing urban tourism involves the integration of three key components: infrastructure (transport, logistics, accessibility), information and digital (mobile applications, smart cards, big data analytics) and socio-cultural (interaction with local communities, event formats, creative spaces). In the city of Lviv, it has been established that the introduction of the Lviv City Card provides synergy of transport and cultural services, providing free or discounted access to more than 20 museums, public transport and partner attractions, which stimulates the redistribution of tourist flows outside the historical center [14; 15]. The system is based on the

integration of electronic ticketing with a CRM platform, which allows you to track the routes of card use and increase the accuracy of statistical estimates of tourist activity [16].

Table 1. Characteristics of urban tourism in the context of urban environment transformation

Sign	Traditional urban tourism	Urban tourism of a new type
Purpose of the trip	Sightseeing of historical and cultural monuments	Comprehensive immersion in the socio-cultural life of the city
Spatial organization	Centric, around the main tourist attractions	Polycentric, covering different neighborhoods and creative spaces
Means of interaction	Excursion format, printed guides	Digital maps, mobile applications, interactive routes
Type of leisure	Passive-cognitive	Active-research, creative, event
Economic role	Support for the hotel and restaurant sector	Formation of a multisectoral economy of the city (culture, IT, transport, service)

Source: systematized by the authors according to the data given in [1; 2; 5; 8; 10].

For the City of Vienna, the implementation of the Visitor Economy Strategy 2025 demonstrates the transition from quantitative to qualitative indicators of tourism, focusing on creating “value for all” – residents, businesses and guests of the city. The concept provides for the development of neighborhood-based tourism, digital management of flows based on data analytics and monitoring of the level of social comfort of residents [17]. According to the Vienna Tourist Board, as part of the implementation of the strategy, there was an increase in tourist satisfaction by 14% and an increase in the share of repeat visits to 36%, which indicates the effectiveness of the polycentric leisure model [18]. Taken together, such practices prove that urban tourism is turning into an urban development management tool that strikes a balance between economic benefit, cultural authenticity, and quality of life for the local community.

Globally, tourism continues to show a steady recovery even after the pandemic downturn. According to the UN World Tourism Organization, in 2023, the number of international tourist arrivals amounted to about 1.286 billion, which is equal to 88% of the level of 2019 [19]. In 2024, the figure reached UAH 1.465 billion, almost returning to the pre-crisis level [20; 21]. For comparison, in 2022 this figure did not exceed UAH 0.95 billion, which means that the increase in two years was more than 54% [22]. Such trends indicate a systematic recovery of tourist activity and structural changes in world leisure, in particular, the transition from mass consumption to urban-oriented forms of recreation, where the experience of interaction with the urban environment becomes the main thing (Fig. 1).

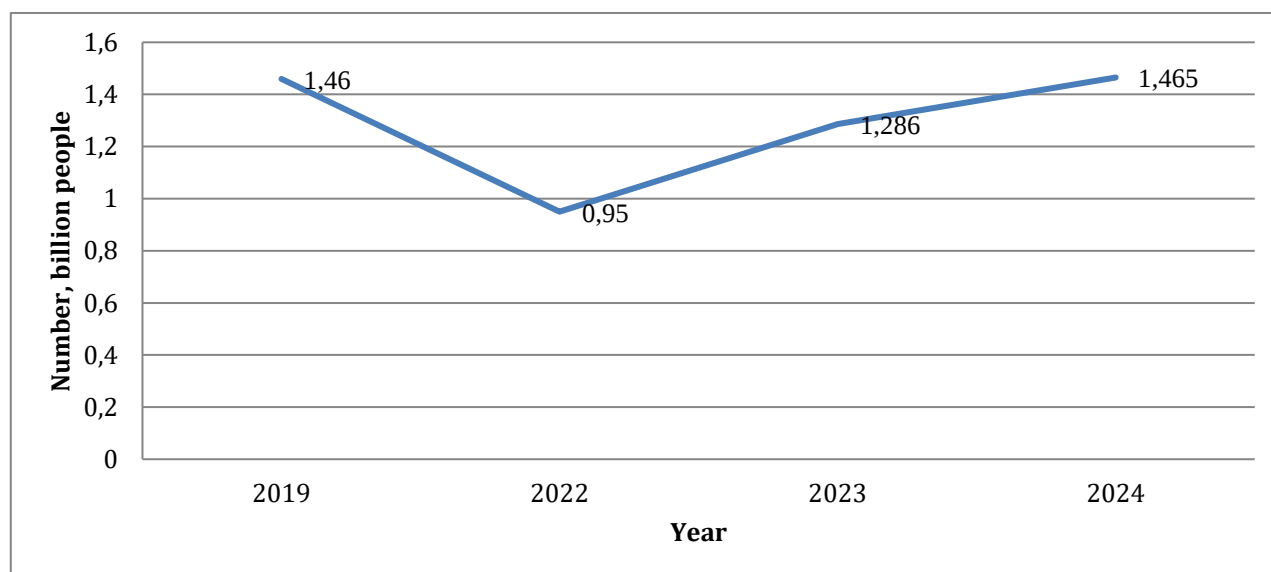


Fig. 1. Dynamics of international tourist arrivals (2019–2024)

Source: developed by the authors on the basis of [19–22].

The graph reflects the gradual return of global tourism to 2019 levels after the 2020–2021 crisis. The growth line demonstrates not only quantitative growth, but also qualitative stabilization of the sector, which creates the basis for the further development of urban tourism as a form of sustainable

urban leisure. The recovery has reached 97–100% of pre-crisis indicators, which confirms the potential of urban areas as the main drivers of the tourism economy.

The methodology for compiling urban tourist routes is based on a combination of analytics of tourist resources, statistics on attendance and the use of modern cartographic services. Its purpose is to provide a logical, convenient and informative structure of the trip, which meets the interests of different categories of tourists and contributes to the unleashing of the potential of the city. Geographic information systems perform an auxiliary function in this process: they make it possible to visualize the spatial location of monuments, cultural sites, catering establishments, green areas and transport hubs. Statistical data allows you to determine the most popular locations, time peaks in attendance, average length of stay and the main destinations of tourist flows. Digital technologies – mobile applications, interactive maps, QR routes – provide personalization of trips and convenient access to information in real time (Table 2).

Table 2. Methods of formation of urban tourist routes

Component of the methodology	Sources of information	Practical significance
Analysis of tourist resources	Official databases, reference books, tourist maps	Identification of objects of main interest for the trip
Study of demand	Attendance statistics, surveys, data from online platforms (TripAdvisor, Google Maps)	Formation of routes in accordance with the interests and age groups of tourists
Spatial visualization	Geographic information maps, Google Earth, Mapbox	Determining the logical sequence of objects and ease of movement
Route optimization	Analysis of time, distance, availability of transport	Building a rational route for one-day or multi-day trips
Digital Integration	Mobile apps, QR codes, interactive guides	Improving the quality of service, ease of navigation and attracting tourists

Source: systematized by the authors according to the data given in [3; 9; 11; 13].

In practice, this technique is implemented in projects aimed at increasing the tourist attractiveness of cities. For example, the Kyiv Region Tours platform systematizes more than 50 routes in the region with an interactive map, photo gallery, and the ability to upload routes to the navigator [23]. In Barcelona, a similar approach is used to optimize flows on the Rambla – installed antennas track the number of visitors and help the city administration redistribute flows, avoiding congestion of central streets [24]. Such experience demonstrates that digital tools do not replace tourist planning, but only expand the possibilities of its practical application – they help to make routes more comfortable, informative and balanced.

The potential of natural, historical, cultural and social resources forms the core of the urban tourism product: it is the combination of green corridors, heritage and active urban communities that determines the diversity of leisure scenarios and the readiness of the city to receive visitors without overloading the space. A science-based assessment of such potential relies on the inventory of resources, their spatial overlap and measurable effects on the tourist experience – from accessibility and safety to eventfulness and social interaction (Table 3)

Table 3. Matrix of the resource potential of the city for urban tourism

Resource Type	Content basis	Suitability metrics
Natural	parks, embankments, green corridors	the share of “green cover” in the route area; continuity of the pedestrian and bicycle network; accessibility to water
Historical and cultural	heritage, museums, contemporary art, gastronomy	POI density/km ² ; opening hours; average time to visit the location
Social	creative clusters, events, local communities	calendar of events; residents' involvement; Safety and Tolerance Index

Source: systematized by the authors according to the data given in [4; 5; 7; 9; 10; 12].

A Ukrainian example is demonstrated by the Kyiv Region Tours platform, where at least 20 routes with clear parameters are open in the catalog: the number of points of interest, distance, and estimated travel time. The “Routes” page displays, in particular, routes for 9–14 locations with a distance of 22 km to 600 km and a travel time from 34 minutes to 9 hours 40 minutes; This allows you to balance the natural and cultural assets of the region and select trajectories of different saturation for family,

educational or memorial visits [25]. A foreign example – La Rambla (Barcelona) – illustrates how social resources and flow management maintain the quality of the urban experience: five geolocation antennas have been installed to count visitors and time peaks, and the first measurements have adjusted hyperbolized estimates of annual visits to less than 80 million. Real-time data is used to adapt services and redirect flows to reduce central axis congestion and reinforce adjacent neighborhoods with event and gastronomic scenarios [18]. As a result, the combination of natural, cultural and social dimensions, supported by open route parameters or sensory analytics, creates a reproducible mechanism for the formation of attractive urban tourism destinations, where decisions are based on facts, not on intuition.

The development of urban tourism in Ukraine and Europe is constrained by deep disproportions between the pace of digitalization of services and the real state of transport and recreational infrastructure [1; 6]. The first problem is the gap between tourist demand and urban transport capacity. In many cities, the transport system was designed for labor flows, not for tourist routes. Tram and bus lines often do not coincide with the main tourist areas, and the orientation of traffic remains chaotic, without taking into account seasonal or event peaks [2]. Even where e-tickets have been introduced, there is no flexible tariff policy for short-term visits, which makes urban tourism expensive within the daily budget.

The next block of problems is related to recreational infrastructure. City parks, embankments, and public spaces, for the most part, do not have tourist logistics – from elementary navigation to service points [9]. Some recreational areas are in an abandoned state or perform a purely local function, not integrating into the general tourist product of the city. The architectural heritage is revitalized in fragments: one street after reconstruction becomes a tourist showcase, while the surrounding quarters are left without infrastructure [3; 7]. The unevenness of spatial development creates a situation of “island tourism” – when a tourist locks themselves in several locations, not perceiving the city as an integral organism [5; 8].

A separate group of difficulties concerns the statistical support of management. Data on tourist flows, attendance at events, or hotel occupancy are collected by different structures, without unified formats and without communication with transport or utilities [11]. This makes it impossible to simulate a complete picture of the tourist's movement in the urban space, from arrival to departure. There is a lack not only of digital panels, but also of elementary accounting standards: one department reports on the number of tickets, another on museum visitors, the third on sales in the field of hospitality [12]. As a result, managerial decisions are made “blindly”, based on fragments of information.

An additional factor is the lack of integration between municipalities and private platforms. Services such as Booking or Google Maps have detailed analytics of flows and requests, but city structures do not have access to this data [13]. The ability to plan the load on infrastructure, predict peak days, or coordinate transport is lost. Tourism turns into a spontaneous process in which information does not serve development, but only fixes its lag.

Improving the system of organizing urban tourism requires a transition from fragmented activities to a holistic urban leisure policy that combines spatial planning, digital analytics and social participation. First of all, it is necessary to ensure a balance between tourist flows and the comfort of residents. To do this, cities should form a polycentric structure of visits: the transfer of part of cultural and recreational activities beyond the historical cores reduces the load on the central zones, creating new tourist clusters in areas with untapped potential. This not only expands the spatial offer but also stimulates economic activity outside of traditional routes.

Another direction is the modernization of transport infrastructure in the logic of “tourist – city – community”. The introduction of integrated tickets, single visitor cards and tourist passes with access to public transport reduces transaction barriers and increases mobility within the city. It is important not only to develop new lines or routes, but also to ensure their clear communication through mobile applications and interactive maps.

The data management system should become a key link in urban tourism. It is necessary to create a single city statistical monitoring base, where data from transport, cultural, hotel and event operators would be integrated. Such platforms are already successfully operating in Vienna, Krakow, and Barcelona, allowing cities to predict workloads and adjust visitor engagement policies. For Ukrainian cities, this can be implemented on the basis of municipal think tanks with open APIs for businesses and researchers.

The development of tourism infrastructure should be based on the principles of sustainability and inclusiveness. Reconstruction of public spaces, creation of green routes, and improvement of barrier-free entrances to attractions or museums not only improve conditions for tourists but also improve the quality of life of residents. A sustainable approach also involves the use of environmentally friendly materials, energy-efficient lighting, and waste sorting in tourist areas.

To ensure a long-term effect, it is advisable to create communication platforms for joint management – partnerships between the municipality, business and communities. It is these formats that allow you to coordinate priorities, avoid duplication of functions and develop travel products based on a common identity. In modern conditions, urban tourism should turn into a tool for restoring the social fabric of the city – through event initiatives, interactive spaces and the experience of co-creation, which makes leisure not consumer, but meaningful.

6. Conclusions

In the course of the study, it was found that urban tourism is formed as a complex system of intersection of spatial, cultural and social processes, in which the urban environment becomes not only the background of the trip, but its content. It has been proven that its effectiveness is determined not by the number of events or attractions, but by the quality of the interaction between the tourist, the space and the community. It is the city's ability to organize convenient navigation, safe mobility and open communication that turns a visit into an experience of cognition, not consumption. Urban tourism is increasingly performing a social function – it creates connections, forms an image of the city, which does not disappear after departure.

The problems identified during the analysis are systemic in nature. The transport infrastructure in most cities is not adapted to tourist routes – it gravitates towards pendulum flows and does not take into account seasonal or event peaks. The recreational network is unevenly developed: historical centers are overloaded, while peripheral areas are left without services and navigation. Additionally, the fragmentation of statistical data. Information about tourist flows, events, transport and hotels is collected by various structures without uniform formats, which deprives cities of the opportunity to manage tourism based on facts, not intuition.

The scientific novelty lies in the identification of a model of integrated management of urban tourism, which combines transport analytics, cultural resources and digital interaction. The paper summarizes the experience of cities implementing “smart” solutions – from Lviv City Card and Kyiv Region Tours to La Rambla sensor monitoring systems in Barcelona. Such examples prove that digital integration can not only optimize flows, but also change the nature of leisure – make it sustainable and meaningful.

The practical effect of the study is to develop recommendations for urban strategies: the creation of unified analytical platforms, the development of polycentric routes, barrier-free infrastructure and partnerships “government – community – business”. It is these steps that form trust between the city and the tourist and turn leisure time into a tool of social stability.

Prospects for further research are related to the assessment of the impact of urban tourism on the recovery of Ukrainian cities, the development of integral indicators of sustainability and the creation of the UrbanTour Index model, which will allow measuring not only the economic but also the social efficiency of urban leisure.

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