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## **THE DIRECTIONS OF SPA & WELLNESS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN UKRAINE**

*The article discusses new trends of Wellness and spa tourism development in Ukraine. The main theoretical fundamentals of SPA and wellness tourism development are discussed. The researches of Country Competitiveness Rating for SPA and Wellness development are substantiated. The main quantitative indicators of wellness and spa activity in Ukraine and other European countries are explored. The dynamics of the development of sanatorium and wellness resorts in Ukraine is proposed.*

**Keywords:** *wellness and spa tourism, resorts, sanatorium, Ukraine, European Union, Country Competitiveness Rating, indicators of activities.*

**Relevance of research topic.** Wellness and SPA tourism has become a growing force driven by the changes in lifestyles simultaneously by demographic and psychographic factors. The ageing of the European population and the growing health awareness to live better with a nonstressful state of mind has been creating demand for a new range of health-related products and services in a large leisure setting. Identifying this and considering the growing demand for but also the supply of health tourism products and services, – the recent re-emergence of demand for wellness experiences has presented destinations with a new opportunity to develop and sell innovative products in this area.

Therefore, the main aim of the article consists in analysing of prerequisites, problems, and perspectives of the industry of wellness and spa tourism development in Ukraine. Elaboration of recommendations concerning stimulating the domestic market of wellness tourism development and distribution policy for it is envisaged. The urgency of the research is the need to improve the management of services distribution in Wellness and SPA tourism and to create an efficient marketing system for the operation and development of enterprises in the market is due to the growing competition in the tourism industry against the background of demand reduction for services.

**Formulation of the problem.** The main problem of this study consist in investigations of theoretical substantiation of the nature, place and importance of domestic health and spa tourism in the system of international tourism market, the application of methodological tools and recommendations for the improvement of domestic health tourism based on the use of foreign experience in the distribution management of regional tourism in Ukraine.

Reforms process on the way to euro integration of Ukraine stipulated urgency of the development of those branches of economy that are able in short term perspective give impetus to the social-economic growth of the regions and improving the investment image of the country in general. Within recent time wellness and spa tourism start to become popular.

**Analysis of recent researches and publications.** In one way or another, in the investigations of wellness and SPA such Ukrainian scientists as O. Dmytruk, M. Malska, U. Schur and others are being engaged. Scientific researches on wellness and spa tourism are mostly developed in the USA. Thus, the Global Wellness Institute yearly conducts a thorough study of the world touristic market of recreation services. The problems of the theory and practice of managing the distribution of wellness and SPA tourism services are reflected in the works of foreign and domestic scientists such as J. Bolt, D. Bukhalis, D. Jobber, J. Lancaster, and G. Stewart. In the area of tour-ism: L. Balabanova, G. Calvin, F. Kotler, J. Majkenzi, C. Melnychenko, G. Mykhaylychenko, G. Osmolovsky, T. Primak and others.

**Presenting main material.** Today, wellness and spa tourism maintain one of the leading places in the tourism industry. Wellness and spa tourism are based on the usage of naural resources: mineral waters, therapeutic muds, and climatic conditions, which in combination with each other have a positive impact on the treatment of various diseases.

Europe is one of the centers of wellness and spa tourism in the world, where the intensive development of resorts began in the XVIII century. Countries such as Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic are firmly entrenched not only in the European but also in the global health tourism market. Natural conditions, resources, proper support from the state, development of resort infrastructure, use of modern treatment methods, attracting foreign investments, active promotion of the

national tourist product do their job – the world-famous resorts of the countries of the region attract hundreds of thousands of tourists every year [3].

Wellness tourism is one of the priority directions of the development of both foreign and domestic tourism in Ukraine. This is facilitated by the potential, available healing resources and natural conditions in Ukraine, which are very similar to the European countries – leaders of wellness and spa tourism.

Any type of tourism is part of an entire tourist complex that is developing based on the tourist attractiveness and competitiveness of the country, as well as its rating on the world tourist market. According to the rating of tourist competitiveness and attractiveness, compiled by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2013, the Czech Republic (31), Hungary (39), Poland (42) and Slovakia (54) received the highest points and places among the studied countries (Tab. 1). In 2013 Ukraine ranked 76th overall out of 140 countries represented in the report, far behind in terms of doing business, pursuing state tourism policies and cultural resources [5]. However, in terms of infrastructure, our country was on par with Slovakia and Poland.

In 2019, the Czech Republic was ranked 38, Poland – 42, Hungary – 48, and Slovakia – 60, among the countries surveyed. According to this rating, Ukraine took 78th place.

*Table 1*

### **Country Competitiveness Rating, 2013/2019**

Country	Overall Rank	Enabling Environment	Travel & Tourism Policy and Enabling Conditions	Infrastructure	Natural and Cultural Resources
<b>Poland</b>	42/42	58/45	49/55	60/50	42/34
<b>Czech Republic</b>	31/38	37/26	28/36	35/36	47/61
<b>Hungary</b>	39/48	49/42	26/17	47/45	71/60
<b>Slovakia</b>	54/60	60/47	43/51	64/68	53/59
<b>Ukraine</b>	76/78	71/65	60/70	68/73	91/89

*Source: Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report [Electronic resource]. – Access mode : [http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_TTCR\\_2019.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TTCR_2019.pdf)*

So, the main obstacle to conducting any type of tourist activity, including wellness and spa tourism, is the security of tourists in the country, corruption, political instability, problems with doing business and investment activities.

There are 58 resorts in Ukraine (45 of which are national and international), while in Poland – 43, in the Czech Republic – 33, in Hungary – 22 and in Slovakia – 18. The most famous resorts are:

- Czech: Karlovy Vary, FrantiškovíLazne, MarianskeLazne, Jáchymov, Lugachovice;

- Hungarian – Heviz, Balatonfured, Hajdúszoboszló, Paradfurdo;

- Slovak – Piestany, Bardejov, Raietske Teplice, Smrdaki;

- Polish – Krynica, Dushniki-Zdrój, Wieliczka.

The most famous resorts of Ukraine are Truskavets, Morshyn, Nymyriiv (Lviv region); Soimy, Svalyava, Kvasy, Sinyak (Transcarpathian region); resorts Khmilnyk (Vinnytsia region), Myrhorod (Poltava region), Berminvoda (Kharkiv region), Berdyansk, Kirillovka (Zaporizhzhia region), Hopry, Genichesk (Kherson region), Odessa, etc.

The largest concentration of health facilities in the region is concentrated in the Western Carpathians and their spurs. Polish balneology is represented by 9 types of mineral waters, Czech – 8, Hungarian – 7 and Slovak – 6 species. In Ukraine, there are mineral waters in almost every region (except Chernivtsi). In total, 8 out of 9 types of medicinal waters are represented in Ukraine.

It can be said that the natural conditions and resources possessed by Ukraine are not inferior to those of the Central European countries being explored and should be used rationally for the development of resorts and tourist infrastructure. In general, our country lacks a single state body that would fully control the market for wellness and spa services, not some of its individual parts.

In terms of quantitative indicators of health tourism, Ukraine is also not inferior to the countries of Central Europe (Tab. 2).

By the number of health-improving enterprises, Ukraine is ahead of the countries of the region. As for 2016, there were 404 institutions in our country. In 2016, 651943 people were treated in Ukrainian institutions, which is 2.1 times more than in Slovakia, but less by 1.7% than in Hungary; 12.2% than in Poland; 12.3% than in the Czech Republic.

*Table 2*

**The main quantitative indicators of wellness and spa activity  
in the countries 2016**

Indicator	Poland	Czech Republic	Hungary	Slovakia	Ukraine
Number of resorts	43	33	22	18	58
Number of enterprises	250	88	35	101	404
Number of beds	43925	22504	12420	13142	95360
Number of tourists taking a rest for the purpose, including	731453	732276	663000	304975	651943

*Source: Колективнімісцярозміщення в 2016 році. Статистичний бюлетень. – Державна служба статистики України, 2017. – 200 с.*

So, in terms of quantitative indicators, Ukraine is not inferior to the countries under study, however, we can take on their experience in organizing health tourism through the creation of a single body of control, monitoring and support of resorts and businesses.

Ukraine has a well-developed tourism infrastructure, which began to be created in the nineteenth century. It is an essential factor in the development of the tourism business, as well-developed infrastructure is one of the main prerequisites for its development. The emergence and development of wellness and spa tourism in our country are conditioned by a unique set of natural, recreational resources and a whole network of various health and wellness facilities that will be able to satisfy a fairly wide range of tourists' needs for treatment and rehabilitation. On the territory of the country there are all kinds of resources (balneological, mud, climatic), which are necessary for the functioning of institutions for the provision of sanatorium and health services.

Factors that determine the development of wellness and spa tourism: the creation of a global information space (Internet) and fundamentally new means of communication, the spread of high-speed modes of transport, the emergence of the international market for tourist services, the spread of English as a language of international communication, improving living standards in developed countries and developing countries.

One of the most pressing problems in the sanatorium and resort industry, which has exacerbated since the beginning of the restructuring of Ukraine's economic system, is a significant reduction in state funding and a decrease in the efficiency of the management of specialized health-care facilities, which negatively affected their competitiveness. At the same time, there is a problem related to the insufficient capacity of internal and external tourist flows.

Tours to spa resorts are gaining in popularity. Customers who visit wellness resorts regularly choose a new vacation spot every year. Wellness and spa tourism has such great potential, which stands out in the independent segment of the tourist market with a wide range of investment opportunities: from large-scale hotel projects adjacent to clinics and located within the city, to already existing specialized complexes with some modifications in the structure of services. The revival of medical prevention at the stage of spa treatment is one of the most important directions of development and improvement of the health care system.

The solution to this problem is facilitated by the development of the concept of health protection of a healthy person, which envisages the introduction of modern technologies of health improvement, complement of the existing system of rehabilitation treatment with spa programs with the inclusion of medical spa services aimed at prevention, formation of a culture of health in the population.

Wellness and spa tourism is one of the most promising types of tourism in Ukraine. It develops with significant resources: flat and mountainous terrain, karst

caves, mountain lakes and rivers, the sea coast of the Azov and Black seas combined with mild climates and comfortable weather conditions, hot, warm and cold mineral springs, therapeutic mud deposits, forests, diversity of flora and fauna of which the rich country. Since tourism is primarily based on natural resources, the availability of such natural diversity in the country has become a key factor.

According to the statistical materials, the geography of sanatorium and resort establishments of Ukraine largely corresponds to the territorial-component structure of recreational resources and recreational needs. Attention should be paid to two groups of areas:

1) leaders – the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (16,7% of health resorts of Ukraine), Donetsk (14,6%), Odessa (11,6%), Dnipropetrovsk (7,1%), Mykolaiv (5,0%), Zaporizhzhia (5,3%) regions;

2) outsiders – Kirovograd, Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Khmelnytsky, Ternopil, Chernivtsi regions (only less than 1,0%).

The dynamics of the development of sanatorium and health resorts was also analyzed (Tab. 3). According to these data, there is a generally negative trend: the reduction of sanatoriums and boarding houses with treatment from 320 in 2014 to 288 in 2018. There is also a significant reduction in the number of sanatoriums-preventoriums from 118 in 2014 to 56 in 2018, a significant reduction in children's health and recreation facilities from 13997 in 2014 to 9428 in 2018.

*Table 3*

### **Dynamics of the development of sanatorium and wellness resorts**

Year	Sanatoriums and boarding houses with treatment		Sanatoriums-Preventoriums		Holiday homes and pensions		Bases and other recreation facilities		Children's health camps	
	total	Number of beds, ths	total	Number of beds, ths	total	Number of beds, ths	total	Number of beds, ths	total	Number of beds, ths
<b>2000</b>	549	151	377	31	266	63	2010	238	7615	227
<b>2001</b>	555	151	357	29	273	61	2015	236	8578	221
<b>2002</b>	544	151	334	28	290	63	1982	236	10890	231
<b>2003</b>	536	147	325	27	292	62	2005	236	14961	228
<b>2004</b>	531	147	311	25	302	62	2033	231	19443	256
<b>2005</b>	524	145	291	23	321	65	2016	233	18366	236
<b>2006</b>	520	148	277	23	301	63	1976	232	18238	231
<b>2007</b>	523	143	269	21	302	64	1934	224	18363	226
<b>2008</b>	518	142	262	21	302	64	1916	221	18672	218

Year	Sanatoriums and boarding houses with treatment		Sanatoriums-Preventoriums		Holiday homes and pensions		Bases and other recreation facilities		Children's health camps	
	total	Number of beds, ths	total	Number of beds, ths	total	Number of beds, ths	total	Number of beds, ths	total	Number of beds, ths
2009	513	141	252	21	296	62	1907	216	17379	198
2010	510	141	234	19	290	60	1920	217	17342	196
2011	508	141	224	19	280	59	1947	216	17703	194
2012	484	133	185	18	286	60	1925	208	17744	188
2013	477	132	165	15	271	57	1916	202	18549	191
2014 <sup>1</sup>	320	79	118	17	90	17	1400	157	13977	126
2015 <sup>1</sup>	309	78	79	12	76	15	1399	165	9743	113
2016 <sup>1</sup>	291	70	63	10	73	14	1295	146	9669	112
2017 <sup>1</sup>	290	67	59	9	72	13	1125	138	9504	110
2018 <sup>1</sup>	288	64	56	8	70	12	1065	127	9428	108

1 Excluding the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the city of Sevastopol and the temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

*Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode : <http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua>*

This state of sanatoriums is explained by the complex socio-economic situation in our country and the specifics of the implemented medical reform. In the past, health resorts and wellness establishments worked more dynamically and were focused on the development of mass health improvement of the population.

However, despite the negative dynamics, the conditions for the development of wellness and spa tourism are clearly observed. Moreover, it is the involvement of foreign nationals for the rehabilitation in Ukraine that will facilitate the restoration of the medical sector and the development of certain recreational regions in our country, create new jobs and suspend migration processes when the most qualified health care workers go abroad.

**Conclusion.** Ukraine has enough resorts of different specialization, but to attract the attention of foreign and domestic tourists, Ukrainian resorts need to solve a number of problems related to financing, management and modernization.

Modern strategies for the development of state and local resorts should take into account the introduction of an effective system of financing the spa industry and the creation of a system to encourage investment in the modernization and construction of facilities of the spa industry, the creation of affordable health product, adherence to

state standard methods in the field of resort treatment, coordination of activity of sanatorium and health resorts regardless of the form of ownership and subordination.

According to experts, the development of innovative health centers in Ukraine in the form of the so-called recreation parks, recropolises, resorts, and recreation zones in the traditional resort regions (Carpathians, Polesie, Azov and Black Sea coasts) will allow to create a nationwide health and wellness network. Activities to improve the operation of resorts and sanatoriums in Ukraine should turn the resort business into a highly profitable and competitive sphere of economy and medicine, since Ukraine has large natural, geographical and socio-cultural recreational resources.

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