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Organization of Bleisure Tourists Service as a Factor of Increasing the Competitiveness of Hotel Enterprises in Rostov Region

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Abstract

Introduction. The article is devoted to the topical direction of increasing the competitiveness of hotel enterprises in Rostov region.

Materials and methods. The complexity of the methods applied in this study is explained by the subject of the work, extrapolating the methodology of sociology, pedagogy, philosophy and a number of economic disciplines related to the study of the specifics of the organization of bleisure tourist services in accommodation facilities and the study of the importance of this sector in the activities of business hotels in the Rostov region and the city of Rostov-on-Don. The object of the study is the specifics of the organization of bleisure tourist services as a factor in increasing the competitiveness of hotel enterprises.

Results. Changes in society, associated with active lifestyle and travel policy of large corporations, have given rise to a new type of tourism in Russia – bleisure. The need to popularize and develop bleisure tourism as a growing segment for hotel companies is emphasized. A number of reasons contribute to the development of this trend. Firstly, bleisure is an excellent tool for motivating employees. According to statistics, up to 64 % of employees say that after even a short vacation they feel better and want to return to work. About 61 % of employees who have combined a business trip with a personal travel experience an increase in productivity when they return to the office.

Discussion and Conclusion. The bleisure phenomenon is a potentially lucrative market that is growing and is likely to become more attractive to those working in the hospitality industry in the coming months and years. Increasing the number of business accommodation facilities and expanding the range of additional services will provide jobs, raise living standards due to the growth of the population's income and increased revenues of local budgets, promote the development of small businesses, which will affect the solution of important socio-economic problems of the Don region.

Keywords: bleisure tourist, bleisure tourism, hotel, hotel service, additional hotel service, service, business hotel, business tourism, Rostov region

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Научная статья

Организация обслуживания блейже-туристов как фактор повышения конкурентоспособности гостиничных предприятий Ростовской области

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Аннотация

Введение. Статья посвящена актуальному направлению повышения конкурентоспособности гостиничных предприятий Ростовской области.

Материалы и методы. Комплексность примененных в данном исследовании методов объясняется тематикой работы, экстраполирующей методологию социологии, педагогики, философии и ряда экономических дисциплин, связанных с изучением специфики организации обслуживания bleisure туристов в средствах размещения и исследование значения этого сектора в деятельности бизнес-отелей Ростовской области и г. Ростова-на-Дону. Объектом исследования является специфика организации обслуживания bleisure туристов как фактора повышения конкурентоспособности гостиничных предприятий.

Результаты исследования. Изменения в обществе, связанные с активным образом жизни общества и тревел-политикой крупных корпораций, породили в России новый вид туризма – bleisure. Подчеркивается необходимость популяризации и развития bleisure туризма как растущего сегмента для гостиничных предприятий. Развитию данного направления способствует целый ряд причин. Во-первых, bleisure – это отличный инструмент мотивации сотрудников. По статистике, до 64 % сотрудников заявляют о том, что после даже небольшого отпуска чувствуют себя лучше и хотят вернуться к работе. Около 61 % работников, совмещавших командировку с личным путешествием, ощутили рост продуктивности по возвращению в офис.

Обсуждение и заключение. Явление bleisure является потенциально прибыльным рынком, который растет и, вероятно, станет более привлекательным для тех, кто работает в гостиничной индустрии в ближайшие месяцы и годы. Увеличение числа средств размещения делового характера и расширение ассортимента дополнительных услуг обеспечит рабочие места, повысит уровень жизни благодаря росту дохода населения и увеличения доходов местных бюджетов, будет способствовать развитию малого предпринимательства, что повлияет на решение важных социо-экономических проблем Донского региона.

Ключевые слова: bleisure турист, bleisure туризм, гостиница, гостиничная услуга, дополнительная гостиничная услуга, обслуживание, бизнес-отель, деловой туризм, Ростовская область

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Introduction. Today, tourism has become a leading economic sector, accounting for 10 % of global GDP and 6 % of total world exports. With more than a billion people traveling around the world every year, tourism is becoming a powerful and transformative force that is fundamentally changing the lives of millions of people for the better. Against the backdrop of demand for domestic tourism, bleisure travel is growing in popularity.

Bleisure tourists are becoming a rapidly growing and profitable segment for hotel companies, so hotel managers are trying to focus on attracting and servicing this category of tourists.

Hotels that can attract bleisure tourists potentially benefit by generating revenue not only from the sale of business services, but also from the sale of additional food, health, entertainment, sightseeing, household services, as well as from the sale of the main service of accommodation when the duration of the tour increases. For this reason, many hoteliers are looking to appeal to this growing business and leisure-based demographic.

It's important to realize that business travel spending is increasing year-over-year. Since 2015, business travel spending has increased by 6-7% annually. Opportunities to attract loyal customers have made business travelers the main focus of the tourism industry. The organization of bleisure tourist service in accommodation facilities can act as a factor of sustainable development of business hotels, due to the implementation of additional services no longer of a business nature, the duration of the guests' stay and increasing the load of the hotel room stock on weekends.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the specifics of the organization of bleisure tourist services in accommodation facilities and to study the importance of this sector in the activities of business hotels in the Rostov region and the city of Rostov-on-Don.

Materials and methods. The intensive development of bleisure tourism promotes the need to develop technologies for serving bleisure tourists in hotels. Organization of their service in hotel enterprises can become a sustainable factor in increasing the competitiveness of business hotels in the Rostov region.

For more detailed elaboration of the issue, it is necessary to refer to the works of such authors as: Orit Unger, Natan Uriely [1], Bongkosh Rittichainuwat, Eric Laws, Rengson Maunchontham, Supaporn Rattanaphinanchai, Sanvicha Muttamara, Kris Mouton, Yueling Lin, Chanatip Suksai [2], Lloyd C. Harris, Andrew Pressey [3].

Due to the fact that the expansion of the segment of bleisure tourist services directly affects the increase of competitiveness of business hotels, it is very relevant to study the trends and specifics of hotel business development both in the world and in Russia. These issues are devoted to the works of the following authors: A.O. Nabil, Channouf

AsmaAl-Zaidi, 2016 [4], Mehmet Ali Köseoglu, Mehmet Altin Eric Chan, Omer Faruk Aladag, 2020 [5], L.N. Kazmina, V.S. Makarenko, V.V. Provotorina, T.N. Grigorenko, G.E. Ekinil, E.M. Shevchenko, A.S. Petrenko [6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13].

The methodology of the study is of a comprehensive nature due to the multifaceted nature of the topic under consideration. We used a variety of general scientific methods in combination with conceptual-logical and comparative analysis of the data obtained in the process of research.

Results. The popularity of Bleisure tourism increased about five years after its emergence – in 2016. Changes in society associated with active lifestyles and the travel policies of large corporations have given rise to a new type of tourism in Russia – bleisure. The bleisure phenomenon began to gain momentum at the same time as millennials began to play an increasingly important role in the global economy, accounting for 38 % of all such travelers. Generation X and baby boomers each account for 31 % of transactions, highlighting the need for travel companies to attract all of these age groups.

Bleisure tourism is a growing segment of hotels around the world that combines business and leisure travel. Bleisure travelers combine business commitments with non-work activities in one trip. They can be divided into two main categories: corporate, group or conference guests who use several vacation days for their business travel, and business travelers who take along fellow travelers such as friends or family members.

For business travelers, bleisure travel is very attractive for several key reasons. At a basic level, combining work and fun or personal activities helps create a much better work-life balance. This leads to greater happiness, lower stress levels.

In many cases, bleisure travel represents an ideal opportunity to save on travel costs associated with traveling abroad. Many business travelers return to the same place repeatedly, or at least more than once. With this in mind, bleisure trips give travelers the opportunity to get to know the place and its culture better. This, in turn, can help to improve the quality of work performed while allowing for more meaningful business relationships to be formed.

Finally, bleisure offers the opportunity for business travelers to travel with a companion such as a friend, partner or colleague. This can help prevent feelings of isolation and contribute to the overall enjoyment of the trip.

Bleisure tourism in Russian companies is most popular in the following industries:

- 24 % of bleisure travelers work in technology /IT/software;
- 13 % of bleisure travelers work in manufacturing;
- 12 % of bleisure travelers work in finance;
- 8 % of bleisure travelers work in healthcare;
- 6 % of bleisure travelers work in education.

Typical initial purposes of bleisure travel include:

- traveling to a conference;
- traveling to an external meeting;
- sales;
- internal meetings;
- traveling for “other” reasons.

Bleisure travelers make business trips with overnight stays from once a week to once a year.

The hospitality industry in the current market conditions is taking the lead in terms of attractiveness for business development in the Rostov region. This sphere turned out to be one of the few industries able to quickly adjust to the changing conditions. Due to the opportunities of profit maximization and efficient functioning of hotel enterprises, the hospitality segment can be considered with a high level of profitability and adaptability.

In the city of Rostov-on-Don today operates more than 150 accommodation facilities with a room stock of 4750 rooms and is designed in total to receive about 10000 guests. The city of Rostov-on-Don ranks 4th in terms of hotel room supply and average cost of accommodation among million-strong cities (Fig. 1).

Hotel companies operating in the category “no stars” account for 48 % of the total volume of the hotel market structure. During the peak season the occupancy rate of accommodation facilities of this category varies from 85 % to 90 %, during the rest of the time 50–55 %. The seasonal occupancy of two- and three-star hotels reaches 75–80 % (40–45 % in the off-season). Four-star hotels in the season are filled by 65–70 %, and in the passive period – 35 %. The occupancy rate of five-star hotels is about 65% in season and 30–35 % in the off-season.

In 2021, there were 549 400 people accommodated in collective accommodation facilities of Rostov-on-Don (23 700 of them are foreign citizens). The lion's share of tourist traffic that goes to Rostov region falls on representatives of business tourism. In general, the average duration of stay of tourists is from 1 to 4 nights.

Bleisure travelers need comfort, efficiency and flexibility. Hotel chains around the world are recognizing this necessity and are quickly adapting to it. Accommodation facilities are ready to offer business travelers and new room formats that

can be either a bedroom or an office, instead of being both at the same time. The idea is to help guests separate their work and personal time. Some business hotels are trying out the launch of the newest suite division, which will be able to meet the growing demand for work and leisure travel:

- a suitable workplace. For bleisure tourists, the top priority is their work and they need to have the necessary amenities to work efficiently and comfortably (Wi-Fi, Internet access, long distance telephone service, a desk with an ergonomic chair in the room, plenty of easily accessible outlets, etc.);

- childcare and facilities for children. Many bleisure travelers take their families with them, including partners and children. These travelers are looking for rooms with enough space for the whole family, such as a separate bedroom with a door that closes for better sleep and work. Family members also want amenities and activities to enjoy while the business traveler works, such as a private pool, playground, beach or babysitting services;

- concierge services. Bleisure travelers spend less time planning their leisure trips than they do planning a traditional vacation. They will be thrilled to find a hotel that provides good local recommendations or helps them purchase tickets to attractions, shows or transportation.

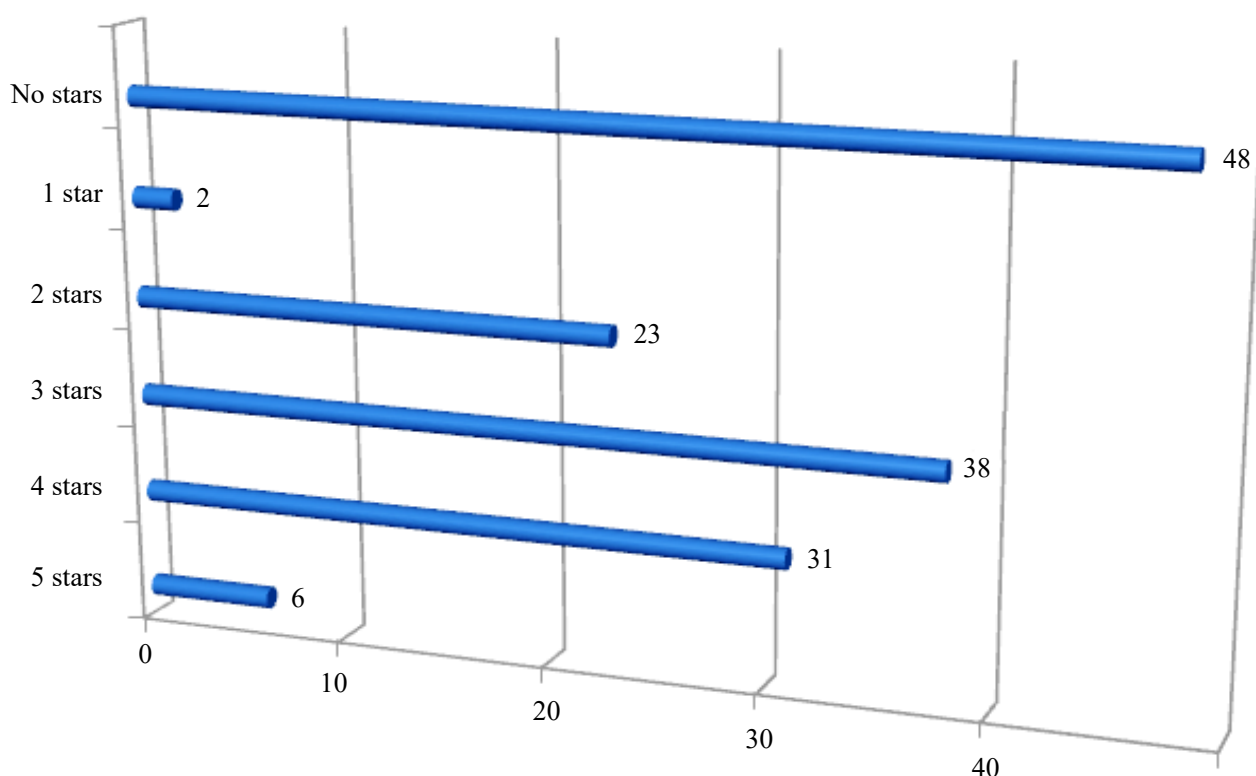


Fig.1. Rostov-on-Don accommodation facilities

Bleisure tourism may appear to be a sustainable trend for the development of the hospitality industry, including the development of business hotels in Rostov-on-Don. All signs point to the fact that the combination of bleisure travel with recreation will become a significant and distinct segment of tourism for many years to come. With business travel returning to the norm, and “digital nomads” and remote working still having to pay for work, now is a good time to make sure that hoteliers are ready to increase the length of stay for business travelers and to generate additional revenue from business travelers who want to disconnect from work and enjoy all the attractions of the Rostov region.

Discussion and Conclusion. The main conclusions of the study are as follows.

Favorable development of bleisure tourism and the organization of services for tourists traveling for both business and leisure purposes is impossible without a successful combination of external and internal conditions, available resources that have a direct impact on the daily work of the hotel, and competent management of this area of work.

Strategies for attracting Bleisure travelers by hospitality enterprises.

1. Hotel technology.
2. Fast and reliable Internet in workplaces.
3. Expansion of marketing channels for hotel services.
4. Developed personalization.
5. Showcasing hospitality and leisure amenities.

6. Advertising the tourist attraction of the area.

7. Development and promotion of specific Bleasure offerings.

In order to attract tourists, it is necessary to:

- implement technology in hotels to make travel easier, as the NationalCarRental2019 State of Business Travel Survey found that 93 % of frequent business travelers prefer brands that use such technology, from IoT devices in hotel rooms, such as smart speakers, to the use of smartphone apps that enable contactless check-in, check-out and payments at restaurants;

- provide guests with convenient workstations with reliable internet connectivity;

- partner with the right distribution channels, as working with corporate travel agents can be one way to increase the number of travelers, as these travel agents specialize in arranging business travel and planning business events for their clients;

- improve personalization, which has great appeal to bleisure travelers, as it often results in processes or services that are more efficient and more accurate. From intelligent recommendations made based on customer data to the ability to personalize hotel room environments such as smart heating controls, greater personalization can save time and increase comfort, allowing business travelers to get work done quickly and free up free time;

- present their business and entertainment services. The typical tourist will certainly be interested in corporate offerings such as private meeting rooms, laptop or phone charging ports and any 24-hour services that the hotel has to offer. However, in addition to this, they may also be attracted by leisure facilities such as spas, saunas, gyms or fitness centers, yoga areas, bars and bike rentals;

- advertise the attractions and surrounding infrastructure of nearby areas (museums, exhibition centers, theaters, riverfront, restaurants);

- promoting package offers for bleisure tourists including a range of business packages and providing business travelers with discounts on extra nights to encourage them to extend their trip, discounts on additional services and tickets to local museums or events;

- developing a section for bleisure tourists on the hotel website, promoting bleisure offers in pre-stay emails and including customer testimonials from bleisure travelers on social media platforms.

Thus, for business travelers, bleisure trips offer a number of benefits, including boosting moral spirit and increasing the overall enjoyment of business travel. They also offer the opportunity to save on business travel costs, as the business travel element is paid for by the business. This can provide an opportunity to take time off for people who are otherwise unable to take it.

Businesses can also benefit from bleisure travel because the happier employees are, the more productive they become, as well as the opportunity to enjoy leisure time can mean that employees who would otherwise be reluctant to travel for the company will want to do so. The employee pays for the extended trip and the leisure activities they participate in, so bleisure doesn't usually cost more. It also allows business travelers to get a better understanding of the places they are traveling to.

Meanwhile, for the travel industry, the growth of bleisure opens up the opportunity for business travelers to extend their stay in hotels and therefore spend more money in time for their trip.

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors do not have any conflict of interest.

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