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MARITIME TRANSPORT AND INTERNATIONAL TOURISM: TRENDS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BLUE ECONOMY

МОРСЬКИЙ ТРАНСПОРТ І МІЖНАРОДНИЙ ТУРИЗМ: ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ДЛЯ РОЗВИТКУ BLUE ECONOMY

This article examines the connection between maritime transport and international tourism, focusing on the cruise industry and its role in the Blue Economy. Sustainability challenges and opportunities in the cruise and maritime transport industries are analyzed. As the industry expands, there is a stronger emphasis on environmentally responsible practices. The Blue Economy framework, which fosters economic growth while preserving marine ecosystems, is presented as key to the future of maritime tourism. The adoption of cleaner technologies is crucial for balancing growth and environmental conservation. The research also highlights the role of maritime transport in supporting global tourism and the need for sustainable innovation.

Keywords: tourism, tourism industry, international tourism, sustainable development, maritime transport, shipping, seaborne trade, Blue economy, COVID-19 pandemic.

Досліджено питання взаємодії морського транспорту та міжнародного туризму, зокрема в контексті круїзної індустрії, та їхній внесок у розвиток Blue есопоту. Аналіз тенденцій доходів та прогнозів на майбутнє показує зростаючу важливість морського транспорту в міжнародному туризмі. Відновлення круїзної

індустрії після пандемії COVID-19 підкреслює важливість морського транспорту для сталого розвитку глобального туристичного сектору. Виявлено домінуючу роль США на ринку круїзів, а також зростаючу позицію китайських ринків. Прогнози на найближчі роки вказують на стійке зростання доходів круїзної індустрії, зокрема на очікуване збільшення доходів у період з 2025 по 2029 роки. Визначено виклики та можливості, пов'язані з сталим розвитком у круїзній та морській транспортній індустрії. З розвитком круїзної індустрії зростає акцент на впровадження екологічно відповідальних практик, що відповідають цілям сталого розвитку. Blue есопоту, яка сприяє економічному зростанню, одночасно зберігаючи морські екосистеми, обговорюється як важливий концептуальний підхід для майбутнього морського туризму. Впровадження інноваційних технологій та екологічно безпечних практик у круїзній індустрії є ключовим для забезпечення сталого розвитку без завдання шкоди природному середовищу. Розглянута роль морського транспорту у сприянні розвитку глобального туризму та необхідність туристичної індустрії звернути увагу на екологічні проблеми. Зазначено, що галузь повинна постійно впроваджувати інновації та адаптуватися, щоб відповідати стандартам сталого розвитку, забезпечуючи економічне зростання не завдаючи шкоди довкіллю. Результати дослідження підкреслюють важливість узгодження економічного зростання з охороною навколишнього середовища, забезпечуючи, щоб морський транспорт залишався ключовим фактором розвитку Blue есопоту та міжнародного туризму в найближчі десятиліття.

Ключові слова: туризм, індустрія туризму, міжнародний туризм, сталий розвиток, морський транспорт, судноплавство, морська торгівля, блакитна економіка, пандемія COVID-19.

Introduction. The connection between maritime transport and international tourism is gaining prominence as global tourism continues to expand. Cruise tourism and travel to coastal destinations underscore the pivotal role maritime transport plays in shaping the contemporary tourism sector. This research explores prevailing trends and future prospects for maritime transport within the realm of international tourism, highlighting its role in advancing the concept of the Blue Economy.

The Blue Economy pertains to the sustainable use of ocean resources to foster economic development, generate employment opportunities, and enhance livelihoods, all while preserving marine ecosystems. It presents vast potential for both the tourism sector and maritime transport. Historically, maritime transport has been integral to tourism, particularly for island nations and coastal regions dependent on sea-based travel. In recent years, the growing demand for environmentally responsible tourism has prompted the adoption of sustainable practices within the sector, driving innovation in maritime tourism.

The influence of maritime transport extends beyond merely transporting tourists. It also plays a significant role in fostering economic and social development by creating employment, enhancing coastal infrastructure, and supporting local economies. However, the emergence of new travel preferences, such as eco-tourism and the pursuit of unique experiences, calls for the industry to adapt to sustainability objectives and evolving consumer demands.

This article offers an in-depth exploration of the dynamic relationship between maritime transport and international tourism, emphasizing the alignment of these sectors with the principles of the Blue Economy. By examining current practices and future opportunities, the study seeks to highlight how maritime transport can contribute to sustainable tourism development, ultimately benefiting both the industry and communities that rely on coastal resources.

Literature review. The connection between maritime transport and international tourism has garnered increasing attention as both sectors continue to grow and adapt. Maritime transport serves as a key

enabler for connecting travelers to coastal and island destinations, which are central to global tourism flows. In the context of heightened emphasis on sustainability, the Blue Economy has emerged as a critical framework for promoting environmentally responsible practices in maritime transport and tourism.

The Blue Economy, as discussed in the literature, is a cornerstone for fostering sustainable development within the realm of international tourism.

Sarwat, S. (2022) examines the Blue Economy's potential for sustainable growth using Bangladesh as a case study, highlighting opportunities derived from marine resources and the challenges of balancing economic development with environmental conservation [1]. Wenhai, L. et al. (2019) provide global examples of successful Blue Economy initiatives, presenting best practices and policy frameworks for sustainability in marine industries [2]. Lee, K.-H. et al. (2021) explore the synergy between the Blue Economy and environmental sustainability, emphasizing the importance of integrated approaches to align ecological and economic objectives [3]. Kabil, M. et al. (2022) analyze the application of Blue Economy principles in the Southern Red Sea region, demonstrating how spatial and economic planning can enhance tourism development [4]. Bari, A. (2017) discusses the Blue Economy's role in addressing global issues such as climate change and resource depletion, while also mitigating socio-economic disparities [5]. Spalding, M. (2016) introduces the concept of the "New Blue Economy" advocating for innovative investments and strategies in marine industries to support sustainable growth [6].

Collectively, these studies highlight the transformative potential of the Blue Economy to drive sustainable development. They provide valuable insights into its practical implementation in tourism and related sectors, underscoring the importance of interdisciplinary approaches and collaboration to optimize the economic, social, and environmental advantages of marine resources.

The aim of this article is to explore the development of the cruise industry and its interconnections with maritime transport and the international tourism

sector. The study seeks to analyze the cruise industry's growth trends, its contribution to global tourism flows, and its role in shaping the maritime transport sector. Additionally, the article examines how the cruise industry aligns with sustainability goals and the principles of the Blue Economy, offering insights into its potential to drive innovation and sustainable development within the broader tourism industry.

Presentation of main materials. The global cruise industry, as a dynamic component of international tourism, has undergone significant changes in recent years, influenced by market shifts, the impact of COVID-19, and emerging trends in the tourism industry. This section delves into critical aspects of the cruise sector, analyzing its global revenue trajectory from 2020 to 2029, which reflects a recovery and growth pattern after the pandemic-induced decline. It also examines the top global ocean cruise destinations ranking from 2019 to 2023, shedding light on evolving passenger preferences and demand trends. Furthermore, the analysis of top-performing countries by cruise industry revenue from 2025 to 2029 highlights regional contributions and the sector's economic impact.

A particular focus is placed on the role of maritime transport in developing the cruise industry. As a cornerstone of the Blue Economy, maritime transport facilitates the movement of passengers to leading destinations and contributes to the sector's sustainable growth. This interconnected relationship underscores the cruise industry's potential to align with sustainable development goals while addressing the challenges posed by global economic shifts and environmental concerns.

This analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the cruise industry's recovery, resilience, and long-term prospects, emphasizing its critical position within the broader tourism industry and its reliance on maritime transport.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp decline in passenger numbers across all destinations in 2020 and 2021, with many regions experiencing negligible or no activity. However, a strong recovery began in 2022, with most destinations showing significant growth by 2023 and several surpassing pre-pandemic levels. The Caribbean/Bahamas/Bermuda region consistently dominates as the most popular cruise destination. After a sharp drop in passengers during the pandemic, the region rebounded strongly, reaching 12.86 million passengers in 2023, surpassing 2019 levels. Its popularity is driven by its proximity to major cruise hubs, diverse itineraries, and strong post-pandemic demand. The Central and Western Mediterranean also showed steady recovery, increasing from 707,000 passengers in 2021 to 3.91 million in 2023, fueled by its cultural and scenic appeal. Northern Europe experienced consistent growth, with passenger numbers rising to 2.23 million in 2023, while Alaska rebounded strongly to 1.65 million passengers, confirming its appeal as a nature-focused destination.

Other regions showed varying recovery rates. Asia and China, though recovering, lagged behind pre-pandemic levels, with 2.56 million passengers in 2023, likely due to stricter travel restrictions and slower reopening in the region. Australia/New Zealand/Pacific also showed improvement, reaching 1.28 million passengers in 2023 after a sharp decline. Niche markets and specialized destinations, such as exploration cruises and transatlantic/world cruises, demonstrated steady growth, reflecting increasing interest in unique cruise experiences. Smaller destinations, including the Canary Islands, Canada/New England, and Hawaii, showed slower recovery rates but are gradually returning to pre-pandemic numbers. Regions like the Panama Canal/South America and Africa/Middle East also experienced modest growth but remain smaller markets compared to the Caribbean or the Mediterranean.

Table 1

Top global cruise destinations from 2019 to 2023, ranked by passenger numbers (in thousands)

Destination	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Caribbean/Bahamas/Bermuda	11983	2966	1745	9004	12857
Central & Western Mediterranean	3211	225	707	2629	3912
Asia & China	3977	643	658	946	2561
Northern Europe	1708	52	454	1561	2225
Alaska	1215	–	121	1162	1650
Eastern Mediterranean	1226	30	288	1133	1543
North American West Coast/Mexico/California/Pacific Coast	–	232	211	1137	1446
Australia/New Zealand/Pacific	1178	366	12	482	1277
Panama Canal/South America	807	484	95	421	1081
Africa/Middle East	515	267	38	264	539
Other	304	54	84	326	506
Canary Islands	497	181	133	341	500
Transatlantic & World Cruise	393	45	28	227	415
Exploration Destination	187	11	37	138	319
Canada/New England	302	–	–	233	304
Baltics	594	–	141	217	257
Hawaii	243	43	–	137	233

Source: completed by authors based on [7]

Overall, the recovery is driven by strong performances in leading destinations like the Caribbean and Mediterranean, which have exceeded pre-pandemic levels. However, slower rebounds in regions like Asia and niche markets highlight areas for potential growth. The increasing interest in exploration cruises and unique itineraries reflects evolving consumer preferences. This suggests that while the global cruise industry is on a recovery trajectory, opportunities remain for further expansion, diversification, and innovation in response to shifting demand.

The presented data showcases revenue trends in the global cruise market from 2020, with projections extending to 2029, highlighting notable fluctuations and a strong recovery path following the pandemic.

In 2020, the cruise industry faced a dramatic revenue drop to \$8.08 billion as the COVID-19 pandemic brought cruise operations to a near standstill worldwide. The downturn persisted into 2021, with revenue falling further to \$3.11 billion, reflecting the prolonged impact of travel restrictions and uncertainty during that time.

A remarkable recovery began in 2022, with revenue rebounding to \$21.43 billion as travel restrictions eased

and the industry resumed operations. This upward trend continued in 2023, with revenue climbing to \$39.19 billion. Projections indicate sustained growth, with revenue expected to reach \$42.30 billion in 2024 and rise further to \$53.49 billion by 2029.

These figures suggest not only a full recovery from the pandemic's impact but also significant expansion driven by growing tourism demand and the introduction of new cruise experiences and destinations. The consistent growth trend implies the industry will surpass pre-pandemic revenue levels in the coming years. The strong recovery of the cruise market underscores its resilience and increasing popularity as a key sector in global tourism. The projected growth may reflect a shift toward more diverse offerings, such as extended itineraries, luxury experiences, and greater emphasis on sustainability to meet evolving consumer preferences.

The data presents an analysis of cruise industry revenue across six leading countries from 2025 to 2029, shedding light on global market dynamics. The United States remains the dominant player, with revenue forecasted to grow from \$26.11 billion in 2025 to \$32.39 billion by 2029. This growth reflects

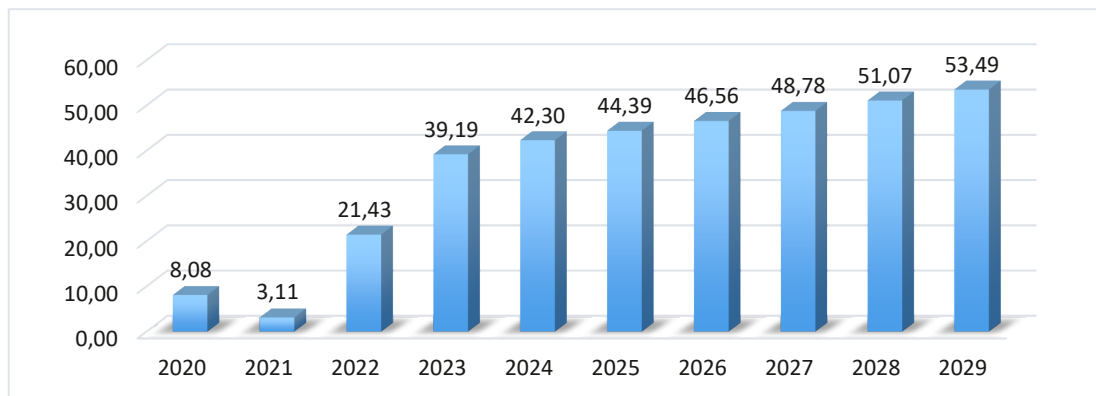


Fig. 1. Global revenue of the cruise industry from 2020 to 2029 (in billions of U.S. dollars)

Source: completed by authors based on [8–9]

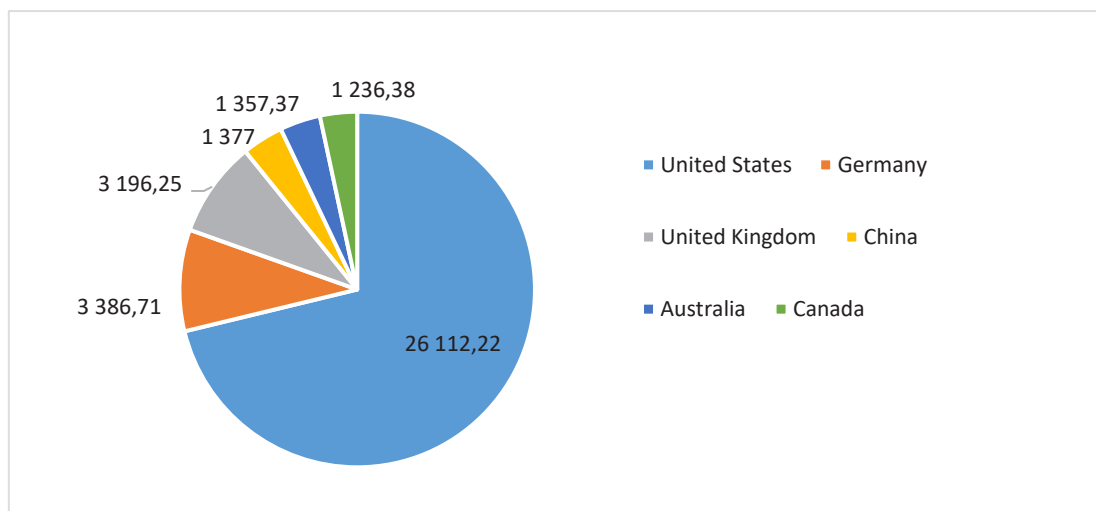


Fig. 2. Top countries by cruise industry revenue worldwide from 2025 to 2029 (in millions of U.S. dollars)

Source: completed by authors based on [10]

the robust demand for cruise travel among U.S. consumers, supported by a mature and expansive market that continues to lead globally.

Germany secures the second position, with revenue expected to increase moderately from \$3.39 billion in 2025 to \$3.66 billion by 2029. This steady growth underscores Germany's role as a cornerstone of the European cruise market, driven by sustained interest in luxury and budget-friendly options.

The United Kingdom also demonstrates a significant presence, with revenue projected to rise from \$3.20 billion in 2025 to \$3.49 billion by 2029. However, the relatively slower growth may result from market saturation or shifts in traveler preferences toward alternative forms of tourism.

China's cruise market, while smaller than those of the U.S. and Europe, shows strong potential, with revenue anticipated to grow from \$1.38 billion in 2025 to \$1.84 billion by 2029. This increase reflects rising interest in cruise tourism and the growing disposable income of the country's expanding middle class.

Australia, although a smaller market, is experiencing steady growth, with revenue forecasted to climb from \$1.36 billion in 2025 to \$1.67 billion by 2029. The region's cruise sector benefits from increasing popularity within the Asia-Pacific market, attracting both domestic and international travelers.

Similarly, Canada's cruise industry is expected to generate \$1.24 billion in 2025, rising to \$1.33 billion by 2029. This moderate growth highlights Canada's importance in the North American cruise market, particularly due to its proximity to the U.S. and the popularity of scenic routes, such as Alaskan cruises.

Overall, the data reveals the United States' continued dominance in the global cruise industry, with notable contributions from Germany and the UK in Europe and emerging potential in China. Australia and Canada, though smaller markets, also exhibit steady growth, reflecting the global appeal of cruise travel. These trends underscore the industry's expansion, driven by rising disposable incomes, economic growth, and growing consumer interest in leisure and cruise tourism.

Conclusions. The analysis of the global tourism and maritime transport sectors provides valuable insights into the current trends and challenges shaping international tourism, with a particular focus on the cruise industry. The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on both international tourism and maritime transport, leading to significant declines in revenues and operations, especially in 2020 and 2021. However, the sector has shown resilience and recovery, with revenues from cruise tourism in 2022 and 2023 rebounding significantly, underscoring the pent-up demand for travel and tourism experiences. The projections for future years indicate continued growth, suggesting that maritime transport, particularly within the cruise industry, will remain a crucial component of the broader tourism industry.

In the context of sustainable development and the Blue Economy, the role of maritime transport is becoming increasingly important. As the tourism industry expands, so does the need for environmentally responsible practices that align with sustainable

development goals. The cruise sector, in particular, faces the challenge of balancing growth with environmental preservation, as cruise ships contribute to carbon emissions and other environmental impacts. The growing emphasis on eco-friendly technologies and practices, such as using cleaner fuels and energy-efficient vessels, will be crucial in ensuring the sustainable development of maritime transport within the tourism industry.

The revenue growth in countries like the United States, Germany, and China reflects the global demand for cruise tourism, which has rebounded post-pandemic. However, this growth must be accompanied by efforts to mitigate the cruise industry's environmental impact, ensuring that future growth aligns with the principles of the Blue Economy. This involves not only fostering economic growth but also protecting marine ecosystems and promoting social equity within the tourism sector.

Countries with significant cruise revenues, including the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, and China, will continue to drive the future of the cruise industry. While the U.S. remains the leader in cruise tourism revenue, the rising market in China and the stability of European markets show promising prospects for international tourism in the coming years.

In conclusion, the future of maritime transport within the tourism industry looks promising, with strong revenue growth projected globally. However, to ensure long-term sustainability, the sector must address the challenges posed by environmental concerns and adapt to the principles of sustainable development and the Blue Economy. As a major part of international tourism, the cruise industry must adopt innovative solutions to reduce its ecological footprint and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable global tourism system. As the sector recovers from the impacts of COVID-19, there is a significant opportunity to reshape the tourism industry in a way that supports economic growth and environmental stewardship.

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