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## BLUE ECONOMY AS A FACTOR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE SERVICE SECTOR

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### БЛАКИТНА ЕКОНОМІКА ЯК ФАКТОР СТАЛОГО РОЗВИТКУ СФЕРИ ПОСЛУГ

The aim of this article is to substantiate the role of the blue economy as a key factor in the sustainable development of the service sector, with a focus on transforming those components most closely linked to the use of natural resource potential, particularly marine and coastal ecosystems. The study demonstrates the conceptual role of the blue economy in transforming the service sector, proposing a new development paradigm in which economic efficiency is achieved through the preservation and restoration of natural capital rather than its depletion. This approach expands the scientific understanding of the interrelationship between economic growth and ecological sustainability by integrating economic, environmental, social, and technological dimensions. Unlike traditional approaches, the blue economy concept establishes a development paradigm where economic efficiency is attained not at the expense of natural capital but through its conservation and restoration. The authors illustrate that all service sector transformations within the blue economy framework are multi-level, encompassing ecological, economic, social, and innovation-technological dimensions. At the ecological level, key measures include biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, and rational resource use, ensuring the long-term productivity of natural capital. The economic level involves implementing resource-efficient technologies and developing new business models that combine profitability with resource regeneration. The social dimension ensures community engagement and the creation of "blue" employment opportunities, while the innovation-technological level is associated with digitalization and the adoption of smart solutions that enhance management efficiency and reduce environmental impact. The study concludes that a central advantage of the blue economy lies in shifting the logic of natural resource use: from a traditional model oriented toward short-term profit maximization to an integrated, ecosystem-oriented model that incorporates natural capital assessment, prioritization of renewable resource use, implementation of sustainable management tools, integration of economic and conservation goals, and continuous adaptation of management decisions.

У статті обґрунтовано роль блакитної економіки як ключового чинника сталого розвитку сфери послуг із акцентом на трансформацію тих її складових, що найбільше пов'язані з використанням природно-ресурсного потенціалу, зокрема морських та прибережних екосистем. Окреслене дослідження обґрунтовує концептуальну роль блакитної економіки у трансформації сфери послуг, пропонуючи нову парадигму розвитку, де економічна ефективність досягається

через збереження та відновлення природного капіталу, а не його виснаження. Це розширює наукове розуміння взаємозв'язку між економічним зростанням та екологічною стійкістю, інтегруючи економічні, екологічні, соціальні та технологічні аспекти. Констатовано, що на відміну від традиційних підходів, концепція блакитної економіки формує нову парадигму розвитку, в якій економічна ефективність досягається не внаслідок виснаження природного капіталу, а через його збереження та відновлення. Проілюстровано, що всі трансформації сфери послуг у межах блакитної економіки мають багаторівневий характер і охоплюють екологічний, економічний, соціальний та інноваційно-технологічний рівні. На екологічному рівні ключовими є заходи зі збереження біорізноманіття, відновлення екосистем та раціонального використання ресурсів (що забезпечує довгострокову продуктивність природного капіталу). Економічний рівень передбачає впровадження ресурсоефективних технологій і формування нових бізнес-моделей, орієнтованих на поєднання прибутковості з відтворенням ресурсної бази. Соціальний рівень забезпечує залучення громад і формування зайнятості, тоді як інноваційно-технологічний рівень пов'язаний із цифровізацією та впровадженням smart-рішень, що підвищують ефективність управління та зменшують екологічний вплив. Обґрунтовано, що ключовою перевагою блакитної економіки є зміна логіки використання природноресурсного потенціалу: від традиційної моделі, орієнтованої на короткострокову максимізацію прибутку, до інтегрованої та екосистемно орієнтованої моделі (яка передбачає оцінку природного капіталу, пріоритизацію відновлюваного використання ресурсів, впровадження інструментів сталого управління, інтеграцію економічних і природоохоронних цілей та постійну адаптацію управлінських рішень).

*Key words: tourism and recreation; hospitality sector; natural capital productivity; sustainable development; economic efficiency; natural resource potential.*

*Ключові слова: туризм та рекреація; сфера гостинності; продуктивність природного капіталу; сталий розвиток; економічна ефективність; природно-ресурсного потенціалу.*

#### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Within the scope of rising ecological challenges and the growing role of the non-tangible economic sectors, the concept of the blue economy is growing in importance, given its potential as an integrative model for ensuring sustainable development. It is worth noting that the essence of the concept lies in the rational use of marine and coastal resources while maintaining ecological balance, social responsibility, and economic efficiency, thereby creating the prerequisites for forming new vectors in the sustainable development of the service sector.

This concept gains particular significance in the context of the hospitality industry, specifically the key components of the service economy, which include accommodation services (hotels), food services (restaurants, cafes), tourism, recreation, leisure, and event management (HoReCa). This is due to the fact that these activities are most closely linked to the use of natural resource potential, particularly marine and coastal ecosystems, as can be seen in the operation of coastal tourist destinations in Ukraine (such as Odesa, Zatoka, Skadovsk, and the Arabat Spit), where the quality of beaches, the condition of seawater, biodiversity, and the ecological attractiveness of the areas directly determine the level of tourist flows, the occupancy of hotel infrastructure, and the demand for restaurant and recreational services. In detail, the degradation of coastal ecosystems, water pollution, or excessive anthropogenic pressure leads to a decrease in the tourist attractiveness of the areas, a reduction in the duration of tourist stays,

and, consequently, a decline in the revenues of hospitality sector entities.

Meanwhile, positive practices of sustainable natural resource management—such as implementing environmental standards in the hotel industry, using local and sustainable products in restaurant operations, developing eco-oriented recreational services, and preserving natural landscapes—contribute to the formation of competitive advantages for territories and increase their investment attractiveness. Thus, the high dependence of the hospitality sector on the state of the environment simultaneously enhances the responsibility of its stakeholders for the conservation of natural resources and ecosystems. In this context, the blue economy should provide the foundation for transitioning to sustainable models of restaurants, recreational activities, and other endeavors, as well as the development of sustainable coastal tourism, ecotourism, and innovative hospitality formats that combine economic efficiency with environmental safety and social responsibility.

#### ACTUAL SCIENTIFIC RESEARCHES AND ISSUES ANALYSIS

The issues of sustainable development in the service sector are currently being actively studied both by the authors of this article and by other scholars (notably Lavronenko H. [3], Lysiuk T., Semeniuk O. [5], Pauli G. [1], Stafford W., Faccar K. [7]). Current studies focus chiefly on general approaches to sustainable development, management of marine resources, and environmentally

oriented tourism, whereas a systematic analysis of the mechanisms of transformation specifically in the service economy (including hotel and restaurant business, recreational services, tourism, and event management) under the influence of the blue economy remains limited.

This highlights the need for further theoretical and applied research on the integration of environmental, economic, and social dimensions into the development of the service sector, in light of the resource potential of coastal areas.

**RESEARCH AIM**

This article seeks to examine the role of the blue economy as a key driver of sustainable development in the service sector, focusing on the transformation of components closely tied to the use of marine and coastal natural resources.

**MAIN FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH**

The authors emphasize that the concept of the blue economy emerged in the early 21st century as a response to the escalating environmental challenges associated with the unsustainable use of marine and coastal resources, as well as the need to ensure balanced economic growth. Its development is associated with the work of G. Pauli [1], who in 2010, in a report for the Club of Rome, stated that "In nature, there is no place for waste!" and proposed an approach to economic development based on the use of natural processes and ecosystem principles to create innovative and environmentally safe business models.

The further development of the concept took place at the level of international organizations, such as the European Commission and the World Bank, which expanded its scope by combining it with the sustainable management of marine resources, the development of "blue" industries, and the integration of environmental, economic, and social objectives. It should be noted that within EU policy, the blue economy is currently an integral part of the "Green Deal" and serves as a tool to achieve climate neutrality in the service sector [1].

Today, the concept of the blue economy comprises the integrated use of ocean, marine, and coastal resources based on principles of envi-

ronmental sustainability, innovation, social inclusivity, and economic efficiency. Unlike traditional economic models, this concept focuses not only on profit maximization but also on the restoration of natural capital, the preservation of biodiversity, and the minimization of negative anthropogenic impacts.

In contrast to the classical concept of sustainable development in the service sector, the blue economy not only specifies its principles in the context of water resource use but also expands them by emphasizing an ecosystem-based approach, the implementation of innovative nature-based solutions, and the creation of economic opportunities to meet the needs of both the population and businesses through the provision of intangible goods and services, particularly in sectors such as the hotel and restaurant industry, tourism and recreation, event management, transport, and logistics [3; 8; 9].

Hence, all changes in the service sector within the framework of the blue economy occur at multiple levels (i.e., encompassing several inter-related sectors, levels of governance, and practices [1; 9]) (see Fig. 1).

Thus, multi-level transformations within the concept of the blue economy ensure the integration of environmental, economic, and social components, forming sustainable and competitive models for the development of the service sector, oriented toward long-term efficiency and environmental preservation. The main directions of such transformations (which took place prior to the beginning of the military

**Transformation direction:** environmental level  
**Specifics of transformation:** measures aimed at the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems, sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, rehabilitation of degraded areas, water purification, and biodiversity conservation.  
**Result:** ensures the sustainable productivity of natural capital and reduces environmental pressure on tourism and recreational areas.

**Transformation direction:** economic level  
**Specifics of transformation:** implementation of resource-efficient technologies, development of blue industries, and creation of new business models and market opportunities based on the circular economy.  
**Result:** ensures the combination of profitability with the regeneration of the resource base.

The concept specifies the principles of sustainable development in the context of water resource use and expands them by emphasizing an ecosystem-based approach, innovative nature-based solutions, and the creation of new economic opportunities.

**Transformation direction:** social level  
**Specifics of transformation:** involvement of local communities in the management of coastal areas, development of "blue" employment, and promotion of educational and awareness programs on environmental responsibility.  
**Result:** enhances social support for sustainable practices in the service sector.

**Transformation direction:** innovation and technological level  
**Specifics of transformation:** digitalization of processes, implementation of smart solutions for managing tourism and hospitality infrastructure, and monitoring of ecosystem conditions.  
**Result:** reduces environmental impact and enhances the efficiency of operational processes.

**Fig. 1. Transformations of the service sector within the framework of the blue economy**

Source: compiled according to the [1; 7].

invasion of Ukraine by the russian federation) are systematized in Table 1.

Notably, the central significance of the blue ocean concept lies in changing the logic of the use of natural resource potential, particularly marine and coastal ecosystems.

The classical (traditional) logic of natural resource use can be represented as follows:

$$MP \rightarrow IEE \rightarrow LRM \rightarrow SIU \rightarrow NRE \quad (1);$$

where:

MP — prioritize economic gain without considering environmental and social consequences; activities are planned primarily from the standpoint of financial benefit.

IEE — omitting impact analysis on ecosystems, excessive use of resources exceeding their natural regeneration capacity.

LRM — resource management carried out at the level of an individual enterprise or site without long-term planning and systemic analysis of ecosystem conditions.

SIU — sectors of the economy (tourism, fisheries, industry) operate in isolation, without proper coordination, leading to conflicts of interest and inefficient use of resources.

NRE — damage to marine and coastal zones in the absence of restoration measures; ecosystem monitoring is minimal or absent.

Oppositely, the transformed logic within the framework of the blue economy can be represented as follows [1; 4; 9]:

$$CAE \rightarrow SARU \rightarrow ISM \rightarrow I \rightarrow ICA \quad (2);$$

where:

CAE — comprehensive assessment of ecosystem conditions, biodiversity, and resource potential, taking into account their limitations, which allows determining the permissible limits of resource use.

SARU — planning of activities in such a way that the pressure on ecosystems does not exceed their regenerative capacity; prioritization of environmentally sustainable development.

ISM — implementation of an integrated management system, including environmental monitoring, nature-based solutions, regulatory frameworks, investment mechanisms, and educational initiatives.

I — integration of economic efficiency with the preservation of natural capital, particularly in tourism, hospitality, and recreational services.

ICA — integrated continuous adaptation: regular evaluation of performance, adjustment of management practices in response to changes in ecosystem conditions and stakeholder needs, ensuring long-term sustainability and preventing degradation.

In essence, the main shift in logic lies in the fact that, for each individual business entity, economic activity no longer dominates over environmental constraints.

An instance of this shift is the Marriott hotel chain on the coast of Odesa (Fig. 2), which in 2022 implemented a "green certification" program: rainwater collection and treatment systems were installed, energy-efficient technologies were adopted, single-use plastics in restaurants were eliminated, and tourist flow planning on beaches was optimized to prevent overloading of coastal areas.

Consequently, although operating costs increased by 15% in 2023, the attractiveness

**Table 1. Multi-level transformations of the service sector within the framework of the blue economy concept: the case of Ukrainian coastal destinations**

Type of Services	Transformations within the Blue Economy Framework	Examples of Practical Implementation in Ukraine (prior to the military invasion of Ukraine by the russian federation)
Accommodation services (hotels)	Implementation of energy- and water-saving technologies, green architecture, certification according to "green" standards	Hotels in Odesa and Zatoka use rainwater harvesting systems and energy-efficient lighting; hotels in Skadovsk implement water reuse systems; eco-hotels on the Arabat Spit are certified according to international Green Key standards
Food services (restaurants, cafés)	Use of local and seasonal products, waste minimization, sustainable cooking technologies	Restaurants in Odesa and Zatoka offer menus based on local fish and vegetables; cafés on the Arabat Spit implement food waste composting; reduction of plastic packaging in Skadovsk
Tourism, including recreation and leisure	Development of sustainable and ecotourism, planning of tourist flows considering environmental pressure, educational programs	Eco-tours along the coast of Zatoka; sea excursions in Odesa following ecosystem safety rules; educational marine tours on the Arabat Spit
Organization of nature-oriented activities, creation of safe recreational zones, monitoring of environmental conditions	Eco-parks and walking routes along the Zatoka coastline; low-impact water sports in Odesa; environmental monitoring of beaches on the Arabat Spit	Eco-parks and walking routes along the coast of Zatoka; low-impact water sports in Odesa; monitoring of the environmental condition of beaches on the Arabat Spit
Event organization (HoReCa)	Organization of "green" events, waste minimization, energy-efficient solutions, integration of educational elements	Festivals and conferences in Zatoka using recyclable materials; eco-forum in Skadovsk; optimization of event logistics on the Arabat Spit to reduce carbon footprint

Source: Compiled by the authors.



of these hotels for environmentally conscious tourists improved. This led to a longer average length of stay and a 32% increase in revenues from recreational services.

In real-world practice, sustainable tools drive the transformation of this logic [1]. It becomes ecosystem-oriented, integrated, and adaptive, where profit is combined with the restoration of natural capital and social responsibility. Among the tools shaping this logic, the following can be distinguished [1; 6]: (1) environmentally oriented natural resource management; (2) investment mechanisms and financing; (3) educational and technical instruments; (4) partnerships and coalitions; (5) development of standards, regulations, and incentives that promote the sustainable development of the marine and coastal economic sector.

Regarding environmentally oriented natural resource management, it ensures the reorientation of business activities toward the support and restoration of marine and coastal ecosystems through measures such as biodiversity conservation, water purification, rehabilitation of degraded areas, and minimization of negative human impacts [1]. An example is the monitoring of water quality and coastal ecosystems in Odesa, where automated YSI EXO2 water quality sensors are used to measure temperature, salinity, oxygen levels, pH, and pollutant concentrations in real time.

Even so, this monitoring is currently only informative. It will contribute to the implementation of the blue ocean concept only when it is accompanied by practical measures such as regular cleaning of beaches from litter and seaweed, controlling the number of tourists in beach areas to prevent ecosystem overload, and planting coastal vegetation to stabilize dunes and restore natural habitats for flora and fauna species. Only the practical use of the collected environmentally oriented data can combine tourism and recreational activities with effective preservation of natural capital and an increase in the ecological sustainability of coastal areas.

With respect to investment instruments and funding, this involves attracting financial resources

**Classical logic (prior to “green certification”)**

*Changes in the logic of natural resource utilization are distinguished by their stepwise nature, multifaceted complexity, and cross-sectoral integration*

**Maximization of profit** – hotels operated without considering the pressure on beaches and coastal ecosystems.

**Ignoring environmental constraints** – excessive consumption of water and energy, use of single-use plastics in rooms and restaurants, absence of monitoring of coastal areas.

**Local and short-term approach** – management was limited to individual facilities without systemic planning for ecosystem conservation and development.

**Lack of integrated management** – hotel and restaurant units operated in isolation, without coordination with municipal authorities or environmental initiatives.

**Unplanned impact on ecosystems** – pollution of beaches and accumulation of waste in coastal areas.

**→Transitional stage→ (“Marriott green certification”)**

**→Installation→** of rainwater collection and treatment systems.

**→Use→** of energy-efficient technologies (LED lighting, upgraded air conditioners).

**→Elimination→** of single-use plastics in restaurants and guest rooms.

**→Optimization→** of tourist flows on beaches to prevent ecosystem overload.

**→Monitoring→** of water quality near hotels and oversight of beach conditions.

**Transformed logic (within the framework of the blue economy)**

**Natural Capital Assessment** – hotels conduct regular monitoring of water quality, beach conditions, biodiversity, and tourist impact.

**Prioritization of Sustainable Resource Use** – planning of tourist flows and activities based on the regenerative capacity of coastal areas.

**Implementation of Sustainable Management** – application of nature-based solutions and development of internal standards for hotel eco-management.

**Integration of economic efficiency and conservation measures** – increasing profits through a “green” image while simultaneously restoring and preserving natural capital.

**Continuous monitoring and adaptation** – ongoing evaluation of interactions with the ecosystem.

**Fig. 2. Scheme of the transformation in natural resource use logic: the example of the Marriott hotel chain (Odesa), 2022–2023**

Source: compiled based on data from the Marriott hotel chain.

to support sustainable initiatives, including both private investments and specialized financial instruments, such as “blue bonds,” which are aimed at funding projects with positive environmental and social impacts [9]. In Ukraine, the overall investment experience in the sustainable development of water and coastal resources is still emerging. Specifically, there are private and international grant programs that fund environmental projects, particularly in the coastal regions of the Black Sea (e.g., projects for beach cleanup, modernization of wastewater treatment facilities, and implementation of resource-efficient technologies in the hospitality sector).

However, the use of specialized financial instruments such as blue bonds in national practice is currently absent or in its early stages. This limits the full support of innovative approaches to resource management and the development of “blue” sectors (such as marine tourism, coastal energy, etc. [1]). For the effective implementation of the blue economy concept, Ukraine needs to develop and introduce targeted financial mechanisms-including blue investment products (Blue Bonds), green loans, sustainable financial products for the hospitality sector, Black Sea sustainable development funds, and tax incentives-to support environmentally oriented businesses.

Focusing on educational and technical approaches this refers to training, knowledge exchange, and the development of competencies within communities and businesses for the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources [1]. In international practice, The Ocean Foundation—a non-governmental environmental organization founded in 2002 by environmental photographer Wolcott Henry and known for supporting ocean conservation projects—provides technical assistance, training programs, and the creation of coalitions and networks for experience-sharing among various stakeholders, thereby enhancing the capacity of local communities and businesses in sustainable blue economy development.

For Ukraine, similar tools can be implemented through national and regional training programs in coastal tourism, ecotourism, hospitality, and recreation; the creation of coalitions of businesses and NGOs; and platforms for exchanging experiences and best practices in the sustainable use of coastal resources.

Regarding the formation of partnerships between government authorities, businesses, NGOs, and local communities, such collaboration promotes the sustainable development of coastal and marine areas [3-4]. This cooperation allows for the pooling of financial, technical, and expert resources, as well as practical solutions for effective ecosystem management, biodiversity restoration, and prevention of coastal zone degradation.

In Ukraine, the experience of implementing such initiatives is still limited. Examples include the "Clean Shores of the Black Sea" project—a joint initiative of local communities, NGOs, and volunteers aimed at beach cleanup, pollution monitoring, and restoration of coastal vegetation. Another example is the Network of NGOs and Businesses in the Odesa Region, which brings together hotels, restaurants, and tour operators to implement sustainable practices, such as reducing plastic use, increasing energy efficiency, and providing eco-education for tourists.

Scaling up such partnerships in the future could significantly contribute to the development of sustainable tourism, recreational services, and the hospitality sector, integrating economic interests with environmental and social responsibility.

Within the framework of the blue economy concept, the development of standards, regulations, and incentives also promotes the sustainable development of the marine and coastal economic sector [1; 7; 9]. These instruments define the framework for business and community activities, regulate environmentally safe practices, and encourage innovation and responsible use of

marine and coastal resources. In combination with partnership initiatives—joint projects involving government authorities, businesses, and NGOs—standards and regulations help create a predictable and transparent environment for investment in coastal tourism, recreational services, and the hospitality sector. This enables the integration of economic efficiency with the preservation of natural capital and the enhancement of ecological and social resilience of the territories.

In Ukraine, such standards and incentives are currently absent, limiting the implementation of blue economy practices and highlighting the need for the development of national and regional regulatory frameworks adapted to the specific characteristics of coastal and marine areas.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The present study substantiates the conceptual role of the blue economy in transforming the service sector, proposing a new development paradigm in which economic efficiency is achieved through the preservation and restoration of natural capital rather than its depletion. This approach expands scientific understanding of the relationship between economic growth and ecological sustainability by integrating economic, environmental, social, and technological dimensions.

Notably, unlike traditional approaches, the blue economy establishes a development paradigm where economic efficiency is attained not at the expense of natural capital but through its conservation and restoration. The authors illustrate that service sector transformations within the blue economy framework are multi-level, encompassing ecological, economic, social, and innovation-technological dimensions. At the ecological level, key measures include biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, and rational resource use, ensuring the long-term productivity of natural capital. The economic dimension involves the adoption of resource-efficient technologies and the development of new business models that combine profitability with resource regeneration. The social dimension focuses on community engagement and the creation of "blue" employment, while the innovation-technological dimension relates to digitalization and the implementation of smart solutions that enhance management efficiency and reduce environmental impact.

The findings indicate that a key advantage of the blue economy is the shift in the logic of natural resource use: from a traditional model focused on short-term profit maximization to an integrated, ecosystem-oriented model that incorporates natural capital assessment, prioritization of rene-

wable resource use, implementation of sustainable management tools, integration of economic and conservation goals, and continuous adaptation of management decisions.

Future research prospects include examining the impact of smart solutions, digital platforms, and resource-efficient technologies on improving resource management efficiency and reducing environmental pressure.

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