INTEGRATION OF DESTINATION BRANDING INTO THE HOTEL AND RESTAURANT INFRASTRUCTURE AND URBAN TOURISM IN ODESSA

ІНТЕГРАЦІЯ БРЕНДИНГУ ДЕСТИНАЦІЇ В ГОТЕЛЬНО-РЕСТОРАННУ ІНФРАСТРУКТУРУ ТА МІСЬКИЙ ТУРИЗМ ОДЕСИ

This article examines the integration of destination branding into the hotel and restaurant infrastructure and urban tourism of Odessa, emphasizing its strategic role in enhancing competitiveness nationally and internationally. It explores theoretical approaches to branding in hospitality and tourism, focusing on emotional branding, digital visualization and co-design of tourist experiences. These methods help create unique offerings for diverse tourist segments, fostering strong emotional connections and engagement. The article proposes a typology for forming and implementing sub-brands in gastronomy, wellness, digital innovation, and event tourism. Using SWOT and REST analyses, it evaluates internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats affecting Odessa's brand development. This integrated approach promotes sustainable development, emotional identity and digital transformation, increasing Odessa's appeal among domestic and international travelers while offering adaptable frameworks for other urban destinations.

Key words: *hotel and restaurant infrastructure, tourism, branding, destination, tourist market, sub-brand, sustainable development, competitiveness, quality of service, Odessa.*

Chernykhivska Anna
Candidate of Economic Sciences,
Associate Professor at the Department
of Tourism and Hotel
and Restaurant Business,
Kyiv National University
of Technologies and Design

Tkachuk Leonila
Candidate of Geographical Sciences,
Associate Professor at the Department
of Tourism and Hotel
and Restaurant Business,
Kyiv National University
of Technologies and Design

Чернихівська А.В.
Київський національний університет
технологій та дизайну

Ткачук Л.М.
Київський національний університет
технологій та дизайну

У статті досліджується процес інтеграції брендингу дестинації в готельно-ресторанну інфраструктуру та систему міського туризму Одеси як ключового чинника підвищення конкурентоспроможності регіону на національному та міжнародному рівнях. Розглянуто сучасні теоретичні підходи до брендингу у сфері гостинності й туризму, зокрема концепції емоційного брендування, цифрової візуалізації ідентичності бренду та інноваційного ко-дизайну туристичного досвіду, що дозволяють формувати унікальні, привабливі й емоційно насичені пропозиції для різних категорій туристів. Запропоновано типологію створення та реалізації суббрендів у таких й напрямках, як гастрономія, wellness, цифрові інновації та подієвий туризм, із урахуванням світових тенденцій і локального потенціалу розвитку туристичного ринку. Проведено комплексний SWOT– та REST– аналіз для визначення внутрішніх сильних і слабких сторін, а також зовнішніх можливостей і загроз, що впливають на процес розвитку та позиціонування бренду Одеси як конкурентоспроможної туристичної дестинації в умовах глобалізації та цифрової трансформації. Обґрунтовано стратегічні рекомендації для зацікавлених сторін щодо посилення бренду Одеси через системний розвиток туризму й готельно-ресторанного бізнесу, впровадження цифрових рішень, удосконалення комунікаційних стратегій, просування локальних продуктів і підвищення якості сервісу. Такий інтегрований підхід посилить зростання туристичної привабливості міста, зміцнить емоційну ідентичність, сформує позитивний імідж, розширить асортимент брендових продуктів та підвищить впізнаваність Одеси на внутрішньому й міжнародному ринках. Результати дослідження доповнюють наукову дискусію з питань брендингу територій та пропонують практичні моделі й алгоритми формування конкурентних переваг, що можуть бути адаптовані в інших містах, зацікавлених у підвищенні туристичної привабливості, розвитку готельно-ресторанної інфраструктури, посиленні економічного потенціалу та інтеграції в глобальні туристичні мережі, а також для покращення інвестиційного клімату в регіонах.

Ключові слова: *готельно-ресторанна інфраструктура, туризм, брендинг, дестинація, туристичний ринок, суббренд, сталий розвиток, конкурентоспроможність, якість обслуговування, Одеса.*

Problem statement. For cities endowed with a rich historical and cultural heritage, such as Odessa, the effective integration of destination branding into the hotel and restaurant infrastructure and urban tourism represents a critical strategic imperative. This integration not only enhances the city's visibility at both national and international levels but also contributes to the formation of a cohesive brand identity, which serves as a fundamental prerequisite for attracting both domestic and international visitors.

A key issue hindering the advancement of Odessa's destination branding is the substantial discrepancy between the brand's latent potential and the actual degree of its implementation within the hospitality and tourism sectors. Despite possessing considerable cultural and historical assets alongside a significant tourism capacity, the absence of a coherent, unified, and systematically implemented branding strategy results in a fragmented and inconsistent image of the city. The lack of coordination among principal stakeholders in the tourism market, limited application of contemporary marketing instruments, and the insufficient progress in digital transformation collectively impede the establishment of a strong and recognizable city brand. Consequently, Odessa's competitiveness as a tourist destination is weakened, diminishing its ability to attract investment, boost tourism development, and elevate the overall quality of services provided.

In addition, the pronounced seasonality of tourist flows remains a persistent challenge, contributing to the uneven utilization of the hotel and restaurant infrastructure throughout the year. The limited diversification of tourism offerings and the low level of off-season activity exacerbate this situation, resulting in significant economic inefficiencies across the hospitality sector. Addressing these structural

shortcomings necessitates the adoption of innovative and holistic approaches that facilitate the integration of the city brand across all elements of the tourism system, including the hospitality industry, as well as cultural, recreational, and event-based initiatives.

Accordingly, the present study is of both theoretical and practical significance, as its results may provide a conceptual and empirical basis for formulating effective governance strategies and managerial decisions aimed at strengthening the tourism and hospitality ecosystem in Odessa.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Recent studies emphasize the growing integration of destination branding with tourism infrastructure. Buhalis D. and Amaranggana A. highlight the concept of "smart tourism destinations," where big data and digital tools enable personalized services and strengthen brand appeal. The UNWTO underscores digitalization and sustainability as key pillars of modern tourism branding, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals [1; 2].

Rinaldi C., Cavicchi A. and Marino A. focus on the emotional and cultural dimensions of place branding, revealing how cultural specificity shapes tourist perceptions [3]. Saraniemi S. and Kylänen M. stress the adaptive and reflexive nature of destination branding, calling for strategies that evolve with stakeholder narratives [4].

Wang Y. and Zhang L. demonstrate the importance of hotel and gastronomic service quality in shaping destination perception, a finding particularly relevant for Odessa, where these sectors are core to the local tourism product [5].

Ukrainian scholars contribute notably to this field. Ivanenko O. calls for coordinated efforts among municipal authorities, businesses, and civil society to build a sustainable brand for Odessa [6]. Petrenko S. and Kovalchuk Y. identify digitalization as essential for enhancing service quality and attracting younger tourists [7]. Shevchenko N. points to gastronomic tourism as a key brand driver, while Klymchuk V. and Zubenko M. evaluate the role of public-private partnerships in advancing regional tourism development [8; 9].

Task statement. The aim of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the integration of destination branding into the hotel and restaurant infrastructure and urban tourism of Odessa, with the objective of identifying key factors, mechanisms, and strategic approaches that enhance the city's competitiveness as a tourist destination.

Statement of the main results. In the 21st century, branding in the tourism and hospitality sector has evolved into a strategic concept aimed at fostering sustainable competitive advantages for tourist destinations, transcending its traditional role as a purely marketing-oriented tool.

Today, competition among regions, cities, and countries occurs not only at the level of tourism infrastructure, but also in the symbolic and emotional realms – through narratives, identities, and values that generate a unique emotional connection between the visitor and the place. In this context, theoretical approaches to branding are undergoing significant transformation, moving towards interdisciplinary integration that encompasses marketing, cultural studies, service design, digital technologies and sustainability [4].

Contemporary destination branding encompasses a broad spectrum of categories – from destination image to place identity, from emotional branding to digital storytelling – underscoring the complexity of the phenomenon and the necessity for systematic analysis of its multidimensional components. A notable trend in recent scholarship is the recognition of the destination brand as a sociocultural code that emerges from the interaction among multiple stakeholders: tourists, local communities, the hospitality industry, municipal authorities and media [3].

A crucial element in brand formation is not merely the visual identity or logo of a destination, but the experiential dimension – namely, the impressions tourists form through their engagement with hospitality infrastructure, service encounters, gastronomy, and cultural events. In the context of the digital economy, the hotel and restaurant sector functions not only as a practical component of tourism infrastructure, but also as a tangible medium for conveying the core values and narratives of the destination brand. Modern hospitality establishments – particularly in competitive urban settings – serve as carriers of authenticity, local lifestyle, and emotional resonance, all of which are integrated into the broader narrative of the destination brand [5].

Empirical evidence suggests that successful branding initiatives are those where service quality, landscape architecture, gastronomy, cultural programming, and digital communication are harmonized into a coherent system. It is through this synergy that a holistic and compelling brand experience is created, ultimately strengthening the destination's identity and appeal.

A distinct emphasis within current theoretical discourse is placed on the phenomenon of emotional branding, conceptualized as a destination's capacity to establish lasting emotional connections with tourists through sensory experiences, storytelling, and the authenticity of the surrounding environment. This approach is particularly relevant in the contemporary context, where travel decisions are increasingly guided not by price-based considerations, but by perceived value alignment. Today's tourists seek meaningful engagement during their stay – whether through visual aesthetics, culinary experiences, social interactions, or environmentally conscious practices [3].

Another salient vector in the evolution of destination branding is digital place branding, which leverages digital platforms, social media, and immersive technologies such as virtual and augmented reality to visualize and communicate the brand identity of a destination. In this regard, social networks function not

only as channels for promotion, but also as arenas for co-creating collective visual imaginaries of places [1].

Technologies such as digital twins, virtual tours, and the influence of digital content creators (e.g., travel bloggers) play a pivotal role in constructing a holistic image of the destination an image that becomes superimposed onto the real-life experience and is further reinforced through hotel and restaurant service interfaces.

To synthesize and illustrate the prevailing theoretical approaches in the domain of tourism and hospitality branding, the following comparative Table 1 presents the key concepts, mechanisms, and practical implications.

In the context of sustainable development, destination branding increasingly serves as a powerful tool for communicating the values of responsible tourism – including environmental sustainability, ethical consumption, and support for local producers. Rather than being viewed merely as a product of marketing efforts, contemporary scientific discourse increasingly conceptualizes an effective destination brand as the outcome of a co-design process involving a broad range of stakeholders – from hoteliers and restaurateurs to tourists and local communities [2].

Co-design refers to a collaborative approach to the development of products, services, or experiences, in which not only producers but also end users – guests, tourists, and other relevant actors – actively participate. The core premise of co-design is that involving users at the early stages of development facilitates a deeper understanding of their needs, expectations, and pain points, ultimately leading to more relevant, user-centered, and impactful solutions. This participatory method enhances trust, fosters engagement, and builds long-term loyalty among stakeholders [10].

As a result, contemporary theoretical perspectives on branding in the tourism and hospitality sector increasingly emphasize the creation of an empathetic, value-driven, and dynamic brand experience – one that transcends traditional promotional strategies and becomes an integral component of the socio-cultural and economic development policy of the destination.

Odessa represents a strategically advantageous tourist destination in southern Ukraine, combining geographical appeal with a multidimensional cultural identity. The city exhibits a strong sense of individuality, shaped by its historical multiculturalism, Black Sea coastal location, architectural diversity, and a well-developed gastronomic scene – all of which align with contemporary criteria for place branding.

The historically constructed image of Odessa as the "Southern Pearl" and "City of Humour" has, to date, been only partially realized in the form of a comprehensive destination branding strategy. Nonetheless, both theoretical considerations and applied indicators suggest that Odessa holds significant potential for the development of a sustainable tourism brand characterized by high levels of recognition, emotional resonance, and cultural authenticity.

A key prerequisite for branding Odessa lies in its rich cultural and historical narrative, which encompasses multinational traditions, a creative ethos, and a strong theatrical and musical heritage. This enables the formation of an emotionally compelling brand grounded in architectural aesthetics, local culinary traditions, Black Sea identity, and the openness of its urban spaces. Within the hospitality sector, this translates into opportunities for the development of conceptual hotels, themed restaurants, gastronomic routes, and personalized services that reflect the city's unique cultural assets.

Odessa's hotel and restaurant infrastructure demonstrates a high degree of flexibility, adaptability, and resilience even under crisis conditions, including the imposition of martial law. These characteristics position the city as a viable candidate for responsible and inclusive tourism, oriented towards local resources, sustainability, and ethical consumption. Gastronomic initiatives, maritime event formats, and creative spaces can be further developed into distinct sub-brands – including festival, historical-cultural, ecological, or youth-oriented identities – depending on the specific target audience (Table 2).

In 2023–2024, the brand of Odessa as a tourist destination significantly reinforced its impact on the

Table 1

Main Directions in Theoretical Approaches to Branding in Tourism and Hospitality: Concepts, Mechanisms, Applied Significance

Branding Direction	Key concepts	Implementation mechanisms	Applied aspects of application
Place Branding and Tourism Identity	Forming an authentic destination image through cultural, historical and spatial codes	Architectural solutions, legends, urban symbols, cultural routes	Using local heritage to enhance the emotional appeal of the destination
Emotional Branding in Hospitality	Creating emotional engagement of tourists through narratives, service design, sensory experience	Storytelling, emotional UX design, gastronomic experiences, personalization	Increasing customer loyalty, creating positive reviews and WOM marketing
Service as a Space for Brand Embodiment	Integrating brand values in hotel and restaurant services and maintenance	Themed hotels, regional dishes, interior design, ethical behavior of staff	Communicating brand authenticity through quality, service culture and aesthetics of the space
Digital Branding and Virtual Image	Constructing a brand image in the online environment through interactivity and visuality	Social networks, virtual tours, AR/VR technologies, user-generated content	Engaging a digital audience, building trust in the destination before the visit

Source: built by the authors on the basis of [1–5]

Table 2

Advantages of Odessa as a Tourist Destination

Category	Advantage Content	Practical significance	Branding Opportunities
Cultural and historical capital	A city with a rich heritage, multinational identity, architectural ensembles	Formation of cultural, educational and festival tourism	Using Heritage as the Core of Place Identity and Storytelling
Gastronomic uniqueness	Local cuisine with a strong multicultural influence, seafood, street gastronomy	Development of gastro tours, themed restaurants, support for local producers	Creating a Sub-Brand "Odessa Taste" or "Black Sea Cuisine"
Natural and geographical location	Access to the sea, mild climate, natural resources, resort appeal	Resort, health and sea tourism	Creating a brand of the Black Sea "outdoor recreation destination"
Creative potential and youth energy	Active environment of IT, culture, students and creative industries	Innovative tourism, development of digital products, startup platforms	Digital place branding, branding through user-generated content
Hospitality infrastructure	Developed network of hotels, hostels, restaurants, cafes, cultural spaces	Providing services for tourists with different income levels	Implementation of the concepts of "brand service", thematic hotels and restaurants
Emotional identity	A city with character, humor, openness, informality in communication	Forming tourist loyalty, memorability, positive WOM marketing	Building an emotional brand "Odessa – more than a destination"

Source: built by the authors on the basis of [1–3]

development of the hotel and restaurant industry. According to analytical data, the average occupancy rate of hotels in the city increased by 34% compared to 2022. The average daily rate (ADR) reached 2,177 UAH, while the revenue per available room (RevPAR) amounted to 759 UAH –reflecting year-on-year increases of 9.5% and 45.4%, respectively [11].

The city's accommodation market continues to demonstrate positive dynamics. In 2023, the number of hostels expanded by 28.7%, hotels by 9.1%, and motels by 10.7%, indicating growing diversification in hospitality offerings and increased tourist demand [12].

International investment activity also intensified during this period. Notable examples include the ongoing implementation of the Hilton Odessa project, featuring an 800 m² conference hall and a full-service SPA complex, as well as the opening of the Ultramarinn Hotel in the Primorsky district in July 2023 [13; 14].

A number of high-profile gastronomic and wellness initiatives have become integral to Odessa's renewed destination branding strategy. Among them are Odessa Wine Week, the development of wellness tourism locations, and the digitalization of tourism products through QR-coded routes and integrated social media engagement. These elements collectively reinforce Odessa's positioning as a city oriented toward leisure, business tourism, gastronomy, and culturally immersive travel [2; 13].

The hotel and restaurant infrastructure in Odessa not only reflects the city's brand but actively contributes to its construction. Conceptual hotels, themed restaurants, and local cafés offering signature cuisine serve as tangible manifestations of the destination's identity within the physical space. Each service encounter becomes a point of contact through which the brand is communicated to guests, turning individual establishments into ambassadors of the city brand. This embo-dies the notion of "experiential brand value" – the ability to translate a city's symbols into emotions, tastes, and lasting memories (Table 3) [13].

Such establishments do more than provide services they co-create the city's narrative by embedding cultural, historical and emotional elements into everyday guest experiences. As a result, the hospitality infrastructure becomes a dynamic platform for storytelling, where visitors not only consume but also internalize and share the Odessa brand.

The role of the hospitality sector as a narrative channel is increasingly prominent. Hotel and restaurant staff now often serves as cultural mediators, offering recommendations for local landmarks or sharing stories tied to the district where their establishment is located. This narrative immersion contributes to a deeper connection between visitors and the city's identity, aligning with the contemporary demand for authentic and place-based tourism experiences [14].

The concept of sub-branding offers significant strategic potential. By enabling the creation of specialized, audience-specific offerings, sub-branding enhances the overall attractiveness of the destination and reinforces its competitive position in both domestic and international tourism markets.

In the case of Odessa, local brand platforms have already emerged as components within the city's overarching brand architecture. According to recent municipal reports and event-based branding initiatives, four prominent sub-branding directions can be identified [14; 15]:

– Gastronomic Sub-Brand "Odessa Taste": A platform for wine routes, culinary festivals, signature dishes, and street food culture.

– Wellness and Health Tourism: Capitalizing on Odessa's medical resources, sanatorium heritage, and spa infrastructure.

Table 3

The impact of the Odessa brand on the hotel and restaurant business

Aspect	Brand influence	Practical benefits	Significance for the sector
Tourist flow	Branding led to increased attendance	Increased hotel occupancy, demand for restaurants, increased revenue	Increasing the economic stability of the hotel and restaurant sector
Infrastructural initiatives	Tourism development program, information centers, digital strategies	Opening of hotels/hostels, QR codes, digital tours	Increasing the quality of service and competitiveness
Adaptation to the crisis	Implementation of QR marketing, focus on domestic tourism, support for business tourism	Inflow of local tourists, preservation of vacancies, reduction of seasonality	Flexibility and viability during external shocks
Gastronomic potential	Studies record untapped potential of the restaurant sector	Offers of gastronomic maps, festivals, guidebooks	Unique niche of the Odessa brand, an incentive for tourism sustainability
Recovery after COVID-19	Increase in tourists, development of the MICE segment	Resumption of hotel operations, organization of festivals and business events	A high base for long-term investment and positioning in the international market

Source: built by the authors

– Urban Digital Tourism: Development of digital maps, interactive tours, and smart tourism tools using QR codes and AR technologies.

– Event Branding: Cultural, artistic, and business events that concentrate communication flows and generate media visibility (Table 4).

As of 2024, the management of the Odessa city brand is carried out through institutional mechanisms of municipal marketing, ranging from the activities of the Department of Tourism to public-private partnerships with stakeholders in the hospitality sector. The growing inflow of investment into international hotel chains, such as Hilton Odessa and Ultramarinn Hotel, illustrates the city's increasing economic attractiveness, and serves as evidence of the brand's ability to stimulate real infrastructural development [14].

To provide a comprehensive evaluation of the integration of Odessa's tourist destination brand into the hotel and restaurant infrastructure and the broader context of urban tourism, both SWOT and REST analytical frameworks are applied. These tools facilitate a multidimensional assessment capturing internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats, as well as resource-related, economic, social, and technological factors influencing branding processes.

The combined use of SWOT and REST analyses enables a holistic understanding of how branding strategies align with local capabilities and external dynamics. It also highlights potential leverage points for enhancing the visibility, competitiveness, and sustainability of Odessa's brand within the tourism and hospitality sectors. Moreover, these frameworks assist in identifying gaps and areas for innovation, ensuring that branding efforts are both adaptive and future-oriented.

The SWOT analysis (Table 5) offers a structured perspective on the current state and potential of Odessa's brand in the hospitality sector. Among the city's strengths are their distinctive cultural identities, shaped by a rich multicultural heritage, and its well-developed hospitality infrastructure, which collectively form a robust foundation for tourist appeal [14; 15].

However, the analysis also reveals several structural weaknesses, notably seasonality in tourist flows and limited international marketing visibility, which constrain long-term growth potential [11; 12].

On the opportunity side, the city can benefit from the introduction of innovative technologies – including digital tourism platforms and AR-based navigation – and the development of niche tourism segments such as wellness, gastronomy, and creative industries.

Table 4

Typology of Odessa sub-brands and their implementation in the hotel and restaurant sector

Sub-brand	Main features	Implementation tools	Expected effect
Odessa Taste (gastronomic)	Author's cuisine, seafood, local recipes, festivals	Gastro tours, Odessa Wine Week, restaurant branding	Strengthening the uniqueness of gastro tourism, increasing the average check
Wellness Odessa	Sanatorium and resort facilities, mineral springs, SPA	Opening wellness areas in hotels, SPA menus, treatment services	Formation of a new tourist segment, extending the season
Digital Odessa	QR codes, online maps, AR/VR tours, interactive navigation	Digital guides in hotels, applications, integration with OTA systems	Easier navigation, reducing language barriers, increasing accessibility

Source: built by the authors on the basis of [13–16]

Table 5

SWOT analysis of the Odessa branding

Category	Key Points	Explanation	Brand/industry impact
Strengths	– Cultural identity and multiculturalism; – Developed infrastructure; – Famous events; – Digitalization	Odessa has a vibrant cultural image and a large number of tourist locations. Hotels and restaurants operate at an international level. Events like Odessa Wine Week increase awareness. The use of digital technologies increases convenience	Increased tourist loyalty and increased tourist flows, strengthened position in the domestic and international market
Weaknesses	– Seasonality of tourism; – Insufficient investment support for small businesses; – Low level of marketing; – Problems with logistics	Tourism is concentrated in the summer season, which causes uneven loading. Small businesses lack resources for development. Marketing campaign is weak, which limits global recognition. Transport infrastructure needs updating	Reduction in potential income, loss of part of the audience, threat of reduced competitiveness
Opportunities	– Development of MICE and wellness tourism; – Implementation of AR/VR technologies; – Eco–tourism; – Investment in innovation	Conferences, exhibitions and sanatoriums allow expanding the tourist season. New technologies make tourism more interactive. Eco–direction corresponds to global trends. Investors show interest in sustainable development	Expanding target markets, increasing revenues, creating a modern and attractive image
Threats	– Geopolitical instability; – Rising costs; – Competition from other destinations; – Environmental concerns	Military actions and political risks can negatively affect the tourist image. Inflation increases the cost of services. Competition from other cities and countries is increasing. Pollution affects recreational resources	Decrease in tourist flow, loss of investment attractiveness, deterioration in the quality of services

Source: built by the authors

These align with current global tourism trends and can significantly enhance Odessa's brand value [2; 13].

Conversely, the city faces a number of persistent threats, primarily driven by geopolitical uncertainties, macroeconomic volatility, and reputational risks stemming from proximity to conflict zones. These factors necessitate adaptive branding strategies, increased risk resilience, and ongoing monitoring of external environments to sustain competitiveness and ensure long-term positioning [11].

The REST analysis (Table 6) provides an extended perspective on the multidimensional factors influencing the integration of the destination brand into Odessa's hotel and restaurant infrastructure. It highlights the city's strong internal resources, which underpin its competitiveness in the hospitality sector. These include a well-developed network of accommodation and dining facilities, an active events calendar, and an expanding ecosystem of gastronomic and wellness initiatives [12; 16].

However, the external environment is marked by complex challenges, such as geopolitical instability, economic fluctuations, and limited access to global tourism markets. These conditions necessitate a high degree of organizational adaptability, scenario-based planning, and the implementation of risk-informed strategic management frameworks [11; 15].

An important factor in the successful implementation of brand integration strategies is the level of stakeholder engagement. The coordination among municipal authorities, private businesses, community actors, and international partners is critical to ensure consistent branding efforts and optimize the use of available resources [2].

Moreover, emerging global tourism trends place increasing emphasis on sustainable development, digital transformation, and experiential tourism. Tourists increasingly seek personalized, immersive, and ethically conscious travel experiences. Therefore, the ability of Odessa's hospitality sector to align with these trends by incorporating smart technologies, digital content strategies, and authenticity-driven service models will determine the city's positioning in competitive international markets [11; 13].

Recommendations for Strengthening the City Brand of Odessa through the Development of Tourism and the Hospitality Sector.

The formation and consolidation of Odessa's brand as a competitive tourist destination require a comprehensive strategic approach that integrates marketing, innovation, and socio-economic development. Taking into account current trends in the global tourism industry and the regional specificities of southern Ukraine, the following measures are recommended [6–9]:

1. Development of an Integrated Marketing Strategy. A unified branding strategy should emphasize Odessa's unique cultural and gastronomic assets. Special attention should be paid to experiential tourism, which fosters emotional engagement and lasting associations with the destination. The use of digital communication platforms, including social media and online event promotion, is essential to amplify brand visibility and appeal to international audiences.

2. Support for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs). Strengthening SMEs in the hotel and restaurant sectors is critical for service diversification and quality enhancement. This can be achieved

Table 6

REST analysis of the Odessa branding

Category	Resources / Elements	Brand/Industry Impact Assessment	Recommendations / Development Strategies
Resources	– More than 200 hotels and restaurants – Unique gastronomy – Qualified staff	High diversity of offerings allows for catering to a wide range of tourists. Local cuisine and culture are a strong magnet for tourists. Staff ensures quality service	Focus on improving service quality, supporting local products, and training staff
Environment	– Government support – Economic instability – Environmental challenges	Urban programs promote tourism development, but external risks can limit potential. Ecology is a key factor of attractiveness	Development of anti-crisis programs, implementation of environmental standards, strengthening partnerships
Stakeholders	– City government – HoReCa business – Tourists – Investors	Each group has its own influence on brand development, their interests must be aligned for the success of projects	Creation of coordination platforms, public engagement, transparency of governance
Trends	– Sustainable tourism – Digital technologies – Experiential tourism – Behavioral changes after COVID-19	Trends are shaping new expectations of tourists and requiring adaptation of products and services	Introducing innovations, developing personalized services, focusing on safety and comfort

Source: built by the authors

through targeted financial assistance, capacity-building programs, and the promotion of local supply chains, which together reinforce both economic resilience and brand authenticity.

3. Digital Innovation in Tourism Products. The implementation of smart tourism tools – such as mobile applications, virtual and augmented reality platforms, and digital storytelling – will enhance the service experience and attract a younger, tech-savvy demographic, in line with global tourism trends.

4. Diversification of Tourism Offerings. Expanding the city's tourism portfolio through the development of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism, wellness destinations, and sustainable tourism products will help mitigate seasonal fluctuations and attract diverse market segments. This contributes to the long-term economic sustainability of the hospitality industry.

5. Improvement of Transport and Urban Infrastructure. Upgrading transport connectivity, ensuring ease of access to tourist sites, and adhering to green urban standards are vital for creating a safe and visitor-friendly environment. These improvements not only enhance the visitor experience but also reinforce the city's reputation for quality and sustainability.

6. Attraction of International Investment through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). The establishment of effective PPP mechanisms will enable the mobilization of resources for the modernization of hospitality infrastructure. High-profile investment projects, such as the Hilton Odessa, demonstrate the potential of such partnerships to strengthen Odessa's competitiveness in global tourism markets.

7. Promotion of Social Responsibility and Environmental Awareness. Encouraging corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental consciousness across the tourism ecosystem is essential. Prioritizing sustainable practices, such as the use of local organic products and eco-certification, not only enhances brand reputation but also aligns with the evolving expectations of modern, ethically-minded tourists.

Conclusions. The integration of the Odessa city brand into the hotel and restaurant infrastructure as well as urban tourism holds strategic significance for establishing a recognizable, competitive, and sustainable destination image at both national and international levels. The conducted analysis revealed that Odessa possesses substantial cultural, historical, gastronomic, and geographical potential, which, when leveraged through effective branding, can be converted into core competitive advantages. However, significant challenges remain, including fragmented marketing strategies and pronounced seasonality of tourist flows, which impede the full exploitation of this potential. Consequently, the development of a comprehensive, innovative, and inclusive brand strategy is a critical prerequisite for further advancement.

Empirical evidence from successful branding initiatives demonstrates that forming an emotional brand identity, employing digital technologies, developing sub-brands such as gastronomic, event-based, wellness, and digital sectors and fostering public-private partnerships are effective components of a multidisciplinary branding approach. The hotel and restaurant sector functions not only as an infrastructural backbone but also as a communicative medium, transforming the Odessa brand into a tangible experience manifested through service quality, atmosphere, and authenticity. Moving forward, strategic emphasis should be placed on sustainable development principles, personalized service delivery, digital integration, and active engagement of all stakeholders in co-creating the brand as a dynamic socio-cultural asset.

REFERENCES:

1. Buhalis D., Amaranggana A. Smart tourism destinations: Enhancing value co-creation through data-driven experiences. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management.* 2022. Vol. 23. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2021.100732.

2. UNWTO. Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals – 2023 Update. United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2023. https://unwto.org/sustainable-development. Accessed: 01.06.2025

3. Rinaldi C., Cavicchi A., Marino A. Emotional place branding in hospitality and tourism: A cultural perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management.* 2023. Vol. 111. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103296.

4. Saraniemi S., Kylänen M. Destination branding as a reflexive process: Reconstructing the brand identity of Finnish Lapland. *Tourism Management.* 2022. Vol. 88. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2021.104428.

5. Wang Y., Zhang L. Integrating service experience into destination branding: The case of hotel and food experience in urban tourism. *Journal of Travel Research.* 2023. Vol. 62. No. 2. P. 389–403. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875221078536

6. Ivanenko O. Systemic coordination in city branding: The case of Odessa tourism development. *Ukrainian Journal of Tourism Studies.* 2025. Vol. 12, No. 1. P. 45–60. (in Ukrainian)

7. Petrenko S., Kovalchuk Y. Digitalization of tourism infrastructure as a factor of competitiveness enhancement. *Eastern European Tourism Review.* 2024. Vol. 8. No. 1. P. 32–47.

8. Shevchenko N. Gastronomic tourism as a driver of city brand development: The Odessa experience. *Journal of Ukrainian Culinary Studies.* 2025. Vol. 5, No. 1. P. 15–29. (in Ukrainian)

9. Klymchuk V., Zubenko M. Public-private partnerships as tools for effective tourism branding: Evidence from Odessa. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management.* 2024. Vol. 10, No. 2. P. 78–92.

10. Allen W. Designing together: Reflections on co-design in complex settings. Available at: https://learningforsustainability.net/post/co-design-in-complex-settings (accessed: 07.06.2025)

11. Forbes Ukraine. How the war changed the hotel market in Odesa: Hotel Matrix analytic. Available at: https://forbes.ua (accessed: 07.06.2025)

12. Ribas Hotels Group. Ukrainian hotel sector report: Trends & Resilience 2023–2024. Available at: https://ribas.ua (accessed: 07.06.2025)

13. Hospitality ON. Odessa Wine Week and the revival of Ukrainian gastronomic tourism. Available at: https://hospitality-on.com (accessed: 07.06.2025)

14. KyivPost. New luxury hotels boost Odessa's image despite wartime challenges. Available at: https://www.kyivpost.com (accessed: 07.06.2025)

15. Odesa City Council. Strategic Plan for Tourism and Hospitality Development 2023–2025. Available at: https://omr.gov.ua (accessed: 07.06.2025)

16. Odessa Wine Week. About the festival. Available at: https://wineweek.com.ua – (accessed: 07.06.2025)