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OVERVIEW OF THE GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COUNCIL STANDARDS AND SUGGESTED INDICATORS FOR TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

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In the context of rapid growth in the tourism industry and increasing attention to sustainability issues, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) standards have become an essential benchmark for the hospitality sector worldwide. As Ukraine moves toward integration into the global tourism market, adopting the Global Sustainable Tourism Council standards is crucial for maintaining environmental, social, and economic sustainability within the industry. The subject of the study is the Global Sustainable Tourism Council standards and indicators of sustainable tourism and hospitality development. The purpose of the article is to analyze international standards and indicators of sustainable tourism and hospitality development, particularly the criteria of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, and to determine their significance for the Ukrainian tourism and hospitality industry development. The objectives of the study are: to analyze the structure and content of international standards and indicators for sustainable tourism and hospitality development, with a focus on the Global Sustainable Tourism Council criteria; to determine the significance and practical implications of applying GSTC standards for enhancing the competitiveness and sustainability of the Ukrainian tourism and hospitality industry. Research methods: generalization and systematization (to identify groups of criteria and indicators of sustainable development in the tourism and hospitality industry); systemic and comprehensive analysis (to determine the importance of applying global sustainable tourism council standards for the Ukrainian tourism and hospitality industry development); graphical method (for visual representation of the theoretical material). Results. A comprehensive review of the standards and recommended indicators of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) for tourism and hospitality has been carried out, with a focus on their structure and key thematic areas. A detailed analysis of the four main blocks of GSTC criteria – effective sustainable management, socio-economic benefits, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental protection – has been conducted. The review demonstrates how these standards align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and serve as a universal basis for assessing the sustainability of tourism enterprises and destinations. The necessity of applying GSTC criteria for the Ukrainian tourism and hospitality industry has been substantiated, emphasizing their role in enhancing competitiveness and sustainability. The strategic importance of these standards for post-crisis recovery, shaping a positive image of Ukraine as a sustainable tourism destination, and ensuring long-term resilience through responsible practices has been highlighted.

Keywords: sustainable development, tourism, hospitality industry, Global Sustainable Tourism Council, international tourism, international relations, sustainable development indicators.

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Problem statement. The rapid development of the tourism industry is accompanied by increasing pressure on natural resources, cultural heritage, and socio-economic systems. Despite the existence of international initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism and the hospitality industry, the practical implementation of sustainable development principles remains uneven and fragmented. Many hotels, tourist destinations, and MICE event organizers face challenges in integrating environmental, social, and cultural aspects into their operations. The lack of unified approaches to sustainability assessment and certification complicates the comparison of results, reduces market transparency, and undermines consumer trust. This highlights the need to study international standards, particularly the GSTC criteria, as a tool for harmonizing requirements and enhancing the competitiveness of tourism enterprises in the global environment.

The Ukrainian tourism and hospitality markets are in the process of recovery after major economic and social challenges caused by war and crises. Implementing sustainable development principles and international standards such as GSTC is critically important for attracting foreign tourists and partners, shaping a positive image of the country, and integrating into European markets. A sustainable approach ensures business transparency and competitiveness, opening access to global tourist flows and international certification programs. Moreover, environmental challenges, the preservation of natural resources, and cultural heritage are becoming priority tasks for Ukraine, as they affect the long-term resilience of the industry. The development of domestic tourism also requires the adoption of sustainable practices to support local communities, create new jobs, and ensure economic growth in the regions.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Multifaceted scientific issues of the introduction and use of sustainable tourism standards and indicators are raised in numerous works by both domestic and foreign scientists.

A profound contribution to the development of the outlined topic was made by foreign scientists. Agyeiwaah E., McKercher B., Suntikul W. [1] evaluate a number of studies that have proposed a variety of indicator themes to identify commonalities among them that may serve as a starting point for enterprises to move towards a more sustainable path. Cataldo R., Grassia M.G., Marino M. [2] build a system of composite indicators of sustainable tourism using Partial Least Squares Path Modeling (PLS-PM) as a valuable way to analyze data in a longitudinal perspective. Font X., Torres-Delgado A., Crabolu G. et al [3] evaluate the impact of sustainable tourism indicators on destination competitiveness with reference to the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS), a scheme funded by the European Commission to address the evidence gap in tourism policy making. Gaonkar S., Sukthankar S.V. [4] develop and measure

a new scale for Cultural Sustainability Indicators and Sustainable Cultural Tourism Development (SCTD) and examine the influence of Cultural Sustainability Indicators on SCTD growth. Gasparini M.L., Mariotti A. [5] analyze the roles sustainable tourism indicators play in policy making processes at destination level through a three-dimensional framework: 1) instrumental (direct use of information for decision-making), 2) conceptual (awareness raising) and 3) symbolic (legitimate decisions). Jeelani P., Shah S.A., Dar S.N. et al. [6] identify and evaluate tourism sustainability construct indicators in the mountain ecosystems. Lin L.Z., Heeren K. [7] focus on low-carbon tourism itinerary planning and sustainable development indicators, which are based on the theoretical perspective of tourism experience value. López-Sánchez Y., Pulido-Fernández J.L., Durán-Román J.L. [8] propose “Indicators of Tourists’ Sustainable Intelligence” as a fundamental tool in the incorporation of tourists in the progress towards the sustainability of SDs. Niezgodá A. [9] evaluates the possibilities of evaluating sustainable tourism in Polish tourist regions, in particular, through the use of ETIS indicators and to assess for the availability of data for their calculation in the nationwide statistical system. Perchinunno P., L’Abbate S., Massari A. et al [10] investigate the interaction between tourism and territorial sustainability at the municipal level, using the DBSCAN (Density-Based Spatial Clustering of Applications with Noise) algorithm, analyze a set of sustainability and tourism-related indicators to identify spatial clusters of municipalities with similar performance. Punzo G., Trunfio M., Castellano R. [11] build and validate a composite indicator of sustainable tourism, which recognises the economic, environmental and social dimensions as the three main interrelated facets of tourism sustainability. Rasoolimanesh S.M., Ramakrishna S., Hall C.M. et al [12] systematically review the research contributions on the development of STIs based on four criteria including: i) the relevance of the STIs to the sustainable development goals; ii) governance; iii) stakeholders involved; and iv) the distinction between subjective and objective indicators. Šenková A., Dzurov Vargová T., Matušíková D. [13] identify the differences of significant social, economic, and environmental indicators with the tourism indicator. Torres-Delgado A., Cerdan Schwitzguébel A., Pareto Boada P. [14] consider Sustainable Tourism Indicators and their use in assessing sustainable tourism in cities. Zubiaga M., Sopelana A., Gandini A. et al [15] provide decision-makers with an extensive array of criteria and indicators, enabling informed decision-making, policy formulation, and impact assessment tailored to the distinctive attributes encountered in European destinations.

Despite the significant interest of domestic scientists in the issue of sustainable development of tourism and hospitality, there are almost no scientific works on the study of existing standards and indicators in this area.

The purpose of the article is to analyze international standards and indicators of sustainable tourism and hospitality development, particularly the criteria of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, and to determine their significance for the Ukrainian tourism and hospitality industry development.

Research methods: generalization and systematization (to identify groups of criteria and indicators of sustainable development in the tourism and hospitality industry); systemic and comprehensive analysis (to determine the importance of applying global sustainable tourism council standards for the Ukrainian tourism and hospitality industry development); graphical method (for visual representation of theoretical material).

Information base of the study: scientific foreign periodical literature, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council standards for sustainable travel, tourism and hospitality.

Main body of the research. In the context of rapid growth in the tourism industry and increasing attention to sustainability issues, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council standards have become an essential benchmark for the hospitality sector worldwide. They establish a unified understanding of sustainable tourism principles and set minimum requirements that all accommodation providers should strive to meet. This overview explores the structure and content of these standards, as well as the key indicators used to assess their implementation in the hotel industry.

GSTC Standards and Suggested Indicators for Hotels were created in an effort to come to a common understanding of sustainable tourism, and

are the minimum that a hotel (or any type of built accommodations) business should aspire to reach. The Hotel Standard (formerly known as GSTC Hotel Criteria) are organized around four main themes (Figure 1).

GSTC Criteria were created to provide a common understanding throughout the world of “sustainable tourism” and are the minimum that any tourism business should aspire to reach. Some of the uses of the criteria include the following: serve as the basis for certification for sustainability; serve as basic guidelines for businesses of all sizes to become more sustainable, and help businesses choose sustainable tourism programmes that fulfill these global criteria; provide greater market access in the growing market for sustainable products, serving as guidance both for travelers and for travel agencies in choosing suppliers and sustainable tourism programmes; help consumers identify sound sustainable tourism programmes and businesses; serve as a common denominator for information media to recognize sustainable tourism providers; help certification and other voluntary programmes ensure that their standards meet a broadly-accepted baseline [16].

The Criteria indicate what should be done, not how to do it or whether the goal has been achieved. This role is fulfilled by performance indicators which designed to provide guidance in measuring compliance with the GSTC Criteria for Hotels (Figure 2).

The GSTC standards and indicators for hotels serve as a universal tool aimed at promoting sustainable tourism worldwide. They cover key aspects of management, community engagement, cultural heritage preservation, and environmental protection. Applying these criteria

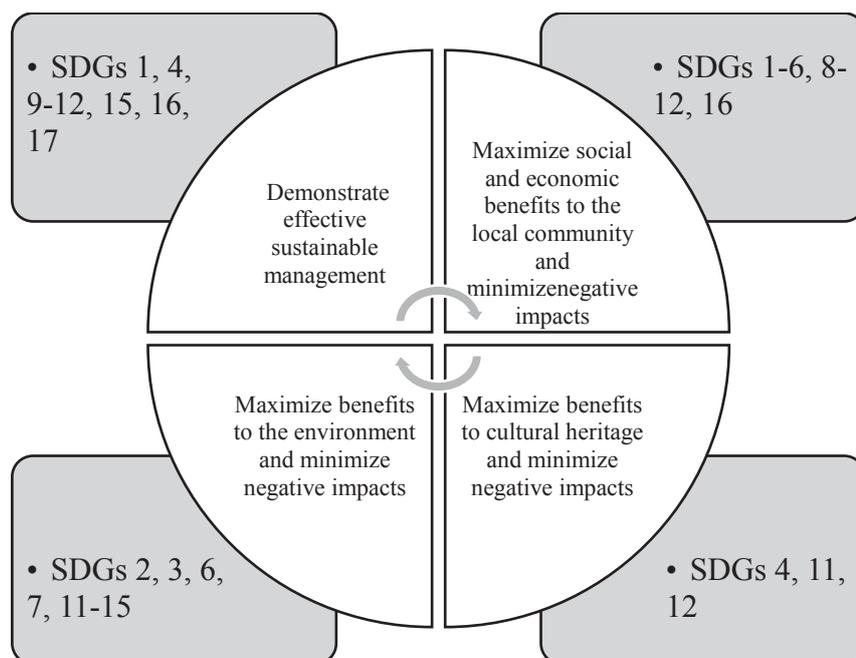
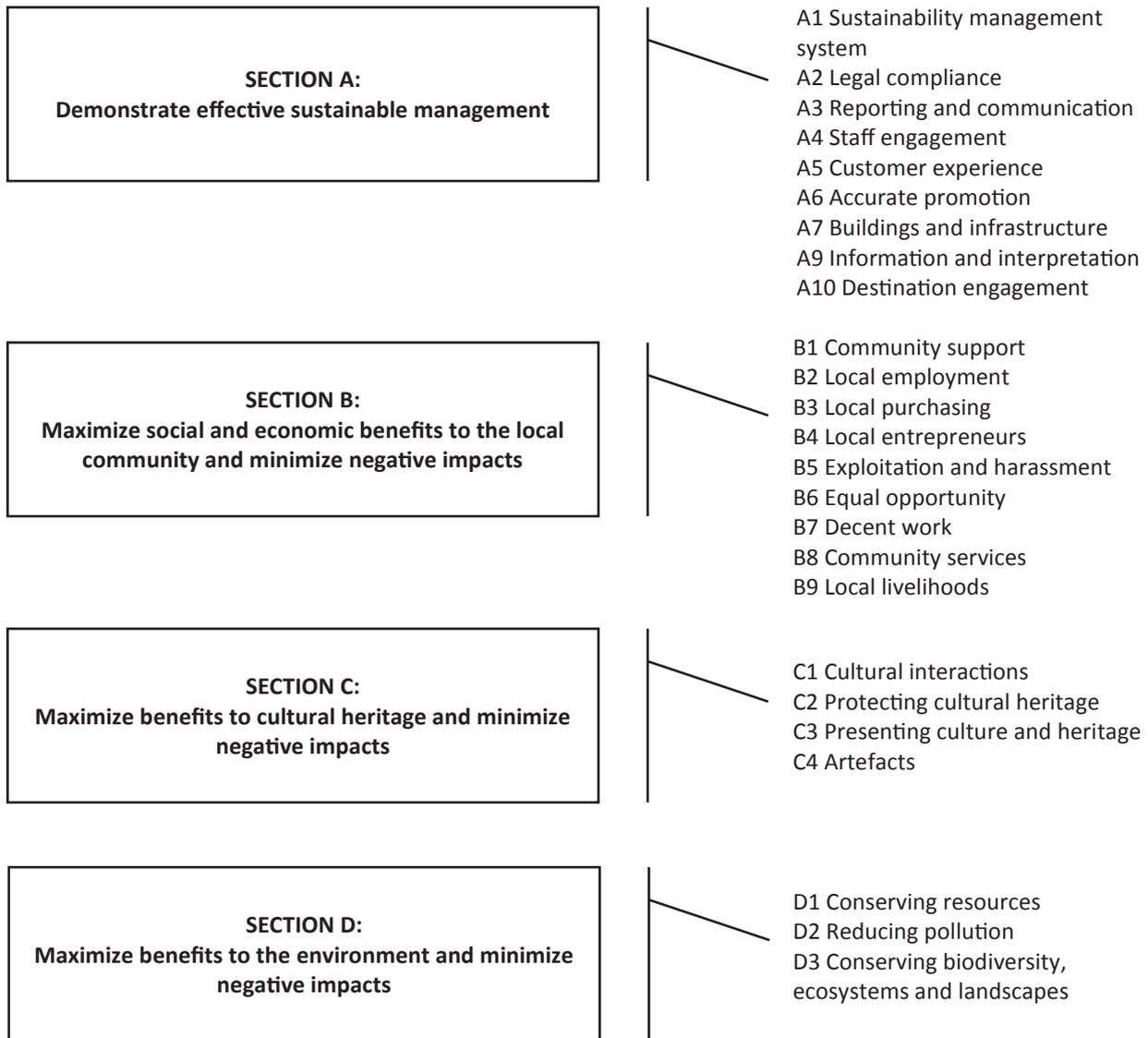


Fig. 1. The main themes of GSTC Hotel Criteria
Source: the authors' own study based on [16]



*Fig. 2. GSTC industry criteria for hotels
 Source: the authors' own study based on [16]*

not only enhances the internal sustainability of hotel operations but also increases their competitiveness in the global market. Implementing GSTC standards enables hotels to demonstrate responsible practices in social, cultural, and environmental dimensions, fostering trust among consumers and partners. Thus, the GSTC standards provide a solid foundation for the strategic development of the hospitality sector toward sustainability.

Tourism destinations, as integral components of socio-economic systems, must comply with international sustainability standards that ensure a balance between economic benefit, social equity, cultural authenticity, and environmental responsibility. In this regard, the standards of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council serve as a universal tool for assessing and managing the sustainable development of tourism destinations.

The GSTC Destination Standard v2.0 is the first revision to GSTC Destination Standard. The GSTC-D v2 includes performance indicators designed to provide guidance in measuring compliance with the Standard. The GSTC Destinations Criteria are the minimum that any tourism destination should aspire to reach. They are organized around four main themes: sustainable management; socio-economic impacts; cultural impacts; and environmental impacts (Figure 3).

Application of the standards will help a destination to contribute towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Against each of the Standards, one or more of the 17 SDGs is identified, to which it most closely relates.

Some of the uses of the GSTC Destination Criteria include the following: serve as the basis for certification for sustainability; serve as basic

guidelines for destinations that wish to become more sustainable; help consumers identify sound sustainable tourism destinations; serve as a common denominator for information media to recognize destinations and inform the public regarding their sustainability; help certification and other voluntary destination level programs ensure that their standards meet a broadly accepted baseline; offer governmental, non-governmental, and private sector programs a starting point for developing sustainable tourism requirements; serve as basic guidelines for education and training bodies, such as tourism schools and universities; demonstrate leadership that inspires others to act [17].

The criteria are in four sections, each with two or three sub-sections, as shown in the Figure 4. The order of the sections and sub-sections in no way indicates the relative importance of each topic. The performance indicators presented in the figure 4 are designed to provide guidance in measuring compliance with the criteria. The performance indicators essentially provide a suggested list of circumstances, factors, evidence and actions to be looked for in a destination in assessing compliance with the criteria.

The GSTC Destination Criteria v2.0 represent a comprehensive and structured framework for assessing and guiding sustainable tourism development at the destination level. By aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, these standards provide a globally recognized baseline for evaluating environmental, socio-economic, cultural, and managerial aspects of tourism sustainability.

The integration of performance indicators enhances the practical applicability of the criteria, enabling

destinations to monitor progress, identify gaps, and implement targeted improvements. The four thematic pillars – sustainable management, socio-economic sustainability, cultural sustainability, and environmental sustainability – offer a holistic approach that supports long-term resilience and responsible tourism practices.

Furthermore, the GSTC standards serve multiple stakeholders, including governments, private sector entities, educational institutions, and certification bodies, fostering collaboration and shared responsibility in achieving sustainability objectives. Their adoption not only contributes to the global sustainability agenda but also strengthens the competitiveness and reputation of tourism destinations in an increasingly conscious market.

The MICE industry (Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conferences/Conventions, and Events/Exhibitions) plays a crucial role in shaping regional image, stimulating economic activity, and developing infrastructure, while simultaneously exerting a significant impact on the environment and local communities.

Accordingly, the GSTC standards for the MICE sector serve as an essential tool for harmonizing approaches to sustainable management, ensuring socio-economic responsibility, and preserving cultural heritage. These standards provide a foundation for assessing and certifying sustainable practices in event organization, raise awareness among market participants, and act as a reference point for educational and professional programs.

The GSTC MICE Standard (for Venues, Event Organizers, and Events & Exhibitions) aim to serve as the global sustainability standards for the industry and were created to provide a common understanding of

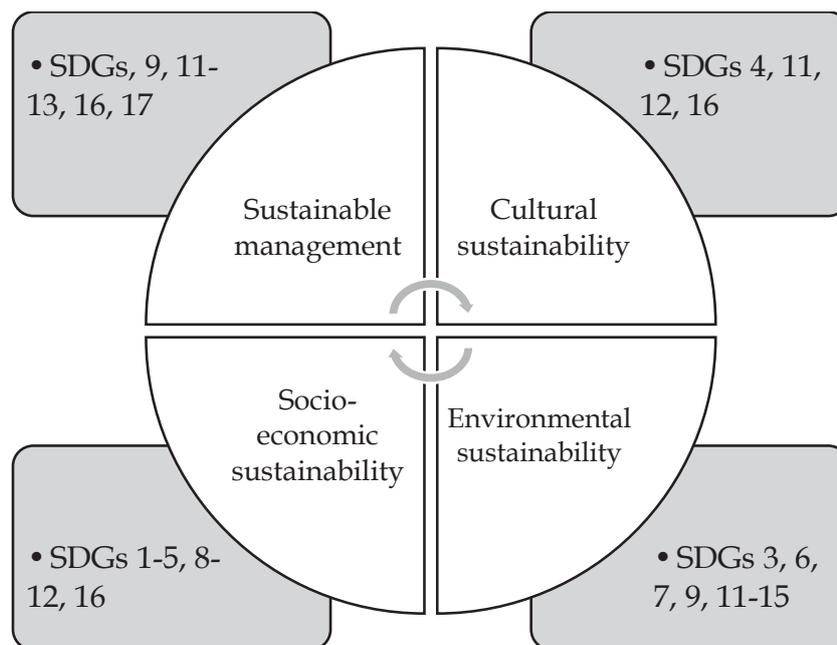


Fig. 3. The main themes of GSTC destination Criteria
 Source: the authors' own study based on [17]

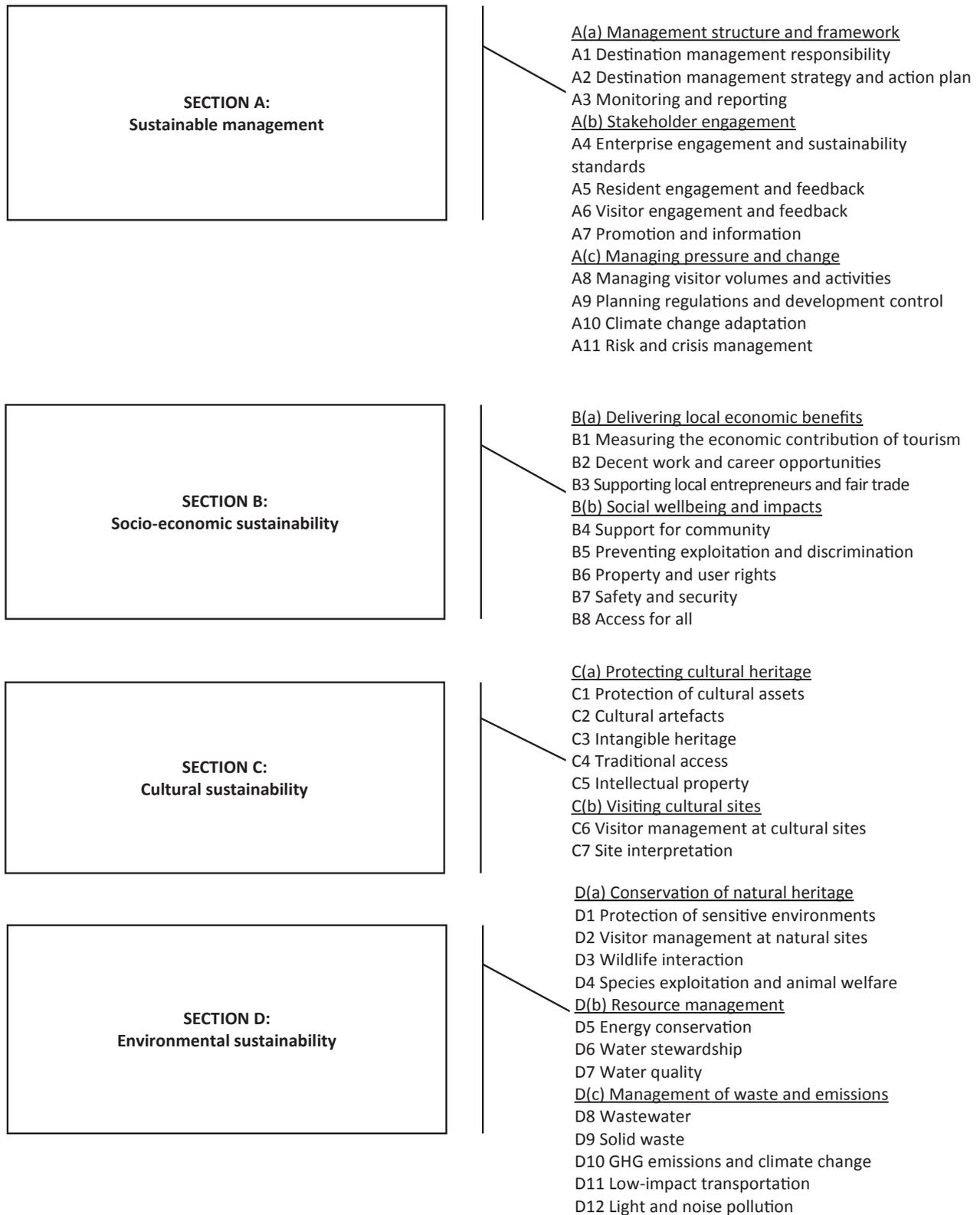


Fig. 4. GSTC industry criteria for destination
 Source: the authors' own study based on [17]

sustainable tourism in the MICE industry throughout the world. The GSTC MICE Standard are the minimum that any MICE business should aspire to reach. They are organized around four main themes: effective sustainability planning, maximizing social and

economic benefits for the local community, enhancing cultural heritage, and reducing negative impacts on the environment (Figure 5).

Some of the uses of the GSTC industry criteria for MICE include the following: help define sustainability

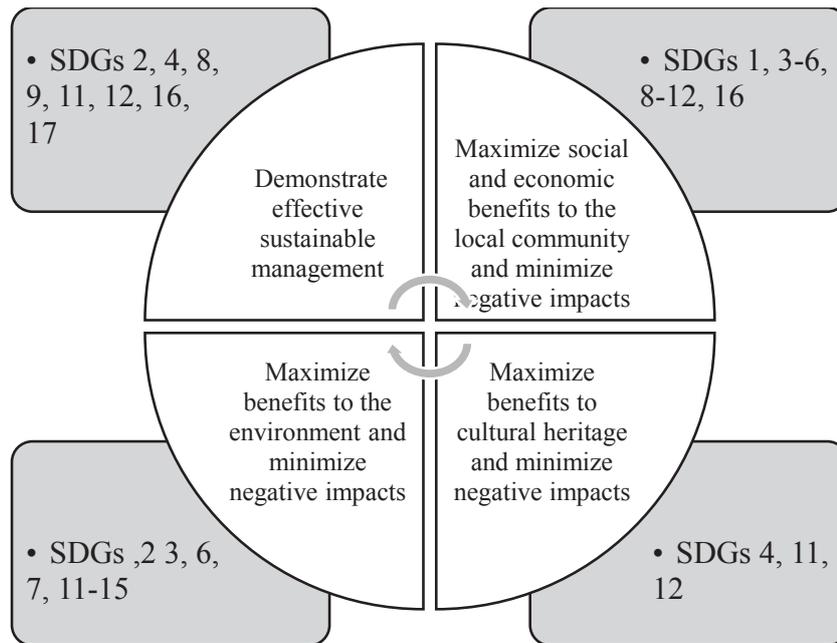


Fig. 5. The main themes of GSTC MICE Criteria
 Source: the authors' own study based on [18]

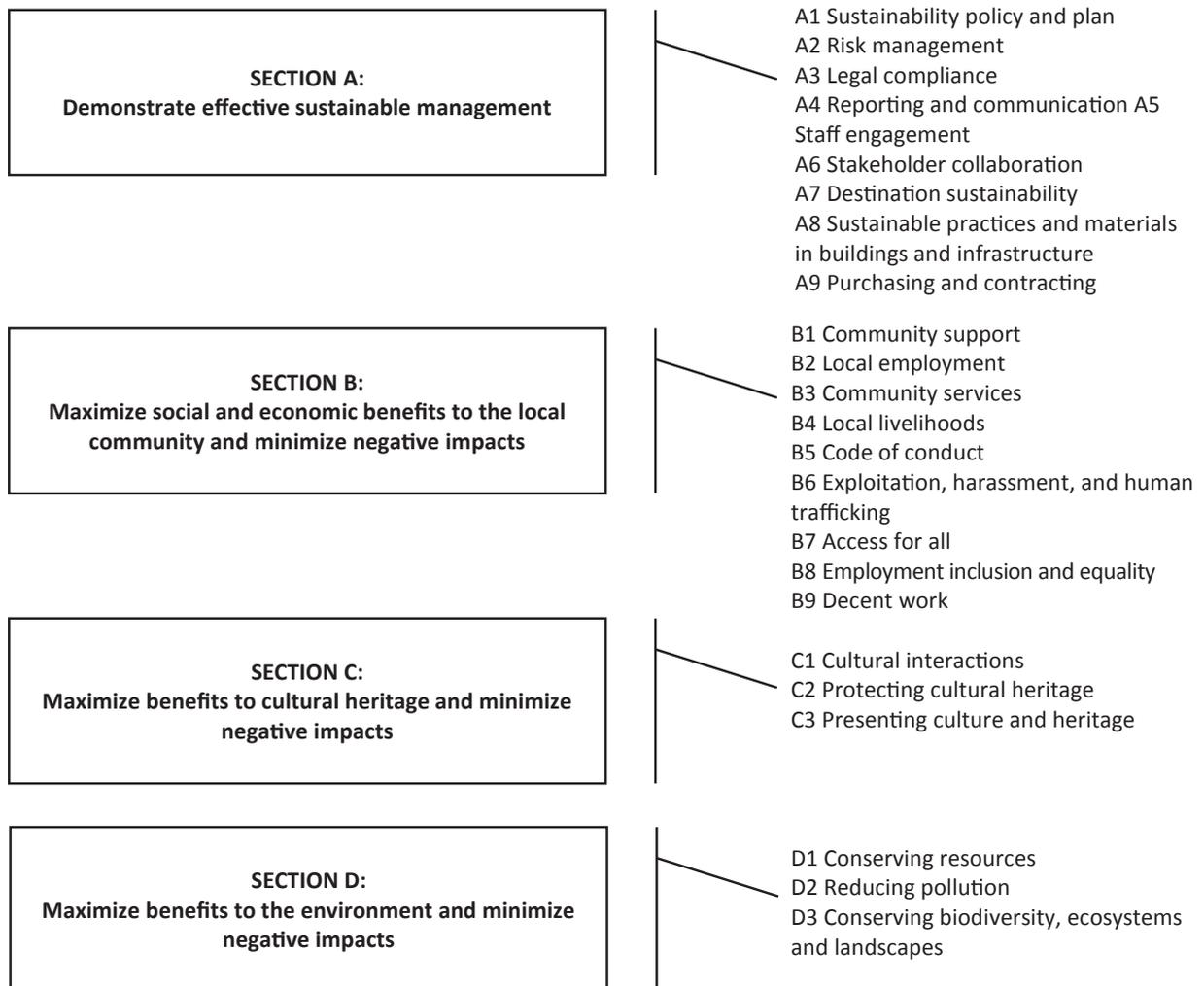


Fig. 6. GSTC industry criteria for MICE
 Source: the authors' own study based on [18]

in a holistic manner; raise awareness of the breadth and nature of sustainability; serve as the basis for certification for sustainability; serve as basic guidelines for MICE businesses to become more sustainable which includes guidance for identifying more sustainable suppliers and service providers; provide greater market access in the growing market for sustainable businesses, serving as guidance for the MICE businesses in choosing suppliers and partners; help consumers identify sound sustainable MICE businesses; serve as a common denominator for information media to recognize sustainable MICE businesses; offer both the public and private sectors a starting point for developing sustainable MICE business requirements; serve as basic guidelines for education and training on sustainable MICE by universities, hospitality schools, or associations; demonstrate leadership that inspires others to act [18].

The GSTC Standard indicate what should be done, not how to do it or whether the goal has been achieved. This role is fulfilled by performance indicators, associated educational materials, and access to tools for implementation, all of which are an indispensable complement to the GSTC Standard. The performance indicators presented in the figure 6 are designed to provide guidance in measuring compliance with the GSTC MICE Criteria.

By aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the GSTC Criteria offer MICE stakeholders a strategic foundation for minimizing negative impacts and maximizing positive contributions across social, economic, cultural, and ecological dimensions. The suggested performance indicators serve as essential tools for assessing compliance and guiding implementation, while also supporting education, certification, and market access. Ultimately, the GSTC MICE Standards empower businesses and institutions to lead by example, fostering a more responsible and resilient global tourism sector.

The significance of international standards and indicators of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) for the development of the Ukrainian tourism and hospitality industry is multifaceted:

1. Alignment with global practices. GSTC standards provide a globally recognized framework for sustainable tourism, ensuring that Ukrainian tourism and hospitality enterprises meet international benchmarks. This alignment enhances credibility and competitiveness in the global market.

2. Market access and competitiveness. Adoption of GSTC criteria opens access to international certification programs and sustainable tourism networks. This improves transparency, builds consumer trust, and attracts environmentally conscious travelers and foreign partners.

3. Post-crisis recovery and image building for Ukraine, which is recovering from economic and

social challenges, implementing GSTC standards is critical for shaping a positive image, integrating into European markets, and attracting foreign tourists and investments.

4. Environmental and cultural preservation. GSTC indicators emphasize resource conservation, pollution reduction, and cultural heritage protection. Their application helps Ukraine address environmental challenges and safeguard cultural assets, ensuring long-term resilience of the industry.

5. Support for local communities. Sustainable practices guided by GSTC standards promote local employment, fair trade, and community engagement, contributing to socio-economic development and regional stability.

Conclusions. The study confirms that international standards and indicators developed by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council are essential for establishing a unified approach to sustainable tourism and hospitality worldwide. These standards provide clear guidelines for environmental protection, cultural heritage preservation, and socio-economic responsibility, which are critical for ensuring balanced growth in the industry. By aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), GSTC criteria offer a comprehensive framework that addresses global sustainability challenges and promotes responsible tourism practices.

For Ukraine, the adoption of GSTC standards has strategic importance. The tourism and hospitality industry is currently undergoing recovery after significant economic and social disruptions, and implementing internationally recognized sustainability principles is vital for rebuilding competitiveness and trust. Compliance with GSTC criteria enables Ukrainian businesses to access global certification programs, attract environmentally conscious travelers, and strengthen partnerships with international stakeholders. This approach not only improves transparency and market positioning but also contributes to shaping a positive image of Ukraine as a sustainable destination.

Moreover, the integration of GSTC indicators supports long-term resilience by fostering resource efficiency, reducing environmental impacts, and encouraging community engagement. Sustainable practices guided by these standards create opportunities for local employment, fair trade, and cultural preservation, ensuring that tourism development benefits both businesses and society. Overall, the application of GSTC standards in Ukraine represents a necessary step toward harmonizing national tourism policies with global trends, enhancing competitiveness, and securing sustainable growth in an increasingly demanding international market.

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ОГЛЯД СТАНДАРТІВ ТА РЕКОМЕНДОВАНИХ ПОКАЗНИКІВ ДЛЯ ТУРИЗМУ ТА ГОСТИННОСТІ ГЛОБАЛЬНОЇ РАДИ ЗІ СТАЛОГО ТУРИЗМУ

У контексті стрімкого зростання туристичної індустрії та зростаючої уваги до питань сталого розвитку стандарти Глобальної ради зі сталого туризму стали важливим орієнтиром для сектору гостинності у всьому світі. В умовах інтеграції України у світовий туристичний простір впровадження зазначених стандартів є необхідним для забезпечення екологічної, соціальної та економічної збалансованості галузі. Предметом дослідження є стандарти та індикатори сталого розвитку туризму і гостинності, розроблені Глобальною радою зі сталого туризму (GSTC). Метою статті є аналіз міжнародних стандартів та індикаторів сталого розвитку туризму і гостинності, зокрема критеріїв Глобальної ради зі сталого туризму, та визначення їх значення для розвитку туристичної та готельної індустрії України. Завдання дослідження полягають у: аналізі структури та змісту міжнародних стандартів і індикаторів сталого розвитку туризму та гостинності з акцентом на критерії GSTC; визначенні значення та практичних аспектів застосування стандартів GSTC для підвищення конкурентоспроможності та сталості української туристичної та готельної індустрії. Методи дослідження: узагальнення та систематизація (для визначення груп критеріїв та індикаторів сталого розвитку індустрії туризму та гостинності); системний і комплексний аналіз (для визначення значення застосування стандартів Глобальної ради зі сталого туризму для розвитку туристичної та готельної галузі України); графічний метод (для наочного зображення теоретичного матеріалу). Результати. Здійснено комплексний огляд стандартів та рекомендованих індикаторів Глобальної ради зі сталого туризму (GSTC) для туризму та гостинності, з акцентом на їх структуру та ключові тематичні напрями. Проведено детальний аналіз чотирьох основних блоків критеріїв GSTC – ефективного управління сталим розвитком, соціально-економічної вигоди, збереження культурної спадщини та захист довкілля. Огляд показує, як ці стандарти узгоджуються з Цілями сталого розвитку ООН (SDGs) та слугують універсальною базою для оцінки сталості туристичних підприємств і дестинацій. Обґрунтовано необхідність застосування критеріїв GSTC для туристичної та готельної індустрії України, з акцентом на їх роль у підвищенні конкурентоспроможності та сталості. Підкреслено стратегічне значення цих стандартів для післякризового відновлення, формування позитивного іміджу України як сталого туристичного напрямку та забезпечення довгострокової стійкості через відповідальні практики.

Ключові слова: сталий розвиток, туризм, індустрія гостинності, Глобальна рада зі сталого туризму, міжнародний туризм, міжнародні відносини, індикатори сталого розвитку.

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