

FACTORS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE "BLEISURE" TREND IN CITIES ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE KRAKDENT® INTERNATIONAL DENTAL FAIR

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Aim: The aim of the research conducted during the fair on 30.03-5.04.2023 was to identify the factors for the development of the bleisure trend in cities based on the preferences of the participants of the 29th edition of the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair. The research mainly concerned the "bleisure" trend, which in business tourism concerns the combination of *business* and *leisure*, i.e., business duties and leisure.

Design/methodology/approach: The research was not commercial and was carried out as part of the cooperation of the Targi w Krakowie Ltd. with the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and the University of the National Education Commission in Krakow. The research was conducted based on primary data – a questionnaire collected between 30 March and 1 April 2023 during the 29th edition of the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair held at the International Exhibition and Congress Centre EXPO Kraków. The research was conducted among exhibitors and visitors, although the primary respondents were exhibitors.

Results: The research indicates expectations and contemporary trends in traveling among business tourists participating in the fair. The research verified the main research hypothesis as follows: *The primary determinant of the development of the "bleisure" trend in cities is the discounts offered in the area of city attractions and infrastructure.*

Research limitations/implications: The difficulty obtaining questionnaires from visitors to the fair was a significant limitation. In the future, it would be essential to continue this type of research among participants at trade fairs or other business events.

Practical implications: The research aimed to learn about the preferences of both exhibitors and visitors to prepare a better or tailored offer for them for subsequent editions of the event.

Social implications: The research subject has significant social implications, as bleisure tourism is an essential factor affecting human well-being and health. Bleisure tourism is of great social importance for people's mental comfort.

Originality/value: In the Polish literature on the subject, this type of research has not been carried out so far.

Keywords: bleisure, development factors, business tourism, cities, regeneration.

Work category: Research paper.

1. Introduction

The aim of the research conducted during the fair on 30.03-5.04.2023 was to identify the factors behind the development of the bleisure trend based on the participants' preferences of the 29th edition of the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair. The research mainly concerned the "bleisure" trend, which in business tourism concerns the combination of business and leisure, i.e., business duties and leisure. The assumption of the research was to learn about the preferences of exhibitors and visitors to the fair and to prepare a better or tailored offer for them for subsequent editions of the event. The research was not commercial and was carried out as part of the cooperation of the Fair in Krakow with the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and the University of the National Education Commission in Krakow.

Surveying fair participants' preferences seems crucial after the COVID-19 pandemic. It may indicate directions for adapting the city's offer or appropriate actions in creating a tourism policy aimed at encouraging participants of this type of event to extend their stay in the city. One of the assumptions of the research was to learn the opinions of respondents on the expectations towards both the organizers of the fair and the city in the area of possible factors motivating them to extend their stay during their arrival at the fair. The research indicates expectations and contemporary trends in traveling for business tourists participating in the fair. The research verified the main research hypothesis as follows: *The primary determinant of the development of the "bleisure" trend in cities is the discounts offered in the area of city attractions and infrastructure.*

2. The "bleisure" trend in business travel

According to the Collins Dictionary (2024), the word "bleisure" is described as the phenomenon of blurring the line between business and leisure travel, while the combination of the words "business" and "leisure" was first used in 2007 in a press release of the Carlson Hotels (carlson.com) hotel chain. The same term (also bizcation, busitainment) also appeared in 2008 in The Future Laboratory report (LS: N Global 2008) as a term for a broader consumer trend not only in the field of tourism (after Kachniewska, 2015, p. 44). Lichy and Mcleay (2018, p. 517) call people who combine work and leisure as "bleisure travelers". Authors such as Cohen (2011), Smith, and Carmichael (2007), Unger, Uriely and Fuchs (2016), and Uriely and Reichel (2000) have studied the experiences of business travelers. Caicedo-Barreth et al. (2020, p. 120) tried to find an answer to whether the development of the attractiveness of a place in terms of business tourism and the bleisure trend can stimulate the growth of tourism in the region. According to M. Pinho and H. Marques (2021, p. 346), combining business and leisure

into one trip, or "bleisure," is becoming increasingly popular nowadays. This segment has gained a boost, especially from the millennial generation. However, the COVID-19 pandemic had a critical impact on this trend's development, as other foreign authors indicated.

For example, S. Wales et al. (2023, p. 657) refer to bleisure travel as the terminology typically used to designate travel that includes business and leisure elements. In this case, business travelers extend their journey to enjoy spending their free time in the visited place. Research conducted by the indicated authors has shown that due to the pandemic COVID-19 tourist travelers are highly demotivated, scared, and anxious. However, the results also showed that the future of leisure travel seems unpredictable, and therefore, a different approach to business in this area is necessary.

It is also worth noting that research on "bleisure" has so far been conducted, for example, by Lichy & McLeay (2018) on motivation and typology, Chung et al. (2020) on the bleisure tourism experience chain and implications for tourism marketing; Bi et al. (2020) on experiences, mixed emotions and revisiting by bleisure tourists; Adhiatma et al. (2019) in the field of business and "bleisure" in the organization; Keadplang (2018) on developing the competitiveness of wellness tourism towards the experience of VIO and bleisure tourists.

3. Characteristics of the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair

The KRAKDENT®¹ Fair is an international exhibition of products and services in dentistry. The event combines a scientific program for dentists, dental technicians, hygienists, and assistants. The fair is addressed to professionals professionally associated with the medical industry. More than 300 exhibitors usually attend the event. During the fair, several dozen hours of medical courses, training, workshops, and the International Dental Congress Dental Spaghetti are held. In addition, the event offers several attractions on the KRAKDENT MeetUp stage. Numerous new products are presented at the stands. In 2023, the fair was attended by 323 exhibitors, including 77 foreign (from Austria, Belgium, China, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Spain, Japan, the Netherlands, Germany, South Korea, Polish, Romania, Slovakia, Switzerland, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the USA, Italy and the UAE), as well as 10,303 visitors. One thousand seventy (1070) people participated in the KRAKDENT® program (including the Dental Spaghetti Congress and pre-congress courses: 264 people) (<https://krakdent.pl/>, 22.10.2023).

¹ The organiser of the fair is Targi w Krakowie Ltd.

4. Material and methods

The research was conducted based on primary data – a questionnaire collected between 30 March and 1 April 2023 during the 29th edition of the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair held at the International Exhibition and Congress Centre EXPO Kraków. The research was conducted among exhibitors and visitors, although the primary respondents were exhibitors. Statistical analysis was used to achieve the assumed empirical goals and verify the hypotheses, including Spearman's rho and chi-square correlation test to confirm the research hypotheses; in addition, the following tests were used to examine the significance of the influence of sociodemographic traits on other diagnostic variables: chi-square, *Mann-Whitney U* and *W. Wilcoxon, rho Spearman*.

Various research tools and techniques were also used. A questionnaire for exhibitors and business visitors was used to obtain data from primary sources. The survey was conducted on 181 respondents (people traveling outside their residences to participate in trade fairs).

In the study, exhibitors and visitors to the fair used the techniques of paper and electronic questionnaire versions. In the first technique, the respondents' answers are marked in writing. This technique was primarily used among exhibitors. The second technique is placing a questionnaire on the website, which the respondents fill in online. The respondent reads the questions and marks the answers (Mider, 2013, p. 211). This technique was conducted on social networks via a research panel *Online research* (<http://researchonline.pl/>, 20.10.2023), where a questionnaire was created. The selection of units for the study was non-random – units typical among the participants of the fair who expressed their willingness to participate in the survey. The size and structure of the general population were determined on the basis of available data, verified, and registered participants of the fair in the amount of 319 entities.

The questionnaire was constructed so that the answers to the questions contained in the questionnaire were a source of data that would allow the verification of research hypotheses. At the beginning of the questionnaire, there is information about the purpose of the study and general instructions on how to answer the questions. The term "bleisure" trend was also given, which in business tourism is about the connection of *business* and *leisure*, i.e., business duties and leisure. In addition, some questions were accompanied by detailed instructions on the rules for completing them, such as the need to rank selected factors in order of importance or the possibility of adding your answer, etc. As part of the research, an attempt was made to determine the factors determining respondents' extending their stay and combining business and leisure purposes. The determinants were specified in most of the survey questions and concerned, for example, the type of activity during the extension of the stay, incentives to extend the stay during a business trip, barriers hindering the extension of the stay, or opinions on the expectations of both the organizers and the city in terms of activities encouraging to combine a business stay with a leisure stay.

The questionnaire consisted of 17 questions (introductory, substantive, and imprint), including eight closed questions, six semi-open/semi-closed questions with the possibility of adding their own answer, and 3 open questions. The first two questions in the questionnaire were introductory, 15 were problematic–substantive questions and the last was a metric². The first was a filtering question designed to identify the nature of the respondents – fair participants as exhibitors or visitors. The next question concerned the motive of coming to the fair only for business or business and leisure. The next question concerned the duration of stay at the fair, and the next question was the time of extending the stay before or after the fair. Questions 5-7 concerned activities during and after the fair. Questions 8-10 concern the determinants of extending the stay and barriers in this area.

As part of the research of the fair participants, questionnaires were collected from 268 people. The data collected in the questionnaires were verified. After rejecting some of the surveys, unfinished or incorrectly completed (as part of the so-called data reduction stage), the selected surveys in 181 were properly coded (thus enabling statistical analyses) and entered into an Excel sheet. They were then transferred to the R program, where the study was performed.

To verify the assumed selected hypotheses, the following tests were used:

- to check whether the tendency to extend the stay depends on the influence of sociodemographic variables, i.e., age and size of residence, the following tests were used: *Mann-Whitney and W. Wilcoxon, rho Spearman*. The correlation coefficient ρ_{Spearman} measures the strength of the interdependence between variables, but in this case, a normally distributed quantitative scale is no longer required (<https://www.statystyka.az.pl/korelacja-rho-spearmana.php> 11.11.2023). The Wilcoxon test is equivalent to the Student's t-test for dependent samples. It is used to compare two pairs of measurements in one group in terms of results expressed on an ordinal quantitative scale, when the assumptions of *the Student's test t* (no outliers, equivalence of groups, uniformity of variance) are not met (<https://pogotowiestatystyczne.pl/slowniki/test-wilcoxona/>, 11.11.2023).
- to check the tendency to extend the stay or use the city's attractions, depending on the type of exhibitor, the chi-square and Pearson tests were used. In addition, it was also examined whether the respondents' answers to a given question (Y_j) depend on their selected sociodemographic characteristics (X_i) and other diagnostic variables (Y_j); for example, in issues related to the organization of the trip, it was examined whether this variable (Y_i) depends on sociodemographic characteristics (X_i).

² More on this topic: Poskrobko, Borys, Czaja, Poskrobko, 2020, p. 196.

By the rules standard in socio-economic research, materiality at $\alpha = 0.05$ (Aczel, 2006, p. 308), if p (test probability) was less than 0.05, then the H_0 hypothesis should be rejected and the H_1 hypothesis accepted. Otherwise ($p > 0.05$), there were no grounds for falsification of H_0 .

5. Characteristics of the respondents in general

A total of 152 exhibitors and 30 visitors took part in the survey, according to the data presented in Figure 1.

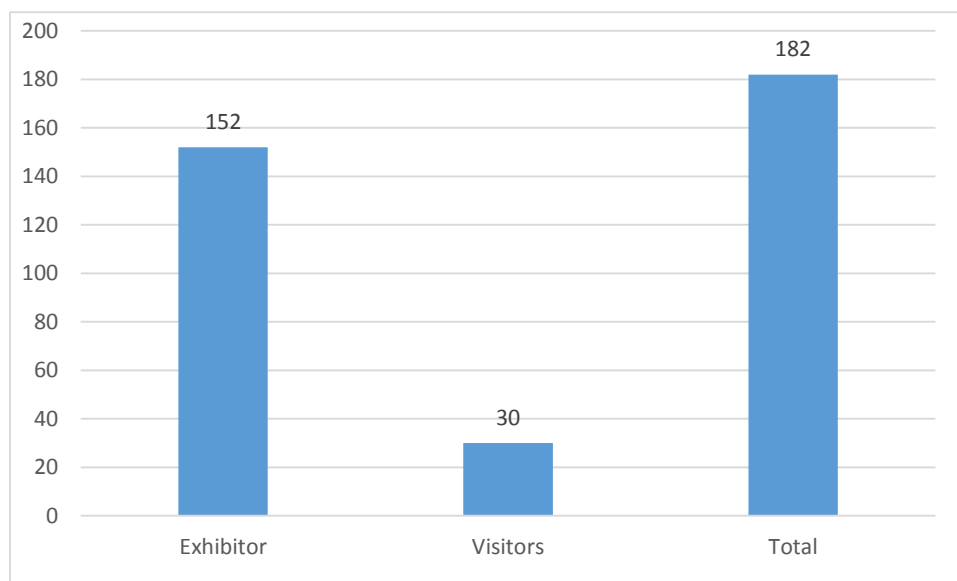


Figure 1. Number of respondents – participants of the International Fair KRAKDENT®.

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

Respondents participating in the fair most often represented the age groups of generations Y and X, 1981-1995 (Y) and 1965-1980 (X). The survey involved 83% of people with higher education. On the other hand, 93% of them were professionally active. They represented professions related to the dental industry: dental assistant, dentist, dental industry, doctor, nurse, dental technician, hygienist, and prosthetist. The fair was also attended by representatives of other businesses, i.e., the following industries: event, export, financial, graphic, media, trade, and marketing.

The respondents surveyed represented as many as 44 cities in Poland. The fair had an international character, although the participants and foreign exhibitors who took part in the survey did not provide their place of origin or enter their place of residence in Poland. Most people came from Warsaw and large cities.

6. Results

6.1. Positive determinants of the "bleisure" trend in the opinion of the participants of the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair

To verify the determinants of the development of the "bleisure" trend in cities, research hypotheses were assumed - the main - *The primary determinant of the development of the "bleisure" trend in cities are the discounts offered in the area of the city's attractions and infrastructure* and partial:

H1: *The younger the participants, the greater the tendency to extend their stay.*

H2: *Participants in larger cities are more likely to extend their stay.*

H3: *The most critical factors encouraging people to extend their stay are the desire to rest, discounts on accommodation, and cultural facilities.*

H4: *Exhibitors are more likely to extend their stay than trade fair participants.*

One of the determinants of the development of the bleisure trend may be the age of the participants, so using the Spearman rho and Mann-Whitney U correlation test, it was verified whether age could be one of the factors influencing this trend (Tab. 1).

Table 1.

Differences in the age of trade fair participants and the willingness to extend their stay

Ranks	Extends/ does not extend	Number of respondents	Average rank	The sum ranks
Birth in years:	0,00	156	86,75	13532,50
	1,00	17	89,32	1518,50
	Total	173		
Z = -0.216; p-value = 0.829				

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

According to Table 1 a partial hypothesis (1) was assumed: *The younger the participants, the greater the tendency to extend their stay.*

Table 2.

The relationship between the tendency to extend the stay and the age of the participants

Correlations		How many days do you extend your stay at the fair?	Birth in years
Spearman rho	How many days do you extend your stay at the fair?	Correlation coefficient	1,000
		Materiality (two-sided)	.
		Number of respondents	181
	Birth in years	Correlation coefficient	0,031
		Materiality (two-sided)	0,687
		Number of respondents	172

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

The results of the analyses (Tab. 2) using Spearman's rho correlation test did not indicate that age was statistically significantly correlated with the number of extended days of stay after the fair ($p > 0.05$). Also, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test (Tab. 1) examined differences

in terms of age between people who declared that they were overstaying and others who did not indicate significant differences ($p > 0.05$).

The second potential determinant verified was the size of the cities from which the respondents came.

Table 3.

Differences in the size of the city of residence and the desire to extend the stay

Ranks	Extends/does not extend	Number of respondents	Average rank	The sum ranks
Size of residence	0,00	154	85,53	13171,50
	1,00	17	90,26	1534,50
	Total	171		
Z = -0.401; p-value= 0.688				

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

The second partial Hypothesis (2) was also verified as follows: *Participants from larger cities tend to extend their stay* (Tab. 3).

Table 4.

The relationship between the tendency to overstay and the size of cities

Correlations		How many days do you extend your stay at the fair?	Size of residence
Spearman rho	Point 4. How many days do you extend your stay at the fair?	Correlation coefficient	1,000
		Materiality (two-sided)	.
		Number of respondents	181
	Size of residence	Correlation coefficient	-.003
		Materiality (two-sided)	0,974
		Number of respondents	170

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

The results of the analyses (Tab. 4) using Spearman's rho correlation test did not indicate that the size of the inhabited city was statistically significantly correlated with the number of extended days of stay after the fair ($p > 0.05$). Also, the results of the Mann-Whitney U test (Tab. 3) examining differences in terms of the size of the place of residence between the persons who declared that they were overstaying and the others did not indicate any significant differences ($p > 0.05$).

Various factors may encourage people to extend your stay. Therefore, it was investigated which could be the most relevant and encourage fair participants to stay in the city longer. The results may also indicate what actions trade fair organizers should take in this regard. They are illustrated in Figure 2. Another partial hypothesis (3) was assumed - *The most important factors encouraging the extend the stay are the desire to rest, discounts on accommodation, and cultural facilities.*

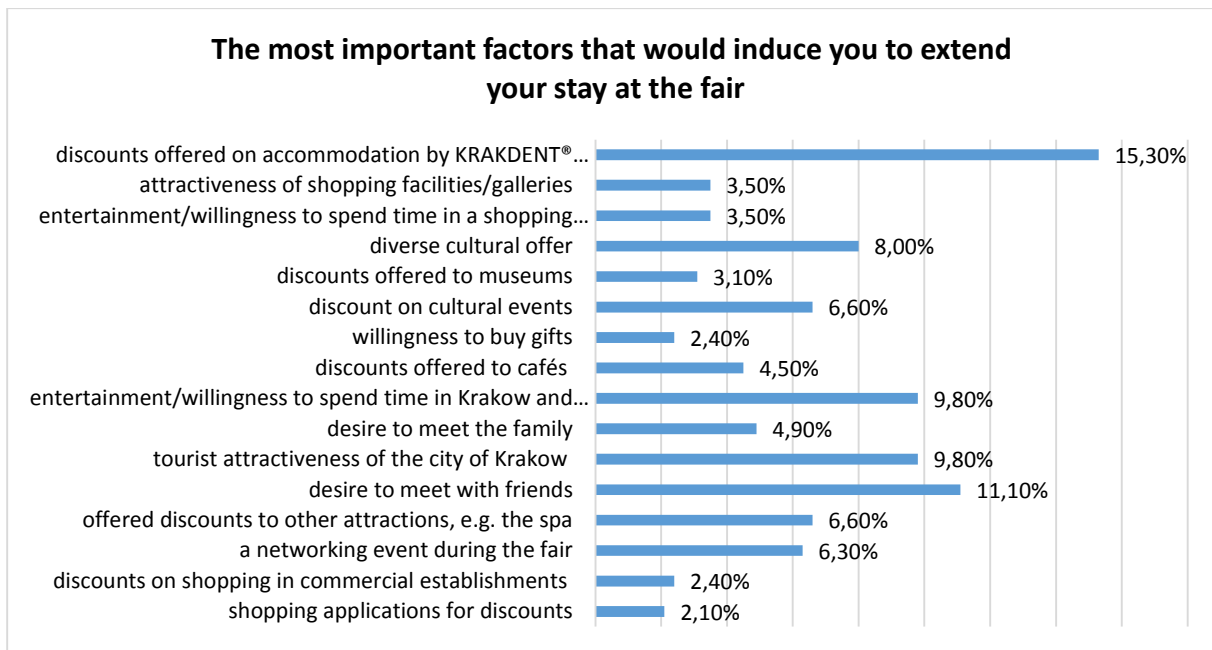


Figure 2. Factors prompting respondents to extend their stay due to KRAKIDENT® participation.

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

The respondents indicated that the factors that most encourage them to extend their stay at the fair are discounts on accommodation offered by the KRADENT® Fair organizer (15.3%). Further places were:

- the desire to meet a friend (11.1%),
- the tourist attractiveness of the city of Krakow,
- entertainment/desire to spend time in Krakow and rest (9.8% each),
- a diverse cultural offer (8%).

For the respondents, incentives such as the possibility of using other attractions, e.g., a health resort, are also significant. In terms of influencing the development of this trend, it would be essential to promote the city's attractiveness to tourists or to promote various events and entertainment, particularly cultural ones (Fig. 2).

Another research area was to investigate whether the type of participants can influence on the development of the "bleisure" trend and the desire to extend their stay (Tab. 5). For this purpose, a partial hypothesis (4) was verified - *exhibitors are likelier to extend their stay than fair participants*.

The results of the analysis with chi-squares for cross-tabs (Tab. 5) showed statistically significant differences in the answers to the question about how many days you came to the fair (chi-square = 65.49; $p < 0.001$). The results show that visitors usually stay at the fair for one day, while in the case of exhibitors, the stay for three days of the fair dominates (80.9%). Also, when it comes to extending the stay, there are significant differences between these groups – much more often, exhibitors decide to extend their stay (11.2%) compared to visitors (3.3%).

Table 5.
Length of stay at trade fairs by exhibitors and visitors

Question about the length of stay at the fair			Group		Total
			exhibitor	visitors	
How many days did you come to the fair?	1 day	Multiplicity	7	14	21
		% of Group	4,6%	46,7%	11,5%
	2 days	Multiplicity	5	7	12
		% of Group	3,3%	23,3%	6,6%
	3 days	Multiplicity	123	8	131
		% of Group	80,9%	26,7%	72,0%
	I extend my stay	Multiplicity	17	1	18
		% of Group	11,2%	3,3%	9,9%
Total		Multiplicity	152	30	182
		% of Group	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test (Tab. 6), referring to the differences in the answers to the question *How many days do you extend your stay at the fair*, did not indicate significant differences between exhibitors and visitors ($p > 0.05$).

Table 6.
Comparison of groups of exhibitors and visitors in terms of the number of days of extension of stay at the fair

Question about extending the stay	Group	Number of respondents	Average rank	The sum ranks
How many days do you extend your stay at the fair?	exhibitor	152	88,80	13497,00
	visitors	29	102,55	2974,00
	total	181		
$Z = -1.641$; $p\text{-value} = 0.101$				

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

Referring to the results of activities outside the fair date, no significant differences between exhibitors and fair participants were indicated. There was one trend ($0.1 > p > 0.05$) in the case of participation in a cultural event (exhibitors 4.9%; visitors 18.2%; chi-square = 2.941; $p = 0.086$).

Analyzing the answers to question concerning the factors that would encourage the respondents to extend their stay at the fair, the following differences between exhibitors and participants of the fair were indicated: attractiveness of commercial facilities/galleries (exhibitors 6%; visitors 23.8%; chi-square = 6.100; $p = 0.014$); shopping applications entitling to discounts (exhibitors 3.6%; visitors 19.0%; chi-square = 8,848; $p = 0.012$). In the case of the other variables, no significant differences between the groups were noted.

6.2. Barriers to the development of the "bleisure" trend in cities according to respondents

Various barriers may be obstacles to the development of additional activities. Thus, the desire to extend the stay was a reason the participants were asked what a barrier was for them in this area (Tab. 8).

Table 8.*Barriers to the possibility of extending the stay during the fair in the opinion of the respondents*

Barrier type	Number of respondents	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
Lack of time	116	1	5	4,34	1,157
Communication difficulties in travelling	107	1,00	5,00	2,1776	1,37232
No additional leave	106	1,00	5,00	3,2358	1,50271
My personal economic situation prevents me from extending my stay	105	1,00	5,00	2,4667	1,30138
Too short opening hours of the main attractions/monuments discouraged me from extending my stay	105	1,00	5,00	2,2095	1,20651
Too few attractions offered by the KRAKDENT® Fair	108	1,00	5,00	2,7037	1,32735
N Important (disabling observations)	91				

Source: own elaboration based on survey.

The most critical barriers to extending the stay are primarily a lack of free time and holidays. The barriers also include pets at home, fatigue, and longing for family (Tab. 8).

7. Discussion

According to M. Kachniewska (2025, pp. 42-44), dynamic transformations in the structure and ways of using free time in postmodern society are an essential social trend that affects the nature of contemporary tourism, particularly in business tourism. The combination of business and leisure aspects of travel (bleisure trend) is not without impact on the expectations of travelers towards the offer of hotel facilities or the organizers themselves events aimed at acquiring business meetings. The desire to intensify tourists' use of free time is essential for creating a tourist offer because the possibility of diversifying experiences during tourist trips is considered a critical element of their quality. Tourist service providers create extensive proposals for spending time, which is partly part of the experience economy. According to Pine and Gilmore (2011), experience creates new value. The desire for new experiences is changing the face of business tourism. Social media are essential, enabling immediate information sharing, which is conducive to disseminating business travel patterns extended to entertainment and educational purposes. The intermixture of the words "business" and "leisure" (bleisure) as well as "education" and "entertainment" (edutainment) reflects the essence of the trend relevant to the planning of various projects (conferences, training, congresses, company meetings, business trips, etc.) (Kachniewska, 2015, p. 44). The fashion for combining business and leisure purposes means that the meetings industry should also adapt its offer to this trend to meet the requirements of tourists in this area. This aspect is also pointed out by N. Laili Mohd Sohaili, N. Aminudin, and A. Fitri Amir (2022, pp. 911-919), who emphasize the importance of motivation to visit attractions and the appropriate offer in this regard for different segments of tourists.

8. Conclusion

The analysis of the research results leads to essential conclusions for both the organizers and the city, which indicate a positive verification of the assumed central hypothesis, which reads that the *primary determinant of the development of the bleisure trend in cities is the discounts offered in the area of city attractions and infrastructure.*

For the development of the "bleisure" trend, it would be necessary for the following to offer by:

- organizers of discounts on accommodation for exhibitors as well as to the restaurants;
- fair organizers in cooperation with organizers of cultural events discounts on cultural events and SPA shopping, including shopping applications entitled to discounts.

These attractions are more critical for visitors because they have more time to participate in attractions or do shopping than exhibitors.

On the other hand, if it wants to revive the "bleisure" trend, the city should promote hotel and catering facilities among exhibitors, tourist attractions, cultural events, and shopping among visitors, including local products and commercial facilities.

However, the future of leisure travel is difficult to predict, given the tourism situation due to COVID-19. The pandemic has not only changed the travel model of tourists but also has significant implications for the future of the tourism business. It is necessary to search for and create new offers for tourists. One such destination can be "bleisure" travel.

Further research on bleisure tourism should look at the preferences of business tourists in the international market of the meetings industry, considering segmentation of various professions. In the future, it would be essential to continue this type of research among participants at trade fairs or other business events.

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