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## **PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE "BLEISURE" TREND IN CITIES IN THE OPINION OF THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE 29TH EDITION OF THE KRAKDENT® INTERNATIONAL DENTAL FAIR**

**PERSPEKTYWY ROZWOJU TRENDU  
BLEISURE W MIASTACH W OPINII  
UCZESTNIKÓW 29. EDYCJI  
MIĘDZYNARODOWYCH TARGÓW  
STOMATOLOGICZNYCH KRAKDENT®**



## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** The article aims to determine the prospects for developing the *bleisure* trend in cities in the opinion of participants in the 29th edition of the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair. The main practical goal was to compare the elements contributing to developing the *bleisure* trend in the cities identified by domestic and foreign participants in the fair. The research concerned the *bleisure* trend, a combination of business and leisure. The authors highlight the importance of the *bleisure* trend for creating sustainability in a tourist destination.

**Methods:** The research was conducted based on a questionnaire during the 29th edition of the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair held at the International Exhibition and Convention Centre EXPO Kraków. The research was conducted among both exhibitors and visitors.

**Results:** Study participants believe that the *bleisure* trend will grow in cities. It is an essential factor in improving employee job satisfaction and productivity.

**Conclusions:** The article raises important questions about the opinions of business tourists on the prospects of the *bleisure* trend in cities. Cities, as well as the business tourism industry, should take these issues into account in creating and promoting an appropriate offer in this regard.

**KEYWORDS:** *bleisure, cities, development prospects, management of business tourism, guidelines*

## STRESZCZENIE

**Cel pracy:** Celem artykułu jest określenie perspektyw rozwoju trendu *bleisure* w miastach w opinii uczestników 29. edycji Międzynarodowych Targów Stomatologicznych KRAKDENT®. Głównym celem praktycznym było porównanie elementów mogących przyczynić się do rozwoju trendu *bleisure* w miastach wskazanych przez krajowych i zagranicznych uczestników targów. Badania dotyczyły trendu *bleisure*, czyli połączenia biznesu z wypoczynkiem. Autorzy zwracają uwagę na znaczenie trendu *bleisure* dla tworzenia zrównoważonego rozwoju w destynacji turystycznej.

**Metody:** Badania przeprowadzono w oparciu o kwestionariusz ankiety podczas 29. edycji Międzynarodowych Targów Stomatologicznych KRAKDENT® odbywających się w Międzynarodowym Centrum Targowo-Kongresowym EXPO Kraków. Badania prowadzone były zarówno wśród wystawców, jak i zwiedzających.

**Wyniki:** Uczestnicy badania uważają, że trend *bleisure* będzie się rozwijał w miastach. Jest to istotny czynnik poprawiający satysfakcję z pracy i produktywność pracowników.

**Wnioski:** W artykule poruszono istotne kwestie dotyczące opinii turystów biznesowych na temat perspektyw rozwoju trendu *bleisure* w miastach. Miasta, jak i branża turystyki biznesowej powinni wziąć pod uwagę te kwestie w zakresie kreowania i promocji odpowiedniej oferty w tym zakresie.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** *bleisure, miasta, perspektywy rozwoju, zarządzanie turystyką biznesową, wytyczne*

## INTRODUCTION

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the issue of people's mental health, especially employees, has become important. As such, *bleisure* travel can be essential in helping regenerate human strength or well-being. This trend, although not new, has recently gained importance. Therefore, it is necessary to get to know the opinions of business tourists in this regard. As a first step, it was verified whether they think this type of travel, whereby business and leisure are combined, has the potential to develop even further. What factors are essential in this context, what can be an opportunity, and what is a barrier to the development of *bleisure* travel? These trips are also crucial for employers, who should consider them in their human resources management strategy. They can also be important in encouraging employees to travel for business. An original approach to this issue, taking into account the international community, the research was conducted among business tourists during the prestigious KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair. The article's content will contribute to developing scientific knowledge about the role of *bleisure* trends in management theory and practice. It may help managers better manage people, organizations, and changes in the work market, considering the *bleisure* trend.

## 1. TOURISM AND BLEISURE TOURIST – INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUE

*Bleisure* travel is defined in the literature as trips that include both business and recreational elements, wherein business travelers extend their journey to spend their free time in the place they are visiting (Wales et al., 2023, p. 657). As Johnson (2022) points out, the word *bleisure* is a combination of the words *business* and *leisure*, and, as the term suggests, is a type of travel that combines business and leisure aspects. This type of travel has recently been gaining popularity (Pinho, 2021, p. 346) among travelers and companies, with business travelers often combining business travel with leisure, especially when working abroad and using the time for sightseeing, going to the beach, or the hotel spa (Johnson, 2022). In the literature on the subject, one can also find such terms as *hybrid travel*, which means combining work and tourism but also medical and political visits or migrations (Batala & Slevitch, 2024; Unger et al., 2016). Chung et al. (2020) define *bleisure travel* as a new type of travel in which travelers also include leisure elements in their business trips. Based on this definition, as well as the research carried out, the following extended definition of this type of travel is proposed: *Bleisure travel is travel for business purposes, when people combine business with leisure and entertainment, either during an extension of stay or leisure time outside work. They go on this journey alone, with co-workers with family, or other accompanying persons.*

*Bleisure* tourists, on the other hand, are people who extend their business stay and enjoy entertainment outside work. They usually extend it by arriving earlier, leaving later, or taking friends and family to spend free time with them. There is an opinion that the happier the business traveler, the better the benefits they bring to the company (Johnson, 2022). Two types of leisure travelers are mentioned in the literature. The first category includes business travelers who take friends or family members to spend leisure time with them, while the second type of people includes corporations, groups, or conference participants who include a few days of holidays in their business visits (Iyengar & Venkatesh, 2024).

The study focused on the prospects for the development of the *bleisure* trend in cities, filling a gap in science in this area. To date, previous research has focused on, for example, the *bleisure* tourism experience chain

and implications for tourism marketing (Chung et al., 2020); on experiences, mixed emotions, and revisiting *bleisure* tourists (Bi et al., 2020); on the trend in *bleisure* tourism and the potential of this business-leisure symbiosis in Porto (Pinho & Marques, 2021); on *bleisure* tourism: business and leisure together (Mercan&Sandıkçı,2024);on competitiveness of Guayaquil toward *bleisure* tourism (Caicedo-Barreth et al.,2020); on exploring the future trends of *bleisure* tourism in Nepal (Kumar & Majumder, 2024); and on *bleisure* travel: the rise of flexible work and its impact on tourism (Sood & Juneja, 2024).

## 2. THE IMPORTANCE OF *BLEISURE* TRAVEL FOR HUMAN HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE

There are many advantages to combining business travel with leisure. In addition to costs, these are primary advantages regarding the person's physical and mental health.

As a result of the coronavirus and subsequent changes in regulations (e.g., as in Poland), many companies have introduced a hybrid work model. The benefits that we can associate with human health are primarily:

- less stress – combining leisure with work can contribute to achieving a better balance between personal and professional life. This can lower stress levels and make people enjoy traveling;
- Job satisfaction – affects the employee's well-being. They feel job satisfaction and may be inclined to work better and more effectively;
- reduction of emissions – employees who combine holidays thus make fewer trips. This translates into time savings, which can result in a reduced carbon footprint (Johnson, 2022).

Mercan and Sandekce's (2024) research analysis in this area emphasizes the importance of *bleisure* tourism. Research shows that it can help increase employee productivity. People who go on a business trip in the *bleisure* tourism field sometimes take close friends or family members with them. This can motivate them to go on a business trip and help increase work efficiency. They also point out that planning *bleisure* tourism is important and beneficial as

excessive entertainment or shopping can lead to distractions or other unfavorable phenomena when working on a business trip. They believe that, for this reason, the *bleisure* element should be planned together with travel agencies and companies. According to the authors, *bleisure* tourism can benefit various stakeholders, including business travelers, travel companies, hotels, restaurants, other tourism companies, and residents.

In the opinion of Mercan and Sandekce (2024), *bleisure* can be an essential factor affecting employee motivation. Thus, it seems justified to introduce such elements into the human resources management strategy, especially in the context of cross-cultural management. According to Adler (2002, p.11), cross-cultural management refers to the behavior of people in organizations around the world. This type of management shows people how to work in organizations with employees and client populations from many different cultures. Cross-cultural management compiles organizational behavior within countries and cultures and compares organizational behavior across countries and cultures. This management also tries to improve the interaction of co-workers, managers, executives, clients, suppliers, and alliance partners from countries and cultures worldwide.

One aspect of this management is when a cross-cultural manager performs well (Mahadevan & Steinmann, 2023). New human resource management strategies and innovative approaches, including *bleisure* travel, may be relevant. The management of transnational corporations often leads to new problems or issues. One of the essential functions of these issues is to maximize employees' potential in the personal sphere and reward the best employees (Szańca, 2013, p. 291). *Bleisure* tourism should be one of the segments of incentive travel for employers.

The literature on the subject emphasizes that motivational tourism is treated as one of the non-material motivators, and its basis results from the psychological approach to motivation. Incentive tourism improves the company's interpersonal relations, enhances employee productivity, and eliminates the seasonality of holidays because it is often organized outside the holiday season (Ivan, 2014, p. 112). The same positive features can, therefore, be found in the *bleisure* phenomenon, which should also be a tool for personnel management in the modern intercultural world of employees.

### 3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research was conducted by collecting primary data between 30 March and 1 April 2023 on the basis of a questionnaire during the 29th edition of the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair held at the International Exhibition and Convention Centre EXPO in Kraków. The KRAKDENT® fair is an international exhibition of products and services in dentistry; an event aimed at those professionally associated with the medical industry, with more than 300 exhibitors usually taking part annually. In 2023, the fair was attended by 323 exhibitors, including 77 foreign, as well as 10,303 visitors (<https://krakdent.pl>). Surveys were conducted among exhibitors and visitors, while the leading respondents were exhibitors. The survey was conducted on a sample of 181 Polish respondents who had traveled outside their residence to participate in the fair (Paliś & Siwek, 2024, pp.450-451).

Research methods such as quantitative, diagnostic survey, and statistical analysis were used. The research techniques were an electronic and paper survey and descriptive statistics. The research tools were a survey questionnaire, Excel spreadsheets, and online survey software. Paper and electronic questionnaires were used. The paper survey was conducted mainly among exhibitors, while the second technique consisted of placing a questionnaire on the website, which the respondents filled out online, reading the questions, and marking the answers (Mider, 2013, p. 211). The research using electronic technology was conducted on social networks via the Researchonline research panel (<http://researchonline.pl/> 20.10.2023). The selection of units for the study was non-random – units typical among the participants of the fair who agreed to participate. The size and structure of the general population were determined on the basis of registered participants of the fair amounting to 319 entities (Paliś & Siwek, 2024, pp. 450-451).

Ten foreign respondents also took part in the survey. These were the exhibitors themselves. Because only a small number of foreign respondents took part in the survey, their answers were described as a case study, and they were not included in the primary research sample.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, information about the purpose of the study was given with a definition of the *bleisure* trend. The questionnaire

consisted of 17 questions. The first two questions in the questionnaire were introductory questions, 15 were problematic–substantive questions, and the last was a metric (for more on this topic, see Poskrobko et al., 2020, p. 196). The first filtering question was aimed at identifying the nature of the respondents – fair participants as exhibitors or visitors. The next question concerned the motive of coming to the fair, whether only for business or business and leisure. Another question concerned the duration of stay at the fair and the time of extending the stay before or after the fair (Paliś & Siwek, 2024, p. 450-451; more on this topic and the second part of the research can be found in: Paliś and Siwek (2024, pp. 447-459). The questions that covered the analysis in this article concerned opinions on whether the *bleisure* trend will develop. These factors may contribute to the development of *bleisure* travel, barriers in this area, or expectations about creating the *bleisure* offered by organizers or the city.

The following research hypotheses have been set within this section: H1: The *bleisure* trend will grow in cities; H2: The development of the *bleisure* trend should be supported by an adequate offer shaped by both the city and the organizers; H3: Foreign participants have a similar opinion of the development of the *bleisure* trend compared to domestic participants. H4: One of the factors favoring the development of the *bleisure* trend is the desire to relax after work. These hypotheses were confirmed by analyzing the survey results.

Questionnaires completed by 268 people were collected. The data in the questionnaires were verified, and, after rejecting some of the incorrectly completed questionnaires, a final total of 181 were coded correctly and entered into an Excel sheet for statistical analysis (Paliś & Siwek, 2024, p. 451).



#### 4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS IN GENERAL

A total of 152 exhibitors and 30 visitors participated in the survey (Figure 1).

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



**Source:** Paliś and Siwek (2024, p. 452)

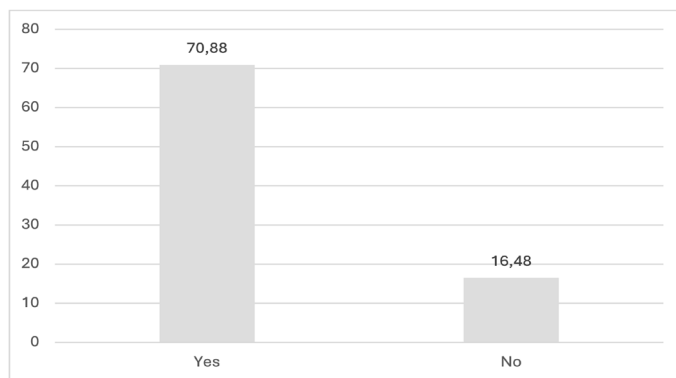
Respondents participating in the fair most often represented the age groups of generations Y, 1981-1995, and X 1965-1980. The survey involved 83% of people with higher education, and 93% were professionally active. They represented professions related to the dental industry: dental assistant, dentist, dental industry, doctor, nurse, dental technician, hygienist, and prosthetist. Other sectors were also present at the fair: event, export, finance, graphics, media, trade, and marketing. The respondents represented 44 cities in Poland. The fair was international (Paliś & Siwek, 2024, p. 452).

#### 5. THE BLEISURE TREND IN THE OPINION OF KRAKDENT® FAIR PARTICIPANTS – OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS

To explore the possibility of developing the *bleisure* trend (a combination of business and leisure), respondents were asked whether they thought the above trend could grow (H1). More than two-thirds of respondents believed that it does (Fig. 2).

**Figure 2.** Respondents' opinion on the potential development of the *bleisure* trend in cities in %

Source: Own elaboration based on a survey



Based on the responses above, H1 stating that the *bleisure* trend in cities will grow was verified positively.

Respondents who answered yes to the above question were asked to indicate the factors of this phenomenon. The responses (51) were grouped into six categories (Table 1). As decisive factors influencing the development of the *bleisure* trend, the respondents indicated rest, relaxation, and entertainment (33.33%), and the possibility of combining work with rest during one trip (31.37%), which indicates positive verification of hypothesis H4.

**Table 1.** Factors influencing the development of the *bleisure* trend in cities

Lp.	Categories	Number of responses	Percentage
1.	Rest, relaxation, entertainment	17	33.33
2.	Combining work with rest (pleasant with valuable) – saving time and costs	16	31.37
3.	Building relationships, developing social contacts, integration	9	17.65
4.	Attractiveness of a given place offers	4	7.84
5.	More excellent financial opportunities for society	3	5.88
6.	Gaining new experience, getting to know each other	2	3.91

Source: Own elaboration based on a survey

The answers of respondents who indicated that the *bleisure* trend would not develop in their opinion were grouped similarly (Table 2). As the most significant reason, they cited the lack of strength and willingness after work (35.71%).

**Table 2.** *Factors blocking the development of the bleisure trend in cities*

Lp.	Categories	Number of responses	Percentage
1.	Lack of strength, desire after work, too much fatigue	5	35.71
2.	This is not a good solution	3	21.42
3.	Lack of time	2	14.28
4.	Lack of financial resources	2	14.28
5.	Focus only on work	2	14.28

**Source:** Own elaboration based on a survey

The respondents were also asked about their expectations from the organizers during the next fair regarding deciding whether to participate in *bleisure* tourism. The answers (58) are presented in Table 3. Most often, the respondents indicated discounts, including for accommodation facilities (20 responses). Twelve people answered that they did not expect anything or had no opinion on this issue.

**Table 3.** *Expectations from the organizers that may affect the decision to extend*

Lp.	Categories	Number of responses	Percentage
1.	Discounts (various)	11	20.75
2.	Discounts on accommodation, food	9	16.98
3.	Attractive offer (e.g., concert)	10	18.87
4.	Post-fair event, integration event (free of charge)	4	7.55
5.	Communication and parking facilities, free cloakroom	4	7.55
6.	Different dates (not before Christmas), shorter opening hours, not on the weekend	3	5.66
7.	Information pack, recommendation of attractions, hotels	3	5.66
8.	Animations, attractions for children	2	3.77
9.	No expectations, I don't know	12	22.64

**Source:** Own elaboration based on a survey

Similarly, respondents were asked about expectations from the city, which could influence their decisions to extend their stay.

**Table 4.** *Expectations from the city that may influence the decision to extend the trip*

Lp.	Categories	Number of responses	Percentage
1.	Discounts (various, mainly for cultural events and museums)	12	26.67
2.	Discounts on accommodation, food	4	8.89
3.	Attractive offer (e.g., concert, performance)	7	15.56
4.	Transport facilities (free transport, better access)	8	17.78
5.	Information about attractions, events	2	4.44
6.	I don't expect anything; I don't know	12	26.67

**Source:** Own elaboration based on a survey

As in the previous question, respondents (45 in number) indicated that they would be most pleased with discounts, mainly for cultural events and cultural facilities, such as museums (18 answers). Twelve people stated that they did not expect anything or had no opinion.

With the above in mind, it should be considered that the H2 hypothesis, assuming that the development of the *bleisure* trend should be supported by an adequate offer shaped by both the city and the organizers, has also been verified positively.

Similar conclusions were reached by Çulfaci et al. (2024, p. 420) investigating the *bleisure* trend among academics. They stressed that it might be necessary for the development of the *bleisure* trend to increase the variety of activities in the areas of culture, art, and food and to include offers in these areas in the packages offered to potential leisure-loving business tourists.

## 6. ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN FAIR PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BLEISURE TREND – A CASE STUDY

Ten foreign respondents took part in the survey – exhibitors from four countries. Table 5 presents their characteristics. They represented countries such as Romania, Italy, Germany, and Slovakia and cities such as Aras, Carpi, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, and Piestany.

**Table 5.** *Characteristics of a foreign respondent in numbers*

Sex		Age			Education		Occupational status	
Woman	Man	1996-2012	1981-1995	1965-1980	Higher	Average	Student	Professionally active
2	8	1	2	5	6	2	2	7

**Source:** Own elaboration based on a survey

The majority of respondents were men. Most people were born between 1965 and 1980. They mainly had higher education and were professionally active (Table 5).

Table 6 refers to the fact that foreign respondents overstay their visit.

**Table 6.** *Extending stay and relaxing during stay at the fair of foreign respondents in numbers*

Work/relaxation during the fair		Overstaying			
Work Only	Relaxation after working hours	1 day before the fair	1 day after the fair	2 days before the fair	2 days after the fair
3	7	2	2	1	1

**Source:** Own elaboration based on a survey

Table 6 presents how foreign respondents used the city's attractions during their stay at the fair and the data analysis shows that as many as seven people relaxed after work, and six people extended their stay in Krakow.

**Table 7.** *The way of using the city's attractions during the stay at the fair by foreign respondents in numbers*

Leisure activities after trade fair hours		Leisure activities during the stay the fair					
In the hotel	Use of the city's attractions	In the restaurant	In a café/pub	In the spa	Meeting friends	Participation in the banquet for exhibitors	Shopping for regional products and for your own pleasure
2	8	9	3	1	2	1	4

**Source:** In-house analysis based on surveys

Most foreign respondents enjoyed the city's attractions after work at the fair. They stayed mainly in restaurants, cafés, or pubs, and four people shopped for regional products or for their pleasure (Table 7).

Table 8 presents how foreign respondents spent their free time in extending their stay at the fair.

**Table 8.** *The way of spending free time by foreign respondents in the situation of extending their stay at the fair in numbers*

Leisure activities in the event of an extension of stay				
In the restaurant	In a café/pub	With friends	Regional product purchases	In the museum
5	2	1	1	4

**Source:** Own elaboration based on a survey

It can be seen that most people used restaurants, and four people visited museums (Table 8).

Foreign respondents were asked which factors they considered the most encouraging in extending their stay when arriving at the fair. The results are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9.** *Factors encouraging the extension of stay during arrival at the fair in the opinion of foreign respondents*

Incentives for extending stays when arriving at trade fairs							
Discounts on accommodation during the fair	Attractiveness of shopping centers/galleries	Entertainment/incentives for spending time in shopping centers	Diversity of cultural offer	Discounts to museums	Discounts on cultural events	Willingness to buy gifts and discounts at shopping malls	Other attractions
3	3	3	3	2	2	2	4

**Source:** Own elaboration based on a survey

Foreign respondents could be motivated to extend their stay by various discounts, e.g., for accommodation, shopping, museums, or cultural events. Tourist attractions and the diversity of the cultural offer are also important.

The most significant barriers to extending their stay for foreign respondents are lack of time, lack of additional holidays, too short opening hours of tourist attractions, and too few attractions offered by the fair organizer.

The way foreign respondents organized their stay at the fair was also verified, as presented in Table 10.

**Table 10.** *The way of organizing the stay at the fair by foreign respondents*

Means of transportation		Accommodation				
Aircraft	Car	Hotel 5*	Hotel 4*	Hotel 3*	Hostel	Guest house/uncategorized property
3	6	2	2	2	1	2

**Source:** Own elaboration based on a survey

Foreign participants of the fair traveled mainly by car and by plane. They stayed primarily in hotels (Table 10).

They gained knowledge about the fair primarily from the website and from the fair employees. Five people came to the fair with co-workers, although others traveled with friends or families.

Foreign respondents also expressed their opinion on whether the cities' *bleisure* trend will develop. Five people thought it would, and only one person thought it would not, the majority arguing that it was an excellent way to get to know other cultures. They also expressed their expectations toward the organizers of the fair and the city about what could encourage them to extend their stay. They felt that organizers of the fair should provide more information about what can be done during the extended stay. On the other hand, they would expect a good night's offer from the city or a special offer to encourage them to extend their stay. Thus, foreign participants have a similar opinion on the development of the *bleisure* trend compared to domestic participants, which confirms the positive verification of hypothesis H3.

## RESULTS

The research showed significant prospects for the development of *bleisure* tourism (H1). Most respondents, both domestic and foreign, believed that the *bleisure* trend will develop. As decisive factors influencing its development, the respondents indicated rest (H4), relaxation, entertainment (33.33%), and the possibility of combining work with rest during one trip (31.37%). As the main barrier, they cited the lack of strength and willingness after work (35.71%). The most important factors that would encourage them to extend their stay at the fair included discounts on accommodation offered by the KRAKDENT® fair (15.3%) were the desire to meet a friend (11.1%), the tourist attractiveness of the city of Krakow, entertainment/willingness to spend time in Krakow and relax (9.8% each) and a diverse cultural offer (8%) (Paliś & Siwek, 2024, p. 455). With the above in mind, it should be recognized that the development of the *bleisure* trend should be supported by an adequate offer shaped by both the city and the organizers (H2) (see Paliś & Siwek, 2024).

Foreign participants also indicated similar expectations (H3), as their answers show that they could be motivated to extend their stay by being offered various discounts, e.g., for accommodation, shopping, museums, or cultural events. Tourist attractions and the diversity of the cultural offer are also important to them.

Importantly, *bleisure* can be essential in human resource management strategies, especially intercultural management, when employees move between locations. It can help to improve their well-being and increase work efficiency.

*Bleisure* travel, as a combination of business and leisure, can have a multifaceted impact on employers and employees. Because of seamlessly combining work commitments with personal enjoyment, *bleisure* travel can become a strategic tool to increase employee satisfaction and productivity.

This hybrid approach offers many benefits, such as reduced stress, improved work-life balance, and increased job satisfaction. It also contributes to sustainable travel practices, potentially reducing the overall number of trips and thus reducing the carbon footprint.

## CONCLUSION

Research conducted among international business tourists during the KRAKDENT® International Dental Fair provides a unique insight into this group of travelers' preferences and perceptions of *bleisure* trends. The results indicate their strong belief in the future growth of the *bleisure* trend, highlighting its importance in today's work and travel paradigms.

Arsić et al. (2024) point out that a characteristic of the modern tourism market is turbulent change. Successful destinations, on the other hand, are those that offer more value to tourists than their competitors. A tourist destination must distinguish itself by the quality of its services and offerings. One such offering may be the *bleisure* offer.

Future surveys on *bleisure* tourism should focus on running them on a more significant number of respondents in different countries.



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