


Categorization of marinas as a potential tool supporting the development of sustainable marine tourism

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Abstract

Marinas are of key importance in the development of sustainable marine tourism, whereas requirements posed by certification organizations can have a motivating effect and contribute to the implementation of environmentally and socially friendly solutions. The aim of this study is to analyze two world-leading marina categorization systems: the Gold Anchor Scheme and the IMCI Blue Star Marina Certification System. A special focus is made on the criteria relating to sustainable development, such as requirements concerning services, equipment, and management, posed to marinas by the accreditation bodies. The following research question has been defined: Do certification and categorization contribute to the development of sustainable sailing tourism? The results of the conducted analyses show that part of the requirements set by the accreditation organizations running two of the most popular marina categorization schemes worldwide relate to the achievement of sustainable development goals. The requirements motivate the management at marinas applying for a category to implement solutions that are friendly to the environment and society, and contribute to the growth of local economies. The research results indicate that the categorization of marinas is not only of some marketing value but is also a useful tool in the development of sustainable marine tourism.

Introduction

The development of tourism brings many social and economic benefits. At the same time, however, it may contribute to the degradation of the natural environment, the demise of local economies, and a decline in the quality of life of local communities. The latter may be the case if tourism develops randomly and in a way which does not seek to meet expectations across various groups of stakeholders. Beneficial effects can be obtained solely through achieving a healthy balance of economic, social, and environmental goals, i.e., through sustainable development of tourism. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as ‘tourism that leads to the management of

all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems’ (UNWTO, 2023a). Many scientists use that definition as a point of reference.

Marine tourism has undergone rapid growth in many parts of the world in the last two decades. In some countries, such as Croatia, it has become the leading form of tourism of great importance to the national economy (Ivanić, Perić Hadžić & Mohović, 2018). It is also gaining in popularity in Poland, accompanied by an expansion of the network of marinas and a rising number of marina users (Łapko et al., 2022). Marine tourism is commonly considered to be of little impact or damage potential

to the environment. However, increased watercraft traffic can cause water pollution or shoreline damage, destroy flora and fauna, disrupt the life of local communities, or even negatively affect the economy, edging out local businesses or giving rise to the dangerous phenomenon of tourist monoculture (Conti & Perelli, 2004; Yiu & Cheung, 2021).

The unfavorable developments referred to above can be contained through the reliable operation of marinas. Marinas are key to the development of marine tourism. They constitute an important element of the tourist product addressed to sailors. Decisions concerning the selection of a voyage route or behaviors of tourists regarding, e.g., waste disposal largely depend on the quality of facilities and services offered by marinas.

Looking to gain a competitive edge, marinas undergo certification and categorization. Depending on the scheme, a category or a certificate awarded confirms the quality of services rendered and, thus, helps attract visitors. For the purpose of this research, the following research question has been defined: Do certification and categorization contribute to the development of sustainable marine tourism? There are a small number of reports in the scientific literature on research into marine tourism. The categorization and certification of marinas and their possible impact on their commercial offering are practically unexplored. Meanwhile, the importance of marine tourism is growing alongside its effect on the environment, and this justifies the need for an analysis of various aspects of its growth.

The infrastructure and services provided in marinas as a means to attain sustainable development goals – a literature review

A marina can be defined as a ‘complex of harbor basins, water-engineering structures, on-shore structures, and technical equipment providing shelter and service to yachts and other pleasure craft and floating devices’ (Mazurkiewicz, 2010). Marinas may vary in many features, such as size, infrastructure, and service offering (Lam González, de León Ledesma & León González, 2015). Regardless, scientists are unanimous in their opinion that the development of marinas is the major factor driving the growth of marine tourism. Valdor et al. refer to them as ‘the key element supporting recreational sailing’ (Valdor et al., 2019), whereas Martínez-Vázquez et al. reiterate the importance of services provided at marinas (Martínez-Vázquez, de Pablo Valenciano & Martínez, 2021). The ability to receive certain

types of pleasure boats and provide quality services to certain groups of tourists depends on the type and condition of the existing infrastructure (Yao, Zheng & Parmak, 2021). A marina infrastructure is typically divided into on-water and on-shore infrastructure. According to Butowski, on-water infrastructure is supposed to ensure safe arrival and departure and protect watercraft from unfavorable sea and weather conditions, such as strong swells (Butowski, 2007). On-shore infrastructure, on the other hand, makes it possible to provide services required for watercraft and other means of transport, as well as by visitors (Hącia & Łapko, 2020). Benevolo and Spinelli also point to the importance of data transfer infrastructure, which supports the management or even enables the functioning of a marina (Benevolo & Spinelli, 2018). Thus, the infrastructure of marinas and services provided by them can largely determine whether marine tourism on the adjacent waters is sustainable, i.e., compliant with the sustainable development goals.

Sustainable development goals were adopted in 2015 by all 193 UN Member States and described in detail in *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to stimulate action over the next 15 years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet* (UN, 2015, p. 3). Each of the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) includes several to more than a dozen goal targets, totaling up to 169. All goals and targets are equally important; however, considering the scale, area, and specific character of conducted operations, various entities may contribute to the achievement of the goals and completion of the targets in a direct or indirect way (Pizzi, Rosati & Venturelli, 2021). As indicated by Calabrese et al., the company management can concentrate on several selected goals that best match the conducted business activity (Calabrese et al., 2021). A similar opinion is expressed by Lenort et al., allowing for prioritization of the SDGs at the strategic level so that they relate to the specific character of the business (Lenort, Wicher & Zapletal, 2023).

A major part of the research papers in which an analysis of marine tourism and the operation of marinas is undertaken focuses on the environmental aspects, primarily on waste management, aimed to prevent water pollution and accumulation of waste on-shore (Dolgen, Alpaslan & Serifoglu, 2003; İçemer et al. 2011; Sariisik, Turkey & Akova, 2011). Some researchers investigate the sustainability of marine tourism from the point of view of cost-effective land development, which

conserves nature and sustains the well-being of local communities (Kovačić, Gržetić & Bosković, 2011; Favro & Kovačić, 2015; Appolloni et al., 2018). There are also a number of publications on the management of financial resources in marinas relating to the economic pillar of sustainable development (Lučić & Luković, 2017; Janković & Vlašić, 2018; Benevolo & Spinelli, 2021). Research into the adjustment of marinas to different types of users, conducted by some scientists (Łapko, 2023), can be related to the SDGs in the social domain.

Implementation of solutions in marinas, which help achieve the SDGs, can be required and imposed by the authorities. It can also strengthen the competitive edge, boosting service quality and expanding the customer base. The latter is key in view of the growing number of marinas and the competitiveness of the industry. Looking for ways to stand out from the competition and enhance the attractiveness of the offering, marinas can undergo a process of certification and be awarded a category.

Certification and categorization of marinas

Growing competition forces tourist facilities to take intensified action to win new customers. Facility managers look for ways to stand out from the competition through improving service quality, seeking to meet customer expectations and promoting the offering to strengthen the market image and drive sales growth (Oleksiuk, 2009, p. 177). They try to outsmart one another, developing new ways to reach customers using all the available tools and utilizing state-of-the-art technologies (Amin & Priansah, 2019; Femenia-Serra & Gretzel, 2020).

The quality of tourist services can be verified only on consumption. Considering the specific properties of tourist services (i.e., intangible, non-severable, perishable, and unique), it is difficult to define their quality (Kachniewska, 2002, pp. 16–17). Reference is commonly made to the definition of quality of tourist services (services rendered by marinas fall into this category) proposed by the UNWTO, according to which it is ‘the result of a process which implies the satisfaction of all tourism product and service needs, requirements and expectations of the consumer at an acceptable price, in conformity with mutually accepted contractual conditions and the implicit underlying factors such as safety and security, hygiene, accessibility, communication, infrastructure and public amenities and services. It also involves aspects of ethics, transparency and respect

towards the human, natural and cultural environment’ (UNWTO, 2023b).

Sales of services are easily boosted with the so-called proof of quality, which is a guarantee extended to the customer that using services provided by a facility is free of the risk of their expectations not being fulfilled. Such proof of quality can have the form of a certificate – a document issued in the process of a certification audit carried out by an authorized institution (Kachniewska, 2002, p. 87–88). A certificate is typically issued for a definite term by an independent certification body, which determines the quality standards required to be met.

In principle, a certificate is a confirmation that a product, process, or service meets certain requirements and complies with the adopted standards (FAO, 2023). A certificate may certify various aspects, such as *inter alia*, quality and origin of food, safety, or compliance with the principles of sustainable development (Dragomir, Mazilu & Marinescu, 2018; Katuk et al., 2020). In fact, due to the specific character of tourist services, assessment of their quality by way of a certification audit is impossible. What is possible, however, is the assessment of the infrastructure based on which services are rendered and a review of procedures, competencies, and behaviors of staff. Therefore, an assumption is made that if the infrastructure and human resources at a facility meet specific standards, the services generated in that facility also meet certain quality standards.

In reality, not all certified facilities meet the requirements of certification bodies to the same degree. If this is the case, categorization becomes helpful. In general, categorization is defined as ‘a breakdown of a certain type of facilities into groups, by certain criteria, aimed to determine their standard’ (Raciborski et al., 2001, p. 169). The assignment of a category is equivalent to positive verification of the service infrastructure based on the required standards (Panasiuk, 2007, p. 90). Zajadacz distinguishes between certification and categorization as follows: ‘certification is a process by which a duly authorized body confirms that a business or a product meets the required standards, whereas categorization is typically construed as a process consisting in the establishment of categories or assigning objects to existing categories’ (Zajadacz, Stroik & Śniadek, 2018). Categorization and certification are commonly applied in tourism to both infrastructure (e.g., tourist trails) and facilities (e.g., hotels, agritourism farms, restaurants, and marinas) (Mikos von Rohrscheidt, 2008, pp. 167–168; Łapko, 2017; Łukaszewicz, 2018; Maynard et al., 2020).

The systems of certification and categorization of marinas can be broken down, by the area of application, into:

- local,
- national,
- international.

Local systems apply within a certain geographical region or sailing route, and the certification body (i.e., the body assigning a category) can be a local tourism organization or another entity appointed for this purpose. Correspondingly, national systems apply on the territory of the entire country, and the certification bodies are appointed at the national, e.g., ministerial level. International systems of categorization have the widest range of applications and can apply even across the globe. The certification bodies are typically international organizations appointed exclusively for this purpose or international sailing associations whose scope of operation covers many more areas than just the assignment of categories to marinas.

Categories are assigned by way of a categorization audit covering a number of aspects of operation. The assessment typically covers:

- on-water and on-shore infrastructure,
- procedures and policies in place,
- scope of services offered,
- implementation of the principles of environmental protection,
- customer service, occasionally including, e.g., marketing activities and co-operation with the local community.

A category is assigned for a definite term and, throughout this term, certification bodies perform periodic audits to verify the offered service level. The assignment of a category can bring a marina real marketing benefits (Tselentis, 2008). Marinas with an assigned category obtain advertising materials for, inter alia, visual identification (e.g., flags, banners, etc.). Information on the assigned category is made public and may constitute a factor attracting tourists.

Aspiring to be awarded a category, marina authorities are motivated to make investments in the infrastructure, expand the service offered, and implement solutions aimed at improving customer service. Many of these activities can relate to the achievement of the SDGs. Additionally, in this paper, the author analyzes the requirements of two international categorization systems for the greatest range of worldwide applications. The purpose of this analysis is to identify the requirements that relate to the achievement of the SDGs.

Research methods

This research examines the requirements of two marina categorization systems: the Gold Anchor Scheme and the IMCI Blue Star Marina Certification System. The following research question (RQ) has been defined: Do certification and categorization contribute to the development of sustainable sailing tourism? A special focus has been placed on aspects relating to sustainable development – requirements concerning services, equipment, and management policies put on marinas by the accreditation bodies. Each of the assessment criteria in both systems has been analyzed for conformity with the 17 main goals and 169 goal targets of sustainable development.

The systems have been selected for analysis based on the criterion of their range of applications. Both systems apply globally and are the most commonly recognized systems of marina accreditation worldwide. The documentation research method and exploration of websites have been used in this research. The Gold Anchor Award Scheme is administered jointly by the Yacht Harbour Association (TYHA), a member of the British Marine Federation (BMF), and the Marina Industries Association (MIA). TYHA certifies marinas in Great Britain, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean. The MIA certifies marinas in Asia and the Pacific Region, including Australia and New Zealand. Both organizations operate jointly in the Americas.

The accreditation audit consists of an assessment of the marina infrastructure and service offerings. As a result of the accreditation process, a marina can be awarded from two to five Gold Anchors (marinas that offer their customers a comprehensive and unique marina experience can be awarded the Five Gold Anchor Platinum accreditation). Accreditation is granted for a term of three years. During this term, marinas undergo periodic assessments aimed at verifying whether they continue to adhere to the Gold Anchor values (TYHA, 2023). In 2021, there were 200 marinas across 27 countries accredited under the Gold Anchor Scheme (Nautilus Marine, 2021). The IMCI Blue Star Marina Certification System is administered by the International Marine Certification Institute (IMCI). Founded in 1993, the IMCI is a non-profit organization that initially dealt with accreditation and CE (*Conformité Européenne*) certification of recreational watercraft (Manigel, 2011). Since 2005, the IMCI has certified marinas using a scale of five stars. In 2021, there were 50 certified marinas across Europe, located in Denmark, Germany, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey.

Considering the range of operation of the systems under analysis, the Gold Anchor Award Scheme is the most common accreditation in the world. In Europe, both systems are equally present. In some cases, both systems operate in parallel within the same country, such as Italy and Spain. None of the marinas in Poland have yet to be accredited with either of the two systems.

Results and discussion

The Gold Anchor Award Scheme accreditation audit covers six evaluation categories, and each of them has a share in the final assessment:

1. Ambience – 20% share in the final assessment,
2. Planning, policies, and procedures – 10% share in the final assessment,

Table 1. The Gold Anchor Award Scheme – the evaluation criteria directly relating to the sustainable development goals (own elaboration based on (Gold Anchor Scheme, 2017))

Evaluation category	Detailed evaluation criteria	Sustainable development goal and goal target
Ambience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Easy access from the water and the shore – A design that takes advantage of the specific location and integrates into its character, uses local materials, and corresponds to the local natural environment – Clear and visible designation of buildings and facilities, conspicuous warning signs – Clean water in the marina basin (removal of floating waste) – Roads and pathways of appropriate width with applied anti-slip surface – Suitable lighting ensuring the safety of visitors, staff, and watercraft – Information about tourist attractions, activities, and events 	Goal 8, goal target 8.9 Goal 10, goal target 10.3 Goal 11, goal target 11.4 Goal 14, goal target 14.1, 14.7 Goal 15, goal target 15.1
Planning, policies, and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Environmental protection procedures in place 	Goal 11, goal target 11.6 Goal 12, goal target 2.6 Goal 14, goal target 14.1
Customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Easily accessible information for customers (for Five Gold Anchors and Five Gold Anchors Platinum); standard information about the marina and the prevailing weather conditions must be accompanied by a welcome package including a description of local tourist attractions, the service offering at the marina, and the mandatory procedures in place (including environmental procedures) – Wireless Internet access (for the categories up from Four Gold Anchors; may apply to all or selected berths only) – Marina website (requirements concerning the website content vary, depending on the category) – Mooring assistance (for the categories up from Four Gold Anchors, as a standard or an option, depending on the category). 	Goal 9, goal target 9 C Goal 10, goal target 10.3
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Environmental policies in place, including: waste management (Marina Waste Management Plan); for the categories up from Four Gold Anchors – educational activities for customers concerning good environmental practices; for the categories of Five Gold Anchors and more, the staff is required to promote environmental practices – Appropriate number of municipal waste collection zones, documentation certifying that waste management is carried out in compliance with the applicable local and international regulations – Safe storage of fuel, oil, and other hazardous substances – Terms and conditions of berthing include provisions prohibiting discharge of waste or other harmful substances to the marina basin and ensuring safe collection of the same; marinas awarded with Five Gold Anchors provide instructions and assistance with the operation of waste pumps; marinas awarded with the Five Gold Anchors Platinum category provide waste collection by staff – Solutions for discharging bilge water (the standard of the solutions depends on the category) – Gray waste collection system in place, preventing the discharge of gray waste into the marina basin – Oil spill removal equipment deployed in appropriate locations and clearly designated 	Goal 11, goal target 11.4, 11.6 Goal 14, goal target 14.1
On-water infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Safe access to the quay of an appropriate width with an applied anti-slip surface, ensuring wheelchair access – Access to fresh water and electricity at all quays or all berths (depending on the category) 	Goal 10, goal target 10.3
On-shore infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Sanitary facilities with wheelchair access (all categories) – Luggage trolleys (manual or electric, depending on the category) – Designated children's playground meeting certain standards (required for the categories up from Four Gold Anchors) 	Goal 10, goal target 10.3

3. Customer service – 20% share in the final assessment,
4. Environmental – 10% share in the final assessment,
5. On-water facilities and infrastructure – 20% share in the final assessment,
6. On-shore facilities and infrastructure – 20% share in the final assessment.

The evaluation criteria directly relating to the sustainable development goals in the area of marina management are shown in Table 1.

As shown in Table 1, the accreditation audit covers a number of criteria that can relate to the SDGs. A great focus is placed on environmental issues, including, without limitations, watercraft waste, wastewater management, and procedures for the disposal of each type of waste.

The evaluation also covers accessibility of the marina as well as services and facilities for all types of users, including users with disabilities and children. Marinas applying for the accreditation must

also operate in a way that does not disrupt the life of local communities, in alignment with the specific character of the location.

The IMCI Blue Star Marina Certification System audit covers six functional areas of the marina (Favro, 2019; Blue Star Marina Certification, 2022):

1. External presentation, functionality, and marketing communication,
2. Safety,
3. Sanitary installation and hygiene,
4. Service,
5. Food supply and leisure,
6. Management, environmental protection, and disposal.

There is no data on the weight of each of the criteria in the final assessment.

The evaluation criteria directly relating to the attainment of the sustainable development goals in the area of marina management are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The IMCI Blue Star Marina Certification System – the evaluation criteria directly relating to the sustainable development goals (own elaboration based on (IMCI Blue Stars, 2023))

Evaluation category	Detailed evaluation criteria	Sustainable development goal and goal target
External presentation, functionality, and marketing communication	– Marinas awarded with four or five stars have a website providing complete information about the marina	Goal 8, goal target 8.9 Goal 9, goal target 9C
Safety	– Marinas of all categories display a list of contacts to local health professionals – Marinas awarded with three stars or more employ staff trained in first aid – Marinas awarded with five stars provide an automated external defibrillator (AED)	Goal 10, goal target 10.3
Sanitary installation and hygiene	– Marinas awarded with five stars has sanitary facilities with wheelchair access (toilets and showers) – Marinas awarded with three stars or more provide a baby changing unit	Goal 10, goal target 10.3
Service	– Information about the marina, services, and events is available in marinas awarded with one star. Marinas awarded with more than three stars provide information not only about the marina, but also about tourist attractions in its vicinity and public transport. Marinas awarded with five stars provide sales of excursions or assistance in excursion planning (by designated staff) – Luggage trolleys (from three stars up)	Goal 8, goal target 8.9 Goal 10, goal target 10.3 Goal 11, goal target 11.4 Goal 12, goal target 12B
Food supply and leisure	– Wireless Internet access (in marinas awarded with four or five stars)	Goal 9, goal target 9C
Management, environmental protection, and disposal	– Waste collection in marinas of all categories; marinas awarded with more than three stars implement waste segregation. Oil waste and bilge water disposal facilities must be available in the vicinity of marinas awarded with three stars (at a maximum distance of 1 km). Electrical waste and paint and varnish waste disposal facilities must be available in the vicinity of marinas awarded with four stars (at a maximum distance of 1 km). Marinas awarded with five stars provide disposal of all types of waste on the premises – Marinas of all categories provide a water waste pump – Marinas awarded with three stars or more have dangerous waste (e.g., oil waste) disposal policies in place – Marinas awarded with four or five stars provide environmentally safe underwater hull cleaning facilities – Marinas awarded with four or five stars provide wireless Internet access	Goal 11, goal target 11.4, 11.6 Goal 14, goal target 14.1 Goal 15, goal target 15.1

Table 3. List of development goals and goal targets relating to accreditation system requirements (own elaboration based on documentation research and on (UNWTO, 2023a))

Goal and goal target number	Goal target	The Gold Anchor Scheme	The IMCI Blue Stars
Goal 8, goal target 8.9	By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products	x	x
Goal 9, goal target 9C	Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020	x	x
Goal 10, goal target 10.3	Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies, and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies, and action in this regard	x	x
Goal 11, goal target 11.4	Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage	x	x
Goal 11, goal target 11.6	By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management	x	x
Goal 12, goal target 12B	Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promote local culture and products	–	x
Goal 12, goal target 12.6	Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle	x	–
Goal 14, goal target 14.1	By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution	x	x
Goal 14, goal target 14.7	By 2030, increase the economic benefits to Small Island Developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism	x	–
Goal 15, goal target 15.1	By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains, and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements	x	x

It can be seen in Table 2 that the requirements of the IMCI Blue Star Marina Certification System relating to sustainable development are more general than those of the Gold Anchor Scheme. The main focus is on the environmental requirements concerning the collection of waste, with less pressure on the social aspects. Nevertheless, marinas applying for the accreditation of a higher category are required to ensure access to various social groups, including families with children and the elderly. Both accreditation systems have clear requirements concerning access to information. A marina website updated on a regular basis, as well as Wi-Fi access, has become a standard.

The analysis of the accreditation system requirements has made it possible to identify the related sustainable development goals and goal targets (Tables 1 and 2). Table 3 shows a list of them, as well as a comparison of whether or not they are required in each of the systems under analysis. Table 3 does not show the number of requirements or whether they are included in the audit forms for each of the accreditation schemes.

The research results indicate that the requirements of both accreditation systems refer to as many

as seven out of 17 sustainable development goals. Slight differences are observed in the goal targets to which the specific accreditation scheme requirements can be assigned. No reference is made to goal target 12B in the Gold Anchor Scheme, whereas goal targets 12.6 and 14.7 are not addressed in the requirements of the IMCI Blue Stars. Nevertheless, the differences do not reduce the number of goals to which the requirements are related since other goal targets can be assigned to them.

Marinas, aspiring to be awarded a category and facing the requirements set by the accreditation organization, must implement appropriate infrastructure and organizational solutions. Implementing such solutions brings some marketing-related benefits (such as membership in a prestigious program, winning a desired category, boosting the brand image, higher customer trust, and standing out from the competition), as well as contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. Therefore, it can be stated that a positive response has been found to the research question, confirming that marina certification and categorization schemes can contribute to the development of sustainable nautical tourism.

Conclusions

The research results showed that part of the requirements set by the accreditation organizations running two of the most popular marina categorization schemes worldwide relate to the achievement of the sustainable development goals. Seven sustainable development goals have been identified, to which the evaluation criteria can be assigned. It is interesting that no considerable differences between the requirements of the schemes have been observed, which leads to the conclusion that fulfillment of these requirements has become a standard that must be met by marinas aspiring to be one of the most prestigious and best-evaluated facilities.

The requirements posed by the accreditation organizations and their relationship to the attainment of the SDGs can be considered beneficial, especially since they motivate the management at marinas that apply for a category to implement solutions that are friendly to the environment and society, and contribute to the growth of local economies. The research results indicated that the categorization of marinas is not only of some marketing value but is also a useful tool in the development of sustainable marine tourism. To the author's knowledge, no research into this area has been conducted so far.

From a pragmatic perspective, based on the research results, a conclusion can be inferred that marinas should be encouraged to undergo a categorization process. A growing number of marinas accredited under one of the schemes is likely to boost the development of infrastructure and service offerings, which in turn helps mitigate the negative impact of the facilities and watercraft using their services on the environment.

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