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SPECIFICS OF ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN PANDEMIC CONDITIONS

It should be noted that there are two models of ecotourism development: «German» or «European» (tours of mainly cognitive nature which include development of local culture knowledge) and «Australian» (recreational tours including visits to natural parks, biosphere reserves, etc.) which is also known as «a trip to natural reserves». The Concept Note deals mainly with the second type of ecotourism. But since the flow of international tourists has also decreased significantly in European countries, such as Germany, Switzerland, etc., it can be assumed that ecotourism in the countries of the «German» model more or less remained «afloat» mainly due to domestic tourism, the same situation is in Ukraine (As a pandemic 2020). Ecotourism of the «Australian» model could suffer more because it depends more on international tourism. That is why the international documents give it more attention [1; 2].

However, despite all the negative consequences of today's crisis, it is worth noting that the modern tourism industry has long been, so to speak, in anticipation of major changes. This finally became clear in 2019 when the world's largest travel company Thomas Cooke went bankrupt. It was a historical, significant event, because the «empire» of a man who went down in history as one who, in fact, «invented tourism», ceased to exist. Thus, we can say, that the tourism, which the world has known for more than 200 years, is over. A pandemic will only speed up this process. Probably the trends of more active introduction of virtual and augmented reality technologies, as well as the experience economy will become more relevant. The tools to meet the tourists' needs will also change. This will be facilitated by the fact that, according to sociologists, the online society has long been formed [2; 6].

However, it is worth looking at Ukraine's chances in implementing digital technologies. Here is what our country looks like in the OESD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) document «Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis in the Eastern Partnership Countries» in the Digital Infrastructure Schedule [2; 4; 12].

As one can see, in our country the situation with the number of mobile phone subscribers is good; the number of Internet users is at the level of that in Georgia and Armenia. However, in Ukraine there are problems with the number of subscribers of such the most modern technologies as the fixed digital access and a broadband mobile network. This means that in Ukraine the circle of people who will be able to carry out virtual ecotours around the world in good image quality is very limited.

There is also little chance of making a high-quality Ukrainian digital ecotourism product so that the whole world could watch it.

Although, in general, ecotourism, both in the world in general and in Ukraine in particular, has good prospects. That is because along with the spread of digital technologies in tourism another trend, which is expected to grow after the pandemic declines, is ecotourism. After all, the «pandemic of fear» will remain for some time – people, fearing infection, will avoid mass traveling carefully weighing their desires and possible risks. This can lead to an increase of the ecotourism popularity. It involves traveling to the relatively untouched by the man-induced impact areas. It is also aimed at environmental education of travelers, raising the level of their environmental culture. Experts talk about increasing the role of meaningful tourism, and where to get «thoughts» if not in education? At the same time, ecotourism is good for locals, because the more popular the tourism facilities located in their territory, the greater will be their personal income and income aimed at protecting these same facilities and the environment [2; 4; 10].

It is also worth mentioning that ecotourism has grown precisely because of the tourists' demand for ecotourism, i.e. it is an organically economic phenomenon. And since the efforts of international tourism organizations will be aimed at strengthening the environmental friendliness of any type of tourist travel, and, as experts say, it has already been demonstrated that tourists want to travel more environmentally friendly (Schmidt 2020; Tourism 2020), it seems the very nature of ecotourism will guarantee its fairly rapid recovery. Experts talk about the phenomenon of «deferred demand», which can be manifested in relation to ecotourism. In addition, unlike other types of tourism, ecotourism provides a minimum amount of infrastructure, which can be profitable from an economic point of view.

Thus, the world experience has shown that an important characteristic of ecotourism is its relative resilience during crises and its relatively rapid recovery after them. The current crisis in tourism, which is the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, is unprecedented in terms of expected losses and consequences. However, a large deferred demand will be accumulated in the tourism industry by the end of the pandemic and the opening of borders between countries. And since there will be a fear of large crowds for some time, tourism will become more individual, meaningful, the popularity of ecotourism will grow. Tourists' more careful attention to travel safety, sanitary and epidemiological situation, as well as preference of more environmentally friendly tours in any type of tourism is another expected consequence of the crisis. An important consequence will be an even greater strengthening of the long-standing trend towards digitalization of tourism, including ecological one.

In connection with the above presented, the following recommendations for the development of ecotourism in Ukraine are offered:

1. First of all it is necessary to reorient the internal market of tourism.
2. To develop new proposals and products focused on the economy option of tourism, individual tours and tourism in small groups.

3.To develop new eco-routes, to use advanced promotions and ideas of experience economy.

4.To strengthen the epidemiological safety of travel and the quality of the insurance product.

5.Mastering the digitalization of services using the latest technologies [2; 5; 7].

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