

RENEWAL OF MOLDOVA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY BASED ON CURRENT GLOBAL TRENDS

ÎNNOIREA INDUSTRIEI TURISTICE A MOLDOVEI PE BAZA TENDINTELOR GLOBALE ACTUALE

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Abstract.

The pandemic crisis of 2020 has caused serious damage to the entire global tourism industry. According to the UN Report, at the last year the reduction in the volume of tourist services reached the figure of 80%.

A similar decline in the tourism industry was noted in the Republic of Moldova. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, at 2020 travel agencies and tour operators provided tourist services to 124.5 thousand tourists and sightseers, which is 66.9% less than in 2019, that is, the volume of tourist services actually decreased by 2/3.

This year, the task of tourism reviving has arisen. The directions presented in the UN concept for the transformation of the global tourism sector should become a reference point for development. Many of them are relevant for use in the Republic of Moldova. The article analyzes the relevance of these areas for the development of Moldovan tourism.

Keywords: *tourism, tourist services, pandemic crisis, transformation of the tourist sector, the Republic of Moldova*

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the leading and most dynamically developing branches of the economy of the non-productive sphere, whose enterprises and organizations meet the needs of tourists in material and non-material services. The role of tourism in the structure of the world economy is steadily increasing. Moreover, tourism is the fundamental basis of the economy of many developed and developing countries of the world. Currently, it has turned into an industry of international scale, which occupies the third place among the export sectors of the economy in terms of income. Until recently, this industry was one of the most profitable and actively developing sectors of the world economy. Tourism stimulates the development of other adjacent sectors of the economy: trade, transport, communications, agriculture, production of consumer goods, etc. Tourism also plays an important social role. It has a significant impact on the employment of the population.

In the Republic of Moldova, the tourism services sector, especially inbound and domestic tourism, is relatively poorly developed. The real possibilities of accelerating its growth are far from being fully used. If there are opportunities for the development of various

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tourist offers, there are a number of problems in the provision of tourist services. In recent years, the entire tourist market has been experiencing a serious shock due to the pandemic situation.

2. The position of tourism at the present stage

The modern stage of mass development of tourism began after the Second World War, when in the late 50s tourism began to acquire a truly mass social character. The recreation industry began to form with its own institutions, product, production cycle, methods of organization and management. This is the period of mass construction of hotels, motels, various kinds of entertainment establishments. Hotel chains have expanded, hotel families have appeared, there has been an intensive growth of both inbound and outbound tourism. There were educational centers for training in specialties related to tourism [1].

There were fundamental changes in the supply and demand in the tourism market, which give reason to say that mass conveyor tourism began to gradually transform into mass differentiated tourism. Conveyor tourism assumed relative primitivism and uniformity of the needs and motivation of tourists, the impersonal conveyor nature of the services produced.

Differentiated tourism is characterized by:

- the variety of needs and motivations of tourists,
- the multiplicity of highly specialized segments in the tourist demand,
- the variety of services offered,
- a pronounced specialization of the tourist offer [1].

The transition from conveyor to differentiated tourism was carried out simultaneously with the transition from the producer market to the consumer market. It is at this time that new types of tourism are emerging, due to the individual extraordinary needs of tourists.

The main trend of the last decades is the expansion and differentiation of the variety of tourist offers. Recently, new types of tourism have appeared and are in demand: ecotourism, agrotourism or rural tourism, exotic adventure and extreme tourism, wine and gastronomic tourism, shopping tourism, wedding tourism.

The appearance of new types of tourism on the market is due to many factors: scientific and technological progress, which provides new opportunities for organizing trips, urbanization, in connection with which there is a desire to relieve stress and abstract from the routine of life, and others. Accordingly, tourist offers based on these new types of tourism have appeared

However, it is impossible to ignore the latest events of 2020 related to the pandemic situation and the radically changed position of the entire world tourism

According to the UN Report "COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism" [2], the decline in the world tourism economy was approaching the figure of 80%, which amounted to a loss of more than \$ 730 billion in revenue compared to 2019. There were bankruptcies of many transport companies, as well as small tourist and hotel enterprises. In total, there was a threat of dismissal of 100 million people in the industry.

Under these conditions, the variety of tourist offers has significantly decreased due to restrictions related to border crossing and compliance with the sanitary regime. However, in 2021, the tourism industry gradually began to become more active and even develop a variety of tourist offers.

3. Global trends in the development of the tourism sector

The year 2020 has made a significant deterioration in the state of the entire world tourism. Nevertheless, according to the UN Report [2], the following general trends in the development of world tourism are planned in the future:

1. mitigating the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic situation (preserving jobs, building trust and security);
2. improving competitiveness and sustainability (development of tourism infrastructure and improving the quality of services provided, diversification of products and markets, promotion of domestic tourism);
3. digitalization (digitalization of the tourism system, creation of innovative solutions, investment in digital skills);
4. greening (promotion of sustainable development, introduction of carbon-neutral solutions, development of ecotourism);
5. coordination and partnership for the transformation of the sector and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

From these directions, it is clear that the range of tourist offers will continue to expand (product diversification), special attention will be paid to ecological tourist offers, digitalization will be actively introduced, including in tourist offers.

It is noteworthy that against the background of pandemic restrictions, support for domestic tourism has increased in many countries, new tourist offers for national sites have been added. Thus, in Russia, compensation was provided for 10% of the cost of tourist trips on organized routes of domestic tourism [3].

The pandemic situation has affected the requirements for the formation of tourist offers. For example, in 2021, the French Tourism Agency published a special document on new requirements, which include special care for compliance with sanitary standards and health, digital transformation, the use of innovations, conscious consumption with minimal harm to the environment. Urban tourism was declared a priority [4].

The trend of active digitalization in the industry will allow tourists to order and book hotel accommodation as quickly and comfortably as possible, get transport tickets, enter tourist facilities, attend events. An example of such a product is the RUSPASS service in Russia [3].

Another direction of digitalization is virtual excursions, thanks to which you can visit the object of interest as a tourist, from anywhere in the world.

According to UN experts, the pandemic has become to some extent a catalyst for tourism to accelerate the introduction of innovations in the industry [2].

4. Directions for the restoration of Moldovan tourism in the framework of global trends

In recent decades, the importance of tourism in the economy of the Republic of Moldova has been constantly growing, there has been an internal restructuring of the industry. A legislative framework for tourism activities has been developed in Moldova. The directions of development of Moldovan tourism are formed by a number of legislative and regulatory acts, which are periodically updated. The main legislative document is the Law of the

Republics of Moldova on the Organization and Implementation of Tourist Activities. In addition to this law, tourism development strategies have been adopted in different years, including the one that was in effect until 2020. The tourism development strategy "Tourism-2020", as well as some national programs. In April 2020, the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure developed and submitted for public consultations a draft of the National Tourism Development Program for 2021-2025. However, this document was created before the pandemic crisis and needs serious revision.

In the Republic of Moldova, by 2020, certain achievements have been achieved in the formation of tourist offers. All the necessary components of the tourist offer are present in our country. Based on the multi-faceted tourism potential and the existing tourism industry, the government and the tourism industry first of all formed tourist offers for recreational, therapeutic, educational, religious and cultural tourism. In recent decades, efforts have been made to expand the variety of tourist offers in Moldova.

However, the pandemic situation in 2020 has significantly worsened the state of Moldovan tourism, as well as the entire world. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2020, travel agencies and tour operators provided tourist services to 124.5 thousand tourists and tourists, which is 66.9% less than in 2019, that is, the volume of tourist services actually decreased by 2/3. The decrease in the number of tourists and tourists was due to their reduction in outbound tourism (-76.0%), inbound tourism (-65.0%) and domestic tourism (-7.1%) [5].

Moldovan tourism, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, has reduced the volume of services by 2/3 [5]. In these difficult conditions, it is necessary to combine the efforts of all participants in economic relations to preserve the tourism industry of Moldova. After all, tourism is an entire economic sector that needs to be paid close attention to and developed competently, starting from the level of the Government and Parliament. It is wrong to leave the whole set of these problems at the mercy of the private initiative of entrepreneurs.

It is worth noting that 2020 was declared the UNWTO Year of Domestic Tourism. It was planned to direct investments in the sector and related industries, in particular, in the hotel business, wine and rural tourism. International donors have also become more active: solid money was expected from USAID, as well as from the World Bank. About 20 million lei were promised for the promotion of Moldovan tourism when the Investment Agency was established. However, the pandemic crisis has dramatically and negatively completely changed the situation both in tourism and in the entire economy. According to experts, Moldovan travel agencies still do not serve foreign tourists.

Industry experts clearly understand that after the pandemic, the tourist market will not be the same. It is assumed that the mass tourist will travel to regions close to home. Experts predict the following trends in tourism:

- travelers will want to participate in the creation (and consumption) of local small business products,
- online sales will come to the fore,
- digital marketing, online booking and easy-to-use platforms for individual tourists (solo traveler) will develop rapidly [2].

It is necessary to prepare for these changes now in order to be able to start restarting as soon as the pandemic goes down.

Even before the pandemic, there were many unresolved problems in the Moldovan tourism industry, so now the issue of state support for the economy in general and tourism in particular is becoming the most important. After all, in this period, it is necessary to improve all the components of the tourist offer of Moldova.

Until recently, the most common types of tourism in Moldova were business, health, religious and educational. By last year, rural and wine tourism were at the initial stage of development, and the gradual development of ecotourism was also declared. In the new conditions, these new types of tourism are still relevant. Therefore, recommendations were developed for the development of both traditional and new types of tourism.

It should be noted that as a result of the pandemic crisis, people have:

- on the one hand, the need to activate vital activity after lockdowns,
- on the other hand, fears for the safety of their health and the health of their loved ones.

That is, when developing tours, it should be taken into account that any tourist offer will be subject to increased requirements for ensuring sanitary safety. This requirement remains relevant for all types of tourist offers. Therefore, tourist offers should be developed in the field of family tourism and / or small groups. Accordingly, an important recommendation for all types of tourism is the development of tourist offers for family, individual tourism, as well as offers for small groups.

However, in addition to the pandemic situation, the development of tourist offers in Moldova is hindered by a number of problems. The industry needs to form new organizational structures, modernize accommodation and catering facilities, provide entertainment and high-quality transport services, etc. Approaches to the restoration of the tourism industry in Moldova are at different levels – state, local and the level of travel companies.

Thus, at the state level, it is necessary to continue improving the state strategy and policy in the field of tourism. The concept of tourism development in the country should be revised taking into account new realities and trends and new priorities for its development should be formulated.

It is very important to determine the methods of state incentives and support for the industry. One of the directions could be a targeted program to support domestic tourism, with provided benefits for national tourists traveling in Moldova, as was done, for example, in Russia, where 10% of the cost is reimbursed by the state on domestic tourism routes [3].

Practice shows the need for Moldova to become more actively involved in the European and world organizational tourism system. Active international cooperation and participation in international events will allow us to better understand the situation on the world tourism market, adopt and use international tourism experience.

In general, from the point of view of global economic trends, the tourism sector of Moldova should be recognized as one of the main priorities of the national investment strategy. Moldova should offer significantly better conditions for investment and doing business, including reducing the time and money for business organization compared to other states.

It is necessary to ensure the creation of an attractive image of the Republic of Moldova, which causes domestic and international tourist demand. Moldova is little known

abroad as a tourist destination. Substantial assistance from the state is needed in the development and promotion of information packages that make the image of the Republic of Moldova attractive.

In order to promote the tourist offers of Moldova, it is necessary to give a permanent character to marketing activities, to encourage the widespread use of tourist logos and symbols of the country by both embassies and economic agents providing tourist services. In the context of increased use of the Internet, to support information platforms about tourism in Moldova.

The most relevant areas of development of tourist offers, including taking into account the recommendations of the UN, are currently becoming:

- creation of competitive digital content about the most interesting tourist offers of Moldova;
- introduction of innovative technologies for access to tourist information, electronic booking, booking tickets for tourist events, etc.;
- creation and constant updating of computer databases on tourist offers, products and services in tourism in Moldova;
- conducting press tours on tourist offers in Moldova and wide coverage in national and foreign information sources.

It is necessary to expand national protected areas in accordance with the requirements of international environmental organizations. In Moldova, national protected areas account for only 1.4% of the total land area of the country.

Many sectors of society and the economy come into contact with tourism and use it, even if tourism is not of particular interest to them. In this regard, in order to further develop the tourism industry in the Republic of Moldova, it is necessary to create and maintain an effective formal and informal partnership that unites ministries and state departments, local authorities, professional associations and unions, non-governmental organizations, as well as the mass media.

The intensive joint work of all participants in the development and expansion of the variety of attractive tourist offers of Moldova, their active promotion in the Internet space will serve to revive and strengthen the Moldovan tourism industry.

5. Conclusion

In recent decades, the importance of tourism in the economy of the Republic of Moldova has been constantly growing, the industry has developed, the legislative framework for tourism has been developed. In the Republic of Moldova, by 2020, certain achievements have been achieved in the formation of tourist offers. All the necessary components of the tourist offer are present in our country.

However, the 2020 pandemic has significantly worsened the state of Moldovan tourism, as well as the entire world. According to the NBS of the Republic of Moldova, in 2020, the volume of tourist services actually decreased by 2/3 [5].

On the basis of the multi-sided tourist potential and the existing tourism industry, first of all, tourist offers of recreational, therapeutic, educational, religious and cultural tourism were formed. In recent decades, efforts have been made to expand the variety of tourist offers.

In Moldova, with the support of the government and international structures, a direction was taken to activate the tourist offers of ecotourism, wine tourism and rural tourism.

However, in addition to the pandemic situation, the development of tourist offers in Moldova is hindered by a number of problems. The industry needs to form new organizational structures, modernize accommodation and catering facilities, provide entertainment and high-quality transport services, etc. Accordingly, recommendations were developed to improve the tourist offers of Moldova, including taking into account new trends and foreign experience.

The general directions for renewal Moldovan tourist services are on different levels – state, local and the level of tourist companies. Special attention was paid to recommendations for the promotion of tourist offers, including digitalization of the tourism system, creation of innovative solutions. Very relevant the development of a variety of tourist offers in Moldova, including wine, rural and ecotourism. In addition, the development of tourist offers for adventure, industrial and gastronomic tourism is proposed. Overcoming the problems and developing tourist offers will serve to revive Moldovan tourism.

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