

## **MODERN CHALLENGES AND TRENDS OF PROFESSIONAL TOURIST EDUCATION**

In response to the exponential rise in COVID-19 infections, many countries across regions are implementing lockdowns, travel restrictions, social distancing policies, and workplace and school closures. These necessary measures aim to slow the spread of the virus, minimize lives lost and avoid catastrophic outcomes for national health systems, but they also have a sudden and drastic impact on workers and enterprises. Labour markets were disrupted on a historically unprecedented scale. In 2020, 8.8 per cent of global working hours were lost, equating to 255 million full-time jobs, four times the number lost during the 2009 financial crisis [1].

The tourism industry suffers significant losses. International tourist arrivals have fallen by 74% from nearly 1.5 billion in 2019 to around 380 million in 2020. Aviation has been in its gravest moment in history with a global collapse in air travel demand. COVID-19's assault on air travel continues, with 2020 passenger totals dropping by 60% [1]. The most popular museums lost 77.7%, and theme parks lost 67.2% of their visitors due to agency restrictions limiting operating days and capacities during the COVID-19 pandemic [2].

Many researchers, such as V. Fedorchenko, L. Knodel, A. Konokh, G. Shchuka, and others, dealt with the issue of professional training for the tourist sphere abroad. But the supply of educational programs to train tourism professionals needs to be updated in light of the crisis in the tourism and hospitality market, which has led to significant job cuts due to the pandemic and lockdown. To this end, there was a content analysis of materials from educational portals, containing annotations of programs at the Bachelor's [3] and Master's [4] degrees from around the world. To show the dynamics in the articles, the results of a similar study conducted by the author three years ago are used.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the market for educational services in the field of tourism and hospitality due to a significant reduction in tourist flows, which has reduced the number of employees in the industry and given the long recovery time.

The search was carried out in the direction of Hospitality, Leisure and Sports, which corresponds to the maximum training for tourism: the list of future professions for graduates includes employees of hotels and resorts, travel companies (travel agents), guides, restaurant managers and transport companies. The analysis was conducted according to the following criteria: educational and qualification levels (bachelor and master), forms of education and the content of educational programs taking into account the geographical factor. At the Bachelor's Degree in Hospitality, Leisure, and Sports, 3,275 educational programs were presented, so the number of programs increased by 3% in three years. The regional distribution of educational institutions offering educational programs in this area is uneven. The best in the market are North America (51%) and Europe (38%), due to their historical background, a large number of educational institutions, and the level of tourism development; Oceania – 6%, Asia – 4%, Africa – 1%. These regions have significantly fewer educational programs in Hospitality, Leisure and Sports, but offer more innovative forms. For example, schools in Australia and New Zealand (Oceania) offer the highest percentage of online and blended learning programs (30% of the total). The emergence of a small, but with a tendency to increase, the number of online programs and blended learning is one of the current trends in the educational environment due to the circumstances [3].

There is no universal list of specialities for the training of tourism professionals in the world because it all depends on local legislation in the field of education, decisions of educational institutions and the needs of the tourism market. Hospitality, Leisure and Sports is a larger category of disciplines that has given rise to a variety of Bachelor's degrees in Hospitality Management (14 %), Tourism & Leisure (15 %), Event Management (6 %), Culinary Arts (2 %), Sports Management (21 %) and Sport Sciences (42 %) [3]. Previous analysis was conducted by the author in 2018 and the figures are almost the same: the number of programs is stable, a slight increase shows

Event Management and Sports Management, and the number of programs decreased in Sport Sciences [5]. The last two specialities in sports are not excluded from the analysis because they include programs for training specialists in physical recreation, instructors for sports tourism and active leisure, fitness, and wellness instructors/trainers required for tourism. The significant supply of educational programs in sports management and sciences is due to increased demand for a healthy lifestyle in society, the growing popularity of all types of fitness and wellness technology, and the development of physical recreation and sports not only in tourism but also in everyday life. The number of educational programs in Hotel Management and Tourism and Leisure is virtually the same (617 and 691). There is a lack of proposals for Event Management, but this is due to its novelty and the fact that this discipline is often a component of the other traditional educational programs, which allows them to update their content and increase their popularity in the market of educational services.

As previously defined, North America and Europe are the leaders in the number of offers of Bachelor's programs for tourism professionals. Quantitative indicators have been identified for certain specialities. Coincidentally, North America is dominated by physical recreation and sports education programs, while Europe has relatively more Event Management programs. The number of Event Management programs in Europe is 135, while it is only 75 in North America, even though the number of programs such as Parks and Recreation is significantly higher in North America. This is due to the popularity of theme parks and park recreation in North America, especially in the United States, which is a traditional world leader in the number of theme park visitors, income and investment, innovative and unique attractions, and a variety of topics and programs for tourists and visitors to parks [3].

A similar situation is observed in the Master's degrees, where the total number of proposals (1905) shows an increase of more than 20% over three years. The largest number of programs is represented in Europe (821) and North America (813). Hospitality, Leisure and Sports is a larger category of disciplines that has given rise to a variety of Master's degrees in Hospitality Management (13%), Tourism & Leisure

(16%), Event Management (5%), Culinary Arts ( $\leq 1\%$ ), Sports Management (23%) and Sport Sciences (42%). On average, about 20% of programs are offered for online and blended learning [4]. In the joint program, tourism combines with MBA, culture, management of resources and destinations for sustainable development, and wine tourism, which combines the expertise in tourism and oenology of three universities and regions: Spain, France, and Portugal [6].

Modern trends in tourism education include international programs in tourism and hospitality, in which some courses are held in Europe, some in the United States or online, and the joint program, in which the study of tourism management or hospitality is combined with the study of foreign languages, management, marketing and business administration.

Thus, the impact of the pandemic on the labour market in the tourism and hospitality sector did not, as might be expected, lead to a significant reduction in relevant educational programs. This fact adds confidence that tourism will quickly cope with the challenges of reality. The market for educational services has adapted to the changes, which has led to an increase in the number of online and blended learning programs. Universities are developing flexible international study programs in which individual modules can be studied online or continue in another country.

**Keywords:** *tourism industry; higher education; professional training; program; Bachelor's Degree; Master's Degree; Hospitality, Leisure and Sports; online and blended learning program*

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