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## **TOURISM FOR THE FUTURE**

The appearance of COVID-19 virus has changed the very way tourism is viewed. Tourism, as a modern phenomenon, is a consequence of general social development and an increase in the quality of life. A general feature of the modern age is the frequency of tourist travels and the desire for vacation, as well as new experiences, and it is exactly what tourism offers. It also provides a kind of "escape from reality" into a better world that tourists experience while on vacation. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has swept the world and changed the tourism as we know it: countries have closed their borders, air and land routes have been abolished, and therefore, the concept of international tourism has disappeared. The whole world has stopped, including tourism. The pandemic has shown the key problems of tourism at the global level, but the challenge of world tourism is not and must not be how to return to the state of tourism before the pandemic, but how to improve, innovate and create long-term sustainable tourism.

Looking at tourism from the aspect of continuous increase in tourist movements and its main characteristic, which is its mass character, results in its biggest problem and the question: How to create long-term sustainable tourism that will benefit all interested stakeholders and how to lay the foundations for the future? Sustainable tourism has long been the main assumption for the development of tourism in any destination, although in practice sustainable solutions are most often found at the micro level and with individual tourist offers. However, most often sustainable tourism in destination is discussed only pro forma. This implies that if tourism is to be preserved for future generations, the sustainable development of tourism needs to be implemented on a global level and to be created as a trend.

This paper will try to provide a solution to the question of how to create a new tourism trend of sustainability and how through the implementation at the global level it can be applied to individual destinations and what the benefits for each destination, as well as for the world tourism. It also suggests how to reduce the negative effects of travel on the environment.

In modern tourism, it is important to emphasize the role and influence of social networks on all aspects of tourist travel. Users of social networks often travel to certain destinations to show that they have been there, i.e. there is a "travel to show" as a trend and it is very popular to create the so-called "Instagramable" moments. Users post pictures from the destinations they visited on social networks, and it often happens that due to too much traffic, certain attractions are closed to tourists, the number of arrivals is limited, and the total value of the destination is reduced. Given the fact that social networks in modern tourism have a great influence on the choice of destination, as well as on the behaviour of

tourists, this paper offers a solution to reverse the trend of using social networks in favour of sustainable tourism.

The idea for creating a new trend of sustainability in tourism is to create a new organization in tourism that can be part of the AIEST organization, but which will be exclusively focused on sustainable tourism. The proposed name of the organization is "Infinity tourism".

The organization would have a non-profit character, but an annual membership fee would be paid. The membership fee would be paid because all revenues from membership fees would go to charities that promote environmental care, as well as to reward the best members of the organization (explained in more detail later in the paper). The organization would divide its members into three groups, which are:

- 1. Destination** - it is possible to report a destination as a country (e.g. Croatia), region (e.g. Istria) or city (e.g. Zagreb)
- 2. Tourist attractions** - it is possible to report a new or existing tourist attraction that fully meets the principles of sustainable development and encourages sustainability at all levels.
- 3. Individual bidders** - e.g. hotels that have eliminated the use of plastic in their business, that use energy rationally, contribute to the preservation of the environment or restaurants that use food procured exclusively from environmentally friendly sources.

Table 1 shows examples of criteria and areas in tourism that members must meet, according to which members would be awarded certificates and awards for sustainable development by groups.

Table 1. Criteria for awarding prizes and certificates to members of the organization

| DESTINATION  | TOURIST ATTRACTIONS   | INDIVIDUAL BIDDERS  |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Year-round business</li> <li>✓ Dispersion of tourism - the degree of tourism development of the entire destination</li> <li>✓ Degree of preservation of natural and cultural heritage</li> <li>✓ Investments in the preservation of natural and cultural heritage</li> <li>✓ Tourism development management</li> <li>✓ Percentage of waste</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Year-round business</li> <li>✓ Impact on the environment in which the stakeholders are located</li> <li>✓ Preservation and improvement of the attraction - investment in it</li> <li>✓ The impact that tourists have on its preservation/ destruction</li> <li>✓ Educating tourists about the importance of sustainable</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Year-round business</li> <li>✓ Percentage of the reduction in the use of plastic in business</li> <li>✓ Percentage of use and procurement of products from local markets and from sustainable sources</li> <li>✓ Percentage of use of sustainable energy sources</li> <li>✓ Percentage of waste recycling</li> <li>✓ Donations and participation in environmental protection programs</li> </ul> |

|           |  |   |
|-----------|--|---|
| recycling | development through visiting attractions | of the destination in which they operate (e.g. afforestation, removal of waste from nature) |
|-----------|--|---|

Source: author's work

Based on the criteria elaborated in detail within the organization, each year it would award its members a certificate of success. The destination to be declared the best for next year would be called "Infinity tourism 2022 - the capital of sustainability" and would be the host destination of the entire organization in which a conference on progress in sustainable tourism development would be held and present new solutions and ideas. In addition, new tourist attractions would be created in that destination, which would represent everything that sustainable tourism must achieve (a good example is Eden Project, Cornwall, UK). Moving the organization from destination to destination would highlight examples of good practice at the global level and raise awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism. In addition, it is important to emphasize cooperation with other organizations such as 4ocean or WWF (World Wildlife fund).

In order to become truly sustainable and to be future-oriented, tourism must be guided by the following principles, which also represent the vision of the organization.

Figure 1. Vision of the organization and principles of the future tourism



Source: author's work

Therefore, change must start today, and through all its differences and unusualness, tourism must be the driver of community. Tourism of the present and the future must be tourism for all, optimistic and original, responsible and realistic, moral and unforgettable. Through tourism today and tomorrow, "Infinity tourism" is created.

The program "Infinity Tourism - tourism for the future" would be implemented within the organization and it would be based on the promotion and creation of a trend of sustainable tourism through social networks. The emphasis would be on cooperation with all stakeholders in the destination - from the bidder, public and private sector, to the domicile population and tourists. The program would be implemented continuously, but at time intervals of two years. For example, the first program would be held from 2022 to 2024, and

the program would measure the results and goals achieved in that period and bring new ideas and solutions for further progress in the next cycle. The program would especially use the services of the so-called “Influencers” on social media to increase the positive effects for tourism. For example, publishing images from destinations that are members of the organization and promote sustainable tourism or from a hotel that does not use plastic in its business. Tags on social networks can be crucial for creating a global trend, i.e. the entire organization and program would use the tags #tourism4future, #Infinitytourism, #forthefuture, #infinitytourism24. In addition, it is possible to reward those individuals who use these labels most when traveling in a sustainable way. The reward can be a visit to the destination that won the award for the best sustainable destination or and a guest appearance at a conference on sustainability.

Social networks are key to bringing the problem of tourism sustainability closer to young people, so it is necessary to launch a global action to create sustainable tourism through social networks.

Furthermore, the detrimental effects of tourism on the environment can be reduced if each state at the national level enacts new laws that need to be tightened and penalties for those who break the law. This would also increase the revenues of the state treasury, which can be invested in solving problems in the state's tourism. In addition, large multinational companies, such as airlines and hotel chains, should pay more to protect the environment in which they operate and implement sustainable business in their operations as much as possible. A good example is the Hilton hotel chain which recycles used hotel soaps. It is to be highlighted that a newly created organization can have an impact through its primary goal (creating long-term sustainable tourism), and in cooperation with countries and their members.

Finally, it is important to point out that the pandemic will create conditions for travel and business of all tourist entities in the coming years. Consequently, it is necessary to create a market-oriented tourism with the aim to innovate the offer in pandemic conditions. The key challenge will be health safety of tourists and domicile population.

Regarding the development of the organization and the program proposed in this paper, it is necessary to conduct a detailed market research to see the reactions of market participants, as well as their interest in participating. In addition, it is necessary to define in detail the positive effects that the activities of this organization can bring to its members and tourism in general.

To summarize, changes in tourism should start today and it is necessary to get rid of old ideas about the importance of growth and quantity. Instead, it is necessary to focus on the quality and future and to create tourism for the future.