

PR ACTIVITIES AS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO PROMOTE ECOTOURISM

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ABSTRACT:

Ecological Tourism is a journey through relatively untouched natural places. Ecotourism, as a part of the social sphere performs the following functions: rational use of free time for tourists, providing employment of the population of the specific area, raising the standard of their living, ecological education of tourists, raising the culture of relationship with nature, Developing ethical norms of behavior in the natural environment and increasing personal responsibility in this direction, actuate the principles of "Green Marketing", preserving etalon objects of nature.

The development of ecological tourism on the territory of Georgia covers the following aspects: 1. Identification those natural objects and areas that represent the sphere of interest for tourists; 2. Development of such tourism programs that provide minimal impact of tourists on natural complexes and do not restrict overly tourist opportunities; 3. Supporting the economic welfare of local residents, encouraging them to preserve regional, natural and cultural heritage; 4. Development of tourism services to attract international tourists; 5. Development of effective marketing strategies in the field of ecotourism.

Proper PR and advertising campaigns can become a current means of promoting and popularization of ecotourism in our

country, both in the domestic and foreign markets.

Ecological PR uses all kinds of PR tools: publications, social advertising, creating publicity, civilized lobbying, special events, participation of community, blogs.

Ecological tourism, which is not yet popular in our population, needs to be actively promoted. In the field of ecological services, ecotourism becomes a tool of ecological PR with the aim of raising public awareness.

KEYWORDS: ecological tourism, ecotourism promotion, ecological PR, ecological education, PR tools.

INTRODUCTION:

Deterioration of the world ecological situation caused by climate change, ozone layer depletion, demographic explosion, ecosystem depletion and drastic reduction of biodiversity, weakening of energy resources, environmental pollution, drinking water scarcity, reduction or destruction of particularly protected natural areas, variability of natural processes taking place in the biosphere, provides a basis for many experts to make predictions about the development of ecotourism. Environmental degradation is taking place at an ever-increasing pace, which is having a negative impact on the daily lives of the planet's population. Ecotourism may become a serious alternative to an industry focused on the enhanced exploitation of the natural resources of a country or region. {1}

According to the Ecotourism Society (USA), ecological tourism is the travelling to relatively pristine natural areas. Ecotourism, as part of the social sphere, performs the following functions: rational use of tourists' free time, employment of the population of a particular area, raising their living standards, ecological education of tourists, raising the culture of relations with nature, developing ethical norms of behavior in the natural environment and increase personal responsibility in this regard, actuate the principles of "Green Marketing", maintain the standard objects of nature. In general, the development of tourism increases revenues, which is important for the formation of the country budget, which, in turn, creates the opportunity to forming and implements strategies for the further development of ecotourism. {3}

According to experts, in the 21st century, the growth rate of ecotourism will be high, and the revenues generated will make a significant contribution to the economic development of many countries around the world and especially developing countries. This will stimulate the socio-economic growth of the backward and, above all, mountainous regions. High hopes are placed on ecotourism in terms of realization of the concept of sustainable development of tourism. Rational use of natural and cultural-historical tourism resources will avoid many negative consequences of mass tourism.

Among the main drivers of ecotourism formation, the anthropogenic load strengthened on natural and cultural-historical tourism resources, caused by mass tourism, plays a leading role, which increases in direct proportion to the growth rate of tourist visits. Given the forecast of tourism development in the 21st century, there is an obvious increase in resistance to meeting the demand for

tourism and the rational use of tourism resources.

Negative aspects of the impact of mass tourism on the environment and tourism resources were mentioned as far back as the foreign and domestic studies of the 1970s. Today, anthropogenic pressure and its deterrent effects takes place in most of the tourist areas, in almost all sectors of the tourism industry. For example, in Poland, for this reason, the length of water tour routes in rivers and lakes has been reduced by 40%, and in the seas by 70%, the area of damaged forests has been increased by 60%. The average rate of soil and soil washing has exceeded the permissible limit 86 times as a result of tourist traffic in the Balinger Canyon in the USA. {4}

The problem of sustainable development is especially relevant for the unique natural objects and events involved in tourism, for natural reservations. Tourists are often the main source of income for people living in the vicinity of such facilities (this is especially true in mountainous regions).

The impact of tourism on natural complexes can be direct and indirect, the scale of which is difficult to determine. Examples of the impact of tourism on the components of the natural environment can be named as follows: in the soil - loss of fertile layers, reduced looseness, changes in humidity and temperature of the microflora; In plants - change in species composition, change in spatial structure, distribution of individual characteristics into tiers; In the water system - changing the characteristics of the shoreline and the seabed, increasing the volume and turbidity of the sludge, changing the organic and chemical composition.

It should be noted that ecological tourism is a very important direction of social-economic development not only of a specific place or region, but also of the whole country. At the same time, it has an important

component - the focus on environmental protection, therefore, on the ecological modernization of business processes, which meets the modern world requirements for sustainable development.

The aim of the research is to present the role of PR in the development of one of the most important directions of tourism - ecotourism.

The main objectives of the research are:

1. Discussion of the current situation in the ecotourism market in Georgia; 2. Offering effective and result-oriented PR opportunities for the development and promotion of ecological tourism in Georgia.

Main part. The ecotourism business is based on many projects and programs of tourist service, where in addition to tour agents and tour operators, the following facilities participate: 1. Institutions that serve the accommodation of ecotourists; 2. Food facilities; 3. Transport service companies; 4. Advertising and information tourism services; 5. Trade facilities; 6. Health centers, etc.

These facilities that comprehensively constitute the ecotourism infrastructure provide ecotourists with numerous services throughout the route and determine the development of the ecotourism business. It should be noted that tourists visiting less developed regions often have to be prepared to forget the usual standards of comfort. In some ways, this can also be considered an attractive aspect of ecotourism. Tourists should be informed about the specifics of the place they are visiting and also about how to behave in order to minimize the impact on the environment. This is the main responsibility of the tourism industry. But at the same time, the existence of ecological tourism resources is essential. Here we must allocate recreational resources. Protection and detection of recreational resources include normalization of pressure on natural complexes, allocation of

green zones and resort forests, protection of recreational lands, forest use measures, maintaining the cleanliness of groundwater, mineral resources and springs, etc.

Not only recreational resources but also geographical location, historical and cultural heritage, the originality of the sights, natural conditions, tourist centers and zones are important in ecotourism. Natural and geographical conditions are the priority basis for the development of tourism business. In the initial stage, it develops intensively in the countries and regions that have the necessary climatic conditions, later it becomes necessary to demand the level of education and cognition, and then - historical and cultural resources become very important. {1}

Ecotourism is considered as one of the directions of tourism based on the use of natural objects. As the experience of European countries shows, ecotourism in local areas can ensure the economic development of the local community in a way that preserves and improves the quality of the natural environment. Activities in the field of ecotourism and its infrastructure are usually small, but taken together, in a complex way can play a special role in creating the necessary environment for the emergence of new industries, providing jobs, generating tax revenue, attracting investors. The main goal of ecotourism is the use of ecological and information resources. Ecological resources - this is the natural balance of environmental components, which is formed without the active intervention of humans. The main value of ecological resources is the originality of nature. This is what attracts tourists. People living in cities are constantly feeling the negative impact of polluted air and water, noise and social conflicts. As a result of the use of ecological resources, people get a healing and cognitive effect, and when it comes to information resources, they make it possible

for those who want to approach ecological resources and benefit from them.

Environmental protection is an integral part of ecotourism development strategy. It can also bring economic benefits. In ecotourism, this happens when both the environment and the business are healthy. Sometimes the interests of the population are sacrificed for the protection of the environment. For example, residents may be barred from doing agricultural work, collecting fuel and building materials. The environment is sacrificed to the maximization of short-term profits, the existing ecosystem is destroyed. Degradation of tourism resources works against both interests (environmental protection and ecotourism). It is also very important to take into account that tourism cannot develop without some impact on the environment. However, without caring for the environment, it is impossible to focus on tourism alone. Therefore, one of the main principles of sustainable development of ecotourism is to ensure the involvement of local people in it. {5}

Georgia has great potential for the development of ecotourism due to its diverse natural zones, aesthetically attractive landscapes, the Caucasus Mountains covered with permanent snow and glaciers, karst caves, with unique flora and fauna untouched by urbanization and cultivation processes, unique monuments of history, culture and nature, not a small number of relict and endemic species included in the Georgian and International Red Book, protected and developed networks of natural areas. Ecotourists are especially attracted by the rich ethno culture, various public holidays, customs, unique samples of folk crafts, traditional hospitality of the population and Georgian cuisine. {2}

The development of ecological tourism on the territory of Georgia includes such aspects as:

- Identify the natural objects and areas that are of interest to tourists;
- Development of such tourism programs that ensure minimal impact of tourists on natural complexes and do not overly restrict the opportunities of tourists;
- Supporting the economic well-being of local residents, which encourages them to preserve the regional natural and cultural heritage;
- Development of tourism services to attract international tourists;
- Develop effective marketing strategies in the field of ecotourism.

In Georgia, ecotourism can comprehensively solve nature protection and social-cultural problems, food supply, transport, accommodation for tourists. Ecotourism, as an integral part of the service sector, has its specifics and functions that allow us to define it as an autonomous field of economic activity. The field of ecotourism services includes the base of natural facilities, infrastructure and services that affect the quality of tourism services and the development of ecotourism in the country. {1}

Georgia's integration into the world economy system necessitates the development of ecological tourism as a priority direction of the world tourism industry, which allows us to simultaneously preserve natural values in a mode of sustainable development, to develop infrastructure and replenish the state budget. All of this puts on the agenda the need to make the right marketing moves.

As ecotourism is a part of the service industry, unlike material production, its marketing is more difficult; therefore, proper PR and advertising campaign can be a topical means of developing and promoting ecotourism in our country, both in domestic and foreign markets, which is mainly carried out through various means of mass

communication, especially - through television and the Internet.

With the help of environmental PR, the society and the state formulate the direction of development in environmental issues and solve ecological problems. Clearly, environmental issues must be resolved jointly by humanity, but this is not always possible on the background of economic and political crises. Today, the state tries to solve environmental problems as follows: every citizen of the country realizes the ecological threat and takes care of nature. For this purpose, a purposeful process of formation of ecological culture and ecological awareness of citizens is underway in Georgia. This is the main task of ecological PR. {6}

One of the levers of ecological education and, consequently, ecological PR is the close acquaintance of the population with the natural world, in direct contact with it (in campaigns, special ecological tours).

Ecotourism is a special type of travel, the main purpose of which is: ecological education, careful attitude towards nature, as well as providing a full-fledged recreation in a pristine natural environment. However, it can be said that ecotour is a specific ecological event that makes it one of the tools of ecological PR.

Environmental PR uses all kinds of PR tools: publications, social advertising, publicity, civilized lobbying, special events, community participation, blogs.

The mass media contributes to the formation of the problem and its inclusion in the agenda; The media influences the development of state policy (for example, programs, laws), directly participates in its implementation and evaluation of the results obtained. Mass media can become reliable partners not only in formation of positive image of the firm and advancing the ecological tour, but also in advancing the ecological

thought. In this case, the forms of communication with the massmedia can be press-conferences and briefings, followed by the publication of information in the massmedia, the press attention to the tour advertising campaign events, and the most effective lever for influencing the mass media will be the joint invitation of journalists and employees of travel companies to a press tour.

Publicity this is the public interest in the subject, the formation of the subject's awareness and popularity, gaining and maintaining the public's interest in this or that object. One of the ways to create publicity is special events, in particular, environmental events, competitions, festivals, flash mobs, sports and cultural-recreational events, etc.

Specially organized events are planned in advance; the target groups of consumers, society, organizations, as well as state structures are informed about their holding in different ways.

Conventional Information Events - conferences, seminars, meetings, roundtables on environmental issues can be seen as special as a result of proper coverage by the media.

A specially organized tour involving massmedia representatives and ecologists can also be turned into a special event. At this time: promotion of the ecological idea and the tour organizer tour operator; promoting of ecotourism as a new form of recreation; attract tourists, the press and the public to the region where the tour takes place.

Environmental PR also uses lobbying in a civilized form, which involves representing environmental organizations with various levels of government.

Social advertising is aimed at disseminating environmental thought and building environmental awareness among the population.

Public participation implies public participation in solving environmental problems.

The use of social networks and blogs to spread ideas, goods and services has become very popular. By connecting with high-profile bloggers today, ecotour can be successfully promoted. {6}

Ecotourism will be greatly promoted by holding PR-events such as "Ecological Tourism Day", "Tourism and Ecology", "Ecological Music Festival", etc.

The mass media should present natural (national parks, protected areas, etc.) and cultural-historical objects, complete data about the whole country or individual region, where ecotours and ecological-educational events should take place. It will even serve to create the image of an attractive tourist country for nature lovers.

Using all the above-mentioned means, it is possible to create a positive image of Georgia as a region with the best potential for the development of ecological tourism outside its borders and to interest many potential tourists. At the same time, tourists' impressions, their information, information received through various media and communication can play an essential role in shaping and strengthening the image.

Thus, properly conducted environmental PR will interest many people, and the more participants in the ecotours, the more will expand the circle of society that is interested in the ecological condition of the regions and the preservation of the world around us.

Ecotourists' service in the regions needs the hotels, restaurants, cafes, as well as development of cultural components (museums of local lore, ethnocultural centers). The implementation of such a program will create new jobs. At the same time, the population will not completely switch to the

services of tourists; most will continue to live as usual, engaging in traditional fields of agriculture, which ensures the use of nature in a saving mode.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, ecotourism, which is not yet properly popular among our population, needs to be further actively promoted with PR activities, aimed at raising public awareness in the field of environmental services; ecotourism becomes an instrument of environmental PR.

Ecological tourism is considered not only as a means of ecological education, but also as a means of attracting tourists to explore nature and, consequently, to preserve it.

Conducting ecological tours in the regions of Georgia will help to draw public attention to the ecological condition of these regions, as well as create new jobs in the field of tourist services, which will lead to the expansion of infrastructure in settlements.

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