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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SERVICE SECTOR OF CULTURE AND ART IN THE SOCIETY DURING THE CRISIS

IMPORTANȚA SECTORULUI DE SERVICII AL CULTURII ȘI ARTEI ÎN SOCIETATE ÎN TIMPUL CRIZEI

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Annotation: *The service sector of culture and art or the creative economy has gradually acquired independence and has become an essential element of the total social activity, the functioning of which is aimed at the formation and satisfaction of the cultural needs of people. At the same time, just like any other social sector, although it has its own specifics, which does not allow it to “merge” with the sphere of material production, to become its “servicing” link, it is an expression of human imagination, spreading important social and cultural values.*

Adnotare: *Sectorul de servicii al culturii și artei sau economia creativă a dobândit treptat independență și a devenit un element esențial al activității sociale totale, a cărei funcționare vizează formarea și satisfacerea nevoilor culturale ale oamenilor. În același timp, la fel ca orice alt sector social, deși are specificul său, care nu-i permite să „contopească” cu sfera producției materiale, să devină verigă „de deservire” a acestuia, este o expresie a imaginației umane, răspândind importante valori sociale și culturale.*

Keywords: *services, culture, creative industry, art, crisis, pandemic*

Cuvinte-cheie: *servicii, cultură, industrie creativă, artă, criză, pandemie*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered unprecedented responses as it spread across the planet. Social distancing, a moratorium on crowds, border closures have halted a significant part of the economy, including the impact on culture, exhibitions, entertainment and educational activities. Theaters, art centers, clubs, cinemas, philharmonic societies, museums, art galleries, educational centers were closed as part of quarantine measures [7, p.5].

The crisis caused by the pandemic reminded of the fundamental importance of creativity in the life of society. The preservation of culture as a means of informal interaction between people is extremely important for their psychological comfort. Therefore, it is so important: how a person perceives new difficult conditions of life, what his behavior, his moral state, will, feelings, emotions during a crisis. Since a person in the sector of culture acts as an object and subject of culture, he is both a carrier and a creator, a creator of culture and art. And he is destined to survive in this not easy

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struggle. In art, a person expresses self-respect, equality and democracy, which are necessary for people to live together in the world.

The lessons of world history speak about the importance of measures in the field of culture in difficult stages of the development of society. Therefore, culture and art are a key socializing factor that regulates various areas of human interaction from everyday communication to the functioning of the global economy. It may also be noted, that:

- culture preserves and transmits knowledge;
- culture creates values and symbols;
- culture strengthens social relationships;
- culture contributes to the development of the economic and political sphere of the country.

Materials and methods of research

In recent years, in parallel with the sector of culture, a new sector of culture has also developed - the creative industry or the creative economy. This sector shows higher growth compared to other industries: it generates about 3% of global GDP and employs 1% of the world's economically active population [8, p.3].

The creative industry is a sector of the economy that has both commercial and cultural value. A significant part of its added value is generated by trade in creative activities and intellectual property rights. These include design, fashion, architecture, visual arts, music, film and animation, video games, broadcasting, advertising, etc. The development of a creative economy has multiple positive effects for the economy and society, based on improving the quality of human capital, stimulating innovation and knowledge transfer in all sectors of the economy, etc.

The museum, theatres, galleries, exhibition halls, concert venues have become almost the first collateral victims of the Covid-19 pandemic. They were closed, productions were canceled, and the show was canceled.

According to UNESCO, as of April 15, 2020, 89% of countries have already completely or partially restricted public access to world cultural heritage sites. By April 22, 2020, 128 countries have suspended the activities of organizations related to the sector of culture. At the height of the pandemic, the International Council of Museums cited data on the closure of 95% of museums around the world. At least 85% of museums did not work in each region due to restrictive measures [1, p.6].

Table 1. Activities of cultural institutions of the Republic of Moldova for the period 2016 - 2020

Cultural institutions and their activities	Analysis period					Changes for 2016 %
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Museum (including branches)	123	126	127	127	130	+5,69
Number of visits - thousand	836,2	757,8	759,5	794,1	300,7	-64,70
Theaters	16	16	16	16	16	0
The number of spectators - thousand	433	395	367	346	115	-73,44
Libraries	1343	1338	1334	1326	1319	-1,79
Number of visits - thousand	8197	8192	7821	7204	4179	-49,01
Cinema installations	5	5	5	5	5	0
The number of visits to film screenings, thousand	425	610	485	687	119	-72,00
House of culture and club institutions (community centers)	1219	1219	1216	1216	1197	-1,80

Seats in auditoriums and lecture halls - thousand	331	336	338	334	311	-6,04
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Cultural institutions and their activities	Analysis period					Changes for 2016 %
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Philharmonic	1	1	1	1	1	0
The number of spectators - thousand	23	32	21	23	9	-60,87
Concert organizations	5	5	5	5	5	0
The number of spectators - thousand	86	73	100	100	42	-51,16

Source:[1, p.56-57], [1, p.4-6]

Results and considerations

Restrictive measures have led to a massive reduction in the number of visitors to cultural institutions both around the world and in our country. In the Republic of Moldova in 2020, there were 16 theaters that were visited by 114.9 thousand people, which is 71% less than in 2017. Despite the growth in the number of museums in the country, the number of visitors from 2017 to 2020 decreased by more than 2 times (table 1). On June 1, 2020, access to the museum was open, but the tours were conducted individually and in groups of up to five people. Throughout this period, events were held mainly in an online format with a minimum number of participants who can be in the premises. During this time, museums managed to hold a number of online events - exhibitions, lectures, art salons. In this case, artists or speakers in the limited number that the room allowed were in the museum building, and visitors could hear and see everything that was happening on the online broadcast.

Due to the pandemic, incomes of the population have decreased, and some citizens have lost their jobs altogether. This also had a negative impact on the service sector. It can be assumed that most of the cultural institutions depend on ticket sales, so it is possible that due to lack of budget, these institutions may not open even after the restrictions are lifted. The sector of culture is experiencing difficulties in accessing financial support, its main source of funding, both in Moldova and abroad, is various donors: authorities, sponsors, charitable organizations. Coming out of the crisis, many states allocate huge funds for economic recovery, including oil and gas production, but the cultural sector, as always, remains in the shadows.

The cancellation or postponement of book fairs has affected the release of new books, which has affected the income of authors and publishers. Growth in online sales only partially offset revenue losses.

In 2020, there were 1319 national and territorial public libraries in the country, which is 19 units less than in 2017. On average, one library has 11.8 thousand copies of books, serial publications and other documents.

At the same time, quarantine and restrictive measures have increased the demand for home entertainment and self-development, in connection with which sectors such as video games and online services with streaming audio / video content have received a huge boost to develop and expand their potential audience. At the same time, the profits were mainly made by large companies.

In general, many are of the opinion that work in the sector of culture has a low status and prestige, and the COVID-19 crisis has had a particularly negative impact on the employment of workers in the creative professions. According to the Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, the number of personnel in the service sector for 2020 is 9352 people [3].

A significant part of those employed in the sector of culture are employees of pre-retirement and retirement age and most of them are women, and the creative industry is young people (15-29

years old). Cancellations of concerts, the postponement of festivals, the cessation of film production - all these factors have had a disastrous effect on the field of creative professions. There was a surge in the outflow of specialists in other areas of activity. Despite the fact that the average monthly salary in the Republic of Moldova for 2020 in the field of art, entertainment and recreation was 5753 lei, 73% higher than in 2017 [1, p.31]. After all, many countries to this day cannot provide their citizens with jobs with decent wages in the service sector. Even in countries where the social security system allows for payments to workers in the creative professions, there are difficulties in overcoming the consequences of the cultural crisis.

Tourism is another hardest hit area. According to UNESCO, tourism and related areas account for up to 70% of the income of the national economies of some countries. Restrictions have affected the work of 75 million people in the tourism sector worldwide. The World Tourism Organization notes that tourism costs associated with restrictive measures will reach historic proportions [7, p.13].

Due to closed borders, restrictions and travel cancellations, tourism is seeing a significant decline. Entertainment events and business conferences were canceled everywhere, tourists cancel reservations from hotels and tickets. Tourism companies in the Republic of Moldova also suffered, despite the already low rates of incoming tourist flow, which are due to the underdeveloped tourism and general economic infrastructure of the country, which directly affects the slowdown in tourism development. So, in order to support the tourism sector of the Republic of Moldova during the crisis, there were implementations of online projects that allowed those who wished to visit virtual excursions.

In Moldova, an initiative group of developers and photographers launched a unique collection of virtual 3D tours of Moldova. On the website www.visit.md and www.locals.md there is a map of virtual tours that inspires travel. Of course, a virtual tour will not replace a real trip, so each tour is provided with contact information and a map. Also, the tour pages tell the story of each of the places so that you are fully prepared for the trip[7]. It can be assumed that virtual travel in the near future will become a good auxiliary tool in choosing a real trip, but definitely not a replacement for it, although this technology may slightly reduce the size of the excursion tour market.

Conclusions

The increased focus on creativity over the past year has made it clear that culture is essential to our emotional well-being, especially during times of crisis. General self-isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the sector of culture, clearly accelerating the development of new technologies in the sector of cultural services. The transition to the electronic format came rapidly, thereby largely preserving the moral and mental health of the nation during the pandemic. Art plunged into the online sphere and became more accessible. And also thanks to the emergence of marketplaces of services and the simplification of website creation tools, the popularity of cultural services has grown. Therefore, new technologies help the industry recovery program. But the growing interest in digital products in the field of culture entails a number of problems that need to be solved.

Entering the path of recovery, we must do everything to ensure that culture does not stand aside. Certain types of cultural services are provided by commercial organizations (creative industry), which can be implemented independently in market conditions and in parallel serve as a source of replenishment of the budgets of the corresponding levels. However, the main consequences of the crisis have affected cultural organizations that are deprived of commercial opportunities and are characterized as socially significant and socially useful character. To support these types of services, state subsidies, the creation of various foundations and cultural associations are required, which will provide access to cultural objects in the conditions of the “new normal”, which will give impetus to the active development of the digitalization of this area, the formation and updating of the cultural online environment.

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