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## **BLEISURE TRAVELS AS A NEW REQUIREMENT FOR HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY**

ARYNA ZAMORA, student

OLHA HNATYSHEVA, Teacher, Language Adviser

*O. M. Beketov National University of Urban Economy in Kharkiv*

Living in modern society urges us to be flexible and have a lot of mobility, either in private life or in business. The concept of so-called “digital nomad” previously associated mostly with IT specialists is becoming more and more widespread in terms of occupations making this lifestyle possible. Firstly, the pandemic triggered the revolution in remote working as a way of adaptation to the modern challenges, and since then more and more ideas connected with working away from the office have started to appear.

As for Ukraine, the problem is not only actual, but also immeasurably painful because of the Russian aggression, as a lot of people had to relocate inside the country or to move abroad. So, the only way for companies to keep the qualified professionals employed is to give them opportunities of having a remote workplace, if it is even slightly possible.

The word “bleisure” was coined as a result of blending the words “business” and “leisure”. “Are you travelling for business or leisure?” is one of the typical questions asked by a hotel receptionist, and nowadays the answer could be “both”. Living in a different place for some time is seen as an opportunity to explore it when you are free, have a good rest to be productive and even find an inspiration. According to Microsoft’s Work Trend Index, about 73% of workers aged 25-60 have the need for distant and flexible working process (compared with 21% from 2010 statistics). This drastic change in numbers is also connected with technological advances such as easier and cheaper access to the Internet via laptops, tablet PCs or smartphones.

Considering the advantages for workers, are there any benefits for the hotel industry? The answer is yes: attracting bleisure travelers is a good way of increasing the revenue. Firstly, it helps boost the hotel occupation rate in mid-season time when there are few tourists coming. Secondly, this means having a whole new business segment of mostly high income customers to work with (which, again, results in more profit).

Of course, it is impossible to attract this type of visitors without having proper facilities. That is why the term “hybrid hospitality” appeared meaning the combination of comfort (modern rooms, cozy atmosphere, gourmet meals) and working opportunities (fast and reliable Internet connection, meeting halls, cabinets inside the rooms, modern hardware etc).

However, installing office equipment or redecorating rooms is not enough to be successful. The key is in being efficient in services offered to the client who is often too busy to do a lot of research concerning other local companies, whether it is about the choice of food or a day trip to the seaside. This problem could be solved in two different ways. The first one is to develop the services inside a hotel by retraining staff, offering new options or hiring some additional employees (e. g. diversify the kitchen with new dishes available, open the tech support facility or hire a tour guide to offer the trips around the locality). Another way deals with collaboration, basically giving these tasks to outsource companies, thus creating stable and efficient partnership which would be beneficial for both sides. Special packages including all the necessary services with a reasonable discount could be a good way to attract your first bleisure travelers.

All in all, being really all inclusive concerning services of different kinds is not enough, too. Trips for business are usually different from trips for leisure because of the limited amount of personal choices. As a result, the best way to satisfy bleisure customers is to give them as much flexibility as possible, so that they do not feel as if they are just living in the office. This could be achieved by giving them more freedom in check-in/out options and time schedules in general. Moreover, personalization could be done in the form of a questionnaire filled in while booking a room, with every little aspect mentioned (preferable ways of contact with personnel, language spoken, age groups and gender, tastes in food and drinks, transport or trips reservations needed etc.).

While being a combination of two older ways of travelling, bleisure travel is still both a challenge and an opportunity for hotels to become more versatile in their offerings. Judging by the technological advances forecasted for the near future and the tendency of living as a “digital nomad”, these kinds of hotels are going to be more and more required by the hospitality industry customers.

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