

ONLINE SUMMER CAMPS FOR CHILDREN AS A FORM OF VIRTUAL TOURISM AND THEIR ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

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Rest is an important activity for the appropriate psychological and physical development of children. A modality to organize active rest for children are the summer camps. The digital media have opened the possibility of organization of online summer camps for children which can be seen as a form of virtual tourism.

First online summer camps appeared in United States in 2000s and their topic was IT [1]. Beginning with the recent pandemic, online summer camps unfolded as a new form of organization of traditional summer camps with physical presence, not as an alternative, but as a complementary option to them for children during the periods with restrictive measures in times of crisis, the pandemic period being first in this row of crises.

In comparison to the summer camps with physical presence the ones in online form have some advantages: a smaller risk of infection between participants in the camps; nearly no limit on the class size; lower organization costs; a broader geographical diversity of participants (from different regions and even from other countries); adequate use of gadgets; development of new skills (while in summer camps with physical presence the bigger focus is on rest); the presence of family home environment that gives a higher psychological security to the child; the opportunity to keep the individual pace in activities; easier accessibility for children in difficult situations (that have a low mobility – children with physical disabilities and those from socially vulnerable groups (for example, for those that may have access to Internet through computer, tablet or smartphone, but can't pay the tickets to the camps with physical presence)). The use of online summer camps for children also has its disadvantages: the risk of depersonalization of those that participate; difficulties in using virtual skills to the real world; absence of direct emotional, energetic, suggestive contact between teacher and children and between children themselves; the extra screen time that may have harmful effects on children, like behavioral problems (social, emotional, attention issues), worse academic performance, sleep problems; sometimes a big cost for some online summer camps, while many propose free programs.

The aim of online summer camps is the creation of a digital educational environment for the creative self-realization of children and teens in various types of online and offline activities, united by a holistic game concept of the camp, in accordance

with the inclinations and interests of pupils, which will ensure the intellectual and emotional and value development of their personalities [2] [3].

This goal is done through the following activities: 1) involving children and adolescents with no geographical restrictions in creative activities, using electronic gadgets, social networks, video broadcasts, according to their needs and abilities in a safe and cozy home environment; 2) expanding the multidirectional communication of children and teens in society thanks to the interactive nature of communication links and cybersocialization; 3) promoting the formation of children and teens' skills in time management in conditions not regulated by the school schedule, for a more complete self-realization and self-development; 4) initiating the cultivation by a child or teen of an individual socio-cultural guidance and educational route according to their inclinations, abilities and considering trends in informatization, computerization and digitalization of reality; 5) creating situations of demand for children and teens to master electronic technologies and resources, general educational skills to solve personally significant and socially relevant problems in the development of online projects; 6) overcoming computer addiction of adolescents through the creation of an effective system of motivation, involvement in team forms of work, the organization of permanent psychoprophylactic activities, the development of a culture of preserving and improving one's own health.

As functions of the activities of the online summer camps are: 1) formative function - uninterrupted education of children and teens according to their needs and abilities, including the mastery of electronic technologies and resources; 2) educational function - to promote the spiritual and moral development of the personality of a child or teen through the organization of multidirectional communication through involvement mainly in team forms of interactive activity; 3) developing function - the organization of motivated development by children and teens of the ways and techniques of cognition as effective resources for self-realization in the development of multimedia projects and research; 4) humanistic function - to recognize the value the personality of a child or teen in the interaction of all subjects of the educational process of online summer camps; 6) regulatory function – development by the subjects of the educational process of the accepted rules, approved norms, established traditions of the activities of online summer camps, considering modern trends in informatization, computerization and digitalization of reality; 7) design function - the development of integrated educational programs for children's associations.

With regard to the content of the activities of the online summer camps the following main areas of activity can be suggested: 1) the formative content of the activity that involves mastering by children and teens the starting knowledge and skills in leading areas in the field of IT and programming, solving complex engineering problems in a playful way through a block programming language; learning how to create cinematic stories; 3D modeling in Blender with which they will be able to master the basics of

modeling games and animation objects; Web-development and Web-programming; 2) recreational and health-improving content of activities as the main and optional direction of the work of interactive clubs of online summer camps; 3) the cultural and educational content of the activity that allows the development of social responsibility and cultural enlightenment of children and teens. Depending on the priority of one or another content orientation, an online summer camp can be predominantly educational and developmental, educational and relaxing, and educational and entertaining.

Organizations from different countries gave the opportunity to participate in online summer camps, for example: India, Canada, United States, South Korea, Ireland, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and other countries. In the case of Republic of Moldova, first online summer camps at the initiative of state authorities were opened in 2020, in total 11 camps of this type, where more children than in the case of physical presence camps could participate from different places of the country and even from diaspora. Because the online summer camps are relatively new for the country there were some issues in their organization: insufficiency of IT abilities of teachers; underdeveloped IT infrastructure; slow connection to Internet and insufficient size of Internet data packages. To tackle these issues the following measures can be applied: training activities for teachers in the extracurricular institutions in IT field; hiring of IT trained persons to manage digital resources and promote online activities; increase of Internet speed endowment for educational institutions; giving teachers appropriate internet packages.

List of references:

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