

How does the decrease in the number of tourists as a result of Covid-19 affect the tourism sector in Italy?

Kinga Stolczyk

*Uniwersytet Gdański, Wydział Oceanografii i Geografii, Instytut Geografii
E-mail: k.stolczyk.178@studms.ug.edu.pl*

tutor: dr Julia Ziólkowska

*Uniwersytet Gdański, Wydział Oceanografii i Geografii, Instytut Geografii,
Zakład Gospodarki Przestrzennej*

Słowa kluczowe: Covid-19, tourism, Italy

The purpose of this article is to discuss how the decrease in the number of tourists as a result of Covid-19 affects the situation of residents of popular tourism destinations in Italy. To show how great the impact is, it is important to compare quantitative and qualitative data. These statistics complement each other. As well as examined statistical numbers from *istat.it* and analysed public opinion, including residents, government and media. Also, EUROSTAT data was research. It is important to understand the changes in tourism. What is the current state of the tourism industry? What about residents of popular destinations? This study is about Italy because it is a country for which tourism plays an important role.

It has been proven that tourism is a valuable economic pillar of the Italian economy, in this case Italy suffered one of the largest losses in Europe. It is fair to say that Covid-19 had an influence on Italian

tourism sector. However, it is important to evaluate how great the extent of Covid-19 is and how are the residents affected.

Mass tourism before Covid-19 was one of the fastest developing sectors of the economy. People earned more money, so they spend it for vacations, and they travelled a lot. Also, travels were easily available because travel agencies offered package holidays, which included the cost of accommodation, travel and food. In addition, plane tickets were affordable, allowing tourists to visit a lot of different places. Accommodation and gastronomy were profitable businesses, so there was a lot of new places to stay or to eat. Countries were investing in new infrastructure, in consequence the number of seasonal workers permanently increased. Figure 1 presents the scale of employment in accommodation and food service activities in 2017. Italy, Spain, Germany, and France are the countries, for which employment in accommodation and food service activities was particularly important.

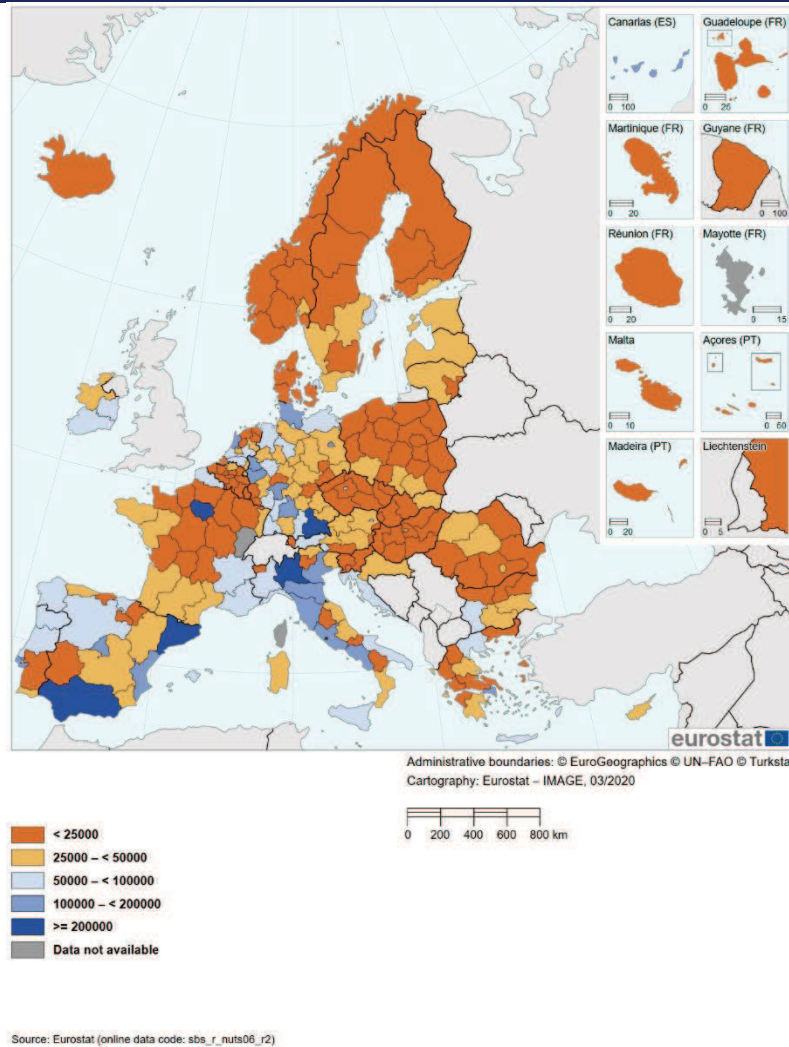


Fig. 1. Employment in accommodation and food service activities in 2017 (EUROSTAT)

Tourism is one of the main sectors of Italian economy, therefore figures should be provided to show the significance of the impact of Covid-19 on tourism. The virus has an influence on different sectors of tourism, including public transport and gastronomy. Italy imposed restrictions during the lockdown. Restaurants, bars and hotels were closed. Italians could not leave their homes and visit family. Public transport was restricted, only people with valid reason could travel. Moreover, foreign travellers were required to have a valid reason for entry and a relevant document. All statistics originate from Istituto Nazionale di Statisti-

ca - Italian National Institute of Statistics. If Covid-19 had not occurred, in March-May 2020 quarter, Italy might have had 81 million visitors, which represents only 18.5% of the average annual total. Moreover, there is 23% of the annual total of foreign visitors and there is 20.3% of the annual total of stays in hotel facilities. Furthermore, there would be 9.4 billion euros expenditure by foreign tourists. Annual expenditure by foreign tourist would be about 21.4% and 16% annual expenditure by Italian tourists. With regards to hospitality and tourism industry in 2017 there was 52.164 enterprises. Turnover was about 25.6 billion euros. More than

Tutoring Gedanensis

that value added was 11,4 billion euros. In 2017, in Italy, there was 282,6 thousand of employees and 220 thousand of workers in

the tourism sector (istat.it). Figure 2 summarizes those number.



Fig. 2. The impact of Covid-19 on Tourism in Italy (istat.it)

Public opinion, such as residents, government and media is significant to understand changes occurring in tourism. This study analysed specific websites related to the title topic. Statements are taken from unwto.org, revenue-hub.com, cor.europa.eu, business-standard.com, thelocal.it and phocuswire.com. It was hard to find statements about employment in tourism-related activities. However, Vittorio Messina, National President of Assoturismo - Italian Tourism Federation, said (cor.europa.eu): "In recent history Italian tourism has never experienced a crisis like this. It is the darkest moment." This opinion proves that the situation is serious. Moreover, Luca Patane, president of Confiturismo - a unitary expression of the national organizations representing the tourism businesses and professions belonging to Confcommercio Imprese per l'Italia (the coordination association struc-

ture for the tourism sector promoted by the Confederation), said in a statement regarding March 2020: "At the end of March we hypothesized that the tourism sector would lose 100 billion euros this year and at the time it seemed like an excessively dramatic vision." To addition Gloria Guevara, President & CEO of WTTC (World Travel & Tourism Council) told: "The situation could have been far worse if it were not for the government's Cassa Integrazione Ordinaria scheme, which supported up to 80 percent of a worker's salary and kept many people in their jobs whilst the Travel & Tourism sector continued to suffer." Further Secretary-General of the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization) Zurab Pololikashvili said: "Italy is a world tourism leader, a strong ally of UNWTO and committed to making tourism a pillar of sustainable economic development. We must build on the

determination and solidarity that characterized our joint response to the crisis to grow back stronger and better with sustainability and innovation among our most important guiding principles." In addition, Maria Giovanna Argiolas, Customer Success expert at RevenueHub thinks: "...Covid-19 took a nonetheless heavy toll on the national economic system, and particularly on the tourism sector and all of its associated activities." Giancarlo Carniani, which manages a small hotel company, in an interview for PhocusWire said that he earned less money during virus, but it is enough to survive. Moreover, all of his employees kept their jobs. One of the readers of the article said: 'This crisis is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the industry if Hoteliers, Activity Providers, In-Destination Tour Operators, and entire Destinations see the current situation as a unique opportunity to come out of the crisis and restart their business much better off than they have entered into this crisis.' To sum up, this citation of commenter includes everything: "Nothing will be the same as it was before."

In summary, no one doubts that Covid-19 affect the situation of residents of popular destinations in Italy. Italian economy lost a lot of visitors and in consequence money. Overall, all opinions agree that virus is an opportunity to change the tourism industry. I agree with that. In my opinion, virus was a wake-up call to change the way how to manage tourism. For that reason, tourism should be based on sustainable development and innovation.

Źródła internetowe:

assoturismo.it
business-standard.com
confcommercio.it
confturismo.it
cor.europa.eu
ec.europa.eu/eurostat
istat.it
phocuswire.com
revenue-hub.com
thelocal.it
unwto.org
wttc.org

Notka o Autorce: Kinga Stolczyk jest studentką I roku magisterskich studiów uzupełniających na kierunku geografia społeczno-ekonomiczna z elementami GIS. Interesuje się szeroko pojętą ludnością, turystyką, ochroną środowiska oraz odnawialnymi źródłami energii.