



ECONOMIC GROWTH OF THE TOURISM SECTOR IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC DURING 2021

Žaklina Spalević*, Snježana Stanišić

Singidunum University,
Belgrade, Serbia

Abstract:

The tourism sector around the world has been hit hard by the Covid-19 virus pandemic. The consequences of the pandemic during 2020 on the entire tourism sector have significantly reduced the income of both individuals and the collection in the state treasury. The introduced measures, as well as the mass vaccination of citizens, enabled the opening of tourist destinations during 2021, which brought long-awaited revenues to this branch of economics. The opening of tourist destinations has started the travel sector, both air, and road, rail and water transport. The aim of this paper is to analyze the current economic growth of the tourism sector and compare the current situation with the situation in 2019 and the situation during the crisis in 2020. The paper also gives an overview of the legal measures adopted in order to overcome the problems caused by the closure. The analysis of the economic growth of the tourism sector during 2021 was performed on the basis of available data and information both in the world and in the countries of the region. Also, the analysis was performed for both international tourism and domestic tourist destinations. Based on the conducted analysis, it is concluded that the number of tourists who visited the observed regions in the first half of 2021 is still lower compared to the same period in 2019.

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INTRODUCTION

The economy of many countries around the world is directly dependent on tourism, as one of the main industries. On the other hand, it can be said that there is almost no country in the world where tourism does not bring a certain profit. Practically observed from the angle of both citizens and the state, if it is a question of foreign tourists who visit a tourist destination, this is a form of income by which new amounts of money are introduced into the state budget.

*E-mail: zspalevic@singidunum.ac.rs





Precisely for these reasons, we have been constantly working on improving tourism and economic growth, which can be achieved by increasing the number of tourist destinations, as well as increasing the number of both domestic and foreign tourists who visit specific tourist destinations.

Closing the doors of tourist destinations either voluntarily or forcibly means great economic losses for all people living in that part of the country from tourism. At the same time, the closure of tourist destinations affects the state budget. The Covid-19 virus during the tourist year 2020 caused the closure of a large number of tourist destinations. Practically the way the virus has spread, as well as the unknowns about the dangers it carries, have led many countries to introduce measures globally to close tourist destinations, close hotels, restaurants, and finally close their borders to foreign tourists. The introduced measures led to the collapse of the tourism economy (Sigala, 2020). The improvement in terms of re-normalization of travel and operation of all tourist facilities began in 2021 after the mass vaccination and immunization of the population around the world. Precisely for this reason, the aim of this research was to analyze the current state of tourism in relation to 2019 and in relation to 2020. In addition to mass vaccination, to mitigate the effects of full closure measures, many countries around the world have enacted legal provisions and decisions to fund tourism. The goal is to compare the current state of tourism with the year that preceded the pandemic (2019) and for which data show that it is one of the best years, as well as with the year in which the pandemic was in full swing. This approach was chosen to show the extent to which tourism could recover to its pre-pandemic status.

The paper is organized as follows. The second chapter presents the relevant literature. The third section deals with the economic analysis of the tourism sector during the last year. Within the fourth section, key conclusions and ideas for future work are given.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of tourism industry largely depends on many socio-economic factors. For example, human relations, wars, pandemics, natural disasters can affect the development of tourism in some parts of the world. It is for these reasons that tourism organizations must have a developed mechanism for acting in crises, as well as a strategy for recovery from them (Qiu, Park, Li, & Song, 2020). A large number of papers examine the crisis that may arise in the tourism sector. In one of the papers, a quantitative study of crisis management was published regarding the crisis in tourism that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. The current data obtained from the conducted interviews were analyzed using a statistical tool. The results of the research showed that honest communication is the best solution in terms of fighting the pandemic, and that it is the main trump card when it comes to overcoming the crisis in tourism (Yeh, 2020).

In one of the papers, the authors defined different scenarios aimed at predicting the future requirements of international tourism. The basic concept is to consider the further development and struggle of tourism organizations in order to restore tourism after the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors applied two completely different methodologies in their research. By applying these methodologies, they managed to predict the development of tourism in the next year. Using appropriate methods, they developed accuracy metrics which showed that their predictive models have a high degree of accuracy. The results of the survey showed a large decline in the number of tourist arrivals during 2021 (Fotiadis, Polozos & Huan, 2021).



As a number of tourist destinations are known in casinos, the Covid-19 pandemic has also affected the gambling sector. One of the research is aimed at determining the impact of Covid-19 pandemics on the gambling industry. Using quantitative analysis and relevant data, the research showed that the gambling industry in Macau is significantly dependent on the number of international tourist arrivals (Lim & To, 2021). As the number of tourist arrivals has fallen sharply, the survey showed a significant decline in GDP, as well as a decline in employment (Lapointe, 2020).

During the pandemic, one of the ways to help the tourism sector was through non-repayable economic aid. However, these measures do not cover tourism workers working in the gray zone. In one of the surveys, the authors showed that one in 165 citizens of the European Union prefers to be an unregistered worker. Of course, the research refers to workers in the tourism sector. In order to help these workers during the Covid-19 pandemic, they had to be counted and financially supported (Williams, 2020).

The tourism of a country can be divided into national and international. The division is of course made according to the tourists who visit specific tourist destinations. Different experiences in both domestic and international tourism can contribute to its development in each of the countries. During the Covid-19 virus pandemic, there was a significant increase in revenue from domestic tourists around the world. In one of the papers, experiences in terms of domestic and international tourism in Uzbekistan are summarized. Based on the available data, some of the key conclusions have been drawn regarding the stimulation of further development (Nurov, Khamroyeva & Kadirova, 2021).

In one of the papers, as the goal of the research an assessment of the short-run economic impacts of the inbound tourism industry on the Australian economy during the pandemic. The research has shown that pandemic has had a major impact on the various industries behind tourism. The authors also conclude that financial assistance to tourism is much needed. Financial assistance to tourism will provide further development of various branches of industry that are directly dependent on tourism (Ngo, Su, Dwyer & Pham, 2021).

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF THE TOURISM SECTOR

The Covid-19 virus pandemic started at the end of 2019 and has changed until this day the tourist picture around the world daily. Favorite tourist destinations, one day full of tourists, are already closed to visitors the next day (Gretzel, *et. al.*, 2020). The problems that have arisen have greatly affected at least the earnings of the people employed in the tourism sector. The consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on both domestic and international tourism are certainly more significant precisely because of the fact that the tourism sector is largely dependent on the free movement of people (Stankova, Amoiradis, Velissariou & Grigoriadou, 2021). This is especially the case when it comes to international tourism (Andrades & Dimanche, 2019). The economic deficit of international tourism due to the closure of borders directly impairs the survival of a large number of families whose livelihoods are directly based on income from foreign tourists (Bakar & Rosbi, 2020).

The closure of borders during 2020 directly caused the impossibility of movement of tourists, and thus reduced the number of arrivals and reduced wages for all those working in the tourism sector (Kourgiantakis, Apostolakis & Dimou, 2020). The comparison of the number of tourist arrivals in certain parts of the world or regions is directly related to the popularity of tourist destinations in a given region.

Also, the increase or decrease in economic income is conditioned by the number of tourists who arrived at a destination as well. In order to make a comparison, the data from the World Tourism Organization were used (UNWTO, 2020).



If we look at the number of arrivals at the global level during 2020 and compare it with the number of arrivals during 2019, we can clearly see the decline in the number of arrivals (Figure 1 and Figure 2, respectively). Also, based on the available data on the number of tourist arrivals worldwide, it can be seen that the percentage during January 2020 was still growing in the number of tourists. In the following months, a significant decline in the number of tourist arrivals is evident, which corresponds to the period in which measures were introduced in the fight against the Covid-19 virus (Bozovic *et. al.*, 2021).

Figure 1. International tourist arrivals in 2020

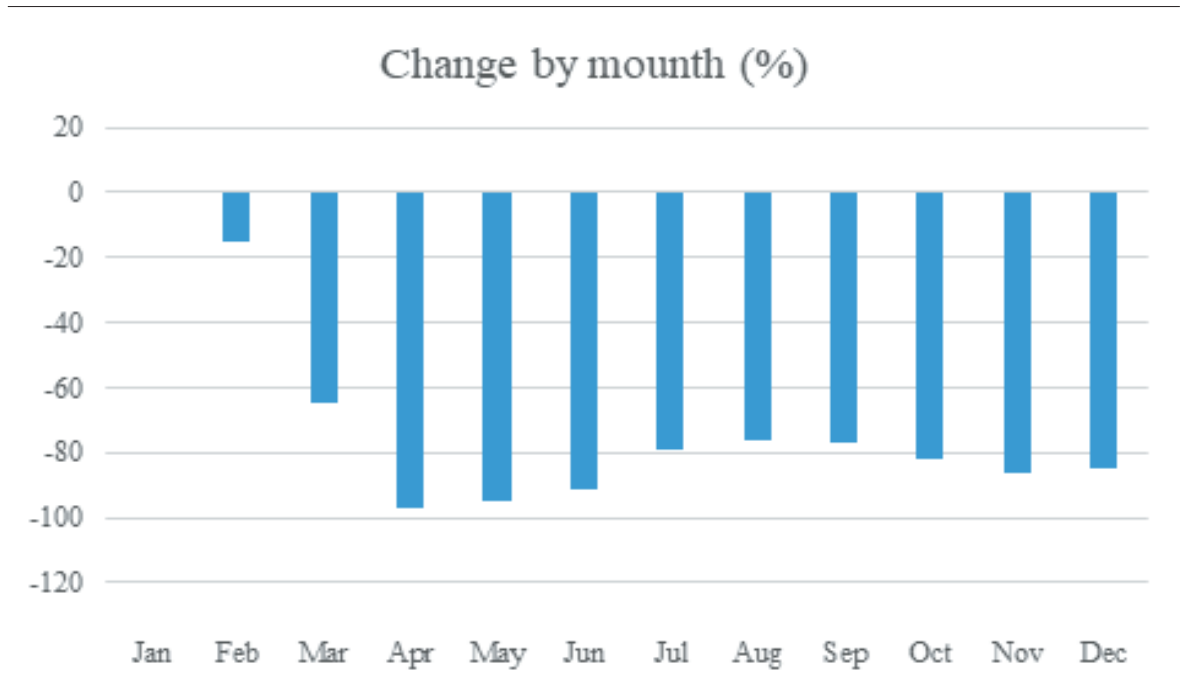
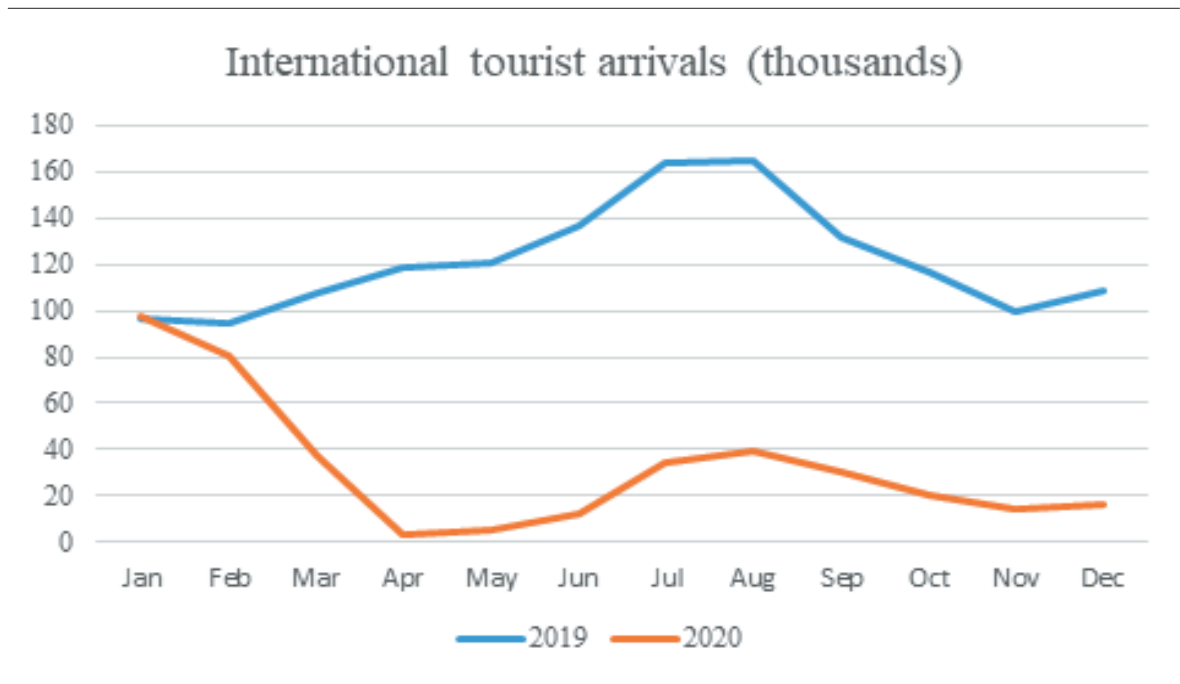


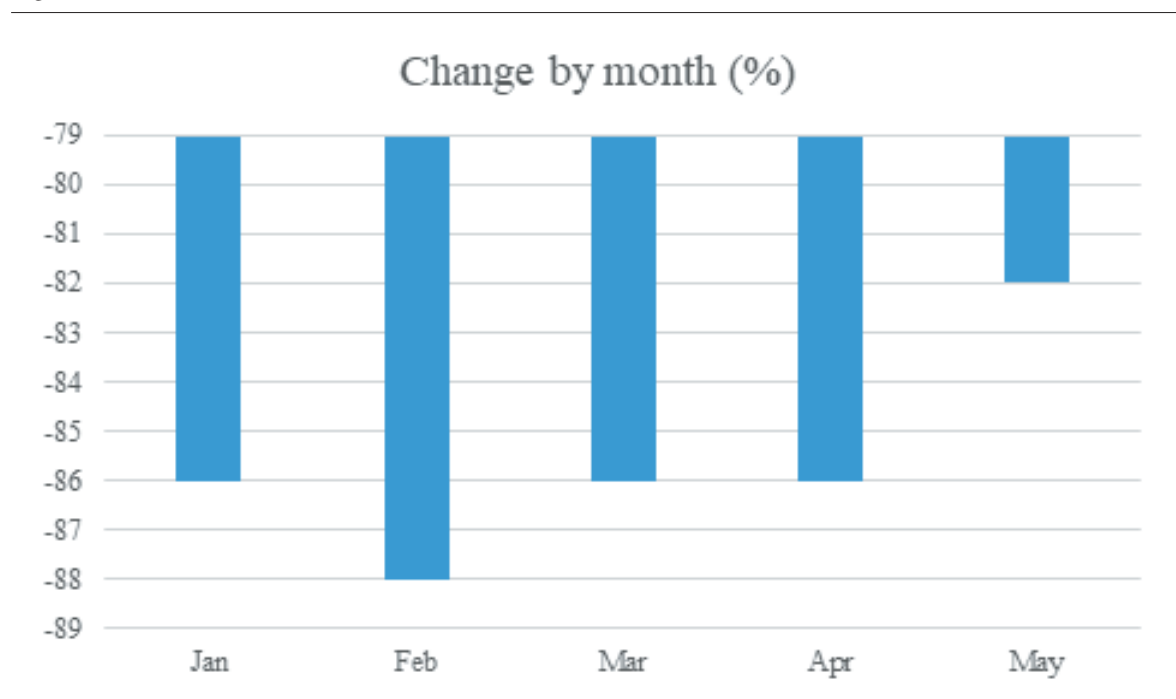
Figure 2. International tourist arrivals comparison of 2019 and 2020





As immunization led to the possibility for tourists to move during 2021, the number of tourist arrivals around the world increased (Gallego & Fort, 2020). Figure 3 shows the percentage number of arrivals for the first 5 months of 2021 (Pantic, 2021). As 2020 was considered one of the worst years in terms of tourism, a comparison of the number of arrivals in the first 5 months of 2021 was made with the same period in 2020. The results of the comparison can be seen in Figure 4. If we compare the decline in the number of arrivals during 2020 and the available data on the number of arrivals during 2021, it is clear that the number of arrivals during 2021 has increased compared to the number of arrivals during 2020. The growth in the percentage of tourist arrivals worldwide in 2021 will begin after March. This growth trend continues during April and May. Projections show that the same growth rate can be expected during the other months of 2021. As there is no data available to show the number of tourist arrivals in other months, the interpretation is based solely on the projection.

Figure 3. International tourist arrivals in the first 5 months of 2021



**Figure 4.** International tourist arrivals comparison of 2020 and 2021

The decline in the number of arrivals at the world level is also transmitted at the level of the European Union. If we compare the available data on the number of arrivals during 2019, 2020, 2021 in the European Union, we can clearly see the decline in the number of arrivals during 2020 and 2021 compared to 2019 (Figure 5, Figure 6, Figure 7 and Figure 8). Regarding the comparison of the number of tourist arrivals in the first months of 2021, the number of tourist arrivals is less than in the first months of 2020 (Cai, *et. al.* 2021). This trend can be justified by the fact that the number of tourists traveling around the world in the first months of 2020 was significantly higher because there was no presence of the Covid-19 virus or measures that restricted movement.

As for 2021, the first trimester is still characterized by a great potential for the spread of the virus, as well as restrictive measures in terms of travel and movement. If we compare the data from April onwards, it can be clearly seen that in the case of 2020, the number of tourist arrivals decreases significantly in these months, while in the case of 2021, the number of tourist arrivals increases.



Figure 5. Number of arrivals on the territory of Europe during 2020

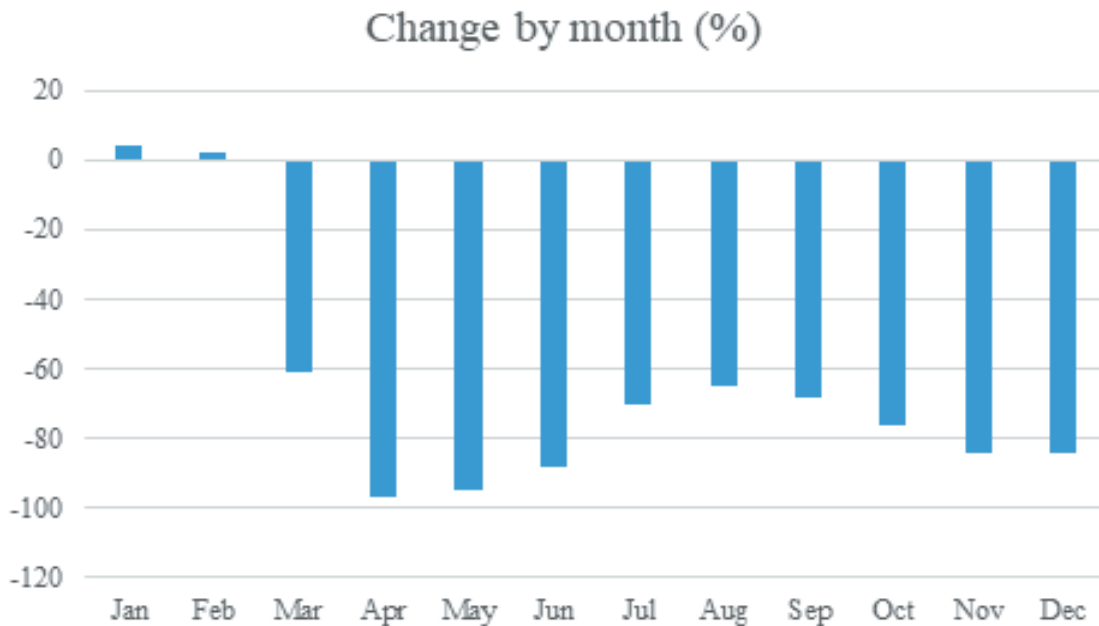


Figure 6. Comparison of the number of arrivals on the territory of Europe during 2019 and 2020



Projections for the remaining period of 2021 as available data on the number of tourists and economic earnings show that the trend of growth in the number of tourist arrivals will continue, and thus revenue in the tourism sector (Puska, *et. al*, 2020). Measures to combat the Covid-19 virus pandemic also contribute to the increase in the number of tourists, both international and domestic. Namely during this period, active immunization of the population as well as the abolition of restrictive measures contributed to the increase in the number of tourist arrivals (Nientied, & Shutina, 2020).



The adoption of new measures that include the possibility of travel with the possession of appropriate documents has greatly facilitated the movement of tourists and enabled the renewal of the tourism sector (Cvijanovic, Pantovic, Djordjevic, 2021). Depending on the region or specific country, it still differs which of the documents is needed in order to be able to travel and enter the territory of a given country. For example, some countries require that a permit entering their territory must have a vaccination certificate. On the other hand, some of the countries allow tourists to enter if they have a negative PCR test or a negative antigen test.

Figure 7. Number of arrivals on the territory of Europe during the first 5 months of 2021

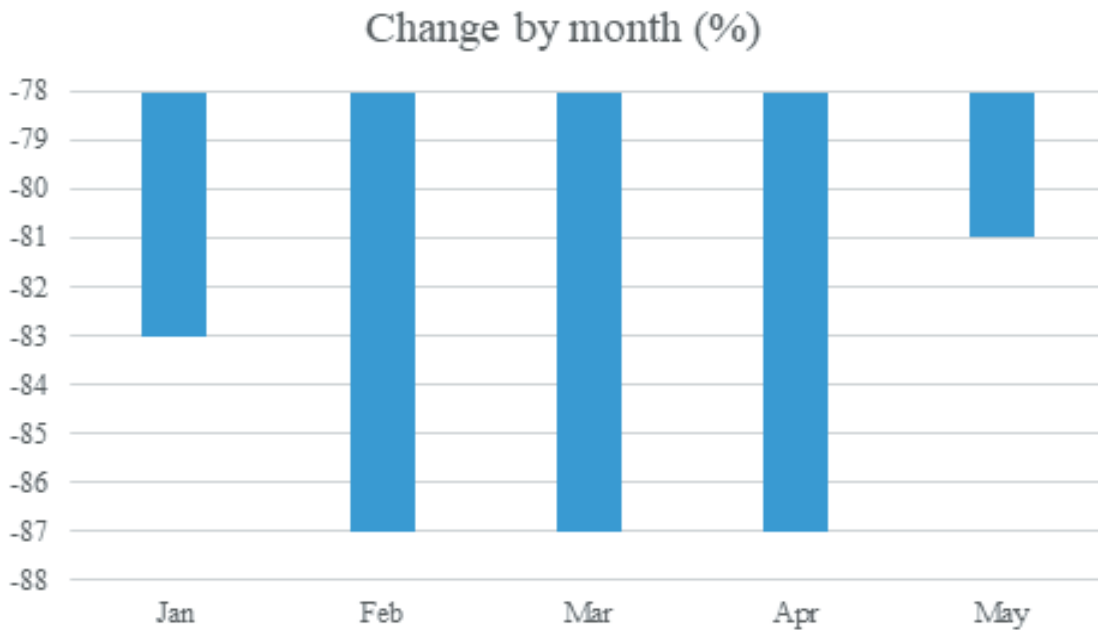


Figure 8. Comparison of the number of arrivals on the territory of Europe during 2019 and 2021





If we compare the percentage of tourist arrivals in the Republic of Serbia as well as in neighboring countries with the data available worldwide, we can conclude that the downward trend in the number of tourists is almost identical. All this can be seen in Figure 9. Also, from Figure 9 it can undoubtedly be seen that in the first months there is still an increase in the number of tourists, while after that there is an evident decline (Demirovic, 2021). Such data can be justified by the fact that the number of infected people in the territory of the Republic of Serbia started to grow at the beginning of March. Also in the first months of 2020, a large number of Serbian citizens who were temporarily frightened by the Covid-19 pandemic while working abroad returned to the country, which caused an increase in the number of arrivals (Beraha, Djuricin, 2020).

Figure 9. Number of arrivals on the territory of the Republic of Serbia and surrounding countries during 2020

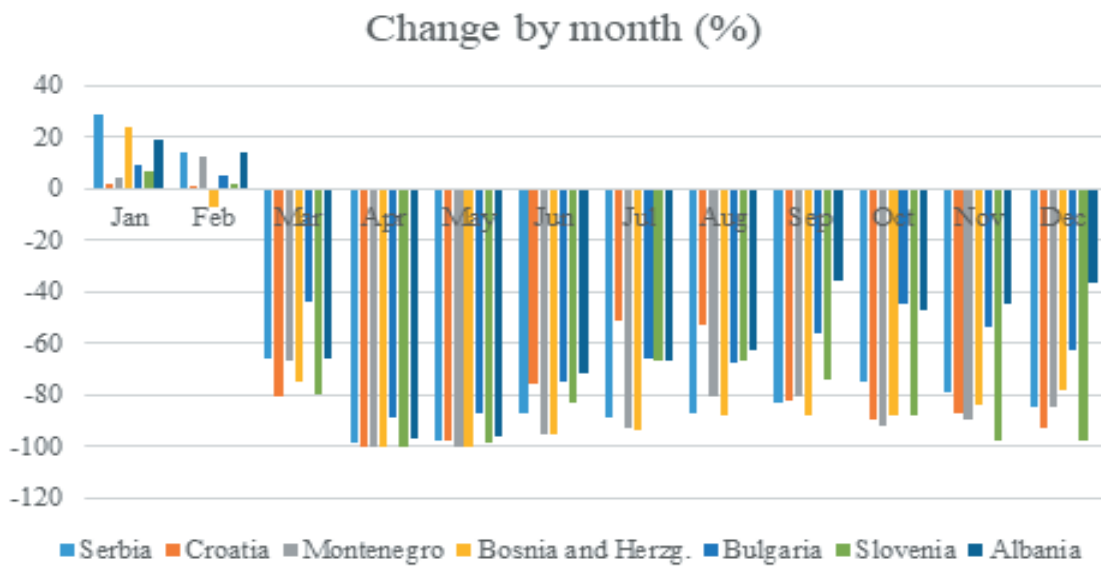
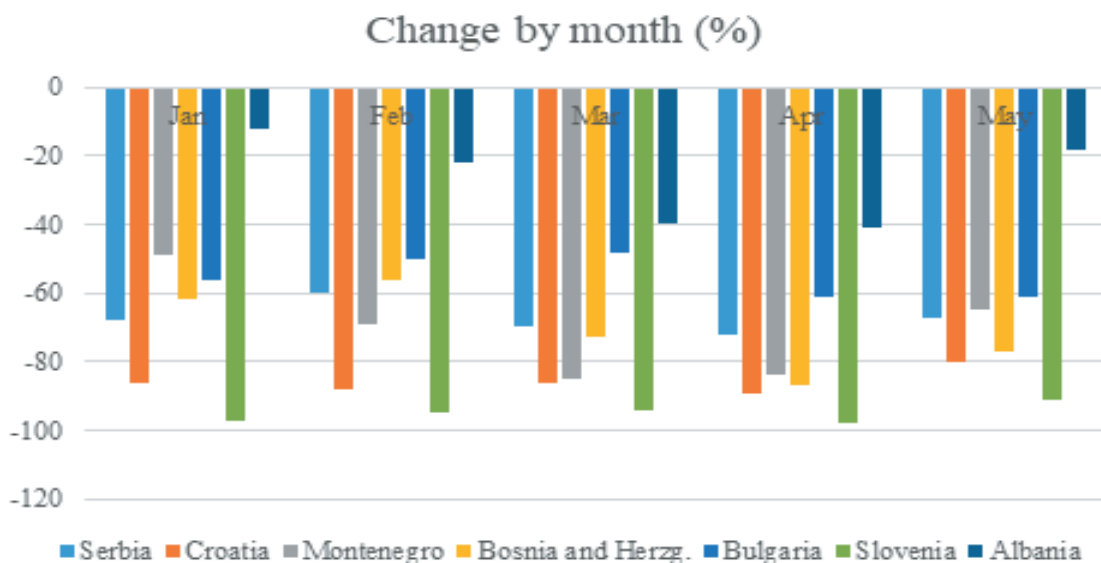


Figure 10. Number of arrivals on the territory of the Republic of Serbia and surrounding countries during the first five months of 2021. year





In May 2021, in accommodation facilities in the Republic of Serbia, there were 194 479 registered tourist arrivals, which means it increased by 307.5% when compared to the same period 2020. In relation to May 2020, the number of foreign tourist arrivals increased by 1371.0%, while the number of domestic tourist arrivals increased by 219.7%.

In May 2021, the number of 585 798 tourist overnight stays was recorded, 74.7% of which were made by domestic tourists, and 25.3% by foreign tourists. Compared to May 2020, the number of overnight stays increased by 243.2%. In relation to the same period 2020, in May 2021 the number of overnight stays of foreign tourists increased by 689.4%, while the number of overnight stays made by domestic tourists increased by 188.1%. Regarding the structure of foreign tourist overnight stays, in May 2021 the largest share was made up the tourists from Bosnia and Herzegovina (10.8%), Turkey (9.5%), followed by tourists from Russian Federation (9.2%).

Observed by regions for the first seven months of 2021, tourist accommodation capacities in the north of Serbia recorded 4 287 116 registered overnight stays. On the other hand, tourist accommodation capacities in the south of the Republic of Serbia recorded 2 918 515 registered overnight stays. As for the north of the Republic of Serbia, out of the total number of 741 435 overnight stays, it refers to foreign tourists, while the remaining number of overnight stays is by domestic tourists. As for the south of the Republic of Serbia, in the first seven months of 2021, 121 618 overnight stays belonged to foreign tourists, while the remaining number of overnight stays was made by domestic tourists.

If we look at individual tourist destinations, the total number of nights spent by domestic and foreign tourists in Vrnjacka Banja was 129 192 and it can be said that it is in the lead when it comes to spa tourism. If we look at mountain tourism in the first seven months of 2021 – 111 640. In the category of cities, Belgrade realized the largest number of overnight stays – 271 821.

As in other regions, certain European governments helped minimise the decline in domestic spending through stimulus initiatives. Italy, for instance, implemented the 'Italy Cure' rescue plan in May 2020, which included a 'holiday bonus' of up to EUR 500 that low-income families could spend on tourism accommodation (Mandic, 2021). Further support announced in August included grants for tourist activities open to the public in the historic centres of art cities, and EUR 15 million for tourism promotion. Visit Sicily launched the 'See Sicily' voucher scheme, offering tourists of the island a discount on flights, a free night's stay, a free tour, and entry to a cultural attraction. Travel & Tourism employment fell by 9.3%, equating to 3.6 million jobs; however, the situation could have been far worse if there were not the government's prompt action, which introduced job retention schemes to save millions of jobs under threat. In fact, job protection schemes were introduced in many European countries, including the largest Travel & Tourism economies such as France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom, with different levels of support. The UK's Job Retention Scheme brought significant relief to millions of employees across the UK whose jobs have been sustained. The furlough scheme, as it is also known, has been in place since March 2020 and will end in September 2021 (Payne, Gil-Alana, & Mervar, 2021). For most of this period, the grant covered 80% of wages up to GBP 2,500 (USD 3,500) for employees kept on payroll but with no work, as well as national insurance and pension contributions. Between March 2020 and mid-February 2021, 11.2 million jobs were furloughed across the UK, with GBP 53.8 billion paid out across the country. A similar scheme was also set up for the self-employed. In terms of the global rankings, some European countries improved while others fell in the rankings. For example, Germany had a decline of 46.9% in GDP, while Italy at the same time had a decline of 51% of GDP. If we look at France and the United Kingdom as one of the leading tourist destinations in terms of the number of arrivals, the data show that they experienced a decline of 48.8% and 62.3% respectively (Qiu, *et al.* (2020).



A combination of stringent lockdowns, continuing travel restrictions and damaging quarantines caused it to suffer the biggest collapse of the 10 largest Travel & Tourism markets (Prideaux, Thompson, & Pabel, 2020). What is more, the Netherlands rose two places from 15th to 13th position following a 36.5% drop in Travel & Tourism GDP (below the regional and global average decline), while Switzerland joined the top 20 largest Travel & Tourism economies following a GDP decline of 35.4%. While Spain was the top country in Europe and third worldwide for international visitor spending in 2019, it fell three places in 2020 and was overtaken by France, Germany, and Italy. In fact, international visitor spending experienced an unprecedented drop of 78.2%, partly due to restrictions in the country's key source markets such as the UK. Tourism Revenues in Greece increased to 790.71 EUR Million in June from 168.28 EUR Million in May of 2021 (Sigala, 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed a lot since its inception in the daily lives, work, and habits of people around the world. Various measures to combat this virus came into force and were abolished both locally and globally. The reduction of travel, both domestic and foreign tourists has greatly affected the development of tourism. The decrease in the number of tourists has reduced the potential for the continued growth of income from tourism in relation to 2019 and all the years before it. The year behind us was very unfavorable because of all the above for all people who are directly related to tourism and who live from it.

The lifting of travel restrictions allowed an increase in tourism revenues during 2021 compared to 2020. The conducted research showed that the number of tourists both in the Republic of Serbia and in the world has significantly increased compared to 2020. The increased number of tourists directly conditioned the increased number of overnight stays, and thus the increased income. Observed on the example of Greece, earnings in the first half of the year are significantly higher than in the same period in 2020. However, although there has been a significant increase, direct earnings from tourism have not reached the 2019 level.

In order for the tourism sector to return to the level before the Covid-19 virus pandemic and for the total earnings to reach the desired level, it is necessary to achieve as many arrivals and overnight stays as possible. As the number of overnight stays is directly conditioned by the reduction in the spread of the Covid-19 virus, it is necessary to build a strategy on a global level. All actors in this strategy must contribute. The key conclusion of this research is that even in a pandemic, with appropriate legal and economic measures, it is possible to improve the tourism sector.



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EKONOMSKI RAST SEKTORA TURIZMA TOKOM PANDEMIJE COVID-19 2021. GODINE

Rezime:

Turistički sektor širom sveta teško je pogođen pandemijom virusa Covid-19. Posledice pandemije tokom 2020. na čitav turistički sektor značajno su smanjile prihode pojedinaca i naplatu u državnoj kasi. Uvedene mere, kao i masovna vakcinacija građana, omogućile su otvaranje turističkih destinacija tokom 2021. godine, što je ovoj grani ekonomije donelo dugo očekivane prihode. Otvaranjem turističkih destinacija pokrenut je sektor putovanja, vazdušni, drumski, železnički i vodeni saobraćaj. Cilj ovog rada je analiza trenutnog ekonomskog rasta turističkog sektora i upoređivanje trenutnog stanja sa stanjem u 2019. i sa stanjem tokom krize 2020. U radu se daje i pregled zakonskih mera usvojenih u cilju prevazilaženja problema izazvanih zatvaranjem. Analiza ekonomskog rasta turističkog sektora tokom 2021. godine izvršena je na osnovu dostupnih podataka i informacija kako u svetu tako i u zemljama regiona. Takođe, analiza je urađena kako za međunarodni turizam tako i za domaće turističke destinacije. Na osnovu sprovedene analize zaključuje se da je broj turista koji su posetili posmatrane regione u prvoj polovini 2021. godine i dalje manji u odnosu na isti period 2019. godine.

Ključne reči:

turizam,
Covid-19,
Evropa,
ekonomski rast.