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INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC TOURISM IN POST COVID CONDITIONES, WITH REFERENCE TO RURAL TOURISM IN SERBIA DURING THE COVID PERIOD

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Abstract: The Covid-19 pandemic was the biggest challenge the world has faced in the 21st century. It left the biggest negative impression on health, social and economic aspects. The negative impact was reflected in the tourism economy, dealing a major blow to the global economy and the movement of tourists. The pandemic affected the existing tourism, but it also changed the habits of tourists and thus influenced the choice of destination. The aim of this paper is to show the impact of the Covid-19 virus in the world as well as in the Republic of Serbia, with a focus on the selection of tourist destinations during and after the pandemic, as well as a comparison of tourists during 2022 and 2023 on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. Qualitative-quantitative, analytical and comparative methods were used during the research. Based on all relevant collected data, it is important to emphasize that the international tourism industry ended 2023 at 88% of pre-pandemic levels, with an estimated 1.3 billion international arrivals. A full recovery is expected by the end of 2024, driven by pent-up demand, improved connectivity and resilient Asian markets. According to the latest UN tourism barometer data, from January 2024, the Republic of Serbia has the largest increase of 79% compared to 2019 in the category of income from foreign tourists.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, tourism industry, choice of destination, tourist movement

Introduction

Covid-19, a global pandemic, was declared on March 11, 2020. Many call it the pandemic of the 21st century. It represents the greatest challenge the world has faced since World War II. The World Health Organization gave the new virus the name Sars-cov-2 and the disease caused by Covid-19, which is an acute respiratory disease that spreads when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can live up to

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72 hours. The Covid virus has unfathomable consequences, which at the beginning were catastrophic only in the source of China in Wuhan and its surroundings, and then in Europe, especially in Bergamo in the north of Italy, before it spread to the whole world (Abu Bakar & Rosbi, 2020; Geić et al., 2021). The consequences of this virus, which spread at an enormous speed, are reflected in the number of sick 771,820,937 cases and the number of deaths 6,978,175 according to the report of the World Health Organization (WHO). It is a worrying fact that with the constant effort of the health epidemiology profession, along with the development of vaccines and the invention of medicines, the appearance of new strains and mutations of the virus is not abating. In addition to the health crisis, the Corona virus pandemic has left the biggest negative impact on the social and economic aspects. The negative impact was reflected in the tourism industry, dealing a big blow to the global tourism economy and the movement of tourists.

The tourism industry has faced unprecedented threats. This topic is very important considering the number of tourists in the world. Authors Abu Bakar & Rosbi (2020) estimated the impact of Covid on the tourism industry using the supply and demand curve. They came to the result that the price of the tourism sector continues to decline in parallel with the decline in demand. In this period, households spent only for basic needs, such as food, medicine and protective equipment, and on the other hand, economic entities reduced or completely stopped their work due to the requirement to maintain social distance and reduce contacts (Prašcević, 2020). Tourist demand has fallen worldwide, affecting flight cancellations, sales and revenue of airlines, cruise ships, hotels, restaurants and the transportation industry. In 2020, airlines and travel agencies recorded a sharp decline in the number of tourists, their existence and business depends solely on tourism. Air transport, as a branch of transport, has the largest share in international tourist movements, 58% in 2018 (ICAO, 2020). Due to the suspension of international flights, the losses of airline companies were huge (IATA, 2020). All this led to the bankruptcy and shutdown of a number of small airline companies, as well as their acquisition by large airlines that, due to their national and economic importance, can count on extensive financial assistance from national governments such as the governments of Germany, the United Kingdom and France (Jovičić, 2020). While the operation of hotels and restaurants continued, however, their business results were significantly reduced. Restaurants have limited their operations to take-out only, leading to a decrease in revenue.

The pandemic affected the existing tourism, but it also changed the habits of tourists and thus influenced the choice of destination. The measures taken by the governments of a number of countries to prevent the spread of the virus, such as social distancing, complete “lock down”, self-isolation, the introduction of negative

PCR-test measures, antigen tests or vaccination, wearing masks indoors, while in some countries the entry of tourists was forbidden. All this led to an economic collapse, to mass unemployment, which contributed to a decrease in demand in the tourism industry (Abu Bakar & Rosbi, 2020; Prašćević, 2020). The travel restriction had major consequences for tourism on a global level and the world economy as a whole (Milošević & Marjanović, 2022; Jovičić, 2020; Popović, 2021; Jović-Bogdanović et al., 2021; Gejić et al., 2021). The negative impact of the pandemic on tourism hit the developed economies of Asia, Europe and North America the most, as the key emitting and receiving areas in global tourism trends. Particularly affected were countries that base their economic development on tourism, where the participation of tourism plays a large role in GDP, whose tourism economy is based on foreign demand, for example Croatia, Montenegro, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, Albania, Portugal, Spain.

Tourism is the third largest export category of the global economy, and one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Tourism contributes 10% of global GDP and in 2019 accounted for 7% of global trade and accounts for one in every 10 jobs worldwide (unep.org). This is evidenced by data from the World Tourism Organization, which confirmed that in 2018, 1.4 billion international arrivals were generated in the world, which was expected only two years later. International travel has dropped by 74% since the pandemic was declared in March 2020. This year is considered the worst year in the history of tourism, resulting in 1.1 billion fewer international tourists (overnight visitors) worldwide, bringing the number of travellers back to the level of 30 years ago. Tourism needs open borders, stable political, socio-economic as well as health and safety conditions (Jovičić, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic affected tourism in Serbia in such a way that the awareness of tourists when choosing tourist destinations changed. The increasing diversification of tourist destinations of a mass character (overtourism) with undiscovered tourist destinations and selective forms of tourism (green tourism, ecotourism, mountain tourism) was noticeable. Certain destinations (Stara planina, Sokobanja, Ribarska banja, Dvčibare) saw an increase in the total number of tourists in 2020 compared to 2019, due to the increase in the number of domestic tourists who did not travel abroad due to the closure of borders (Vassileva et al, 2020). However, according to the author's survey (Petrović & Kokanov, 2021), when asked where respondents work and choose to travel, which referred to the choice of place, whether it is their own country, abroad, destinations or none of the above in 2021, most of them chose abroad as a tourist destination for their trip (53%), while a few of them preferred not to travel anywhere (1%). Only 6% of respondents chose their own country as a tourist destination, while 40% of respondents chose the destination. From the above, we conclude that due to the insufficient level of development of

tourism in Serbia, changes in the quality of services and the satisfaction of tourists can be expected. The Covid pandemic in Serbia has led to some new patterns in the tourism sector regarding:

- management of tourist space (redefining the management of the flow of accommodation capacities in particularly attractive and busy destinations, prohibition of construction in protected areas outside the boundaries of the urban plan),
- health safety of tourists (the presence of even the smallest risk is crucial whether tourists will visit a certain destination) (Alkier et al. 2021),
- environmental protection (e.g. reducing energy consumption and using alternative energy sources, increasing recycling),
- development of domestic tourism (affirmation of undiscovered tourist destinations that are suitable for the development of sustainable tourism)
- the importance of digitization (during the pandemic in lock-down conditions, the internet, internet browsers, social networks enabled people's lives to continue as normal),
- achieving competitiveness in tourist market, etc.

The aim of this paper is to show the impact of the Covid-19 virus in the world as well as in the Republic of Serbia, with reference to the selection of tourist destinations during and after the pandemic, as well as a comparison of tourists during 2022 and 2023 on the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The work was based on the hypothesis that tourists choose destinations that are closer to them and that they stay shorter in the destination itself during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. That tourism is an adaptable system that adapts to the given situation in the environment.

Methods and materials

In this paper, secondary data, reports of the World Tourism Organization, reports of the Republic Institute of Statistics, a review of scientific and professional literature on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in tourism studies from 2020 to 2023 were used for analysis. Qualitative-quantitative, analytical and comparative methods were used during the research. The task of this work refers to obtaining results on the movement of the number of domestic and foreign tourists in the Republic of Serbia during 2022 and 2023, as well as on the presentation of tourist movements in the world that were realized during and after the pandemic, with special reference to the choice of tourist destinations. Also, using the available data, a descriptive analysis of the current state of the tourism industry was performed.

Results and discussion

The impact of the Covid virus pandemic on the development of tourism in the world

Asia and the Pacific – Considering that the largest industrial production in the world is realized in Asia, income from tourism is less dependent on other continents. However, international tourist arrivals have a positive relationship with gross domestic product per capita. Martin Oliver Pedak (2018) states that an increase in the number of international tourists will increase the economic level in the country. The first country affected by the Covid virus, China, had serious consequences in the tourism industry, considering that at the beginning of the 21st century, China recorded high tourism growth as well as the participation of the service sector. In the first place, the consequences were in social contact with the Chinese population. Because of the threat of the virus, people avoided any contact with the Chinese population. Many domestic and foreign airlines have cancelled their flights to China due to insufficient number of passengers. In the period January-October 2020, they recorded a drop in arrivals by 82%. China has opted for a “zero tolerance” approach in the fight against the pandemic. Given such a policy, in 2022, China’s GDP growth will slow down to around 3%. South Korea and Australia opted for a “zero tolerance” policy (Jović-Bogdanović et al., 2021). The countries where the tourism industry has the largest contribution to GDP are Thailand, Hong Kong and Singapore, and Indonesia suffered the biggest economic shock (ADB, 2023). South Asian countries faced a more challenging situation due to their large population. These countries have weaker health systems, high poverty rates, low socio-economic conditions, poor social protection systems, and limited access to water and sanitation. To contain the spread of the virus, South Asian countries have imposed strict lockdown measures, affecting the lives of millions of people in the region, home to a third of the world’s poor. Economies in Asia and the Pacific continued to recover from the pandemic as the effects of the virus eased and lockdowns eased. In 2022, Asia and the Pacific reached only 23% of international tourist arrivals, due to stronger pandemic restrictions (Figure 1) (UNWTO, 2023). In the period 2023, Asia and the Pacific reached 65% of pre-pandemic levels following the reopening of several markets and destinations. However, performance is mixed, with South Asia already recovering 87% of 2019 levels and North-East Asia around 55% (UWTO Tourism barometer, 2024).

International tourist arrivals in the **Americas** in 2022 reached about 65% of pre-pandemic visitors. By sub-region, Central America continued to exceed the pre-

pandemic level in the period January-September 2023 by +4% (UNWTO Tourism barometer, 2023). America has recovered 90% of pre-pandemic visitors according to data January 2024. Due to the spread of the pandemic, the number of passengers dropped almost to zero by mid-March 2020. Large cities on the East Coast (New York, Boston) were particularly affected due to the large number of infected people. America's healthcare system has shown major flaws. The private health insurance model corresponds to the market (entrepreneurial) model in which health insurance is organized by private insurance companies whose contributions are paid by those who want it (Prašćević, 2020). In it, health care is not available to everyone because it does not ensure the availability of health services to the entire population. The poor sections of the population were the most affected.

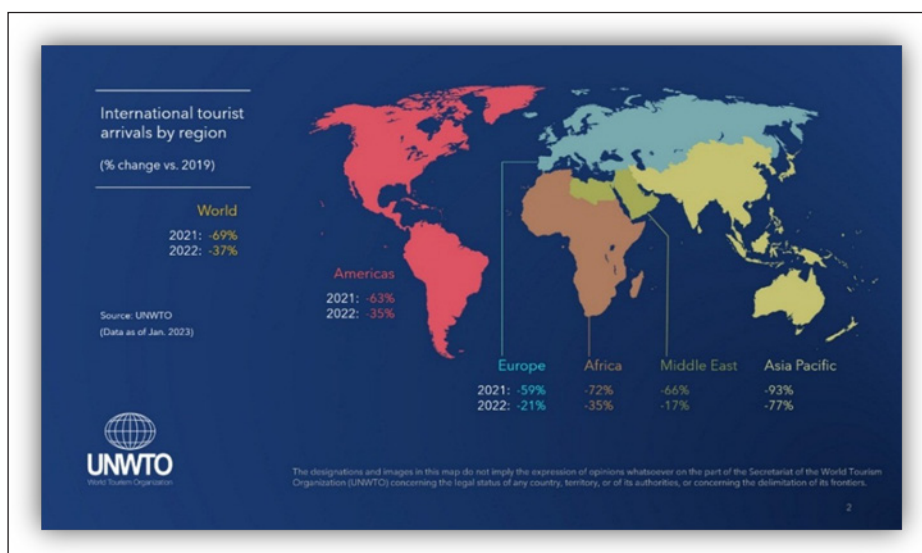


Figure 1. Arrivals of international tourists by region (January 2023)

International tourist arrivals in **Africa** in 2022 reached around 65% of pre-pandemic visitors while the Middle East had the largest relative increase among regions in 2022 with tourist arrivals rising to 83% of pre-pandemic numbers (UNWTO, 2023). International tourist arrivals in 2023 reached 96% of pre-pandemic visitors while the **Middle East** continued to lead the regional recovery in relative terms, with arrivals 22% above pre-pandemic levels 2019 (UNWTO Tourism barometer, 2024). Visa facilitation measures, the development of new destinations, investments in new tourism-related projects and the hosting of large events, help underpin this remarkable performance. The main impact on the economy of African countries during the pandemic is the reduction of foreign income. Countries such as Gambia, South Africa, Egypt, Kenya and many others that are heavily dependent on tourism

have been forced to close down many tourism businesses. The economies of African countries, since they depend for the most part on tourism, were forced to increase their borrowing, thus potentially producing their cycle of poverty. Africa has become a favourite destination for international tourists as it offers some different tourist experiences like safaris and national parks, exotic culture and food. The Republic of South Africa, a country with a significant tourism sector, was the first in its history to receive a loan from the IMF of US\$ 4.3 billion (Issahaku, 2020).

Europe is the biggest destination in the world. The rebound was supported by robust intra-regional demand as well as strong demand from the United States. Intraregional tourist movements are specific in the European Union. This is supported by the fact that around 70% of foreign overnight stays in the EU are made by tourists from member countries of this organization (Eurostat, 2023). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the borders of the European Union remained closed to residents outside the Union, but borders were also established between member countries, which was not supported by the European Commission because it called into question the basic principles on which the Union rests, which refers to free flow people and goods, as well as solidarity between members. Tourism contributes 10% to the GDP of the European Union, includes 2.4 million economic entities, 90% of which are small and medium-sized enterprises, and accounts for 12% of employees in the community of European countries. Considering the large drop in income from tourism in 2020, hotels, tour operators, travel and train transport recorded a drop of 85%, cruise ship trips and air travel even 90% (Praščević, 2020). Europe, reached 94% of 2019 levels, supported by intra-regional demand and travel from the United States (UNWTO Tourism barometer, 2024). The highest percentage of tourism in GDP in European countries is Spain 14.3%, Italy 13%, Germany 9.1%, France 8.5%, Netherlands 5.7% (Visual Capitalist, 2020).

The recovery of tourism from Covid-19 was very gradual. The rise in demand has been fuelled by increased traveller confidence due to rapid progress in vaccinations and the easing of entry restrictions in many destinations. International tourism receipts reached USD 1.4 trillion in 2023 according to preliminary estimates, about 93% of the USD 1.5 trillion earned by destinations in 2019. Preliminary estimates on the economic contribution of tourism, measured in tourism direct gross domestic product (TDGDP) point to USD 3.3 trillion in 2023, or 3% of global GDP. This indicates a recovery of pre-pandemic TDGDP driven by strong domestic and international tourism. Several destinations reported strong growth in international tourism receipts during the first ten to twelve months of 2023, exceeding in some cases growth in arrivals. Strong demand for outbound travel was also reported by several large source markets this period, with many exceeding 2019 levels. Looking Ahead to 2024 International tourism is expected to fully recover pre-pandemic

levels in 2024, with initial estimates pointing to 2% growth above 2019 levels. This central forecast by UNWTO remains subject to the pace of recovery in Asia and to the evolution of existing economic and geopolitical downside risks. The positive outlook is reflected in better expectations for 2024 compared to 2023. Key considerations include: There is still significant room for recovery across Asia. The reopening of several source markets and destinations will boost recovery in the region and globally. Chinese outbound and inbound tourism is expected to accelerate in 2024, due to visa facilitation and improved air capacity. China is applying visa-free travel for citizens of France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia for a year to 30 November 2024. Visa and travel facilitation measures will promote travel to and around the Middle East and Africa with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to implement a unified tourist visa, similar to the Schengen visa, and measures to facilitate intra-African travel in Kenya and Rwanda. Europe is expected to drive results again in 2024. In March, Romania and Bulgaria will join the Schengen area of free movement, and Paris will host the Summer Olympics in July and August. Strong travel from the United States, backed by a strong US dollar, will continue to benefit destinations in the Americas and beyond. As in 2023, robust source markets in Europe, the Americas and the Middle East, will continue to fuel tourism flows and spending around the world (UNWTO Tourism barometer, 2024).

The impact of the Covid virus pandemic on the development of tourism in the Republic of Serbia

With the declaration of a pandemic on March 11, 2020, tourism in Serbia faced huge losses. The World Health Organization declared the end of the emergency situation on May 5, 2023, which does not mean that the pandemic is over (WHO, 2023). However, on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, the epidemic has not been officially declared as finished. Health, social, economic crisis are just some of the consequences that the world was facing. Service activities such as tourism, trade stopped their operations due to a series of restrictive measures that were adopted to stop the pandemic. However, the government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a series of short-term measures to mitigate the negative economic and social consequences of the impact of the Covid-19 virus. According to the latest UN tourism barometer data from January 2024, the Republic of Serbia has the largest increase of 79% compared to 2019 in the category of income from foreign tourists (UNWTO Tourism barometer January, 2024)

*International and domestic tourism in post COVID conditiones,
with reference to rural tourism in Serbia during the COVID period*

Table 1. The number of tourists and their overnight stays in the period from 1985 to 2023

Year	Number of tourist arrivals			Overnight stays		
	Total	Domestic	Foreign	Total	Domestic	Foreign
1985.	4.605.915	3.820.263	785.652	13.129.419	11.602.158	1.527.261
1990.	3.939.867	3.059.742	880.125	11.669.782	10.201.605	1.468.177
1995.	2.432.107	2.341.078	91.029	8.124.460	7.870.220	254.240
2000.	2.169.225	2.003.549	165.676	7.696.290	7.265.197	431.093
2005.	1.988.469	1.535.790	452.679	6.499.352	5.507.604	991.748
2010.	2.000.597	1.317.916	682.681	6.413.515	4.961.359	1.452.156
2015.	2.437.165	1.304.944.	1.132.221	6.651.852	4.242.172	2.409.680
2019.	3.689.983	1.843.432	1.846.551	10.073.299	6.062.921	4.010.378
2020.	1.820.021	1.374.310	445.711	6.201.290	4.936.732	1.264.558
2021.	2.591.293	1.720.054	871.239	8.162.430	5.732.833	2.429.597
2022.	3.869.235	2.096.472	1.772.763	12.245.613	7.306.219	4.939.394
2023.	4.192.797	2.058.492	2.134.305	12.440.935	6.858.331	5.582.604

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), 2023.

Based on table 1, it can be concluded that in 2022, 12.2 million overnight stays were registered, which is 50% more compared to 2020, when the pandemic was declared, and 21.57% more compared to 2019, when tourism took place under normal conditions. The number of tourist arrivals of domestic and foreign tourists in 2019 is almost identical, however, with the emergence of the covid-19 virus and restrictive measures to suppress it, we can conclude a decrease in the number of foreign tourists. The number of domestic tourists since 2020 is higher than foreign tourists. Also, the number of overnight stays by domestic tourists in the period from 2020 to 2022 is higher than that of foreign tourists. Domestic tourism, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, has shown positive signs in many markets as people tend to travel closer to each other to minimize health risks. Based on research, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2023) points out that travellers go on “staycations” or vacations close to home because they feel safe when traveling within the borders of their own country, or during visits to nearby and familiar countries. Travelers believe in the importance of creating a positive impact on local communities, increasingly seeking authenticity. Nature, rural tourism and short-haul travel have become popular travel choices due to travel restrictions and the pursuit of outdoor experiences. After the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a significant increase in spending per trip and longer stays that is, staying in a certain place.

The pandemic affected the existing tourism, but it also changed the habits of tourists and thus influenced the choice of destination. During 2022, tourists were most interested in spa, village and mountain tourism. In this year, 3,054,744 overnight

stays by tourists were realized in spas, of which 88.4% were overnight stays by domestic tourists (2,701,335) and 2,800,358 overnight stays were registered in mountain centres, of which 84.7% were domestic tourist overnight stays (2,372,790) (SORS, 2023).

Table 2. Number of foreign tourists by country of origin in 2022 and 2023.

Number of foreign tourists by country of origin	2023	2022
Turkey	201.440	125.602
Russia	170.884	123.425
Germany	123.058	105.792
Romania	100.055	74.590
China	92.125	32.591
Bosnia and Herzegovina	158.824	148.773
Bulgaria	110.419	81.661
North Macedonia	109.738	92.046
Croatia	108.161	89.860
Montenegro	96.019	80.656
Slovenia	85.051	78.532
Greece	70.388	56.564
Poland	58.458	44.513
Hungary	54.383	49.878
Italy	49.609	38.387
SAD	47.909	37.929
Austria	45.554	40.867
France	37.238	32.816
India	8.787	44.192
Israel	15.584	14.156
Ukraine	21.974	19.275

Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), 2023/2024

The report of the Republic Institute of Statistics for the year 2023 shows that the total number of tourist arrivals is 4,192,797, which is an increase of 8.3% compared to the year 2022. The number of domestic tourists compared to the year 2022 is even, but we notice a difference in the number of foreign tourists, where we have a record number of foreign tourists compared to all previous years. It is also evident that the number of overnight stays by foreign tourists is 643,210 more than in 2022. The number of foreign tourists based on the structure of foreign tourists in 2023 shows that the largest number of tourists based on the country of origin is from Turkey, Russia, Germany and China as well as the neighbouring countries of Bosnia

and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania and Montenegro. The number of tourists originating from Turkey is about 60% higher than in 2022, Russian tourists by 38.5%, and the biggest increase is among tourists from China by 59,534 compared to 2022. In the period from January to June 2023, our country was visited by foreign tourists from about 50 different countries, over 80% of overnight stays were made by tourists from Europe, so the number of foreign tourists increased by more than 32.6%. The largest number of overnight stays in 2023 was achieved by Russian tourists 665,819, tourists from Turkey 521,288, followed by Bosnians 351,542, Germans 282,252 and Chinese 282,069. One of the reasons for the large number of tourists from Russia is that there is a direct flight to Serbia, given that only Turkey and Serbia have direct flights to Russia. Also, considering the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, the number of Russian nationals who represent migrants has increased. As such, they are recorded statistically as tourists even though they do not represent tourists. Also, recording problems occur when there are tourists in transit, people who often cross the state border, students, patients, as well as business visitors (Business expediency audit report, 2023).

In the first six months of this year, the number of overnight stays in rural households in Serbia increased by 21.8% compared to the same period in 2022, while visits by foreign tourists increased by more than 32.6%. In the Republic of Serbia in October 2023, compared to October 2022, the number of tourist arrivals is lower by 1.5%, and the number of overnight stays is lower by 13.0%, the number of overnight stays by domestic tourists is lower by 21.4% , and the number of overnight stays by foreign tourists is lower by 0.5% (RZZS). 758 rural households with slightly more than 2,400 accommodation units are registered in the e-tourist database. Tourist services provided by business entities such as: restaurants, hotels, which serve both tourists and the resident population, have suffered serious consequences due to the resulting pandemic. Forecasts by the World Tourism Organization predicted a faster recovery of domestic travel compared to travel to distant destinations. All this had a great incentive for hoteliers, carriers, travel agencies and tour operators. Rural tourism in Serbia experienced a revival. The Republic of Serbia has significant natural and anthropogenic resources, rich cultural and historical diversity. In addition to popular mountain, spa and city destinations, the pandemic contributed to the discovery of new, until then little-visited tourist destinations throughout Serbia, which have a preserved and healthy environment. Even today, even after the pandemic, rural areas are at the very top of the tourist market, given the attractiveness offered by the untouched natural environment, traditional way of life and customs that are manifested in local areas. The rural area, which makes up more than 85% of the territory of the republic with about 43% of the population of Serbia, has great potential for the development of rural tourism and other alternative forms of tourism: ecotourism

(green tourism), sustainable tourism (Vesić&Bogdanović, 2023; Vesić at al., 2021) . With the strategy of the future development of the sustainable tourism sector, the authors Ilić & Šimčević (2022) highlighted the most important factors that influence the shaping of sustainable tourism, namely: the reactive role of the government in creating a sustainable and resilient tourism sector, further development of domestic tourism and strengthening of small businesses, moving away from mass tourism and adapting to the specific needs of travellers, digitizing the sector, developing eco-tourism, and highlighting efforts in the area of hygiene and health.

The authors Škorić & Jovanovnić (2021) predicted that rural tourism under the influence of the covid pandemic will move on an upward trajectory, which has come true. Considering the current situation, the Republic of Serbia will have to work a lot on improving the quality of the tourist offer in order to attract foreign demand in addition to the domestic population. The state offers incentives to those who want to engage in rural tourism or who want to do so. In addition to rural tourist households, accommodation services are also offered in home-made facilities (houses, apartments and rooms), lodgings, hostels, camps, as well as in ethnic villages and ethnic parks (Ministry of Tourism and Youth).

Conclusion

Looking back on the previous three years, we come to the conclusion that the tourism industry is slowly recovering. The introduction of measures, the advent of vaccines, which contributed to the opening of the borders of many countries, the world slowly returned to normal and the pandemic was kept under control, which therefore led to the abolition of the pandemic with the responsibility to comply with the measures, not to relax and take the situation lightly. The ability of tourism to recover from a series of natural and man-made events (avian flu threat, Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, global economic crisis in 2008, swine flu outbreak in 2009, and the occurrence of the coronavirus 2020), shows us that the tourism industry is a resilient and adaptable system. In the last 70 years, world tourism has been characterized by continuous growth despite all the unexpected problems. International tourist arrivals in the world amounted to 25 million in the 1950s, and in the 2000s they increased to almost 700 million and in 2018 to 1.4 billion (UNWTO, 2023). Data from the Republic's Statistical Office show that there was an increase in the number of tourists on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, especially the number of foreign tourists in 2023. However, tourism in Serbia did not progress statistically due to the improvement of the tourist offer, but due to the recognition of immigrants as tourists. Given the deficiencies in the registration of foreign tourists, extensive research is needed on this issue.

In 2022/2023, the severity of the pandemic decreased. While all countries were moving from the Covid-19 pandemic, the world was gripped by new economic crises and long-term geopolitical problems such as war conflicts, Russian invasion of Ukraine, Israeli aggression on Palestine, high inflation and the jump in the price of oil on the world market, as well as the fear of global recession, still represent the main factors influencing the recovery of tourism. Extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, cyclones, heat waves that indicated the vulnerability of the entire Earth. All these extreme impacts have caused a food crisis, the displacement of millions of people and put the poor and vulnerable in danger above all (ADB, 2023). Higher food and energy prices result in lower purchasing power and weaker consumer confidence, which could affect travel demand in 2024. All these problems represent negative facts for tourism and create a feeling of general insecurity throughout the world.

The negative impact of tourism activity on the environment has led many countries' governments to encourage sustainable international tourism with a minimal impact on the environment. The pandemic affected the change in the social way of life of people all over the world, so tourism trends have transformed from mass tourism to destinations that place people's health as a primary factor. As a result, the number of tourists who are ready to pay a very high price to stay in a destination with a preserved and attractive environment has increased. All actors involved in the development of tourism with the support of the government must cooperate with each other, considering the increase in domestic tourist travel in the previous period. With its development policy, the Republic of Serbia will have to work on improving the quality of the tourist offer in order to attract additional tourist clientele.

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