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Position of Spain in the global tourism market: its competitive capacity and priorities

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Miejsce Hiszpanii na światowym rynku turystycznym: konkurencyjność i priorytety

Streszczenie

Artykuł poświęcony jest badaniu miejsca Hiszpanii na światowym rynku turystycznym. Określona jest specjalizacja gospodarki rekreacyjnej kraju. Scharakteryzowano potencjał turystyczny Hiszpanii. Równie dużo uwagi poświęca się badaniom naturalnych zasobów rekreacyjnych oraz

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dziedzictwa historycznego i kulturowego. Przedstawiono rolę infrastruktury turystycznej w rozwoju sektora turystycznego kraju. Ponadto w pracy przedstawiono zagospodarowanie rekreacyjne na terenie Hiszpanii. Analizie poddano intensywność, dynamikę i geografie przepływów przyjazdowych i wyjazdowych, cechy turystyki krajowej, a także przychody z turystyki międzynarodowej oraz średnie koszty turystyki. Oprócz aktualnych danych śledzono dynamikę głównych wskaźników statystycznych turystyki międzynarodowej. Szacowany jest wpływ globalnej pandemii COVID-19 na branżę turystyczną badanego kraju. Artykuł opisuje główne problemy nieodłącznie związane z hiszpańską branżą turystyczną, w szczególności problemy gospodarcze, środowiskowe i społeczne. Jednocześnie określone są główne priorytety Hiszpanii na światowym rynku turystycznym.

Badanie zostało przeprowadzone na podstawie analizy raportów statystycznych i danych materiałowych UNWTO oraz Instytutu Statystyki Narodowej Hiszpanii, Alliance for Excellence in Tourism (tj. Exceltur). Narzędzia metodologiczne badania zawierają metody analityczne, statystyczne, porównawczo-geograficzne, matematyczne, a także metodami uogólniania i systematyzacji, etc.

Słowa kluczowe: światowy rynek turystyczny, Hiszpania, potencjał turystyczno-rekreacyjny, przemysł turystyczny.

Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of Spain's place in the world tourism market and determines the specialization of the country's recreational economy. The tourist potential of Spain is characterized. Equal attention is paid to the research devoted to natural recreational resources as well as historical and cultural heritage sites. The role of tourist infrastructure in the development of the country's tourism sector is outlined. Besides, the paper presents recreational zoning of the territory of Spain. The intensity, dynamics and geography of incoming and outgoing flows, features of domestic tourism, as well as revenues from international tourism and average tourist costs are analyzed. In addition to current data, the dynamics of the main statistical indicators of international tourism are traced. The impact of the global pandemic COVID-19 on the tourism industry of the studied country is estimated. The article depicts the main problems inherent in the Spanish tourism industry, in particular, economic, environmental and social problems. Simultaneously, the main priorities of Spain in the world tourism market are defined.

The study was conducted on the basis of analysis of statistical reports and material data of UNWTO and the Institute of National Statistics of Spain, the Alliance for Excellence in Tourism, i.e. Exceltur. The methodological tools of the study involve analytical, statistical, comparative-geographical, mathematical methods, as well as methods of generalization and systematization, etc.

Keywords: world tourism market, Spain, tourist and recreational potential, tourism industry.

Introduction

An the modern stage of development of international economic relations, globalization processes have encompassed all the spheres of the world economy, including the global market of tourism services. In fact, economies of all the countries of the world are currently characterized by the tendency towards the increase in the tourism industry contribution to both GDP structure and the pattern of consumption.

Globalization and regionalization are the integral components of the unified process of the global tourism development, which makes it a unique economic instrument able to form manufacturing systems of international character, as well as to preserve local significance [4].

The number of international tourist destinations tends to grow, having increased from 25 million people in 1950 to around 700 mln people in 2002, and the record number of 1.18 billion people in 2017 (UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2018). As it was prognosticated by the World Tourism Organization UNWTO, by 2020 the number of tourist trips should have reached 1.6 billion people, and the incomes from tourism and hospitality services should have increased from 445 billion USA dollars in 1998 to around 2 trillion USA dollars in 2020. Admittedly, the world pandemic of coronavirus (COVID-19) has badly affected further development of international tourism.

During recent years Spain, France and Germany have invariably been European and world leaders in the tourism sector. There has been an increase of interest in Spain as a tourist destination among European non-EU countries. Another significant segment is the tourist flow from the USA (2.4%); therefore some resorts focus on consumers from these countries [7, 12].

Spain has unique cultural heritage, which formed as a result of extended history. Seaside regions of the country are recreational zones of international importance. Due to extensive development of these regions, tourism has become one of the most significant profit shares of Spanish economy.

Spain specializes predominantly in mass beach tourism and is one of the main tourist centres of the world. The tourism market of Spain is mostly formed due to external demand and is oriented towards the reception of foreign tourists. Undoubtedly, such important factors as geographical proximity, favorable climate and relative affordability of the tourist product prioritize Spain as an international tourist destination, thus playing the main role for the countries of the European subcontinent. Nevertheless, it is visited by a big number of tourists from Japan, the USA and Canada despite the distance [2].

Literature review

The vast array of scientific research into the issue of the world tourism market development was carried out by numerous national and foreign scientists, with the prominent works and publications of such Ukrainian authors as L. Hontarzhavska, Y. Zabaldina, R. Zablotska, V. Kyfiak, P. Masliak, O. Liubitseva, H. Mykhailichenko, S. Sokolenko, D. Stechenko, T. Tkachenko, N. Chornenka, etc., as well as foreign scholars such as R. Barton, M. Birzhakov, D. Bowen, R. Brymer, V. Kvartalnov, N. Reimers, Ch. Robinson, D. Holloway, etc.

The European recreational area as the world main tourist destination has been investigated rather well. Both theoretical and practical aspects of tourism development within the European Union are studied in the works of numerous Ukrainian (O. Liubitseva, F. Fomenko, S. Kuzyk, O. Beidyk, O. Topchiyev, I. Smal, Y. Dmytrevskiy, M. Malska, O. Korol) and foreign scientists (N. Papyrian, Y. Aliek-sieyeva, V. Voskresenskiy, A. Aleksandrova). Research on tourist recreational potential of Spain and the peculiarities of the country's tourism industry development can be found in the works by V. Stafiichuk, D. Tomashuk, T. Mykhalchuk, P. Podlepin, etc.

Taking into account the dynamic processes of the international tourism market trends, there arises acute necessity to investigate modern vectors of tourism market development in the country under consideration as the tourism industry is characterized by significant dynamism.

Thus, the object of our research is Spain as the leading tourist destination of the world. The main tasks of the study are to determine Spain's place in the world tourism market, as well as the impact of the world's COVID-19 pandemic on the country's tourism industry.

Methods

Methodological tools of the study include analytical, statistical, mathematical, comparative-geographical methods, as well as other methods, in particular, generalization and systematization methods.

During the study, in order to determine the number of tourist arrivals by destinations, the dynamics of the distribution of tourists by the prevailing modes of transport and the geography of tourist arrivals to the country the authors use the comparative geographical method and the method of geographical analysis. The chorological (spatial) method of research is used in the analysis of outbound tourism flows in Spain, whereas chronological (temporal) research method is applied to study the dynamics of inbound tourism in Spain. Analytical and statistical methods of research, which are used by the authors, are of a great importance.

Results

Spain has confidently taken the second position among the most popular tourist destinations in the last five years. The top-3 most visited countries of the world together with it include France and the USA. If Spain reached the second position in terms of the number of tourist arrivals, ahead of the US, in 2017, then

in 2016 it went to China which took the second place in international tourism receipts.

Tourism in Spain is the biggest branch of economy, with the share of GDP that amounts to 12%. There was a surge of tourism in the country after the Second World War. Comparing to Jordan, Croatia and Mauritius, tourism accounts for 10% or more of those countries' GDP. In France, the world's top tourism destination, tourism represents 7% of GDP [8].

In compliance with the postulates of community geography and recreational demarcation, V. Stafiihuk singled out 9 recreational areas on the territory of Spain: Northwestern, Northern, Northeastern, Eastern, Central Eastern, Central western, Southern, the Canaries and the Balearic Islands. Each of these regions has its specificity in terms of nature, climate, traditions, specializations of resort tourist service and the prospects of its development [13].

Due to its geographical position, climatic conditions in Spain are extremely diverse. Spain is rated as the leading country in Europe in terms of the number of sunny days per year. The Mediterranean seacoast of Granada and Murcia is the warmest place of Europe in winter. In summer, the temperature in Seville rises up to +50°C, whereas the highlands of the Pyrenees are covered with snow all the year round. Winters are mostly mild and rainy [6].

The tourist season in Spain continues all the year round. The most comfortable time for beach holiday is from April till the middle of October. The peak of the season is in July and August. The development of tourism is focused on the Mediterranean coast of the country and the Balearic Islands. The Canary Islands are located much further to the south, therefore many tourists visit this tourist destination in winter in order to spend their winter holiday on the beach.

The country has more than two thousand registered mineral and thermal springs with the curative qualities famous worldwide, thus there are over 120 balneological spa-centres. The Ministry of Tourism in Spain allocates 1 mln euros annually to develop health-improving tourism.

Spa-resorts are located in almost all areas of the country, from the coastal zones to the mountainous regions. Curative facilities offer thalassotherapy, climatotherapy, hydrotherapy, etc. SPA culture is highly prosperous nowadays.

Spanish architecture is considered to be the most interesting in the world. Due to the influence of foreign cultures from the Romans to the Moors, every city possesses its unique architectural style, from classical Andalusian architecture of Seville and Cordoba via Moresque style of Granada, elegant Baroque and Renaissance details in Salamanca to the combination of Gothic and modernistic styles in Barcelona [1].

As of 2020, the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites included 1121 sites from 167 countries. Italy and China are the world leaders in this respect, with

the most sites on the list – 55 in each country. They are followed by Spain (48), Germany (46), France (45), India (38) and Mexico (35) [7, 16].

Among the total number of UNESCO sites located on the territory of Spain, 18 are recognized to be the masterpieces of human creative genius (criterion I), 4 sites represent phenomena of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance (criterion VII), and 2 sites are of mixed properties [3]. Moreover, as of 2018, 24 sites of the country are intended to be included in the World Heritage List.

Spanish infrastructure is well-developed and diverse. According to the data provided by the Spanish National Institute of Tourism, the country has 11,598 hotels, 1,872 of which are included in the category of 4–5 star hotels. It is 16% of all Spanish hotels and almost one third from the total number of accommodation facilities, boarding houses for 125,000 places and camping sites for 1.2 mln places. 144,000 employees are engaged in this sector [11].

On the whole, the total number of accommodation facilities in Spain amounts to 1.04 mln, 86% of which are hotels. The biggest number of hotels is located in Catalonia (1,197 hotels and hotel facilities) and the Balearic Islands offer the highest number of accommodation places (301,957).

In 2019, the number of people employed in the tourist industry of Spain was 2.4 million, which is 500,000 more than in 2009. By the end of 2020, over 2.19 million people worked in the tourism sector in Spain. It is 11% of all active population [11].

Another essential factor that promotes the influx of tourists to Spain is a well-developed transport infrastructure, in particular the availability of 152 airports.

In the 1960s, the country became the favorite holiday destination for tourists from other European countries, in particular Great Britain, France, Central and Northern Europe. The number of tourists increased from 3 million people in 1950 to 34.3 million people in 2000 [7].

Based on the data provided by UNWTO, in 2019, the country was ranked second in the world after France in terms of tourist arrivals, the figure being 83.4 million people [2], 8.6% more than the figure for the previous year (Table 1). In 2020, the situation was similar. The number of tourist arrivals in 2020 was 19.5 million people.

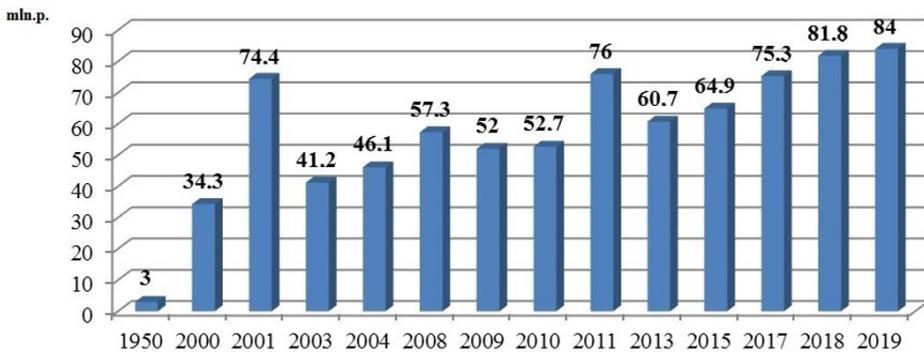
Figure 1 illustrates the dynamics of tourist arrivals in Spain.

In 2017, the income derived from international tourism in Spain increased by 2.5% and amounted to 68 billion US dollars [5]. It enabled the country to occupy the second position in the world after the USA. In 2018, this index increased by 7.04% and in monetary equivalent amounted to 81.25 billion US dollars. Incomes from the tourism branch cover the deficit of the country's trade balance by 136.6% and provide employment for 2.6 million people, which comprises more than 10% of the total amount of economically active population.

Table 1. Top 5 most visited countries in the world (as of 2019)

Tourist destination	A place among the countries of the world	Tourist arrivals, million people
France	1	90.2
Spain	2	83.8
USA	3	78.7
China	4	67.5
Italy	5	64.6

Source: [17].

**Figure 1.** The dynamics of tourist arrivals in Spain (million people)

Source: created by the authors based on [17].

It is worth mentioning that 2019 turned out to be the record year for Spain in terms of international tourism development. According to the data provided by Alliance for Excellence in Tourism, Exceltur, the country welcomed 84 million foreign tourists, who spent 92 billion euros or 109 billion US dollars in the country [11]. In 2020, revenues from international tourism decreased to 77.3% and amounted to 79.7 billion US dollars. The United States was the country worldwide with the highest international tourist receipts in 2021. Meanwhile, France and Spain followed in the ranking in 2021, with 40.8 billion U.S. dollars and 34.5 billion U.S. dollars, respectively.

Predominantly, the tourist arrivals in Spain were from Great Britain (approximately 17.3 million people, which is 2.2% less in comparison with the analogous period in 2018), Germany (10.7 million people; -1.8%) and France (10.6 million people; -1.3%) (Table 2).

In 2019, the Canary Islands were invariably the main tourist destination – 25.2% out of the total number of tourist arrivals, followed by Catalonia (22.5%) and Madrid (14.3%) (Table 3) [15].

Table 2. Geography of tourist arrivals in Spain (as of November 2019)

Countries	Tourist arrivals, million people	Changes (%)
In general	79.4	1.2
Germany	10.7	-1.8
Belgium	2.4	0.8
France	10.6	-1.3
Ireland	2.1	6.8
Italy	4.2	3.5
Netherlands	3.5	-4.4
Portugal	2.3	5.0
Great Britain	17.3	-2.2
Switzerland	1.7	-2.9
Russia	1.3	8.0

Source: [8].

Table 3. Number of tourist arrivals by destinations (as of November 2019)

Destinations	Tourist arrivals, million people	Changes (%)
In general	79.4	1.2
Andalusia	11.5	3.5
Balearic Islands	13.6	-0.8
Canary Islands	11.9	-4.4
Catalonia	18.4	0.8
Valencia	9.1	3.8
Madrid	7.1	7.5
Other destinations	7.8	3.2

Source: [15].

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of tourist arrivals according to the purpose of their visit to the area investigated in November 2019, as well as its dynamics within the analogous period of the previous year.

Distribution of international tourists by preferred means of transport has changed as well (Figure 3).

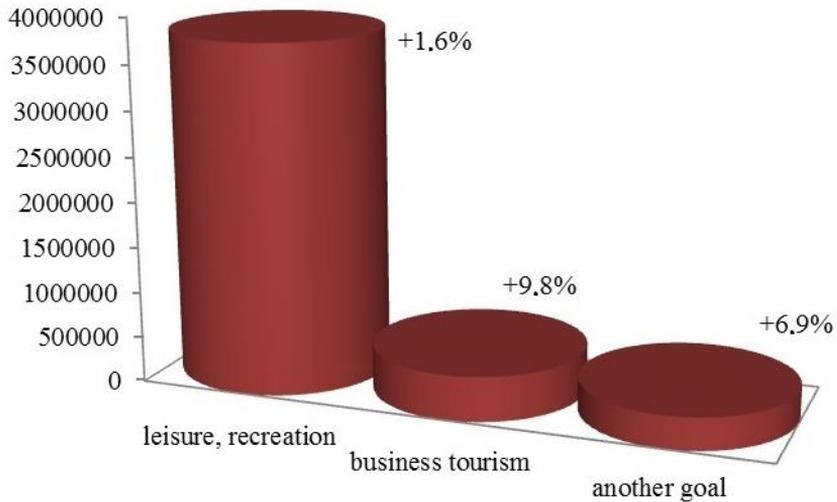


Figure 2. Distribution of international tourists concerning the purpose of travel to Spain (as of November 2019), (%)

Source: created by the authors, based on [14, 15].

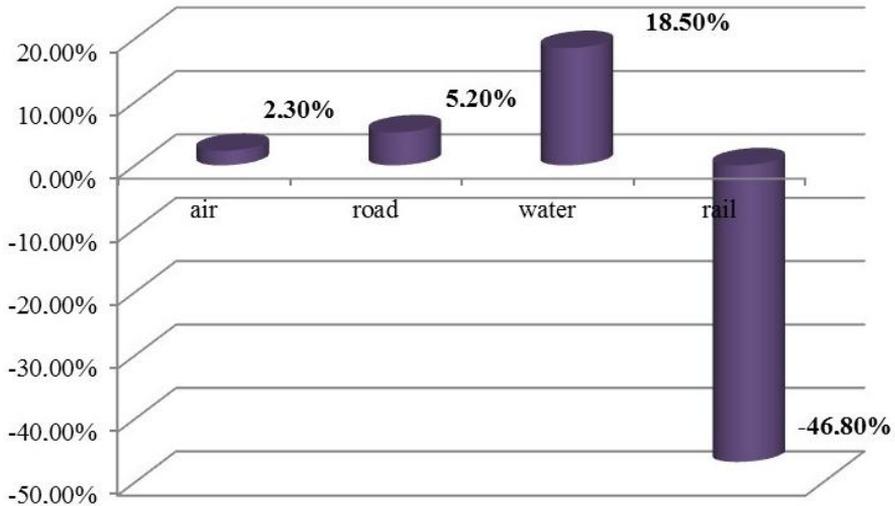


Figure 3. The dynamics of the distribution of tourists visiting Spain, by the predominant modes of transport (as of November 2019), (%)

Source: created by the authors, based on [7].

The global COVID-19 pandemic had a detrimental effect on the world tourist flows and first and foremost referred to Spain. Within the first half-year of 2020, Spain was visited by 10.8 million tourists, which is 71.7% less than within the

analogous period of 2019. One could observe a major decrease in the number of visitors from Great Britain (–99.6% (to 8.4 thousand people)), Germany (–97.4% (to 33.7 thousand people)) and France (–93.2% (to 64.9 thousand people)). France and Germany were the main countries of origin for international tourism in Spain in 2021. In that year, more than eleven million travellers from these two European countries headed West for a trip to Spain. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom ranked in the third place that year, accounting for around 4.3 million foreign visitors to the Spanish territory.

The number of foreign tourists that arrived in Spain in July 2020 equalled 2464.4 thousand people, which is 91.7% less than in June. Top three most interesting destinations for foreign tourists became Catalonia (37.4% from the total number of arrivals), Valencia (15.4%) and the Balearic Islands (13.8%) [9].

April and May can be called a “dead period” for the tourism sector of Spain, when a 100% decrease in tourist activity due to the global pandemic was recorded. As a result, there was a prognosticated decrease of profit in the tourism sector of the country of almost 100 billion euros, which is 15.6 billion euros more than it was estimated at the beginning of the pandemic [11].

Spain is characterised by intensive domestic tourism. Thus, in 2020, 47.3% of the Spanish opted for domestic tourism: 21% visited Andalusia, 13.3% – Madrid, 13% – Valencia. According to the official state statistics data, 90% of all the tourist flows are directed to five major recreational areas of the country: Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, the Canary Islands, Andalusia and Valencia. Average daily expenses per one tourist amount to at least 101 euros [7].

The dynamics of outbound tourist flows is increasing more slowly. The geography of outbound tourism is represented by Greece, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia and Turkey, which provide cheaper holiday offers. Outbound tourism to the neighbouring countries is increasing at a slow rate: the number of tourists departing for Portugal increased from 2.5 million people in 1986 to 5.1 million people in 2016, and the number of those travelling to France – from 1 million people to 2.8 million people within the same period [7].

The dynamics of outbound tourism is illustrated by Table 4.

Table 4. Dynamics of outbound tourism

Period	The intensity of the outflow, people	Change relative to the previous year, %
2014	11 783 000	4.78%
2015	14 407 000	22.27%
2016	15 405 000	6.93%
2017	17 031 000	10.56%

Source: [17].

In 2018, the number of Spanish tourists travelling by air amounted to only 7.5%; 90% of tourists departed from the country to the neighboring states by car. It is a clear indication that the majority of the Spanish opt for short-term tours within the country, traveling by means of automobile transport. Long-haul flights are mostly chosen by business tourists, 40.7% of whom travel to Canada and 44.5% to Japan [16].

Average tourist expenditure in Spain is 141 euros per day, according to the latest data published by the National Statistics Institute of Spain.

The most popular country amongst Spanish tourists is Portugal, the country with which Spain has common historical and cultural roots, as well as close economic relations (Figure 4).

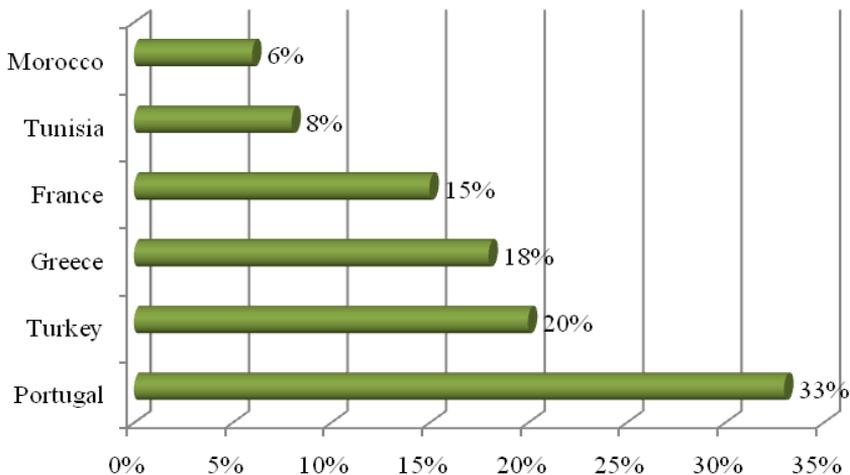


Figure 4. Outbound tourism flows in Spain (as of 2017), (%)

Source: created by the authors based on [7].

France as a travel destination is chosen due to geographical proximity, perfectly developed motor highways and common linguistic community. France predominantly offers 3-star hotels, which also appeals to tourists with middle income. The reason the Spanish are attracted to the rest of the countries are business goals, education, etc.

Tourism without borders is developing in Spain more and more. A great amount of work is being carried out in the country to adapt all the resources available to the needs of the disabled by means of eliminating architectural barriers, ensuring access to cultural objects, recreational facilities in the natural environment, developing special norms in the area of transport connections, construction, landscape design, etc. A vast array of architectural monuments, mu-

seums, nature reserves, hotels and restaurants in Spain provide services, infrastructure and entertainment that are fully adapted to the needs of people with disabilities.

Conclusion

Tourism industry of Spain predetermines workforce distribution, creation of workplaces and an increased proportion of the service sector in GDP structure, influences an effective demand for goods and services, ensures the availability of wholesome recreation and health improvement, as well as acquaintance with the historical and cultural heritage and contemporary side of Spain.

One of the most acute issues provoked by tourism development is environmental pollution, which is relevant, first and foremost, to the Mediterranean and Southern seaside areas of Spain.

Seasonal prevalence of tourism in Spain is the reason behind underemployment (in the winter period in the regions where it is widespread). The consequences of the tourism seasonality are the most significant in the seaside recreational area.

It is essential to mention the fact that the main aim of restructuring the tourism market in Spain within the recent years is the diversification of supplies in tourism, the change of existing paradigm within which the country is perceived exclusively as a beach destination. To achieve these goals, a whole number of advertising campaigns have been developed and implemented («Spain Marks», «Bravo Espana», «I need Spain», etc.).

The analysis of tourist arrivals shows that Spain is characterized by the tendency towards a steady annual increase in the number of tourists. Moreover, with each coming year there was a rise in the number of people visiting historical, cultural and architectural monuments, including those that are the World Heritage Sites. As of 2020, it can be stated that the tourist season was lost, and the country could count only on domestic tourists.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

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