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# PANDEMIC AND GENERAL TRENDS AND CHALLENGES OF WORLD TOURISM

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## ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the most important fields of the world economy. In recent years, world tourism has been a direction of special priority and the attention to it has increased considerably. The importance of tourism to the World Heritage was gradually increasing, which changed both opportunities and danger. The World Heritage Center was tasked with developing a solid World Heritage Tourism Development Program. The purpose of this program is to help the World Heritage Committee and the management of the facilities use tourism as a positive factor in preserving the world heritage and mitigating the expected threats. Although there are suitable environmental conditions for the development of tourism in the world, it is significantly affected by such risks as: climate, natural disasters, political situation, various viruses, pandemics, etc. This kind of risk that fundamentally changed tourism around the world today is COVID-19, to which our article is dedicated.

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**Introduction.** The following interesting picture was reflected in the data of the last year of world tourism. The results of 2020 were equal to the data of 1990. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), during the 10 months since the pandemic began, the world tourism flow decreased approximately by 72 percent. Based on these data, these events made lose \$ 935 billion in export revenues to the world tourism market.

It is also noteworthy that since March 2020, the number of visits decreased by 62.3%, while in April this decrease was already 95.5%. Such is the dynamics of visits from EU countries around the world.

In general trends during the pandemic period, Georgia is one of the countries whose data are given as an example. There are a variety of resources for the development of the tourism sector in Georgia.

**The recent data on world tourism and preparations for the post-pandemic situation.** Georgia offers very important tourist facilities, goods and services to tourists. Among different types of tourism should be especially noted eco, phyto, agro, hiking, cultural, wine, and more. The attention of foreign tourists has intensified, after archeological excavations, near the capital of Georgia, namely in Dmanisi, discovered parts of the skeleton of an ancient Paleolithic human, which dates back to 700 thousand years.

Statistics data for visits made by international guests / to EU countries from Georgia:

Table 1.

	EU Countries	2019	2020	change	change %
	<b>Total</b>	<b>484 996</b>	<b>70 738</b>	<b>-414 258</b>	<b>-85,4%</b>
1	Austria	11 962	1 435	-10 527	-88,0%
2	Belgium	9 247	1 027	-8 220	-88,9%
3	Bulgaria	10 916	3 871	-7 045	-64,5%
4	United Kingdom	37 478	5 625	-31 853	-85,0%
5	Germany	89 051	9 338	-79 713	-89,5%
6	Denmark	6 088	568	-5 520	-90,7%
7	Spain	13 710	1 726	-11 984	-87,4%
8	Estonia	12 482	2 819	-9 663	-77,4%
9	Ireland	4 903	707	-4 196	-85,6%
10	Italy	21 424	3 722	-17 702	-82,6%
11	Cyprus	2 262	367	-1 895	-83,8%
12	Latvia	20 514	3 976	-16 538	-80,6%
13	Lithuania	22 381	4 735	-17 646	-78,8%
14	Luxembourg	360	60	-300	-83,3%
15	Malta	520	101	-419	-80,6%
16	Netherlands	22 908	2 192	-20 716	-90,4%
17	Poland	88 300	10 690	-77 610	-87,9%
18	Portugal	3 988	546	-3 442	-86,3%
19	Romania	6 815	1 205	-5 610	-82,3%
20	Greece	21 150	3 363	-17 787	-84,1%
21	France	27 952	5 219	-22 733	-81,3%
22	Slovakia	6 689	1 182	-5 507	-82,3%
23	Slovenia	3 335	360	-2 975	-89,2%
24	Hungary	7 778	1 028	-6 750	-86,8%
25	Finland	5 100	701	-4 399	-86,3%
26	Sweden	9 654	1 452	-8 202	-85,0%
27	Czechia	16 018	2 476	-13 542	-84,5%
28	Croatia	2011	247	-1 764	-87,7%

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

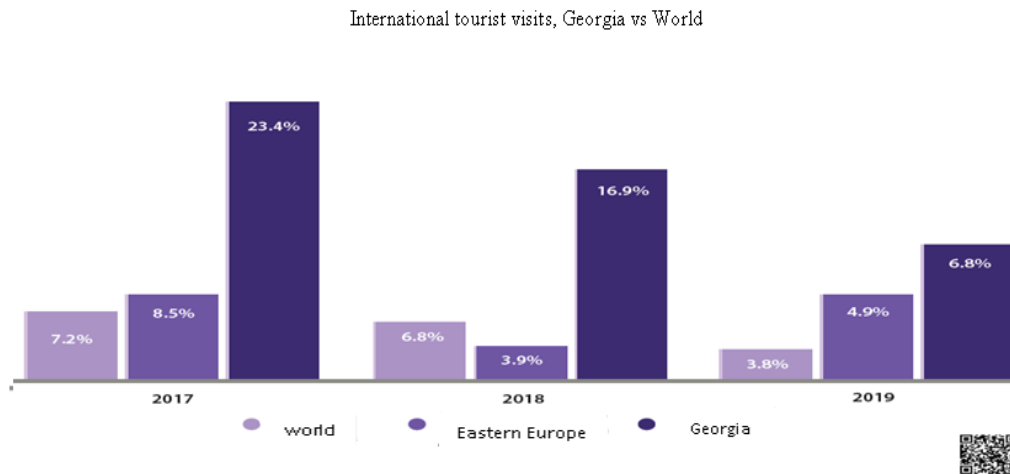
International tourist visits from top 10 countries to Georgia (Table 2.).

Table 2.

Country	2017	2018	change	change %
Russia	825,437	1.083,874	258,437	31%
Azerbaijan	608,682	697,782	89,100	14,6%
Turkey	547,983	5089,3	41,357	7,5%
Armenia	466,449	510, 542	44,093	9.5%
Georgia (non-resident)	404, 584	424,597	20,013	4.9%
Iran	273,842	280, 735	6,893	2.5%
Ukraine	147, 389	158,160	10,771	7.3%
Israel	112,827	154,764	41,937	37.2%
Poland	47,504	65,361	17,757	27.3%
Germany	41,217	61,422	20,205	49%

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.

The development of tourism in Georgia was also facilitated by the creation of free economic zones. Although Georgia does not have an honorable place in the world tourism market, the increase in tourist flows is of a regular character (Fig. 1).



*Fig. 1. Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.*

The tourism industry is losing billions of dollars and millions of jobs. But at the same time, new trends are emerging in the market as well as new exciting directions acceptable to the tourism industry. Digital startups appear, e.g. the company Travel Tech. There are also new opportunities for individual tours and consequently, a new format of relationships. International experts believe that the current crisis is another opportunity to create a more solid tourism economy in the world [10].

According to the study by the International Tourism Organization (UNWTO), another 100 million jobs can be lost in the tourism industry by the end of the year. Most notable is the fact that the current crisis has revealed structural weaknesses in the tourism industry that existed in the sector even before the pandemic. Actually, the tourism business was a fragmented sector that was represented by small and medium businesses [10].

The untimely response of the state to the existing problem was also revealed. But it is precisely this current crisis that has opened up new opportunities for advancement. Back in August 2008, a new Airbnb service was introduced, which became a global platform and was used as a rental service. Similar services and creative platforms are an effective way to help today's disorganized tourism [9].

Similar trends are relevant for world tourism. The big players in this field managed to take advantage of the so-called pause; they used large-scale digitalization, were able to create and implement new platforms, discussed environmental issues, and changed their approaches to tourism. The research was carried out on new projects introduced by the WWTC. The projects included recreational activities for tourists, as well as the next stage of the tourism development after the pandemic [8].

This year, one of the new platforms "Welcome City Lab", founded by the French agency "Atout France", developed a new document outlining new innovative directions for the development of the tourism sector. The document mentions several trends that imply the development of the sector together with the defeat of the pandemic. Priority issues are: care for the health of tourists, compliance with sanitary norms, digital transformation, focus on environmentally friendly products of "Low Tech" and joint activities in the virtual and real world for a more interesting effect (9).

The new project "Pandemic Covid-19" demonstrated how big cities need to adapt and prepare for the future. Studies show that the so-called city tourism is becoming the main priority of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and its main trends are being formed.

The digitalization process of the tourism sector started even before the pandemic. Such services such as Skyscanner, Booking.com, Airbnb created ideal opportunities for international tourism. Using such platforms, tourists from all over the world can plan the whole process of travel: contact the world travel agencies, calculate and balance their expenses, book hotels, enjoy interesting and attractive travel packages.

There was much more demand for the purchase of similar individual packages than in previous years. A variety of digital platforms have been able to improve international relations (9).

According to international experts, tourists will not be able to travel to other countries at a fast pace. Tourism activities will start in stages. The revival of the tourism industry can start in the direction of domestic tourism, which will bring the first result for any state. Based on observations, domestic tourism can start in a country like China. By summer, the situation in European countries will improve. Due to the new situation, the total content of tourist packages is changing, prices are changing, tourist routes are changing and, most importantly, the quality of service is increasing. Both, the success of domestic tourism and the related growth rate depend on the service and its high rate. Similar preparatory activities are already underway in the countries such as Italy, Spain, France, Thailand, and others. Travel companies believe that their success in domestic tourism will create new jobs with much higher pay. High pay depends on the number of tourists who are attracted by interesting and innovative tourist routes, high level of service, and loyal prices.

As you know, the pandemic caused a huge economic blow to the world. Along with all the other problems, people exhausted their financial savings. Therefore, the tourism sector is returning to its so-called “initial state” in which it started its first steps. The rate of this segment changes significantly.

A similar situation indicates that only high-ranking members of society will be able to travel, as they did many years ago. The middle class will start looking for less valuable packages, mainly in the field of domestic tourism. In the foreground will be ecological types of tourism, which deserves more confidence in today’s reality. Types of tourism such as agritourism, ecotourism, camping, tents, etc. will become more popular. Due to the current events, similar tours will be equipped with: veils, towels, special gloves, antibacterial wipes, and special disinfectant solutions.

One interesting fact is that during the World Economic Forum, it became clear that small and medium-sized hotels and various small and medium-sized accommodations are becoming more of a priority than large-scale hotels. It is also becoming more useful for tourist groups to rent apartments, where it will be more possible to comply with all sanitary norms. Large hotels are given special advice by the World Economic Forum, and in order to follow such advice and recommendations, it is time to conduct training and train the whole service staff in accordance with the relevant high standard.

A number of hotel departments will change internal regulations, e.g. a hotel reception department will try to convert basic services to online activities. Such changes will create a sense of security and stability for hotel guests. The Food and Beverage Division will also change the standard of operation of its subdivisions, e.g. the working breakfast standard will change and several of its service types will switch to remote service mode. With regard to these and other issues, the management has to plan the news precisely and respond to all important issues in a timely manner.

In today’s reality of tourism, some interesting ideas have emerged. For instance, Adam Blake, a Professor at the University of Bournemouth, says: “People are the same as before the pandemic, without any changes. People are still attracted to all kinds of travel and they are still aspiring to foreign countries. But people have a desire to see and feel all the differences that exist between the past and the present world. The world tourism companies should be able to not only convince future tourists but also to prove that travel will be safe and enjoyable for them. Similar considerations and analysis help us to manage the current situation properly”.

The prices that will be compiled in the direction of any tourist service should be developed at a much lower rate than it was during the summer of 2020. Naturally, airlines will not be able to operate full-time flights because of the number of passengers, but even such an unfavorable picture will bring a positive result considering that such an airline will have many new passengers who will positively evaluate their service. A step in this direction will positively affect the image of any airline in the future. E.g. Several airlines in the United States already refused to provide services to passengers with food and drink, including the so-called aisles. By introducing similar innovations, the company plans to adjust contacts between passengers and consequently reduce the company's costs.

**Conclusions.** The pandemic of coronavirus had the greatest impact on the entire civilized world. Its negative impact affected all sectors of the world economy. The world tourism industry with all its incoming links is particularly affected.

Given today’s reality, one of the key issues remains the revival of world tourism with as little waste of time as possible. This requires the activation of state structures because the biggest and most powerful levers belong to them. Only with their support and planning of the right strategy is possible to implement a successful plan.

- Based on proper research and analysis, the government of any country should understand and estimate the real damage inflicted on the tourism business during the pandemic.
- The governments of the countries should try to compensate for the economic losses in the tourism sector by using various legal mechanisms.
- It is desirable to study the example of different countries, use the methods of defeating the pandemic and revive the tourism sector in parallel.
- It is desirable to find new marketing channels that will bring a much more interesting effect in the field of tourism, in terms of improving quality.
- Worldwide, it is desirable to develop a business strategy specifically for domestic tourism.

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