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The situation of the tourist sectors after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic – tourism covidisation

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Abstract: The article puts forward a proposal for a new concept enabling a more in-depth analysis of the impact of the development of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector, dating back from the turn of 2019 and 2020. In order to present the concept of ‘tourism covidisation’, subject literature has been analysed. While analysing the literature, it was found that the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all tourism sectors: the accommodation and catering sector, the tourist attractions sector, the transport sector as well as the tourism organisers sector. This prompted the author of this publication to create a new definition – tourism covidisation, which may be defined as “any effects on the tourism industry sector directly or indirectly connected to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Keywords: pandemic; COVID-19; tourists sectors; covidisation; concept.

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1 Introduction

The term ‘tourism covidisation’ certainly falls under the category of new terminology, however, the very idea behind its creation is not an unknown phenomenon. The onset of the development of tourism covidisation – as well as its entire phenomenon – can be found at the beginning of 2020, when the world was being faced with the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic has completely transformed the global economy, including the tourism sector, which is especially prone to any changes taking place in the contemporary, globalised world.

The aim of the article is to signal the emergence of a new concept in contemporary tourism, that is, ‘tourism covidisation’ and to attempt to define it. The originality of the article lies in its coverage of an entirely novel concept that has not yet been discussed in such detail in literature. Based on the example of several countries, the scope of tourism

covidisation, its features and diversification over time are presented. The author implemented the method of desk research to scrutinise the above-mentioned elements, mainly a synthetic analysis of relevant scientific publications and other scientific reports.

2 Literature review

Until now, the problematic aspects related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have been mainly dealt with by economists, who saw close interrelatedness between government actions and socio-economic developments. Ashraf (2020), using data from 77 countries, indicated that the introduction of various types of social distancing measures led to a significant decrease in the activity of their economies. The decline in the activity of global economy was also brought upon by Sonora (2020). In his publication, the author draws our attention to the drastic decline of the market index (VIX) at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. What is more, its values have never before been as low as in the period from 19 February to 1 March. Another economic consequence of the outbreak of the pandemic is a decrease of 60 percentage points in the consumer movement (Goolsbee and Syverson, 2020), which in turn caused financial instability of employees as result of being made redundant (Mogaji, 2020).

A significant number of scientific publications also deals with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector itself. Its terrible state is one of the social costs of protection against SARS-CoV-2 infection (Qiu et al., 2020). The restriction of travel has led to a loss of income for tourism enterprises (Williams, 2020) in, among others, the accommodation and catering industries (Gössling et al., 2020). In case of the former, luxury hotels have suffered the most (Hao et al., 2020). Madeira et al. (2020) using a survey study method, have revealed the concerns of all Portuguese restaurateurs. The situation in the catering industry in the first months of the pandemic was presented by Grochowicz (2020). The author, using mapping and field observations, indicated that the catering industry in down-town districts has been greatly affected by the pandemic, especially in cities focused on receiving tourists, e.g., in Krakow, Prague or Barcelona. Grochowicz's (2020) research was confirmed in a survey of the opinions of Krakow tourism entrepreneurs on the impact of the pandemic on the tourism industry (Walas and Kruczek, 2020).

Significant changes resulting from the pandemic have also taken pace in the tourist attractions sector. The subject literature shows a decline in tourists visiting tourist attractions, especially those located in larger urban centres (Jiricka-Pürerer et al., 2020). It is evident that in the era of the pandemic, the importance of other forms of tourism has increased, especially the ones entirely transferred to virtual space (Gutowski and Kłós-Adamkiewicz, 2020). An interesting example of this is the growing interest in digital culinary tourism (Fusté-Forné, 2020).

3 Methodology

In order to present the new concept of 'covidisation of tourism', a detailed analysis and criticism of subject literature was carried out. This analysis was made on the basis of publications in the Google Scholar and Research Gate search engines. Both are free, specialised and used to search databases containing scientific publications in various

fields (Pamuła-Cieślak, 2008). The articles were searched on the basis of the keywords – ‘tourism’ and ‘COVID’, and the time range covered the year 2020. The languages of the searched articles were Polish (author’s native language) and English (international language). Following Silverman’s (2008) guidance on qualitative content analysis, the research material was reduced based on the division of tourism into five sectors (tourist attractions sector, tourist transport sector, tourism organisers sector, accommodation sector, catering sector). It was then decided to give an example of the impact of the COVID-9 pandemic on tourism based on the situation in four countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Ukraine and Ireland). The choice of countries was subjective. In the end, as part of discussion on the analysed issue, all the latest publications that deal with the topic of covidisation in various areas of social and economic life have been analysed. Articles, as in the initial part of the study, were searched for in the Google Scholar search engine based on the keyword ‘covidisation’. Out of 48 obtained results, the ones that directly related to the introduction of the concept of covidisation in the literature were selected.

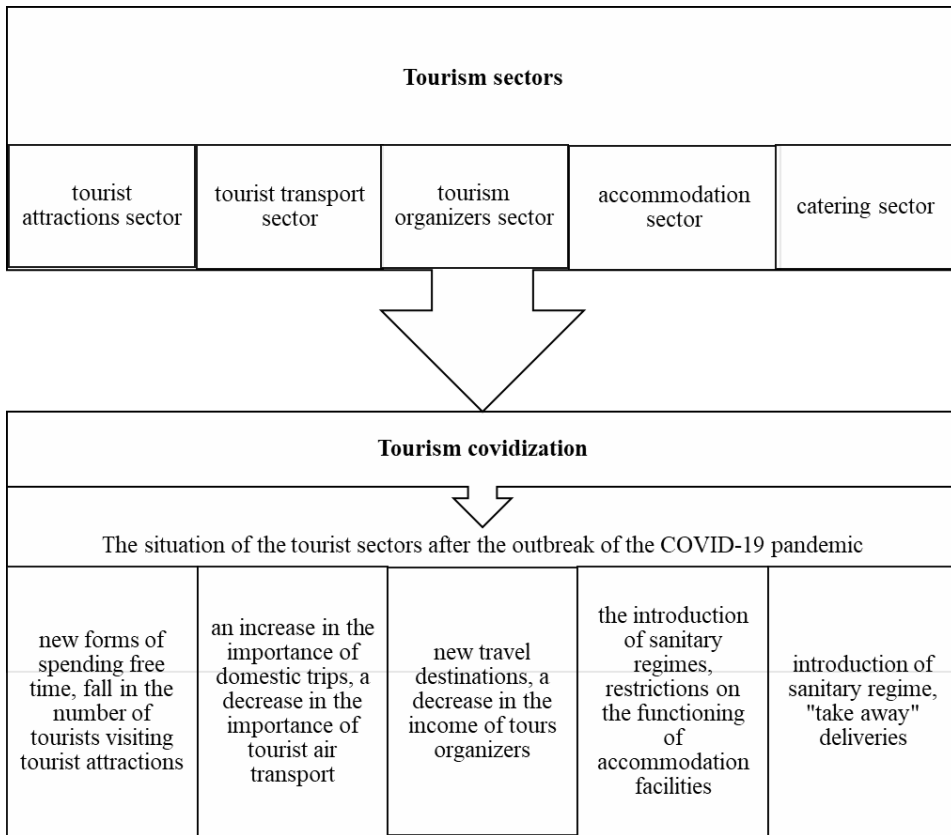
4 Results

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector has undergone a number of different transformations (Figure 1). New ways of spending free time have emerged, focusing mainly on sustainable development, which is to be one of the national strategies in fighting the economic consequences of the pandemic’s development (Kreiner and Ram, 2020). The number of domestic travellers has increased, especially to such destinations as agritourism farms perceived by tourists as less probable places of contracting the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, contrary to urban centres (Wojcieszak-Zbierska et al., 2020). This, in turn, triggered an increase in the importance of domestic transport at the expense of tourist air transport, as mentioned, among others, by Nižetić (2020).

Similarly, the destinations of foreign trips have also changed due to tourists being motivated not by their own preferences but by the possibilities to enter a given country (Kowalska and Niezgoda, 2020). A relatively large part of countries closed their borders to visitors for whom the only travel purpose was to spend their free time in a country other than their country of residence. This, in turn, resulted in less wide tourist offers proposed by tourism organisers, directly leading to lower income for those businesses. As a result of the increased investment risk, the crisis of tourism organisers recorded a significant pace of decline in the price of their shares on global stock exchanges (Liew, 2020).

Furthermore, the functioning of tourist accommodation and catering facilities also underwent major changes. They constituted in the introduction of sanitary regimes in most tourist accommodation facilities. Some of the restrictions included: a limit imposed on the number of guests (one person in a room) and restrictions on meals (breakfast in the room, no possibility to use the hotel restaurant), which are mentioned, among others, by Rutynskyi and Kushniruk (2020). In the catering industry, ‘take-away’ deliveries have been introduced in many countries as means to significantly reduce the risk of possible infection with the coronavirus. Such measures have been introduced in most small and medium-sized enterprises in Malaysia (Lai et al., 2020) and in Indonesia (Sibarani, 2020).

Figure 1 Transformation of the tourism sector resulting from tourism covidisation

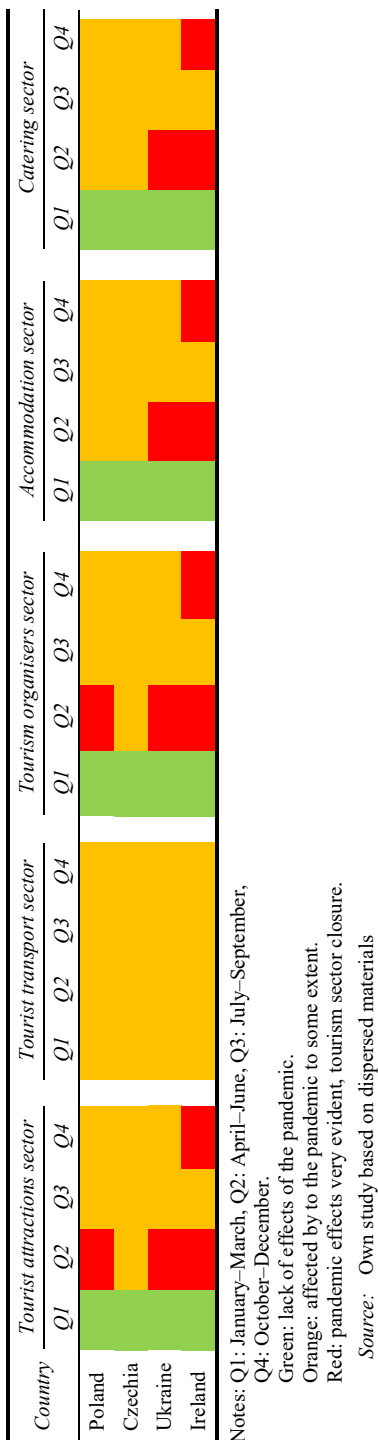


Source: Own study

In Europe alone, the covidisation of tourism progressed in different ways and occurred at different times (Figure 2). Such discrepancies were caused by the specificity of the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus. However, a general tendency to limit the activities of the entire tourism sector could be observed.

In Poland, the covidisation of tourism began with the introduction of restrictions on tourist transport. Already on 25 January, special procedures for passengers arriving from the People’s Republic of China were introduced and the location forms were used. On 2 March, the number of flights to Italy, a country strongly affected by the pandemic, was also reduced. In Poland, the biggest changes took place on 1 April, when most enterprises working in tourist traffic were closed. What is more, ‘take-away’ deliveries were introduced and accommodation could only be used in specific circumstances. In the case of tourism organisers and the tourist attractions sector, the situation did not start to improve until the third quarter of 2020 when certain efforts were made to save their economic situation.

Table 1 The course of tourism covidisation in selected European countries in 2020, broken down into quarters (see online version for colours)



Similar actions as in Poland were also undertaken by the Czech Republic, where the borders were closed on 16 March 2020 and a state of emergency was announced four days before. However, some key aspects of measures taken by the Czech Republic differed from the ones present in other countries. During the pandemic, the closure of enterprises operating in the tourism sector was not banned, as was the case in Poland.

When it comes to Ukraine, similarly to countries analysed above, the first sector in which the impact of the pandemic could be observed was tourist transport. On 27 January, the Ukrainian charter airlines, and a few days later also the domestic carrier, announced the suspension of some flights, especially the ones to the Asian continent. Nevertheless, other restrictions directly or indirectly affecting other sectors of tourism were introduced later (on 25 March, the government announced a sanitary regime). In the second quarter of 2020, a complete closure of the hotel and catering industry was decided upon. Those facilities reopened at the beginning of the holiday season.

While analysing covidisation in European countries, the situation in Ireland deserves special attention. On 15 March, the Irish Government ordered the closure of bars and pubs and advised against accommodating guests. The restrictions were lifted only from the beginning of July 2020, and already in October of the same year, the country introduced a six-week re-lockdown, treated in this paper as defined by Qureshi et al. (2020). At that time, cultural establishments, museums, restaurants and all accommodation facilities whose operation is not indispensable were closed.

5 Discussion

The phenomenon of covidisation is a new concept, although it is becoming more common to stumble upon it in literature from all over the globe. It relates, among others, to economic, social and medical issues, as shown in Table 2.

A broader definition of covidisation is introduced by Bhattacharya (2020) who asserts that it is in fact a negative process taking place on social, economic and medical levels. However, the article focuses mainly on the impact of the pandemic on the health crisis, as is the case in the papers of Lasco and San Pedro (2020). Those two authors analyse medical issues in the context of the governments' decisions to transform healthcare facilities into specialised units for fighting the pandemic, at the same time neglecting the treatment of patients for other diseases. Economic covidisation is described by Radev (2020). In his publication, the author, based on empirical research on Bulgaria, points at the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic such as for instance the crisis in the domestic banking system. Pai (2020) arrives at interesting conclusions by finding a certain mechanism of covidisation in scientific publications. In this case, it is treated as lowering specific scientific standards in order to produce a large number of publications on the pandemic.

Although the concept of 'covidisation' is relatively new, contradictory concepts are already appearing in world literature. Sen (2020) in his publication comes up with the concept of de-covidisation, which is treated as a departure from the negative effects of a pandemic through sustainable development. Perhaps at this point we should consider the implications of de-covidisation for the subject discussed in this article, i.e., tourism. Once the majority of the population is vaccinated, many kinds of restrictions will be abandoned, and in the future they may all be lifted. Will the tourism sector return to its

original state? It is not certain. Most likely, the concept of ‘tourism covidisation’ will be discussed and present in the global scientific discourse for many years to come.

Table 2 The concept of covidisation in world literature

<i>Author</i>	<i>Publication title</i>	<i>Journal name</i>	<i>The concept of covidisation</i>
Bhattacharya (2020)	The social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	ORF Issue Brief No. 406	<i>Covidisation</i> – a process that is a negative result of medical, economic and social effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic
Lasco and San Pedro (2020)	The ‘covidization’ of health care	Philippine Daily Inquirer	<i>Covidisation of healthcare</i> – the governmental actions to allocate proper resources to fight the pandemic, undertaken at the expense of other health issues of the society
Pai (2020)	Covidization of research: what are the risks?	Nature Medicine	<i>Research covidisation</i> – the negative impact of the pandemic on the way science is financed, produced, published and reported
Radev (2020)	Covidization of the economy: initial economic effects of COVID-19 on the companies in Bulgaria	COVIDization EBES First Report	<i>Covidisation of the economy</i> – economic effects of COVID-19
Sen (2020)	Decovidization through rurbanization: the redevelopment option for sustainable energy access	<i>International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy</i>	<i>De-covidisation</i> – moving away from the negative effects of the pandemic through sustainable development

Source: Own study based on dispersed materials

6 Conclusions

The issues discussed in this article, that is, the definition of ‘tourism covidisation’, as well as the characteristics of the impact of the pandemic on individual tourism sectors, allow for the following conclusion: ‘tourism covidisation’ is a new concept, however, it refers to the entire global tourism economy. The term should be understood as any phenomena in the tourism industry sector that are directly or indirectly related to the COVID-19 pandemic which transformed the world in the 21st century. The analysis of trends in the contemporary tourism market shows that fundamental changes are taking place in the sector. They also suggest that, in the near future, tourism may look completely different than the one we know and observe today, and the concept of ‘tourism covidisation’ will accompany it for a very long time. This thesis is confirmed by the effects of the pandemic observed in many countries of the world, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Ireland, all analysed in this article.

The article is an introduction to research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism sectors. The situation should be analysed in detail in the future, in particular: the impact of introducing restrictions on domestic and foreign travel, differences in the regeneration of domestic and foreign tourism, the impact of the pandemic on tourist

travel plans and the economic impact of the pandemic on tourism. The above-mentioned issues should be analysed with the use of various methods of spatial analysis and statistical methods, which would fill the gap in the literature on the subject.

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