Impact of COVID-19 Restrictions on the Development of the German Tourism Industry

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Abstract
The years preceding the outbreak of the pandemic were the heyday of the German tourism industry. However, the end of 2019 marked a milestone in its successful development. The crisis caused by the COVID-19 virus has hurt all sectors of the world economy, including tourism. The year 2020 has become the most difficult for the German tourism and hospitality industry in many years and has forced a new assessment of the path traveled and the prospects for further development of this industry. People stopped traveling, visiting relatives, going to theaters and restaurants for a long time. Distance learning and the transfer of some employees to remote work are also controversial. However, in modern conditions, the acceleration of digitalization and the introduction of new technologies is an inevitable process.

At the same time, the crisis allows the earth's ecosystem to recover, as production is partially stopped and carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere have significantly decreased. The pandemic forces people to think about the future and take the necessary measures for survival, realizing that they are part of a single ecosystem of our planet.


1. Introduction.

Germans are convinced that vacation is the most popular form of happiness, which is why on average 40% of the German population go on vacation at least twice a year. In 2019, 21% of the population made two trips, and 19% traveled even more often [5].

Statistics show that during 2019, three out of five German citizens made a trip of at least five days. On average, 61 people out of 100 respondents. Youth: 61 people out of 100, couples without
children: 72 people out of 100, families with children: 70 people out of 100, singles: 58 people out of 100, seniors: 55 people out of 100 [7].

The most popular destinations for Germans in 2019 were, as in previous years, German resorts in Western Pomerania, Bavaria, Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, and Baden-Württemberg. Domestic tourism was preferred by 34.4% of German citizens, which is 2.3% less than in the previous ten years (2009: 36.7%). High prices and unstable weather force Germans to spend their main vacation abroad, and the resorts of Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, and Schleswig-Holstein, which lost some of their vacationers in the high season, make up for the losses incurred by vacationers in the off-season [5].

Forty-eight and three-tenths % of Germans vacationed in the summer of 2019 in other European countries: Spain (10.6%), Italy (6.3%), Austria (4.2%), Greece (4.1%), the Scandinavian countries (3.8%), Turkey (3.5), the Benelux countries (3.5), France (2.5%), Croatia (2.1%), Poland (1.4%). [5] For many years, the most popular destinations for Germans had been the resorts of the Spanish mainland, as well as the Balearic and Canary Islands. A decline in interest in traditional European resorts was observed in 2019. Many tourists have chosen individuality over the mainstream. They didn't want to lie on the over-occupied beaches, or run through the cities in a crowd, seeing the sights. Authenticity and atmosphere were in high demand. Tourists wanted individual offers, impressions, and experiences, so there were fewer German tourists in Spain and Turkey in the summer of 2019. Their number has decreased by 2.6% and 3.1%, respectively, over the past ten years. So many German tourists have never taken their main holiday outside of Europe in the entire history of sightings. Seventeen % of German tourists preferred to rest in the resorts of the Far East (Vietnam, Hong Kong, Cambodia, Laos, China, Malaysia, South Korea) and North America. German vacationers are returning to the resorts of Egypt very slowly. Trips to distant countries outside of Europe were preferred mainly by childless couples and singles, while families with children and pensioners were more likely to stay in Germany or go to other European countries. It should also be noted that even the Germans, who advocate sustainable tourism and environmental protection, forget about high principles and global climate change during their holidays and enjoy using the services of air carriers. As it turned out, the concept of Flight shaming is not for vacation. Thoughts about the need to protect the environment from harmful emissions into the atmosphere leave many German tourists during their summer holidays [8].
There have been further changes in the preferences of German tourists from 2009 to 2019. Thus, the trip on vacation has been reduced by one day and is currently on average a little more than 12 days (12.3). Interestingly, according to statistics, holidays within the country are almost twice as short as holidays abroad. The trend is as follows: the further away the place of rest is, the longer the time spent there. Therewith, people aged 18-24 years and pensioners took the longest trips in 2019, up to 14 days. Childless couples traveled an average of 11.6 days, families with children – 12.8 days, singles – 10 days [7].

The vacation remained a high-maintenance item and cost an average of 98 euros per day. A vacation trip has risen in price by 20% between 2009 and 2019 and cost a German vacationer 1208 euros per person in 2019. This amount included the cost of travel, accommodation, meals, tickets to various events, the purchase of souvenirs, and tips to the service staff. Daily vacation expenses varied depending on the place of stay: they were 85 euros per person in Germany, and just over 100 euros in Spain, Greece, and Scandinavia. They could be 125 euros per person on long-distance routes. At the same time, in some European countries, daily expenses could be even lower than in the country, for example, in Croatia – 69 euros, in Poland – 70, in North Africa – 80, in Turkey – 81. Childless couples, singles, and young retirees were willing to spend more money on vacation. High-income vacationers (starting at 3,500 euros per month) spent 40 euros more per day than low-income vacationers [5].

2. Features of tourism during the period of restrictions of COVID-19

As recently as the end of 2019, two-thirds of Germans were confident that they would make at least one five-day trip in 2020. Thirty-three % of respondents were sure of this, 32% were going to travel a lot in the coming year, 21% of respondents found it difficult to answer whether they want to go somewhere, and only 14% did not plan to travel at all. Twenty-five % of respondents were going to spend their holidays in Germany in 2020, 40% of respondents planned to go to other European countries, 18% dreamed of distant exotic countries, and only 17% did not make a final decision. The Germans always preferred to plan their holidays. They always took advantage of the early booking discount, not hoping for last-minute deals. Early booking is convenient for tourists, tour operators, hotels, and airlines. The outbreak of the pandemic has ruined all plans for a vacation in 2020 and dealt a devastating blow to the tourism and hospitality industry around the world. It disrupted plans
not only for the summer vacation, but also for the Easter and Christmas holidays, and the epidemiological safety of travel came to the fore.

The repeated lockdown and start of vaccination announced by the German government has not yet brought the expected result, and the pandemic, which began in 2019 in China, continues to confuse all plans for a vacation in the summer of 2021. However, the attraction of German tourists to long-distance wanderings and vacations on the shores of the warm sea is greater than ever before. Surveys of more than 5,000 respondents show that most of them plan to make at least one big vacation trip in 2021. Many people would like to give up a few short trips during the year in favor of one or two long trips. This desire is not least connected with the fact that in 2020 the Germans were deprived of such an opportunity due to the pandemic. According to German tour operators, organized tours and outdoor recreation are usually in great demand. However, the difficult epidemiological situation forces tourists to organize their own recreation, depending on the specifics of the current moment. Sudden restrictions on entry and exit, flight cancellations, and other unpleasant surprises force vacationers to abandon air travel to their vacation destination in favor of traveling by train or by private car. Despite the fact that a tour organized and purchased in advance from a travel agency seems to be the best solution in a normal season, in the difficult season of 2021, many people are ready to abandon the services of tour operators and organize a summer vacation on their own. This decision is made primarily by those who plan to spend their holidays in the country or visit neighboring Austria, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. With the well-known love of Germans for long-term planning and booking of hotel rooms and tickets, no one is taking such a risk this year. Booking takes place just a couple of days before the start of the trip, as everyone understands that the situation can get complicated at any time. In the German tourism industry, they are now talking about the popularity of Last Minute Reisen, "last-minute bookings". [5].

3. Travel trends: "slow travel", "All Inclusive"

Sustainable tourism and slow travel "slow tourism" is becoming even more popular: no one wants to damage historical and cultural monuments, annoy residents, cause social tension and pollute the nature of the visited places to please the economic interests of the region. Conscious tourists try to comply with the basic rules of sustainable tourism, namely: accommodation in environmentally compatible hotels, compliance with the working conditions of service personnel, consumption of
local food, reduction of electricity consumption, reduction of waste, use of environmentally friendly transport, compliance with measures to protect biological diversity, etc. [1].

People are tired of the hustle and bustle and want to enjoy a leisurely holiday away from the popular routes of mass tourism. More and more vacationers choose to stay in private apartments or rooms in private houses instead of the hyped hotels and do not forget about environmental protection even on vacation [4, 13]. Many people plan to devote their vacation in 2021 not to mindless lying by the pool in a hotel but to clean the beaches of garbage and other equally important activities for the environment. The trends for 2021 are as follows: no more than three long trips abroad per year, a reduction in the number of short trips, more wellness holidays in resorts in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, a decrease in city tours, an increase in demand for outdoor recreation in rural areas and eco-tourism. Fifty-six % of vacationers admitted that the most important thing for them is the financial hedging of the booked tour, and for 44% it was the low price of the trip that was more important. Seventy-four % of respondents expressed a desire to discover new countries and cultures, while 24% said that they would prefer to stay in a familiar resort in 2021, where they have already been before. Eighty % of those asked would like to spend their vacation in nature and only 20% would like to visit other cities. Sixty-five % are still going to book a hotel room, 35% will rent a private apartment or a room in a private house [7].

Many families plan to spend their holidays without leaving the country since Germany has many regions that are beloved by tourists around the world: the leading positions within the country have been held for many years by resorts on the coast of the North and Baltic Seas, Bavaria offers tourists holidays in the mountains and on the lakes, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern attracts tourists with the untouched nature of the Mecklenburg Lake plateau.

Germans love to spend their holidays in Europe. This is primarily since most of these countries are already well known to vacationers, entry to these countries is not associated with any difficulties and the infrastructure in them differs little from what German tourists are used to at home. Greece, both the mainland and the islands, promises to be the absolute favorite in 2021. German tourists are attracted to Greece by traditional Greek hospitality, sightseeing, reasonable prices, healthy Mediterranean cuisine, and beach holidays.

Like Russian tourists, Germans love All-Inclusive tours to distant countries. In the summer of 2021, tour operators offer to visit Vietnam and Canada first. Vacation in Vietnam attracts tourists with its tropical climate, exotic cuisine, visits to the cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the
picturesque Halong Bay, which is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, and, of course, beach holidays on Phu Quoc Island. In addition to Vietnam, exotic lovers are recommended to visit Albania, Montenegro, Slovenia, Oman, the Gambia, and the city of Fortaleza in Brazil. Traveling around Canada by car will allow tourists to admire the beautiful scenery of this country and visit many cities and feel their atmosphere [8].

4. Tourism trends 2021

According to surveys, Lisbon, Vienna, Valencia, and Moscow will become popular destinations for those German tourists who plan to enjoy the sights of individual cities in 2021. The most promising of the German cities was Frankfurt am Main. The top 10 trending goals for 2021 are as follows: Lisbon, Vietnam, Valencia, Canada, Montenegro, Albania, Slovenia, Gambia, Oman.

The main expected trends of the tourist season of 2021 are as follows: holiday safety, sustainable tourism, short-term booking, visiting previously unpopular countries and cities, road trips, camping, traveling alone. The pandemic and, as a result, the desire for maximum isolation and safety on vacation gave rise to a boom in caravanning in Germany, or as it is also called "yachting on wheels". The safe and budgeted way of organizing a holiday combines many advantages that German tourists immediately appreciated: the lack of direct contact with other vacationers, freedom to choose a place of rest, the availability of everything necessary. According to experts, not only new but also used campers, recreational vehicles and motorhomes have recently been in unprecedented demand among buyers [6].

Despite the obvious change in the preferences of consumers of the hospitality industry, hoteliers do not waste time in vain and introduce new technologies to improve and simplify the work of their enterprises in the coming season. The German hospitality industry, considering the specifics of the development of the industry in the context of the pandemic, is quickly adopting digital technologies that help optimize the work of enterprises in this industry. They allow significantly simplifying all types of communication between the hotel and guests, increasing brand awareness, and increasing sales of additional products and services. Automation of routine processes frees the hotel staff to solve issues that require personal contact with guests and perform tasks of a creative nature. Guest requests are constantly growing. The hotel and restaurant businesses shall keep up with the times to survive in the competition.
Considering the fact that digital technologies are rapidly developing and thus significantly expand the possible list of services provided, hoteliers have to keep their eyes on the ball all the time and closely monitor which services are most in-demand by guests. If not so long ago free Wi-Fi and the possibility of watching films in Pay-per-View mode were enough for a guest, today young travelers, whether they are tourists, vacationers, or businessmen, want to stream their content directly from any room in which they are at the moment, including from the hotel room. Generations of people for whom digitalization is commonplace since they were born and grew up after it had begun (the so-called digital natives "digital natives" or "digital natives") are focused on digital standards in all areas of life, not just at home. Those for whom new technologies have not yet become familiar, also strive to master the competencies necessary to feel comfortable in the modern world. Even older people are becoming more confident Internet users and are not afraid of new technologies. According to the latest data, 69% of people aged 60-69 and 36% of people over 70 are constantly using the Internet and are increasingly confident with new technologies. Guests do not want to give up the digital infrastructure that they are used to at home. Also, many expect pleasant innovative surprises during their stay at the hotel.

Market research shows (ITB Berlin, Travelzoo) that by 2030, guests expect smart hotel rooms that automatically adapt to the personal tastes and preferences of the guest. It is interesting to note, however, that in a digitalized world, guests from different generations have different digital needs. Thus, generation Y (millennials – people born between 1981 and 1998) and generation Z (those born after 1998) made up half of the population in Germany in 2020 and potentially half of the guests of the hospitality industry. They experienced the digital revolution at a young age and grew up in the digital age. Digitization and interactive technologies have long been commonplace for them. For this reason, they expect digital infrastructure everywhere. Generation X (those born between 1960 and 1980) was introduced to the Internet as an adult.

Despite this, people of this generation have mastered the necessary competencies and become confident users, they are willing to use new technologies because they consider the opportunities that digitalization provides as a means to optimally get the desired result. The statement that the elderly (silver surfer) fear new technologies has long been untrue. According to recent studies, the older generation shows a great interest in new technologies and a willingness to apply them in different areas of their lives. The older generation is learning new technologies to keep in touch with the younger family members and speak the same language with them. Digital technologies help older
people to monitor their health, and they are also willing to use digital security systems in the home. People of all ages keep themselves in good physical shape with the help of new technologies and gadgets. They are used to always being in touch. These people have been assigned the name "generation C" (always connected), they are associated with such concepts with the letter "C" as "creation", "curation", "connection", "community". Generation C is not an age group, but rather a group of people with the same life attitudes. They are active in social networks and are well-versed in new technologies.[2, 15].

Businessmen who make business trips rely on the fact that the hotel has a digital infrastructure that will allow them to work in the usual mode. The results of the FutureHotel Gastbefragung study show that hotel guests feel the need for a quiet area with a pleasant atmosphere, where there is a laptop desk and where one can work. It was also suggested that the room should be equipped with a workplace like an office [3]. A modern hotel is expected to be more flexible and ready for spontaneous guest decisions. This applies primarily to registration. Hotels shall pay great attention to digitization to be able to attract guests with a special digital infrastructure and the use of new technologies. Today Netflix Streaming is more important to guests than Pay-per-View. Paper guest folders are a thing of the past, replaced by digital guest folders with additional features. Digital technology allows guests to check in to the hotel themselves using a smartphone or tablet. The hotel's modern ways of communicating with its guests are very diverse. These include digital guest folders, hotel apps, modern hotel phones, smart TVs, chatbots, voice assistants, robots, and more. The possibilities of digitization in the hotel are very large, but in each case, one should calculate which technology is necessary for each particular hotel, and which is redundant. Before starting the digitization process, consultation with experts is required to develop an original strategy for the hotel, considering its main target group.

Today, it is impossible to imagine a hotel room without a guest folder. Of course, a multi-page printed version on glossy paper with beautiful city views and up-to-date information about the most important events of the current month is still in every room of a modern hotel, but the digital guest folder is interactive and versatile, it can easily be adapted to the needs and goals of each hotel. Although all guest folder-tablets look the same in all German hotels, their content reveals great differences and draws the attention of guests to the most strengths and features of a particular hotel. Digital guest folders are one of the most effective ways to promote additional services provided by the hotel to its guests. Guests can, in turn, evaluate the quality of the service and leave their feedback
there. The use of a digital guest folder improves the quality of digital communication, increases the number of sales by identifying the hidden needs of the guest and the ability to implement a more expensive product or service (Upselling), increases brand awareness, allows optimizing and automating many processes, as well as reducing costs. For example, the SuitePad tablet for a hotel room takes the digital communication of hoteliers with guests to a new level and completely replaces the traditional guest folder. In addition to general information about the hotel, the surrounding area, gastronomic offers, and entertainment menu, SuitePad also serves as a tool for booking spa treatments or restaurant reservations and combines the remote control of the TV and the hotel phone in one device.

During Upselling and Crosselling, the hotel offers the guest to buy a higher-quality product or additional service. Therewith, the hotel staff should be trained to convince guests of the advantages of the offer: increased comfort, a large benefit, or a small difference in price. Usually, guests of the hotel are offered to buy flowers, sweets, tickets to the theater or various events, spa treatments, etc.

These sales are handled by the hotel's marketing department and the front desk staff. The receptionist, often based on his/her intuition, offers the guest a product or service at the right time. An experienced and motivated employee knows who, when and what to offer. This work brings the hotel a certain income, but staff turnover and frequent changes of employees, in particular at the reception, negatively affect sales figures. The digital guest folder-tablet in the hotel room with bright photos and catchy texts about the benefits of a product or service is designed to attract the attention of guests at any time of the day, it is a link between the guest and the reception. It would be a big mistake to assume that the digital guest folder is only used by the younger generation. The results of the Heilbronn University study show that 75% of generations 50+ are happy to note the presence of a guest folder-tablet in their room and readily draw information from it about the various services provided by the hotel. The management of the room using such a tablet is still not popular, it is still used by no more than 2% of guests. However, the digital guest folder provides guests with incredible interactive features, and practice shows that it is used for an average of 86 hours per month.

The introduction of digital technologies helps to automate routine processes and optimize the work of Front Office employees. Lobby robots answer typical questions of guests and allow employees to pay more attention to solving more important tasks. Automation with the help of new technologies goes far beyond hotel applications or chatbots in the hospitality industry. Chatbots are sometimes called the most innovative "hotel employees". New technologies have made it possible to
move from a recently transactional one to an interactive service. Digital check-in and check-out, self-service kiosks in the lobby, the possibility of constant communication with hotel staff using hotel applications are no longer a rarity and are taken for granted by guests.

Despite the difficult situation in the industry, the German tourism industry hopes for a significant improvement in the situation in 2021. A cautious hope is expressed that in the new year it will be possible to reach 50-70% of the level of pre-crisis sales of 2019. According to Norbert Fiebig, chairman of the German Travel Association (DRV), people want to travel again: "Businesses in the tourism industry note increased consumer demand for their offerings." Approximately half of the tourism enterprises hope that the tourism industry will work in the same mode in the summer, and this is despite the fact that 90% of the tourism industry enterprises are barely making ends meet at the moment, are, in fact, on the verge of ruin and are completely dependent on state assistance [5]

The cruise industry has had a harder time than hoteliers in the 2020 season. Almost all shipping companies suspended their operations in March 2020 after high-profile stories of infecting tourists on cruise liners in Yokohama, Miami, and San Francisco. Aida, Costa, Carnival Cruise Lines – until the end of July, MCS, and Cunard – until October. If in 2019, 30 million passengers rested on cruise liners, and companies had to fight for free berths in ports, then in 2020, 400 giant ocean liners turned out to be useless even in high season. The companies that organize river cruises in the Schengen area were more fortunate, which, provided they comply with all hygienic conditions, were not prohibited. For the summer of 2020, the concept of "Blue Cruises" was developed, namely 3-4-day cruises on the Northern or Baltic Seas without calling at foreign ports, for example: from Hamburg to Hamburg. The shipping companies managed to reduce losses to some extent since passengers whose cruises did not take place due to the pandemic did not demand a refund but agreed to postpone their trip to the next year in the hope that by that time a reliable vaccine against covid-19 would be created or a solution would be found to minimize the possibility of infection on the liner or avoid it altogether [8, 12].

The resumption of safe flights along tourist-favorite routes is critical to rebooting the tourism industry, especially towards the warm southern seas and resorts. After all, if passenger aircraft cabins remain potential hotbeds of a terrible virus, all attempts to breathe new life into the tourism industry will be in vain. Flight safety disputes between experts have been ongoing and in various forms for several months now. Airline officials point out that HEPA-Filters installed in aircraft, high-efficiency particulate absorption filters, capture 99.97% of all hazardous particles in the passenger compartment.
Every three minutes, the air in the cabin is completely cleaned and its cleanliness can be compared to the cleanliness of the air in a hospital operating room. Also, the air flows are directed from the ceiling to the floor, which according to experts should also prevent the spread of viruses throughout the flight. Therewith, the level of danger is still significant, because while the plane is on the ground and passengers are boarding and disembarking, the filtration system is not working at full capacity and the probability of spreading the virus in the crowd is quite high. Although cases of infection of passengers from each other are still unproven, there is still some wariness in German society concerning the services of air carriers. Moreover, several cases of infection of passengers were recorded as a result of direct contact with crew members [6, 14].

At the beginning of the new year 2021, we are all wondering what the world will be like after overcoming the crisis caused by the pandemic. Will we remember the pandemic only for its disastrous consequences or for the new opportunities that we could have used before, but neglected them for various reasons for the time being? The coronavirus has changed our lives at an incredible rate. All the global problems that have faced humanity for more than a decade have faded into the background. Even global warming and climate change are not talked about as much as before, although this is a real threat to all life on earth. The world economy is experiencing lockdown after lockdown, freedom of movement is restricted in many countries by 15 kilometers from home, the celebration of New Year and Christmas was marked in Europe and the United States by unprecedented restrictions.

In other words, 2021 should be a turning point in economic development and public life. The crisis has had a huge impact on all aspects of our lives: politics, economy, culture, communication, education, and new technologies. A revaluation of many values took place in the shortest possible time. In particular, serious problems caused by globalization were exposed, for example, the production of protective masks and medicines was moved to Asian countries for reasons of economy, which led to a shortage of both for consumers in Europe at the beginning of the pandemic. There are some questionable solutions designed to improve production efficiency, when, for example, potatoes grown in Germany are first transported by truck to Holland to be peeled there, and then back to Bavaria to cook and fry, and already from this federal-state they are delivered to retail chains throughout Germany. The assembly lines of large automotive companies in the country have been stopped, as it is not possible to supply the necessary components for the production of cars from enterprises located in different regions of Europe and Asia. Therewith, there is no need to fly to
business meetings around the world, video conferences and video calls have become the realities of business life in 2019. The pandemic has demonstrated that working in the Home Office can be just as productive as working in the office. Remote work and distance learning allow using time more efficiently, although they require more self-organization and concentration on completing a specific task. More and more purchases are made online and paid for with a credit card or phone. The crisis showed that in particular in Germany, not enough attention was paid to the development of cellular and fiber-optic networks. There was no understanding that the development of the Internet and digital technologies are necessary for the development of the country to the same extent that in the past it was necessary to build roads, train stations, airports, and other infrastructure.

It should be noted that digitalization can and should become a kind of tool for creating maximum sustainability for all members of society. Various apps and platforms will help to share things, rather than acquire them for personal use. [2, 9] Many people in Germany have appreciated the benefits of car sharing compared to buying and maintaining their car. Cities will become smart shortly with the help of artificial intelligence. They will consume significantly less electricity and reduce harmful emissions into the atmosphere by 70-90%. QR codes in mobile phones will replace railway and airline tickets on paper, which will save paper, electricity, printer supplies, etc. The ability to conduct business meetings, seminars, conferences, and other events in a video format makes it pointless to travel to meet with partners and colleagues. The crisis caused by a new deadly virus is forcing people around the world to change their habits, which can significantly reduce the consumption of electricity and various types of raw materials and thereby reduce the impact of anthropogenic factors on the ecosystem of our planet. The pandemic forces people to develop and implement digital technologies faster, contributes to the acceleration of technological progress, thereby helping to slow down climate change, slow down the destruction of the environment, and cope with the lack of resources. [3, 10, 12].

5. Conclusion

The pandemic that broke out at the end of 2019 pushed the problem of climate change into the background and posed several questions to the world community, to which there are no clear answers yet. Such signs of the time as remote work, distance learning, the rapid development of digital technologies, globalization, the introduction of partial or full lockdown in some countries, and many others will still be evaluated. But it is equally important what lessons will be learned, how the
negative impacts caused by the pandemic will be overcome, and how the opportunities presented by the hospitality industry and other sectors of the economy will be used.

References


