



Article

# Post-Pandemic Recovery and Strategic Development of Italy's Tourism Industry

Bekmurodova F. A (PhD)<sup>1</sup>, Abduhamidova A. D<sup>2</sup>, Sharipov I. O<sup>3</sup>, Xurramova N. B<sup>4</sup>, Vahobov I. I<sup>5</sup>, Abdullayev S. Sh<sup>6\*</sup>

1. University of world economy and diplomacy (UWED) Tashkent, Uzbekistan

2. Student of UWED, faculty of EIR

3. Student of UWED, faculty of EIR

4. Student of UWED, faculty of EIR

5. Student of UWED, faculty of EIR

6. Student of UWED, faculty of EIR

\*Correspondence: [bekmurodovaf@gmail.com](mailto:bekmurodovaf@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** Europe has been the all-time tourism destination through centuries, with the exquisite tourism opportunities of the countries located here. Italy being one of them, it is considered as the main tourism driver of the region with its from geographical to man made tourism opportunities. Italy has unique tourism power, which can not be easily repeated by other countries. Even though, tourism makes up a sizable portion of Italy's GDP, it also causes overcrowding, environmental damage, and increased living expenses for locals. Due to this reason, this article will explore the importance of tourism in Italy. It further analyses the impacts that tourism has on the environment, economy, and cultural heritage. The study explores the impacts of mass tourism on historic sites, host communities, and other infrastructural facilities. Additionally, it discusses the role of government policies and sustainable tourism strategies in mitigating these challenges.

**Keywords:** Italy, Tourism industry, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Pandemic Covid-19, over tourism, crime rate, economy, ecotourism, SWOT tourism.

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## 1. Introduction

Italy is considered the most visited country for overnight stays among other European countries, with 64.5 million travelers in 2019. Italy attracts a great quantity of tourists with its picturesque landscape, cultural heritage, and home of fashion and art, which whip up every person, then summon them to come again. Furthermore, with its contribution to the country's GDP and employment rate, tourism is a momentous part of the economy, also. During the Pandemic of 2019, however, the country's tourism as well as economy witnessed a huge unexpected failure, and nowadays there are some other problems in the field of tourism, such as over-tourism, ecotourism, and others [1]. With having growth in the crime rate, ecological and geographical impacts, and infrastructure of the country – tourism industry inherent involvement of Italy – the government should pay attention to this field of development. This article will scrutinize every aspect of the tourism economy and industry, look through those obstacles, and give some solutions [2], [3].

### Research data and methods

Given information and all statistics in the article were taken from World Bank, Statista - statistic database, and other articles that connected to the sphere of Italy's tourism

economy. Additionally, this article was written based on numerous research, observation and analysis, comparisons of those statistics and other articles.

### **Literature review**

There is ongoing debate about tourism problems and its contribution to Italy. The effects of tourism have been recognized globally as a catalyst for environment and authentic culture, and crime mitigation. Samina confirms that total crime and property-related crime (fraud, larceny, and robbery) are strongly and positively linked to tourism, while crime against persons (assault, murder, rape, abduction, and kidnapping) is only marginally linked to it [4], [5], [6].

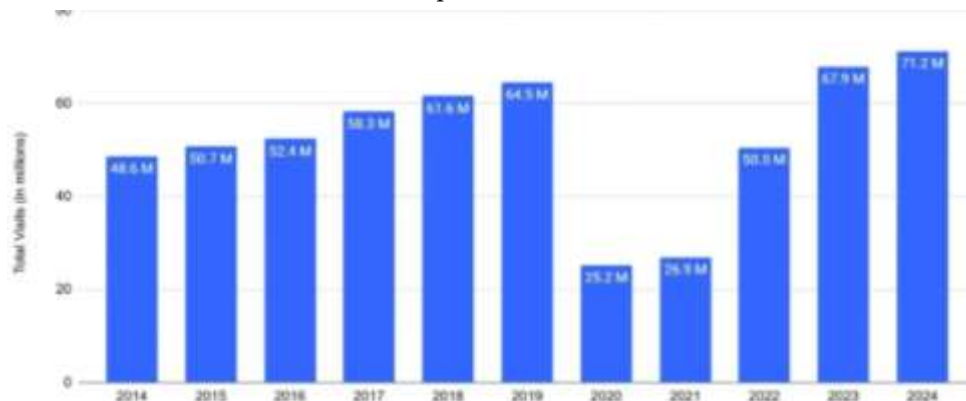
Italy a connection between tourism and crime does not tell us whether the victims are tourists or residents; it merely indicates the presence of a link between tourism and crime as a potential source of negative externalities [7], [8]. Tourism means to threaten on natural resources, environmental pollution, physical environment and tourist activities in the national park. Ugur Sunlu concludes in his research it involves many activities that can have adverse environmental effects. Many of these impacts are linked with the construction of general infrastructure such as roads and airports, and of tourism facilities, including resorts, hotels, restaurants, shops, golf courses and marinas. The negative impacts of tourism development can gradually destroy environmental resources on which it depends. [9]. Tourism is recognized as an agent of social and cultural change. 'Most anthropological studies of tourism provide evidence of the destruction of traditional ways of life, rituals, habits, kinship patterns, and forms of employment in the host society. Yet if anthropologists are not to engage simply in salvage ethnography, that is, the reconstruction of a culture in its pure, primitive, pre-contact state, analysts must deal with the dynamics of cultural change accelerated by tourism' [10], [11]. However, some useful models exist to balance between the relative sophistication of theory and models for the various sectors and interests of tourism. Jafari [12].

## **2. Materials and Methods**

Tourism stays as a backbone of the Italy's economy, by hiring huge number of people, having positive effects to the country's gross domestic product, infrastructure and overall development. Observations and data analysis show that during the pandemic, covid-19, the tourism industry experienced some failures in each of its fields. Including unemployment, depletion of revenue that comes from tourist spending, and bankruptcy in the sphere of airlines, also. Furthermore, there are some obstacles that Italy's tourism industry suffers from and should be tackled as possible. The first one is over tourism. Over tourism is posing growth in the cost of living of Italy's nation; also, most of their work is based on only waitressing. They are unhappy from this occasion. Additionally, tourists' perceptions of Italy are negatively impacted by small crimes committed against them in major cities.

### 3. Results and Discussion

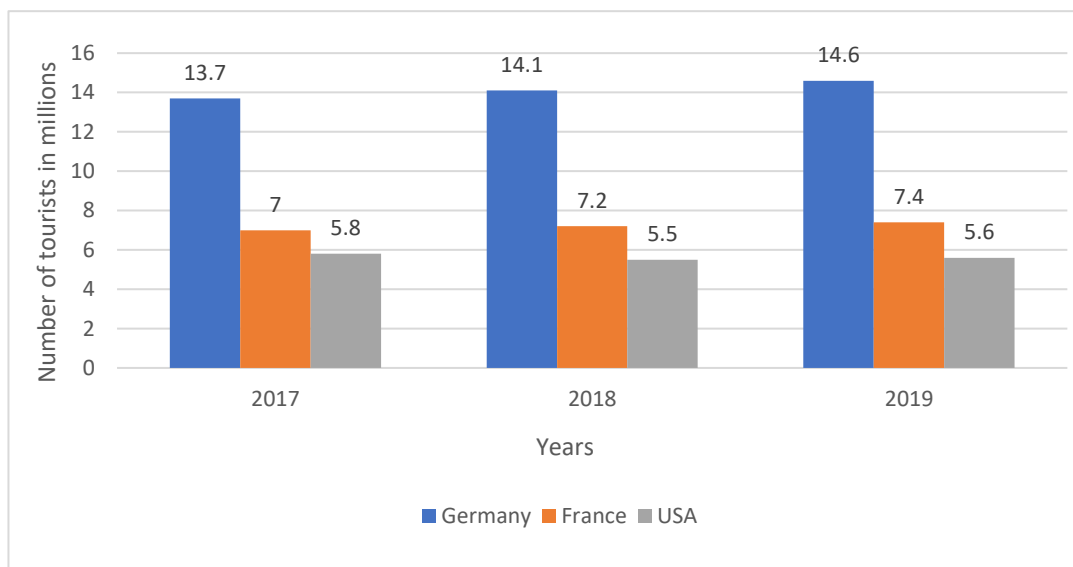
Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Italy was one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Every year, millions of tourists from different parts of the world visited Italy's historic cities such as Rome, Florence, Naples, Milan, Venice, and others.



**Figure 1.** Number of Visitors to Italy from 2014 to 2024

Before global pandemic the amount of visitors to Italy was immense, with main trips to Rome, Florence, and Naples, as these cities represent the country's rich historical and cultural heritage. For winter sports enthusiasts or professionals, the Dolomite Alps are Italy's best destination. This region specializes in skiing and extreme sports, with one of its most famous locations being Cortina d'Ampezzo, which hosted the Olympic Games [13], [14], [15].

Main visitors to Italy are from its neighboring countries like Germany, France. American are also interested to the country. Until 2019, Germany was the leading country in terms of visitors to Italy, with 12–14 million German tourists annually (figure 2). Germany was Italy's number one tourism market. The second-largest group of tourists came from France, with 5–7 million visitors per year. After the French, the third-largest group of visitors to Italy were Americans, with 5–6 million tourists per year. Their main purpose from the trip to the country to enjoy gastronomic tourism, staying at luxury hotels.



**Figure 2.** Top Nationalities Visiting Italy from 2017 to 2019

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism accounted for 13% of Italy's GDP, and over 4 million people were employed in the tourism sector. The entry of Covid-19 into the country, however, caused some problems and economic slumps in the field of tourism. On the one hand, the number of tourists decreased significantly. As a result of this phenomenon, the contribution of tourism to the country's GDP also declined. It influenced, especially the unemployment rate in the sphere of tourism. During the period of the

pandemic, most countries utilized the lockdown strategy in order to avoid the pervasive spread of Covid-19, including Italy, also. In the sense of this, tourists' flow decreased significantly, and lots of tour agencies, hotels, and businesses that are connected to the sphere of tourism suffered from lack of revenue, and then most of them folded [16], [17].

During pandemic, as all countries closed cross border activities, Italy's tourism sector faced severe decline. The government planned recovery strategies to bring back the tourism flow as soon as possible. The strict cross-border health checkups, strong advertisement, renovated tourism places made the tourism recovery happen in the country in 2024. The interesting thing is that, after pandemic the purpose of travel changed, making people not only visit for see, but also experience culture firsthand. Tourists were interested in more than just sightseeing; many took part in activities like cooking classes, wine tastings, and unique travel experiences. In response, the "Italy with a Twist" tours launched in 2024 and became very popular, with 82% of travelers choosing at least one of these experiences.

#### Problems of tourism in Italy

Though tourism is an important sector of Italy's economy and cultural interaction, it also carries a group of issues confronting the local population, historical landmarks, and the environment. With millions of visitors traveling to Italy each year, the country has encountered various socioeconomic and environmental challenges [18].

**Overcrowding** is a major issue in Italy's most famous cities. Venice, Florence and Rome attract more visitors than their infrastructure can cope with, leading to overcrowded public transport, long queues outside major attractions and clogged up streets. But this comes at a great cost to tourists' experience, as well as locals' daily lives. They have shops and public spaces that are geared towards tourists rather than citizens and hence, residents are unable to utilize these services at the most basic level. There are also protests against mass tourism in certain locations where residents request a greater regulatory control over tourists [19], [20], [21].

By receiving 20 million people annually, Venice, is a well-known example of a city facing overtourism. Visitors commonly visit famous attractions creating traffic, and making it difficult for nationals to commute, intensifying the issue. However, the consequences of overtourism extend far beyond seasonal congestion. From the residents' point of view, tourism has produced a series of problems, including irresponsible behavior, such as canal swimming and littering, and environmental degradation from big cruise ships discharging pollutants. As a result, many residents decided move away, and this has caused a remarkable reduction in population—from **120,000 three decades ago** to just **55,000 today**. If the trend persists, it is projected that Venice will be entirely emptied of its inhabitants by 2030 [22], [23].

The overwhelming focus on tourism has made it increasingly challenging for Venetians to live their regular lives in their "homes". **Marco Gasparinetti**, an environmental lawyer and spokesperson for **Venice's largest activist group, Gruppo 25 Aprile**, emphasizes the need for a balance between tourism and local sustainability: *"For Venice to be enjoyed by tourists, the city also needs to exist as a place for everyday life. We need to create conditions for people to stay"*. However, the lack of diverse job opportunities discourages young graduates from remaining in the city, as Gasparinetti points out: *"There are no jobs for young graduates, unless you want to waitress or work selling tourist stuff at a kiosk."* Additionally, the **poor administration** of accommodations associated with tourism has received criticism. Another significant issue caused by tourism in Italy is the **rise in petty crimes**. Petty crimes like pick-pocketing, parked car theft, and handbag snatching occur in huge crowds, particularly in large cities. Tourists, often unfamiliar with the surroundings, are common targets for theft [24].

A significant negative consequence of tourism in Italy is the **gradual erosion** of its authentic culture. Over time, tourism in Italy has greatly harmed the original culture of the country. As tourism-based businesses replace local shops and homes are turned into short-term rental properties, the natural order of life there is at risk. In cities like Venice and Florence, the rush of visitors has resulted in the commercialisation of once-authentic cultural experiences, transforming historic districts into tourist attractions rather than

vibrant local communities This does not only worsens citizens' everyday experience, it changes the very heart of cities.

The **ecological effects of tourism cannot be ignored as well**, as they pose serious threats to Italy's natural and historical landscapes. For example, transportation and accommodation made in hotels require large amounts of energy and lead to grow in **CO2 emissions** [25]. The rise in tourist numbers leads to greater **waste generation**, including food scraps, plastic bottles, and packaging materials. Ecological footprint is significantly increasing in eco-tourism areas, harming flora and fauna.

#### 4. Conclusion

To conclude, everything has beneficial sides, but its problematic aspects can also be noticeable, as in Italy's tourism industry. While it brings to the country a high amount of income and revenue, more people coming here are emerging as controversial misfortunes to the ecology and citizens of Italy. In order to defend this occasion, the government is implementing some fees for entering attractive cities of the country and paying more attention to the southern destinations. Furthermore after facing economic challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic (from 2020 to 2022), the country has rehabilitated its previous degree.

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