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Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism is an open access, peer-reviewed interdisciplinary research journal, aimed to publish articles and original research papers that contribute to the development of both experimental and theoretical nature in the field of Environmental Management and Tourism Sciences. The Journal publishes original research and seeks to cover a wide range of topics regarding environmental management and engineering, environmental management and health, environmental chemistry, environmental protection technologies (water, air, soil), pollution reduction at source and waste minimization, energy and environment, modelling, simulation and optimization for environmental protection; environmental biotechnology, environmental education and sustainable development, environmental strategies and policies.

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This issue has a special importance for us, marking a new stage in the history of this journal. So, starting with Issue 5(69), Fall 2023 **Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism** will be published in Open Access system. Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism' articles are published under the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License BB CY](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original authors and the source are credited.

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Travels and Sustainable Tourism in Italy. Selected Dilemmas

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Abstract: The scientific article regards travels and sustainable tourism in Italy in terms of employment, spending, and GDP. The principal purpose of the article is the analysis of travels and sustainable tourism in Italy in terms of employment, spending, and GDP. The paper carried out the documentation analysis, but also very important was the application of the statistical, dynamics, and comparative analysis. The time scope of the study is 2019-2021. Italy's economic recovery will be greatly aided by the travels and sustainable tourism, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). In 2020, the sector was just 0.3% below its pre-pandemic levels. The sector's contribution to GDP in 2019 exceeded €194 billion, according to the World Trade and Technology Council's (WTTC) latest Economic Impact Report (EIR). However, employment in the industry may return to levels seen before the epidemic. Further, the Travel & Tourism industry in Italy is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 2.5 percent over the next ten years, which is five times the growth rate of 0.5 percent of the country's entire economy. In the meanwhile, it's expected to surpass €226 billion by 2032.

Keywords: sustainable tourism; employment; spending; tourist; GDP; Italy.

JEL Classification: L83; R41; Q01; Q56; Z32; R11.

Introduction

Italy's Mediterranean location and its over 7,600 kilometers of coastline bring in tens of millions of tourists annually. Northern Europeans in particular are attracted to Italy's mild weather and picturesque landscapes. The history, culture, and architecture of Italy are well-known all over the globe. Many of the countries over a hundred thousand historical monuments date back to the days of the ancient Roman Empire. More than any other nation, the United States has more than 50 locations designated as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. Historic districts of Rome, Venice, and Florence are like vast outdoor galleries. Architects from antiquity to the Renaissance left their namesakes in stone in many places around the globe (Mrozek 2022b).

Italy is home to many great painters throughout history, including Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci. Small villages in Tuscany's wine country, for example, have a certain charm that draws tourists even when they're not interested in the region's famed art and culture. Sunbathers may choose from a wide choice of activities on the Mediterranean's long stretches of sandy beaches throughout the summer. In the hottest parts of the summer, temperatures may go beyond 30 degrees. It's warmer than much of Europe, even in the winter. Skiing is a popular winter activity for visitors since the country's northern region is bordered by the Alps. Tourists may do downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, or snowboarding at any one of the 290 ski resorts. Winter activities, however, can't keep up with the influx of tourists from April through November. The most visited cities in Italy include Rome, home to the Vatican and countless ancient buildings from almost 3000 years of art history and architecture; Venice, home to the lagoon and famous for its canals and gondola rides; Florence, capital of Tuscany and known for its Renaissance art and architecture; Pisa, home to the Leaning Tower of Pisa and a renowned cathedral; and Milan, located in the north and known as a hub for fashion and design (Italian Traditions 2023, Luiss Open 2023).

The Gothic Milan Cathedral and Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" fresco are both located in the same monastery, Santa Maria delle Grazie. When comparing 2018's numbers to those for 2021, the Italian tourist industry comes close to pre-pandemic levels in both air traffic and the tourism sector. In 2022, the Italian tourism industry as a whole nearly recovered to its pre-pandemic levels, with the number of international visitors almost doubling from the previous year. This revival was felt across the board, from tour operators to hotel chains, but the sectors that saw the biggest uptick in demand were those directly related to transportation, such as travel agencies and airlines. While many European nations have suffered significant losses due to the present scenario brought on by the spread of the coronavirus and its novel variations and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Italy is among those who have suffered just minimal losses, according to the research.

The industry group has identified transportation as a key component of the tourist sector and airports as a crucial aspect of the travel experience, while also emphasizing that they are among the primary difficulties for a connected and speedy future. Preventive measures, such as travel bans and other restrictions, intended to control the spread of the coronavirus and its novel forms, have had a substantial impact on Italy's tourist industry, resulting in huge losses throughout the country's economic sectors.

Although the tourist industry was among those hit worst by the outbreak of coronavirus and its novel forms, Italy was one of the last European nations to lift all such restrictions. Despite major progress in Italy's tourist industry last year, the country still faces formidable obstacles. ISTAT, Italy's national statistical institute, reports that between January and August of last year, the country saw a total of 74.1% more overnight stays than it did in all of 2021. The inhabitants of Germany, Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, and Denmark were said to have made up 75% of all overseas tourists to Italy last year (Future market insights 2023, OECDa 2023).

1. Research Questions and Methodology

The paper regards travels and sustainable tourism in Italy. The principal purpose of the article is the analysis of travels and sustainable tourism in Italy in terms of employment, spending, and gross domestic product.

The author depicts the subsequent exploration dilemmas:

- What is the heterogeneity of travels and sustainable tourism in Italy in terms of employment, spending, and GDP?
- Which of the research aspects of travels and sustainable tourism in Italy showed the most important changes?

The theory section of the paper has presented the tourism industry and sustainable tourism in Italy. Documentation, statistical, comparison, and dynamic analysis are used in the research. Reports, datasets, books, manuals, academic and commercial publications, and scholarly articles were used to compile the information for this study. The method of reasoning was logical.

2. Theoretical Analysis

2.1. Tourism Industry in Italy

After almost two years of inactivity owing to the COVID-19 epidemic, Italy's tourism industry has rebounded in recent months, seeing favorable results. Also, the tourism industry in France, like many other countries, has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The recovery of the tourism industry in France is subject to ongoing monitoring and adaptation to changing conditions related to the pandemic and global travel trends (Mrozek 2022a).

However, Italians and businesses still face several long-term challenges. There was a 74.7 percent increase in the number of overnight stays recorded in Italian accommodation places between January and August of 2022, as reported by ISTAT, the Italian agency for statistics, at the first national conference for the sector. Travelers from all over the world, particularly those seeking a relaxing vacation, flock to the country. Travelers interested in spas and other wellness activities have made Italy a top destination for their vacations. In addition, Rome is a popular tourist destination. In 2022, 10.5 million tourists stayed in Italian campgrounds and tourist villages, an increase of 11% over the previous year. This equated to 73 million nights, 57% of which were occupied by visitors from outside of Italy.

The majority of visitors (75%), who came from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Denmark, stayed for seven nights on average, up from 6.8 days in the previous year. More than 40 million international tourists visited Italy every year around the turn of the 21st century, attesting to the country's fame as a prime vacation spot. On the other hand, only around 20% of Americans go overseas for their vacation. Italy's tourism business fell from 1987 on, especially during the Persian Gulf War and the global recession, but it recovered in the 1990s, with increases in both international and domestic visitors. Millions of people visited Rome

and the Vatican City enclave in 2000 for the Jubilee festivities organized by the Roman Catholic Church to welcome the new century. As a result of Pope Francis's proclamation of 2016 as an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, the number of visitors to the Vatican has increased.

The tourism sector has grown rapidly thanks to the support of both domestic and foreign customers. Beyond the major cities of Rome, Florence, Venice, and Naples, the most visited areas are those along the coast or in the mountains and lakes of the north. These include the Ligurian and Amalfi rivieras, the northern Adriatic coast, the Tyrrhenian Islands (Elba, Capri, and Ischia), the Emerald Coast of Sardinia, Sicily, Gran Paradiso National Park and the Dolomites, and Abruzzo National Park (OECD 2023, Reportlinker 2023, The Global Economy 2023).

2.2. Sustainable Tourism in Italy

According to the UNWTO (World Tourism Organization), 2017 was the year of sustainable tourism. Since then, there has been a steady rise in the general public's understanding of the idea, building on a trend that is making inroads in terms of the expectations and behavior of both travelers and industry professionals. Sustainable tourism is described as tourism that meets the demands of consumers, the industry, the environment, and host communities while also minimizing negative impacts on the environment, society, and the economy. A comprehensive idea that incorporates every facet of travel and every party involved.

A responsible and eco-friendly vacation combines environmental consciousness with cultural exploration by carefully planning one's mode of transportation, lodging, diet, and activities to minimize negative impacts on the local ecosystem (Zlopaša and Solarević 2019). The sustainable tourism market in Italy is expanding both in terms of customers and businesses. Italy places a premium on environmental conservation and the preservation of its cultural legacy, two of the country's incontestable strengths. In a nutshell, eco-friendly vacations benefit not just the environment but also the businesses and communities directly linked to the sector. What started as a social phenomenon is now an opportunity for the local economy and the benefit of all residents. Fotis, and Korre (2023) integrate sustainability principles into tourism practices as essential condition for ensuring long-term competitiveness while safeguarding the environment and the well-being of host communities.

Sustainable vacations provide visitors with a wide range of advantages, including the pleasure of knowing that they have not contributed to environmental degradation. Among them are: the opportunity to combine experiences, the health benefits of exercise, the savings from reduced spending and consumption, the conservation of local resources, the preservation of cultural artifacts, and the spread of a positive, contagious vibe are just a few of the many benefits of multi-activity vacations. If you look at the sustainable tourism map, you'll see that Italy provides a wide variety of activities and attractions (FS Italiane Group 2023, Schengen visa(B) 2023, World Data 2023).

For instance, the alberghi diffuse (scattered hotels) provide lodging and meals in refurbished buildings spread throughout Italy's historic villages, such as those on the hills of Liguria's Western Riviera or in Sardinia's Barbagia mountain area, thereby avoiding new construction and the resulting increase in land consumption. In some instances, structures that were formerly used for one purpose have been repurposed for another. The former Porto Tolle thermal power station, for example, will be transformed into an innovative and sustainable open-air tourist center, offering water sports facilities, experiences to enable visitors to appreciate the surrounding environment and landscape, and a facility for developing the local fishing and agriculture industries, among other things, with a capacity to accommodate 40 guests (Branchini 2015).

The Italian Association for Responsible Tourism (AITR) has released a map of sustainable travel destinations in Italy. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) manages some nature reserves, hotels, and campgrounds that have received environmental certification from Legambiente, and the Institute for Ethical and Environmental Certification (ICEA) has certified several organic agritourism facilities. Consideration of social and ethical issues, as well as the quality of the food offered, are further tenets of sustainable tourism. Use of zero-mile food goods, for instance, or "pizzo-free" tourist trips in the Valle del Sosio, Palermo Province, to combat the Mafia's control over the local economy via the extortion of 'pizzo' protection money, are two examples. To further reduce their environmental impact, eco-friendly tourists choose to travel by foot, bicycle, or electric car. Hikers and walkers in the Alps and Apennines have long adhered to the notion of "zero emission travel", a view shared by those who prefer to traverse ancient pilgrimage routes like the Via Francigena. However, electric bikes allow visitors who are interested in cycling to experience excursions without exerting themselves too much, such as on the island of Elba or among the historic sites of Recanati, the birthplace of poet Giacomo Leopardi. An electric automobile is an option if you need to transport more than two people (Betta *et al.* 2021). To encourage the use of electric vehicles in Italy's most popular tourist destinations, the Enel Group and the country's Ministry of Cultural Heritage

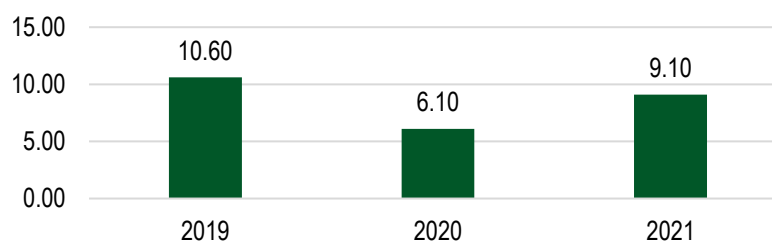
and Tourism struck an agreement in February 2018 (Foreign Policy 2023, The World Bank 2023, Trading economics 2023).

3. Quantitative Analysis

3.1. Analysis and Results of the Research

The research is carried out within the structure, statistical, comparative, dynamics, and documentation analysis. The time scope of the study is 2019-2021, but some issues that were broadened. The results of the carried-out research present significant modifications between the research variables in the given analyzed areas. The analysis was carried out within such issues as the share of travel and tourism's total contribution to GDP in Italy from 2019 to 2021 (in %); total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in Italy from 2019 to 2021 (in billion euros); distribution of travel and tourism spending in Italy in 2019 and 2021, by type of tourist (in %); distribution of travel and tourism spending in Italy in 2019 and 2021, by type (in %); total contribution of travel and tourism to employment in Italy from 2019 to 2021 (in million jobs).

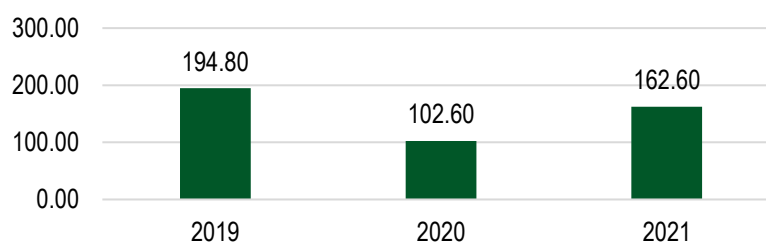
Figure 1. Share of travel and tourism's total contribution to GDP in Italy from 2019 to 2021 (in %).



Source: Schengen Visa (A, B) 2023.

After a significant decline in 2020 owing to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Italy's travel and tourism sector's contribution to GDP rose in 2021 compared to the previous year. Direct and indirect contributions to Italy's GDP from the tourist industry reached 9.1 percent in 2021, up from 6.1 percent in 2020 but still below pre-pandemic levels (Figure 1). As a whole, tourism in Italy added over 163 billion euros to the country's GDP that year. As with other countries hit hard by the epidemic, Italy saw a significant drop in travel and tourism's overall contribution to employment in 2020, only to see it largely rebound the following year. In the most recent year available, the tourist industry in Italy supported 2.64 million employments. With governments enacting stay-at-home regulations to address the health disaster, the COVID-19 pandemic completely flipped the travel and tourist business in Italy. The amount of money foreign visitors spent in Italy in March 2020 was much lower than in the same month the previous year. While things looked brighter in 2021, monthly spending by visitors still fell short of pre-pandemic highs. However, in 2021, domestic tourist spending in Italy rose again, exceeding 2019's numbers by a little margin (Italy tourism market 2023, Financial Times 2023).

Figure 2. Total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in Italy from 2019 to 2021 (in billion euros)

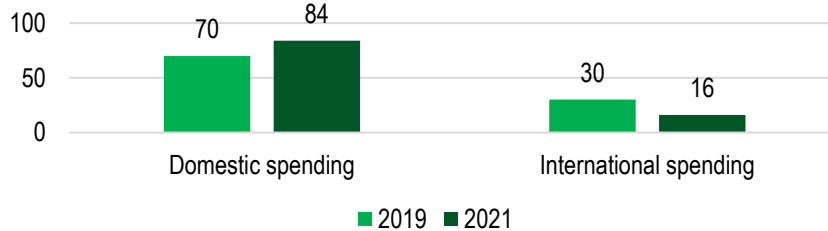


Source: Knoema 2023

After a precipitous decline in 2020 due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, travel and tourism's overall contribution to Italy's GDP increased by roughly 60 billion euros in 2021 over the previous year. Direct and indirect spending related to tourism in the nation was 162.6 billion euros in 2021 (Figure 2.). Although this number increased significantly each year, it was still lower than it had been before the epidemic. As a whole, tourism accounted for almost nine percent of Italy's GDP that year (2021). While spending by domestic tourists in Italy recovered strongly in 2021 after a dip caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, that of international visitors was slower to recover. In particular, in 2021, Italians spent 107 billion euros on domestic tourism, a rise of 76% from the 96

billion euros recorded in 2019. Italy's overseas tourist receipts, on the other hand, grew by 3.5 billion euros compared to the previous year but still fell short of the levels seen before the global health crisis. As for domestic tourism in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has increased in popularity since the outbreak began. In terms of where Italians traveled in 2021, almost nine out of 10 excursions were conducted inside Italy. In the meanwhile, 44% of Italians planning a trip in the next six months said they would stay inside the country (International and Italian tourism scenario 2023, Knoema 2023, World Travel & Tourism Council (A-D) 2023).

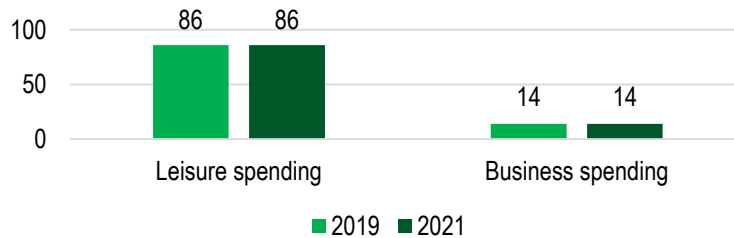
Figure 3. Distribution of travel and tourism spending in Italy in 2019 and 2021, by type of tourist (in %)



Source: World Travel & Tourism Council (A-D) 2023

Travel restrictions and high levels of uncertainty during the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic led many visitors to stay inside their nations rather than go abroad. Domestic tourists accounted for the bulk of Italy's tourism revenue in 2021. In that year, domestic tourists accounted for 84% of all expenditures, a rise of 14% over the next year (Figure 3.) (CNN 2023, The World Tourism Organization 2023).

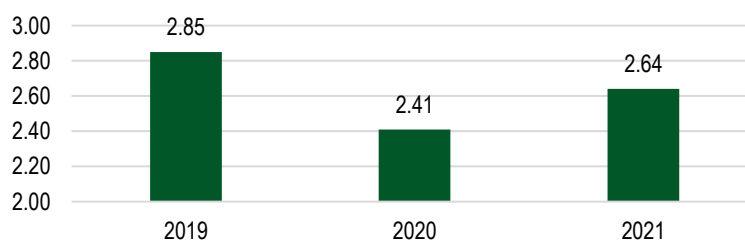
Figure 4. Distribution of travel and tourism spending in Italy in 2019 and 2021, by type (in %).



Source: Visas Association 2023

The majority of money spent on tourism in Italy in 2021 was on vacations. In that year, as in 2019, leisure travel accounted for 86% of all tourist expenditures in the nation (Figure 4.). Spending by international visitors to Italy increased by a constant 6.2% in 2019, with visitors from the rest of Europe and North America continuing to be the primary contributors. The amount spent overseas by Italian tourists also increased, by 6.3%. The result was a rise in the surplus from tourism to 1% of GDP in 2019 from 0.9% in 2018, albeit small, this is the continuation of a trend that began at the turn of the decade. While foreign tourism as a whole increased dramatically, Italy's share of the market remained stable. Global tourist earnings increased by 7.4 percent to €1,322 billion in 2019. Both the United Kingdom and Italy continue to share the fifth spot in global tourist revenue (CEIC 2023, International Trade Administration US Department of Commerce 2023).

Figure 5. Total contribution of travel and tourism to employment in Italy from 2019 to 2021 (in million jobs)



Source: OECD (a-b) 2023.

About 2.64 million people had employment that year because of tourism in Italy. Even while this number is 9.5% higher than it was in the first year of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, it is still lower than it was before the outbreak (Figure 5). The prediction also shows that during the next decade, the travel and tourism industry in

Italy will generate over half a million (533,00) new employment, or more than 53,000 new positions annually. In 2022, the industry added 8.7 percentage points to GDP, bringing its total contribution to more than 176 billion euros (9.6 percentage points of GDP). Approximately 2.7 million new jobs will be created in this industry during the next several years. More than 400,000 employees, or 15.4 percent, were lost as foreign travel came to a virtual halt, bringing the total number of jobs supported by the industry down to just over 2.4 million in 2020. In 2021, however, it contributed 58.5% more to GDP, totaling €162.6 billion, and it employed 9.4% more people, for a total gain of almost 2.6 million (Britannica 2023, Cassa Depositi e Prestiti 2023, Take-profit.org 2023, World Travel & Tourism Council(A) 2023).

Conclusions

Italy's economic recovery will be greatly aided by the travel and tourism industry, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). In 2020, the sector was just 0.3% below its pre-pandemic levels. The sector's contribution to GDP in 2019 exceeded €194 billion, according to the World Trade and Technology Council's (WTTC) latest Economic Impact Report (EIR). However, employment in the industry may return to levels seen before the epidemic. Further, the Travel & Tourism industry in Italy is expected to increase at an average annual rate of 2.5 percent over the next ten years, which is five times the growth rate of 0.5 percent of the country's entire economy. In the meanwhile, it's expected to surpass €226 billion by 2032. The prediction also shows that during the next decade, the travel and tourism industry in Italy will generate over half a million (533,00) new employment, or more than 53,000 new positions annually. The industry's contribution to GDP was at 9.6 percent of the economy in 2022, or more than 176 billion euros. Employment in this field is anticipated to grow by 2%, reaching over 2.7 million people. As a result of the epidemic, Italy's travel and tourism industry took a serious hit, losing billions of dollars as companies closed and thousands of people lost their jobs. The entire contribution to GDP before the pandemic began was 10.6 percent, or 194.8 billion, and dropped to 6.1 percent, or otherwise 102.6 billion, in 2020. In addition, the industry accounted for about €2.9 million in employment until the near extinction of foreign travel caused a loss of more than 400,000 jobs, or 15.4 percent, bringing the total to just over 2.4 million in 2020. In 2021, however, it contributed 58.5% more to GDP, totaling €162.6 billion, and it employed 9.4% more people, for a total gain of almost 2.6 million (Brookings 2023, Schengen visa(A) 2023).

The COVID-19 epidemic has had a devastating effect on the travel and tourist industry. Spending by international visitors to Italy dropped by about a third in 2020 compared to 2019, according to data from the Bank of Italy's Survey on International Tourism. Spending by Italians on international vacations saw a similar decline. This reversed a trend that had been ongoing since the turn of the past decade, resulting in a significant fall in the travel surplus of the balance of payments (to 0.5 percent of GDP in 2019 from 1.0 percent in 2019). Despite a worldwide decline in visitor numbers, Italy had a 3.7% increase in its proportion of the international tourism-related gross domestic product. The stricter entrance restrictions and greater geographical distance contributed to an above-average decline in spending by non-EU international tourists in Italy. When looking at European nations, the percentage of tourists coming from neighboring countries has risen. Vacations in major cities have been hit worse than those in coastal resorts, and hotel stays have been hit harder than those in other types of lodging due to the epidemic. The fear of spreading disease and the subsequent inclination for isolating oneself from others undoubtedly underlies many of these trends. The macro-region of Central Italy, which had benefited the most from cultural tourism before the epidemic, was impacted the most. Due to the effect of the epidemiological crisis and the limits on international movement, international visitor flows into and out of Italy remained at extremely low levels in the first four months of 2021. The number of international visitors, notably those from the European Union, seems to be on the rise again as of late April, according to the available statistics (Social Europe 2023, World Travel & Tourism Council(A) 2023, World Travel & Tourism Council(B) 2023).

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Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Michał Mrozek: The contribution of the author regards such actions as conceptualization, investigation, methodology, carrying out the formal analysis, writing original draft, data curation, writing, editing, visualization. The paper carried out the documentation analysis, but also very important was the application of the statistical, dynamics, and comparative analysis. The secondary data were used in the analyses. Reports, datasets, books, manuals, academic and commercial publications, and scholarly articles were used to compile the information for this study.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The author declares that it has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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