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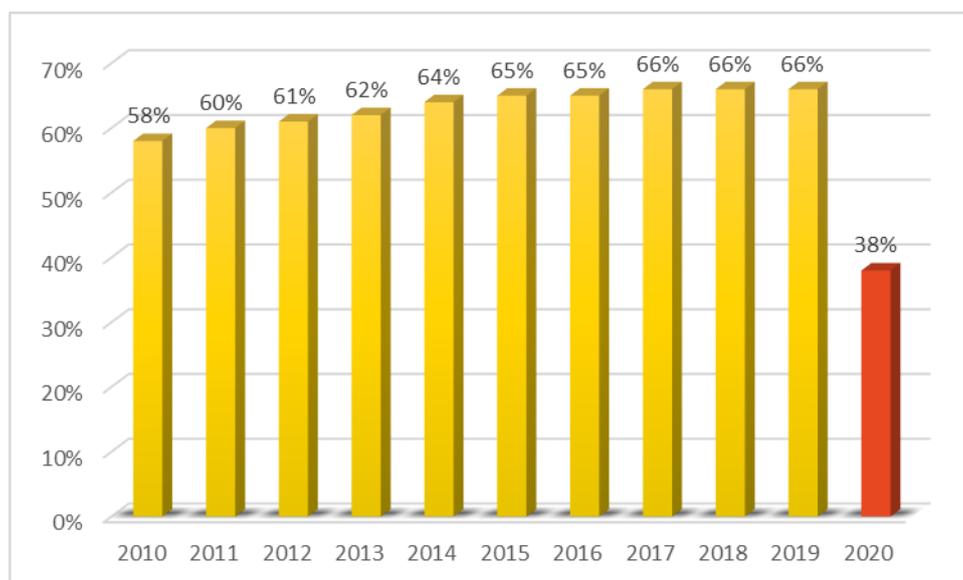
## **ANALYSIS OF INNOVATIVE METHODS IN TOURISM TO OVERCOME THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE TOURIST CRISIS CAUSED**

**Abstract.** *Influencing key sectors of the economy, tourism is increasingly becoming one of the most important indicators of socio-economic development, both in certain regions and in the country as a whole. But with the spread of the coronavirus, the tourism industry has faced a crisis that could be the worst in the history of the world economy [1]. Tourism accounted for about a tenth of the growth of the global economy. In recent years, the industry has even been called its global driver. After all, it developed much faster than the world economy as a whole.*

**Keywords:** *tourism, pandemic, travel, research.*

According to Oxford Economics, the revenue of the hotel industry decreased by almost 50% in 2020, that means the industry lost 124 billion dollars [2]. According to Smith Travel Research, 8 out of 10 hotel rooms are unoccupied. 2020 is projected to be the worst in the history of hotel occupancy (figure1).

As can be seen from figure 1, the percentage of hotel occupancy has been steadily rising since 2010. This indicator has increased from 58% to 66% over the last ten years. However, hotel occupancy is projected to fall to 38% in 2020, almost halving.



**Fig. 1. Indicators of hotel occupancy for 2010-2020**

Since the beginning of the pandemic, 70% of hotel workers have been fired or sent on forced leave. Nearly 1.6 million hotel workers are out of work and are losing \$2.4 billion a week in wages due to the crisis, according to Oxford Economics [3].

The international hotel industry found itself in an unprecedented situation: a large number of hotels and resorts in each country were forced to close due to the implemented quarantine measures against the spread of COVID-19. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the management of leading hotels to rethink the way they use the technologies available to them.

Digital and technological innovations, such as the use of chatbots for booking, voice assistants, butler robots, the use of QR codes should form a new tourist experience in hotels. The good news is that technological innovation will have a shorter time to market, as more and more industry leaders turn to software for innovation management solutions.

Some hotels already use voice assistants and robots to service the rooms, which is a safer alternative in this situation. Voice assistants provide guests with important information for their stay, replace concierge recommendations and accept service requests, while robots are a full part of the team, delivering wine, towels, groceries and more to guests who prefer contactless delivery.

Besides, hotels are switching to contactless solutions using QR codes to minimize guest contact with staff. QR codes can be used to order food in the room, feedback and even to analyze what guests like and dislike. Guests can also use the QR code to find out when the hotel was cleaned last time [4].

The new hygiene standards should now be not voluntary, but mandatory in every hotel. The American Hotel and Lodging Association has issued industry-wide Safety standards. Many hotel groups and associations around the world have also issued similar rules.

Elevator buttons, door handles, furniture, switches, remote controls and other frequently touched items must be properly cleaned and disinfected after each use. Face masks and hand sanitizers should always be available to guests.

Some new cleaning programs are implemented by the largest hotel chains worldwide, for reassure customers ahead of the resumption of the hotel industry. The laundry treatment program «More than cleanliness» was introduced by the leading textile company Vision Support Services. Vision Support Services has been testing Micro-fresh's innovative antimicrobial technology, which is applied to blankets and pillows at the production site for more than two years. This antimicrobial technology is effective and long-lasting. It protects bedding from the spread of coronavirus and kills more than 80% of bacteria than untreated textiles. It has up to almost 100% effectiveness against harmful pathogens.

The Hilton hotel chain has developed a safety policy in conjunction with the Mayo Clinic Infection Prevention and Control Team, and it also uses electrostatic sprays and ultraviolet light to disinfect surfaces and objects.

Thus, in order to overcome the tourism crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, with minimal losses, hotels need to implement digital and technological innovations to minimize guest contact with staff, and adhere to new hygiene standards to make their stay more safer at the hotel.

It is worth noting the measures introduced by the governments of the countries, which are divided into three main categories:

- ensuring a fair balance between the protection of tourists and the interests of tourism workers;
- providing conditions for business survival throughout the supply chain;
- focus on coordination mechanisms to better address and support the recovery of the tourism sector.

Most measures to respond to the problems of the international hotel industry can be divided into 3 logical stages:

1. Market and community response:

a. market encouragement for booked rooms - the possibility of re-booking or receiving compensation for the full cost of the booked room, which depends on the current regulations of the country / market;

b. suspension of loyalty programs in cases when the accumulated points or bonuses expire;

c. community support - providing hotel accommodation for medical staff, availability of hotels for quarantine, cooking for people in need and emergency response.

2. Health and safety responses:

a. programs to implement stricter health and safety rules - cleanliness, hand hygiene, cleaning of hotel rooms, products, protocols to prevent the risk of virus infection (for example, Hilton CleanStay program with the antiseptic manufacturer Lysol);

b. financial assistance to employees of international hotel chains who need support due to the financial crisis [5].

Failure to do so could result in the immediate dismissal of more than a million workers without actual severance pay due to lack of working capital, as well as the probable bankruptcies of thousands of tourism entities and hundreds of thousands of related companies and tourism suppliers.

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