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The importance of the tourism sector in the Jamaican labour market in 1996–2018

Abstract: Jamaica is one of the islands of the Caribbean Region which began to dynamically develop its tourism sector after the Second World War. Despite the very strong competition from the neighbouring islands of the Caribbean Region, the accomplishments of the tourist sector on this island are impressive. The purpose of the article is to demonstrate the importance of tourism industry for the labour market in Jamaica and how much the economy of the country is relying on tourism. Moreover, article seeks to answer the question whether tourism contributes to the creation of new jobs for the local population, and whether jobs in the tourism sector are satisfactory for the local residents. Also, the paper discusses activities that can potentially contribute to greater public acceptance of the development of the tourist sector in Jamaica. The underlying assumption is that the relationship between the development of tourism and the employment level in Jamaica can be measured, whereas the quality of jobs in tourism is only partially satisfactory for the local population. The method used in the article involves statistical analysis and calculation of the Pearson's correlation ratio, which shows the relation between the number of foreign tourist arrivals and the unemployment rate.

Keywords: Jamaica, employment in tourism, island area, economic impact of tourism

1. Introduction

Jamaica is located in the Lesser Antilles archipelago, 145 km from Cuba. It has an area of 10 991 square kilometres and measures 243 kilometres from east to west and 80 kilometres from north to south. Jamaica's nearest neighbours are Cuba 150 kilometres to the north, and Haiti 160 kilometres to the east (Gritzner, 2004). Tourism in Jamaica began to develop just after the end of World War II. Hotel centres began their development in the 1950s. At the beginning they were located in Montego Bay (Jędrusik, 2005). Other popular tourist destinations include Negril and Runaway Bay (Mydel and Groch, 1998). Adverse political relations after the Second World War between Cuba and the United States resulted in a ban on American tourist arrivals in Cuba, which consequently made tourism develop rapidly in Jamaica.

The island of Jamaica is composed of chalk and tertiary deposits, as well as limestone

sedimentary rocks. It features a varied landscape, with coastal lowlands, limestone plains and densely forested mountainous areas. The island is located in the temperate equatorial climate zone. The average temperature in winter is 24°C, while in summer 27°C. The average annual rainfall in Jamaica is 2 100 mm. There are two rainy seasons – from May to June and from September to October. Coastal rainfall is 700 mm, and in the Blue Mountains more than 5 000 mm. Unfortunately, the island lies on the hurricane route and often suffers from occasional natural hazards, including devastating hurricanes. Centrally located in the Caribbean region, the island lies on the sea routes between Great Britain and the United States and to the Panama Canal (Gritzner, 2004).

Tourism represents the most important source of export. The western part of the island features the most beautiful beach – Seven Mile

Beach – along which there are many luxury hotels (www.travelek24.pl/2018/02/jamajka-co-zobaczyc-informacje-ceny.html). The main Jamaican tourism product is coastal tourism usually referred to as ‘sun, sea and sand’ (Hyman, 2014). The problem of Jamaica tourism sector development lies in the questionable brand of the country connected with economic instability, crime and corruption (Johnson, 2014), as well as its reputation of aggressive vendors (Henthorne et al., 2013).

The central part of Jamaica is particularly popular among tourists owing to its numerous attractions – for example, waterfalls on the Dunn River and Nine Mile (Bob Marley’s birth and burial place). In the eastern part of the island there are the Blue Mountains with excellent coffee plantations, sugar cane, bananas, jam, citrus trees and coconut palms. Animal husbandry includes poultry, cattle, pigs, goats and crustaceans (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jm.html). Employment in agriculture (2017) amounted to 16% (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jm.html), and the agricultural sector (2017) was responsible for generating 7% of GDP. Industry accounted for 21%, and services 72% (including tourism 18%); however the multiplier effect resulting from tourism can be two times higher. The communication network is quite well developed,

and the length of roads is about 19 000 km, of which 70% is paved (www.encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/Jamajka-Gospodarka;4574376.html). Jamaica is divided into 3 counties and 14 parishes, and most major towns hold local parish offices. Kingston was founded in 1692 after a huge earthquake had destroyed the city of Fort Royal, and it became the capital in 1872. Prior to this, the British capitals were Fort Royal and Spanish Town. Island nations in the Caribbean received the name ‘West Indies’, with Jamaica being the largest of the English-speaking Caribbean islands (Gritzner, 2004).

The aim of the article is to describe the impact of tourism industry on the Jamaican labour market. Furthermore, the authors seek to answer the question whether the tourism sector contributes to the creation of jobs for the community, and whether jobs in the tourism sector are of good quality, as well as what should be done to ensure greater public acceptance for the development of the tourist sector in Jamaica? It was assumed that the relationship between the development of tourism and the employment level in Jamaica exists, yet the quality of jobs in the tourism sector is not satisfactory enough. The article employs statistical analysis paired with Pearson’s correlation ratio, and examines the relation between the number of foreign tourist arrivals and the unemployment rate.

2. The impact of tourism on economy and labour market – literature discussion

According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), tourism is one of the pillars for the development of the global labour market in the coming decade (www.portalsamorzadowy.pl/wydarzenia-lokalne/turystyka-napedza-rynek-pracy,92342.html). Many researchers have dealt with the analysis of the importance of tourism to the economies of individual countries. There is often a strong correlation between the expenditures of foreign tourists and economic growth (Dritsakis, 2004). Also, many researches focus on the importance of tourism in islands areas (Jędrusik, 2019). Tourism is a field that concerns numerous sectors

of the national economy. Furthermore, tourism has become the dominant economic sector for many destinations, which is particularly true for island territories located in a tropical climate; it generates both revenues and gives employment opportunities. It also improves the balance of payments. The multiplier effect of tourism gives islands a chance to grow. The results of Seetanah (2011) research on the analysis of 19 islands have shown that tourism is an important development factor behind the economic growth in island territories. However, many researchers point to the problem of inadequate pay and dependency of employ-

ees in the tourism sector from wealthy visitors (Kingsbury, 2011).

The labour market in tourism consists of entities providing employment in five main areas: (i) activities related to culture, entertainment and recreation, (ii) organisation of tourism and tourist intermediation, (iii) passenger transport, (iv) catering and (v) accommodation.

Tourism industry frequently struggles with numerous negative occurrences, including undeclared work, not reporting part of remuneration for tax purposes, employment of foreigners without valid work permit (particularly in services related to culture, entertainment and recreation), concealment of income (especially on the part of entities offering accommodation) and running unregistered business activity (most notably in passenger transport) (Badanie rynku pracy w turystyce, 2017). People working in tourist accommodation are predominantly women (approx. 60%). Additionally, employees with low education constitute over one-third of the labour market in this segment. Furthermore, the job market in this sector is characterised by considerable seasonal fluctuations.

Permanent employment relationship is most frequently declared by the employees of entities whose main scope of activity is the organisation of tourism and tourist intermediation. On the other hand, jobs in companies or institutions providing accommodation services tend to be seasonal (Badanie rynku pracy w turystyce, 2017). While tourism can certainly be considered a viable development opportunity, local population is exceedingly often overlooked in tourism professions as both investors and employees (Liua and Wall, 2006). Many organisations face a big challenge of finding suitable employees, especially in remote locations. What attracts tourists does not always attract employees to the tourism sector. After all, employees must live and work for a longer period of time in a given area (Solnet et al., 2014 after Vaugeois and Rollins, 2007).

Remote areas that are popular among tourists usually have problems with the internal labour market. The local employee supply is insufficient to meet the demand for labour

(Lundberg et al., 2009; Solnet et al., 2014). Groups of migrants are interested in working in tourism in countries far away from their homeland (Janta et al., 2011; Solnet et al., 2014). It is assumed that tourism planning should take into account both the needs of residents and the needs of visitors (Liua and Wall, 2006). If tourism is to have a positive effect on the local population, it must develop with the support of the local population and their involvement. Many tourism plans do not place enough emphasis on developing these resources. In addition, the type of tourism that is pursued in a given region does not necessarily correspond to the needs and expectations of the local people, who do not gain as much profit from tourism as they should. The development of human resources most often focuses on the needs of large international corporations (Liua and Wall, 2006).

On the other hand, the positive impact of tourism on the labour market is apparent when we compare the unemployment rate in places receiving a large number of tourists the national average. Tourism is a sector of the economy that offers opportunities to counteract unemployment and create new jobs (Alejziak, 2007). However, it should be remembered that the tourist sector is struggling with a considerable problem of employment seasonality (Smuga, 2007). While it is certainly important to involve the inhabitants in providing services to tourists, the needs of local residents should also be addressed. Many tourist areas are directly dependent on foreign investments (Tourism in Small Island Developing States..., 2014). Since groups of migrants are willing to work in tourism in countries located far from their homeland (Solnet et al., 2014), politicians should include tourism in their development plans, with particular emphasis on the promotion and use of local products and the skills of islanders (Tourism in Small Island Developing States..., 2014).

The tourism industry needs a lot of people, which is why it is heavily dependent on the human factor, but also requires natural resources and large investments to provide quality of products and services (Measuring Employment in the Tourism Industries..., 2014).

3. Method used in the paper

The main method used in the article involves statistical analysis of the data connected with tourism sector and unemployment in Jamaica. The main purpose of this chapter is to calculate the Pearson's correlation ratio between the changes in tourism intensity ratio and the unemployment rate (in %) in Jamaica in 1996–2018.

It has been assumed that the development of tourism in Jamaica is bound to stimulate the labour market. Therefore, with the increase in the number of tourist arrivals in Jamaica, the unemployment rate on the island should diminish. In order to assess this relationship, the authors employed Pearson's correlation coefficient formula:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n x_i, \bar{y} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n y_i$$

Pearson's linear correlation coefficient determines the level of linear dependence between the examined features. We assume that x and y are random variables with continuous distributions, x_i, y_i are the values of random samples of these variables ($i = 1, 2, \dots, n$), whereas x, y denote values of these samples, where:

n – the number of surveyed units – a time series of the number of years analysed,

x_i – the value of the first feature – intensity indicator of tourist movement,

y_i – the value of the second feature – unemployment rate (in %).

4. Tourism development in Jamaica

Jamaica is as a music destination similar to New Orleans in the United States, because it is the birthplace of reggae music. The areas most known for their reggae heritage include Negril, St Ann and Kingston's Trench Town. The areas in question are also well developed, and thus, can potentially strive to increase the number of tourist arrivals (Dunn, 1999). Tourists travelling to Jamaica are usually aged 25–49. Visitors who travel with their families are mostly looking for attractions such as horseback riding, as well as historical and nature monuments. They are typically interested in sandy beaches, waterfalls and rafting. In Jamaica there are more than 150 licensed attractions (Dunn, 1999).

In 2018, the gross domestic product per capita in Jamaica amounted to USD 5 114 (2017), and the unemployment rate was 12.3% (www.data.worldbank.org). In the mid-1990s, the number of tourists and one-day visitors in Jamaica exceeded 1 million per year. Figure 1 presents the relation between tourism revenue and GDP in Jamaica in 2007–2017, which ranged from 14 to 18%. There was a decrease in this share in 2009–2012, which was a response to the global economic crisis and the decline in foreign tourism in the Caribbean Region.

Jamaica is the island of choice to 8% of all tourists in the Caribbean region, which is less than the Dominican Republic (18%) and Puerto Rico (13%), but almost on a par with the Bahamas (9%) (Tourism in the Americas, 2013). One should also note that for the Caribbean Region the percentage of foreign tourists who travel for leisure, recreation and holiday purposes is about 75%, while in South America it is 62%, in Central America 58% and in North America only 33% (Tourism in the Americas, 2013).

The Spanish colonial heritage is particularly apparent in the city of Kingston, which is regarded as the cultural centre of the island. It is also one of the oldest colonial cities in the Western Hemisphere. Kingston is known as a modern and sprawling city. It is situated on a wide plain area facing the shore line to the south and the Blue Mountains to the north. Parishes neighbouring the capital are also considerably urbanised and attract the population from the rest of the island (Gritzner, 2004).

The distance from the capital city of Kingston, located on the south shoreline, to Annotto Bay, the northernmost point, is 36 kilometres. Jamaica is a country of stark contrasts and many problems, such as urban sprawl, poverty, crime and violence, struggling with poor economic

situation and high foreign debt. It is a “country of incredible scenic beauty, with many natural resources and a rich cultural life (...) and a beautiful natural landscape” (Gritzner, 2004).

The island is famous for a rich and varied natural environment. The landscapes range from low-lying coastal plains to the high areas of the Blue Mountain, reaching elevation of almost 2 286 metres. Furthermore, the islands is considerably varied in terms of climate – in the lowlands, the distribution of temperatures is typical of an equatorial climate (24–28°C), mountainous areas feature an amplitude of

15–18°C, whereas temperatures in the upper parts of the mountains may drop even below 10°C (Gritzner, 2004). Jamaica is famous for its bauxite resources used for the production of aluminium.

The year 2008, i.e. shortly before the global economic downturn, proved to be particularly successful for tourism as far as GDP is concerned. This was followed by a decrease in the contribution of tourism to the economy in the years 2008–2011. Since 2013 there has been a stable increase of this indicator, with its peak in the years 2016–2018.

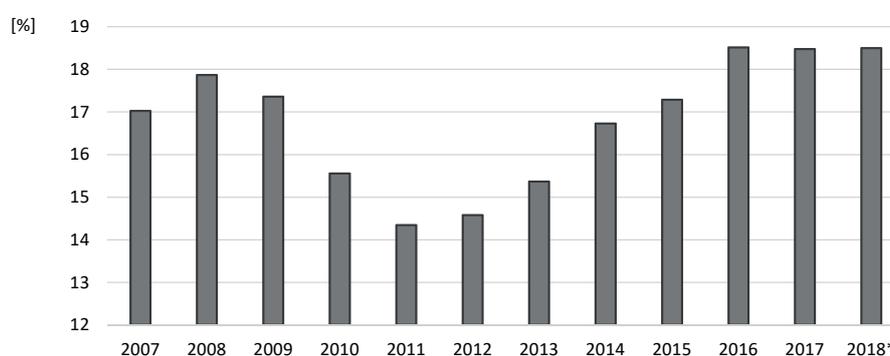


Figure 1. The share of tourism in Jamaica’s GDP in 2007–2018, *estimations (Source: own study based on UNWTO data: www.unwto.org)

Figure 2 shows the number of tourists and one-day visitors in Jamaica in the years 1995–2018 (in thousand), demonstrating a stable increase over the entire study period. Interest-

ingly, even in the years 2007–2010 the increase persisted, despite the fact that a downward trend was observed in the Caribbean Region due to the global economic crisis.

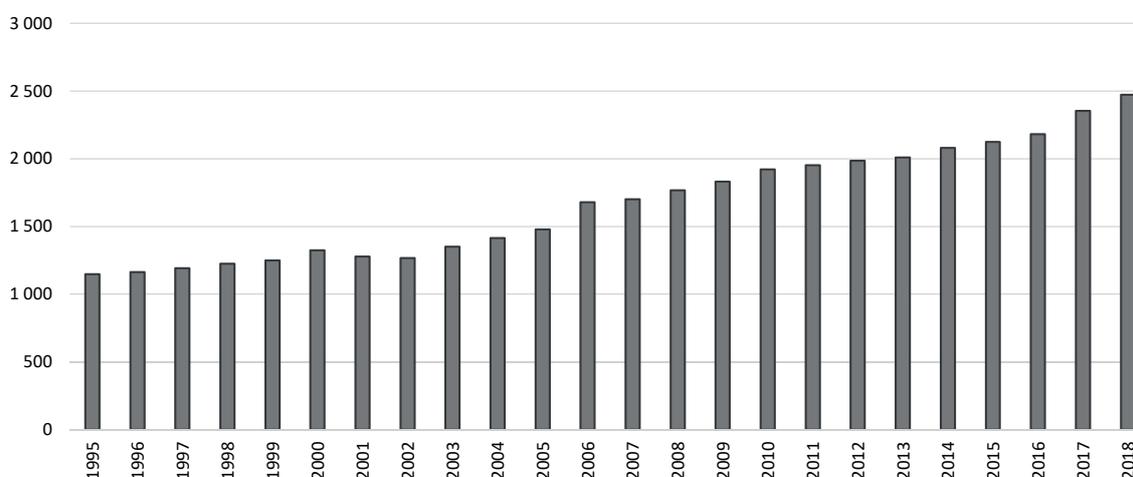


Figure 2. Number of tourists arrivals in Jamaica in 1995–2018 (in thousands) (Source: own study based on UNWTO data: www.unwto.org, Worldbank: www.data.worldbank.org and Jamaican Tourist Board: www.jtbonline.org/report-and-statistics)

5. Development of the tourism sector and the labour market in Jamaica

In general, it can be stated that the role of tourism in improving employment opportunities and the standard of living is considerable. An increase in employment in the direct tourism economy causes an increased demand for work in the indirect tourism economy. Tourism stimulates local labour resources and significantly reduces the unemployment rate (Jarosz, 2006). According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), in the years 2008–2018 the tourism industry provided employment to 80–115 thousand people in Jamaica. It is estimated that in 2018 the number of people employed in the tourism industry was 118 thousand (Travel & Tourism Economic Impact ..., 2018). The share of the tourism industry in employment in the years 2008–2018 ranged from 7% to 9%. Considering the entire tourism industry, employment amounted to almost 300 000 people, and also had a multiplier effect of 500 000. The tourism economy in 2018 generated 25% of GDP with an induced effect of 30%. It is estimated that by the end of the third decade of the 21st century, tourism economy along with the induced effect will account for almost 40% of total employment in Jamaica. The permanent nature of work in tourism sector is most often declared by employees of entities whose main scope of activity is organisation of tourism and tourist agencies, whereas accommodation services mostly tend to provide seasonal jobs.

Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoyb (2015) analysed the attitudes of local residents towards foreign investments in the tourist sector in Jamaica. They studied both the positive and negative effects of tourism development for the local population. They argue that entrepreneurs should create a tourism development strategy in cooperation with residents. In addition, they indicated that it is important to sponsor local events and training programmes for the local community. In their research, they showed that it is important that foreign companies employ local people also on managerial positions, as this will enable the acquisition of knowledge

and skills as well as social advancement, which in turn contributes to a better perception of the social role of tourism (Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoyb, 2015). Moreover, the authors stress the importance of promoting local culture and implementing social programmes. A large number of people in Jamaica work in the tourism sector; according to Pratt (2015) Jamaica belongs to the islands with one of the largest multiplier effects for the sector of hotels and restaurants among the analysed islands belonging to Small Islands Developing States (SIDS). Moreover Sinclair-Maragh (2017) compiled the profile of a Jamaican resident with a positive attitude to tourism development.

Tourism in Jamaica is providing employment to a great number of people. The hotel sector, for example, offers almost 30 000 rooms with another 8 000 planned. In fact, the island is likely to have the most diverse selection of Caribbean rooms and tourist offers (www.thecaribbeancurrent.com/how-important-is-tourism-to-jamaica). An important indicator is the rate of average use of hotel rooms in Jamaica, which in 2017 reached 65% (www.unwto.org). In the article “For Love and Money. Romance Tourism in Jamaica”, the authors described the specificity of tourism in Jamaica in connection with the openness of residents and the possibility of pursuing the so-called matrimonial tourism (Pruitt and LaFont, 1995). According to a study by Gamradt (1995), even children in Jamaica identify tourism as an important element to the economy of this island.

Pearson's correlation between the unemployment rate and the tourist intensity ratio in Jamaica in 1996–2018 amounted to -0.341, which can be interpreted as a weak negative correlation between the analysed variables¹. The tourism intensity ratio was calculated from the number of tourist arrivals divided by the number of population. This means that with the increase in the tourism intensity ratio in Jamaica the unemployment rate decreased,

¹ Correlation was interpreted with the use of the scale presented by S. Ostasiewicz, Z. Rusnak and U. Siedlecka (1999), which assumes the following: no relationship between the studied features – more than -0.2; noticeable albeit low negative correlation – less than -0.2 to -0.4; moderate negative correlation – less than -0.4 to -0.7; significant negative correlation – less than -0.7 to -0.9; very strong negative correlation – less than -0.9.

and at the time when the tourist intensity ratio decreased, the unemployment rate increased. Figure 3 shows tourism intensity ratio and

the unemployment rate in Jamaica between 1996–2018.

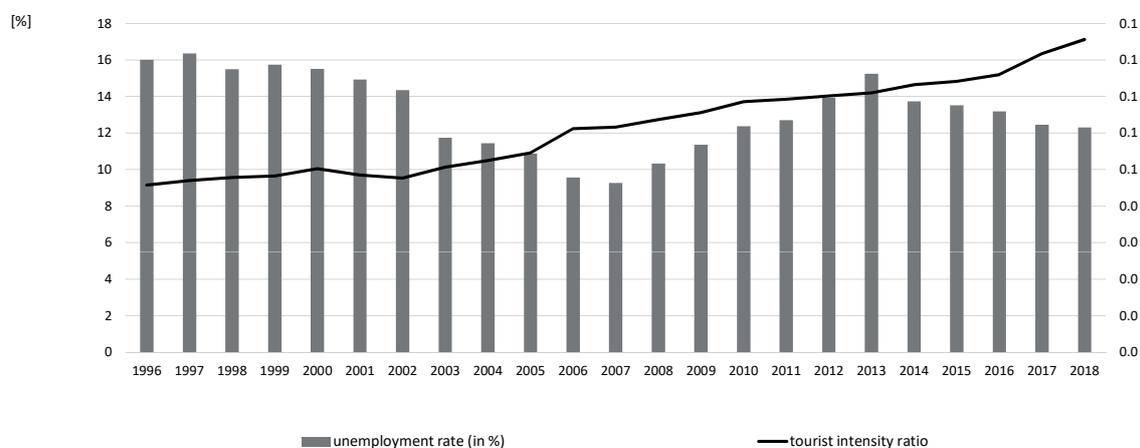


Figure 3. Tourism intensity ratio and the unemployment rate (in %) in Jamaica in 1996–2018 (Source: own study based on: www.data.worldbank.org, www.unwto.org.)

According to Jamaica's tourism development strategy *Jamaica – Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development* (2002) prepared by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism in Jamaica, tourism on this island shall be developed in accordance with the principle of sustainable development. Tourism industry is to respect the cultural heritage of the island and make use of its excellent natural conditions. It is important to increase the percentage of people willing to return to Jamaica, and the local community must have access to higher-level jobs.

'Planning should be bottom-up, not top down' (Jamaica – Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development, 2002). The success of tourism should be measured not only by the size of GDP, trade and jobs from the tourism

sector, but also through the economic and social opportunities offered by tourism to the local Jamaican population. The tourism industry must be developed in a sustainable way, with a particular attention to the preservation of existing animal habitats.

According to Padilla and McElroy (2007), Jamaica should focus on bolstering the loyalty of its clients (hence ensuring their subsequent return to the island) and the diversification of tourist products. In the early stage of development, the tourism sector in Jamaica struggled with a high degree of petty crime against tourists. Initially, the problem was countered by creating closed enclaves in which the tourists felt safe (de Albuquerque and McElroy, 1999).

6. Summary

The tourism sector in Jamaica is developing exceptionally well compared to other islands in the Caribbean Region. Jamaica offers a recognizable tourism product connected with reggae music and cuisine. However, the country has not yet established a particularly positive brand. Nevertheless, the image can be altered by reducing the crime rate and financing special promotion programmes in the main tourist markets. The positive outcomes of the tourism

sector in Jamaica is apparent from the fact that the number of arrivals of foreign tourists has been steadily growing, and even the global economic crisis did not cause a decline in the number of inbound tourists. The article shows the relationship between changes in the unemployment rate and the tourism intensity ratio in Jamaica. There is a weak negative relationship between the analysed features. This correlation in years 1996–2018 amounted to -0.341 , which

means that with the increase in tourism intensity ratio, the unemployment rate in Jamaica declined. This appears to confirm the hypothesis put forward at the beginning of the work. Unfortunately, jobs provided by the tourism sector in Jamaica are not at a satisfactory level. The local population has insufficient access to high-end positions. This can be addressed by training and educating people in the tourism industry, especially with regard to managerial and executive positions. Public acceptance for the development of the tourist sector in this country can be improved by allowing the local

communities to participate in crucial decision making with respect to the tourism sector.

The hypothesis put forward at the beginning of the work was confirmed in that the development of tourism contributes to the creation of jobs in Jamaica. It has been shown that an increase in the number of inbound tourists translates into a decline in the unemployment rate on the studied island. One should bear in mind that the unexpected economic downturn caused by COVID-19 is likely to exert adverse impact on the tourism sector, and thus, the employment market in Jamaica.

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