


# Chapter 13

## Integrating Public Health Safety Into Socially Responsible Business Practices of Small and Medium Enterprises in the Cruise Tourism Sector

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## ABSTRACT

*Ensuring the safety of cruise tourists in response to contamination issues is not a comprehensive solution to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. This article explores the essence, tools, and prospects for enhancing public health safety in international maritime passenger transport to achieve sustainable tourism goals. It analyzes existing approaches to sustainable tourism, emphasizing the need for flexibility and adaptability. A questionnaire-based survey was conducted to obtain independent, non-professional assessments of biological security on cruise ships. The findings reveal increased awareness of social responsibility, a shift in attitudes toward public health safety related mainly to COVID-19, and the persistence of low biological precautions. The study proposes recognizing public health safety as the 13th goal of sustainable tourism and identifies four promising directions for its development, along with corresponding tools.*

## INTRODUCTION

Until recently, international tourism has been considered one of the fastest-growing industries (Bielialov & Namliiev, 2024; Manimala et al., 2023; Parfinenko et al., 2022). Before January-February 2020, investment in the tourism business was considered, if not risk-free, then one in which the risks can be regarded as acceptable (Shafiee et al., 2025; Xie et al., 2025). The problems of tour operators and travel agencies were mostly individual or related to individual tour operators or carriers (mainly air and sea). They were related to logistics (Gan & Liu, 2024; Kazakov et al., 2023; Novakivskyi et al., 2022; Orozonoval et al., 2022; Sushchenko et al., 2023) and operational service (Bashynska et al., 2019; Karyy et al., 2019; Koldovsky, 2015; Saienko et al., 2020; Shpak et al., 2023) - issues that can be resolved quickly.

In this context, public health safety is increasingly recognized as a core element of socially responsible business practices, particularly for small and medium enterprises operating in high-density tourism environments (World Health Organization, 2024). The cruise tourism sector represents a critical case, as SMEs play a central role in delivering services, managing passenger flows, and ensuring health-related standards on board and in port areas (World Tourism Organization, 1995).

The situation associated with the spread of the coronavirus infection SARS-CoV-2 has radically changed the industry, putting some parts on the brink of existence or completely bankrupt (Das et al., 2024; Jeyakumar et al., 2024; Mahendru et al., 2024; Sungchaset al., 2024). Moreover, the problem of the spread of a particular disease by passengers (tourists) or crew, considering the safety mechanisms that existed before the pandemic, seemed unlikely or practically impossible. All measures

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