

# Domestic Tourism: Post-Pandemic Revival of Travel and Tourism Industry in Uttar Pradesh

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## Abstract

Since the pandemic has disrupted the activities of travel and tourism worldwide, its multidimensional impact has been observed. As it is evident that tourism industry is capable of generating employment opportunities multifold, all the people in the chain from tourists to service providers have been badly hit in terms of the transactional behaviour. Closed boundaries, restricted transportation and COVID protocols are some of the issues which have changed the thought process of key industry players, Government stakeholders, policy makers and tourism organizations. Their attention to accelerate the growth of tourism has changed from inbound tourism to strengthen and improve the domestic tourism. The study explores issues and suggested strategies for recovery of tourism industry in Uttar Pradesh. The study evaluates the information retrieved from secondary sources (news, articles, magazine, and reports) to recommend the possible ways to deal with the impact of pandemic on Tourism industry. Domestic tourism, whether it is Religious, Adventure, Sport, Holiday or Heritage; if encouraged with proper strategies, policies and framework can be fruitful to accelerate the speed of tourism in the country. On the similar thoughts Government of Uttar Pradesh has been giving due emphasis in this direction by implementing schemes and strengthening tourism infrastructure such as One district one product (ODOP), attractive holiday packages for tourists, developing religious circuits (Ramayana circuit, Buddhist circuit, Mahabharat circuit, Shaktipeeth circuit), Construction of Ram Mandir, Renovation of Kahsi Vishvanath Corridor are some of the ongoing projects represent the holistic approach to enhance the experience of tourism. The experts and key industry players are hoping to have overcome with

this situation as market comes back to its normal situation with the development of vaccine and expecting 'Revenge travel' to gain momentum in 2021.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Domestic Tourism, Religious Circuits, Uttar Pradesh

## INTRODUCTION

Since the pandemic has disrupted the activities of travel and tourism worldwide, its multidimensional impact has been observed. As it is evident that tourism industry is capable of generating employment opportunities multifold, all the people in the chain from tourists to service providers have been badly hit in terms of the transactional behaviour. Prior to the pandemic, Travel & Tourism (including its direct, indirect and induced impacts) accounted for 1 in 4 of all new jobs created across the world, 10.6% of all jobs (334 million), and 10.4% of global GDP (US\$9.2 trillion). Meanwhile, in 2019, international tourist expenditure was US\$1.7 trillion (6.8 percent of total exports, 27.4 percent of global services exports).

According to global economic impact trends (2020), India ranked 10<sup>th</sup> among the top 15 nations in the world in terms of travel and tourism contribution to GDP in 2019, with US\$194 billion, which is more than the worldwide T&T GDP growth of 3.5 percent.

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**Table 1: India’s Travel & Tourism GDP Contribution**

Position	Country	T&T Contribution to GDP, 2019 (US\$ bn)	T&T GDP Growth 2019 (%)	Domestic Spend % of Total, 2019	International Spend % of Total, 2019	Leisure spend % of Total, 2019	Business Spend % of Total, 2019
10	India	194	4.9	83	17	94	6

Source: Global Economic Impact & Trends (2020).

According to WTTC reports on the economic and employment impact of Travel & Tourism for 185 countries/economies and 25 geographic or economic regions in the world: In comparison to the global economy’s 3.7 percent GDP reduction in 2020, the Travel & Tourism industry lost about US\$4.5 trillion to reach US\$4.7 trillion in 2020, with its contribution to GDP plummeting by a whopping 49.1 percent. Due to increasing mobility constraints, the Travel & Tourism industry contributed 10.4 percent to global GDP in 2019, but this will drop to 5.5 percent in 2020. In 2020, 62 million jobs will be lost, a loss of 18.5 percent, leaving just 272 million people working globally, down from 334 million in 2019. Many employment opportunities are being maintained by

government retention plans and reduced hours, but without a full recovery of Travel & Tourism, the potential of job losses remains. Domestic tourist expenditure fell by 45 percent, while foreign visitor spending fell by a record-breaking 69.4%.

According to India tourism statistics report (2020), International tourism receipts worldwide increased almost 30 times in nineteen years from US\$475.3 billion in 2000 to US\$1487.6 billion, in 2019. Similarly, over the years Indian tourism industry has also gained momentum in view of foreign earning exchange (FEE’s) from US\$ 3.46 billion in 2000 to US\$30.06 billion in 2019. India’s rank in regard to tourism receipts has also witnessed improvement from 36<sup>th</sup> in 2000 to 12<sup>th</sup> position in 2019.

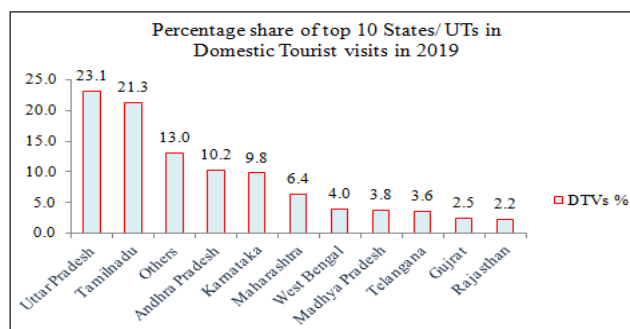
**Table 2**

Year	International Tourism Receipts (Worldwide)		Foreign Earning Exchange (India)		India’s Rank
	US\$ Billion	% Change Over Previous Year	US\$ Billion	% Change Over Previous Year	
2000	475.3	#	3.46	#	36 <sup>th</sup>
2015	1217	-2.8	21.01	6.7	14 <sup>th</sup>
2016	1247	2.5	22.92	9.1	13 <sup>th</sup>
2017	1349	8.2	27.31	19.1	13 <sup>th</sup>
2018	1463	8.5	28.59	4.7	13 <sup>th</sup>
2019	1487	1.6	30.06	5.1	12 <sup>th</sup>

Source: UP tourism statistics (2020).

## OVERVIEW OF TOURISM INDUSTRY IN UTTAR PRADESH

India Tourism Statistics (2020) report revealed that Uttar Pradesh witnessed a growth of 25.3% in domestic tourist visits (DTVs) in 2019 with the highest recipient in DTVs among top 10 states/UTs. Domestic tourist arrivals in the state of Uttar Pradesh reached 535.8 million and Foreign tourist arrivals crossed over 4.74 million in 2019. In respect of foreign tourist visits among top five States/ UTs Uttar Pradesh had remained 3<sup>rd</sup> highest recipient after Tamilnadu (6.9 million) and Maharashtra (5.5 million).



Source: UP tourism statistics (2020).

**Fig. 1**

The increase in DTVs, Tourism receipts and employment generation surely is a sign of maturation of the industry, which can continue only with the support of state and national government. The positive trends of the last few years must continue with due consideration to meet the visitors need at global and local level and upgrade the tourism services at various tourist sites in Uttar Pradesh.

## TOURISM FORMS IN UTTAR PRADESH

The land of Uttar Pradesh has different forms of tourist's attractions to offer to its prospective visitors. Accordingly, State government of Uttar Pradesh has formed different circuits to suit the preferences of the visitors.

<i>The Circuits</i>	
Buddhist Circuit	Kapilvastu, Kaushambi, Kushinagar, Sankisa, Sarnath, Sravasti
Bundelkhand	Bithoor, Chitrakoot, Jhansi, Kalinjar, Mahoba
Braj	Agra, Mathura, Vrindavan
Awadh	Lucknow, Dewa Sharif, Naimisharanya, Ayodhya, Ayodhya
Vindhya-Varanasi	Varanasi, Chunar, Vindhyachal
Wild Life-Eco tourism	Dudhwa, Pilibhit, Katarniaghat

These circuits also define the prominent forms of tourism popular in the state. These are helpful to devise exclusive development strategies for socially and economically inclusive and sustainable tourism growth of these circuits. According to the recent report from Times of India (2021) to ease the travel journey of pilgrims, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Shri Yogi Adityanath had issued directives to revamp five well-known pilgrim spots that will feature enhanced facilities. For the convenience of visitors, steps are being taken to equip well-known sacred cities such as Chitrakoot, Naimisharanya, Shakumbhari Devi, Vidhyanchal, and Shukratirtha with improved amenities. Among all tourism attractions following types of noticeable tourism forms can be identified in the state of Uttar Pradesh:

- Gastronomy tourism
- Historical/Heritage tourism
- Religious/Pilgrimage tourism
- Rural Tourism
- Wild life tourism

Uttar Pradesh has rich cultural, historical and political background. Above all it is the land which has abundance of places of religious significance and also blessed with the foundation of some of the popular religions of the world i.e. Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. Thus it showcases more potential for religious tourism. Observing the number of foreign and domestic tourists growing at the prominent places/tourist destinations of religious concern the state government has taken a step forward to classify UP Tourism in various circuits. The initiative to create additional tourism circuits like as the Ramayana circuit, Mahabharat circuit, Shaktipeeth circuit, Adhyatmik circuit, Buddhist circuit, and Jain circuit is being evaluated as yielding results.

## PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

There has been a multitude of studies measuring the significance of pilgrimage tourism. A profusion of research studies have been conducted to assess the significance of pilgrimage tourism. Many researchers estimate that a steady flow of tourists seems to impact such holy places in multiple ways. Shinde (2006) proposed a model that emphasises the dynamics of pilgrimage religious tourism. The model explains how pilgrimage tourists interact with the locals and the impacts arising out of such interactions for all the concerned parties. This leads to a favourable scenario for all stakeholders. The model simulates the immediate environmental effect of such missions (Lawrence, 1992). Not only that, but such connections have a far-reaching indirect impact on society and economic factors. According to Evans (1976), while religious institutions are unquestionably the most compelling cause for visiting such pilgrim places, there are other factors at play that will influence pilgrimage tourists' preferences. These could include hotels, travel agencies, food and beverage outlets, and souvenir shops (especially those selling religious mementos like holy water (Maseeh, 2002), statuettes, and candles), all of which provide a steady source of income to the local population, enhancing the significance of such pilgrimages. Religious sites, on the other hand, are responsible for bringing in substantial revenue to the surrounding community (Vijayanand, 2012). Lourdes, France, and Assisi, Italy, are two examples (Fleischer & Felsenstein, 2000). Local events, according to Mihajlovi and Vidak (2017), play a big role in advertising a town as a tourist attraction, and this is very much relevant to religious festivals as well.

On the other hand, Secall (2003) believes that pilgrimage has been responsible for giving a materialistic perspective to spiritual accomplishments throughout human history.

The good effects of pilgrimage tourism serve as a motivator for the local population. They protect their cultural legacy as well as religious monuments and landmarks. They make certain that visiting pilgrims are not disappointed by the preservation of sacred structures. This also serves as a saving grace for such sacred sites, assisting in their preservation to the greatest extent feasible (Cohen, 1998). The local population gains from improved living conditions for the underprivileged or less fortunate elements of society.

Because of the ancient history, religious sites and locations have always been popular with pilgrimage travellers. In Uttar Pradesh, there are many pilgrimage tourism circuits that may be seen as a way to mitigate the impact of the epidemic on residents as well as intermediates in the whole economy.

## UTTAR PRADESH: A RELIGIOUS TOURIST HUB

Uttar Pradesh, the heartland of India, Situated in the vast steamy plain of the Ganges represents the nation through its culture, religion, language and politics. The state is home to more than 200 million people making it the most populous state in the country. The history of India is inexpressible without citing the background of Uttar Pradesh – temples, monuments, religion – Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Jain etc Without recognizing the history of Uttar Pradesh – temples, monuments, and religions such as Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and Jain

– India would be incomprehensible. It is a melting pot of culture and religion, with people of all religions and beliefs coexisting together. Religion is a unique point of reference in the state, including religious destinations, shrines, and sites that are held in high respect by people of many faiths. Hindu worshippers have several sites of spirituality and devotion distributed over the length and width of the country's fourth largest state. Some Hindu pilgrimages, shrines, and temples are world-famous, attracting throngs of religious travellers from all over the world every year. Due to the virtues of places of worship, meditation, and spiritualism, a number of cities around the state are deemed holy. Mathura-Vrindavan, Varanasi, Ayodhya, and Sarnath are some of the most important sites. When it comes to religious travellers, the geographical landscape and the unique quality of topography add a lot to the overall appeal of these destinations. Then there are the annual gatherings, fairgrounds, celebrations, and important events, all of which contribute to the overall spiritual experience. Owing to its second-place ranking in the country in terms of overall visitor footfall, the state has performed wonderfully in the field of tourism. This has been achievable because tourists arrive to the state for a variety of purposes, including religious, spiritual, mindfulness, recreation, and peacefulness, to name a few. Not just religious believers come to the state; there are also others who don't believe in any religion or thought process but nevertheless come for inner serenity or spiritual reasons. These religious tourism places' tranquil environment, combined with the element of spirituality, lead to eternal happiness and equilibrium between the soul and body. The state of Uttar Pradesh offers a myriad of places of interest that annually draw millions of visitors (both local and international).

**Table 3: Domestic Tourist Visits to Some of the Popular Tourism Destinations/Cities of Uttar Pradesh**

Tourism Destination/Cities	DTVs (in Thousands)			% Change Over Previous Year	
	2017	2018	2019	2018	2019
Prayagraj	41764.99	44668.66	284057.01	6.50	84.27
Ayodhya (Sthal)	17549.63	19217.57	20122.44	8.68	4.50
Govardhan	13178.10	15989.70	16889.40	17.58	5.33
Vrindavan	13788.50	14850.20	16036.10	7.15	7.40
Nimsar	1921.00	10156.15	10703.25	81.09	5.11
Agra	8654.42	8949.88	9185.81	3.30	2.57
Mathura	7226.70	7660.30	8240.40	5.66	7.04
Chitrakut	6687.39	6796.42	7234.40	1.60	6.05

Tourism Destination/Cities	DTV's (in Thousands)			% Change Over Previous Year	
	2017	2018	2019	2018	2019
Varanasi	5947.36	6095.89	6447.78	2.44	5.46
Radhakund	4981.30	5155.80	5598.90	3.38	7.91
Kasganj (Soraun)	5040.00	5080.27	5256.73	0.79	3.36
Shakumbhari Devi	4667.98	4901.50	5244.61	4.76	6.54
Brajghat (Garhmukteshwar)	4461.50	4684.80	5012.70	4.77	6.54
Barsana	3614.44	3885.40	4265.70	6.97	8.92
Kusum Sarovar	2592.02	2729.55	2902.30	5.04	5.95
Mahadeva (Barabanki)	2202.22	2456.60	2616.02	10.35	6.09
Nandgaon	2064.46	2184.20	2400.50	5.48	9.01
Kaushambi	2156.03	2160.63	2161.08	0.21	0.02
Gokul	1124.88	1160.15	1257.80	3.04	7.76
Bhairav Deo Sthal Azamgarh	1120.00	1138.60	1206.25	1.63	5.61
Pura Mahadeva (Bagpat)	1045.59	1097.80	1152.65	4.76	4.76
Sarnath	1024.59	1070.04	1132.62	4.25	5.53
Shravasti	120.83	982.81	1116.01	87.71	11.94
Kushinagar (Padrauna)	861.76	897.55	1006.76	3.99	10.85
Devasharif	608.10	714.71	758.58	14.92	5.78
Mahavan	485.05	510.25	575.25	4.94	11.30
Fatehpur Sikri	498.58	517.30	537.08	3.62	3.68
Dargah Sharif (Bahraich)	402.25	457.80	514.52	12.14	11.02
Devipatan, Tulsipur (Balrampur)	305.80	506.62	508.90	39.64	0.45
Ayodhya (District)	283.08	317.25	340.97	10.77	6.95
Majeetha (Barabanki)	252.96	281.15	295.51	10.03	4.86
Kotawa Dham (Barabanki)	184.40	198.94	211.88	7.31	6.11
Satarikh (Barabanki)	169.40	188.75	201.61	10.25	6.38
Ausaneshwar Mahadev Mandir (Barabanki)	166.01	192.13	201.37	13.60	4.59
Kunteshwar Mahadeo Mandir (Barabanki)	153.66	188.92	200.67	18.66	5.86
Durvasa Rishi Asharam	185.00	190.00	198.00	2.63	4.04
Majhgavan Sharif (Barabanki)	158.93	179.21	185.77	11.32	3.53
Sankisa	199.28	200.70	138.53	0.71	-44.88
Kapilvastu (Piprahava)	10.31	11.05	18.34	6.68	39.75

Source: U P Tourism website.

The above table presents a comprehensive list of some of tourist places from Uttar Pradesh. These are among some of those tourist attractions, where annual domestic footfalls have remained higher from 2017 to 2019. The table depicts the increase in domestic tourist visits to all the tourist places mentioned in the list except Sankisa, where number of tourists has declined in the 2019 as compare to 2018. The exponential tourist growth in Prayagraj in 2019 has been recorded due to kumbh mela/snan, from 15.01.2019 to 04.03.2019. Overall the table displays

positive picture of domestic tourism in Uttar Pradesh and also describes its potential for growth of tourism industry.

Domestic tourism, whether it is Religious, Adventure, Sport, Holiday or Heritage; if encouraged with proper strategies, policies and framework can be fruitful to accelerate the speed of tourism in the country. On the similar thoughts Government of Uttar Pradesh has been giving due emphasis in this direction by implementing schemes and strengthening tourism infrastructure such

as One district one product (ODOP), attractive holiday packages for tourists, developing religious circuits (Ramayana circuit, Buddhist circuit, Mahabharat circuit, Shaktipeeth circuit), Construction of Ram Mandir, Renovation of Kahsi Vishvanath Corridor are some of the ongoing projects represent the holistic approach to enhance the experience of tourism. Better network and infrastructural facilities eventually help in near future to boost the inbound tourism to the state of Uttar Pradesh as well. IBEF, June 2021 report highlights “the state government announced its plan in January 2021 to build 1,038 new Ganga aarti platforms along the river in Bijnor and Ballia districts” to enhance facilities to attract religious tourists. The experts and key industry players are hoping to have overcome with this situation as market comes back to its normal situation with the development of vaccine and expecting ‘Revenge travel’ to gain momentum in 2022.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hospitality is related to “host and guest”, “coming together”, “tangible and intangible”, and “providing security, psychological, and physiological comfort” (King, 1995). COVID-19 pandemic has done unprecedented damage to the hospitality industry (Gursoy & Chi, 2020). The World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 showing concern for 213 global deaths and 9800 infections (Ghebreyesus, 2020). In India the first case of COVID-19 infection was reported on January 27, 2020 at Emergency Department in General Hospital, Thrissur, Kerala. A 20 year old female, who returned to Kerala from Wuhan city, China, on January 23, 2020, owing to COVID-19 outbreak situation there (Andrews et al., 2020). In progression to curb the pandemic situation and to break the chain of infection Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi called for a complete lockdown of the entire nation for 21 days On March 24, 2020. India imposed stringent travel curbs to the country on March 11, 2020 and the government suspended “all existing visas, except diplomatic, official, UN/international organisations, employment, project visas” until April 15, 2020 (Economic Times, 2021). This was an unprecedented event in the history of tourism and hospitality industry to shutdown the complete movement of people whether it is inter-state or international. Although there have been several instances of pandemic

in the history but in this era of digitalisation, advanced technology and improved medical science, it seems inconceivable to be incapable to restrain the prolonging affect of pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in destination management organizations’ (DMO) and policymakers’ interventions in the tourism industry, for instance by providing stimulus payments to the tourism industry, or by restricting mobility and ordering business closures (Sigala, 2020). The government of Uttar Pradesh likewise other state governments in India had imposed complete lockdown time to time since the first wave in March 2020 to contain the pandemic affect. Consequently, the lockdown has also shown its negative impact on travel and tourism industry in Uttar Pradesh.

Possible negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry might be minimized with the effective management strategies. The negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry can be reduced by determining the regions with a high travel relationship due to the tourism. Addressing the inauguration of India’s first full-fledged international cruise terminal in Kerala in February 2021 Prime minister Modi mentioned in his speech “since the global pandemic has affected international travel, people are going to nearby places. This is a great opportunity for us. On one hand, this means added livelihood to those in the local tourism industry. On the other hand, it connects between our youth and our culture stronger. There is so much to see, learn and discover. I urge our young start-up friends to think about innovative tourism-related products.” According to Statista (2021) India has achieved continuous growth in terms of Domestic tourist visits from 220 million in 2000 to around 2.3 billion in 2019 adding to this FICCI-Yes Bank 2019 report estimated that the sector to grow at 6.7 per cent per annum to become Rs 35 trillion market with 9.6 per cent of GDP by 2029. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTCC), the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to cost the tourism industry almost USD 22 billion and a loss of almost 50 million jobs worldwide.

## POST PANDEMIC INITIATIVES TO REVITALIZE TOURISM

The study inspects the impression of tourism demand and supply of members with respect to the promotion of domestic tourism as a post-pandemic recovery and

resilience building procedure in Uttar Pradesh. Ioannides and Gyimóthy (2020) propose that governmental policies and interventions are very much needed to support the tourism industry and further enhance resilience to overcome the situation of COVID-19 pandemic. TUI, the world's most influential multinational tourism organisation, has sought the assistance of the UK and German governments in its recovery process, and has proposed cost efficiency improvements in its operations around the world (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Domestic tourism promotion as a recovery methodology isn't new in research writing. It has been a default reaction in a few destinations during emergencies in nations like Kenya, following post-political election decision viciousness in 2008, and Malaysia during the Asian monetary crisis 1997/98. In spite of the fact that surviving destinations has witnessed the weakness of travel & tourism following natural disasters, research zeroing in on the promotion of domestic tourism as an objective recovery and resilience building technique during pandemics in destinations with delayed political and financial emergencies like Uttar Pradesh is restricted. Understanding the manageability of advancing domestic tourism as an alternative after the decay of worldwide tourism because of the effects of COVID-19 is required and very important also. All around the world, because of COVID-19, the tourism industry is stood up to with serious demand and supply gaps and difficulties. These difficulties differ starting with one country with another.

Kuščer et al. (2021) study brings out the action plan to deal with the crisis of pandemic in three phases i.e. Response phase, Recovery phase and Restart phase. Response phase are part of the crisis management and governmental responsibility for crisis response, recovery phase-governmental and DMO interventions are crucial and in the restart phase- sustainable tourism development and strategic enhancements are focussed. These structured responses during three pahses will eventually help build resilience deal with the crisis. Sharma et al. (2020) suggest a concept for building global tourism industry resilience based on four factors: government response, technological innovation, local belongingness, and customer and staff confidence.

Many researchers from different geographical areas have presented their viewpoints and defined ways and strategies to recover from the pandemic situation. Closed boundaries, restricted transportation and COVID

protocols are some of the issues which have changed the thought process of key industry players, Government stake-holders, policy makers and tourism organizations to continue business from tourism resources. Their attention to accelerate the growth of tourism has changed from inbound tourism to strengthen and improve the domestic tourism. This research for the most part centres around domestic tourism as the anticipated speediest survivor, or the projection that 'domestic travel will recover first' (Meir, 2020). In like manner, Brouder (2020) has underscored that 'tourism with regards to COVID-19 uncovers how the nearby local is a locus of progress.' Domestic tourism is the foundation of Indian tourism, and surprisingly 60% of domestic visits are by implication or straightforwardly connected to religious tourism and pilgrimage (Shinde, 2014). Subsequently, at this point, religious tourism can be an essential instrument for India's post-COVID-19 recovery as well as for Uttar Pradesh too. The worldwide viewpoint appears to be broken that calls for neighbourhood local belongingness to act the rescue (Brouder et al., 2020; Chang et al., 2020). During the pandemic and post-COVID-19, domestic tourism is ready to overwhelm the scene with most travellers coming from close by regions (Haywood, 2020).

With assumptions for controlling the episode by April 2020 (Ho, 2020), China continuously released the domestic travel limitations. Be that as it may, the recovery of the inbound traveller market stays hard to forecast. As indicated by Lanjing Finance (2020), the China Tourism Research Institute projected that the market recovery will begin from the second quarter of this current year, with the recommencement of business travel, nearby relaxation trips, brief distance touring (one-day visit) and end of the week recreation, mid-range touring and relaxation (intra-common tourism), and significant distance tourism (cross-commonplace domestic travel); hence, hotels & travel agents should zero in on business travellers and local opportunity. Further, the China Hospitality Association (2020) anticipated that in the final quarter of 2020, the hospitality industry may go through a compensatory utilization development, at last compensating for the revenue loss. Given the above mentioned, it is judicious to express that China's hospitality industry has effectively entered the drawn out recovery stage, what began in May and is required to proceed until the finish of year 2021.

In Malaysia, tourism is one of the principle drivers of the Economic Transformation Program in the National Key

Economic Areas (Bhuiyan, Siwar & Ismail, 2013). This undoubtedly shows that one of Malaysia's main revenue generator is the tourism industry. The tourism industry, be that as it may, relies upon the presence of global and domestic guests. As Malaysia's border are shut and the government forces a ban on passage & prohibition on individuals from nations having more than 150,000 COVID-19 cases, Malaysia needs to focus and zero in on domestic tourism to improve Malaysia's economy. On a fundamental level, domestic tourism assumes a huge part for a country. There is a ton of potential for domestic tourism that should be tapped. Albeit the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture has dropped the "Visit Malaysia 2020" campaign because of the episode of the COVID pandemic, progressing endeavours to develop tourism ought to be made specifically in the space of domestic tourism. Likewise, domestic tourism could help the flight industry, convenience, retail, food and refreshment areas also. Gupta (2021) suggest that DMO's and other tourism stakeholders should take appropriate measures to promote domestic travel, especially in the major tourism bound cities to rejuvenate the Indian tourism industry. Domestic tourism is India's most significant source of finance and support for the tourist industry. The research by Arbul et al. (2021) study supports the promotion of domestic tourism as a method for dealing with the consequences of the pandemic. Domestic tourism in Spain has dropped owing to pandemic factors such as loss of income and fear of travel, but it may still create 33 percent of pre-crisis overnight stays if 50% of outward tourism can be redirected to the domestic market. Woyo (2021) study did not support domestic tourism as a suitable recovery option for tourism industry beyond the corona virus pandemic in Zimbabwe due to the challenges exist in the country. Manhas et al. (2020) mentioned in their study that religious sites in India can be potential tool in reviving the tourism sector by promoting staycations and micro-holidays, and by reforming existing projects such as the Swadesh Darshan and the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD). Their study further suggested that packaging tourism products with prominent tourist attractions such as Yoga, Wellness and Ayurveda, can prove a vital tool to reenergize the sector deal with the crisis of pandemic in India. Hussain et al. (2021) study on tourism recovery in Aakora (South Island, New Zealand) describe that government efforts and the progressive reopening of the country has resulted in a shift from "cruise tourism" into a gradual return of

"domestic tourism". The researchers further added that Nature-based resources and outdoor activities can be fruitful for tourism's immediate and sustainable future. Local stakeholders' need to focus on "quality" of tourism rather than "quantity". Therefore, a comprehensive tourism recovery plan is required to prepare by the all stakeholders for smooth conducting the tourism activity in the vicinity of the region for sustaining the tourism industry at local level (Ghosh, 2020).

## STUDY FINDINGS

The study indicates towards the need of a holistic approach to further resuscitate tourism industry in Uttar Pradesh. It articulates the strengths in regard to potential tourism products in Uttar Pradesh and emphasizes on the improvement of local tourism and infrastructure. The Central and State governments' initiatives to curb the spread of COVID-19 pandemic has somehow realised the importance to strengthen the internal business transactions and local consumers. The social and economic consequences of the epidemic prompted governments to adopt a self-sufficient economy. The Central government thus have launched Self Reliant India campaign on May 2020, to make the country and its citizens independent and self-reliant in all senses, placing emphasis on five pillars of self reliance i.e. Economy, Infrastructure, System, Vibrant Demography and Demand to stand against all adverse conditions. The literature review and analysis of potential tourism possibilities suggest that tourism revival strategy of Uttar Pradesh must focus on incorporating indigenous traditions, craft, culture, and beliefs to optimise tourism output by drawing attention of domestic tourists. As previously indicated, Uttar Pradesh had shown great potential in attracting tourists from all around India. Although Uttar Pradesh has many forms of tourism, which pull the attention of tourists but among all forms of tourism, the discussion above reveals Religious and Heritage tourism as most potential form of tourism in Uttar Pradesh. It can be observed from the literature review that to plan and process Post-COVID recovery stage, several nations have given due emphasis on strengthening the local tourism through culture, tradition and heritage. In this regard the sensation of belongingness & attachment among local people will be helpful to define the terms for the recovery of the tourism industry. Thus apart from well known tourism spots whether religious or heritage, the government must reconstruct and reinvent

the important popular 'local' tourism destinations with proper infrastructural development and effective marketing through social media.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Uttar Pradesh is blessed with numerous religious and historical sites. Some of them are very famous (such as Prayagraj, Ayodhya, Kashi Vishwnath, Vrindavan, Nimsar, Mathura and Varanasi etc.) and visited by millions of domestic and international tourists every year. However, the government should focus its attention on such neglected or lesser-known religious tourist destinations in Uttar Pradesh (Sankisa, Satrikh, Kapilvastu, and Magahar, for example), which are religiously and mythologically noteworthy. So that it can be maintained with an emphasis on better upgraded tourist facilities in order to improve domestic tourism at these sites.

The State Tourism Corporations should focus on this organic image and induced image through different channels such as social media (Facebook, Instagram, Youtube etc). While designing marketing strategies for tourism destinations in Uttar Pradesh, base images should be kept in mind. In this way we can highlight the strengths, and weaknesses or exactness or effectiveness of the promotional campaigns. Secondly since there will be a change in the image after visiting the site and having a real-time experience, we need to separate the images of those who have not visited from those who have visited the site. This can be achieved by controlling the groups. The state government should invest more on public facilities and amenities to encourage the new social distancing norms. The local tourist bodies along with the local administration (or State Tourism Department) is required to come out with regulations (SOP) on how to sanitise rooms, camps and running restaurants, how to run taxis with optimum number of passengers, trekking lodges and such related issues which will also boost confidence among the local citizens. The discussion above also highlights the significant role of government to support tourism industry with additional funds and policies, which will further enhance the efficiency of tourism stakeholders to provide better services and facilities to the tourists visiting different tourist destinations in Uttar Pradesh. It is noticeable from the preceding discussion that religious and pilgrimage tourism in Uttar Pradesh need special attention in order to realise its full potential.

## CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing literature, it is apparent that, in order to recover from the COVID pandemic, Uttar Pradesh must focus on the development of tourism that prioritizes local culture, tradition, heritage, and people. We have to be 'go local than global'. For the next few months, we must concentrate on restoring the tourism sector and the local economy on a "region" basis. After disasters, pandemics, and epidemics such as Ebola, Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in the past, the tourism sector quickly recovered (Sharma et al., 2020).

The coming 8-9 months are not for making high profits but an opportunity to survive and revive the industry so that thousands of people associated with the tourism ecosystem may overcome this unprecedented time and overcome the present situation by serving the local stakeholders until the normalcy restored in our social life and economy. Safety of the tourists need to be emphasized and well defined norms require to be set to prevent any impairment which may cause further increase the chance of spreading the virus. For sustainable development of the tourism industry government need to come forward by helping the sector with soft loans, working capital and deferment on loan repayments which is inevitable in this situation. We may expect that economic activity would start again with new norms of social distancing; the local bodies of tourism sector and all service providers would introduce a localised approach to address the challenging issues of the region.

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