



The COVID-19 Pandemic: Impacts and Combating Strategies in Hospitality & Tourism Industry

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Abstract *Tourism industry is very vast, dynamic and growth-oriented industry which is associated with several other sectors such as hospitality, education, finance, agriculture, transport, medical, real estate etc. The whole socio-economic structure has become still due to global pandemic of novel Corona (COVID-19) which has emerged as a big challenge for the globalization and worldwide operations of enterprises. This problem has led to almost entire shutdown, which ultimately affected the human life, business and economic growth immensely and may exist for both short & long duration depends as the things progress. Major adverse impact has been observed on the Indian hospitality industry struggling with very less demand along with very few upcoming reservations. Effectively, all momentary demands have diminished entirely, except those guests who have been staying for long and the hotels which have been recommended by the government for the stay of international passengers returning back to India. Implementation of Section-144, where mass gathering is prohibited, deferment of Visas, & the lockdown in India and their influences seem to be a big challenge. To combat the socio-economic impacts of this pandemic, Government is making appropriate plans to set up a COVID-19 squad to commence essential measures. Since, tourism industries is among the largest and fastest growing industries world-widely and it is considered to play crucial role in retrieving the socio-economic stability after this pandemic situation. Keeping these points in mind, the present article focuses on the challenges faced by tourism and hospitality industry due to COVID-19 and implementation of strategies to cope up the situation.*

Keywords: COVID-19, Pandemic, Hospitality Industry, Tourism, Socio-Economic Stability, Combating Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the global outbreak of COVID-19, the hospitality and tourism sector is presently suffering from its utmost stern functional, saleable, and economic disasters. Major noticeable influences have been observed in both destination and source market, which caused the hinderance in the functional and marketable events. Foremost market players in various fields of the tourism including commercial airline, tour operatives, hotels, cruise line, and venders, have either diminished or they have totally stopped the manufacturing for indeterminate duration, consequently lead to abrupt and entire termination of revenue generation.

This type of event is not happened the very first time that a coronavirus has led to the shocking effects on the human

beings in context with their health. In the early 2000s, spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) coronavirus had occurred, but it was not expected that some other coronavirus Middle Eastern respiratory syndrome (MERS) will burst almost in every part of the globe. There is similarity among all the three viruses as their emergence has occurred from animals and then it is transmitted to human beings. Similar to the SARS, the 2019-nCoV easily spread between the human beings, whereas, MERS has a restricted transmission rate. Though, it was found that MERS has a high mortality rate, those who got infected by this virus.

Several people of today's society have also faced this world's health problem namely SARS. Outbreak of SARS first occurred in south China in 2002 and then swiftly spread in south-east Asia, where Pneumonia was observed

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as an atypical symptom. Then in 2003, World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledges these parts of China as high-risk tourist zones and professed as epidemic zones. At that time, strict warnings were given to International tourists to stop their visits to China, whereas several other countries had banned the Chinese visitors to enter in the respective nations (Zeng et al., 2005; CDC SARS Response Timeline). Same is the situation for the 2019-nCoV, still certain known and unknown facts exist regarding this disease outbreak and transmission.

Government of China took severe steps to restrain the spread of this disease, when 2019-nCoV was declared as emergency on December 31, 2019 by their medical professionals (Buckley, 2020). The emergency poses several restrictions on assembly of people and their visits from one country to another and even within the country. This has also influenced the countries like Japan and Thailand as the cancellation of tours by the China Government (Yuda and Tani, 2020). Millions of people were restricted inside the Wuhan and its two neighbouring cities; their tours were entirely banned and travel permits were not given to them to restrict their movement outside the cities (The Economist, 2020). Even the airlines have restricted the flights inside and out of China. Apart from China, various other countries have implemented the same restrictions. (Bloomberg News, 2020).

Then in January 2020, 2019-nCoV was professed as International Emergency with respect to the public health, which currently restricted all the international travels and trades (WHO Statement, 2020). T. A. Ghebreyesus, WHO chief cleared that the restrictions on International tour and trades would not require to stop the outbreak of this disease, rather it would have influence on enhancing fear or stigma in context with some public health assistance (Bashir, 2020). An expression at certain activities and responses to this promptly varying landscape increases challenging interrogations in the travel and tourism industries & demands for bigger responsibilities and attentions from local residents and travellers.

SIGNIFICANCE OF HOTEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

In the tourism sector, hotels are certainly the fastest-growing divisions and it is actually defensible as housing is the crucial fragment in the growth of any country or region's tourism. Tourism and Hotel Industries always run side by side and the existence of a greater number of hotels contributes in value addition and rather several other factors influence the economy of the region. The presence of hotels only may not be sufficient to activate the tourism, rather they play a role in balancing the health tourism.

From the last two decades, value and relevance of hotel and hospitality industry has been increased due to drastic rise in its demand for the inclusive economy. The global income from tourism in 2018 was around \$1.5 bn that was approximately 3 times more as in 2000 (UNWTO, 2019). Noteworthy shares of the labour forces of chief economies are working in this sector. For the growth and progression, Indian tourism and hotel industry are considered as crucial drivers. The opportunity for Hotel Industry may be at palisade due to the existing outburst of economical substitutes and additional stay options accessible, though hotels are yet a large player in the tourism sector of any country. Both of these industries have significant roles in fulfilling their needs and providing support to each other. The relation between these two is surely dynamic and both of these industries can not be successful without each other as these are incomplete without each other's support.

Hotel and its exertions to Tourism are flourishing significantly in India. Such growth in economy has now leading to an employment creator, which is a substantial cause of foreign exchange in the country. In India, Tourism is astonishingly the third-biggest foreign currency exchange for the country. The thriving tourism industry has had a driving influence on the hospitality sector because of the rise in habitation rate and usual room prices.

India has been announced as hottest destiny for tourism by World Travel and Tourism Council from the year 2009 and in future it would remain as a favourite destiny for tourism. This is one of the reasons for flourishing the hotel industry. Additionally, the hotels also contribute certain spark to the Tourism & Travel industry also. The tourism and hotel industry are the topmost sectors in India which attract the highest Foreign Investment (FDI) and World Tourism all around the globe. 10.6 billion USD FDI was fascinated by the hotel and tourism industry from 2000 to 2017.

For the country's economic development, hotel industry plays significant role. This tendency is increasing slowly, which may stimulate and enhance sense to the tourism of any place. Improvement in the domestic travel was also stimulated by the Hotels and its Industry. It was also reported that the tourism industry contributes significantly in providing employment in both direct and indirect way.

Italy, which is reported as the second most country having highest number of COVID-19 (John Hopkins University, 2020) and 15% of its working people are involved in the tourism sector directly or indirectly. Whereas, the countries like France, UK, US etc. possess 10% shares of their employments towards tourism sector. Present scenario may lead to drastic fall in the employment of hotel and tourism sector. In the overall GDP of several countries will show an extensive gap with great comparative share of tourism in the economy.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACTS

Influence on Hotel Industry

Various parts of the hospitality sector are adversely influenced by virus in several countries. Cancellation of several activities, closure of accommodation facilities and lock down trigger the fall in food and beverage services. Food and beverage outlets need to be closed too, whereas in many countries, alteration in the delivery's mode are permitted to make some activities functional. News on lay-offs and bankruptcies trailed, along with British airline FlyBe capitulating market force, announcing bankruptcy on 5 March 2020 (Business Insider, 2020). Chief airlines include Scandinavian Airlines, Singapore Airlines and Virgin, along with the tour operators such as German TUI (2020) have entreated tens of billions of US\$ in state assistance.

Due to the pandemic condition, government has taken decision of social distancing and lock down all around the world, consequently influenced the restaurant business. Due to this, hotels and restaurants are also shut down. Business loss was reported worth of billions of dollars' and whereas in the US, a Bailout package of \$ 150Bn was sought after (Ozili & Thankum, 2020). Currently, India is not having a bailout package for the hotel industry. Though discussions are going on for some kind of incentives for SME's & MSMEs, still it need a lot of sureness on the side of customer, for restaurants to keep afloat and get footfall.

Recently, in Delhi, a pizza delivery boy was found positive for coronavirus, as a result, authorities have kept as many as 72 families and 15 staff of the pizzeria under Quarantine (kumar, 2020). Such incidences do not represent a good sign for the food service industries. This news makes the people frighten too, not because of the spread of coronavirus, but they would think more than once to order any online food from restaurants. From this incidence, we can imagine how prone is food industry to such type of crisis.

However, the success of food service sector is based on several factors, but the conditions are different presently. Before the pandemic situation of COVID-19, hotels and restaurants were dependent on several techniques of food selling, which will be superseded in the post COVID world.

After this crisis, when social distancing would exist as a rule, in that case, hotels and restaurants need to re-establish themselves. Although street food retailers can flourish due to the transparency present in preparation of food, only the mid to large-scale sit-down restaurants will have to struggle (Jain, 2020).

Effects on Travel and Tourism

It is essential to know that in the past, worldwide tourism had suffered a large number of crisis. In between 2000 to 2015, main troublesome activities involve the terrorist attacks (September 11, 2001), SARS outbreak (2003), the worldwide economic crisis (2008/2009), and MERS outbreak (2015). All of these did not cause any reduction in the progress of tourism globally at all, but only SARS and the global economic crisis hampered the international influxes (World Bank 2020a, 2020b). Such reports indicated the entire system of tourism as a resistant to severe exterior tremors. Though, certain evidences are there which show that the impression and retrieval from the COVID-19 pandemic would be extraordinary.

The associations among travel and pandemics are concerned basically to understand the health safety and worldwide changes (Burkle, 2006). Although researches on tourism have progressed at least a hasty comprehension of the possible universal influences of universal climatic changes. There is not always a similar indebtedness of the systemic impacts of pandemics, along with the research inclining to emphasis on distinct country effects, instead of the system level challenges and susceptibility. Significant contributions of flights in hastening and intensifying the spread of influenza and coronavirus have been confirmed by various researches (Brown et al., 2016). Though, increase or decrease of academic attention in context with the tourism and pandemics is insightful of the broader industry and also governments; mentioned that the tourism is influenced by the spread of diseases many times from the turn of the millennium. It is highly known fact that many times warnings have been made by the scientists; research institutions and the government agencies against the pandemics that they can pose a high risk to the tourism and society (Hall, 2006, 2020; Page & Yeoman, 2007; Bloom & Fauci & Morens, 2012; Scott & Gossling, 2015; Cadarette, 2019; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017, 2018; Jonas, 2014; World Bank, 2012).

Till February, 2020, more than 600 demises were reported in China due to 2019-nCoV, which was much bigger number in comparison to that recorded during the SARS epidemic in 2002-2003 i.e. 349 (WHO, Summary of SARS cases). Apart from this, more than 30,000 confirmed cases were reported in China, along with the added cases also recognized in over 25 other countries. Most of the mortality rate was observed in China, as compared to other countries (CDC, Global Map). On the other hand, in the same month, more than 60 people were confirmed with 2019-nCoV, as per Japanese Health Ministry (Berlinger et al., 2020). On the basis of earlier

involvements, certain stakeholders associated to hospitality may be better organized, with respect to emergency situation and working with clients (Hung et al., 2018).

Considering the situation during SARS, several researchers were asked to plan against this crisis of COVID-19 and balance the system in this tough time (Mair et al., 2016). Regrettably, synchronized disaster management and communication planning have hardly been executed efficiently at the local or centre level. The problem is not only associated with the financial recovery, destination image supervision, media organization and upgradation. Ebola and SARS like pandemic outbreaks also led to the discernment and distortion linked to the nations fundamental to the eruptions (Cooper, 2005; Tam, 2018). The recent 2019 epidemic is also hovering repercussion against the population of China inside and outside the country.

COVID-19: CRISIS MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

Various stakeholder groups are included to a variable range as the companies are greatly influenced by the crisis. For a company, the requirements of stakeholders are essential to balance and fulfilled on priority basis. Such type of declaration is always crucial for the hotel industry – which include food and beverages services, travel & tourism, housing and restoration (Novak, 2017) – during the scenario of existing COVID-19 emergency. As every hospitality unit is influenced economically as well as functionally due to this worldwide crisis. By taking the benefits from crisis management strategies, the present scenario can be balanced. Usually during the start of expectancy or presently at the stage of emergency, stakeholder should have to follow certain steps:

Step 1: pertinent stakeholders must be recognized: Even SME companies, which represent the mainstream among the European hospitality companies by drawing a particular stakeholder map (Fig. 1). Following this step, they would get the potential to create a systematic cooperative network in place of sustaining familiar relations with the stakeholders.

Step 2: Specific necessities and demands: According to normal and emergency situations, stakeholders' desires and demands may change. Depending upon the over-all cataloguing it is necessary to comprise or accentuate exact requirements and demands related to present COVID-19 crisis.

Step 3: to prepare a defensive or operative method. Dealings along with the communiqué can be steadily improved to the corresponding level of effective challenges (Zech 2015).

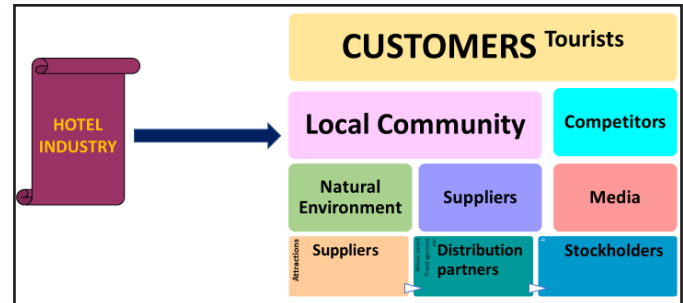


Fig. 1: Stakeholder Map of Hotel Industry in Context with the Tourism (Modified after Zech 2015)

In the present time of COVID-19 emergency, anxiety and apprehension are described in terms of discernment and nationalism, which has a diminutive base in medical evidences (Zech 2017). There are certain events which demonstrate the responses of local people and their negligence against the restaurants of China (Aguilera, 2020; Fang, 2020). The British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, Canada tried to regulate some wrong information regarding COVID-19 with the help of twitter (O'Brien, 2020; see also Emevu, 2020; Tham, 2020). Several people of Wuhan or any other city of China, are facing prohibition, discrimination and side-lining while moving to some other countries, even they are not getting the accessibility of hotels in different parts of China. Even many people are not getting proper medical facilities during the period of lockdown (Gan, 2020).

The existing condition strengthens an important belief for a conversant civil culture. Inhabitants should be well intimated about the unswerving health authorities. The hotel and tourism sector pay an esteemed contribution to proceed a sturdy health communication approaches which include the gathering and communicating the knowledge of medical actualities about the spread of virus and functional phases to inhibit the threat of contamination. Misinformation should also be managed and hospitality must be ensured towards the guests. To fulfil such responsibilities, various steps are essential and those need to be incorporated at the local level:

Durable links must be established between hotels and tourism industries, destiny management administrations and public health establishment (there is robust belief on restricted health establishment for investigation, intensive care and dealing with COVID-19).

Such group of people should be supported who are suffering from discernment and xenophobia by the hotels and travel industries (Phelan & Gostin, 2016).

Local population and stakeholders must be informed well regarding the necessary information of crisis and proper care

must be given to the people who have been side-lined or facing exclusion from the societies due to outbreak of crisis at that very particular region.

Quarantine and Tracing

Apart from this, one of the most operative retrieval approaches for tourism in the post-viral world may be permitting the people long with antibodies to overcome the novel COVID-19 coronavirus so that they can move freely. Different sectors like hotels, spa or airlines, must offer a special discounts or various packages to the customers to re-establish themselves. Some special offers must be given to those group of cured people who need recuperation means; some sort of discounts should be given to such travellers. Though, there are certain apps like Uber, where almost all the latest visits can be traced out, which consequently helped in finding out the travellers who were somehow found positive to coronavirus (Strielkowski, 2020).

Smart quarantine and tracing approaches have been proved advantageous in several parts of the world. People who have just arrived in some other country, certain tracking tools have been provide to them, like in Hongkong tracking bracelets have been given to new arriving travellers, connected with the mobile phones. Such strategies have proved beneficial to trace out the movement of quarantined people.

Other Management Approaches by Government of India

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has also released some preventive measures against COVID-19 on June 04, 2020. There are more than 70 guidelines declared for hotels and restaurants to avoid the spread of coronavirus. Some of very key measures include:

- Only asymptomatic staff and customers are allowed after maintaining proper hygiene. They must wear gloves and masks and should follow social distancing.
- High risk employees like aged people (>65 years), children (< 10 years), pregnant ladies and those who are suffering from any medical issue must take extra precautions and they are not allowed to be exposed to front-line work where direct contact occur with customers. Rather home deliveries are preferred.
- The complete ID details, travel history, medical conditions and self-declaration of customer/guests must be taken at the reception.
- Hotels/restaurants should follow contactless methods such as QR code, online forms, digital payments for both check-in and check-out.
- Seating places, rooms and luggage's of the guests must be disinfected and proper sanitization facilities should be provided.

Many such points have been mentioned in this guideline. Implementation of these crisis management approaches would surely be beneficial to overcome combat this problem of COVID-19.

CONCLUSION

Due to some political and commercial decisions taken by the government in the emergency of COVID-19 lead to denied access of various services to the customers of hotel and tourism sector. It was observed that such privileges manifest in various ways to the hospitality and tourism industry. Definitely, the world will get recovery from the crisis of COVID-19 similarly as it has come out from several such types of epidemics/emergencies. The very first time, such type of worldwide crisis we are facing with such extraordinary gage disseminated in real time. Though, one must not overlook that the COVID-19 is not the Black Death Plague. All the people definitely are not affected by this crisis, but those who will be suffering, would get recover from it quickly. Such people will become the virus-free travellers which will further help to breath the new lives into the tourism and service industry sectors once everything will be settled. Closing of borders and shutting down everything may not be the appropriate solution for long term to fight against this pandemic situation, as it leads to collapse of country's economy, besides all the adverse influences of coronavirus. Globalisation and uprising technology approaches has provided us with many tools that must be utilized efficiently to cover the road to the post-viral tourism.

Further, despite its negative impacts on the tourism and hospitality industry, the COVID 19 pandemic situation has helped the academicians to uncover the opportunities of alternative teaching and learning padagogy. In fact, on theb one hand the academicians have explored numerous teaching and learning strategies to enhance student engagement and satisfaction in a virtual format and on the other hand. Industry has designed customized virtual internships and training programmes. The educational institutions have adopted new teaching and learning methods such as Zoom classes, online discussion, , virtual group projects and onther assignments. Thus, to place students in a better postion in the coming years, academicians should focus on to redesign interdisciplinary/ multidisciplinary courses coupled with software or digital tools such as big data analysis and artificial intelligence.

Interestingly, tourist destinations are required to assess the impacts of COVID -19 and future pandemics using both monitory and non-monetary analysis. Probably, it is time to change and crystallisation of mindset for the understanding the profound impacts on our emerging destinations after COVID -19.

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