

COVID-19: A Critical Appraisal on Tourism and Hospitality Sector in India

Akhilesh Singh*

Abstract

The COVID-19 or Corona Virus Disease 2019 belongs to the family of Corona Viruses. It was first identified in the Wuhan city of China in December 2019. COVID-19 strained and enforced the governments of all affected Nations to shut down everything. Accordingly, from March to April most of the countries and its citizens observed complete lockdown. It had affected even production houses too. It is assumed that tourism is the first affected, most affected and the industry that will recover in last, therefore, among all affected sectors, it is believed that tourism is the worst affected industries of the world. In India, first COVID-19 case was reported on 30th January 2020. Every year, the peak season for international tourists fall in the months between October to March, therefore, the COVID-19 had affected the Indian tourism industry from February to March of the year 2020 and it is expected that the crisis will similarly impact the service industry in upcoming peak season too. During these two months, it spoiled both the inbound and outbound tourism industry of the country and later in summers destroyed domestic season too. During summers all Indian tourist destinations were closed. Few tourist attractions were opened in the last part of the June month but attracted a very few numbers of tourists. For this paper, a piece of literature has been selected from various journals, edited books, newspapers, reports, official websites of different Government and Non-Government organizations. It aims to understand the views and analysis of different professionals, academicians and scholars about the COVID-19 impacts on Tourism and Hospitality Industry. The study revealed that the pandemic has affected a lot to the industry and now special packages need to be declared by the responsible authorities.

Keywords: COVID-19, Tourism, Hospitality, Challenges, Tourist

Introduction

The COVID-19 or Corona Virus Disease 2019 belongs to the family of Corona Viruses. It was first identified in the Wuhan city of China in December 2019. In the early days, China suppressed the matter from the rest part of the world but after its swift spread and when the condition became unrestrained, it unveiled the situation with other nations of the world. The virus continued to wander from one country to another and therefore, on 30th January, WHO declared the crisis as the Public Health Emergency of International Concern and later Pandemic on 11th March 2020. COVID-19 strained and enforced the governments of all affected Nations to shut down everything. Accordingly, from March to April 2020 most of the countries and its citizens observed complete lockdown. It had affected even production houses too. According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare till 23rd September 2020 total 55,62,663 COVID-19 cases were noted by India including 88,935 deaths. Maharashtra is the most affected states of India with 12,24,380 total confirmed cases. Mumbai is the extremely affected cities of India and also a port that receives the second greatest number of international tourists. Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and West Bengal are among the top 10 states that receive the maximum number of Foreign Tourists are also in the list of top 10 most affected states of India. It is assumed that the Tourism is the first affected, most affected and the industry that will recover in last, therefore, among all affected sectors, it is believed that tourism is the worst

* Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism, Uttarakhand Open University, Haldwani, Uttarakhand, India.

affected industries of the world. India registered its first COVID-19 case on 30th January 2020. Every year, the peak season for international tourists fall in months from October to March, it means the catastrophe had already exaggerated the inbound tourism industry from February to March in the year 2020. It also spoiled the outbound tourism and later in summers ruined domestic tourism too. During summers, all Indian tourist destinations were entirely closed. Few tourist attractions were re-opened in the last part of the June month but failed to attract a good number of tourists.

It is, therefore, to present more systematically, as per the convenience of the readers, the appraisal of the studies conducted from time to time, during COVID-19 and the views expressed thereby distinguished authors and academicians through their published/unpublished articles, books and study reports accessible from January 2020 to August 2020 have been further classified in different sections and months group according to its major focus, outcomes and duration of the studies.

Major Objectives

Every research and review exercises are based on some specific objectives and the present exercise is also not an exception, therefore, the main objectives of this exercise are placed below:

- To know the major observations, focus, response of the authors and scholars as well as the outcomes of their studies conducted in recent past accessible during January 2020 to August 2020 on the impact of COVID-19 on tourism and hospitality sectors.
- To review, analyze, appraise and present the outcomes of COVID-19 based on study's outcomes on tourism and hospitality sector industries at present and future in a more systematic order so that its real impact could be found out and necessary measures may be evolved in this connection.

Research Methodology

The present descriptive outcome based on data collected from secondary sources such as reputed journals, edited books, newspapers, reports, official websites of Government and Non-Governmental organizations. For the better understanding of the readers, the collected

pieces of literature have been classified into two parts: the first part consists the analysis of literature published from January 2020 to April 2020 and the second part covers the exploration of research works published in consecutive months i.e. from May 2020 to August 2020 presented below:

Critical Appraisal of Brought Out Literatures on Tourism and Hospitality Sector

(From January 2020 to April 2020)

Kasare (2020) Conducted a study on “Effects of Coronavirus Disease (COVID -19) on Tourism Industry of India”, in his study, he highlighted the top 10 tourist destinations of India in terms of maximum foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) and impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism industry. He concluded by saying that the pandemic is affecting a lot to all sectors of India especially to the service sector which may finally result in the country's GDP loss. To tackle the present contagion the Government of India must take all necessary steps.

Anon (2002) stated in an article published on “Covid-19 impact: Loss forecast for India's tourism sector doubles to Rs 10 lakh crore, says Faith” stated that Faith has assumed that due to crisis Indian tourism industry may lose about 10 lakh crore which is double than the prediction already done by the association in earlier March. The Association has also requested essentials support from the government for the revival and survival of the service sector.

Kumar, Thombare and Kale (2020) argues in their paper on “Impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) on Indian Economy” that earlier, Delhi, Maharashtra, Kerala and Uttar Pradesh were the most affected states of India but other states also noticed few corona cases, for better understanding of the readers, Sector-wise they have classified and examined the economic impacts. The Indian economy is estimated to be affected with 348 million dollars and will be among the top 15 economically most affected countries of the world.

Kumar (2020) in the research paper on “Indian Tourism Industry and COVID-19: Present Scenario” highlighted that COVID-19 affected a lot to the tourism and its allied industries. Today people are cancelling their airline seats,

hotel rooms and events and tourism industry is witnessing reduction of staff or employees are forced to work in fewer salaries. In 2020, it is expected that the Indian tourism industry will receive only half revenue if compare with the previous year's profits and it may take several years to overcome the situation. Further, the author suggests that the Government can save the service industry by reducing the taxes or can give loans with minimum interest rates. Some special packages need to be announced by the Government of India to save the sector.

Ohri, Sitaram, Gopalswamy, Radhakrishnan and Singh (2020) in a report on "Potential Impact of COVID-19 on the Indian Economy" stated that the present crisis will result in the uncertain end. The pandemic has created new problems and challenges before the business environment hence, political and business leaders must take appropriate and timely decisions.

Jain, Makkar, NG, Makkar and Gupta (2020) in a report on "COVID-19 Assessing the Impact on Education Sector and Looking Ahead" has pointed out that in India, the COVID-19 has affected about 320 million learners because all the educational institutions in India are closed, therefore, educators are using online teaching tools to continue the teaching and learning process. As tourism is the worst affected sector so it is similarly affecting tourism education and new admissions.

(From May 2020 to August 2020)

Bhutia (2020) in a study on "Effect of Covid-19 on Sikkim tourism – a Case Study" has noticed that till 22nd May 2020 no confirmed case of COVID-19 was reported in the hilly State of Sikkim but due to the fear and travel restrictions, the pandemic has affected a lot to the tourism industry of the state. In March, foreign tourist's arrival fell by 66.4% therefore, the economy of the state got affected a lot, which finally affected the livelihood of the service providers.

Rath (2020) Postulates in his paper on "Transform COVID-19 challenge on Indian Tourism Industry into an Opportunity," that India houses various kinds of tourism products so always fascinates tourists from all parts of the World. The tourism industry not only increases GDP but also offers employment opportunities to the host

community but today the tourism industry is greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which results in the form of unemployment, stress and economic crisis. Finally, the author concludes by saying that the world is not full of roses, therefore, at every moment, the industry should be prepared and ready to face upcoming deterrents. At this time, we should develop and increase our infrastructure, attitude and morale to defeat COVID-19.

Chowdhary (2020) has given his views in the article published on "The New age Traveller-five things you should know" that post COVID-19 travel activities can be more expensive because it may include hygiene and sanitization service charges too. Further, the author says that new-age traveller may cut their travel and accommodation costs due to the accessibility of certain better online platforms.

Kumar, Kumar, Christopher and Doss (2020) in a study revealed that COVID-19 first appeared in Wuhan city of China but soon it spread to other countries. Till 8th May 2020 Indian reported 56,342 confirmed positive cases. As India is the second-most populous country in the world, the situation could be worst but thanks to Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of India, which did wonderful efforts and timely aware citizens about the pandemic and measures survive. Further, the Government's initiative to implement 55 days complete lockdown, which started on 25th March also helped a lot to control the spread of virus. The present pandemic's impact on the tourism industry will be much higher than the SARS because COVID-19 appeared during peak season.

Patel, Sharma, Kharoliwal and Khemariya (2020) in a study on the topic entitled "The Effects of Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19) in the Tourism Industry in India" have examined the extent of COVID-19 effect on the global tourism industry and found that India is continuously recording new cases of COVID-19 and accordingly tourists are continuously cancelling or rescheduling their travel plans. UNWTO has estimated that this year the international tourism market of the world may decrease by 20% to 30%. Hence, some relief measures need to be executed to give benefits to those, who are socio-economically got affected by the crisis.

Parashar, Khatri, and Pilani (2020) in a report on "Travel and Tourism: Survive, Revive and Thrive in Times of COVID-19" have suggested some relief measures,

recommendations to the Government of India and also highlighted the relief packages given by other countries of the world. The key highlights of the report are: The global travel and tourism are estimated to lose USD 2.7 trillion in 2020 with 100 million jobs at risk. It is expected that the Indian travel and tourism industry may lose USD 16.7 billion with up to 50 million jobs at risk. So GOI must create a separate tourism fund under the aegis of Ministry of Tourism, which should be accessible to the industry as collateral-free, 10 years loan with a moratorium of two years and the minimum rate of interest to support businesses stabilize in this crisis. UNWTO has also urged Governments of World to support the sector morally and financially.

Mandal, Ranjan and Dharanirajan (2020) in the research paper titled “A Review of India’s Response to COVID-19 Outbreak and the Impact of Lockdown on the Indian Economy” mentioned that COVID-19 has affected both the life and property of the people. Initially, the Indian Government took quick and smart decisions to control COVID-19 diseases. However, COVID-19 has wedged harshly to the Indian economy and forced to halt all manufacturing and processing industries. The government had given priority to save its citizen’s life on the cost of the economy. The paper was concluded by saying that Medical staff working in COVID-19 hospitals need to be well equipped with high-quality gears.

Chowdhary (2020) in his article on “Rewriting Future of Tourism: Reengineering the Supply Chain Post-COVID” has written that due to COVID tourism and hospitality sector has augmented the use of online technology in the form of use of robotics, augmented reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), Artificial Intelligence (AI) etc. The author has suggested that post-COVID-19 the service providers should come with safer and affordable tour packages for the guests.

Agrawal, Jamwal and Gupta (2020) found in their research paper on “Effect of COVID-19 on the Indian Economy and Supply Chain” that COVID-19 has affected the production of articles and supply chain around the world. Due to 41 days of complete lockdown, the disease has also ruined the manufacturing activities in India. The authors have also identified 18 critical barriers that have affected the supply chain in India.

Dang, Bedi and Mathur (2020) in a survey conducted on “Impact of COVID-19 on the Indian Hospitality Industry”

mentions that the Tourism and Hospitality industry is the most affected industries across the World. To better understand the impact of the pandemic on the Hospitality sector, an interview of senior executives of leading hotel companies was conducted. In results, the author found that post-COVID-19 would bring so many changes: lobby and restaurant seats will be placed with proper distance, hotel staff will use masks and hand gloves and the same will be also offered to the guests, public areas with high touch risks like door handles and handrails will be regularly sanitized, all check-in, check out and room service shall be done without contact.

Nath (2020) explored in an article published on “As we Emerge into a ‘New Normal’, India Needs to Evolve to Create a COVID-Ready Tourism Destination” that Indian tourism industry needs to develop COVID ready destinations with proper social distancing arrangements. The article also reveals that during the pandemic the popular and the crowded destinations are regaining their original charm and ecology.

Anon (2020) has indicated in “Impact of COVID-19 on Sectors in India” that all closed businesses would restart in June 2020. Different reports mention that despite the travel restrictions being lifted very few numbers of people will show their interest to travel to the destination and because the hospitality industry is dependent on the tourism industry so the pandemic may continue till the first quarter of 2021. To get out of this situation businesses may decrease incentive tours, which may also discourage employees to travel tourist destinations.

Anon (2020) in a report titled “Sectoral Impacts of Corona Virus Pandemic in India, Suggested Policy Measures- Tourism & Hospitality Sector” has emphasized on the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the service industry and measures to handle the emergency. During the initial months of COVID-19 pandemic, tourists started to cancel their hotel rooms, train tickets and plane tickets, hence to deal with such kinds of situation, it is necessary to announce some special packages and tax reduction to revive the industry. Post COVID-19 some special promotional activities should be done to increase tourist’s inflow.

Bansal (2020) in his article titled “The COVID-19 Impact: Challenges for Academia” has indicated that the pandemic has impacted the academic institutions and

people associated with it. Offline classes are suspended since March, therefore, with no further delay, online Faculty Development Programmes (FDP) on online teaching methods and tools must be organized.

Findings

The studies conducted from time to time on impacts of COVID-19 on tourism and hospitality industry by scholars in the field and published in different journals as well as other important reports, during last January 2020-April 2020, collected by the undersigned when COVID-19 started taking place in our country are categorically underlining that the COVID-19 has directly affected a lot to all sectors, especially the service sectors and resulted into the country's GDP loss. It also forecasted the loss in Indian tourism sector doubles to rupees 10 lakhs crores. Accordingly, it also reveals that due to COVID-19 the Indian economy is going to be affected with 348 million dollars and the country is going to remain among the top 15 economically most affected countries in the World.

Similarly, the impacts of COVID-19 based on these studies may be further seen in the form of cancelling the travellers obtained train, flight and bus ticket as well as booked hotel, restaurant etc. Subsequently, it compelled the tour and travel agencies either to continue the services of their working employees on fever salary or to put them out of jobs due to lack of existing work demand and future risks in the tour and hospitality industry. This decision has further affected the quality of life and living conditions of tour and hospitality employees and their dependent family members.

Besides, some of the studies questioned and enquired the impact of COVID-19 on the business environment, political and business leadership and reported its great effect on 320 million student learners as well as the Indian educational institutions which remained closed and compelled to search the alternative feasible online means of education. Hence, to repair the ongoing loss and restoration of industry, studies demanded the immediate attention of the Government in this connection for further revival and survival of the service sector industries.

However, the major findings and result of the studies based on the impact of COVID-19 conducted and published in different journals, important reports, newspaper etc.

during consecutive months i.e. from May 2020-August 2020 during ongoing experiences of COVID-19, categorically informed to have 66.4% decreased in foreign tourist arrival in India and explained its great loss in the Indian economy, as well as the livelihood of service providers, unemployment, stress, unwanted new economic crisis and further apprehended in coming new age to have tour and travel services more expensive due to likely, demanded additional hygiene and sanitation cost as well services. The studies also revealed that this effect may continue to cut the travel and accommodation cost due to accessibility of existing certain comfortable online platform in the industry. In this connection, the role of Government and the ministry has been also recognizing for having on time quick and smart desired decisions by announcing the gradual sector and country-wise lockdown and bringing about the necessary resources, guidelines against COVID-19 with regards to problem prevention, treatment, public awareness and mobilization of resources in all sectors in general and tourism as well hospitality sectors in particular, by saving its citizen's life on the cost of economy. Similarly, studies also went on indicating to have its impacts on global travel and tourism loss of USD 2.7 trillion in 2020 with 100 million jobs at risk and India may lose USD 16.7 billion with up to 50 million jobs at risk. It is, therefore, during this period of studies demanded to have Govt. speedy support, manpower training/development, resource mobilization and special training programme for the group of online educators, parents, the students and other stakeholders, also the special package by the Government for mainstreaming and survival of the tourism and hospitality industry in the present ongoing tireless crisis

Conclusion

The purpose of the present research paper is to review, analyze and examine the focus, coverage and outcome of the studies conducted and appeared in different journals, edited books, websites etc. during January 2020 to August 2020 and also to know the major impact of COVID-19 on tourism and hospitality industry. It is noticed that the studies conducted so far, have larger coverage which major focus was to know the impact of the pandemic and found the great loss in GDP. It further forecasted, the loss doubles to 10 lakh crores in the Indian tourism sector. It can be concluded by saying that the COVID-19 has viciously

affected the tourism industry of India. It is also found that the pandemic has affected a lot the service sector industry, the livelihood of service providers, unemployment, stress and unwanted new economic crisis. However, the studies conducted and found so far have not covered the impacts of the crisis on tourism and hospitality-based educational course's admission and the future of the present learners. It means the education sector particularly the tourism sector, hospitality and allied disciplines are also going to be affected adversely. It is therefore, desired to have pertinent, intensive and extensive study so that the educational programmes in this sector are redesigned, advanced and reshaped as per the need of the hour. Similarly, Government speedy support, manpower training/development, resource mobilization, special training programmes for the group of online educators, parents, the students and other stakeholders, also the special package by the Government for mainstreaming and survival of the tourism and hospitality industry sought in the present ongoing tireless crisis.

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