

# Workation: A New Trend Promoting Offbeat Destinations

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## Abstract

During this period of pandemic and lockdown the working class of India, especially the youth were completely deprived of any form of travel. The work from home concept had every working individual yearn for fresh air and change. Though the concept of 'workation' is not new in the western world, but this pandemic has made the working class Indians aware and interested in the concept. 'Workation' is not just a new trend but a concept which is not only a going phase but a trend to stay. 'Workation' has boosted the businesses of home-stay accommodations for their affordability and homely environment. People staying away from family in metro cities have chosen to escape to a small picturesque location to stay and work instead of staying in the concrete jungles. This has not only promoted and given business to small home-stay owners but also helped the workationers with better mental health and zeal to work. This trend, though for the working class, requires a certain level of comfort and convenience to achieve their professional goals. 'Workation' have been observed to improve productivity and positivity. This has also helped people come closer to nature and appreciate the gift of life. This research is conducted to analyse the thoughts and ideas of people and understand their perceptions on 'Workation'. It will also explore their experiences and choice of locations to find the popularity of off-beat locations in the context. Through this research we will also endeavour to assess the contribution of 'Workation' in professional output and mental health of individuals. The study will be based on a survey conducted on individuals from various walks of life based in India. Primary data (interviews) as well as secondary data (books, articles, websites) has been considered for this study.

**Keywords:** Workation, Homestays, Off-Beat Locations, Mental Health

## Introduction

'Workation' in simple terms can be called a combination of work and vacation. This is a concept where the employees work from a remote location and enjoy their vacation simultaneously. This is an unique opportunity to work while exploring new destinations. This earlier had a very limited opportunity as 'Work from Home' was limited to very few job opportunities. But with the arrival of novel Corona virus, the professionals and their working styles changed. The only way to keep the deadly virus away was to stay at home. And all those workplaces which never imagined shifting online or working from home had to shift online and find a way to work from home. This shift had brought in many ups and downs in the lives of people who had to go through this transformation without any prior mental preparations. This situation has also left people in quite an uncomfortable situation, with increased household responsibilities and equal amount of work pressure in a completely new set-up.

Travel being a very popular form of recreation and stress relief for many individuals this pandemic delayed various plans and recreational activities indefinitely. This took a great toll on the stress level of the working and also affected personal lives. And this situation reduced productivity and motivation of working individuals to a great extent. This concept of 'Workation' was embraced abroad earlier to boost motivation and increase productivity. But in India this idea has very recently appealed to various corporate who are working on this to increase productivity and promote healthy mental state. Apart

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from corporate initiatives individuals who were trapped in their homes due to lockdowns and restrictions, wanted a breath of fresh air and travelled to various destinations to work and experience nature at the same time. This has been observed to drastically improve mental health and motivate individuals to be more productive at work. This magical combination of work and leisure had proved to be highly beneficial for an individual on many levels.

Workation is seen to improve productivity at the workplace and provide a high amount of motivation. Leisure and relaxed environment has also seen to increase quality of work and creativity. 'Workation' initiatives by corporate have helped in better staff retention by increasing loyalty, feeling more cared for and motivated.

## Objectives

- To assimilate the opinions of people regarding off-beat destinations as preference of 'Workation'.
- To assess the contribution of 'Workation' on mental health of people.
- To explore the scope of 'Workation' as a tool to promote off beat destinations.

## Research Methodology

### Primary Data

The primary data required for research was collected by using questionnaires. A questionnaire was drafted and circulated among people to obtain their responses. We have received 118 responses from various fields of work.

### Secondary Data

Secondary data was collected from articles, websites etc. Though very little research has been done on workation in India, we have found various online newspapers and articles on various websites which have been reviewed in our research.

## Review of Literature

Brigitta Pecsek (2018), The Author, her research on both theory and practices of Workation as a hybrid concept. And discovered 6 segments of workation out of which

she found one of them to be the most appropriate for sustainable tourism.

Jennefer Shanthini and Anagha Keerti (2020), The authors in their research on tourism scenario post Covid have mentioned Workation as a concept which is emerging due to the need of people to get away from home and their daily chores and relax, which has proved to be more productive on their professional front.

Keita Matsushita (2021), The author in the research about Workation in Japan tries to find out how the locals accept the concept and how it affects the local economic and social aspects. The author also mentions the evolution of alternative tourism resources as a part the research on workation.

Travel World.com from Economic Times (June 13, 2020), This article talks about workation within the state of Karnataka, and have mentioned various instances where people want to escape the main city and escape to a place closer to nature and less crowded. It was also observed that two main requirements were WiFi and power back up. This article shows how this concept of workation has gained popularity within the locals as well as the stranded foreign tourists.

Hensellek and Puchala (2021), The authors here talk about digital nomads, where they mention that due to this trend the necessity of office presence is lost and people are more comfortable working from a remote location.

Hindustan Times (August 23, 2021), This article talks about budget friendly workation destinations as workation generally mean longer stays in one place. They have also found that popularity of workation is mainly seen in the younger generations, and that they are looking for offbeat locations for the same.

Sandra Mendoza Villaneda (2019), The author in his graduation paper, Goal-oriented retreats: An enhanced professional experience based on a service design approach, states that the modern workforce and their aspirations of work-life balance can be easily achieved through workation, and in today's world of digitization this has been convenient and fruitful for them. Author also mentions that the workforce prefers working autonomously from remote locations to fulfil their professional as well as personal aspirations. But this has

made the corporate aware of the fact that this workforce is capable and skilled to manage the work given, and thus workload is increased. According to the author to sustain their autonomy and freedom many are shifting towards starting their own business.

Times Travel (July 22, 2020), This article mentions that workation has been seen in Japan earlier but is a new phenomenon in India and only time will tell if this trend will survive. This article through various examples has also mentioned that this may be the turning point for those small homestay owners who were ready to close down the accommodation. This article also mentions the importance of precautions and safety measures to protect the service personals, local communities and guests.

India Today (September 7, 2020 UPDATED: September 11, 2020), This article tells us about what workation is and how Indian tourism industry is gearing up for the high demand. They have stated few comments from leading accommodations across India who are either ready or improvising to accommodate guests for a longer period and with workation friendly facilities alongside leisure.

Yano Research Institute (2021), This article talks about how COVID-19 has boosted the workation trend and mentions that due to an increase in telework this trend has reached a new level of popularity and will also stay in future due to the prevailing hybrid work trend.

### Data Analysis

A questionnaire was made with 17 questions, out of which 4 were questions regarding the personal details of the respondents, 10 close ended questions and 3 open ended questions to understand individual opinions. As the first question was to mention the respondent's name, which will not contribute to our analysis, thus the analysis has been started with the second question.

Analysis of each question is done below:

Please select your gender.

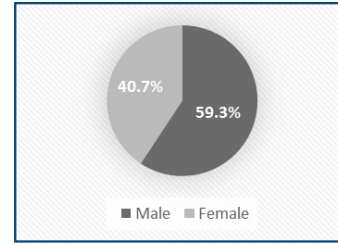


Fig. 1

We have found that approximately 60% of male and 40% female respondents voluntarily responded to this survey.

Have you travelled away from your city in the last 1 and a half years?

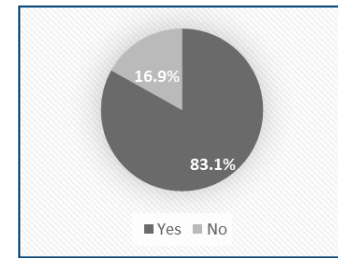


Fig. 2

It was found in this survey that more than 80% of the respondents have travelled at least once after the pandemic hit India.

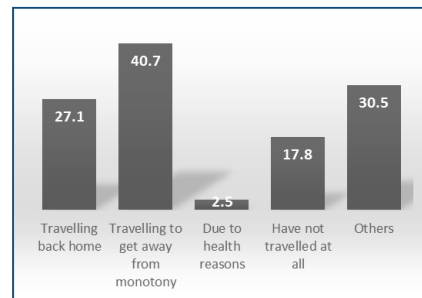


Fig. 3

If you have travelled recently, what were the major reasons for it?

Table 1: Reason Behind Traveling of People During New Normal

Travelling Back Home	To get away from Monotony	Due to Health Reasons	Have not Travelled at All	Other Reasons	Mean	Median
27.1%(32)	40.7%(48)	2.5%(3)	17.8%(21)	30.5%(36)	1.18	32

When the n=118, it was found that the mean is 1.18 which again a positive response for the reasons to travel and our median is 32 which shows that a considerable amount of people were choosing travel for going back home.

It was also found that maximum number of respondents have travelled to get away from the monotony of work from home, household chores and also staying locked up in the confines of one's home.

Have you been engaged in 'Work from Home' during this period?

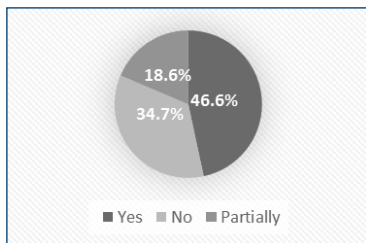


Fig. 4

It was found through the survey that majority of the respondents have been found to be engaged in work from home either fully or partially and a very small percentage have not been engaged in work from home.

Have you at any point of time felt that you wanted to travel to a place with scenic beauty?

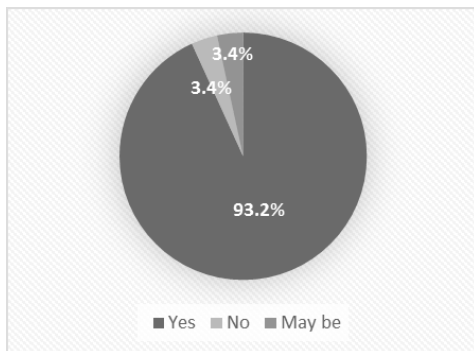


Fig. 5

Majority of the respondents, more than 90% of the respondents have expressed that at some point through this pandemic they have felt the need or urge to escape the enclosed space at home and travel somewhere close to nature. This urge to travel amidst nature which has made its way in the minds of the respondents show the demand

and need of offbeat locations and how this trend will promote tourism in areas away from the crowd.

Have you heard this term 'Workation'?

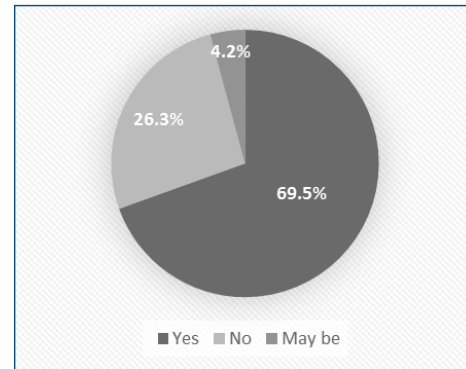


Fig. 6

The response to this question shows that this trend has been something, majority of the respondents are aware of. This trend has proved to be interesting and appealing to the majority.

If you take a 'Workation' what kind of location will you choose?

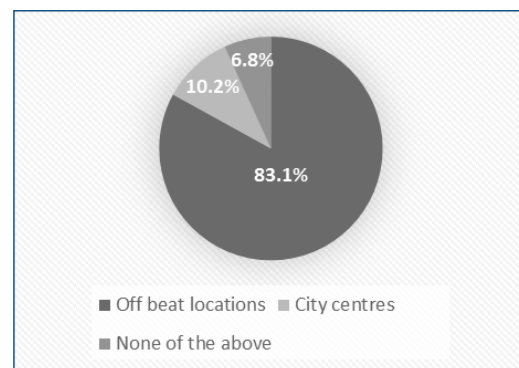


Fig. 7

This survey shows that more than 80% of the respondents would choose off-beat locations in comparison to crowded and well equipped cities. This shows that when marketed well workation can be a tool to promote tourism at off beat locations, which will help small homestay owners as workations are generally longer stays in a particular location.

What facilities will be absolutely necessary for a workation?

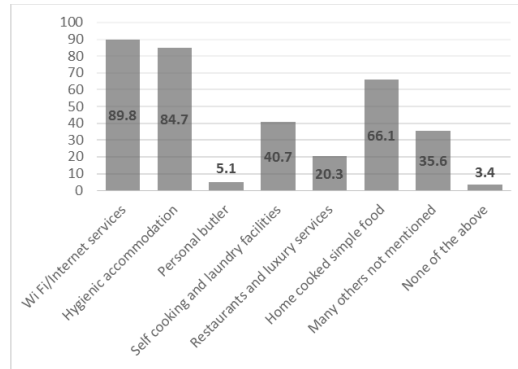


Fig. 8

Table 2: Facilities Necessary for Workation

Internet Services	Hygienic Accommodation	Personal Butler	Self-Cooking and Laundry Facilities	Restaurants and Luxury Services	Home Cooked Simple Food	Others	None	Mean	Median
89.8% (106)	84.7% (100)	5.1% (6)	40.7% (48)	20.3% (24)	66.1% (78)	35.6% (42)	3.4% (4)	3.45	45

Here we consider n=118. In analysing the mean of the responses is 3.45 which shows a positive requirement of all the facilities and the median being 45 it can be stated that a good number of people will choose to self cook and launder during their workation and need other services as well.

Analysis of the response to these questions shows that the 3 major requirements for workation is lead by WiFi connectivity or good internet, followed by hygienic accommodation and home cooked food. If the home-stay owners develop WiFi/internet facilities the other essential factors of basic hygienic accommodation and home cooked food are basic amenities which can be easily developed by the homestay owners without any major extra cost incurred.

Do you think ‘Workations’ are capable of having impact on mental health?

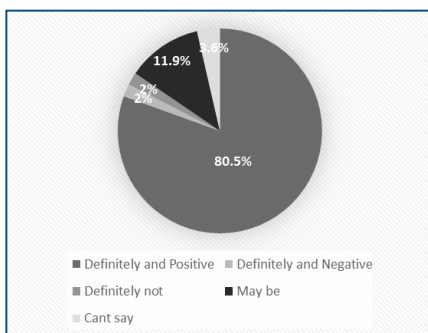


Fig. 9

Analysis shows that more than 80% respondents feel workation can help in having better mental health. Vacations tend to reduce stress, that is a known fact, and working on vacation can result in better mental health and better productivity all while reducing stress on a vacation.

What in your opinion is the future of ‘Workation?’

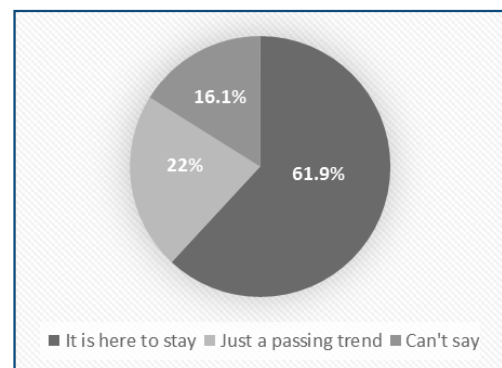


Fig. 10

Analysis of this question shows that more than 60% of the respondents think that this trend is here to stay. This will gain more popularity over time where people while taking a vacation will also be able to work and keep up with their professional life. Whether one is a direct business owner, a salaried person or freelancer everyone has experienced a setback in their professional progress due to the sudden

hit of pandemic. And this concept of 'Workation' will give them an opportunity to work, enjoy a vacation and spend time with loved ones, all at the same time.

What in your opinion will be the impact of 'Workation' as a trend?

This question being an open ended question various opinions were found regarding 'Workation' as a trend. Few of the opinions from various respondents are being quoted below before we analyse them.

"As far as my work experience I concerned, I have managed a beautiful cottage property in Kasol (completely away from the crowd) in 2019, where tourism was on its peak. Now considering the pandemic, these area of business has a lot of potential as this will be a type of medication one needs inorder to release all their stress and anxiety and make people realise that work can be done peacefully and refreshingly, it will change people's lives (words of Jeff Bezos quoting on investing in ideas that change people's lives), will be the best suited business and hospitality venture."

-By Ayush Gupta

"Advantages: one may feel refreshed to work from their desired locations. Thus might result in reduction of stress and increase with productivity Disadvantages: any work that requires face to face interaction or on-site work will be affected negatively."

-By Sayantani Bishnu

"It really helps the youth to focus on both their job as well as personal life, and this trend should be carried forward for a long period of time."

-By Rajat Mishra

"Productivity Amplifier for service sectors that intensively depend on a digital framework , which is virtually every industry in some way or the other. Digital nomads are already a thing and there's a list of countries offering digital nomad visas."

-By Snehashish Ghosh

"It will certainly impact in a positive way, might you the much necessary break from your regular way of working, the only thing for it to sustain is that the work from home model continues."

-By Abhishek Ghosh

The above opinions are few of the many positive comments received and can be concluded to say that though not for everyone but for the people who can opt for work from home as an alternative. Regardless of that the opinion of majority was that this can be very fruitful for mental health by providing necessary stress relief.

How do you think tourism in remote and off beat destinations be promoted with the help of 'Workation'?

As this is also an open ended question, few of the opinions will be quoted below before stating the analysis.

"I guess tie-ups with corporate, and social media promotions are a good way. Also survey filling in terms of personal needs should be a mandate. That helps people opt for places which they are unsure of."

-By Ankita Roy

"More tourists would increase the business opportunities for others and there would be sufficient work for everyone."

-By Suryakant Sharma

"Yes, with the help of workation tourism can be promoted in the effective ways by introducing several different packages for the personnel who mostly stays out related to the work. According to me hospitality industry should also introduce the workation packages slowly."

-By Siddharth Shukla

"Less crowded places attract people who want to stay isolated due to covid. But the facilities should be well equipped with wifi else working remotely will be a problem."

-By Indrakshi Saha

"Off beat locations according to me has been a much neglected place due to which it's very soothing and calm so working in a place like this would be very effective."

-By Niharika Agarwal

The above mentioned comments are very few of many varied opinions received through this survey. As a generic or majority opinion it can be analysed that though Workation may promote tourism in off-beat locations, but having proper facilities is a must, without which this

concept otherwise very fruitful may completely fail. On the other hand few have given the opinion that promotion of off-beat location may result in destruction of nature and make it another commercial location. Regardless of that it was agreed upon by majority that Workation will promote business and result in tourism development in the offbeat areas.

If you have experienced 'Workation' please share your experience. If not, please share your views regarding this concept.

This being an open ended question the opinions of respondents will be stated before analysis.

"The concept is here to stay as it provides a much needed break from the concrete jungle and glass buildings, helps in rejuvenating relationships, provides an option of human connection after work."

-By Ria Banerjee

"I think the concept was always there, people on work tried to add some me time / vacation even before pandemic. But definitely covid and work from home has made it popular."

-By Shuchi Gothi

"Yes I did experience a "workation" situation as I travelled back home. And from there I went for a vacation as well. It really offered me a great opportunity to make memories with my family without compromising my work."

-By Ananya Biswas

"Yes I have recently been for weeks at himachal for a break from this monotonous schedule. I am always fond of remote places and mountains are always my first choice. After staying there for weeks and experiencing the concept of workation I think every day I felt too energetic when I sat to work on the weekdays and the surrounding played a major role in that. On weekends I went for hiking, interacted with people there and that gave me the energy to fresh start the weekdays once again."

-By Debdutta Deb

"I had taken a workation to Himachal Pradesh. It has been lovely. I have stayed in old Manali, Kasol, Tosh. Only in tosh I had encountered internet issues. Rest of the places

I had no difficulty working. The hostels have self cooking and laundry services which is a blessing, if you want to avoid pocket pinches in cafes and restaurants. Working with a mountain view was rejuvenating and if possible I'll like to do it again."

-By Indrakshi Saha

Analysing the opinions of the respondents who have experienced 'Workation' have mentioned it to be a rejuvenating and an experience which cleared their mind and helped to be more productive. Only drawback would be unavailability of proper internet service, if that could be worked upon, this concept would appeal to a larger customer base.

## Conclusion

This research conducted threw great amount of light on the concept of 'Workation' and the perception of the same among our respondents. The combination of close ended and open ended question helped reach the following conclusions.

Workation as an upcoming trend plays its primary role as giving young professionals a scope to rejuvenate while they work. The mundane life within the four walls of their urban homes made them look for this alternative. This gave the workationers a scope to connect with nature away from the crowd which boosted their energy and zeal to work. This change and scope of exploration gave them the much needed motivation. The satisfaction of change of environment and scope to be closer to nature and in a scenic location had also boosted their mental health. Reduction of stress and household chores also gave them scope to find peace in themselves and in turn find professional life and personal life balance, which is known as the key to a fruitful life.

Our research was conducted based on Himachal Pradesh and the north eastern states of India. However through this research we have come across various locations around india which are being preferred for workation, which are not so popular otherwise. Locations in Himachal Pradesh like Naggar, Kasol and Tosh have come out to be very popular for workation. In spite of the fact that earlier these regions were known to have poor internet connectivity, they have updated themselves and proved to be a preferred location for workation. Other places in and

around the North eastern part India which were found to be popular among the respondents are, Majuli in Assam, Yuksome in Sikkim, Jhalong and Chasha in the northern part of West Bengal.

Workation and its popularity clearly indicates that this tourism if marketed well can evolve from a trend to an alternative tourism option. This form of tourism may only be successful when WiFi/good internet service is available. Even though internet is not a facility yet considered to be basic but may become so in near future. Apart from WiFi hygienic accommodation and home cooked food has been found to be marked as essential facilities expected by workationers which can be taken care by homestay owners with some awareness and no extra investment.

Another perspective which was seen among many responders was the concern for the natural beauty and environment of the destinations developing as Workation locations. Though this is very lucrative option for developing tourism and providing employment and scope of development for local people, we need to keep in mind that both the host and the workationers need to focus on responsible tourism. Alternative sources of power and respect of natural resources can only help us sustain tourism of any kind in offbeat locations.

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