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*(Special Covid-19 Pandemic Issue)*

**Vol 11, No. 2 December 2021**



**KERALA INSTITUTE OF TOURISM & TRAVEL STUDIES (KITTS)**

Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram - 695 014

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## **EDITOR'S NOTE**

Warm greetings from the Kerala Institute of Tourism and Travel Studies (KITTS). Economies around the world have been devastated by Covid – 19 Pandemic. Tourism is one of the industries that has been hard hit during these Covid times. Travel, the lifeline of tourism has been brought to a near standstill. Many stakeholders of the tourism industry, largely from the lower rungs have lost their livelihood. Kerala, the southernmost state of Kerala is heavily dependent on tourism to increase its revenue. Tourist attractions ranging from vast stretches of beaches and enchanting backwaters to rolling hills and pristine forests nestled deep in the Western Ghats make Kerala a dream destination. Livelihood activities are closely linked to tourism in all destinations in Kerala as is the case across the world. This makes the impact of Covid – 19 Pandemic even more far reaching. In this backdrop the Indian Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management is bringing out a special Covid issue. This issue focusses on the various perspectives of Covid – 19 and its ramifications in tourism sector of Kerala while highlighting its effects in other destinations including Greece. In spite of the hardships faced, tourism industry can take heart from the news that the crippling effects of Covid is receding. Travel has picked up and tourism is slowly inching back to normalcy across the globe. Lifting of restrictions is sure to boost the tourism sector in Kerala. In this backdrop, this issue which focusses on Covid and Tourism gains importance. The Indian Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management, ever since its inception has strived to publish the best of research papers in tourism and allied areas. It is our ardent desire that the Indian Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management should meet the expectations of students, researchers, educationists and stake holders of the tourism industry. We are sure that this issue has kept its tryst with quality through the high standards of papers published. There is no doubt that as the pandemic fades, tourism will overcome this crisis and reach new heights. With great pleasure and hope for a better future we place this special Covid issue in your hands expecting your continued support.

**Dr. Venugopal C.K.**  
Associate Editor

**Dr. B. Rajendran**  
Editor



# TOURISM IN GREECE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC – PROSPECTS AND PERSPECTIVES

Dr. Venugopal C.K.\*

## *Abstract*

*Tourism industry has been hard hit during Covid times. Irrespective of region tourism receipts have plummeted. Greece is no exception but for the vigorous revival strategies and tactics it had adopted to overcome this crisis. The rich cultural background and numerous archaeological sites in Greece are main thrust areas in tourism revenue for the country. Figures show that during 2020 international tourism receipts plunged to 4,319 million euros from 18,179 million euros in 2019. The country is trying its best to recover from this fall. This paper examines the various strategies adopted by Greece to recover its lost ground. The study will act as a pointer to the direction to be taken by other countries in terms of regaining the stature of tourism industry. There is no doubt that the volume of travel will increase in the coming years due to the withdrawal of restrictions world over. In the backdrop of Covid-19 and its implications in travel trade, drastic changes are required in tourism regulations. This study dwells into tourism in Greece during Covid times while examining its prospects and perspectives in the coming years.*

**Keywords:** *Greece Tourism, Covid-19 and Tourism, Tourism Receipts, Prospects and Perspectives*

## **Tourism in Greece**

The ancient history of Greece is enriched with its architecture, literature, poetry and sciences which has shaped many a culture. The Roman and Byzantine empires were greatly influenced by the Greek culture. In the backdrop of this, it is not surprising that tourism in Greece has evolved and thrives on these cultural ethos. Greece is considered the cradle of Western culture and democracy. Tourism in modern day Greece started to flourish in 1960s and 1970s. It was during this time that large scale construction of projects related to tourism started.

The classification of tourism in Greece excluding its cultural and archaeological sites are as follows: a) LGBT Tourism b) Religious tourism c) Medical tourism d) Ecotourism e)

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Conference tourism. In addition to this, Government plans to implement four seasons and winter tourism also. Greece boast of 18 UNESCO world heritage sites which is among the highest in Europe and rest of the world. Along its long coastline tourism thrives in beaches and the many islands alongside. Based on tourist arrivals and popularity some of the top destinations of Greece have been listed below.

### **Acropolis of Athens**

The Acropolis of Athens is an ancient citadel located on a rocky outcrop above the city of Athens and contains the remains of several ancient buildings of great architectural and historical significance, the most famous being the Parthenon ([wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)).

### **Santorini**

Santorini is the most dramatic of all the Greek isles. It is best known for the west coast cliff-top towns of Fira and Oia, which appear to hang over a deep, blue sea-filled caldera. Made up of typical Cycladic whitewashed cubic buildings, many of which have been converted into boutique hotels with infinity pools, both Fira and Oia are considered romantic destinations, popular for weddings and honeymoons ([planetware.com](http://planetware.com)).

### **Mykonos**

One of Greece's most glamorous island destination is Mykonos. After-dark activities center on Mykonos Town, noted for its chic boutique hotels, classy seafood restaurants, and live music venues. Other attractions include Paraportiani (a whitewashed church in Mykonos Town) and numerous sandy beaches along the island's south coast.

### **Delphi**

On the Greek mainland, Delphi is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Built on the lower slopes of Mount Parnassus, overlooking a dramatic ravine, the site was sacred to the ancients, who came here on pilgrimages to worship Apollo (god of light, prophecy, music, and healing) and to ask advice from the mythical Oracle.

### **Crete**

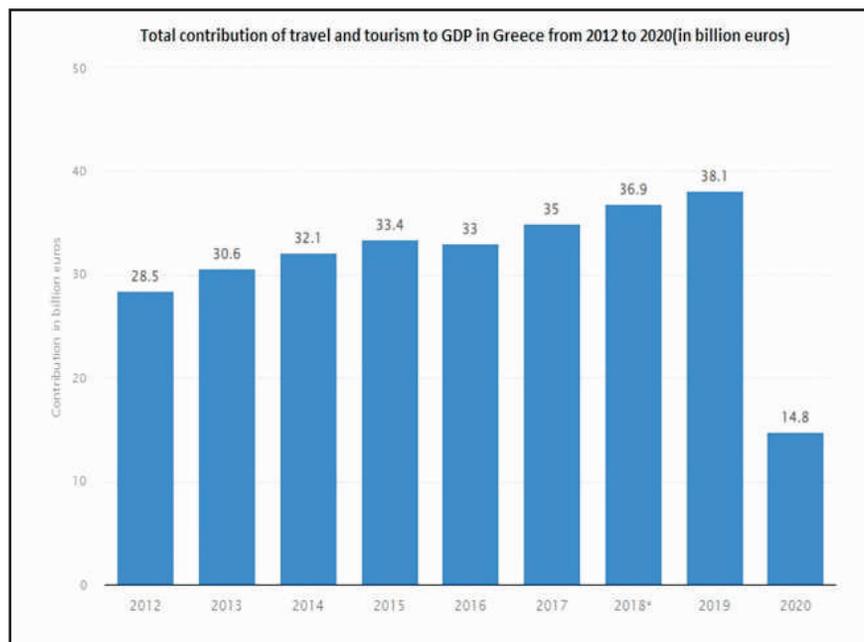
The massive island of Crete is one of the most popular vacation destinations in Greece. Blessed with some of the best beaches in Greece, the island draws visitors from around the world. Some of the most popular beaches on Crete range from small arcs of sand backed by restaurants and promenades to wide - open natural stretches lapped by incredibly clear waters and endless views across the sea.

## Corfu

One of Greece's top tourist destinations, Corfu sits in the Ionian Sea off the west coast of the mainland. Corfu Town, is a UNESCO World Heritage site, largely due to its elegant Italianate architecture and was ruled by the Venetians for several centuries.

By far most of the tourist spending in Greece comes from leisure travellers as opposed to those traveling for business, and this has a significant impact on the Greek economy. Prior to the corona virus (Covid-19) pandemic, the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in Greece was around 38 billion euros, though this fell by over half in 2020 due to the effects of the health crisis. Tourism also boosts employment in the country, with roughly 759 thousand jobs in the Greek travel and tourism industry in 2020 (statista.com).

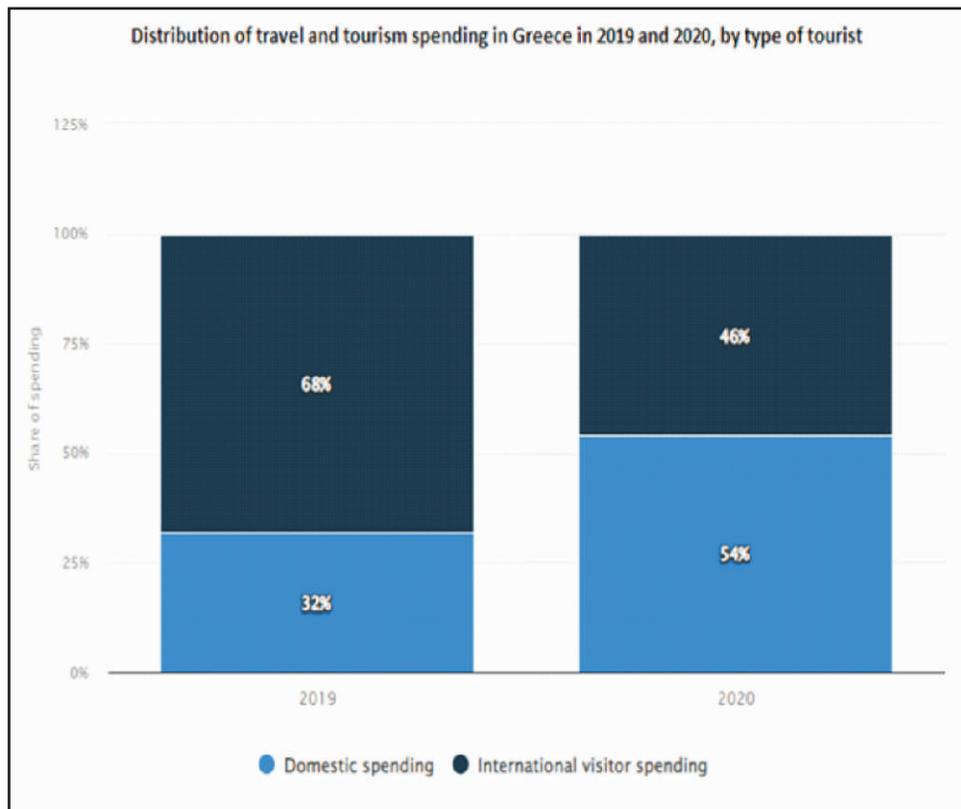
**Figure 1**  
**Total Contribution of Travel and Tourism GDP in Greece**  
**from 2012 to 2020 in Billion Euros**



(Source: statistica.com)

Figure 1 shows that total contribution of travel and tourism GDP in Greece fell to 14.8 billion euros in 2020 from 38.1 billion euros in 2019.

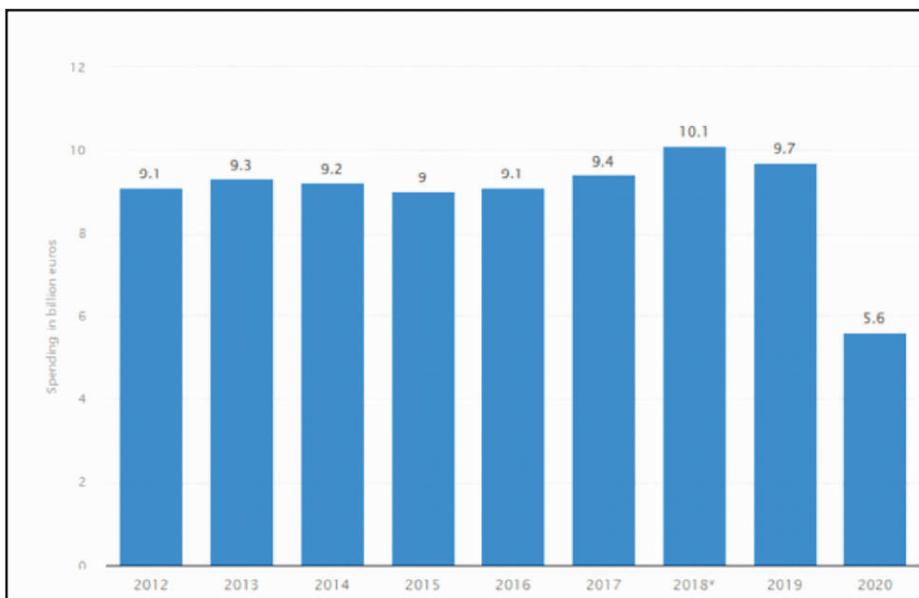
**Figure 2**  
**Distribution of Travel and Tourism Spending in Greece in 2019 and 2020**  
**by Type of Tourist**



(Source: statistica.com)

Figure 2 shows that while travel and tourism spending in Greece was 32% and 68% for Domestic and International visitor spending respectively during 2019 it changed to 54% and 46% during 2020.

**Figure 3**  
**Domestic Tourism Expenditure in Greece from 2012 to 2020 (in billion euros)**



(Source: *statistica.com*)

Figure 3 shows that domestic tourism expenditure in Greece dropped by roughly 42 percent in 2020 over the previous year due to the impact of the corona virus (Covid-19) pandemic. Overall, spending by domestic travelers reached 5.6 billion euros in 2020, while it amounted to 9.7 billion euros in 2019.

### **Revival Strategies and Prospects**

The gross domestic product of Greece showed a higher value in 2021 largely due to increased tourism revenues. As per an official announcement by the Greek Tourism Minister, revenues for the year 2022 is expected to clock in at nearly 12 billion euros (\$13.9 billion). During the year 2019, Greece registered 32 million tourist arrivals and 18 billion euros in tourism receipts. As per official statistics, during 2021, the hotel occupancy rate in Spetses stood at 70 percent in June, exceeded 85 percent in July and reached 90 percent in August. As

per a notification released in February 2022 by Greece Government, Greece will allow tourists with a European vaccination certificate to enter the country without having to show a negative test for Covid-19.

According to a study (Medovaet.al. 2021) there three possible scenarios for tourism development in Greece in the near future, which means the year 2021. The first scenario counts for the current situation and the increasing number of new Covid-19 positive cases worldwide. Related to that, there have been many restrictions and bans on international travel and therefore the scenario expects a similar statistical outcome for season 2021 to the year 2020. The second scenario is an optimistic one. Due to the new vaccination and its coverage, the scenario expects the return of tourism on Santorini and increasing numbers of tourists (comparing with 2020 season) and slowly coming back to the numbers from previous years. The third and rather negative or pessimistic scenario describes the changes in tourism, different trends, and behavioral changes among people that tend to travel. Additionally, the financial impacts on locals, lack of saved money in 2020, and bankruptcy of many key players will cause the majority of people depending on tourism to have to change their jobs and find something else for their livelihood.

This study (Papanikos, 2020) relies on information regarding the international pre-bookings of European destinations. According the to the European Union's Travel and Tourism Industry, pre-booking have fallen by 60 to 90 percent. Using these two extreme values and the average of the two, this study develops three scenarios to examine the impact of the pandemic on Greek tourism. In the best of the three scenarios, the contribution of Greek tourism to GDP will drop from 16% in 2019 to 6.6% in 2020. The output loss amounts to €16.8 billion. This paper (Vouloutidou, 2021) attempted to investigate the extent of the impact of this new crisis on Greek tourism companies, focusing on the case of tourist accommodation and food services by region, since the tourism industry has been greatly afflicted. The main variable examined was the degree of decline in the turnover of the tourism businesses under discussion over the last two years, at regional and national levels. This was supplemented with comparative analyses of similar measurable data. Secondary and statistical data were obtained from the Hellenic Statistical Authority, the Hellenic Tourism Organization and databases of other related institutions. Greece's tourism minister

has stressed that the goals for this year, among others, include a) Improving vital tourism infrastructure b) Establishing a crisis management task force c) Digitizing the tourism ecosystem d) Make sure upskilling, and reskilling options are available for tourism professionals (schengenvisainfo.com).

This article provided estimations of the effects of a decrease in international travel receipts on output, total employment, and trade balance deficit of the Greek economy, based on a multi sectoral joint production model and using data from the SUT for the year 2015. It has been estimated that a-not-unexpected-decrease of international travel receipts in the range of 3.5 to 10.5 billion euros would lead to a *ceteris paribus* decrease in GDP of about 2.0% to 6.0%, a decrease in the levels of employment of about 2.1% to 6.4%, and an increase in the trade balance deficit of about 2.4 to 7.1 billion euros, respectively. This decrease would mainly affect the sectors “Hotels and Restaurants,” “Land Transport,” “Agriculture,” and “Real Estate,” while the trade balance deficit would mainly be affected by the receipts for “Hotel and Restaurant Services” (Mariolis et.al.)

The main purpose of this paper is to examine and analyze the effect that the image of a place, in our case Greece, can have as a STD in the decision-making process for Spanish tourists' who will take summer holidays in 2020, amid covid19 pandemic. Data collected between 15<sup>th</sup> of June and 31<sup>st</sup> of July after the first wave of Covid-19 outbreak, when the Greek authorities promoted Greece as a Safe Tourist Destination to attract tourists. Results indicate that Spanish tourist consider Greece as a Safe Tourist Destination. The successful management of the Covid-19 pandemic compared to other countries and the low rates of Covid-19 cases strongly correlated to the image of Greece as a STD (Andrinos, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic has brought unparalleled impacts to the global tourism industry, thus inspiring a wave of academic research. This paper presents a review of the early literature on Covid-19 and tourism, representing 249 papers. The analysis revealed five key themes: (1) psychological effects and behavior; (2) responses, strategies, and resilience; (3) sustainable futures; (4) impact monitoring, valuation, and forecasting; and (5) technology adoption. However, this research also raises questions about theoretical contribution, methodologies, and future research potential. This article also launches the Annals of Tourism Research's Curated Collection on coronavirus and tourism. The Collection contains all past articles

published in *Annals of Tourism Research* on the topic and will continue to grow as new articles are added (Sigala, 2020).

The second and possible third wave of the coronavirus pandemic may provoke adverse economic effects during the first semester of 2021. The Greek economy continues to be highly indebted, is dependent primarily on domestic demand rather than on exports and is still oriented toward non tradable services. To make matters worse, the private sector will require additional government support (subsidies, tax breaks, suspension of tax and social insurance contributions) to recuperate from the Covid-19 crisis. The unexpected crisis dampened economic activity in 2020 at the moment it had started reviving, after the economic crisis of 2010 – 2018 was over. However, the challenge now is that further government intervention in the economy will provoke a deterioration in the public finances, a trend that was at the center of the Greek crisis in the 2010s. Nevertheless, much hope is being placed in the Next Generation European Union Funds (NGEU). In total, the country expects to receive €72 billion in EU support between 2021 and 2027.

### **Discussions and Conclusion**

This paper throws light upon the present situation prevailing in Greece tourism due to Covid-19 pandemic. It is clear that tourism has been hit in Greece. However the bold steps taken by authorities in Greece has eased the situation. The literature examined during the course of the paper shows that tourism is showing steady growth rate at present. Lifting of travel bans and curbs has resulted in an increase in travel volume tourism receipts. The initiatives taken by Greece tourism has spurred similar moves by other countries. Apart from the increase in the tourism sector, the country expects to register high rates in the exports of goods during 2022 and 2023 as the global environment improves and supply bottlenecks dissipate. According to the forecasts made by the Bank of Greece, the growth rate in the country's economy was expected to turn out at 7.2 per cent in 2021 (schengenvisa.info). This represents a significant increase compared to 2020 when the country was dealing with the virus and keeping strict restrictions in place. Greece's economic activity recovered at a fast pace during 2021 after a significant drop in 2020 due to the rules imposed to prevent the further spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. After the country reopened for travellers, its GDP rebounded significantly in the second half of the year. This study while focusing on tourism

in Greece gives pointers towards the direction to be taken by tourism in general in the coming days.

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# IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON HOMESTAY TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS IN FORT KOCHI - AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Dr. Vivek S.A\*  
Dr. Rakesh Kumar S\*\*

## *Abstract*

*Homestay tourism is a fundamental section of tourism in Kerala. The distinctiveness of this leisure sector has made Fort Kochi a protuberant terminus in Kerala's circuit. Due to Covid-19 outbreak, tourism industry is facing an extremely hard situation to meet the necessities of labour force which is dependent on this sector. As it is a lively connected industry accommodating different sections of the economy, there is an imperative need to discourse the issues to resuscitate the industry at the earliest. This study emphasised on the impact of Covid-19 outbreak on the operations of homestay tourism and stakeholder's life in Fort Kochi. The impact of the pandemic in homestay operators in Fort Kochi is being examined in this paper. Also the measures implemented at Governmental level are also explored.*

**Keywords:** *Homestay, Covid-19, SOPs, Service providers, Livelihood, Stakeholders.*

## **Introduction**

Tourism businesses are perceived to focus simply on the economic facet which is inconsistent to the concept of the triple bottom line (TBL), that calls for an equal accent on all the three key areas: economic, environmental, and social (Wise, 2016). Mainly for the least developed countries, tourism may signify "growth without prosperity," where the government talks about the environment but actually priority is given to economic development over environmental security (Ruhanen & Shakeela, 2013). Governments are presently paying much courtesy to tourism in order to diversify tourism industry and play an active role in managing economic doings to increase local communities' earnings (Chin et. al., 2014). Homestay is a striking sustainable tourism product (Acharya & Halpenny, 2013; Walter, Regmi & Khanal, 2018). Tactlessly, there is no worldwide definition for a homestay; it is classically defined as a type of accommodation in which visitors stay in the homes of residents (Agyeiwaah, 2019; Agyeiwaah & Mensah, 2017). A homestay is a stay by a tourist, traveller, or student at a house, which is hosted by a local family (Rizal et. al., 2018).

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Homestay provides tourists with a sense of feeling at home, interaction with the host family, first-hand relationship with locals, the experience of the local culture and low-cost accommodation (Kuhzady, Seyfi & Béal, 2020; Kulshreshtha & Kulshreshtha, 2019). Tourism is playing an enormous part in Kerala's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), where Fort Kochi is a stand-out contributing unit. The lingering scuffle of the homestay tourism industry starts with the onset of Covid pandemic. Around 80 percent of home stay owners have converted their salaried employees into daily wage workers citing the collapse in their business. Since the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic from last week of January 2020, tourism sector has recorded zero business and did not generate a single penny for all these days, affecting the dependent people. The upheaval is not for the workers alone, but the pandemic has put homestay owners, who invested a considerable amount in business by availing bank loans, in severe financial quandary.

In Fort Kochi, homestay owners with variant capacities are available with single stay to family stay; the quote for the stay also varies according to the comforts and luxuries it provides to its customers. As per a rough estimate, each stay entails an initial investment of Rs. 35 lakhs to Rs. 1.15 crore. Excepting a few, most of the owners have bank loans. The Covid-19 hit created global economic disturbance, where the tourism industry must pause their operations as it more comprehensively depended on transportation and individual mobility. This effort is largely focused on the identification of factors that are hindering the progression of homestay tourism in Fort Kochi. The magnitude of disasters faced by the stakeholders due to the loss of the market is significant. Hence the study attempts to identify the key issues involved and to find out the possible wayout for revival.

### **Review of Literature**

Sustainability is considered inevitable and its a long-term goal for firms, nations, and society as a whole (Finke, Gilchrist & Mouzas, 2016; Tura, Keränen & Patala, 2019). Like other industries, tourism needs to be understood and managed with a broader frame work of sustainability (Higgins-desbiolles, 2018). Sustainability tenders an enduring viewpoint that stresses commitment to ethical beliefs and ethics, integrating the environmental and social uncertainties with economic objectives. Through balanced and complete strategies, the stakeholder's roles are identified and resources can be used sensibly for both present and future generations (Font & McCabe, 2017).

The homestay business is a section of the broader tourism and hospitality industry, with discrete features of intangibility, variability, and inseparability (Sun & Ghiselli, 2010).

Homestay business inspires the community to get involved in the tourism industry (Samsudin & Maliki, 2015). Homestays are powerful visitor-host interaction zone (Walter et. al., 2018) with threefold sustainable community-based tourism goals of environmental, cultural, and local employment protection (Reimer & Walter, 2013). Variants of the homestay concept include cultural homestay, farm stay, heritage homestay, agricultural homestay, leisure homestay, cottage homestay.

There is an incredible disruption in the supply chain of the tourism sector and as this pandemic disease reached every corner of the world, it caused in the reduced drive of people as they are asked to stay back at home and to be self-quarantined. Health-related precautionary measures should be a concern of both political administration and responsible authorities otherwise it will result negatively in the growth of the world tourism sector by reducing the drive of tourist to various destinations (Buckley et. al., 2004). This reduced drive of people, directly and indirectly affected resulted in both the international and domestic tourism sector. Particularly travel divisions, booking agencies, airline sector, and various other hospitality services have been affected. In addition to this the pandemic has affected the personal as well as family lives of the work force in tourism sector. Loss of job or reduced salary of the common public drastically results in socio - economic balancing in the society. From January 2020, cases are being reported from various parts of the world and in India as well, but it was nominal in numbers. When we look at the numbers reporting day by day that makes all the stakeholders think seriously about what could be the next. This study focuses on suggesting certain measures which can be implemented immediately to help the stakeholders to maintain their livelihood.

Coronavirus is a new kind of virus that is affecting human life with its rapid spread. But the factors show that even before the spread of such diseases studies conducted regarding the need for vaccinations to block the chain and block the spread of those diseases were conducted. The study focuses on the need for vaccinations against different spreading diseases since tourists travel across various continents and countries. Defensive measures must be organised in a good manner and that should be implemented in a systematic way otherwise smooth conduct of tourism may be a major challenge (Loscher et. al., 1999). The tourism industry is one of the industries where human beings are interacting face to face not only in the booking stage but also at the operational level. There were studies regarding the spread of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in connection with sex tourism practiced by few countries in the world and that also resulted in reduced mobility (Worm & Lillelund,

1989). When it comes to the ground operation local service providers, restaurants, and accommodation facility providers forced contact with tourists and this cannot be avoided to a certain extent. But in this pandemic situation unfortunately industry could not take up any such decision immediately for leisure travel within the country or internationally. Another study focuses on trends issues in connection with international travel and their ethical concerns and the role of public administrators to prepare various strategies to address the health-related concerns of both guest and host community (Richter & Richter, 1999). There should be a standard operating procedure (SOPs) which can help both tourist and service providers and all other stakeholders to have a better time. This study focusses on various suggestions and strategies which can be put forward for the betterment of the home stay tourism as soon as possible.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- a. To identify the major challenges faced by the homestay stakeholders in Fort Kochi during the pandemic.
- b. To examine whether Covid-19 SOPs are creating any hurdles for the tourism operations in Fort Kochi.
- c. To comprehend the sureness and reassurance level of the stakeholders in light of the measures taken by the state government for the revival of the homestay tourism industry in Fort Kochi.

### **Methodology**

The study design incorporate an exploratory research method for evaluating the main barriers prevailing in the major tourist destination “Fort Kochi” in Kerala. Primary data have been collected using a self-designed standardised questionnaire from the associated persons in the Fort Kochi region. The sample size is limited to 75 samples due to the obvious constraints of pandemic. Convenient random sampling method is chosen for the study. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) is used to analyse the data. In addition to descriptive statistics with percentage analysis, Independent t-Test and One-way ANOVA are employed for the data analysis.

### Data Analysis and Discussion

Table 1 elucidates the setbacks of the stakeholders' earning sources and the progression of their debt level. The indication from the Table 1 specifies the intensity and 71.67 percent of the sample respondents are agreeing on the fact that pandemic situations and the followed restrictive factors have pushed up their debt level to a higher scale. This may harmfully asset their quality of life.

**Table 1**  
**Stakeholders' Susceptibilities with Respect to Debt Level**

Variable	Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Debt Level - Not increased due to Pandemic	No	22	29.33
Debt Level - Increased due to Pandemic	Yes	53	71.67

Table 2 manifested that over 74.67 percent of the stakeholders have not received any means of financial aid or pandemic-based concession in terms of monetary aspects. The homestay management also suffers due to absence of tranquil measures on tax slabs. Further, the SOPs and other guidelines followed by the authorities may indenture the income flow of the stakeholders. During this life-threatening situation, the stakeholders of homestay tourism are expecting some sort of financial help from the authorities, but it seems the expectations endure unfulfilled, and this ignorance pulls down the self-assurance level of the respondents in local self-governing authorities as well.

**Table 2**  
**Stakeholders' Receipt of Financial Benefits or Concession Received**

Variable	Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Financial Benefits or Concession Received	No	56	74.67
	Yes	19	25.33

The capability to find supplementary job opportunities displayed in Table 3 which is divergent from normal tourism-linked openings has also been found to be very negligible except 32 percent of the sample respondents who are able to grab new opportunities. The remaining 68 percent of the population were unable to find a substitute job that is different from their natural course of living. This is one of the core issues that must be addressed because the community which is wholly dependent on a specific arena for livelihood may find extreme snags to shift from that line of operations.

**Table 3**  
**Community's Susceptibilities with Respect to Find Alternative Job**

Variable	Particulars	Frequency	Percent
Able to Find Substitute Job During Pandemic	No	51	68.0
	Yes	24	32.0

**Hypothesis: 1**

There is no significant difference of opinions between SOPs introduced and their effect on drop in demand for homestay tourism in Fort Kochi.

**Table 4**  
**Cross Tab for the Difference in Opinion in the Means of Visible Drop in Demand for Home Stay Tourism and SOPs Introduced in Tourism Sector**

Count		SOPs are beneficial for the revival of home stay tourism					Total
		1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	
Observable drop in demand for homestay tourism	0	28	27	2	4	2	63
	1.0	3	4	0	3	2	12
Total		31	31	2	7	4	75

**Table 5**  
**Independent t-Test Result**

Variables	Visible drop in demand for homestay tourism	N	Mean	t-value	P-value
SOPs are beneficial for the revitalisation of homestay tourism	Yes	65	3.138	5.248	0.00
	No	10	2.542		

Table 4 deduced that the employees and homestay management cluster have agreed on the fact about the SOPs are convincing and provides enough flexibility to operate and revive the homestay operations in Fort Kochi. Meanwhile, it produces a contradictory outcome as there is a sound fall in demand for the homestay tourism industry in Fort Kochi as displayed in Table 5. Thus, at a very high significant value of 0.00 i.e.  $<0.05$ , the study reject Hypothesis 1 and concluded that there is a predominant difference of opinion among the dependent and independent variables. It indicates that even though the relaxation policies given were beneficial for the industry but still there is a drop in demand due to other dormant dimensions. This indicates that SOPs are not at all creating any kind of disturbances for the operations of the industry but the limited mass of visitors or the least demand for homestay tourism increases the economic pressure of the local stakeholders and it remains a major challenge for their mere future.

### **Hypothesis: 2**

There is no significant difference of opinion between different age groups regarding the initiatives taken up by the local self-governing bodies for reviving homestay tourism in Fort Kochi.

**Table 6**  
**ANOVA Test for Assessing the Difference in Opinion on the Activities**  
**of the Local Self-Governing Bodies among Different Age Groups**

Variables	Particulars	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F-value	P-value
Activities of the local self-governing bodies	Between Groups	12.3	10	3.044	3.344	0.000
	Within Groups	56.528	65	521		
	Total	61.622	75			

The inferential results displayed in Table 6 reject the Hypothesis 2 at a significance level of  $< 0.005$  as the P-value is highly significant which .000 with F-statistics of 3.344. This enlightens that there is a momentous difference of opinion between different age groups regarding the activities and the initiatives taken up by the local self-governing body rather than the steps forwarded by tourism promoting authorities. The result reveals the lack of confidence on the stakeholders towards the operations of their local governing bodies. During the pandemic, it was very difficult and hectic struggle for the cluster who are mainly focusing on tourism for livelihood. The local governing institutions could have adequately these communities by motivating and providing supportive measures for an ancillary source of income that can meet bare subsistence for living.

### Findings

The findings of the study are as follows:

- a. **Visible drop - in homestay tourism market:** The study figures out the comprehensive ultimatum for the homestay tourism market in Fort Kochi. The leading destination in Kerala's circuit is facing an in-depth set back is explained by the study inferences.

- b. Existence of anxiety created by rumours:** Misleading information spread in and around destinations is one of the key elements which with-draws the demand of the market for homestay.
- c. Covid-19 protocols and SOPs are not creating much complexity:** For the operations of the homestay tourism industry in Fort Kochi, the formulated guidelines by the authorities were not creating any visible disturbance, as proved by the study outcomes.
- d. Poor level of confidence in the operations of local self-governing institutions:** While assessing the satisfaction level from the management and other stakeholders regarding the activities and measures put forward by the authorities in connection to the revival of the industry, it is interpreted to have poor confidence level with respect to the mentioned ones.
- e. Severely affected by the stake holders:** The downfall of the level of visitors to the destination itself indicates the contractions of earning sources. This may adversely affect and hit hard their economic status and growth.
- f. Increase in debt level of both management and allied stakeholders:** Both the sections of the society are affected painstakingly by the pause in the flow of income. The study indicates that whereas the management has to keep the maintenance of cost while the allied stakeholders have to maintain their requirements for subsistence with the pause of flow in income during the pandemic. This would probably raise their debt burdens.

### **Suggestions**

The following entails the list of suggestions.

- a. Promote domestic tourism:** Every sub-sector of tourism is witnessing challenges in connection with the non-availability of tourists to avail various and services. The study result clearly suggests that there is a huge drop in demand which has to be addressed for the survival of stakeholders who are completely dependent on homestay tourism as means for their livelihood. Hence, it is advisable to shift the focus from

only on foreign tourist visits in Fort Kochi to focus to domestic tourists from nearby destinations, as the subsequent wave of the pandemic is still contemplating. Many potential tourists are unable to explore the destination due to the non-availability of proper information and the significance of Fort Kochi region. Proper promotional activities and the implementation of innovative marketing strategies by targeting domestic tourists may help the revival process of tourism activities in Fort Kochi.

- b. Issue pandemic friendly packages:** The confidence level of both guest and host community is another major challenge and its increasing as pandemic prolongs. The only option is to create unique packages which can be entitled as Covid -19 pandemic friendly packages. Such packages can provide a better experience to the travellers, but efficient marketing initiatives and strategies should be taken by both public and private authorities. Arrival of tourists might help to improve the confidence level of the host.
- c. Awareness programs for destination promoters and potential tourist:** There are many rumours which are spreading across regarding the safety aspect in various tourist destinations. Homestays also follow Covid-19 protocols in Fort Kochi. There is a significant difference in the conduct of homestay tourism and other types of tourism activities. Because there are only a limited number of people gathering at a time. Maximum public contact can be ignored, if the domestic tourists are traveling by their car and reach the destination and directly embark into the homestay. Staff members of the home stay also should take extra care and precautions when they are mingling with the public. It is necessary to create a set of guidelines regarding the safety procedures and social distancing among both parties. The special team can be appointed by the homestay owners to monitor the above-mentioned.
- d. Expand tax exemptions for the management & stakeholders:** The majority of the local community responded that their debt level increased during lockdown and pandemic. It could be the responsibility of the government tourism department and finance department to intrude in this issue. Homestay owners and management are also facing issues about debt. This will affect the growth of homestay tourism

activities in the region. Unless and until the pandemic gets settled, extended support from the government is inevitable for the survival of tourism in Fort Kochi.

- e. **Improve the effectiveness of local self-governing institutions and authorities:** The local administrative system in Fort Kochi is always supporting the homestay tourism sector and beach tourism as beaches are the key attractions of Fort Kochi region. Local administrative bodies are involved in the supervision of home stay operations at various levels, and they might be aware of the challenges faced by the local community during the lockdown. If they can prepare an elaborate report on the problems faced by the stakeholders of home stay tourism in the mentioned region. Such reports will be helpful for the higher authorities to understand the situation of the home stay tourism and dependents sector. According to the report few from the stakeholders received minor aids from the local self-government authorities but it was just for the namesake. It is the responsibility of government authorities to understand the significance of the industry and to involve by providing maximum support in all possible ways.

### **Conclusion**

This study and discussion are mainly about the revitalisation of the tourism market in Fort Kochi along with addressing the major cataclysm experienced by the community of those who are explicitly relying on homestay tourism. The empirical tools adopted for the study are significant enough to generate reliable results and infers genuine findings. The core revelations are provided by the independent t-test which does not point at the Covid-19 protocols issued by the authorities, but highlights the general bias that drop in demand is mainly because of stringent regulations. At the same time, it shows the visible flop in demand for home stay tourism as well. There is scope for further investigations regarding the hidden factors responsible for the existing friction in the market. The study aims to provide convincing and considerable suggestions which can empower the market and are beneficial for all the stakeholders irrespective of certain sections of the society.

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## IMPACT ANALYSIS OF THE COVID - 19 PANDEMIC ON INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

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### *Abstract*

*The impact of Covid-19 in International Tourism scenario has ramifications far reaching. Tourism industry has taken body blow in during this pandemic period. Tourist arrivals have plummeted and revenues dipped in almost all countries across the world. This paper dwells on secondary statistics collected from various sources to present suggestions. Stakeholders of tourism industry have lost not only their livelihood but also face a bleak future. However everything is not lost as findings show. Now that Covid is showing signs of abating it is time for Governments and stakeholders to put a brave face against the odds. Even though predictably tourist arrivals dipped during 2020, it is heartening to note that domestic tourism has picked up. In the coming days with relaxing of norms in travel, there is no doubt that international tourism will be back on its feet.*

**Keywords:** *International Tourism and Covid-19, Tourist Arrivals, Stakeholders of Tourism, Revival of Tourism Industry*

### **International Tourism**

Tourism is travel for pleasure or business; also the theory and practice of touring, the business of attracting, accommodating, and entertaining tourists, and the business of operating tours. The Organization defines tourism more generally, in terms which go “beyond the common perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only”, as people “travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure and not less than 24 hours, business and other purposes”. Tourism can be domestic (within the traveller’s own country) or international, and international tourism has both incoming and outgoing implications on a country’s balance of payments. Tourism numbers declined as a result of a strong economic slowdown (the late-2000 recession) between the second half of 2008 and the end of 2009, and in consequence of

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the outbreak of the 2009 H1N1 influenzavirus, but slowly recovered. Globally, international tourism receipts (the travel item in balance of payments) grew to US\$1.03 trillion (€740 billion) in 2005, corresponding to an increase in real terms of 3.8% from 2010. International tourist arrivals surpassed the milestone of 1 billion tourists globally for the first time in 2012, emerging source markets such as China, Russia, and Brazil had significantly increased their spending over the previous decade. The Berlin is the world's leading tourism trade-fair. Global tourism accounts for c. 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

International tourism has seen continued expansion, despite occasional shocks, demonstrating the sector's strength and resilience and benefiting all regions in the world. International tourism has only experienced declines in 2003 following SARS and the Iraq war and in 2009 amid the economic and financial crisis, with strong and rapid recovery the following years.

### **Covid-19 Pandemic and Tourism Scenario**

The tourism sector is currently one of the hardest-hit by the outbreak of the corona virus disease (Covid-19), with impacts on both travel supply and demand, particularly in China, the world's leading outbound market in spending, and other key Asian and European destinations such as Italy. Travel restrictions and flight cancellations/frequency reduction have significantly diminished the supply of travel services (both domestic and international) while demand continues to retract. Covid-19 has become a new downside risk in a context of an already weaker world economy. Furthermore, the Covid-19 outbreak comes on top of a rather uncertain scenario of continued geopolitical, social and trade tensions, post-Brexit effects, and an uneven performance among major outbound travel markets.

Considering the evolving nature of the situation, it is too early to estimate the full impact of the Covid-19 on international tourism. As of today, factoring the SARS scenario, the size and dynamics of the global travel market, current travel disruptions, the geographic spread of the Covid-19 and its potential economic impact, UNWTO estimates international tourist arrivals could decline by 1% to 3% in 2020 globally, down from a 3% to 4% growth estimated in early January. This would translate into an estimated loss of 30 to 50 billion USD in international visitor spending in destinations (international tourism receipts). At the moment, Asia and the Pacific is expected to be the most affected region with a decrease of 9%

to 12% in international tourist arrivals in 2020, down from 5% to 6% forecasted growth in early January. These estimates should be interpreted with caution due to the volatile evolution of the outbreak which could lead to further revisions of the forecast. Estimates for other world regions are currently premature in view of the rapidly evolving situation.

The impact of the Covid-19 outbreak will undoubtedly be felt across the whole tourism value chain. Small and medium enterprises are expected to be particularly affected. This calls for support and recovery measures for the tourism sector in the most affected countries. UNWTO will continue to monitor the impact of Covid-19 on international tourism and providing updated data and analysis.

Over the past years, most of the countries have considered tourism as a contributor to economic growth and is widely accepted that year after year throughout the world a massive investment continues to pour in its development.

Think Strawberries was among the first companies in the travel vertical to respond to the pandemic. As a company, we announced work from home for our employees from March 18. We wanted to make a conscious effort to 'break the chain' and it has worked to our advantage. All our employees are safe and working from home and we are proud to announce that their productivity is up. We are able to service all our clients during these testing times with minimum turnaround times. No cases have been reported in our offices in New Delhi, Mumbai or Gurgaon.

To clients, we have been doing crisis management exercise with daily situation updates. Outlook in the travel industry all points to recovery with lower volumes. Leisure will be hit most, business mandatory travel will resurge. This will be in phases – Phase I from May to September, Phase II September to December post vaccine and virus control. International short-haul to 'safe' destinations will emerge first, honeymoons by Phase II and by summer 2021 we envisage resuming of International travel. The company's business strategy for the rest of 2020 and 2021 will be to help our clients dynamically to make the most of the evolving market and roll with it..maintain brand awareness when we cannot do business. For example - design incentives and packages.

Whenever there has been any major impact on the economy of any country, tourism

has always been the first one to get affected as people start to cut down on their travel budgets first. However, tourism relatively had a direct role to play when it comes to COVID-19 which has widely spread most in the countries with a high number of tourists. This pandemic is the biggest challenge that any country has ever faced as international travel could be adversely impacted by up to 25 per cent this year which is equivalent to a loss of three months of travel. During this time when on-ground activities are not possible, we are already planning ahead so that whenever there is a slight window open for tourists by any of our clients, we are absolutely prepared to take a lead on the opportunity and ensure the best result.

Since travel has become an important part of everyone's life and is no longer considered as a luxury but a necessity to break away from a mundane routine and rejuvenate, we are positive that travel will revive soon. However, destination marketing services will see a drastic shift. The usually not so conventional destinations, who have seen a controlled exposure to the pandemic might see an upward trend in terms of tourists or as an alternate destination for some of the conventional ones for the time being. Luxury travel will take its time to again play an important role in an individual's life and domestic market and self-driven accommodations at boutique hotels and home-stays will be the focus till next summers as social distancing and staying at smaller properties reduce the risk of the virus. South East Asia and Middle East will play a key role in India Outbound tourism as they have close proximity and fewer Covid-19 cases. Regarding MICE Travel, there will be a reduction in the travel budget and companies will keep on promoting Work from Home and conference calls/ meetings to reduce the risk and expenses.

The WTTC (World Travel and Tourism Council) predicts potential jobs impact of COVID-19 to the global Travel & Tourism Sector. Impact to be felt on both white and blue-collar jobs and up to 50 million jobs are at risk globally, representing a reduction in jobs of 12 to 14 per cent, the government should accept the proposal from TAAI and should also consider a complete GST Tax-free Holiday for the Tourism, Travel & Hospitality Industry for the next twelve months till the time the recovery happens. While we all try to resist the crisis situation, the show must go on. We are confident that together we can overcome this situation as well. The recovery might be slow, but we are sure, once we manage to control this virus, the tourism industry will be the first one to see major growth. After a very long time of no

international travel, people would be looking forward to explore once again.

The World Travel and Tourism Council has warned the Covid-19 pandemic could cut 50 million jobs worldwide in the travel and tourism industry. Asia is expected to be the worst affected. Once the outbreak is over, it could take up to 10 months for the industry to recover. The tourism industry currently accounts for 10% of global GDP. The corona virus epidemic is putting up to 50 million jobs in the global travel and tourism sector at risk, with travel likely to slump by a quarter this year, Asia being the most affected continent, the World Travel and Tourism Council has said.

This impact would depend on how long the epidemic lasts and could still be exacerbated by recent restrictive measures, such as those taken by the U.S. administration on travel to Europe, WTTC's managing director Virginia Messina told Reuters. "Certain measures are not helping and they can prompt the economic impact to be way more significant," Messina said referring to the U.S. decision. She argued that such policies are too generic and not proven to be effective to contain the virus. She also said that such restrictions could complicate travel by medical experts and delivery of medical supplies. Around 850,000 people travel each month from Europe to the United States, equivalent to a \$3.4 billion monthly contribution to the U.S. economy, Messina said.

Of the 50 million jobs that could be lost, around 30 million would be in Asia, seven million in Europe, five million in the Americas and the rest in other continents, she projected. The equivalent to a loss of three months of global travel in 2020 could lead to a corresponding reduction in jobs of between 12% and 14%, the WTTC said, also calling on governments to remove or simplify visas wherever possible, cut travel taxes and introduce incentives once the epidemic is under control. She also encouraged flexibility in the sector, so that travelers can postpone and not cancel their plans. By sector, airlines and cruise ships were currently being more impacted than hotels, the official added. The tourism industry accounts for 10% of the world's GDP and jobs. The WTTC official defended the confinement of certain towns - as is currently happening in Italy and Spain - if health officials recommend it to contain the outbreak, but only in specifically targeted areas or for certain age groups.

The tourism industry has always been one of industries hardest hit by pandemics and crises. Throughout history, the industry has borne the brunt of major pandemics and plagues,

notably, the Black Death (1346-1353), Spanish Flu (1918-1920), SARS (2002-2004), H1N1 Swine Flu (2009-2010) and Ebola Virus (2014-2016). The Spanish flu for instance, restricted travel for four months and killed 21 million people during that short period. Also, the swine flu pandemic led to the Mexican tourism industry alone losing almost a million overseas visitors over a five-month period which translated into losses of about US\$2.8 billion. The tourism industry is in a unique situation because transport serves as a vector for spreading the virus therefore it is usually targeted for breaking the chain of spread of the virus. Tourism has a dynamic element which involves movements and this invariably fuels the spread of viruses. The movement of people via air travel increases the risk of the spread of viruses at a much faster pace than normal. Thus, tourism is both a catalyst for the spread of viruses and a victim of the spread. Pandemics and outbreak of diseases render destinations unattractive to tourists who are risk averse. Usually, travel restrictions, border closures, quarantine and social distance measures are instituted by governments to minimize or curtail the spread of viruses.

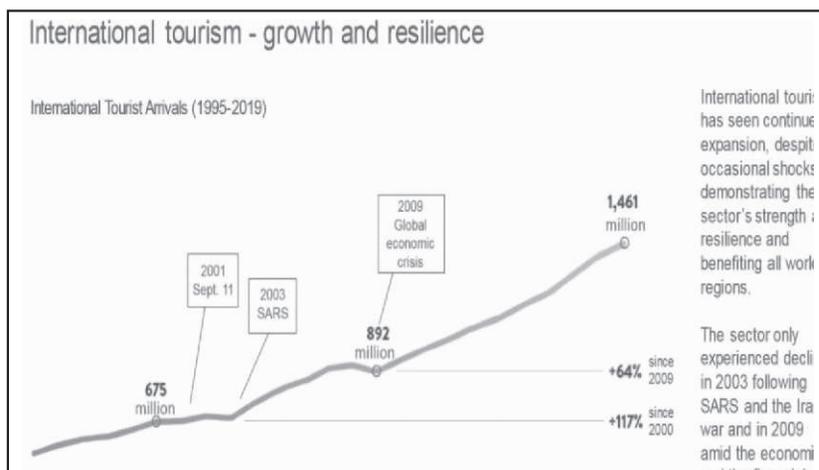
The World Health Organization also issues travel advisories to discourage travel to destinations with cases of pandemics. These measures coupled with media sensationalism in news reports render destinations affected by pandemics unattractive. These result is fear of travel to those destinations and cancellation of flights, hotel reservations and other scheduled events. During the outbreak of pandemics, almost everything connected to tourism is affected perhaps with the exception of the environment. In Italy, one of the countries hardest-hit by Covid-19, popular tourist destinations like Rome, Venice and Milan are deserted and occupancy rates have slumped to as low as 6%. On 26 March, the World Tourism Organization predicted a 20-30% loss in international arrivals in a press release.

Meanwhile, the World Travel and Tourism Council has indicated that 50 million travel and tourism jobs are at risk due to Covid-19. In spite of the monumental impacts on the tourism and hospitality industry, it appears tourism's loss could be the environment's gain. There has been a concomitant fall in greenhouse gas emissions especially in industrialized countries as evident from satellite images of coronavirus hot spots around the world. This has been widely circulated on social media. In China for instance, emissions fell by 25% when factories were shut and cities were on lockdown. Also, the use of coal fell by 40% in the six largest power plants in the country. While there is a lot of panic about the pandemic, nature is

undergoing a healing process. It is expected that by the time we are done with the pandemic, nature would have been done its part. Since the environment is the base product of tourism, destinations would become more attractive.

Airlines, tour operators, travel agents, attraction sites, car hire, restaurants and hotels have all been adversely impacted. All businesses and service providers along the tourism value chain including the farmer who supplies vegetables to a restaurant and a taxi driver who shuttles tourists from the airport to hotels are all affected.

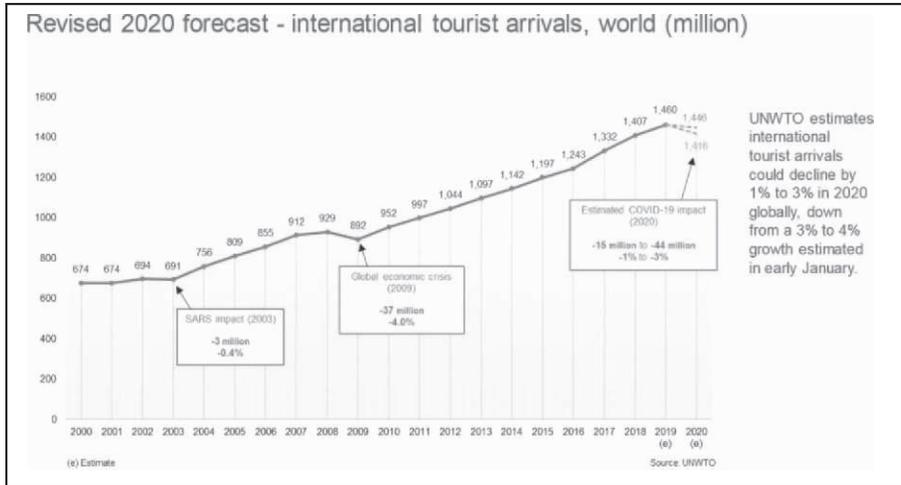
**Figure 1**  
**International Tourist Arrivals During Covid-19**  
**International Tourist Arrivals (1995-2019)**



(Source: UNWTO)

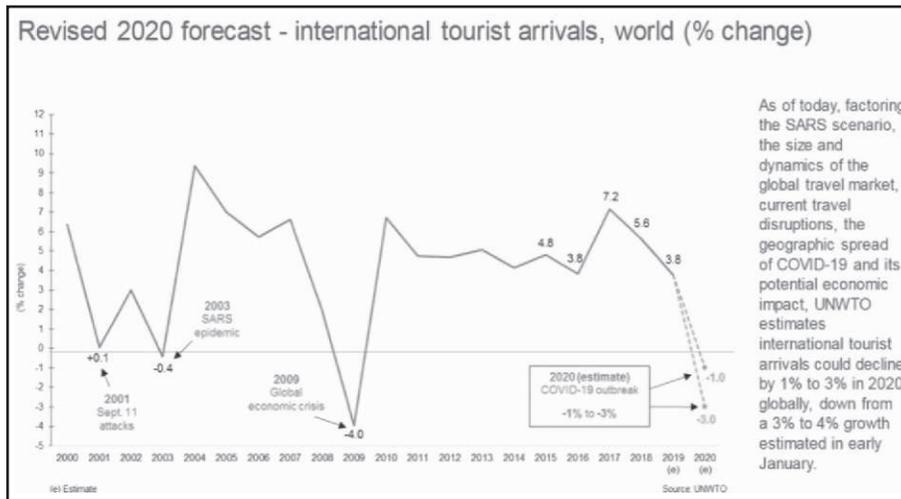
Figure 1 reflects the growth of international tourist arrivals during the period 1995-2019 as per UNWTO statistics

**Figure 2**  
**Revised 2020 Forecast (decline)**



(Source: UNWTO)

**Figure 3**  
**Revised 2020 Forecast (% change – decline)**



(Source: UNWTO)

Figures 2 and 3 shows the revised 2020 forecast predicting a decline in tourist arrivals.

It has often been argued that the tourism sector has high resilience and the capacity to adapt to and recover from catastrophic or unexpected phenomena. This time, however, the sector will have a very severe stress test to pass. There are analysts who believe that once the worst moments have passed, we will gradually return – they do not venture to offer a timescale – to a certain level of normality, or at least to a situation relatively similar to that which existed pre-crisis (Jurado et al., 2020). If this is the case, the black swan theory would be confirmed. That theory posits that once an unexpected event of great socioeconomic impact, such as this crisis, has passed, it becomes rationalised, making it seem predictable or explicable and giving the impression that its occurrence was anticipated (Taleb, 2007). According to such a point of view, the current crisis would not imply substantial change to the tourism sector, at least in terms of its future management and planning. Rather, a 'business as usual' philosophy would prevail. This would be worrying, if we consider the repeated warnings that the sector has received both for its unsustainability (lack of long-term vision) and for the increasingly recurring risks it poses with respect to climate change and global health emergencies (Jamal & Budke, 2020). Ignoring these risks would be reckless.

In light of the current situation, there have been calls for taking advantage of this period of stoppage in order to make far-reaching structural changes to the tourism sector, starting with a reflection on its sustainability. This is particularly relevant if we are to take account of criticisms levelled in recent years, mainly by the academic field, around the concept of sustainable tourism. Those criticisms highlight the need to rethink that concept and bring it closer in line with resilience (Bosak, 2016; Cheer & Lew, 2017; Hall et al., 2018). With the current crisis, this need has become more evident than ever.

(Higgins, 2020), for example, wonders whether the Covid-19 crisis is really an epic disaster. Given that human activities need to change if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change, this crisis, she says, presents us with an unexpected opportunity. Rather than return to our previous operating model as soon as possible, Covid-19 challenges us to think about the lack of sustainability of the pre-crisis travel and tourism industry. This links into another debate that began a few years earlier, which highlighted the need to curb what appeared to be the unchecked (and, therefore, unsustainable) growth of international tourism travel and to opt instead for degrowth strategies, especially in over saturated destinations

suffering from ‘over tourism’ (Higgins, 2019). However, suddenly and unexpectedly, those destinations that previously suffered from this problem are now faced with the completely opposite concern: ‘under tourism’ or, rather, the absence of tourism. It should be said that this crisis has nothing to do with degrowth, which entails voluntary and planned contraction.

Nevertheless, as authors such as (Fletcher et al., 2020) suggest, even if the Covid-19 crisis ends relatively soon, we cannot afford to return to levels of travel experienced previously, particularly by the wealthiest segment of the world’s population. This is not only because of the social unrest over tourism provoked, but also because the industry’s environmental damages (including climate change as well as pollution and resource depletion) which were already beyond unsustainable. According to the same authors, the current restrictions and controls on mobility of people imposed by the health crisis show how, where there is the will and political consensus to do so, it would be possible to regulate tourist flows according to certain sustainability standards – when it had often been argued that this was not possible (Fletcher et al., 2020).

Despite the uncertainty we referred to at the beginning of the article, one of the most likely consequences of this crisis is the bolstering of proximity tourism (Navarro Jurado et al., 2020), understood it as doing tourism and travelling near home (Diaz - Soria, 2017; Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). This prediction is based on the fact that with greater social and environmental awareness (Lew,2020), post - crisis tourists will probably choose to travel to destinations closer to their place of residence. In the context of growing insecurity and uncertainty, nearby destinations could be considered ‘less risky’ by many potential tourists who, having been noticeably affected by the economic crisis arising from the health crisis, have seen their purchasing power reduced. Added to this, there may in fact be restrictions on international (long-distance) travel, at least for a while; in helping to reduce overall emissions, this would certainly be in line with both the promotion of more sustainable tourism and the concept of degrowth.

## **Conclusion**

Needless to say, there is considerable concern over the sustainability of destinations and tourism companies (in this case, sustainability in the sense of survival). Faced with an uncertain future, destinations that appear to be in a less disadvantaged, more resilient, position are those that have a more diversified offer, are less dependent on a particular market and have opted for qualitative rather than quantitative criteria (i.e. development instead of growth). As for the tourism companies, the larger ones may have more wriggle room compared with small ones, although nothing is guaranteed (consider the collapse of giant Thomas Cook, in September 2019). If we consider the abovementioned predictions, companies that have believed in and been loyal to the principles of sustainable tourism, regardless of their size, are those that could be well positioned in the new context. At this point, we should make special reference to the myriad of micro and small enterprises that are deeply rooted in the destination: those companies that offer ecotourism products or products based on the local natural and cultural heritage and do not contribute to overcrowding, offering both high - quality experiences for tourists and high added value to the destination. In any case, as (Lew, 2020) has pointed out, companies that survive the pandemic will need to make their products more resilient to future pandemics – which health experts warn will continue to occur – and be able to adapt to the predicted change in consumer interests, which will include greater demand for sustainable products.

In developed countries and emerging economies, where most of the world's tourism demand is concentrated and where proximity tourism is expected to help save the sector, the situation is more promising than it is in developing countries. The latter are highly dependent on outbound markets that come mostly from developed countries. Therefore, the challenge to the global tourism sector is major. Sustainability tells us to look for balances (i.e. between the environment, society and the economy). Thus, the challenge for global sustainable tourism will be to strike a balance between maintaining activity in rich countries, while avoiding overcrowding, and bringing activity to poor countries, some of which are overly dependent on the sector and markets that will need a lot of incentives to recover. Tourism can be a good tool for local development, but it should not be the only one. Thus, it will also be necessary to find a social balance in terms of equity and justice, as well as an economic one,

in every destination. This is where tourism planning and management policies come into play, in terms of implementing sustainability and resilience at all scales (local, national and international) and with appropriate forms of governance, integrating the public and private sectors in a coordinated manner.

In brief, all stakeholders, including us as researchers, have a task of great responsibility: to help redirect tourism – from the point of view of both supply and demand – towards a truly sustainable and resilient profile that is fit for a future that is constantly changing and full of new challenges.

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# THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS: CONCEPTUAL VIABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN PUDUCHERRY

Dr. Annamalai Murugan\*

## *Abstract*

*Covid-19 greatly affected the operational viability and development potential of tourism and hospitality. This research note aims to stand as a reference point on such topic and to present the results from a study conducted on this crisis in tourism business in Puducherry. Results show that Covid-19 pandemic represents a unique opportunity to conduct a 'reality check' for the crisis preparedness and recovery of tourism businesses, especially in the destinations that underwent multiple, consecutive, crisis in the past and present. It therefore, examines how the experience of the present crisis Covid-19 has changed, if at all, the way how local tourism businesses respond to the on-going effects of Covid-19.*

**Keywords:** *Tourism business, Coronavirus disease Covid-19 pandemic, Crisis management, Tourism development.*

## **Introduction**

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that in 2018, the tourism sector accounted for 10.4 percent of the world gross domestic product (GDP), created 319 million jobs (10% of total employment) and accounted for about 6.5 percent of total global exports (Manzo, 2019). Hence, the tourism industry plays a critical role in the growth and development of economies across the world. Furthermore, the importance of tourism in propelling economic growth makes it imperative to understand the drivers of the performance of the tourism sector. In light of this, few studies have evaluated the determinants of tourism demand and supply in many countries and regions (Uysal, 1998; Formica & Uysal, 2006; Song, Li, Witt, & Fei, 2016; Martins, Gan, & Ferreira-Lopes, 2017; Tardieu & Tuffery, 2019; Petrovic & Milićević, 2019; Pompili, Pisati, & Lorenzini, 2019; Gunter, Shafiullah, Okafor and Khalid, 2019; Dogru, Bulut, & Sirakaya-Turk, 2019; Gunter, et al., 2019; Rossello-Nadal & HE, 2020; Takahashi, 2020). As tourism growth is occasionally interrupted, crisis management and mitigation have become increasingly

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significant. In this respect, this paper addresses the issues of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis: conceptual viability and development of tourism in Puducherry crisis from a fresh viewpoint, and combines three theoretical perspectives of tourism crisis management.

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Basis**

The Covid-19 pandemic has imposed manifold negative effects on global tourism. Although the precise magnitude and the lasting legacy of these effects are yet to be established, experts predict some irreversible changes to occur within the industry in the foreseeable future (Gossling et al., 2020). Further, past experiences mediated through organisational learning should have prompted tourism businesses to allocate the necessary resources in order to plan for the occurrence and overcome the implications of future crisis and/or disasters (Cioccio & Michael, 2007). Importantly, aside from the manifold negative implications, past crisis and/or disasters offer scope for organisational learning (Blackman & Ritchie, 2008).

Consecutive crisis are understood as disastrous events that occur in succession in a single locality, and whose direct impacts overlap spatially before the recovery from a previous disastrous event is considered complete (De Ruiter et al., 2020). It is important to note that there is always an element of subjectivity in such consideration. For example, whilst a locality can be entirely restored post-crisis, the psychological impacts of the destructions incurred and the damage inflicted may well over-last the period of reconstruction and rebuild (Cenat & Derivois, 2014). The literature emphasises the need to recognise the type of hazard which prompts consecutive crisis and the crisis cycle when developing measures on crisis preparedness and response (Hall & Prayag, 2020). For example, cyclones are often cyclic in nature as they tend to occur in certain destinations periodically (Seraphin, 2018). This should, in theory, enable organisations operating in such destinations to learn about their occurrence and put appropriate measures in place to (more) effectively prepare and recover. However, empirical evidence shows that this learning does not always happen (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2020).

In the past, one might have thought that such incidents were confined to a very few specific destinations, it has now become apparent that no destination is immune from crisis. Hence, the vulnerable global tourism industry requires recovery strategies, practices, tools

and procedures to successfully and rapidly face the many challenges of safety and security-induced tourism crisis (Arana & Leon, 2008; Backer & Ritchie, 2017; Beirman, 2006; Blake & Sinclair, 2003; Cohen, 2014; Faulkner, 2001; Hall, 2010; Lerbinger, 2012; O'Connor et al., 2008; Ritchie et al., 2014; Santana-Gallego et al., 2016; Scott, Laws & Prideaux, 2013).

Despite this major threat to the survival of a global, national, regional and local service industry, scholars have indicated that the strategic handling of such crisis has been predominantly reactive and based on 'trial-and-error' (Beirman, 2003; Hall, 2010; Israeli & Reichel, 2003; Lynch, 2004; Mansfeld, 1999; Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006; Ritchie, 2009). Since crisis is a complex situation incorporating a high level of uncertainty, and no crisis is similar to another, crisis management and mitigation should be a careful, collaborative, and holistic managerial process. It should entail flexibility and resource allocation in enhancing resilience, while addressing the challenges of the crisis as it evolves. In this respect, a crisis is not a linear process but rather evolves unevenly within a series of stages (Beirman, 2003, 2006; Boukas & Ziakas, 2014; Faulkner, 2001; Glaesser, 2006; Hystad & Keller, 2008; Mansfeld, 1999; Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006; Paraskevas & Arendell, 2007; Ritchie, 2009).

## **Methodology**

### **Study Area - The Puducherry Context**

The Puducherry tourism sector was chosen as a case study due to its ongoing struggle to mitigate and overcome recurrent tourism crisis since the mid-2020. Puducherry is also an appropriate case study, since it has been enjoying relatively strong tourism demand due to its religious, cultural and historical assets. The Union Territory of Puducherry comprises of four coastal regions viz - Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam. Puducherry and Karaikal are situated on the East Coasts in Tamil Nadu, Yanam in Andra Pradesh and Mahe on the West Coast in Kerala. Puducherry is the Capital of this Union Territory. The unmistakable French connection, the tree lined boulevards, the quaint colonial heritage buildings, the spiritual scene, the endless stretches of unspoilt virgin beaches, backwater, a surprising choice of restaurants serving a *mélange* of cuisines, provide a heady mix that draw travellers from near and far. Puducherry has a special ambience, not felt anywhere else in India. It is a blend of spiritual aura, French colonial heritage, Tamil culture and the cosmopolitan flair of many nationalities in a small but varied town. Puducherry has a wealth of heritage buildings of both

French and Tamil architectural styles. The grid patterned layout of town divides the town into two distinct settlements. The French section is on the east of the canal that bisects the town while the Tamil section is essentially on the western side. Being a small laid back place, Puducherry is pleasant to explore.

A remarkable degree of French influence in Pondicherry exists to this date. Pondicherry was designed based on the French (originally Dutch) grid pattern and features neat sectors and perpendicular streets. The town is divided into two sections: the French Quarter (Ville Blanche or 'White town') and the Indian quarter (Ville Noire or 'Black Town'). Many streets still retain their French names, and French style villas are a common sight. In the French quarter, the buildings are typically colonial style with long compounds and stately walls. The Indian quarter consists of houses lined with verandas and houses with large doors and grills. These French and Indian style houses are identified and their architecture preserved from destruction by an organization named INTACH. The use of the French language can be still seen in Pondicherry.

Pondicherry is also famous for Sri Aurobindo ashram and Auroville. Auroville is an experimental township which is situated 8 km north-west of Pondicherry in East Coast Road. It was founded in 1968 by Mira Richard (also known as The Mother), the spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo. Auroville was designed by the French architect Roger Anger. Auroville is meant to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realize human unity. During the inauguration ceremony of Auroville on 28 February 1968, soil from 124 countries was placed in a lotus-shaped urn and mixed to symbolize universal oneness. The Government of India and UNESCO has endorsed the project. Besides these top attractions, Pondicherry is home to many museums, churches and temples.

Puducherry triggered most severe tourism crisis so far in which four distinct phases of crisis can be detected: (1) The beginning of the crisis; (2) The peak of the crisis; (3) The beginning of recovery; and (4) The return to pre-crisis tourism and hospitality indices. This prolonged crisis almost led to the demise of the Puducherry tourism industry with up to a 50% decrease in tourist arrivals, a 60% decrease in tourist nights, and a 70% drop in tourism

revenue in one year following the outbreak of with the Covid-19 pandemic. During the year of the crisis (2021), numbers continued dropping. Tourism indices reached pre-crisis levels only by 2020. Drawing on the above; it is argued that the Covid-19 pandemic may represent an example of a consecutive crisis event. This is attributed to the predicted multiple waves of its occurrence that can be driven by multiple factors, such as seasonality of the infection spread, the under-developed national systems of public health, and international travel, among others (Xu & Li, 2020). This is also associated with the detrimental impacts imposed by the pandemic on human/economic activity (=the cascading effect). For example, it is estimated that Covid-19 will reduce inbound tourism to the UK in 2020 by at least 59%, with the largest impact imposed on such popular destinations as London and Edinburgh (Visit Britain, 2020). The over-reliance of these destinations on foreign tourists implies consecutive disastrous implications for local residents in 2020 and 2021 in the form of lost income and unemployment. The cascading effects of the pandemic should, therefore, represent a major point of concern for tourism businesses and destination management professionals.

### **Research Gap**

Crisis management in light of national pandemic represents an under-studied topic in tourism management research. Covid-19 provides an opportunity to critically evaluate the extent to which tourism businesses in popular destinations prone to crisis have learnt lessons from the past, if at all. This study has set to undertake such an evaluation in the context of Puducherry, a crisis-prone destination in South India, which over-relies on domestic and foreign tourists as a prime economic activity. Maximum visitors come from its states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Maximum visitors from other countries come from France, Australia and USA. As this research aimed to evaluate the extent and implications involved in the crisis management of Covid-19, a broad stakeholders' perspective was chosen. An in-depth qualitative investigation focusing on both actions and underlying mind-sets of the various stakeholders was conducted. Thus, the study incorporated two specific research questions: During the Covid-19, tourism crisis, were there any new or improved crisis management processes (strategies, practices, procedures

and collaborations) that originated in a novel, flexible thinking and a renewed ‘out-of-the-box’ crisis approach? If so, what influence, if any, did they have on the process of crisis management and mitigation? The survey instrument was developed based on an extensive review of research into sense of Covid-19 as a crisis event as well as tourism. The questionnaire was comprised of four sections: 1) post crisis events, 2) present Covid-19 during the pandemic, 3) future crisis and intentions, and 4) normal after the pandemic (Table 1). The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1¼ strongly disagree to 5¼ strongly agree). According to Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009), scales should be limited to four or five categories. A pilot test was conducted with industry professionals to check for face validity and to reduce measurement error. When measures are taken from various sources, some type of pretest needs to be performed (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2005).

### **Research Design**

The method of qualitative research was adopted for primary data collection and analysis in this study. This is due to the ability of this method to provide more in-depth and rich descriptions, such as the “how” and “why” (Ospina, 2004). Answering these questions was deemed important in this study given they can shed light on such important topics of interest as organisational learning, organisational resilience and stakeholder collaboration in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and other multiple, consecutive, crisis in Puducherry. The method of qualitative paradigm is appropriate for examining complex and/or sensitive topics (Veal, 2011), such as management decisions in relation to (past, current and future) crisis events. The method is best suited to reach for the populations of study informants that are limited in number and/or demonstrate limited willingness to collaborate with researchers, such as senior managers of tourism and hospitality enterprises (Filimonau & Krivcova, 2017), especially in light of crisis. Within a portfolio of the qualitative research methods, semi-structured interviews were used given the analytical power and design flexibility they offered (Silverman, 2000).

### **Interview Schedule Design**

An interview schedule consisting of four sections was developed following a set of preliminary themes derived from the literature review. Section 1 aimed to explore the experience of the study informants' organisations in managing past crisis events, most notably the crisis incidents and Section 2 examined the present Covid-19 during the pandemic recent, continuous, the immediate and lasting effect of the Covid-19 pandemic from the viewpoint of the lessons learnt from past disastrous events, paying special attention to such topics as crisis competencies acquired from the past crisis, organisational resilience and stakeholders collaboration. Section 3 investigated the future and intentions of crisis management in the study informants' organisations from the perspective of business recovery from the current pandemic. Section 4 investigated normal after the pandemic but also considering organisational preparedness for future, consecutive crisis events, such as the subsequent waves of Covid-19, future consecutive multiple waves of the pandemic. The interview schedule was originally designed in English. For integrity and validity, the interview schedule was piloted with a handful of willing tourism businesses in Puducherry prior to its field administration.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection was based on twenty-five in-depth semi-structured interviews with senior executives, who had a direct role in the strategic management and mitigation Covid-19 tourism crisis. The target population for this study was members comprised multiple stakeholders: the private tourism and hospitality sector hoteliers, tour operators, the hotel associations, Puducherry and the travel agencies, associations - Puducherry; and the public sector including the Department of Tourism (DoT), Government of Puducherry. Before conducting the surveys, permission was sought and granted from all stake-holders. The data collection process also incorporated content analysis of official documents and reports, national statistics, senior representatives; officials of the Department of Tourism, Government of Puducherry were interviewed. As such, all the data and material collected represent a broad scope of the entire Puducherry tourism production chain over a single sector inquiry within a prolonged acute tourism crisis Covid-19.

### **Study Informants**

The subjects for this study were represented by senior managers of tourism enterprises who were considered capable of providing in-depth information about the research topic from the perspective of their respective organisations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To understand the views of tourism businesses, senior managers of tourism and hospitality enterprises operating in Puducherry were interviewed. The condition for their participation was in the (1) managerial seniority (i.e. General/Executive Manager, Owner and/or Head of Operations), which is to ensure the adequate decision-making authority; and (2) pro-longed work experience in the business they represented (i.e. at least 5 years), which is to warrant this person's involvement into the design of the (past, current and future) organisation's crisis management plans and procedures (if any).

Purposive sampling (Cresswell, 2007) was used for recruitment. To this end, professional contacts established by the researcher with the tourism industry in Puducherry were first utilised to reach for willing participants. The snowball sampling technique (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) was subsequently applied to target tourism business senior managers for this study's participation as set above. Both purposive and snowball sampling represent popular recruitment tools in research on crisis management in tourism (see, for example, Filimonau & De Coteau, 2020; Ghaderi et al. 2015; Jiang & Ritchie, 2017). Their adoption was, thus, deemed suitable to achieve the goal of the current study.

#### **Interview administration.**

Interviews were conducted within the 26th April to May 25, 2021 period. They were administered online, via Zoom video telephony service, following the governmental requirement to reduce the number of face-to-face contacts during the pandemic in Puducherry. Rather than being a disadvantage, video interviewing was deemed beneficial for this study in a number of aspects. The study informants were able to choose the most suitable time for the interview and undertook it in a (more) comfortable environment (=home settings) with no external disturbances (Gruber et al. 2008) which is often the case for busy tourism and hospitality occupations.

Before the interview, in order to build trust and minimise the effect of possible social

desirability biases, complete confidentiality and anonymity of the study informants was guaranteed. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques used for recruitment aided in trust building. Further, a policy-making insight into the topic in focus was also sought given that policy-makers have been identified as critical stakeholders in crisis-prone destinations (Filimonau & De Coteau, 2020). The interview schedule was modified to better reflect the nature of policy-making and crisis relief provision work. In total, 25 interviews were conducted and this number was determined by the data saturation effect (Marshall et al. 2013). The sample was, thus, broadly representative of Puducherry tourism businesses in terms of the relative proportions they occupied in the destination's tourism market.

### **Results and Discussions**

In terms of crisis management plans and procedures, most study participants stated their preparedness to withstand the consecutive pandemic by adopting appropriate measures to protect their guests and employees. It turned out, however, that this only concerned the immediate effects of the crisis events. However, in the case of pro-longed pandemic, the related crisis management plans and procedures were significantly less established and most study participants claimed they did not foresee so far ahead being confident a single wave pandemic would only last for a short period of time.

#### **The effect of the Pandemic Past and Present**

When discussing the effect of Covid-19, most study informants focused, again, on the immediate damage imposed by the pandemic on their businesses and the challenge of managing businesses during this crisis event, paying particular attention to the issues of lost revenues and staffing. In the latter case, second wave of Covid-19 pandemic during the outbreak most employees were either made redundant or provided with substantially restricted job opportunities. Limited regret was shown as to how the tourism labour would survive on reduced and/or no income during temporary business closures. Although some businesses provided employees with ad-hoc financial support to aid in covering their basic living expenses, their number was, however, small. When probed on the lessons learnt from past crisis management, most study participants agreed that these were primarily concerned with the immediate/short-term adaptation strategies. For example, many tourism businesses

started renovating their properties (in the case of hotels) or fleets (in the case of transport/tour operators), thus using the pandemic as an opportunity to add value to future operations. This was also seen as a means of supporting financially a small number of employees during the period of business disruption. However, in terms of long(er)-term recovery strategies, most study participants agreed that the crisis provided little scope for learning given a dramatically different nature of Covid-19 as a crisis event.

From among the challenges of managing tourism businesses in Puducherry during Covid-19, the need to cease some critical business operations (for example, by closing hotel properties) and/or by adjusting them significantly (for instance, by providing food for take-way rather than as a sit-in service) were mostly discussed. The necessity to pay rent and utilities whilst generating no revenues was a recurring topic in all interviews. The sudden disruption imposed by the governmental lockdown orders and the lack of an initial understanding of the danger of the virus was blamed for insufficient preparedness and the need to 'improvise' when generating new sources of income.

As a critical crisis management stakeholder in tourism destinations, did not realise the potential detrimental impact of the pandemic and, therefore, failed to collaborate with tourism businesses by communicating the danger of the crisis at the initial stage of the Covid-19 outbreak. For example, unlike many developed countries, it provided no dedicated furlough scheme designed to offer temporary maintenance funds to the laid off employees of tourism businesses. The lack of clarity in communicating how could re-open to international tourism after the first wave of Covid-19 was also frequently mentioned.

### **Future Crisis Management Plans and Procedures.**

When discussing the future, most study participants focused on the need to re-think their business strategies in order to survive in a post-pandemic world. However, this primarily concerned outlining new business opportunities and sources of revenue generation (for example, opening a food take-way business), rather than preparing for future disastrous events, and investing into the design of (more) effective crisis management plans and procedures. Covid-19 as an opportunity to learn was also discussed but, again, in light of how to improve future business profitability and compensate for the financial losses experienced

during temporary business closure rather than how to enhance future crisis preparedness. Likewise, the speed of business recovery and the challenges of managing tourism businesses in Puducherry after the pandemic were elaborated upon, but mostly from the economic perspective.

- The only learning opportunity provided by the pandemic for forward business planning which was repeatedly discussed by many study participants concerned improved standards of hygiene in their respective businesses.
- A number of businesses also spoke about the reinforced bonds between members of their teams, bringing about compassion and sympathy, and the opportunity to (better) comprehend the value of other employees' jobs.
- A number of study participants discussed the need to have a 'safety net' in the form of extra savings in order to withstand the detrimental effect of future disastrous events. Whilst being linked to organisational learning and organisational resilience, it is argued that all these points, except improved staff relationships, are primarily concerned with the short-term, financial aspect of future business operations rather than with its long(er)-term crisis management plan and procedures.
- Lastly, Match - funding can be provided by the Central/State governments to encourage business contributions and boards of trustees consisting of renowned/respected industry players can be established to decide and monitor on the money spend. Further, as past experience shows (Nguyen et al. 2017), public-private partnerships (PPPs) can be set up to manage the consequences of crisis and support the most affected tourism businesses with interest-free/low-interest loans designed for speedy recovery (De Ruiter et al., 2020).
- 'One of the very few positive things about the corona, in terms of what learnt from it, is that we need to be proactive in cleaning, washing hands, using hand sanitizers, in other words, to invest in better hygiene. Also, we as a team during this terrible time became closer and learnt how to take care of each other, so the one who previously ignored other employees and only talked when they needed something, now is more attentive to their fellow employees'.

**Table 1**  
**Coding Structure with Themes and Codes Showing the Significance of Each Code**

Subscales	Factor loading	Eigen Value	Variance explained	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>Factor 1: Post crisis events</b>		2.971	19.805%	.796
I have reduced cash flows	.804			
I have reduced visitation	.731			
I am doing things differently	.757			
I feel limited support	.623			
Many of the stakeholders collaboration insufficient	.732			
I feel financial damage	.581			
<b>Factor 2: Present COVID 19 during the pandemic</b>		2.571	17.141%	.834
I think no compensation	.794			
Staff no longer required	.726			
Staffing issues during the Pandemic / over-staffed				
Reduced cash flows	.713			
I like to think of sudden closure	.643			
<b>Factor 3: Future crisis and intentions</b>		2.141	14.272%	.841
I expect to re-thinking business strategy after the pandemic	.859			
It is very important to me opportunity to learn as a positive impact of the pandemic	.835			
Speed of business recovery	.630			
<b>Factor 4: Normal after the pandemic</b>		1.911	12.740%	.786
Speed of destination recovery	.738			
What if the pandemic never ends	.744			
Need to re-think future	.712			
<b>Total Variance Explained</b>			63.957%	

### Factor Analysis

The analysis revealed the presence of five components with eigenvalues exceeding 1 initially with a clear break after the fifth component on the scree plot. Varimax rotation revealed that variables loaded moderately on a number of different factors, and the fifth factor had only two variables loading on it. Then the decision was made to rotate the data on four factors and the optimal solution was found. There were cross-loadings of several variables. Following suggestions from Hair et al. (2005), items with significant cross-

loadings were eliminated one-by-one by checking the variance after each deletion. The four factor model was specified and resulted in 16 items with a variance of 63.96%. The four factors were named as follows: Post crisis events, Present Covid-19 during the pandemic, future crisis and intentions, and normal after the pandemic. These four factors were used in confirmatory factor analysis and as the latent variables of structural equation modeling for sense of crisis.

Next, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to statistically test the hypothesized higher-order factor model to see if the sample data confirms the model and its constructs (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). AMOS version 20 was used for this analysis. The model fit was assessed using fit measures, such as chi-square test, Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), and Normal Fit Index (NFI). First, the measurement models for sense of crisis and mitigation preparedness were tested before examining the measurement model and structural equation model simultaneously. For sense of crisis, higher-order CFA was used to test the second-order factor structure that contained two layers of latent constructs. In this study, there are four first-order latent factors to measure the second-order latent factor which is sense of crisis. Each first-order latent construct had a set of variables acting as indicators. The estimation second order model provided the following model fit: chi-square  $\frac{1}{4}$  232.30, df  $\frac{1}{4}$  84,  $p < .001$ ; CFI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.911; TLI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.888; NFI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.869; GFI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.916; RMSEA  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.076. The NFI value is low but it is close to 0.90 which is acceptable. The model is supported by the data since the majority of the fit indices indicate an acceptable model (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). The new fit was as follows: chi-square  $\frac{1}{4}$  46.80, df  $\frac{1}{4}$  17,  $p < .001$ ; CFI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.970; TLI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.951; NFI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.954; GFI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.964; RMSEA  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.076. The RMSEA model-fit values are slightly high but those values between 0.05 and 0.08 are considered acceptable when reported with other fit indices (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010). The measurement model fit was acceptable with index values as follows: chi-square  $\frac{1}{4}$  581.90, df  $\frac{1}{4}$  262,  $p < .001$ ; CFI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.909; TLI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.896; NFI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.847; GFI  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.866; RMSEA  $\frac{1}{4}$  0.063.

### **‘Newness’ in Crisis Actions**

During the course of the research process, the term ‘newness’ had to be further refined

concerning crisis management and mitigation, and with respect to the term 'new'. Thus, the precise meaning of 'newness' had to be related to as a result of a fundamental shift in thinking regarding the meaning of crisis itself and crisis strategy and practices. The familiar crisis measures almost by default as the standard norm, such as seeking government financial support; downsizing and cost-cuttings; approaching domestic tourism; cease of inbound marketing; encouraging solidarity-inclined tourism and short-term government financial support. Each is further divided into repetitive vs. new, forming four ways: (1) conventional method; (2) trial and error; (3) incremental and (4) breakthrough. (Table 2)

- In 'Conventional method' crisis management and mitigation, it involves repetition of conventional thinking and actions. It is the same recurrent thinking and actions that illustrate fixated.
- In 'trial and error' cases of crisis management and mitigation. It involves repetition of thinking with only a small change in actions. It might introduce some 'new' actions; it represents a short-sighted, episodic modification of a fixed mind-set that might result in questionable and doubtful benefits. It does not encourage insight, inspiration or motivation, among other qualities, as there is neither clear added value nor leadership involved.
- In 'incremental' crisis management and mitigation, it involves a small change or shift in thinking about familiar actions. It might be an improved, updated or slightly modified strategy or practice that is a result of out-of-the-box, flexible thinking. It signifies the 'eyes and appetite' for new and better crisis measures that add value. It is newly-fashioned and slightly different from what is familiar and effective.
- In 'breakthrough' in crisis management and mitigation, since it involves a complete change of thinking and actions. It signifies open, flexible, unconventional, brand new, unorthodox and counter-intuitive thinking and actions in crisis management and mitigation. It involves real ingenuity, because of a fundamental paradigm shift in how a crisis is experienced, understood and managed.

**Table 2**  
**Conditions of a Pandemic Indicator**

Condition	Theme
Past Crisis (past pandemic) Conventional	Reduced cash flows Reduced visitation Financial damage Reduced profitability Damage to business Stakeholders Collaborations
Present (during pandemic) Trial and Error	Sudden closure No compensation Reduced cash flows Demand interrupted Staffs/manpower no longer required Tourist's sudden disruption Coping the pandemic Business strategy during the pandemic Cashless economy Tourism products rebound effects Competitors doing things differently Closing business No Anticipation Public-private partnerships limited Non-existent. Performance of competitors
Incremental (Future pandemic) Adaptability	Comparability Relevance Experiential
Breakthrough	Opportunity to learn as a positive impact of the pandemic (Normal after the pandemic) Rethinking business strategy after the pandemic Business recovery Destinations sustainability (Theme parks, resorts, airlines, festivals, museums, crafts shops, convention centres, cruise, hotels, restaurants, casinos, retails shops, natural beauties, heritage beauties, heritage sites, etc.,) Uncertainty / Pandemic wave continues.

The inner movement within the four quadrants represents the possible and potential change, expansion and growth in a meaningful and concrete manner. Hence, this is not a “do/don't do” static model, but a conceptual and dynamic representation of crisis management possibilities emerging from a current given Covid-19 situations. Thus, it cannot be strictly modeled.

**Figure 1**

**Schematic Process of Viability to Overcome Crisis Management**





#### **4. Impacts and Outcomes**

- Renewed, enlarged and stronger industry
- Better cooperation
- Well-prepared and organized for future crises
- Well-financed
- Experienced with flexibility during uncertainty
- Improved resilience, better compatibility and shorter recovery

The proactive and holistically-oriented stakeholders emerged from the crisis more prominent and stronger due to expansions, business acquisitions and renovations. As such, it highlights the importance of crisis management strategy in general, and creative crisis strategies in particular, as a mean of improved resilience of the tourism system and more successful and rapid recovery. It is argued that the destinations that are prone to multiple, consecutive, crisis events represent interesting contexts to expand an academic understanding of how organisational learning happens in tourism businesses in light of crisis management. The regular, almost sequential, occurrences of crisis should prompt tourism businesses to use past disastrous experiences in order to prepare and adapt to the future (Figure 1).

#### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Destinations worldwide may clearly benefit from the methodology used in this study. It not only highlighted and differentiated between successful and less effective crisis measures, but, most importantly, it determined within any of the various crisis management solutions. Furthermore, once diagnosed, the methodology facilitates the development of new and improved crisis management strategies and tactics for acute and prolonged crises. It also stepped away from the recurrent academic focus on a single stakeholder or sub-sector such as hospitality (Fleischer & Buccola, 2002; Henderson et al., 2010; Israeli & Reichel, 2003; Paraskevas et al., 2013; Wang & Ritchie, 2013), travel agents (Perl & Israeli, 2011), aviation (Blake & Sinclair, 2003), and even tourism niches such as Visiting Friends and

Relatives travel (Backer & Ritchie, 2017), rural tourism (Hjalager et al., 2018), or well-being tourism (Hjalager & Flagestad, 2012). This study focused on an integrated in-depth perspective involving multiple stakeholders. Consequently, the analysis holistically captured the impact of the crisis not only on a specific sub-sector but on the entire Puducherry tourism industry.

Being a qualitative study, this research is not free of flaws and constraints. Personal interpretation might lead to bias, but might also produce a deeper and more significant understanding of the research questions, findings and conclusions. Therefore, this study does not claim to represent the only conclusive view, but rather the researchers' view and understanding while closely following scientific methodology and standards, which support the validity and credibility of this research. The generalizations of findings were based on the interviewees' own words together with additional sources of information, which formed a rich database and included official reports, national and state statistics, tourism committees' protocols, the media, and academic studies. This paper presented the circularity formation for the mapping, development and implementation tourism crisis management and mitigation solutions. The interventions should also be concerned with the provision of tailor-made training on business preparedness and recovery in light of multiple, consecutive crisis.

Given that stakeholder collaboration is insufficient in Puducherry, stakeholder capacity building exercises should be developed and run by Puducherry tourism policy-makers and tourism professionals. These can take the form of industry engagement events, as described above, but also regular (for example, annual) industry conferences and/or fairs that provide a forum for knowledge exchange on effective business practices in crisis planning and management.

### **Limitations and Further Research**

The low number of case study represents a limitation of this analysis. As a new conceptual framework, Covid-19 has yet to be assessed and tested in other crisis scenarios, and so needs further investigation and validation. Future research would be to implement and test the model on different crisis management incidents worldwide, as well as among tourism practitioners. It would be also interesting and of significant value to conduct a comparative case study of two distinct crisis scenarios within a destination in current and past crisis. That

is to say, to examine the Covid-19 within a current crisis versus the non-implementation of the Covid-19 within a past crisis. Moreover, further research could inquire for the determinants of the identified crisis of destinations, through in-depth interviews with the stakeholders, providing a more qualitative analysis.

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## REVIVAL OF MEDICAL TOURISM SECTOR IN POST PANDEMIC MILIEU

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### *Abstract*

*The status of medical tourism in India is not in a bad shape as is the case with tourism in general. The pandemic has drastically affected the tourism sector with damages quite visible. The tourism industry and medical tourism in particular has contributed towards the economic sustainability during the last two decades. No Indian states or territories are spared significantly by the pandemic and its after effects. Kerala is very much affected as it is dependent of tourism and allied areas to its economic growth. The future of stakeholders in this industry looks bleak. This paper examines the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic in the medical tourism sector while suggesting remedies to overcome the same. The industry looks forward to Government support and sops that will help it overcome the present crisis and pave way to a brighter future.*

**Keywords:** *Medical tourism, Pandemic, Post Covid-19, Revival Strategies*

### **Introduction**

Since time immemorial, India has been a big attraction for people from all over the world because it is a repository of conventional health knowledge and practical wisdom. Moreover in keeping with tradition, it has maintained its reputation and goodwill among global health and wellness enthusiasts in recent times as well. The outbreak of a pandemic has affected the global travel in general and the medical related travel to an extent.

Coronavirus disease 19 (Covid-19), which first appeared in Wuhan, China, in early December 2019, has quickly spread around the world, with reported cases in almost every region, and has become a new global public health issue. Severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) was identified as the aetiological agent. Human transmission is mainly accomplished through overt, indirect, or near contact with infected persons through infected secretions such as respiratory secretions, saliva, or respiratory droplets

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expelled when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. The term Covid-19 was coined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and declared this highly contagious disease as a pandemic on 11 March, 2020. Many infected people are asymptomatic or experience a mild respiratory illness as a result of their infection. Fever, non-productive cough, weakness, malaise, and breathlessness are the main clinical signs of the disorder. In the elderly and patients with co morbid conditions, severe illness such as pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), and death may occur. Remdesivir was the first antiviral drug to be approved for use in the treatment of the disease. The most recently discovered medications, such as 2-DG (2- Deoxy-D Gulcose), are also in the list. Currently, the key method for controlling the spread of the disease is to use preventive measures such as touch, droplet, and airborne precautions (Mohan et. al., 2020).

Tourists from various parts, both developing and developed countries, of the world are flying to India every year for medical treatments or related activities. The Governments of India and every state government have a positive policy in their approach towards encouraging medical value tourism (MVT). The revenue generated is also promisingly increasing year by year. The number of people who live depending on tourism allied activities is also not negligible in India. There are states like Kerala whose economic backbone the tourism. The tourism industry in India is going through painful stages of survival due to the pandemic effect. The fall was expected but the intensity and damages were much more than expected. The tourism industry is a super contributor to the Indian economy and accounting for a decent percentage until the pandemic. Covid-19 has left the sector in shambles by 2020 with an unimaginable loss to the industry. Despite the pandemic and shortage of travel, India's tourism sector ranked tenth in terms of travel and tourism spending, employing 8% of the country's workforce in 2019. The Indian tourism industry is experiencing a loss about Rs. 5 lakh crore in 2020-21, according to a report by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The recovery of tourism sector is a big concern today and many aspects are to be taken into consideration. A coordinated effort by taking all the stakeholders to confidence is essential from the government and non government tourism authorities. The pandemic will have a huge impact on visitor perceptions. Personal hygiene and sanitation are now given top

priority. Tourists are now avoiding crowded areas in favour of remote locations. The way people travel has also changed. Some of the latest developments in the sector include the value of local food, proximity to nearby locations and short travel. The industry in order to make a recovery needs to focus on this aspect and various other norms that are in practice in these Covid times.

### **The Medical Tourism in India - Status and Updates**

Tourism has lot of potential for development, and it can help localities, states and even countries. Cultural, social, interpersonal, physical, religious, and now healthcare are all important motivators for travel and tourism. The twenty-first century is experiencing a new trend wherein a synergy of travel and wellness is being popularized. People of developed countries tend to travel to less developed parts of the world to access a broad range of medical services rather than depending on treatment available in their own communities. Travel companies and the media coined the word medical tourism to describe this rapidly rising trend of travelling all over the world to access high-tech medical treatment. Medical tourism is described by the Medical Tourism Association as “where people from one country travel to another country to obtain medical, dental, and surgical treatment that is equivalent to or better than what they would receive in their own country. It also said that these tourists travel for medical care because of affordability, better access to care and a higher standard of care.” It is clear that medical tourism is a business that incorporates healthcare and tourism facilities for international medical tourists.

Marketing, banking, insurance, transportation, corporate, human resources, electronic communication and technology are all intertwined with medical tourism. Customers who choose medical tourism travel to local hospitals in other countries with rich tourism possibilities, where they can relax and participate in cultural events while receiving medical care, maintenance, and recovery through the successful engagement of human capital (service providers and recipients), procedures, technology, and/or material resources (Hwang et.al., 2018). Consumer interests are immensely reflected in interaction practices, and these activities will contribute to changes in medical care delivery.

Many countries such as Cuba, Argentina, Mexico, Hungary, South Africa, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and India are major world players in medical tourism.

Asian countries are leading the list with India as an influential member. The Indian government, state tourism boards, travel agents, tour operators, hotel companies, and private sector hospitals are all looking into the medical tourism industry as a potential source of revenue. They plan to take advantage of the opportunities by merging the country's well-known leisure tourism with medical tourism. The low medical costs in India, which are one-tenth of those in Western countries, are one of the factors that make it a desirable destination for health tourism.

Medical tourism in modern medicine gained a sudden traction in India as a result of globalization and economic liberalization in the 1990s. As a result, a large number of multi-specialty hospitals with cutting-edge technology and advanced medical services, as well as a variety of tourist attractions, have sprung up. India is well-known among developing countries for providing advanced treatments in a variety of procedures such as cardiac, pediatric, dental, cosmetic and orthopedic surgical systems (Dawn et al, 2011)

The tourism ministry has launched the 'e-medical visa' facility to tourists from over 166 countries including the last added Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The scheme also cover the 'e- medical attendant visa' which really going to boost the customers' satisfaction. Moreover Triple entry is permitted for e-Medical Visa and for e-Medical Attendant Visa which could be extended up to 6 months on case to case basis. Similarly, Medical Attendant Visa will be co-terminus with the validity of the principal e-visa holder. Many such announcements are available to public in the annual report published by the Ministry of tourism, Government of India.

The tourism ministry in India also does the following to encourage the medical travel to India,

- A National Medical & Wellness Tourism Board has been constituted to provide an institutional framework of the dedicated activities.
- Publicity materials like CDs, Brochures, promotion videos and kind materials are published and circulated among the target market.
- International platforms like World Travel Mart, London, ITB, Berlin, Arabian Travel Mart etc are also being used for the marketing of Medical tourism attractions in India.

### **Medical Tourism and Economy**

In India the medical tourism has been widely explored in the last two decades. According to a study conducted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and McKinsey in 2004, around 150,000 foreigners would have visited India for medical care in 2004, with the number increasing by 15% per year (Mc Kinsey, 2002; Indian tourism analysis, 2011). India has the potential to draw 1 million health tourists per year, generating \$5 billion in revenue for the nation. The majority of medical tourists come from Asia and Africa. A limited number of visitors come from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The majority of foreign patients who come to India are from nearby countries, and the majority of them are poor. According to reports, approximately 697,453 international tourists visited India for medical treatment in 2019 alone which is 6.4% of total visitors. Nearly a quarter of all arrivals from West Asia in 2018 were for medical reasons, followed by Africa (14.6%), South Asia (13%) and Eastern Europe (4.2 per cent). In addition, 86 percent of Iraqis, 54% of Yeminis, nearly 29% of Omanis, and more than 10% of Saudi Arabian tourists came to our country solely for medical reasons. In a similar vein, 30% of Afghans, 22% of Maldivians, and 14% of Bangladeshis came solely for medical reasons among our South Asian neighbors (Economic times report). Even though the number is less the people from US also prefer India as a medical tourism destination. India ranks sixth in terms of medical tourism industry, sixth in terms of facility and service quality, and tenth overall on the Medical Tourism Ranking, which ranks American perceptions of 46 international healthcare destinations for 2020-21.

The market value is considerably high for medical tourism, Global Medical Tourism Market is valued at USD 82.27 Billion in 2017 and expected to reach USD 274.37 Billion by 2027 with a CAGR of 12.8% over the forecast period. When the industry was worth three billion dollars in 2015, India was the third most popular destination for medical tourism. That year, the number of international tourists entering the country on medical visas totaled nearly 234,000 (Muhamme et. al., 2017; Sharma et. al., 2020). The provisional estimate of foreign exchange earnings from medical tourism was Rs. 1,35,193 crores in 2015, Rs. 1,54,146 crores in 2016, and Rs. 1,77,874 crores in 2017, according to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (2018), indicating a steady growth in the modern medical tourism

industry in India. Recent statistics are also hopeful in the year before the outbreak of the pandemic, 9.20 percent of GDP in 2018. In 2019, the figure dropped to 6.8%.

### **The position of Kerala in Medical Tourism**

In India, Medical Tourists receive health-restorative treatments that include a mix of Ayurveda, Yoga, acupuncture, medicinal oil therapy, nature therapies, and certain ancient Indian healthcare practices, such as Vedic care, which is an alternative healthcare service. States like Kerala and Karnataka have exploited the scope well in advance with their state of the art traditional health care systems (Chanda, 2002)

Kerala, India's southernmost state and popularly known as "God's Own Country," is widely regarded as the most popular tourist destination in the world. This Indian subcontinent's greenest state is blessed with excellent tropical evergreen soil, including dense rain forests, plantation-covered Western Ghats high ranges and hill tops, beautiful midlands of vegetative variations, and palm-lined coastal belts and other water bodies like lakes, rivers, and beaches. Aside from these natural attractions, Kerala's excellent tropical and moderate climatic conditions throughout the year make it a world-famous tourist destination. (Deepu et. al., 2020).

As previously stated, due to the globalization and liberalization policies from 1990s the Europeans have identified Kerala as a premier medical tourism destination. Kerala has a pool of expert doctors and nurses connected to a network of super specialty hospitals where any kind of care can be accessed at a low cost and with little waiting time, according to European visitors and tourist patients. Since then, a large number of international patients from Europe, including those from Western developed countries, have begun travelling to Kerala to take advantage of low-cost medical services as well as a tourism scheme (Singh, 2008)

Kerala is well-connected to the medical tourism markets of the Middle East, South Asia, and Europe. Kerala has a lot of potential for medical tourism because it is the safest place in the world during Covid times, with a mortality rate of just 0.36 percent. Notably, Kerala has the lowest child mortality and highest life expectancy rates in India. Kerala also has the highest Physical Quality of Life Index in India, with a literacy rate of 100 percent, and is the only Indian state with macro health metrics comparable to those of OECD countries. Kerala, also known as the "Headquarters of Ayurveda," has captured the imagination of

many as an admired destination in India for medical value travel (Remya, 2015). Emergence of multi-specialty hospitals and expert doctors are key for the rapid growth of the sector apart from the traditional ayurveda based wellness tourism.

Kerala is also familiar and known for its wellness tourism capabilities and again with due dependence on Ayurveda sector. Wellness tourism is all about travelling with a purpose of maintaining, refreshing and strengthening the health and attaining a sense of well being. Most of the hotels and resorts in India and particularly in Kerala are focusing on this area by incorporating ayurveda treatments, yoga therapies, natural healing etc. According to a 2009 report, tourists' perceptions of Kerala as a preferred Ayurvedic Health Care destination were destination image, healthcare package, and the factors that affected their satisfaction level were booking procedures, promotion and awareness formation, climate, and facilities of Ayurvedic Resorts (Bindu et. al., 2009)

To increase tourist arrivals, the state government (Department of Tourism) and other government agencies such as Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) and Kerala Tourism Promotion Council (KTPC) collaborate on a variety of tourism promotion activities. Several ventures such as responsible tourism, adventure tourism, pilgrimage tourism, and heritage tourism have been discussed in the current tourism policy of the state government. All these measures together have worked well for the rapid growth of the sector. Consequently, in 2017, domestic tourist arrivals in Kerala increased by 11.39 percent, from 1.31 crore in 2016 to 1.46 crore in 2017. In the case of foreign visitors, the number increased by 5.15 percent from 10.38 lakhs in 2016 to 10.91 lakhs in 2017. Kerala tourism received Rs. 30,000 crores in 2018, amid the state's extreme flood disaster, and job opportunities increased to 15 lakhs. Employment opportunities were made available through the Responsible Tourism project for 30,549 people directly and 59,763 indirectly. Kerala Tourism has received three foreign awards from the Asia Pacific Travel Association for its overall growth activities (Kerala Tourism Statistics, 2018; Surendran, 2019)

### **Medical Tourism During Pandemic - The Challenges**

The tourism sector is the worst hit industry due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic across the world from 2020 onwards. The leisure travel completely put on hold as the free movement of people across country borders or even between states and territories were

banned. Medical tourism could not stand odd amidst the pandemic even though there is a perpetuation of medical necessity.

“There are many medical tourism players who have taken India to the top of the world medical tourism map, sadly, today they face a dark future,” said Dalip Chopra, President of the Foundation of Healthcare and Promotion in India in a meeting of the organization on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. This clearly depicts the picture in India and an estimated loss of 2.5 billion USD will demarcate the damage.

There are diverse challenges to be addressed during and after the pandemic in India. Few of them are discussed below.

### **Hospitals and Medical Facilities**

The corona virus has infected and spread to almost every country on the planet, and the number of people infected is growing by the minute. Covid-19 symptoms are typically managed by medication, and early diagnosis may aid in a faster recovery. However, no known formula for attacking and killing the virus has yet been established. Despite the fact that health care programmes did not cease following the declaration of lockdown, a significant priority of health care was the creation of Covid recovery units. Despite the fact that all major hospitals were operational, almost all of them were still performing emergency procedures or treating Covid (Sharma, 2020).

### **Doctors and Medical Staff**

Through contracting of corona virus via direct contact with Covid patients or indirectly through asymptomatic patients who visited the hospital for other purposes, hospitals in India were developing Covid cases among their doctors and support staff. This is not only a concerning condition for Covid patients, but it also raises concerns about the disease's safety measures. These factors are crucial to a hospital's image as a provider of foreign patients. In addition, Indian hospitals are experiencing a qualified specialist shortage. According to the Planning Commission, India is in desperate need of specialist doctors, nurses, and dentists. Professionals such as nurses and doctors are in short supply in our community health centers also (Sharma, 2013)

### **Hygiene and Crowds**

Indian hospitals are falling behind in providing hygienic medical facilities and room services including hygienic food to patients, as a result of which foreign patients are losing faith in Indian hospitals (Sharma, 2013). From now onwards, hygiene is not going to be an additional attraction but a compulsory basic element specifically in tourist places and restaurants. Social distance has to be maintained in public spaces and tourism destinations. People travelling with a medical purpose, further look at the issue consciously, and may rethink the travel plans to places short of hygiene and with possibility of crowds. This is going to be a big issue in Indian tourism sector as far as the foreign travelers are concerned. The very idea of social distancing and personal hygiene practices in important tourism destinations has to be publicized even after the pandemic subsides. The advertisements must also address such changes and provide coverage for such events and pictures.

### **Media Coverage of the Crisis**

The second wave of pandemic has already been catastrophic and the miseries of the people in the country are unimaginable and unfolding day - by day. How the global community is reading these developments in India is important from the tourism point of view. How the international media is depicting the scenario in India is relevant as it will have an impact in the travel plans of tourists in general and medical tourists in particular to India. Some of the images that global media might cover with a damaging consequence to the tourism sector are the crisis of oxygen shortage, the vaccine unavailability, acute shortage of ventilators and even hospital beds in cities like Delhi and in a few of the states, the unprecedented sorrows of the relatives of the deceased who are forced to stand in the queue for hours before the crematoriums, and lastly the numerous dead bodies left ruthlessly in the holy river Ganges and through its banks (Economic times report)

We have number of such reports before us which has been published in reputed international media. In October 2020, the Indian journalist writing for the Dawn newspaper wrote: "The handling of the pandemic betrays a complete lack of imagination and planning and as a result despite imposing the strictest and longest lockdown in the world, New Delhi has failed to achieve desired results. No country in the world has failed as miserably as India

in providing adequate safety nets to its vast population. As a result, millions of lives are at stake and very soon India will end up having the largest number of corona virus cases.” The BBC correspondent wrote a while ago: “India is now in the grips of a public health emergency. Social media feeds are full with videos of Covid funerals at crowded cemeteries, wailing relatives of the dead outside hospitals, long queues of ambulances carrying gasping patients, mortuaries overflowing with the dead, and patients, sometimes two to a bed, in corridors and lobbies of the hospitals. There are frantic calls for help for beds, medicines, oxygen, essential drugs and tests.” (Sushil, 2021). Moreover the videos, photographs and discussions in public and social media also have done the damage for the time being.

### **The Age Group and the Health Condition**

The age group worst affect the corona virus is found to be above 60 to 40 and unfortunately the same age group has been found to be the potential travelers for medical purpose. Moreover those with various diseases, whether it is lifestyle, cancer, heart or others are much vulnerable if the virus contract. The possibility of complication and death rate in these two categories are above the average. So, due to this entanglement of the target age group and health condition the medical travelling has been arrested completely in a manner and has to be resolved by rejuvenating strategies like vaccinations.

Many studies in China, have revealed a higher case-fatality rate among the elderly: > 80 years (14.8 percent), 70-79 years (8 percent), 60-69 years (3.6 percent), 50-59 years (1.3 percent), and 0.4 percent among those under 50 years of age (Li et. al., 2020). In a related report from Italy, the elderly aged 81-90 years (42.7 percent) and 71-80 years (42.7 percent) had the largest number of deaths (35.6 percent) (CNBC report, 2020)

### **The Post Pandemic Strategies to Revive Medical Tourism in India**

According to the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), due to its newfound reputation and popularity as a “reliable and competent” medical destination, the country could be one of the biggest beneficiaries of medical travel. However, according to the ITDC, the sector must be streamlined, organized, and supervised in order for this to happen particularly after the pandemic crisis.

The major strategies to be formulated and executed for the betterment are discussed here.

### **Reviving Goodwill**

Currently there is a lack of good will and confidence among the target groups across the world for travel for medical purpose as the pandemic strikes severely. There was a ray of hope after the first wave when the travel ban was taken off. There was a slow hike in number of travelers and things were moving to normal. This confidence was evident in the statement by Prof. Ravi Mehrotra – Chief Executive Officer, ICMR - India Cancer Research Consortium. “Around 21 patients from Myanmar and Burma were flown in on a chartered flight to Apollo Hospital for kidney or liver transplants recently. This indicates that the number of people seeking care is steadily rising. Unfortunately, not everybody can afford chartered flights, which is why the number is so slim. So that’s where we are right now,” he also added that “People, on the other hand, are becoming increasingly interested in Indian traditional medicine, such as Ayurveda, immunity-boosting herbal products, and yoga. People are curious about naturopathic medicine. We should emphasize that these are beneficial in the treatment of people who suffer from chronic illnesses” (Shukla, 2021). The made in India vaccines and its export was good enough to emulsify the thought of a ‘safe country’ to travel after the first wave but things get upside down in the second wave.

Another recent development in this aspect is the latest introduced drug 2DG (2 Deoxy-D Glucose) by DRDO (Defense Research and Development Organization) which is entering in to front line armamentarium to combat the pandemic. This Indian origin drug by the Indian scientists is providing a hope to the entire world along with other similar medicines under research. From the medical travel perspective this kind of advancements will help bringing the goodwill back.

### **Media Publicity for Positive News**

In between the chaos of the pandemic and the annoying crisis there has been some positive reports also been published in the global media, importantly the health system standards of the state of Kerala. The way how Kerala defended the first wave has been globally appreciated and the front line leader K. K. Shailaja Teacher, the health Minister, has been much acclaimed in international media. The Guardian journal has published a detailed report on the efficient leadership of the Minister and the preparedness of the state well in advance once the corona virus outbreak occurred in Wuhan. The lowest death rate of the state

even in the devastating second wave, which is crossing all the boundaries with the expected number of active cases is well above 10 lakhs, is also well covered in national and international media. So what is trying to illustrate is that there are agonistic news as well and will they have an impact in the tourism industry and be the resuscitative medicine?. We have to wait for that either till the eradication of the pandemic or at least till the active comes down and the travel bans are off.

When the statistics are analyzed the growth of tourism industry in Kerala is steadily upwards and drew about 1.96 crore visitors in 2019, the fastest growth rate in tourist arrivals in 24 years which is 17.2 % higher than the previous year. “After devastating flooding and torrential rain in 2018 and 2019, we have bounced back with vigour. Our statistics show that from May 2019 to the end of the year, there was a substantial rise in footfall,” Kerala Tourism Minister Kadakampally Surendran said in a statement. He expressed his positive mindset in 2019 and expected a similar growth in 2020 also “We are hopeful about maintaining growth momentum this year as well,” he said, “but it will be contingent on how quickly the world finds a solution to the Covid-19 outbreak.”

Similar cases and reports are also coming out through the media from various states and this hopefully will help in recreating a positive attitude towards the people of India.

### **Vaccines - The Savior of Mankind**

Vaccines usually take years to develop and test before hitting the clinic, but in 2020, scientists set out on a race to develop safe and efficient corona virus vaccines in record time. 90 vaccines are currently being tested in human clinical trials, with 27 having reached the end of the process. A total of 77 preclinical vaccines are currently being tested in animals.

The only hope before us is the community vaccination against the corona virus. According to World Health Organization (WHO), access to safe and effective vaccines is vital to ending the Covid-19 pandemic. With that point of objective WHO has sanctioned the development of so many vaccines globally by various pharmaceutical companies (Report by WHO, 2021). Covid-19 infection can provide some protection, also known as natural immunity. According to current evidence, re-infection with the virus that causes Covid-19 is rare in the months following initial infection, but it may become more frequent over time.

Covid-19's chance of serious illness and death greatly outweighs any potential advantages of natural immunity. Covid-19 vaccine protects you by eliciting an antibody response by the host body's immune system without requiring a natural infection and getting sick. Many of the evidence indicates that people who have been completely vaccinated are less likely to be infected without displaying symptoms (asymptomatic infection) and may be less likely to transmit the Covid-19 virus to others. However, further research is being carried out. The vaccines are safer to use as Covid-19 vaccines do not contain the live virus that causes Covid-19, so you cannot get Covid-19 from a Covid-19 vaccine (CDC report, 2021). There is few number of people who have been completely vaccinated can contract Covid-19 if they are exposed to the virus that causes it, according to the CDC. Such conditions are termed as "Vaccine breakthrough events". Although people who have been vaccinated are much less likely to become ill, it is still possible. Experts are still researching how common these cases are. Here we have to remind that when it says 'completed vaccination' implies that both doses of the vaccines have been administered and two weeks are over after that. According to the ICMR (Indian Council for Medical and Research) data 0.04 % people tested Covid-19 positive after the second dose of Covaxin and only 0.03 % after the Covishield vaccine administration. "After vaccination, only 2-4 people per 10,000 people are infected with Covid-19," said Dr. Balram Bhargava, Director General of the ICMR.

There are studies reporting the effectiveness of vaccination against the Covid. According to a study published in 2020 by Moghadas et al., the vaccine could have a significant impact on reducing incidence, hospitalizations, and deaths, especially among vulnerable individuals with co-morbidities and risk factors for serious illness associated with Covid-19 (Moghadas et. al., 2020).

The mass vaccination campaign is ongoing in India and the total number is climbing up every day with the total tally of people administered their first dose as on 17 May 2021 being 14.31 crores and that for both the doses 4.07 crores (data from CoWin dashboard). This number seems pretty low from the total population point of view but expect a hike in number as and when the number of available vaccine doses increased by the production companies. Moreover apart from the indigenous Covaxin and Covishield the Government has given permission for new vaccines to be imported and also produced in India. This includes the

Sputnik V vaccine from Russia and many are on the queue.

### **Modernized Approach in Pre - Treatment Through Tele Medicine**

Tele medicine has emerged as a viable option for those seeking high-quality health cares outside their home country. The tele medicine service introduced by the Government of India is a new step in medical care. This has the potential to extend the basic and advanced medical consultation to the people otherwise may not be to reach out. It has a doctor- doctor platform which integrates the medical services and facilities and a doctor-patient platform for outpatient consultation service. It is operational in all the states and is widely accepted by the patients in the wake of the pandemic and eventual lockdowns in the country. It will be available in 1,55,000 health and wellness centers across India by December 2022.

Telehealth's growing popularity isn't just a supplement to MVT; it's also a force multiplier for it. Cost-effective access to high-quality treatment without the need for physical travel would be a big incentive for the client country. Fundamentally, tele medicine will aid in the preliminary evaluation of patients before they must fly to another country for medical treatment. After a preliminary assessment, a patient can travel to a health destination country like India for advanced care or related surgeries (Report in The Hindu Business line, 2021)

### **General Operational Strategies**

The vital steps to be taken after pandemic in India to reinstall the medical tourism sector are,

- Advertise the services provided by major hospitals in a more effective manner.
- Educate the Indian high commissions in different countries about the potential for medical tourism to generate revenue and goodwill.
- Create public-private collaborations between hospitals that provide medical care, as there are many government hospitals that provide treatment of comparable quality to private hospitals.

Medical tourism in India requires a single point of contact and a dependable, accredited, and supervised platform that can provide solutions for a variety of budgets. Because a medical tourist needs support facilities such as visa and travel arrangements, lodging for attendants, food, and language problems in addition to a secure and accessible

medical facility. Currently, these facilities are provided by different departments/ministries which need to be changed for the comprehensive growth and flexible customer relations.

### **Conclusion**

The growth of medical tourism in India was in good pace during last two decades. Medical tourism has been recognized as an industry by many of the states and is contributing remarkably to economy and employment. The growth was evident in the number of visitors to India which is increasing every year. The unexpected outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has suddenly changed the situation affecting the entire travel and tourism industry around the world and particularly in India after the worst second wave of the disease. Even though the sector is in a unhealthy stage, the stakeholders are expecting a reversal with full swing. This need a lot events to happen in a juncture including the mass vaccination, hygienic facilities in the tourism destinations, control of crowding and many more. The efforts taken by the Governments so far has resulted in the current fame to the Indian medical tourism industry and further on believe that some reformations and changes in policies imposed by the Governments in future will escalate the industry from the pitfall.

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# COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT IN TOURISM SECTOR OF KERALA WITH FOCUS ON KOVALAM AND VARKALA

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## *Abstract*

*The strict measures employed as a precautionary one in response to Covid - 19 pandemic has reduced the global tourism industry to a nadir and disrupted the livelihood of millions of people. However, the Government took the initiative in reopening the tourist beach spots as and when the number of coronavirus cases decreased following Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). Like other tourism sectors beach tourism has also suffered. The study acts as a pointer to the impact of Covid-19 on tourism facilitators of Kovalam and Varkala, the two major beach destinations in Kerala. The tourist facilitators have faced numerous issues and challenges during the Covid -19 pandemic. They are faced with enormous social, economic and mental problems. However both Central and State Governments has come up with various schemes for propping up the tourism industry such as loans, moratorium and the bio bubble program. Now the industry is in revival mode as regulations and relaxations imposed by Government is being lifted slowly.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Tourism, Tourism facilitators, Beach tourism.

## **Introduction**

Travel and tourism has carved a niche for itself as one of the biggest job providers in the world. The benefits and contribution of the tourism industry to all sectors of economy is quite substantial. It is a multi-disciplinary and smokeless industry that helps in the development and expansion of other sectors like horticulture, handicrafts, transport and communication. Tourism is characterised by the urge to know the unknown, to discover new and strange places, to seek change of environment and to accomplish new experiences. The urge to travel influences people to move from one destination to another. As per the World Travel & Tourism Council statistics (WTTC, 2017), the total contribution to Gross Domestic Product by travel and tourism sector raised to 3.6% in 2017 and estimated to rise by 4.0% pa,

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from 2017-2027. The total contribution to employment, both in direct and indirect terms by tourism industry increased to 1.9 % in 2017 and is estimated to rise by 2.5 % in 2027. The present situation created out of Covid-19 pandemic has hit the tourism industry all around the world hard. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourist arrivals have decreased by 74 percent in 2020 compared to 2019.

In Kerala, one of the main revenue generating sector is the tourism sector, with beach tourism ranking among the top. The staggering collapse of the tourism industry in Kerala has reflected on people's livelihoods. As per the numbers put out by the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) Kerala, one lakh people may have lost their jobs and over 20,000 stakeholders shut down their ventures over the last one year. As per the studies reported it is pointed that the tourism sector is considered the worst hit and the state government has announced a package to revive the industry by focusing more on domestic travellers and local tourists. During the past twenty four years, God's own Country had shown significant growth in the tourism sector even as other industries have fallen back.

The two consecutive floods in 2018 and 2019, and now the Covid-19 pandemic have flattened the tourism sector. After the 2018 mega floods, the state reported the highest growth rate in domestic and foreign tourist arrivals during the past twenty four years. There was around 8.5 percent growth in foreign and 17.8 percent growth in domestic tourist arrivals in 2019 compared to 2018. The global promotional campaigns, novel initiatives like introducing new destinations to international bloggers and developing event destinations helped the state to achieve this unique growth. With the pandemic, Kerala has a large share of their gains. Around 18.4 million domestic and 1.18 million foreign tourists visited Kerala in 2019. Since the state reported its first Covid positive case on January 2020, only 349,575 foreign tourists visited in the year, a 61 percent decline in numbers compared to the previous year. Domestic tourist arrivals also drastically declined by 85%, resulting in total losses of Rs. 35,207 crore in 2020 (The Hindu, 2021 July 4).

### **Covid-19 Pandemic and Tourism**

In a study (Goutam, 2021), assessed the impact of the Covid-19 (coronavirus disease-2019) pandemic in India's hospitality and tourism sector by addressing essential aspects such as current conditions and challenges as well as future perspectives. The research findings

showed that Covid-19 in India had significantly affected the hospitality and tourism sector. Global and domestic tourists have cancelled their programs to visit the natural, historical, religious, and cultural sites. Flight tickets and the hotel reservations have been cancelled and a significant number of workers in the sector have lost their jobs. Overall the study revealed that Covid-19 pandemic has seriously affected the tourism sector in India.

(Varghese, 2021) analysed the changes that occurred in the travel and tourism industry as a result of the pandemic. The study overall emphasised that there was a trend among the new generation in spending more time and money on recreational activities as stress relievers. Travel and Tourism were prominent activities in this regard. The spread of the pandemic was so fast and gripping that the country itself got into complete lockdown and consequent shocks in every aspect of the economy. The study inferred from the analysis that lockdowns due to the Covid pandemic had significant and enduring negative impacts on the business prospects of stakeholders in the travel and tourism industry. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the world and almost brought the entire world to a complete standstill. Most of the industries have been affected adversely as countries across the world went on lockdowns and imposed restrictions on travel, trade, and businesses. The tourism, Aviation, and Hospitality industry are among the few that have been most affected due to the pandemic, as pleasure travel had almost ceased to zero and many countries worldwide had closed their borders restricting international tourists. In order to survive this, the travel industry players had to cut down their employees and their pay. Many tourism professionals have lost their jobs or have their jobs at stake (Sandhya, 2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic had caused significant disruptions in the global economy. By the end of the first quarter of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic had brought international travel to an abrupt halt and significantly impacted the tourism industry. For many developed and developing countries, the tourism sector is a major source of employment, government revenue and foreign exchange earnings. Without this vital lifeline, many countries may experience a dramatic contraction in GDP and a rise in unemployment. Using a computable general equilibrium model (GTAP), we assess the implications of the Covid-19 crisis on the tourism sector. (Alam & Parveen, 2021).

**Statement of the Problem**

The unexpected surge in Covid-19 cases has crushed the hopes of several local tourism entrepreneurs and homestay owners in Kerala. Especially the ones in Kovalam and Varkala are back to the previous year's helpless condition. They were hopeful of getting their business back on track this season with the inflow of tourists. However, the travel restrictions and containment zone regulations have put their livelihoods at risk once again. Several entrepreneurs running homestays and other local tourism facilities were badly affected due to the pandemic last year. When the things were getting back to normal, the second wave of the pandemic aggravated the situation. Bookings have stopped due to travel restrictions. Interviews conducted with the local tourism entrepreneurs reveal that small businesses that suffered huge losses due to the pandemic will not revive if the current situation continues.

The global pandemic, the first of its scale in a new era of interconnectedness has put 100 million jobs at risk. Many of these are in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises that employ a high share of women, who represent 54 percent of the tourism workforce, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) statistics. Tourism-dependent countries are likely feel the negative impacts of the crisis for much longer than other economies. Contact-intensive services key to the tourism and travel sectors are disproportionately affected by the pandemic and will continue to struggle until people feel safe to travel en masse again.

**Significance of the Study**

Tourism is a critical sector of the international economy. Before Covid-19, travel and tourism was known as one of the most important sectors in the world economy, accounting for 10 per-cents of global GDP and more than 320 million jobs worldwide. In 2019, the tourism sector accounted for 29 per cent of the world's services exports and about 300 million jobs globally. It is an important source of income and employment for developed and developing countries. The global contraction in tourism arrivals could have devastating economic consequences as some developing countries are highly dependent on tourism. In some countries, such as several small island developing states (SIDS), tourism accounts for more than half of the GDP. The present study focussed to identify the hits of pandemic in

Kerala beach tourism sector and its impact to tourism facilitators and allied sectors. The study also measures the status of reviving packages of government.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study gives focus on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic with respect to beach tourism in Kerala. The views of stake holders relating to tourism sector such as tour operators, facilitators, resort-based labours, taxi drivers and vendors in and around the beach have been included in this effort. The areas of this study include Varkala (papanasam) beach and Kovalam beach in Trivandrum district.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To identify the major problems faced by beach tourist facilitators in Varkala and Kovalam in light of Covid-19 pandemic.
- To understand the Covid pandemic reviving strategies of Central as well as state government in beach tourism of Kerala.
- To study the perception of tourist facilitators regarding reviving strategies.

### **Research Methodology**

The study undertaken is descriptive and analytical in nature. It focusses in analysing the impacts of covid pandemic in tourism sector, especially beach tourism in Kerala. Both primary and secondary data from various sources are used to undertake the study. An interview schedule is used for collect the required primary data for the purpose.

**Research Design:** The present study is descriptive and analytical nature

**Sources of Data:** The study is conducted by using both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected through interview schedule. Secondary data were collected as per the requirements of the theoretical framework.

**Population:** Population of the study is tourist facilitators Kerala. The data was collected from two prominent beaches in Kerala namely Varkala and Kovalam.

**Sample design:** Purposive sampling is used for the selection of tourist facilitators.

**Sample size:** Primary data for the study is collected from 120 respondents through an interview schedule. Stake holders who are located in Varkala and Kovalam beaches in Thiruvananthapuram district are considered as the respondents for the study.

**Table 1**  
**Details of Sample**

Tourist facilitators	Sample size	
	Varkala	Kovalam
Tourist guides	10	10
Restaurant and hotel owners / employees	20	20
Taxi drivers	10	10
Street traders	20	20
Total	120	

*(Source: primary data)*

**Tools used for data collection:** Interview schedule is used to collect primary data

#### **Tools Used for Analysis**

- Multi-Dimensional Scaling (ALSCAL)
- Percentage analysis
- Mean score

#### **Period of the Study**

- The study is confined to the financial year 2020-2021.
- The primary data for the study is collected from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 to 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

- Lock down challenges and strict order of Health department for social distance campaign affect the data collection process.
- However, the maximum effort has been taken to ensure reliability on the information gathered through interview schedule

#### **Operational Definition**

**Tourist Facilitators:** Tourist facilitators are those persons who provide facilities to boosting tourism and consider tourism as an employment for getting income. Tourist facilitators include guides, restaurant owners/labours, taxi drivers etc.

### **Central Government Initiatives for Surviving Tourism Sector**

The Ministry of Tourism launched the 'Dekho Apna Desh' web-series with a view to create awareness about tourist destinations in the country. Twenty-six webinars covering lesser-known tourist destinations and promoting the concept of responsible tourism were held in April 2020. Approximately 42,000 people registered for the webinars, which were well received by the travel industry, students and the public (Ministry of Tourism, 2020). An 'Extraordinary Tourism Ministers Virtual Meeting of the G-20' chaired by H.E. Minister of Tourism, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was held on 24 April 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate collaborative action to protect tourism businesses and jobs, and support visitors in meeting the unprecedented challenge posed by Covid-19. The Ministry of Tourism and Government of India participated and took suggestions on measures that could be taken to revive the confidence of the industry, consumers and stakeholders;

The Ministry of Tourism set up a portal 'Stranded in India' aiming to facilitate and extend support to foreign tourists who were stranded because of the cancellation of flights and the lockdown. The site also provided Helpline numbers of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Bureau of Immigration, Ministry of Tourism, and Ministry of External Affairs. A total of 2,142 foreign tourists have sought assistance through the portal up to 30 April 2020. The Ministry of Tourism circulated and disseminated information on all travel-related advice and guidelines, issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and other Ministries/Organizations. This related to various steps to be taken by tourists, hotels and other stakeholders in all travel and hospitality associations; Hotel associations were advised not to deny accommodation to foreign tourists and to follow required procedures prescribed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. OYO Hotels collaborated by opening up their accommodation units across the country for stranded tourists. This information was shared with States/UTs, Embassies and others in order to utilise the accommodation units for tourists.

The India Tourism Development Corporation Ltd advised accommodating tourists in the Samrat Hotel in Delhi; this was done as and when required. A total of 72 foreign tourists checked into Hotel Samrat from 1 March 2020 to 31 March 2020; The Minister of State for Tourism and Culture launched the Incredible India Website in Chinese, Arabic and Spanish to

attract tourists from these regions. The function was attended by senior officials of the Ministry, foreign delegates and stakeholders of the tourism industry.

**Table 2**  
**Problems Faced by Beach Tourism Facilitators (Mean and Standard Deviation)**

Problems faced by tourists	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Arrival of tourists	120	1.56	.547	.050
Earnings from tourist	120	1.56	.547	.050
Business and employability	120	1.53	.608	.055
Salary and other income	120	1.52	.518	.047
Payment like rent, taxes, interest etc.	120	1.53	.533	.049
Sufficiency of income to payment of obligations	120	1.73	.698	.064
Savings and investment	119	2.03	.786	.072
Daily consumptions like food, cloth etc.	120	1.78	.679	.062
Children's education and medical treatment	120	1.93	.796	.073
Purchasing of luxury products	120	1.62	.747	.068
Providing financial supports to relatives	120	1.42	.495	.045
Supports from government and other institutions	120	2.36	.797	.073
Mental stress	120	1.90	.749	.068
Health issues	120	1.55	.620	.057
Shelter facilities	120	1.80	.656	.060
Entertainment with friends, children, spouse etc, conducting celebrations , buying a gifts to friends, child, spouse and other family members	120	1.53	.517	.047

*(Source: primary data)*

Table 2 shows that problems faced by tourist facilitators from pandemic hits in terms of mean and standard deviations. The table revealed the social, economic and mental problems faced by tourist facilitators and beach tourism related communities. Insufficient income (MD: 1.73), Health issues (MD: 1.55) Mental stress (MD: 1.90) and lack of shelter facilities (MD:1.80) are critical problems. In Vakala and Kovalam, majority of tourist facilitators like, street traders, guides, taxi drivers are migrant peoples staying in rented homes. Insufficient income affects payment of rent and they are force to vacate their rooms and return to own homes. Most of the street traders in Varkala and Kovalam are North Indians.

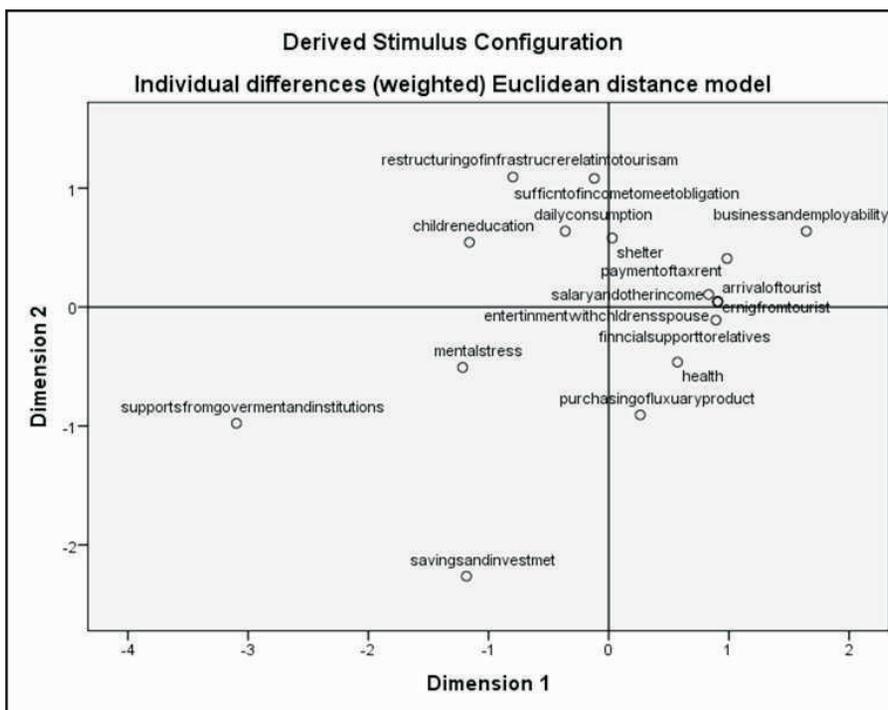
**Table 3**  
**Stimulus Co Ordinates for Problems Faced by Beach Tourist Facilitators**

Stress= .07982, RSQ= .97360			
SL	Facilitators problems and pandemic hits	Dimensions	
		1	2
1	Arrival of tourists	.9066	.0445
2	Earnings from tourist	.9077	.0435
3	Business and employability	1.6440	.6377
4	Salary and other income	.8308	.1061
5	Payment like rent, taxes, interest etc.	.9843	.4078
6	Sufficiency of income to payment of obligations	-.1201	1.0822
7	Savings and investment	-1.1839	-2.2637
8	Daily consumptions like food, cloth etc.	-.3618	.6381
9	Children's education and medical treatment	-1.1590	.5448
10	Purchasing of luxury products	.2627	-.9069
11	Providing financial supports to relatives	.8918	-.1095
12	Supports from government and other institutions	-3.0971	-.9771
13	Mental stress	-1.2150	-.5079
14	Health issues	.5719	-.4630
15	Shelter facilities	.0289	.5809
16	Entertainment with friends, children, spouse etc, conducting celebrations , buying a gifts to friends, child, spouse and other family members	.9065	.0475

(Source: primary data)

The outputs displayed in table 3 shows the stimulus Co-ordinates for opinion of beach tourist facilitators regarding struggles due to pandemic hits were studied. It revealed that the model explains 99% of variability (RSQ=.97360) and is having a small stress value (stress=.07982). Hence it can be inferred that the multi dimension scale model is reliable as it brings out facts and reveals the opinion of regarding pandemic challenges faced by tour facilitators. Result revealed that four aspects are explained to have positive coefficient in two dimensions.

**Figure 1**



Stimulus coordinates for opinion of beach tourism facilitators shows that shelter, insufficiency of income and payment of rent are among the biggest problems faced during pandemic period as seen from Figure 1.

**Table 4**  
**Measure of Revival Strategies by State and Central Governments**

Government support given	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Loans and advances	120	1.96	.920	.084
Moratorium	120	2.13	1.028	.094
Subsidies for electricity and payment of tax	120	1.96	.703	.064
Investment for reviving beach infrastructures	120	1.53	.608	.055
Bio-bubble programs	120	1.73	.698	.064
Rehabilitation programs of government	120	2.08	.949	.087

*(Source: primary data)*

Table 4 depicts that the Covid-19 pandemic reviving strategies of Central as well as state government for supporting beach tourism in Kerala and its effectiveness. As per the opinion of respondents that Government initiatives like moratorium, loan and advances and subsidies given are not sufficient to meet contingencies from pandemic hits.

**Table 5**  
**Evaluation of Perception of Tourist Facilitators Regarding Revival Strategies**

Perception of Tourism facilitators	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Government provide more Loans and advances with cheapest interest rate	120	4.10	1.056	.096
Increase moratorium time period	120	3.89	1.027	.094
Increase subsidy level	120	4.13	1.042	.095
Fastest initiatives taken for reviving b beach infrastructures	120	3.99	1.226	.112
Improve quality of Bio-bubble programs by Government	120	3.65	.941	.086
Add more and more rehabilitation programs by government	120	3.73	.968	.088
Removing lockdown restrictions by government	120	4.21	.986	.090

*(Source: primary data)*

Table 5 shows the perception of tour facilitators regarding reviving beach tourism from Covid-19 pandemic. Outputs shown in table 5 reveal that respondents expect more and more benefits from Government like improving rehabilitation facilities and infrastructure investment, subsidy and moratorium period. The main demands from the respondents is that Government should do away with lockdown restrictions to visiting tourist destinations and also improve the quality of Bio- bubble programs.

### **Findings**

- Beach tourism facilitators struggled with pandemic hits. Tourist facilitators have no sufficient income to meet basic needs like food, shelter and medical treatments. Most of the tourist facilitators in Varkala and Kovalam are north- Indians.
- Government rehabilitation programs have not been effective as desired
- Reviving strategies of Government is not much effective for beach tourism revival, especially Bio-bubble program. In Varkala and Kovalam have limited number of toilets and dustbins and the shortage will result in increased pollution.
- Government announced lots of rehabilitation and reviving programs, unfortunately they are not effectively and timely executed.

### **Suggestions**

- Speeding up of announced tourism reviving packages.
- More attention to be given for Bio-bubble program
- Increasing of moratorium period and providing more loan and advances.
- Infrastructure development in beaches to be speeded up
- Encouraging vaccination campaigns and awareness while making available dust bins, sanitary dispensers and masks at all points in the beach.

### **Conclusion:**

The tourism industry occupies a prominent place in the economic, social status of almost all countries and this is particularly true in the Kerala scenario. The sector alone contributes enormous employment opportunities to millions of people and raised the standard of people in the society. However, the pandemic Covid-19 had changed the entire picture. Government restrictions and strict protocol guidelines affected not only the business

activities in tourism industry but also the livelihood of stakeholders of tourism sector. Taxi drivers, guides, hoteliers, street traders are among the most affected in this sector. The lack of income, increased stress levels and lack of shelter are results of the crisis caused due to the pandemic to the tourist facilitators in Kovalam and Vakala. The government had introduced several supporting schemes like subsidy allocation, bio bubble program, loans and advances to tackle the dilemma. In spite of the hardships, there is a silver lining among the dark clouds of depression caused by Covid-19. This is provided by the Governments and will go a long way in alleviating misery. There is no doubt that tourism will revive in the state of Kerala in the coming days and beach tourism will also benefit from the revival packages offered. The relaxation of Covid norms, financial aids, awareness program and support schemes will help the beach tourism industry to flourish in the near future.

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# REVIVAL OF TOURISM INDUSTRY POST PANDEMIC: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES – A CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE

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## *Abstract*

*Tourism is the most pandemic-affected industry considering the severe impact of Covid-19 on the tourism business of many nations. Many countries were forced to close their international borders and some nations have imposed strict lock downs for curbing the spread of pandemic. These restrictions has resulted in many stakeholders to look for other options. Thus a fast recovery from this crisis is the only a wishful thinking while there is an urgent need for ecological or environmental friendly guidance. This will help the tourism sector recover thereby revive the economy. Sustainable development while implementing mitigation measures post Covid and during Covid will hold key to the future of tourism industry. The present study aims to analyze the economic impacts of the pandemic while suggesting strategies to overcome the present crisis.*

**Keywords:** *Pandemic, Sustainable tourism, New trends, Green economy, Green policies*

## **Introduction**

Over the years the tourism industry has witnessed many ups and down due to various reasons mostly caused by disasters like Tsunami and pandemics. As the sector has significant role in balancing the financial stability of the people, it severely affected people's life and leading to an economic disaster. The novel corona virus (Covid-19), which is one of its kind of pandemic disaster affecting the lives of people and businesses worldwide, triggering a global economic crisis. Tourism sector has taken the brunt of this pandemic. The pandemic has not only affected the foreign exchange earnings (FEE) but also affected regional developments and job opportunities, thereby disrupting the local communities as a whole (Sanjita et al., 2021). At this moment this conceptual paper is trying to analyze various tools which will help the tourism sector in reviving from the current pandemic situation.

## **Review of Literature**

According to the latest data from UNWTO, the pandemic led to a fall globally in international tourist arrivals in 2020, even as many Asian countries continue to impose strict travel restrictions. This sudden fall has placed the sector's ability to drive sustainable

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development forward on hold (UNWTO, 2020). It is clear that the dire consequence of the pandemic will remain for another few years and the only way to overcome the situation is by being sustainable.

Many studies have revealed the negative impacts of the pandemic. Some studies show that the pandemic is pushing the people towards an unstable economic situation as it affected their source of revenue. Most of the airlines are grounded, hotels are being closed due to fever and many five star hotels have been converted into quarantine facilities. Many restaurants see their operating cost rising further because of social distancing, hygiene and sanitation related costs. Therefore sustaining during this crisis is a challenging task for the tourism industry (Sanjita et. al., 2021).

The impact of Covid-19 in tourism sector has affected the related sectors that depend on tourism like lodging, catering and event management. All this has contributed to loss of jobs and other economic losses. According to (Liu et. al., 2019) the most dynamic sector is the tourism industry that benefits many other sectors like lodging, catering, transportation, retail and entertainment contributing to economic growth and recovery globally. It has been reported that tourism growth has outperformed the world GDP growth record from the past consecutively from the year 2011–2017(WTTC, 2018).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has estimated a decrease of between 20% to 30% in international tourist arrivals and corresponding economic earnings in 2020 compared to 2019. However the UNWTO acknowledges that such estimates must be treated with considerable caution, given the magnitude, volatility and wholly different profile of this crisis with respect to previous ones (UNWTO, 2020). Also the decrease in foreign tourist arrival will cause to fewer earning of foreign currency, again will have various effects on economies of countries around the globe.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- Understand the bottlenecks caused in Tourism industry by the pandemic
- Explore various possibilities of sustainable tourism to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic

### **Research Methodology**

The study is conceptual in nature, using secondary data available through online resources. In addition to this various articles, publications, research papers, newspaper articles have been reviewed for collecting secondary data. This methodology seemed more suitable to the situation since collecting primary data from stake holders was not practical in the present situation.

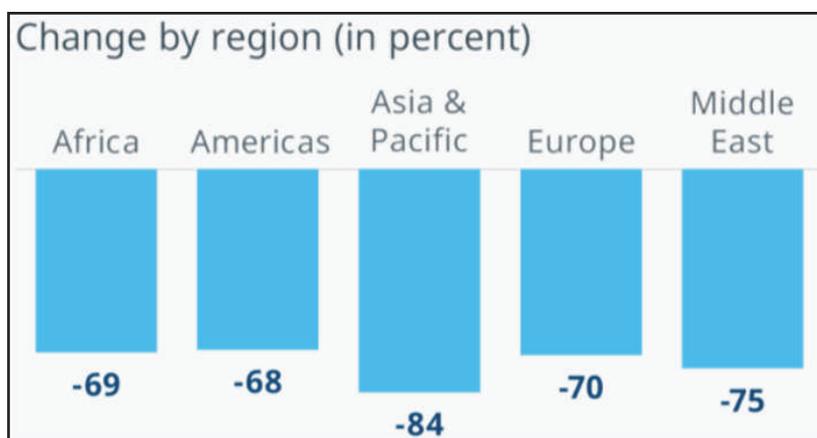
### **Pandemic and its Impact on Tourism**

The unexpected outburst of pandemic has affected the tourism sector unlike other sectors since the movement of people from one place to another being restricted in order to stop the spread of contagion. As 166 countries restrict entry into their national territories, global motilities have come to a near standstill leaving tourism destinations empty handed as their main resource namely tourists, are effectively absent. The smooth space of international tourism has suddenly become highly striated (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980). Indeed 42 % of all destinations have introduced specific restrictions for visitors from destinations due to concerns ranging from the suspension of flights and closing of all borders to compulsory quarantine. This restriction led abruptly to a situation of zero-Tourism which in turn resulted in the closure of businesses, unemployment and bankruptcy in the sector (WTTC, 2020). AS the industry is vulnerable to these types of epidemics the stakeholders and local community (who depended on tourism) was to be first group whom pandemic pushed to a disaster.

The year 2018 witnessed the movement of approximately 1.4 billion international tourists globally, and target set for 2020 was swiftly achieved in 2018 itself. Indeed the tourism industry was all set to gain new heights in the beginning of 2020 but the sudden outbreak of pandemic has brought an abrupt halt in the sector causing various damages on people and economies of countries that depended on tourism for revenue. As the Covid-19 pandemic unfolds, skyrocketing international tourism numbers have fallen like a stone with forecasted trends shifting dramatically from the predicted 3-4% annual growth to a 20-30% decline during 2020 (UNWTO, 2020). The world Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that the massive dip had led to a loss of approximately 197 million jobs worldwide,

as well as \$5.5 trillion (4.7 trillion) in revenue. The losses are five times greater than those caused by the 2009 global economic and financial crisis (DW.com, 2021). According to its April 14, 2020 brief, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates that 75 million jobs are at risk globally with a potential travel and tourism GDP loss of up to \$2.1 trillion this year (WTTC, 2020). As shown in the graph shown below, there is a drastic decrease in tourism business due to Covid-19. In all continents, the tourism business has been collapsed like never before.

**Figure 1**  
**Fall in International Tourist Arrivals**



(Source: UNWTO statistics – 2020)

This sudden fall can only be seen as a temporary phenomenon that will be replaced by the availability of vaccination against the pandemic. However the current situation can be observed as a crisis situation but the tourism industry will definitely re-emerge like we have seen from past examples at the time of disasters. In the context of tourism crisis, (Farmaki, 2020) has discussed tourist post-crisis behavior that reflects forgetfulness as evidenced by

their travel resumption patterns. The author emphasized that tourists tend to forget about the crisis and resume travelling after being affected indirectly and after a large interval. His prospect is reinforced by changes in travel desire and motivations like visiting friends and family. (Zonker & Kock, 2020)

### **Sustainable Tourism: An Alternative for Future**

Nature based tourism constitutes a major part of the tourism sector worldwide, therefore there should be a responsible approach while dealing with the natural resources. Indeed there are two different dimensions as far as the natural aspects are concerned. On one side the natural resources are getting disturbed due to unethical approach of humans towards nature. On the other hand the nature itself demands the presence of human beings, the nature breaths better when it having a good harmony with human beings. We have seen lot of examples at the time of pandemic that carbon emissions from aviation dropped around 22 % as planes stayed grounded, according to the global carbon project that quantifies greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (DW.com, 2021).

Throughout the pandemic period, media outlets and social media posts have highlighted that nature is healing in the absence of humans. Turtles were able to nest on empty beaches, pygmy bats spent nights in empty parking lots and according to local newspaper reports, significantly more white dolphins were spotted off the coasts of Hong Kong, thanks to a suspension of shipping traffic (DW.com, 2021). Summer 2020 was not a good one for common murre on the Swedish island of StoraKarlso in the Baltic Sea. These small black and white sea birds had significantly fewer babies. In fact, their breeding performance dropped by more than a fifth. Studies revealed that this was because lockdown kept tourists away (DW.com, 2021). StoraKarlso wasn't the only place to report unexpected wildlife problems. The drop in tourism in Thailand and India meant that with no grub left behind by visitors, highly aggressive groups of monkeys were left to fight over dwindling food supplies (DW.com, 2021).

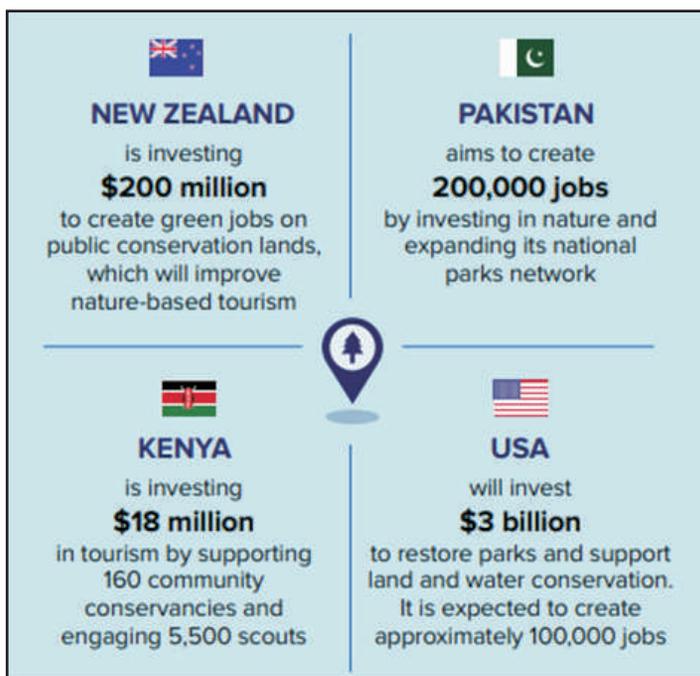
In light of the current situation, there have been calls for taking advantage of this period of stoppage in order to make far-reaching structural changes to the tourism sector,

starting with a reflection on its sustainability. This is particularly relevant if we are to take account of criticisms leveled in recent years, mainly by the academic field, around the concept of sustainable tourism. Those criticisms highlight the need to rethink that concept and bring it closer in line with resilience (Bosak, 2016; Cheer & Lew, 2017; Hall et al., 2018). Thus tourism can also be used as an effective tool to conserve the nature thereby giving a better livelihood for the local community. Promotion of inclusive, sustainable tourism in protected areas offers a way for countries to arrest bio-diversity loss, assist post-pandemic recovery and address longstanding development challenges (World Bank, 2020).

However the present crisis situation can be observed as a lesson for the unethical activities of human towards nature that has to be analyzed while making a better green plan for the future. Any phenomenon can render both positive and negative effects if not monitored effectively and monitoring through policy implementation could assist designing policies and strategies appropriate for a destination (Tiwari & Chodary, 2021). Also we should realize the fact that we don't have any alternative way to sustain from the current situation except by being sustainable. And which have already proven that it can increase the customer experience simultaneously creating more jobs, also empowers the local community and economy at the destination. We should make special reference to the myriad of micro and small enterprises that are deeply rooted in the destination: those companies that offer ecotourism products or products based on the local natural and cultural heritage and do not contribute to overcrowding, offering both high-quality experience for tourists and high added value to the destination (Frances & Rederos, 2020)

It is clear that eco-friendly approach should determine the recovery strategy of any country and this factor should be considered as an effective tool while making the route map for the future development. Globally many countries seek to invest in green policies as part of their recovery strategies. As the global economy re-opens nature based tourism can empower small and medium sized firms through concessions, policies in and around natural areas, and encourage spending in local communities (World Bank, 2020).

**Figure 2**  
**Green Recovery Initiatives in Tourism**



Source: (World Bank, 2020)

The above figure invites our attention towards different strategies adopted by major countries in the world. And they are now framing a sustainable strategy for future to attain a holistic development. Additionally support can be given to local businesses through loans, fast track financing, technical assistance, to diversify operations, and use of digital technologies. A window of opportunity is now open to address the failures and challenges of the industry and to promote a more inclusive, pro-poor and environmentally sustainable protected area based tourism sector (World Bank, 2020).

**Post-Pandemic Tourism**

The unique feature of tourism industry is its high resilience and the capacity to adapt to changes and re-emergence from unexpected phenomena and catastrophes. It is often viewed as the sector will revive in a more transformative way. Also the recent studies have addressed the pandemic as a transformative force in the field of tourism and hospitality (Brouder, 2020). Pandemic could be both a destroyer and a teacher which could create new habits despite the catastrophe (Thomas, 2020). All these factors substantiates the pandemic somehow have the reformative nature, further it will help in adapting a transformative method to build a more powerful industry in the near future.

**Figure 3**  
**Matrix of Potential Evolutionary Pathways Towards Tourism Transformation**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional branching (Supply side)</li> <li>• Dissonance (demand side)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformation (supply side)</li> <li>• Transformation (demand side)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business as usual (supply side)</li> <li>• Bounce back (demand side)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominant discourse (supply side)</li> <li>• Dissonance (demand side)</li> </ul>

*Source: (Brouder P, 2020).*

While such a transformation is possible it remains unlikely. In reality, neither demand for nor supply of global tourism is uniform and thus the top-left and bottom-right quadrants of the matrix come into play. There is likely to be some notable elements of dissonance on the demand side of tourism in either of these scenarios – either the tourist sentiment is out of sync with the regional supply as path creation through regional branching

for a more sustainable form of tourism is out of line with traditional markets (top-left quadrant) or the path dependent nature of tourism economies continues to push the dominant discourse (read: growth focused) to a changed market that is no longer interested in the tourism of the past (bottom-right quadrant). The most likely scenario going forward is a patchwork of pathways based on these two quadrants as some destinations endeavor to reimagine their travel sector and some consumers reassess their priorities for life and leisure. The final pathway sees institutional inertia on the demand and supply side and a continuation of the path dependent processes that were in play previously (bottom-left quadrant). At first glance for the reader, this seems to be either the most likely scenario (i.e. we have bounced back before after crises) or the most egregious (i.e. we cannot just go back to the way things were). One of the great challenges for the tourism economy is that it is a people first sector – so many lives and livelihoods depend on it that getting back to ‘business as usual’ is both understandable as a reaction and seemingly necessary for the survival of many destination regions (Brouder, 2020).

Covid-19 crisis raises the question of whether we are in some form of ‘reset redux’ (just as we were after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the global financial crisis of 2008) or if there is something unique about the present situation which opens the door to transformative change in tourism. Without a doubt, the present situation offers a unique opportunity for, first, the global tourism community to realign its *raison d’être* in a world with Covid-19; and second, for tourism scholars to examine exactly how any realignment manifests going forward (Brouder, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic apparently pressed the “reset button” on earth. Nature revived, waters were cleansed (take the example of Venice) and the environment as a whole was cleaner than before (Muhammad, et al., 2020). Hence “people are frustrated with being locked down and being restricted in their activities. Though they have gotten conscious, yet they want to bust out. The longer the lockdown and travel restrictions, the more the people would be longing to go out. There will be a renewed demand for nature - based travel - the tranquility of wilderness, rurality, and so forth (Nimit, 2021). And globally people are getting increasingly mentally disturbed and looking for solace in spirituality, meditation, and moments of divine ecstasy. It is a part of human curiosity to search for some sort of multi-

spiritual understanding among different people (Swain, S.K & Mishra, J. M, 2017)

Various studies, including one in the Indian Journal of Medical Research, reported that approximately 20 per cent of the urban youth in India is suffering from mental illnesses like depression, anxiety disorders, suicidal tendencies, mood swings, and improper eating habits. This situation has worsened due to the onslaught of Covid-19. To combat this situation, India needs an additional number of 30,000 Psychiatrists which will take 42 years, 37,000 Psychiatric nurses, which will take 74 years, 38,000 Psychiatric Social Workers, which will take 76 years and 38,000 Clinical Psychologists, which will take 76 years to address the mental health issues of 1.3 billion Indians, keeping mental health population constant. We need to find alternatives to cope up with the challenge of mental ill-health and promote wellbeing. Researchers have suggested that the natural environment act as an antithesis to the pressures of the urban environment. Nature has positive and therapeutic impacts when people are exposed to it. It has been established that nature serves as a stimulus to create soothing effects and encourage recovery from physiological and psychological stress (Nimit, 2021). These factors will play an important role in determining the future of tourism and the sector. Undoubtedly tourism industry will serve the people in better manner and will rewrite the economy of the future.

### **Conclusion**

The tourism market has numerous resources to outwit the present situation. It can be noted that the pandemic paved the way to build a more dynamic sector as the consumer needs are increasing rapidly. People in large number are raring to go out and are longing for wellbeing, both physically and spiritual. They are seeking solitude, retreat and restorations; India has plenty of natural and rural destinations topped up with spiritual products like yoga, meditation, rurality, cosines and Ayurvrdā that have the potential to transform an individual (Nimit, 2021). Also as (Lew, 2020) has pointed out, companies that survive the pandemic will need to make their products more resilient to future pandemics. This the health experts warn will continue to occur. Tourism companies that are able to adapt to the predicted change in consumer interest will thrive on sustainable tourism products. On a concluding note, it can be said that tourism will thrive in the coming years and stakeholders who learned the lessons from the Pandemic will reap their dividends.

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# INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON TOURISM IN INDIA: A POST COVID ANALYSIS

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## *Abstract*

*In recent years, a new type of marketing has arisen, which is now referred to as Digital Marketing. It is a type of online marketing that engages customers and other business partners by using the Internet, including social media, as well as electronic devices such as computers, tablets, smartphones, telephones, digital billboards, and game consoles. At the same time, there has been a shift in India's tourist business, which has been influenced by the world-wide impact of COVID-19. Digital platforms are changing the way they do business and forever altering how they attract through advertisements and retain a loyal customer base in this burgeoning digital world where we now need to make connections more than impressions – while communicating with clients, friends, family, and colleagues online – In India's tourist business, travelers' expectations and preferences have shifted dramatically. The burgeoning tourism business in India today faces the issue of communicating regular or specialist vacation packages to a local and global audience. In this context, digital marketing provides tour operators and agencies with the tools and strategies they need to bridge this developing and lucrative industry. As a result, the goal of this article is to comprehend the function of digital marketing in India and the obstacles they face following the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. The article will try to investigate difficulties utilizing primary data, such as what customers encounter while using digital platforms to organize or book excursions after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in India.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Digital Marketing, Tourism, India, Online, Advertising, Social-Media, Travel

## **Introduction**

### **Online Travel Scenario**

'Getting knowledge on the Internet is like drinking from a fire hydrant,' Mitchell Kapor once said. Anyone with a credit card and access to the Internet can now visit an online

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travel portal and book a trip to any part of India, or even better, abroad.

They may shop for a reasonable hotel room, read reviews about the region, reserve a rental car, pinpoint sights they want to see, and acquire a window seat on a flight while sitting at home in front of their PC, laptop, or smart phone - all only one day before departing. Travelers who do not have access to a personal computer are using the Internet to book flight and rail tickets. Many users, particularly India's young Internet population, continue to value the simplicity of arranging trips and finding travel information online. But it is Internet tourism, or companies that make online travel services available to the Indian public, that is the actual achievement, and this is what this research paper is all about.

### **Online Advertising**

Although Smart TVs were only launched earlier this year, the internet advertising business in India has been continuously developing, and advertisers are counting on connecting and communicating with viewers and potential customers in the online realm. Two years ago, India's e-commerce market was worth Rs. 47,000 crore per year, with online travel accounting for Rs. 37,890 crore (Comscore, 2011). With over 122 million internet users in India last year, the online advertising market has become one of the fastest growing segments in the Indian media, with more and more brands migrating from traditional media to digital platforms such as websites, social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, and gaming networks. Digital marketing accounts for \$900 million of India's \$5 billion advertising business. Digital's portion of the market in India is expected to increase year after year, reaching 30 percent of the overall market by 2015.

### **Online travel in India**

Travel, BFSI (Banking, Financial Services and Insurance), and automotive firms were the top online spenders in FY2011, with the three verticals accounting for INR 483 crores, or 45 percent of the whole Indian online advertising market (INR 1070 crores). In FY2012, this combined share is predicted to increase marginally to 46 percent, or around INR 573 crores. According to a study conducted by Comscore two years ago, the number of visitors to travel websites climbed by 32 percent in the previous year to 18.5 million, as more Indians resorted to the Internet for their travel needs. While internet travel accounted for 76 percent of the

market, financial services transactions and e-retailing each contributed 8 percent. Advertisers in India are now allocating 5-10percent of their advertising budgets to the web. For example, Deep Kalra, CEO of MakeMyTrip, stated that the expansion of mobile internet and apps has been a big highlight in the digital arena in 2012. “In my opinion, the take-off of Mobile internet and Apps, notably for surfing, searching, and other purposes, was the primary highlight,” he stated. MakeMyTrip offers mobile apps for all major operating systems (iOS, Android, Blackberry, and Windows 8) as well as a mobile website. The amount of traffic, queries, and transactions coming in through the mobile channel is increasing rapidly.”

### **Objectives**

The Indian travel sector is undergoing a shift as a result of the steady expansion of digital marketing, with consumers preferring to use the internet to arrange long-distance journeys within and outside of the nation. Keeping foregoing in mind, the following are the research aims of this paper:

- To determine the level of knowledge regarding digital tourism among the sample following the impact of Covid-19.
- To see if Indian tourists would rather book through an online website/portal than through a travel agent after the impact of Covid-19.
- To comprehend how social media influences digital tourism following Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown.

### **Hypothesis**

Keeping the objectives of the paper in mind, the research hypothesis will be of two types and will be as follows:

Set 1 - To examine the significance of digital marketing in tourism following the impact of Covid-19.

**H0:** *Digital Marketing does not play an important role in tourism following Covid-19.*

**H1:** *Digital Marketing has an important role in tourism following Covid-19.*

Set 2 - To determine whether Indians prefer a travel agent over an online travel portal/ website following the impact of Covid-19.

**H0:** *Travel agents are approached to make final booking and arrangements for*

*holidays in India following Covid-19.*

**H1:** *Websites are visited to make final bookings and arrangements for holidays in India following Covid-19.*

### **Methodology**

Physical hardcopies of books, academic texts, magazines, and academic journals were used to acquire secondary data. Many books and articles were not quoted in the paper, but they were cited in the bibliography as sources of inspiration. Many scholarly articles and company reports could be found on websites like Sage. A few journalistic websites were also visited and referenced to, although blogs were simply utilised as a reference point and were not used for sources because they lack academic validity. With this paper's research setting in mind, a quantitative study was conducted with a sample size of only 65 respondents. The primary data was collected utilising a selective random sample method via e-mail via an online poll. The respondents were chosen and e-mailed the questionnaire, which was immediately returned within 3-4 days if they had a valid e-mail address and a general understanding of online travel. The respondents were guaranteed that their personal information would not be shared at any time, thus their names were left blank on the questionnaire. In the e-mail, the questionnaire structure was swiftly explained, and telephonic assistance was supplied when needed.

The survey comprises around 17 closed-ended questions that are not ranked in order to be more specific. The survey concludes with a single open-ended question asking respondents to name the first travel website or portal that sprang to mind. This was done to see if they were aware of and remembered any travel websites they had heard about or visited. Specific questions were asked again with a small modification in order to stress certain themes and avoid prejudice, with the goal of emphasising the importance of booking online. There were also two follow-up questions based on their choice to specify the reasons for it. The data has been evaluated using graphs and explanations, which will be reflected in the findings.

### **Findings**

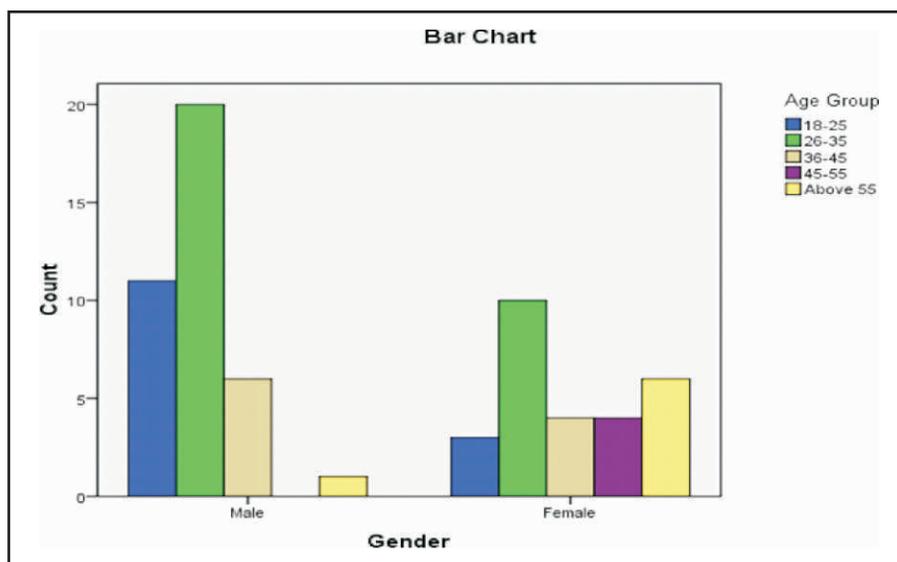
Because it was a selective random selection method, only persons with a valid e-mail id and a general understanding of travel websites were picked to save time on educating respondents. The majority of the conclusions are based on interpretations of numerous cross-

tabulations and analyses:

**Demographics**

The questionnaire was initially sent to 40 men and 40 women through email. However, 18 respondents were excluded owing to biased responses, leaving a total of 65 respondents, 38 men and 27 women. The group of people between the ages of 26 and 35 had the most responses (30), followed by the group of people between the ages of 18 and 25 (14). See the Following Figure for further information:

**Figure 1**  
**Relationship between Gender and Internet Usage**



**Gender and Internet Usage**

Only 43 respondents (23 male and 20 female) access the internet through their smart phone, followed by 15 respondents at home, according to a cross-tab between gender, internet usage, and time spent surfing. Furthermore, 78 per cent of respondents use the internet on a daily basis, with 35 per cent using their mobile phones. This demonstrates that advertising to consumers via mobile phones has a lot of potentials, which supports H1 in set 1

of the hypothesis. (See the table below.)

Gender \* Where do you Internet mainly from? \* How often do you surf the Internet?

**Table 1**  
**Cross tabulation – Gender and Internet**

How often do you surf the Internet?		Where do you Internet mainly from?				Total
		Home	Work	College	All the time (mobile)	
Everyday	Gender Male	11		0	19	30
	Female	3		2	16	21
	Total	14		2	35	51
Once in a week	Gender Male	0			1	1
	Female	1			0	1
	Total	1			1	2
Only at work	Gender Male		4		3	7
	Female		1		4	5
	Total		5		7	12

### Social Media and the Internet

While determining the principal reason for surfing, it was seen that 38 respondents (58 per cent) use the Internet primarily to access social media, followed by leisure (22 respondents) and employment (five respondents). When a cross-tab was done with internet usage, it was observed that 32 respondents, or almost 50% of the total, use their mobile phones to access social media, confirming H1 in sets 1 and 3 of the hypothesis.

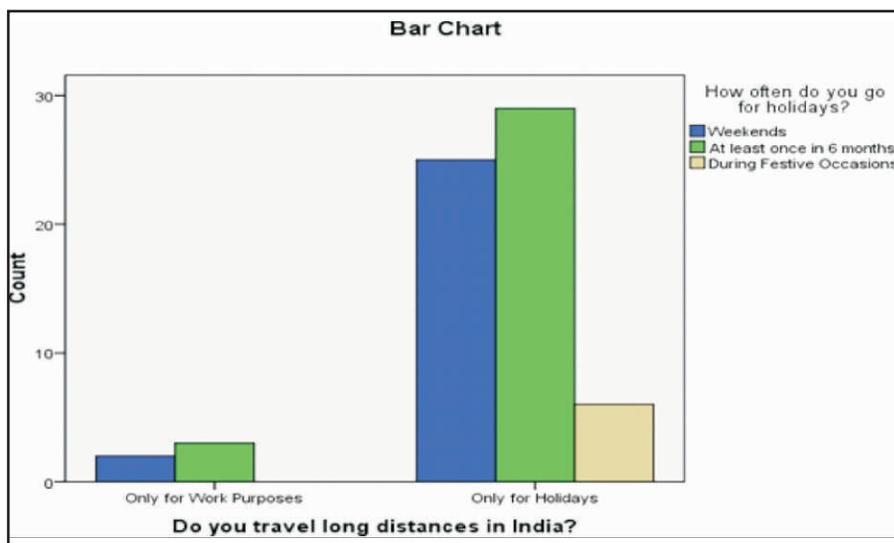
**Table 2**  
**Cross tabulation count - Where do you use the Internet mainly from?**  
**\* What do you use the Internet primarily for?**

		What do you use the Internet primarily for?			Total
		Social Media	Work	Leisure	
Where do you use the Internet mainly from?	Home	4	0	11	15
	Work	0	0	5	5
	College	2	0	0	2
	All the time (mobile)	32	5	6	43
	Total	38	5	22	65

**Long Distance holiday frequency in India**

A cross-tab was done to study holiday frequency in India among sample size and purpose which revealed that 60 respondents travel long distances only for holiday purposes, while

**Figure 2**  
**Long Distance Holiday Frequency in India**



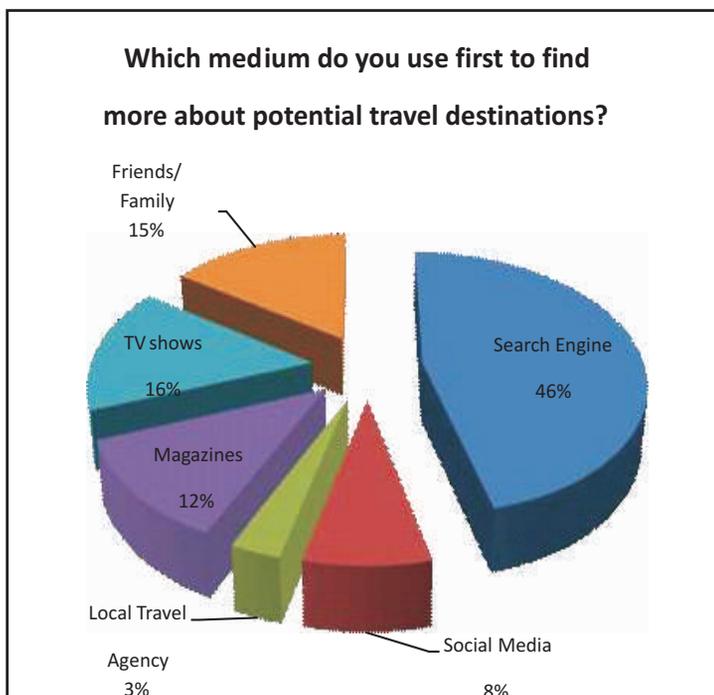
25 travel on weekends and 29 going once every six months, while 6 only travel long distances on festive occasions. Only 5 of the remaining respondents go long distances for work. This simply revealed that the vast majority of the sample size enjoys travelling whenever they have the opportunity, as well as once every six months, demonstrating that local tourism is popular in India.

**The medium used for finding potential travel destinations**

Surprisingly, Search Engine (46 percent of respondents) came out on top, followed by a tie of 10 respondents for TV series and Friends/family (approx. 15.5 per cent each). Magazines came in second with eight responders, followed by social media with five, and finally Local Travel Agency with two. In Set 1, this location supported H1, but in Sets 2 and 3, it supported H0. See the following chart for further information.

**Figure 3**

**Which medium do you use first to find more about potential travel destinations?**



### Medium of Enquiry

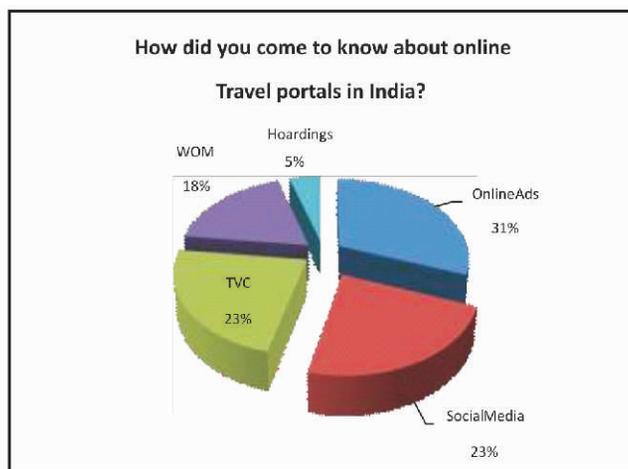
However, a cross-tabulation of the medium for inquiry with which arrangements to look for revealed that 50 respondents wanted to know about travel and stay arrangements, while only 15 wanted to know about travel (itinerary and schedule), and no one wanted to just check stay arrangements (accommodation). Out of 65 respondents, 28 utilized a general internet search for both travel and lodging arrangements, 15 used an online travel website/portal, and the rest went to travel agencies or local bus/train stations. A second cross-tab of the same with age found that respondents aged 55 and up visited local travel agencies and train/bus stations the most, with only two doing a generic online search. This finding serves as a precursor to the next ones.

### Awareness of travel potential in India

A frequency was calculated to determine from which source they learned about online travel portals in India. Online Advertisements (banners, flash ads) received the most responses (20), followed by a tie of 15 respondents for social media and TVC (Television Commercials). Then came WOM, which had 12 responses, and ultimately hoardings. H1 in sets 1 and 3 of the hypothesis is supported by this finding. See the following chart for further information.

**Figure 4**

#### How Information about Online Travel Portals were Obtained



Only 5 respondents said they constantly use online travel portals, while 10 said they only use them occasionally for final bookings. The majority of the 50 people who responded indicated they had never completed an online final booking. As a result, a cross-tab was performed to determine the reason, with the results showing that the majority of the 50 respondents were concerned about refunds (20 respondents), followed by online transaction security concerns (15 respondents), complicated process (10 respondents), and 5 respondents saying it lacked a personal touch. All of this, however, supports H0 in the hypothesis’s second set.

If no to Q.12, why did you not make your final booking through the website? \* How often do you use online portals to make final bookings?

**Table 3**

**Cross tabulation between Usage of Online Portals and final Booking through website**

	How often do you use online portals to make final bookings?			Total
	Always	Rarely	No. not till date	
If no to Q.12, why did you not make your final booking through Website?	5	9	1	15
Security Issue	0	1	14	15
Complicated process	0	0	10	10
Refund or Cancellation	0	0	20	20
No personal Touch	0	0	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>65</b>

**Reason of Preference of Online Travel Portals/websites:**

A total of 30 people stated that internet travel portals are still preferred because they provide instant bookings, last-minute prices, user reviews, and a wide range of possibilities (choices in order of highest to lowest). However, 15 respondents stated they would prefer to

shop online depending on the urgency, although they did not describe why. In sets 1 and 2 of the hypothesis, this supports H1.

**Table 4**  
**Cross tabulation count**

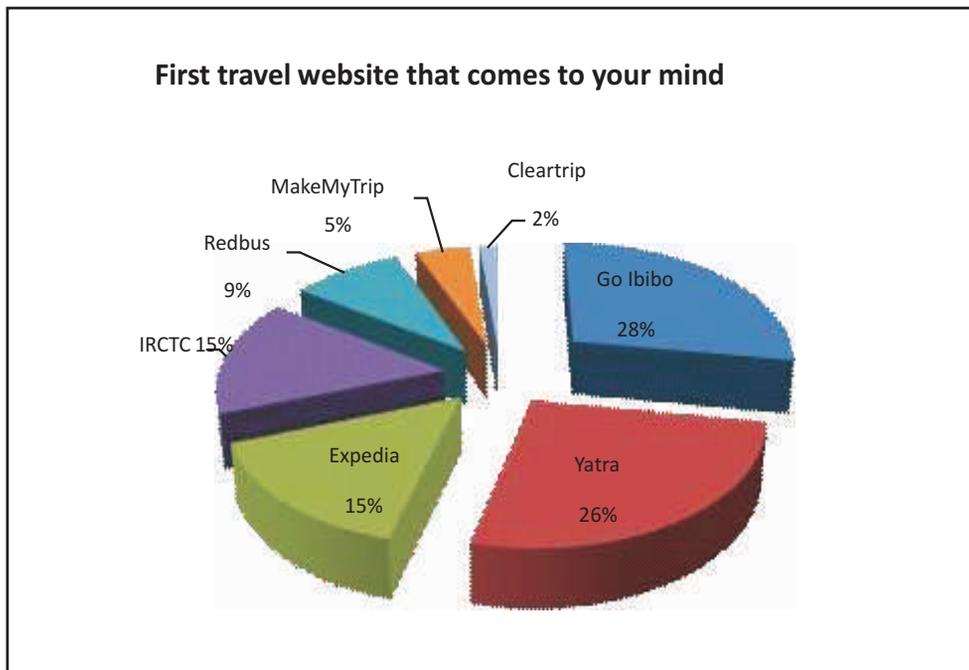
	Do you still prefer Online travel portals (virtual) to travel agents (physical)? If no, go to Q.17			Total
	Yes	No	Depends on Urgency	
If yes to Q.15, what makes Online Travel Portals are better than local Travel Agencies?	0	20	15	35
Last-minute Deals	8	0	0	8
User Reviews	6	0	0	6
Variety of Options	4	0	0	4
Instant Booking	12	0	0	12
Total	30	20	15	65

With reference to the cross-tabulation of **6.9** above - Out of 20 respondents who said the above that they would prefer a local travel agency – 12 respondents chose Trip Customization and 8 respondents chose personalized customer service which supports **H0** in set 2 of the hypothesis.

#### **Brand recall**

In the following chart, the open-ended question about the first travel website they remembered was as follows:

**Figure 5**  
**Pie Chart Showing Breakup of Travel Website Preferences**



All of the above cross-tabulations and graphs show that the bulk of the findings support the research premise and objectives.

### **Suggestion**

Members with a strong interest in certain types of travel items and services are encouraged to meet together online to share information and experiences about buying and using them. Members of the community will then have easier access to more relevant information needed to organise a trip. It is suggested that mobile/cell phone/smartphone games be created specifically for a brand, with the brand deeply integrated within the game. A game is created specifically for a brand, with the goal of developing brand association and high memory.

### **Limitations**

- There aren't many publications about digital marketing in India so finding data

(numbers) on Indian online travel utilisation was challenging, and data from various sources did not appear to be accurate or consistent.

- More time would be needed to research and comprehend the dynamics of websites in order to comprehend consumer reactions to the content.
- The sample size was too tiny to understand the overall Indian situation.

### **Conclusion**

Marketers can plan and plot, but they can't control how people behave. The coming years will be a watershed moment in the global tourism scenario, following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. To properly compete in this burgeoning market, brands will need to deliver increased functionality, simplicity of use, and security to their users as the online travel sector evolves. Marketing has changed dramatically in these years, possibly more than any other corporate function, and this growth will continue as marketers become more focused, quick, and single-minded. According to the survey, the majority of respondents used the internet to make travel inquiries in some form. With over 150 million internet users and a database of 100 million social network users, India as a market is poised for a surge in online tourist sales, but this type of marketing goes much beyond sending out a timely tweet, status update, or even a blog article. Brands of travel portals will need to increase their usage of real-time social analytics, encourage user-generated content, and make quick judgments about hot issues. In the current Indian marketing culture, it will undoubtedly be difficult, but Indian consumers will eventually have to accept this new form of online tourism marketing.

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## **FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS IN TOURISM AND ALLIED AREAS**

### **June 2022**

- 2nd ICDTCP 2022: Domestic Tourism and Current Problems Conference, San Francisco.
- 2nd ICDTHS 2022: Domestic Tourism, Hospitality and Sustainability Conference, New York.
- 2nd ICITHI 2022: International Tourism and Hospitality Industry Conference, New York.
- 2nd ICTIST 2022: Tourism Industry and Sustainable Tourism Conference, New York.
- 9th ICDTCC 2022: Domestic Tourism and Climate Change Conference, Copenhagen.
- 9th ICDTHM 2022: Domestic Tourism and Hospitality Management Conference, Copenhagen.
- 16th ICBG 2022: Business and Globalization Conference, Montreal.
- 16th ICDTE 2022: Domestic Tourism and Economy Conference, Toronto.
- 16th ICDTEG 2022: Domestic Tourism and Economic Growth Conference, Toronto.
- 16th ICDTG 2022: Domestic Tourism and Growth Conference, Toronto.
- 16th ICDTH 2022: Domestic Tourism and Hospitality Conference, Toronto.
- 16th ICDTM 2022: Domestic Tourism and Management Conference, Toronto.
- 16th ICDTRD 2022: Domestic Tourism and Regional Development Conference, Toronto.
- 16th ICDTS 2022: Domestic Tourism Statistics Conference, Toronto.
- 16th ICDTS 2022: Domestic Tourism and Sustainability Conference, Venice.
- 16th ICDTSA 2022: Domestic Tourism and Sustainable Applications Conference, Venice.
- 16th ICTI 2022: Tourism Industry Conference, Toronto.

### **July 2022**

- 12th ICITC 2022: International Tourism and Culture Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITDM 2022: International Tourism Development and Management Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITDMST 2022: International Tourism Development and Sustainable Tourism Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITEM 2022: International Tourism and Events Management Conference, Stockholm.

- 12th ICITEMP 2022: International Tourism, Event Management and Planning Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITHEM 2022: International Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITHHM 2022: International Tourism, Hospitality and Hotel Management Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITHM 2022: International Tourism Hospitality and Management Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITM2022: International Tourism Management Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITMC 2022: International Tourism Management and Culture Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITMH 2022: International Tourism Management and Hospitality Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITMHI 2022: International Tourism Management and Hospitality Industry Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITMP 2022: International Tourism Management and Planning Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITMST 2022: International Tourism Management and Sustainable Tourism Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITMT 2022: International Tourism Management and Technology Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITMTD 2022: International Tourism Management and Tourism Development Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITMTF 2022: International Tourism Management and Tourism Forecasts Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITMTP 2022: International Tourism Management and Tourism Policy Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICITPD 2022: International Tourism and Popular Destinations Conference, Stockholm.

- 12th ICITT 2022: International Tourism and Travel Conference, Stockholm.
- 12th ICSTITM 2022: Sustainable Tourism and International Tourism Development Conference, Prague.
- 12th ICTTI 2022: Tourism and Travel Industry Conference, Ottawa.
- 19th ICIHTD 2022: International Hospitality and Tourism Development Conference, Copenhagen.
- 21st ICIHEMT 2022: International Hospitality, Event Management and Technology Conference, Tokyo.
- 21st ICITEM 2022: International Tourism and Event Management Conference, Tokyo.
- 21st ICITI 2022: Industry, Tourism and Investment Conference, Tokyo.
- 28th ICIHC 2022: International Hospitality and Culture Conference, Zurich.
- 28th ICIHEM 2022: International Hospitality and Event Management Conference, Zurich.
- 28th ICIHEMP 2022: International Hospitality, Event Management and Planning Conference, Zurich.
- 28th ICIHI 2022: International Hospitality Industry Conference, Zurich.
- 28th ICIHSD 2022: International Hospitality and Sustainable Development Conference, Zurich.
- 28th ICIHST 2022: International Hospitality and Sustainable Tourism Conference, Zurich.
- 28th ICIHT 2022: International Hospitality and Travel Conference, Zurich.
- 28th ICIHTM 2022: International Hospitality and Tourism Management Conference, Zurich.
- 28th ICIHTP 2022: International Hospitality and Tourism Policy Conference, Zurich.
- 28th ICITMD 2022: International Tourism Management and Development Conference, Dubai.

**August 2022**

- 8th ICDT 2022: Domestic Tourism Conference, Vancouver.
- 8th ICDTD 2022: Domestic Tourism and Development Conference, Vancouver.

- 8th ICDTEE 2022: Domestic Tourism and Economic Effects Conference, Vancouver.
- 8th ICHTI 2022: Hospitality and Tourism Industry Conference, Amsterdam.
- 8th ICTEMT 2022: Tourism, Event Management and Technology Conference, Lagos.
- 16th ICDTRD 2022: Domestic Tourism and Rural Development Conference, London.
- 16th ICHEMS 2022: Hospitality, Event Management and Sustainability Conference, Bangkok.
- 16th ICITHEM 2022: International Tourism, Hospitality and Events Management Conference, Istanbul.
- 16th ICITHM 2022: International Tourism, Hospitality and Management Conference, Istanbul.
- 16th ICTMI 2022: Tourism Management and Industry Conference, Dubai.
- 30th ICEMIT 2022: Event Management and International Tourism Conference, Sydney.
- 30th ICITEMT 2022: International Tourism, Event Management and Technology Conference, Kuala Lumpur.

**September 2022**

- 20th ICTID 2022: Tourism Industry Development Conference, Toronto.
- 20th ICTIH 2022: Tourism Industry and Hospitality Conference, Toronto.
- 20th ICTIHM 2022: Tourism Industry and Hospitality Management Conference, Toronto.
- 20th ICTIIT 2022: Tourism Industry and International Tourism Conference, Toronto.
- 20th ICTIITM 2022: Tourism Industry, International Tourism and Management Conference, Toronto.
- 20th ICTIM 2022: Tourism Industry and Management Conference, Toronto.
- 20th ICTIMD 2022: Tourism Industry Management and Development Conference, Toronto.
- 20th ICTIMT 2022: Tourism Industry, Management and Technology Conference, Toronto.
- 20th ICTIS 2022: Tourism Industry and Standardization Conference, Toronto.
- 22nd ICTHI 2022: Tourism and Hospitality Industries Conference, Vancouver.

**October 2022**

- 06th ICDTS 2022: Domestic Tourism and Strategies Conference, Tokyo.
- 06th ICIHT 2022: International Hospitality and Tourism Conference, Beijing.
- 06th ICITTP 2022: International Tourism and Tourism Policy Conference, Beijing.
- 06th ICTIHS 2022: Tourism Industry and Hospitality Sciences Conference, Beijing.
- 13th ICIT 2022: International Tourism Conference, Athens.

**November 2022**

- 10th ICHTIS 2022: Hospitality, Tourism Industry and Standardization Conference, Dubai.
- 14th ICBGE 2022: Business, Globalization and Economics Conference, Jeddah.
- 18th ICITEM 2022: International Entertainment Tourism and Event Management Conference, London.
- 29th ICHTEM 2022: Hospitality Tourism and Event Management Conference, Bangkok.
- 29th ICHTEMP 2022: Hospitality Tourism, Event Management and Planning Conference, Bangkok.
- 29th ICHTEMT 2022: Hospitality Tourism, Event Management and Technology Conference, Bangkok.
- 29th ICTIM 2022: Tourism Industry and Marketing Conference, Bangkok.
- 29th ICTIM 2022: Tourism Industry and Marketing Conference, Jerusalem.

**December 2022**

- 02nd ICHMITT 2022: Hospitality Management, International Tourism and Travel Conference, Amsterdam.
- 09th ICBEG 2022: Business, Economics and Globalization Conference, London.
- 09th ICEMIET 2022: Event Management and International Entertainment Tourism Conference, London.
- 20th ICGTTI 2022: Global Tourism and Travel Industry Conference, Istanbul.
- 29th ICTTI 2022: Travel and Tourism Industry Conference, Vienna.

**January 2023**

11th ICHTIM 2023: Hospitality, Tourism Industry and Management Conference, Singapore.

18th ICHTTI 2023: Hospitality, Travel and Tourism Industry Conference, Bangkok.

21st ICITHM 2023: International Tourism and Hospitality Management Conference, Amsterdam.

28th ICTIED 2023: Tourism Industry and Economic Development Conference, Sydney.

**February 2023**

18th ICIHHM 2023: International Hospitality and Hotel Management Conference, Rome.

18th ICIHHM 2023: International Hospitality and Hotel Management Conference, Jeddah.

**March 2023**

04th ICHTMI 2023: Hospitality, Tourism Management and Industry Conference, Rome.

11th ICWTTI 2023: World Travel and Tourism Industry Conference, Miami.

## IMPORTANT TRAVEL AND TOURISM TERMS

**Accessible:** Usable by all people. Whether a hotel, restaurant, or attraction can be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities, regardless of physical or other limitations.

**Assets:** The attractions, hotels and restaurants within a given region. Assets are what that area has to offer guests who visit.

**Buyers:** Travel Trade professionals who sell to consumers. They are tour operators, receptive operators, travel agents and OTAs (online travel agents). They look for destinations and attractions to package and sell to their customers.

**Fly drive:** A vacation package that includes air transportation and a rental car. Many international tourists (FITs) prefer to buy these types of packages to explore a destination.

**Front-line staff:** People who interact with and give service to customers, guests and visitors. For example, front desk staff at a hotel or a cashier at an attraction.

**Group Leader:** The person who accompanies and/or leads the people on a group tour. They work for the Group Tour Operator who sells the tour.

**Group Tour Operator:** A person who puts together vacation packages for groups. They sell these packages as products to consumers. They also fit into the category of Buyers.

**Inbound Tourism:** Tourism generated by visitors from foreign countries. This does not include domestic travel like visitors from drive markets and in-state visitors.

**Motor Coach:** Large passenger bus. This is the vehicle most often used for people travelling with group travel tours.

**Net Rate:** Hotel room inventory sold via a third-party distributor at prices subject to commission.

**Partners:** The people who own or manage the assets of a region. These partners work closely with their region's DMO and benefit from tourism dollars spent at their establishments.

**Rack Rate:** Standard daily rate established for hotel rooms. This rate is typically public, printed on hotel brochures and listed on websites.

**Suppliers:** Tourism or Travel professionals who sell to businesses aka Buyers. They sell B2B (that means business to business). They work with tourism companies to promote their attraction or destination.

**TPA:** Tourism Promotion Agency. This is basically the same thing as a DMO. A government agency that promotes tourism in a specific county or region within a state.

**Travel Advisor:** Someone who assists consumers in booking trips. Previously called travel agents, travel advisors do more than book travel for people. The term agent switched to advisor to demonstrate how these professionals coordinate trips and help groups, families or individuals plan and book their travel.

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## Guidelines for Authors

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Two authors: Cite both names throughout.  
Three or more authors: include the last name of the first author, followed with et al. (Smith et al., 2005)

### References : Reference List

#### *Journal Article*

Van der Duim, R. (2007). Tourismscapes: An actor-network perspective. *Analys of Tourism Research*, 34(3)

For multi authors:

Coles, T., Hall, C.M., & Duval, D. (2005). Mobilizing tourism: A post - disciplinary critique. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 30(1)

#### *Book*

Nash. D. (2007). *The study of tourism: Anthropological and sociological beginnings*. Oxford: Elsevier.

#### Edited Book

Smith M.K. & Robinson. M (Eds.), (2006), *Cultural tourism in a changing world: Politics, participation and (re) presentation*, Clevedon: Channel View

## Publications.

*Chapter in Edited Book*

Hall M., (2004). Reflexivity and tourism research: Situating myself and/with others. In J. Phillimore & L. Goodson (Eds.), *Qualitative research in tourism: Ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies* (pp. 137-155). London: Routledge.

*Doctoral Thesis*

Dileep M.R., (2007), A Study on Information Systems in Tourism Sector in Kerala, University of Kerala, India

*Internet*

Urry J., (2001). *Globalising the Tourist Gaze*. Retrieved November 15, 2008, from Lancaster University, Department of Sociology Web site: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/papers/urry-globalising-the-tourist-gaze.pdg>.

**Other Style Guidelines**

Manuscript Length: approximately 5,000 words (including tables, figures, and references). Font - Times New Roman, 12 point size. 1.5 spaced. The authors should ensure that they have written entirely original works, and if the authors have used the work and/or words of others, that this has been appropriately cited or quoted. Proper acknowledgement of the work of others, that this has been appropriately cited or quoted. Proper acknowledgement of the work of others must always be given. Authors should cite publications that have been influential in determining the nature of the reported work. When an author discovers a significant error or inaccuracy in his/her own published work, it is the author's obligation to promptly notify the journal editor or publisher and cooperate with the editor to retract or correct the paper. If the editor or the publisher learns from a third party that a published work contains a significant error, it is the obligation of the author to promptly retract or correct the paper or provide evidence to the editor of the correctness of the original paper.

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