

COVID 19 PANDEMIC & TOURISM IN H.P

By

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Abstract

It's almost one and half years the corona virus pandemic has affected human life. Every sector is facing the problem of survival. The pandemic has not only affected the health, education, industries and other sectors but also affected various regional developments, job opportunities, thereby disrupting the local communities as a whole. The pandemic affected economically as well as and socially. Tourism is a major source of revenue and employment in many countries. It is a generator for employment for unemployed youth, women and local people. It also helps in tax collections and foreign exchange earnings. Due to Covid-19, tourism is highly affected sector triggering a global economic crisis. More over with the implementation of certain measures like social distancing, lockdowns, work from home, stay at home, self- quarantine, no gathering and travelling etc. the tourism activities almost come to end. Himachal Pradesh is small hilly state with natural beauty which makes it popular destination for tourist activities and tourism is the main source of income for local people. State also provides employment to people of other regions. Due to the adverse impact of Covid-19 pandemic the tourism sector has contracted by over 81 per cent in the current financial year (2020-21). The other sectors associated with tourism like transport, laundry, catering, household, agriculture and construction sectors are also affected. About 3.7% drop is expected in per capita income. 9.2% contraction likely in hotel/ restaurant sector and 3.1% decrease is expected in agriculture sector. Hence, in this scenario, it is necessary to take some strategic measures and manage tourism activities so that economy may improve. We can plan to support tourism by adopting some innovative actions like for healthy tourism with yoga sessions and fitness camp can be arranged, slow tourism where people can stay for longer period at one place and learn and ecotourism stay in natural habitat. Home stay and small sector tourism with proper Covid standard operating procedures (SOP) like use of mask, maintaining distance, sanitization and avoiding crowding can be operated.

Keywords: Pandemic, Corona virus, Tourism, Health Tourism, Slow tourism and Ecotourism

1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has become the biggest threat to human life. Today the globe is facing health, social, and economic crises. The pandemic has not only affected the health, education, industries and other sectors but also affected various regional developments, job opportunities, thereby disrupting the local communities as a whole. Tourism sector is also affected in many countries in these years after Covid 19. International tourist arrivals fell by 72 percent in January-December 2020 compared to the last year. Now it is well known that Covid 19 disease is caused by corona virus which transmits from person to person. Therefore to minimize the infection rate many strategies have been adopted like lockdown, social distancing ban on festival celebrations etc. Many hospitality businesses, tourist activities and related sectors have been temporarily closed. The travel

and tourism industry's employment loss is predicted to be 100.08 million worldwide (Statista, 2020). It is estimated that the effect of Covid 19 on India's economy at an earnings loss of about \$28 billion in 2020, along with 70% job losses for tourism and hospitality workers, and mass bankruptcies (Mehta, C.K., 2020). Tourism in Himachal Pradesh is a major contributor to the state's economy and growth. But in present scenario the state is also facing the same problem and without tourism activities the social and economy of state is greatly affected. There is great loss in other sectors related to tourism like travelling, trade, woollen shawl industry, retail sector, local agriculture, laundry, housekeeping etc. As most of the people are engaged in these so they have lost their livelihood. Governments is also taking actions to restore the tourism sector by adopting some innovative methods for improving the economy.

New forms of tourism would be more prevalent in post-Covid 19, including (1) slow tourism, which emphasizes local destinations and longer lengths of stay, and (2) SMART tourism, which uses data analytics to improve tourist's experiences (Wen, J.; Kozak, M.; Yang, S.; Liu, F., 2020). Many countries are developing various measures for sustainable tourism economy in post Covid 19. Domestic tourism can help in economy to some extent. In this review article the challenges and new strategies for sustainable tourism has been discussed.

2. AIM:

- To review the impact of pandemic on tourism.
- To document some innovative ideas for implementation by the Government for increasing the economy through tourism.
- To create awareness among people to adopt new methods of tourism.

3. METHODOLOGY:

For this paper secondary data has been obtained through the internet, books, online news, reports, and published research articles. Different papers on Covid 19 and its impact on tourism have been searched and many journals are accessed. Keyword like Covid 19, tourism, economy, social factors are used.

4. DISCUSSION:

- 4.1. Covid-19
- 4.2. Tourism in Indian context
- 4.3. Tourism in Himachal Pradesh
- 4.4. Challenges & Strategies

4.1. Covid-19

Covid-19, a new strain of SARS (SARS-CoV-2), has grown into a global pandemic and spreading across many countries. This is a transmissible respiratory disease, Covid-19 spreads through contact with other infected individuals, with symptoms such as fever, cough, and breathing problems (Yang, Y.; Zhang, H.; Chen, X., 2020). Transmission can also occur from asymptomatic individuals, with up to 40% of infected persons

remaining asymptomatic (Oron, D.P.; Topol, E.J. Scripps, 2020).

4.2. Tourism in India

India offers geographical diversity, attractive beaches, 30 World Heritage and biogeographic zones for tourist activities to flourish. It is a major destination for many international tourists, creating several employment opportunities and generating enormous taxes (Ahmed & Krohn, 1992). India ranked 10th among 185 countries in terms of travel & tourism's total contribution to GDP in 2019. During 2019, contribution of travel & tourism to GDP was 6.8% of the total economy, about Rs. 13,68,100 crores (WTTC). Before Covid 19 it was expected that In India, the sector's direct contribution to GDP will grow by 7.1% per annum during 2018-28. For sustainable economic development the hospitality and tourism sector play very important role and help in poverty alleviation and human development. Contribution of tourism is 6.8 % of total GDP and 8 % of the total employment in 2019 (The Times of India, 2020; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019). The Indian tourism industry has generated about 87.5 million jobs by providing 12.75% of total employment and contributing INR 194 billion to India's GDP (WTTC, 2018). Almost 20 million people are now working in the India's tourism industry. India was ranked 34th in the Travel & Tourism published in Competitiveness Report 2019 by the World Economic Forum and contributes ~US\$ 200 billion to the country's GDP. It is the third-largest foreign exchange earner for the country. In WTTC's Economic Impact 2019 report, India's Travel & Tourism GDP contribution grew by 4.9%, third-highest after China and The Tourism & hospitality sector's direct contribution to GDP is expected to reach Rs. 12.68 trillion (US\$ 194.69 billion) in 2028. Through tourism we can increase our foreign exchange earnings. In India tourism activities are now focusing on developing medical, religious tourism adding more destinations and introducing foreign languages in tourist destinations to attract more tourists. The Ministry of Tourism is promoting Buddhist Circuit to increase India's share in global tourism market. While improving the economy tourism helps in preservation of

several historical important places and restoring heritage sites. It also improves the infrastructure that benefits the host community, like health care facilities, and sports centres, transport facilities in addition to the hotels and restaurants. Through tourism activities cultural exchange is also possible. It raises the living conditions of the citizens of the country. It will be helpful in raising the GDP of country and provide self employment to people. The Ministry of Tourism has framed a policy for development and promotion of caravan and caravan camping parks. Government is also assisting by providing free loans to deal with the crisis and revive the economy (DPIIT, ICE 360 Survey 2016).

4.3. Tourism in Himachal Pradesh

Himachal is in the western Himalayas situated between 30°22'N and 33°12'N latitude and 75°47'E and 79°04'E longitude with area of 55,673 square kilometres (21,495 sq mi), (Statistical Facts,2006). Tourism in Himachal Pradesh is a major contributor to the state's economy and growth. Shimla, Kullu-Manali, Dharamshala, Chamba, Dalhousie, Khajjiar and Kasauli are popular hill stations for both domestic and foreign tourists (The Economic Times, 2018). The state received 31,70,714 domestic and 42,665 foreign tourists in 2020 compared to 1,68,29,231 domestic and 3,82,876 foreign tourists in 2019, a drop of 81.6 per cent and 88.86 per cent respectively. 18500 tourists have been visiting Himachal Pradesh per day, whereas 7500 tourists have been visiting the tourist hotspot Atal Tunnel Rohtang (ATR). Himachal records a foot fall of 18500 tourists daily; 7500 for Rohtang Tunnel (Times of india,2021). Himachal is also known for its adventure tourism activities like ice skating in Shimla, paragliding in Bir Billing and Solang valley, rafting in Kullu, skiing in Manali, boating in Bilaspur and trekking, horse riding and fishing in different parts in the state. Himachal Pradesh is likely to register a negative growth of 6.2 per cent in the current financial year 2020-21 (Economic Survey 2020-21). The per capita income at the current price is estimated to drop by 3.7 per cent to Rs 1,83,286 from previous year's Rs 1,90,407. The other badly hit sectors include transport, mining and quarrying, forestry and construction. The agriculture sector is

set to register a contraction of 3.1 per cent due to a decrease of 43 per cent in horticulture production. Fiscal deficit is estimated to be 4.65 per cent of the GSDP in 2020-21(TNS,2021). Covid impact on tourism of Himachal has been observed in many ways as there is 3.7% drop expected in per capita income, 9.2% contraction likely in hotel/ restaurant sector, 3.1% decrease expected in agriculture sector and 4.65% of the GSDP will be the state's fiscal deficit.

4.4. Challenges & Strategies

Challenges:

- The first case of the Covid-19 pandemic in India was reported on 30th January 2020, originating from China. The virus spread to various states and union territories including the state of Himachal Pradesh. The first case was recorded in the Himachal on 20th March 2020.
- Lockdown in all over India resulted in abrupt fall in all activities of hospitality. Closure of offices, banks, schools and work from home also closes the door to outside world.
- No transportation facilities in all over the country in the initial stage of pandemic blocked everything. Major challenges were the implementation of certain measures and campaigns like social distancing, community lockdowns, work from home, stay at home and self quarantine, etc.
- Loss of jobs in various sectors connected to tourism major loss of jobs in tourism and hospitality has been estimated to be about 70 % of the sector workforce (Radhakrishna, 2020).
- Development of effective vaccine as well as the distribution of vaccines on such a large population (1.3 billion). Fear of disease and approach of medical facilities.
- Safety and hygiene for tourism activities. People are likely to prefer private vehicles while travelling, avoiding big gatherings. Requirement of structural change in tourism supply for the ecosystem.

- Due to demand of digitalisation in tourism services, use of automation, contact-less payments and services, virtual experiences, real-time information provision have to be adopted.
- Prior to the pandemic, the Indian travel and tourism industry was showed annual growth rate of 6.9% during 2019-2028 to reach US\$ 460 billion, which would be equal to ~9.9% of India's GDP in 2028.
- In 2019, arrivals through e-Tourist Visa increased by 23.6% YoY to 2.9 million. The Government is working to achieve 1% share in world's international tourist arrivals by 2020 and 2% share by 2025.
- In year 2019 the growth of 3.2% was recorded from 2018, with 10.8 million in India with a foreign exchange earning of USD 29.9 billion. But there was decline of 66.4% in year 2020 in overseas tourists' arrivals in India compared to last year (TAN, 2020).
- In 2020, FTAs decreased by 75.5% YoY to 2.68 million and arrivals through e-Tourist Visa (Jan-Nov) decreased by 67.2% YoY to 0.84 million. The Covid 19 pandemic has greatly disrupted the Tourism industry.
- While the pandemic brought the tourism industry to a halt, the government is now trying to begin with reviving domestic tourism. In November end, India introduced a graded relaxation of its visa and travel restrictions for more categories of foreign nationals and Indian nationals.
- Wellness tourism for maintaining good health and a sense of well-being can be projected in this pandemic time. With the knowledge of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy customers can be provided such facilities to improve their health and boost up immunity. It needs publicity and promotional activities.
- For youth to channelise their energy adventure tourism activities include mountaineering, trekking, jumping, mountain biking, river rafting, and rock climbing could be provided.
- We can connect tourism with cultural heritage. Means visiting historical or industrial sites, religious travel or pilgrimages. There are various temples, majestic forts, pleasure gardens, religious monuments, museums, art galleries and urban and rural sites which are citadels of civilization. All these structures form the products of heritage tourism.
- Rural tourism supports rural life, art, culture and heritage of rural locations, benefitting the local community economically and socially. India's rural, geographical and cultural diversity enables to offer a wide range of tourism products and experience.
- Eco tourism is travel to natural areas to appreciate the cultural and natural history of the environment, while not disturbing the integrity of the ecosystem and creating economic opportunities that make conservation and protection of natural resources advantageous to local people. It involves travel to destinations where flora, fauna and cultural heritage are primary attractions.
- Wildlife tourism involves travel to different locations to experience wild life in natural settings. India is endowed with various forms of flora and fauna and it has numerous species of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and plants and animals. To tap the potential of wildlife tourism, the government has launched

Strategies:

- To overcome the loss of tourism in the pandemic we can make use of this crisis as opportunity to promote different forms of tourism like medical tourism, adventure tourism, slow tourism, domestic tourism, ecotourism and wedding tourism.
- Medical tourism also known as health tourism has emerged as one of the important segments of the tourism industry. Travelers can be provided services such as healthcare and quarantine facilities.

some wildlife packages for travellers. Wildlife Tourism in India includes wildlife photography, bird watching, jungle safari, elephant safari, jeep safari, jungle camping, ecotourism etc. The country offers immense opportunities for wildlife tourism.

- MICE tourism MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) tourism is also one of the fastest growing in the global tourism industry. It largely caters to business travellers, mostly corporate. It caters to various forms of business meetings, international conferences and conventions, events and exhibitions. Covid 19 may significantly change destination marketing services, as well.
- Due to social distance, luxury hotels and luxury travel will still take some time to revive. At this time, domestic boutique hotels, accommodations, and homestays can maintain their social distance and reduce viruses' risk.

Proposals to the Government of India: The hospitality and tourism sector is endangering the employment of large numbers of people as the Covid 19 pandemic is negatively affecting India's economy. Some remedies need to be recommended to India's central and provincial governments for the sector to overcome the crisis (FICCI, 2020b). Government has taken actions to speed up tourism so that it could minimise job losses and recovery in 2021. Key policy priorities include:

- Restoring traveller confidence
- Supporting tourism businesses to adapt and survive
- Promoting domestic tourism and supporting safe return of international tourism
- Strengthening co-operation within and between countries
- Building more resilient, sustainable tourism
- Co-ordinated action across governments at all levels and the private sector is essential.

- Governments need to consider the longer-term implications of the crisis, while capitalising on digitalisation, supporting the low carbon transition, and promoting the structural transformation needed to build a stronger, more sustainable and resilient tourism economy (OECD).
- Domestic tourism can boost sustainable tourism destinations and businesses, and will continue to be a key driver of recovery in the short term. There has been some pick up in domestic tourism activities since the middle of the year, due in part to displacement effects of international travel restrictions.
- Many factors contributed in domestic tourism as complete vaccination, lifting of travel restrictions, as well as the survival and readiness of businesses throughout the tourism ecosystem to meeting demand.

Conclusion:

In this pandemic period for improving the economy of country the tourism sector needs to adopt some innovative plans. Governments is also serious in taking actions to restore and re-activate the sector and protecting jobs and businesses. In Himachal Pradesh there is ample scope for medical tourism, ecotourism, adventurous tourism and slow tourism. Now a days people are also encouraged for wedding tourism in Himachal. In all the activities of tourism proper covid standard operating procedures (SOP) like use of mask, maintaining distance, sanitization and avoiding crowding should be followed. Domestic tourism has restarted and is helping in the economy. Appropriate behaviour of the tourists to the Covid 19 must be maintained while travelling and lodging. However, real recovery will only be possible when international tourism returns. Tourism policy will need to be more flexible and able to adapt according to the crisis or situations like Covid 19 pandemic. Crisis management, Safety and health policy issues should be included in policy making. Covid 19 has created the new opportunities for innovation and replan for more sustainable and resilient models of tourism.

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