

The Effects and Challenges of COVID-19 in the Hospitality and Tourism Sector in India

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Abstract

The hospitality and tourism sector is considered the backbone for economic growth, especially in developing countries. However, this thriving sector is particularly vulnerable to natural and human-made disasters. This study assesses 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 secondary research methodology has been applied for the research. For data collection, the secondary data has been collected through literature, journal articles, government documents, etc. The research findings show that COVID-19 in India has significantly affected the hospitality and tourism sector. Global and domestic tourists have canceled their programs to visit the natural, historical, religious, and cultural sites. The flight tickets and the hotel reservations have been canceled. A significant number of workers in the sector have lost their jobs. This pandemic has affected the economy of the country as well as the well-being of the individuals to a large extent. As the intensification of the COVID-19 is being thought to

cause a long-term impact, this study could be relevant to the decision-makers in regards to the crucial task of reviving the sector.

Introduction

The hospitality and tourism sector is commonly recognized as a significant contributing factor to the green economy through a more sustainable development agenda (Wilkes & Reddy, 2015). It has been the primary and most dynamic sector in today's global economy. It had generated about 10.3 % of global GDP and provided 330 million jobs in 2019 directly and indirectly (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019). Such a large and positive impact on the global economy was experienced despite its survival from the crises and disasters at various times in the past.

The primary forms of crises that affect the hospitality and tourism sector are armed conflicts, environmental hazards/pollution, and pandemics. The main events were the 9/11 attacks in the USA, the 2004 Asian tsunami, the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the 2015/2016 drought in India, Avian flu, amongst others (Ahlfeldt, Franke, & Maennig, 2015; Cheer, 2020; Kuo, Chang, Chen, Huang, & McAleer, 2012; UNICEF, 2016). Moreover, pandemics have left the hospitality and tourism sector with unprecedented challenges time after time, such as by limiting the demand side (freedom of movement, fear of infection, etc.) and the supply-side (closure of accommodation and leisure facilities, etc.). Therefore, it is difficult to predict how the tourism sector will develop during this period. Analysis, early approach, and marketing strategies of tourism elements that meet the modified requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic are clearly demanding. These necessitate significant research that focuses on its impacts, changes, and awareness.

COVID -19 pandemic has impacted the global economy. It has been predicted that the global GDP will be contracted by 5.2 % in 2020 (The World Bank, 2020b). One of the economic areas this pandemic has affected the most in developing countries like India is the hospitality and tourism sector. Many hospitality businesses have been temporarily closed due to strategies to minimize the infection rate. The measures such as lockdowns, social distances, home orders, travel bans, and travel restrictions have been imposed. Also, demand for businesses that are allowed to continue has declined significantly (Bartik et al., 2020; Gursoy & Chi, 2020). In a nutshell, the fear of COVID-19 has led to uncertainty and chaotic conditions in the hospitality and tourism sector.

The hospitality and tourism sector is an essential tool for sustainable economic development in India, like in other developing countries (Asif Khan, Bibi, Lorenzo, Lyu, & Babar, 2020). It contributed 6.8 % of total GDP and 8 % of the total employment in 2019 (The Times of India, 2020; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019). The revenue from domestic trips in India is the most profitable sum of capital. However, with the spread of COVID-19 at the beginning of 2020, there is a significant downfall

in the sector. The lockdown started on March 25, 2020, and continued until May 31, 2020, taking into account the extension of the lockdown. In the hospitality sector, the lockdown was lifted, and on June 8, 2020, hotels, restaurants, temples, and tourist destinations were allowed to reopen. Even so, it is not possible to estimate the extent of the economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in the sector because the course and duration of the outbreak are still uncertain. As the lives and health of the people are still at stake, it is unlikely that the positive signals in this sector will be restored soon. With this regard, there is a need for detailed study and analysis of the effect of COVID-19 in the hospitality and tourism sector in India.

This study is based on secondary data obtained through the internet, books, online news, reports, and published research articles. The data were also collected from the homepage of temples, the published news portal of the Ministry of Tourism, and the information page for COVID-19 of the Government of India. In the rest of this article, I review the literature and mention the impacts of COVID-19 in different hospitality and tourism sectors. It provides correlations between COVID-19 and the sector demand. Finally, the author presents the implications and conclusions of this study that could provide recommendations and outlooks on a future plan.

Literature review

The author reviews the pandemic's global impact in the beginning, and I focus on India because only a handful of pandemic research studies are documented. Epidemics and pandemics have long played a role in social and economic changes (Hall, Scott, & Gössling, 2020). However, the nature of such changes is selective. That means, in some cases, the changes are minimal, while in other cases, the changes are unexpected (Hall et al., 2020).

It was reported that the COVID-19 causes not only a considerable proportion of the health crisis but also an imminent restructuring of the global economic order (EYQ, 2020; Lee & Song, 2020; McKinsey, 2020; Sneader & Singhal, 2020). The World Bank has predicted the long-term socio-economic implications (The World Bank, 2020a). The sharp drop in domestic demand and service supply has forced many countries and regions to revise their GDP projects. Similarly, the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2020b) has observed blockades adopted by countries and regions. The production of non-essential goods and services has been increased. Falling prices of goods in export-centric countries have weakened exporting countries' economies and reduced employment in these sectors (ILO, 2020c). As a result, trade imbalances and large outflows of capital have made debt repayment importing essential goods and services difficult, especially in developing economies.

One of the evident impacts of COVID-19 within the hospitality and tourism sector has been towards the airline and transport sectors. Before the COVID-19

pandemic, tourist destinations such as Venice (Italy), Barcelona (Spain), Kyoto (Japan) faced so many visitors that the situation of over-tourism had occurred. The tourism and hospitality sector was affected by the onset of COVID-19 as domestic and international visitors began canceling scheduled trips. With the progression of COVID-19, almost all countries started restrictions on their borders crossing as part of national emergency responses (ILO, 2020a). The staff of airlines and transport companies across the globe have been being asked to take paid or unpaid leave as well as to accept reduced wages. Another significant impact of COVID-19 has been in the hotel sector. The emergency majors have imposed bars, cafes, and hotels to limit the virus's spread by local and federal governments. About 33 % of the hotel business losses have been predicted in Europe (Dogra, 2020). In the USA, hotels are experiencing booking cancellations, which are expected to eliminate four million jobs. Meetings, incentives, conferences & exhibitions (MICE), etc., are significantly affected, canceled, or postponed across the region. As the pandemic rose to its peak, nearly 30 airlines, including German Airways and Thai Airways, have filed for bankruptcy. Many carriers such as Indigo and Emirates had to cut salaries and dismiss their services (The Indian Express, 2020). This year, airline revenues worldwide in 2020 are down 44% year-on-year (The Economic Times, 2020).

COVID-19 pandemic is deteriorating the hospitality and tourism sector in India like in other countries around the world. It is visible in the country's inbound, outbound, and domestic tourism (Dash, 2020). The potential job loss in tourism and hospitality has been estimated to be about 70 % of the sector workforce (Radhakrishna, 2020). The estimated losses of US\$ 150 billion have been predicted in India's tourism sector (Ghosh, 2020; The Hindu, 2020). The lockdown practice was implemented at the beginning of the pandemic. While with the decline of COVID-19 daily cases (from September 16), alternative approaches such as social distancing, mask-wearing, and avoiding gatherings have been encouraged. These measures have greatly encouraged economic activities in the hospitality and tourism sector. However, with an uncertainty of effective vaccine and therapeutics as well as the distribution of vaccines on such a large population (1.3 billion), even if the vaccine is developed, the positive impact on the sector is still long to wait.

Methodology

In this study, secondary research data has been implemented for the research. Data collection has been collected through literature, journal articles, government documents, government press release, newspapers, online portals, temple websites, advertisements, etc. The research findings show that COVID-19 in India has significantly affected the hospitality and tourism sector. Mainly affected sectors of airlines data had published by International Air Transport Association (IATA). However, hotels and other sectors' data was not clearly shown by those sectors.

During the pandemic, the author conducted direct interviews with local people, local students, and pilgrims to collect information.

Though there are various approaches to reviewing the literature, the author has followed both mixed methodologies of a qualitative and quantitative approach (Terzidou, Styliadis, & Szivas, 2008). With a mixed-methods approach to research, researchers integrate collecting and analyzing data from the quantitative and qualitative research approaches in a single research study (Carrie, 2018; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Kunwar & Karki, 2020; Mair, Ritchie, & Walters, 2016; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). In this study, the pilgrim's experience, discussions with local students, and subsequent interviews with their residents, daily-based workers' relatively age group of 25-50, represent the field's current situation.

Impact on India's hospitality and tourism sector

COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the hospitality and tourism sector in India. In the following subsections, the impacts on the airline, hotel, and pilgrimage sectors are elaborated.

Impact on the airline sector

The Indian airline service is perhaps the most affected sector by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019 the growth of low-cost airlines was expected to promote and increase domestic tourism. India's aviation industry has high fixed costs of nearly 35-40%. These costs include leasing, rentals, worker wages, and interest (Arshad Khan, 2020). Low-cost flights under the UdeDeshkaAamNaagrik (UDAN) scheme are expected to connect regions within the country and promote domestic tourism (IBEF, 2019). The airport authorities of India also aimed to start operating 250 airports nationwide by 2020. As of 2019, 132 airports were operating in India. In 2018-19, India's domestic and international airline passengers increased by 14.1% and 3.4%, respectively. By 2020, the number of passengers at Indian airports was expected to reach 450 million (IBEF, 2020). The airline service has been highly disruptive during COVID-19. The two-month lockdown was dramatic for vulnerable airlines, plagued by low-profit margins, liquidity crises, fixed costs, and rising debt (Agrawal, 2020). The change in airline demands for some countries is presented in Table 1. Due to COVID-19, it was expected that the % change in passenger demand would be decreased by about 49 % in India (Moneycontrol, 2020). The Indian aviation sector is hitting a net loss of US\$9-12 million per day during lockdown (Arshad Khan, 2020).

The airline employees have also been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Air India has withdrawn job offers for around 180 trainee cabin crew members amid the economic slowdown (PTI, 2020). IndiGo, India's largest airline, has suspended its service for several months due to lockdown. It has announced that it will cut 10% of its staff to tackle sluggish earnings. 10 % will result in about 2400 jobs for the airline,

which employ about 24000 people. The other smaller airlines have suffered from similar problems and are about to implement similar measures to avoid bankruptcy. Also, analyzing the situation in other countries, airlines in India emphasize their risk of going bankrupt. By 2020, it could drop to half of the airline's revenues, having the biggest negative impact on the aviation sector and endangering airline jobs.

Table 1 shows the losses estimated by the IATA by region. Indian airlines expect COVID-19 pandemic revenues to decline to US\$ 11,610 million in 2020. It also expects a US\$ 30,60,000 million loss to aviation and subordinate sectors (Moneycontrol, 2020). Passenger demand in India also decreased by 49% in 2020 compared to 2019.

According to the IATA Vice President for the Asia Pacific, Conrad Clifford said, "2020 is the worst year in aviation history, airlines are in survival mode. Also, the impact of this COVID-19 is expected to be the largest loss for airlines in the Asia Pacific region, with annual losses of nearly US\$ 29 billion, more than one-third of the US\$84.3 billion of the aviation sector worldwide. And passenger demand in the region is expected to decline by 53.8%" (Business Standard, 2020a; India Infra Hub, 2020; Moneycontrol, 2020).

Table 1: Regional losses, international air transport association estimates, FY2020

Country	% Change in Passenger Demand (2020 Vs. 2019)	Demand Impact (Origin-Destination Volumes - 2020 Vs. 2019)	Revenue Impact US\$, Millions, 2020 Vs. 2019)	Potential Jobs Impact (Aviation & Dependent Sectors)
Australia	-53%	-52,510,000	-14,770	-376,100
Bangladesh	-49%	-5,660,000	-1,090	-63,300
Fiji	-51%	-1,170,000	-310	-65,500
India	-49%	-93,270,000	-11,610	-3,060,000
Indonesia	-50%	-60,560,000	-8,320	-2,096,800
Japan	-53%	-99,790,000	-23,920	-620,700
Malaysia	-52%	-34,060,000	-4,300	-224,800

Country	% Change in Passenger Demand (2020 Vs. 2019)	Demand Impact (Origin-Destination Volumes - 2020 Vs. 2019)	Revenue Impact US\$, Millions, 2020 Vs. 2019)	Potential Jobs Impact (Aviation & Dependent Sectors)
Maldives	-53%	-2,830,000	-660	-38,300
Nepal	-52%	-3,490,000	-530	-234,200
New Zealand	-52%	-13,250,000	-3,480	-176,400
Pakistan	-53%	-10,100,000	-1,870	-265,600
Philippines	-49%	-29,880,000	-4,630	-569,800

Source: Money control (2020) and edited some by author

The sustainability of Indian airlines requires turnaround changes in revenue strategies and operating models. Focusing on minimizing losses rather than maximizing profits in a pandemic may help airlines fight the current situation (Agrawal, 2020). Such a strategy is required not only during the pandemic but also until this sector is fully revived. During the COVID-19 crisis, the Government of India needs to consider establishing an appropriate strategy for the aviation sector for future sustainability.

Impact on the hotel sector

The lockdown by COVID-19 had a devastating effect on India's hotel sector as well as whole economic development. 1.43 million people are employed in India's hotel industry from 2013 to 2017 (Statista, 2020). The Carlson Group, an international hotel brand in India, currently has 94 operated hotels and plans to add about 30 more hotels by the end of 2023 (IBEF, 2020). A look at the growth rate of major industries in the lockdown, the manufacturing industry was decreased by 39.3%; the commercial, hotel, transportation, and telecommunications sectors were decreased by 47%; and the construction industry was decreased by 50.3%. Only during the monsoon period, the agriculture sector had a positive growth of 3.4% compared to the previous year, 2019 (Mitsubishi UFJ Research & Consulting, 2020). The hotel and tourism sector received a growing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow of US\$ 15.48 billion between April 2000 to June 2020. Indians' national and international flight cancellations, train cancellations, hotel reservation cancellations, the closing of travel

agencies, stopping transportation, and closing of craft showrooms are the reason for the negative impact on the hotel sector.

As of December 2020, most of the hotels in India are not fully open. Hotel chains such as Trident and Hyatt are trying to increase users by offering discounts of up to 60% (The India Express, 2020). Hotel Association of India's (HAI) Vice President K.B. Kachru has said that around 40 million workers in India's hospitality sector may lose their jobs due to COVID-19 (The New Indian Express, 2020a). The luxury hotel chain operated by the TATA Group is also running in the direction of saving costs due to the lockdown caused by COVID-19. Puneet Chatwal, Chief Executive Officer of Indian Hotels Co Ltd, said: "The sector has never experienced such a decline in revenue in the last 100 years" (Business Standard, 2020b). The company's iconic Taj brand, which operates The Pierre in New York City, hasn't reduced hotel employment but is staffed elsewhere in the TATA Empire. (Business Standard, 2020b). The company has lost US\$ 51 million in the six months to September 30, 2020. The budget hotel chain Treebo implemented a pay cut of its founders and managers of 60 and 40 % respectively and launched a paid voluntary resignation scheme for its 400 employees. The hotel chain Oyo cut 5,000 jobs as of April 15 (ILO, 2020b).

Medical tourism is closely linked to luxury hotels and travel agencies, both of which are adversely affected by COVID-19. India faces medical tourism difficulties due to lockdowns and short-term domestic aviation services suspension (ILO, 2020b; Sharma, Vishraj, Ahlawat, Mittal, & Mittal, 2020). Over the past month, several publications and articles have been published dealing with the impact of COVID-19 on India's tourism and hospitality sector. Still, most of the articles are limited to medium and large luxury hotels only.

Impact on pilgrimage tourism

Pilgrimage tourism is the mixture of traditional tours to shrines and cultural trips designed, guided, and synchronized by religious organizations or/and for religious purposes. There are multiple religions in India, and there are many believers in those religions. Therefore, not only Indian people but also foreigners are increasing the number of pilgrims visiting India for religious pilgrimages. Believers of major religions often (mostly) participate in pilgrimages. For them, pilgrimage pursues great moral significance throughout a long journey. In particular, Islam requires that you participate in a Mecca pilgrimage at least once in your life (Singh Jaswal, 2014). Other religions have similar ideas, and participation in pilgrimages remains. However, in recent years, the way of involvement in pilgrimage tourism has changed from a large group to a small group. The Ministry of Tourism collects a large sum of foreign currency through foreign tourists (Ranga & Pradhan, 2017). Among Hinduism and other religions, rather than focusing on the economic impact, the emphasis here is on

the socio-cultural and psychological effects that it has had on the community. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, important and Famous festivals are canceled. Subsequently, It had a negative impact on people who love festivals (Radhakrishnan, 2020).

According to The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), “The Government of India has introduced several plans to increase both domestic and foreign customers and boost the tourism sector. The plans to promote pilgrimage tourism by adopting the Swadesh Darshan scheme and the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)” (FICCI, 2020b). US\$ 120.19 million was sanctioned to develop 51 sites across 28 states in the country under the scheme of PRASHAD. And, under the Swadesh Darshan scheme, 77 projects have been approved worth US\$ 863.60 million (IBEF, 2020). These plans not only increase tourists on pilgrimage but also increase sustainable employment opportunities. However, there is no doubt that the COVID-19 will not keep things going as planned for the campaigns.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on temples and shrines. Thousands of Pilgrims could not go on a pilgrimage to worship temples or shrines. Therefore, the revenue of temples or shrines, the related business's income, local areas social tax revenue have decreased. Also, in pilgrimage, star hotels' business included luxury hotels, general hotels, and pilgrims' accommodations to be shut down at once. Table 2 shows the number of closed days of main temples in India.

Table 2: Situation of Hindu temples in India according to COVID-19 (2020)

Temple name	Pilgrims per day (average)	Status during lockdown	Number of visitors allowed during the restrictions	Days of closed	Place
Padmanabhaswamy Temple	52500	Closed	1000	180	Kerala
Tirupati Balaji Temple	70000	Closed	6000	80	Andhra Pradesh
Vaishno Devi Temple	21753	Closed	2000	150	Jammu and Kashmir
Shirdi's Sai Baba	25000	Closed	6000	210	Maharashtra
Guruvayur Temple	50000	Closed	1000	75	Kerala
Golden Temple	1,00,000	Open	fewer	0	Punjab

Temple name	Pilgrims per day (average)	Status during lockdown	Number of visitors allowed during the restrictions	Days of closed	Place
Sabarimala Temple	100000	Closed	1,000	180	Kerala
Siddhivinayak Temple	40000	Closed	1,000	210	Mumbai
Meenakshi Temple	15000	Closed	Strict restrictions	165	Tamil Nadu
Jagannath Puri Temple	31500	Closed	Still closed	-	Odisha

Source: Created by the author data from the homepage of each Temple, newspaper, etc.

Table 2 shows all Hindu-rich temples in India, and these temples are also on the top-ranking list of assets. These temples are adversely affected by COVID-19. With the temples' closure, many jobs and related temples' services are in a difficult situation. A lockdown order from the state government sets a period for closing temples in a particular area. However, some temples are not closed due to the temples' authorities' decision. Golden Temple in Punjab is an example of opening temples even after the lockdown restrictions. The temple entrances are still restricted, and the number of pilgrims has dropped significantly. Simultaneously, pilgrims who want to go on pilgrimages have restrictions on transportation and accommodation facilities, which makes pilgrimage tourism in India still problematic.

Temples in India are always crowded, and the COVID-19 infection has affected many employees too. In India, many full-time and part-time workers are working in various temples and pilgrimage sites. COVID-19 has made it challenging to hire workers on these sites. Tirupati Balaji Temple, which generates employment opportunities for 14,000 people (TTD, 2021), has a significant negative impact on employee's employment. Padmanabhaswamy Temples administration also withheld 20% of the salary from 150 employees (The New Indian Express, 2020b).

Current status and impact of Covid-19 on the local community in India

India has a total of 38 protected World Heritage Sites. More than 170,000 daily-based workers are working on such World Heritage Sites only as daily-based salary. For example, many tour guides, porters, and photographers in those areas. (FICCI, 2020a, 2020b; ILO, 2020b). Due to COVID-19, the daily-based workers have lost their jobs and are trying to move to other jobs, but there is no other employment

opportunity. COVID-19 is harming their family's life as well. In most urban areas, the employer's employment is directly related to their family. The loss of that employment means the employer is to return to the village or hometown (Walter, 2020). However, it is hard to find the arcuate numbers of workers who have returned to their original home by the COVID-19 as data are not published yet. Lockdown and post lockdown have a major impact on daily-based workers' health, mainly in psychological health. Besides, the closure of schools and kindergarten has a major impact on children's and students' studies.

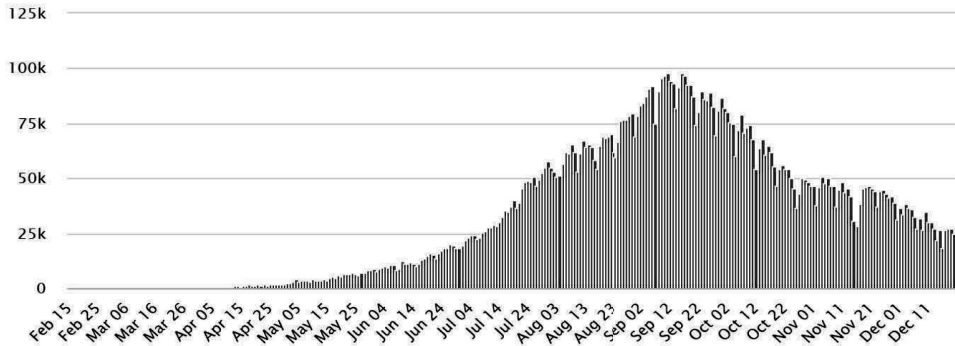
Domestic tourism, which mainly supports India's hospitality and tourism sector, is also restricted by the lockdown. Most of the reservations for summer vacation have been canceled in tourist destinations such as Kerala, Rajasthan, Goa, etc. Subsequently, it claims a negative effect on local communities' employment.

Table 3: Covid-19 status in India (as of December 16, 2020)

COVID-19 Dashboard	Total Cases	Active	Discharged	Deaths	Total Samples Tested Upto December 15, 2020	Samples Tested on December 15, 2020
As on 16 Dec 2020	9,932,547	332,002 (3.34%)	9,456,449 (95.21%)	144,096 (1.45%)	156,646,280	1,085,625
IST (GMT+5:30)	26,382 ↑	7,818 ↓	33,813 ↑	485 ↑		

Source: Created by the author from the home page of Government of India (2020)

As evident from Table 3, many infected people (per day) have still been reported, while the number of patients who have been cured is also comparable. As of December 15, the number of tests per day is 1,085,625, which is a significant achievement in the health sector. Nevertheless, due to the lack of contact tracing and other controllable health measures, there is no likelihood that the pandemic will end soon.

Figure 1: COVID-19 daily cases of India

Source: Created by the author based on data from Worldometer (2020)

As it is clear from the histogram shown in figure 1, the number of COVID-19 patients is maximum at the beginning of the third week of September. After that, the number of patients is gradually decreasing to till now. However, it is also possible that the second wave of COVID-19 may come as like in the USA or other European countries. As the new strings of the virus have been reported in European and other Asian countries, we cannot be certain of the pandemic length.

Support and statistics from the Ministry of Tourism of India

Ministry of Tourism has many challenging projects from past years to promote the tourism and hospitality industry. For instance, it has operated tourism schemes like PRASHAD and Swadesh Darshan. Ministry of Tourism has also released the budget to multiple states and union territories for fairs, festivals, and other tourism-related events. The government of India allows 100% of FDI in the Indian tourism sector. By June 2019, the Indian tourism sector had raised a total of US\$ 13 billion in capital investment. It is expected to be valued at US\$ 460 billion by 2028. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has directly affected the progress of those projects. It will not be a surprise if they need to redefine their strategies and timelines for the post-pandemic period.

Indian Ministry of Tourism is implementing various measures during COVID-19 to support the Indian tourism sector. According to a press release of the Ministry of Tourism, (2020b) on October 16, 2020, “focusing on the promotion of domestic tourism, implementation of the Incredible India Tourist Facilitator (IITF) Certification Programme, improved the connectivity to other states, loan support, an extension of property tax filing deadline, exemption of electricity and water bills during periods when the property was not functioning, opening the tourism services and destination in a phased manner, etc.”

Table 4 shows the number of the registered tourism sector's business in New Delhi, India, in 2020 compared to pre-pandemic years. As evident from Table 4, the number of inbound tour operators is relatively large and has become an essential component of the tourism business. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the new registration in the tourism business has significantly decreased by ~85 %, going from 2019 to 2020 while ~88 % for Inbound Tour Operators. Along with this, the tourism sector business may have gone bankrupt due to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis (FICCI, 2020b). Also, the other states follow a similar trend (Ministry of Tourism, 2020).

Table 4: Number of the new registration business of tourism sector in New Delhi

Year	State	Inbound Tour Operators	Domestic Tour Operators	Adventure Tour Operators	Tourist Transport Operators	Travel Agents	Total
2015	New Delhi	15	4	2	3	1	25
2016	New Delhi	50	4	3	14	7	78
2017	New Delhi	38	4	2	12	11	67
2018	New Delhi	65	11	8	16	16	116
2019	New Delhi	89	12	4	14	17	136
2020	New Delhi	11	3	2	1	4	21

Source: Created by the author based on data from the Ministry of Tourism (2020)

Challenges and remedies after the COVID-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has proven to be very destructive. Covid-19 has caused havoc in the global economy, causing social and financial disruption (Laing, 2020). The aftermath of such a pandemic is probably more threatening to various business survival and sustainability (Wren-Lewis, 2020). Hospitality industries such as the aviation sector and the hotel sector are in a difficult time. As mentioned earlier, the aviation sector is the most adversely affected sector, with the most considerable loss of US\$ 84.3 billion in 2020, the largest loss ever witnessed by the aviation sector (Business Standard, 2020a; Moneycontrol, 2020). More than three in four workers in the tourism sector are in informal jobs in Asia Pacific countries, leaving them especially vulnerable to the negative impacts of the COVID-19 crisis (ILO, 2020b).

To recover from the COVID-19 crisis, stakeholders need to choose the direction of survival by reducing losses rather than considering the business's profits. When

the economy tries to recover at the end of the pandemic, it will be more problematic if there are no employees in their sector. So, it is thought that some measures should be considered, and the employees in the sector should be left without restructuring. Suppose employees working in the hospitality sector are affected by COVID-19 and move to other sectors, even if the pandemic is over. In that case, there is a risk that the economy will not recover sooner due to the lack of employees. Another issue for the end of the pandemic is that the tourism sector needs to be carefully preserved for employees working in the hospitality sector to start up smoothly (FICCI, 2020b).

When the Covid-19 pandemic is over, and the tourism sector is recovering, the tourism sector needs to be boosted. It should be considered that the future of the tourism sectors to build trust between tourists and all other stakeholders. The preparation for welcoming tourists should start as soon as possible. This requires loans to the tourism sector, support, and good planning. At that time, the stakeholders could create a wide range of tourism circuits with friendly neighboring countries. Tourists for medical tourism are visiting from all over the world as India is still a famous destination. However, currently, the medical tourists are in waiting due to the pandemic. With numerous tourists are coming from several parts of Europe, the Middle East, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the United States, the medical tourism sector is unlikely to be postponed for a long time. It is because India offers the latest technology, medical devices, and services at a lower cost than other countries. The Indian medical tourism sector's services may also offer low-cost wellness tourism, alternative treatments, and cosmetic surgery (Gautam & Bhatta, 2020). It is considered that it will be a big issue in the future to revive fully Indian medical tourism, which is almost stopped now, even after the pandemic.

COVID-19 may significantly change destination marketing services, as well. It is expected that it will take some time before the invention of drugs and vaccines. 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. It is thought that the government's help is required for such domestic tourism. Further, inbound tourism and domestic tourism will be difficult to revive the tourism sector until medicines and vaccines are fully developed and efficiently delivered to the public.

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). The author proposes the following strategies to overcome the challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5: Proposals to Central and State Governments in India

No	Proposals
1	Provide direct support and tax exemption for daily-based workers such as taxi drivers and porters.
2	Provide low-interest or straightforward rate loans for the purpose of infrastructure equipment in the hotel sector.
3	Increase the 6-month diploma of tariffs, all legislative obligations, and license fees to 12 months.
4	Provide an appropriate support plan and salary support plans to support the company.
5	Direct support to airlines (ground processing fees, airport fee diplomas, parking fee diplomas, landing fee exemptions)
6	Provide rapid, interest-free, or low-interest loans to restructuring companies as term loans and working capital loans.
7	Create a tourism fund separate from the Ministry of Tourism, which plans an unsecured 10-year loan for industrial infrastructure. Plans for interest-free for the first two years and a minimum interest rate loan for the remaining eight years to stabilize the company in a crisis.
8	Remedies in the aviation sector, travel agencies, tour operators, hotels, amusement parks, and ground transportation sectors are directly related to tourism.
9	Plan and implement the employee salary support schemes and insurance fee reduction policy.
10	Increase investment in beach tourism, marketing, and promote niche products with the 'Incredible India' campaign.
11	Plan to encourage business trips, increase train numbers, develop digital content, invest in new technologies, the idea of virtual tourism and smart tourism, and develop local skills.
12	Conduct campaigns like Japan's Go To Travel and Go To Eat campaigns in the hospitality sector.

Source: Created by the author based on FICCI (2020)

Although the author proposes India's plans (Table 5), it can be utilized in neighboring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Bhutan, which share similar cultural, social, and economic backgrounds.

Conclusion

In this study, the author presented the impact of COVID-19 on the Indian hospitality and tourism sector and its current situation. It was confirmed that this pandemic has significantly affected the Indian tourism sector, especially the aviation sector, the hotel sector, pilgrimage tourism, and daily-based workers in the local community. Moreover, due to lockdown and travel restriction measures, the tourism sector's employers as well as an employee, are in jeopardy. Furthermore, this unprecedented situation is prevailing not only in India but also around the world.

In India, revenues in the aviation sector have temporarily stopped and now resumed. Although we confirmed the airline sectors' loss estimates, the author could not obtain detailed loss estimates for the hotel sector. However, it can also be said that it will be difficult to revive the hospitality sector for a while. The Indian government, the tourism sector stakeholders also have challenges toward the economic revival after the pandemic. It is thought that a plan that can adequately respond to those issues will be necessary. Finally, the author's proposal, along with the FICCI report to India's Government, could be critical for reviving the hospitality and tourism industry. This strategy could be equally applicable to countries with shared economies and social values.

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