

## A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF IMPACT OF NOVEL CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) ON TOURISM SECTOR OF INDIA

Rajendra Kumar Suman\* & Vijay Kumar\*\*

### Abstract

The study aims to analyze the preliminary impacts of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on travel and tourism sector of India. The pandemic has shown its effect on almost every sector worldwide. However, the tourism sector seems to be affected severely. The pandemic seems to have affected every segment of Indian tourism sector which includes Travel Trade, Hospitality, Aviation, Transportation, Restaurant, Tour Guide, Handicraft, etc. The United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is exploring the severe impact of coronavirus on global travel and tourism sector in association with World Health Organization (WHO). In order to contain the spread of Coronavirus, most of the countries including India have resorted to "Lockdown" which seems to have resulted in large number of job loss in tourism sector. The cancellation of all modes of travel such as Air, water and road, closing of international as well as interstate borders in the country and cancellation of hotel reservations seem to have the devastating effects on tourism sector of India.

**Key words:** Covid19, Pandemic, Lockdown, Impacts, Travel & Tourism, Unemployment.

## UM ESTUDO PRELIMINAR DO IMPACTO DA NOVA DOENÇA CORONAVÍRUS (COVID-19) NO SETOR DE TURISMO DA ÍNDIA

### Resumo

O estudo visa analisar os impactos preliminares da nova doença coronavírus (COVID-19) no setor de viagens e turismo da Índia. A pandemia tem mostrado seu efeito em quase todos os setores do mundo. Entretanto, o setor de turismo parece ter sido severamente afetado. A pandemia parece ter afetado todos os segmentos do setor de turismo indiano que incluem o Comércio de Viagens, Hospitalidade, Aviação, Transporte, Restaurante, Guia Turístico, Artesanato, etc. A Organização Mundial do Turismo das Nações Unidas (UNWTO) está explorando o grave impacto do coronavírus no setor global de viagens e turismo em associação com a Organização Mundial da Saúde (OMS). A fim de conter a disseminação do Coronavírus, a maioria dos países, incluindo a Índia, recorreu ao "Lockdown" que parece ter resultado na perda de um grande número de empregos no setor de turismo. O cancelamento de todos os modos de viagem, tais como aéreo, aquático e rodoviário, o fechamento de fronteiras internacionais e interestaduais no país e o cancelamento de reservas de hotéis parecem ter os efeitos devastadores no setor de turismo da Índia.

**Palavras-chave:** Covid19; Pandemia; Fechamento; Impactos; Viagens e Turismo; Desemprego.

## ESTUDIO PRELIMINAR DEL IMPACTO DE LA NUEVA ENFERMEDAD POR CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) EN EL SECTOR TURÍSTICO DE LA INDIA

### Resumen

El estudio pretende analizar las repercusiones preliminares de la nueva enfermedad por coronavirus (COVID-19) en el sector de los viajes y el turismo de la India. La pandemia ha mostrado sus efectos en casi todos los sectores del mundo. Sin embargo, el sector del turismo parece estar gravemente afectado. La pandemia parece haber afectado a todos los segmentos del sector turístico indio, que incluye el comercio de viajes, la hostelería, la aviación, el transporte, la restauración, los guías turísticos, la artesanía, etc. La Organización Mundial del Turismo de las Naciones Unidas (OMT) está estudiando el grave impacto del coronavirus en el sector mundial de los viajes y el turismo en asociación con la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS). Para contener la propagación del coronavirus, la mayoría de los países, incluida India, han recurrido al "bloqueo", lo que parece haber provocado la pérdida de un gran número de puestos de trabajo en el sector turístico. La cancelación de todos los modos de viaje, como el aire, el agua y la carretera, el cierre de las fronteras internacionales e interestatales del país y la cancelación de las reservas de hotel parecen tener efectos devastadores en el sector turístico de la India.

**Palabras clave:** Covid19; Pandemia; Bloqueo; Impactos; Viajes y Turismo; Desempleo.



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\* PhD Scholar in Tourism/ Jamia Millia Islamia (Pursuing, 2018 batch), India. Master of Business Administration/ IGNOU, India (2002). Bachelor of Arts, Kakatiya University, India (1994). ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5127-850X> [ [rksuman73@yahoo.co.in](mailto:rksuman73@yahoo.co.in) ]

\*\* PhD in Tourism/Jamia Millia Islamia, India (2014). Master of Arts in Tourism/IGNOU, India (2006), Degree in Commerce/University of Delhi, India (2002). Full Time Assistant Professor at Department of Tourism & Hospitality, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India. [ [vkumar@jmi.ac.in](mailto:vkumar@jmi.ac.in) ]

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Travel and tourism sector of India has shown steady growth over the years and India's position is 7th in the Asia Pacific region with the share of international tourist arrival (Ministry of Tourism, 2019). According to India Tourism Statistics, 2019 published by Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the tourism sector has made remarkable growth in terms of foreign tourist arrivals as well as in growth in the visit of domestic tourists.

Travel & tourism is one of the world's largest economic sectors, supporting one in 10 jobs (330 million) worldwide, and generating 10.3% of global GDP (WTTC, 2020). According to this report, the Travel & Tourism sector accounts for US\$ 8.9 trillion contributions to the world's GDP and US\$ 948 billion of capital investment worldwide (4.3% of total investment). It further reports that travel and tourism create US\$ 1.7 trillion visitor exports globally which are 6.8% of total exports and 28.3% of global services exports.

Travel and tourism sector is one of the prominent sectors in India and has a potential contribution to the growth of Indian economy (Hotelivate, 2019). According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, India 2020 Annual Research, Travel and Tourism contribute 6.8 % GDP of the Indian economy during the year 2019 (WTTC, 2020) amounting to US\$ 194.3 billion.

The report also says that it had a growth of 4.9% compared to the year 2018. According to this report, the contribution of travel and tourism sector in employment was 39.82 million jobs during the year 2019 which is 8 % of total employment in India. The report further highlights that travel and tourism has a great contribution to exports. India has the International visitor impact of US\$ 30.3 billion which is 5.6 % of the total export of India (WTTC, 2020).

These figures suggest that the tourism sector plays an important role in development and growth in GDP, per capita income, foreign exchange earnings and most importantly employment generation in India. Interestingly, the employment generation by the travel and tourism sector globally is around 10 % with the capital investment involvement of merely 4.3 per cent (WTTC, 2020).

The travel and tourism sector of India creates employment for all type of people such as skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled, women, and even differently-abled people. Even the rural population of India could also find employment in the form of tourist guides and transport operators and tourist vehicle drivers since rural tourism and wildlife tourism are one of the growing products of the Indian tourism sector.

Tourism also contributes to an increase in overall quality of life for residents and supports rural sustainable development and reduction of outgoing migration (Bogdan & et. al, 2018).

The period after the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic has been unprecedented difficult times for the hospitality and travel sector employees who were severely impacted (Bhatia B, 2020). India has witnessed many such situations mainly due to natural calamities such as the earthquake in Gujarat in 2001, floods in many states, devastating storms in coastal area and islands time to time which has affected the tourist footfall to the affected area.

Besides the natural calamities, the economic slowdown of 2008 has also adversely affected the tourist visit in India according to India tourism statistics. The spread of COVID -19 has badly impacted travel and tourism sector since no travel possible after the Indian authorities declared Lockdown since March 23, 2020, to contain the spread of this disease (Mallapur, 2020).

Chris Nassetta, WTTC Chairman said, "We see green shoots of hope emerging as our global community turns its attention toward recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. But we know that travelers will only venture out into the world again when they feel it is safe to do so, making it critically important that we give them the confidence and peace of mind they need.

The global protocols WTTC has laid out are designed to align the travel and tourism sector around consistent health and safety guidelines that will help protect travelers wherever their journey takes them." (WTTC, 2020).

As the COVID-19 situation evolves, The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) observes that full or partial travel restrictions have been introduced globally due to evolving situation of the pandemic which is likely to be continued in future also keeping the public health as the primary concern.

Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General, UNWTO said, "This pandemic affects every level of society and we stand by those affected in these times. The impact of the pandemic on already slowing economies has made tourism particularly vulnerable, becoming the hardest hit sector so far. With 80% of the sector made up of small and medium-sized enterprises, millions of livelihoods in the world are left vulnerable." (UNWTO, 2020).

In the prevailing scenario, the study aims to analyze how far the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the tourism sector of India. The study also aims to analyze what are the various measures which can support and redevelop the Indian tourism sector post-COVID-19 crisis. The study exploratory research in which the qualitative method of analysis has been

used. The period considered under this study is up to May 2020 only. Therefore, no updates beyond May 31, 2020, have been covered in this study. The study is mainly based on secondary data extracted from published journals, articles, related websites and media reports. The data has been basically accessed with respect to impacts of COVID-19 on the travel and tourism sector of India from published papers, magazines, reports of international organizations, and newspapers. Also, the recommendations suggested by various trade organizations and associations have included suggesting the measures to redevelop the tourism sector of India.

## 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Travel and tourism sector of India is anticipated to be the second-largest job provider in the world by employing around 40 million people by 2019 (Amutha, 2016). She also mentioned that the recent influx of FDI to India has facilitated to build 1980 new hotels with 109,392 rooms. According to her, the travel and tourism sector is estimated to create 36.4 % of world GDP, 14.05 % of global capital investments, 13.23 % of employment globally and 32.14 % of exports worldwide.

Travel and Tourism sector in India is developing at a fast pace and it has vast prospective for creating jobs and earning foreign exchange which would boost the economy of India. The government at both center and state are doing their continuous efforts for the growth of tourism in India. However, this sector has not received the status which it actually deserves to get. It is the right time that India should explore and make endeavors to gain the world market share, to offer the best experience to the tourists and embracing improved strategies for the promotion and development of tourism internationally as well as domestically.

According to the report of the World Travel and Tourism Council, (WTTC, 2017), travel and tourism sector of India positions 7th globally with respect to its total contribution to the GDP of the country. The report further highlights that the travel and tourism sector of India has generated Rs. 14.1 trillion (USD 208.9 billion) in 2016 which amounts to 9.6 per cent of the total GDP of India.

In terms of employment generation, the tourism sector in India is at 2nd position globally by generating 40.3 million employments during the year 2016 which is 9.3% of the total jobs in the country. India's Travel and Tourism sector were also the fastest-growing amongst the G20 nations, having a growth rate of 8.5% during the year 2016. It is expected that the growth rate would be 6.7% during the year 2017. WTTC further reported that domestic travel is the main source of

revenue and employment generation which is 88 per cent of the total contribution of the sector.

The impact of foreign tourist arrivals to India can be noticed in both micro and macro-economic viewpoint (Dash 2018). With regard to the microeconomic viewpoint, international tourism develops the excellence of people employed in that sector, generates regional occupation opportunities.

In macroeconomic viewpoint, international tourist arrival generates foreign exchange earnings creates an additional source of tax revenue for governments, contributing to the repayment of foreign debt, new occupation opportunities within the country, thereby growing the national income of the country.

As a cumulative effect, it enhances the standard of living in the country, leading to a positive image of the country, which in turn can be exploited in many other sectors of trade and commerce. Besides, tourism sector creates a convergence of income across countries by transferring income from developed nations to developing ones. Hence, policymakers can use tourism as a tool to policy instrument to reduce regional inequalities.

The travel and tourism sector globally has been hit by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic (MD. Shahnawaz Abidin, 2020). This is the sector which seems to be hit hardest by the pandemic due to the restricted mobility of people and thereby no tourist arrivals. It has resulted in certain devastating impacts such as loss of jobs, reduced revenue and income. Island countries such as Sri Lanka which have major source of their GDP from tourism sector, has been hit hard due to disruption in travel and tourism sector caused by the pandemic. Besides, the sectors which are largely dependent on tourism activities such as hotels and other accommodations, airlines etc. are also stressed due to the disruption in travel and tourism sector. Such situation is indeed a cause of concern and requires early attention and solution.

The biggest simplification would be to keep tourism as a superfluous element, which was real in the beginning of the 20th century (Alfredo A. César Dachary, 2020). Tourism has ceased to be a luxury a long time ago to become a component of emotional balance and the utopia of a quality of life, with changes in post-pandemic society. Tourism will never be dead, as being predicted by some people. It is the distance that will change as an expression of a new social relationship in a digitally controlled world with the memory of the Covid-19 pandemic very hard to forget.

In the recent past, the appearance and rapid spread of the pandemic has not only put the world on hold, but has generated a wide debate regarding the sustainability of tourism (Korstanje, 2020). Today the concept is put to the test by the end of the globalization

and the imposition of a new normality as a result of COVID-19.

Manav Thadani, the founder Chairman of 'Hotelivate' mentioned in the annual report "2019 Indian Hospitality: trends and opportunity" that contribution of domestic travel in total GDP of travel and tourism sector in India is 87 per cent during the year 2018 (Hotelivate, 2019). The report further says that leisure travel (international and domestic) contributed 95% of the total revenue generated in the travel and tourism sector in India.

The government is now making efforts on improving the leisure tourism markets of India. In this context, the Prime Minister has suggested the public to visit at least 15 domestic tourist destinations by the year 2022 in his speech. Government has also taken initiatives to boost the inbound tourism to India such as enabling e-visa facility for around 163 countries and providing visa-on-arrival for some countries. The government has also launched the campaign "Incredible India 2.0" and making efforts towards improving the connectivity among the destinations in India.

The impact of COVID-19 on tourism sector globally that the epidemic can become the key factor for the collapse of the national tourism sector since it affects social, religious, and cultural activities of every human (Folinas & Metaxas, 2020). The Corona Virus has shaken the global tourism industry by cancellation of bookings in large hotel chains and online platforms in the Asian country.

The tourism industry worldwide is facing exceptional dangers due to the global health alarm, the scarcity of aircraft due to the problem with Boeing 737 Max, bankruptcies of travel companies and airlines; and economic slowdown in the large markets. These factors are the indication of a global recession for the tourism sector in the coming months.

It is difficult to analyze the impact of the pandemic on the global tourism industry, as the data changes quickly with the spread of the virus (Becker, 2020). World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has made a projection that there would a job loss of 75 million and a revenue loss of US\$2.1 trillion globally in case the pandemic is prolonged. It has been reported that British Airways is likely to reduce its manpower by 36,000 by April 02, 2020.

Travel Association of America has estimated a job loss of 4.6 million staff by the end of May 2020 since America's travel business been affected badly. The U.S. weekly unemployment figures have doubled in a week to 6.6 million. The major cause of job loss is the decline in travel and tourism sector and the closure of big hotels in states. Roger Dow, president and CEO of a the U.S. Travel Association described the impact on the travel industry in the U.S as six or seven times bigger than the

9/11 attacks. Due to travel restrictions and an expected global recession, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported the air transport industry revenue drop of 94.3 per cent in Apr 2020 from 2019 numbers. (IATA, 2020).

The travel and tourism sector of India is expected to book a revenue loss of Rs 1.25 trillion during the year 2020 due to the shutdown of hotels and suspension in flight operations after the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (Dash, 2020).

During April-June, the Indian tourism sector is expected to incur a loss of Rs 69,400 crore of revenue, which is a loss of 30 per cent on yearly basis. The hospitality and tourism sector has been affected the most due to the spread of COVID-19 in all segments such as inbound, outbound and domestic.

It has also had an impact on leisure travel, adventure tours, heritage tours, MICE industry and cruise tourism. India received 10.9 million foreign tourists and the generated the foreign exchange earnings (FEE) of Rs 210,971 crore during 2019. However, the global travel and tourism sector including India is expected to witness a severe adverse impact during 2020 due to the pandemic.

According to reports and experts, a large number of employee would lose their jobs in tourism and its related sectors due to loss of business owing to COVID-19 outbreak worldwide (Mallapur, 2020). KPMG, a financial services and business advisory firm reported on April 1, 2020, that there would be a job loss of around 38 million in the tourism and hospitality sector of India owing to COVID-19 which is 70% of the total employment.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 9 million jobs were on risk in the travel and tourism sector in India. It would be a great setback for the employment in the country if COVID-19 crisis gets prolonged. According to the annual report of the Ministry of Tourism for 2019-20 travel and tourism sector contributed 12.75% of total employment, 5.56% directly and 7.19% indirectly. WTTC's most recent analysis suggests that the Asia-Pacific region may lose 49 million jobs out of over 87 million, owing to the pandemic. This would amount to a revenue loss of around US\$ 800 billion to the travel and tourism sector. China, which is the origin country for COVID-19 might lose more than half of these jobs (25.6 million).

President of Indian Heritage Hotel Association, Maharaja Gajsingh II (2020) suggested that hygiene and sanitation would be the prime factor in hotels post COVID-19 pandemic and the professionals in hospitality sector should now focus mainly on domestic tourism. He also recommended some of the measures to support the travel and hospitality sector. He suggested that the government should defer all statutory dues such as GST, advance tax, PF, ESIC,

etc. for 12 months applicable to tourism and hospitality. A welfare fund should be raised in order to provide relief for paying remuneration and establishment costs. He also suggested that tourism companies should be given an interest-free loan for the period of 5 to 10 years and a grant for payment of remuneration to the affected staff.

The impact of COVID-19 on hotel business mentioned that whether the business in hospitality sector either slows down or decreases to absolute zero, whereas the liability part remains intact (Jain & Jain Prateek, 2020).

The property-owners still require rentals, the employee which had worked hard for the company to grow still needs their remuneration to meet their both ends. The utility bills, loan EMIs, essential expenses, software charges need to be still paid. While the larger companies can invoke "Force Majeure" and ask the vendors to hold up any invoices, most of the companies are small companies in this sector does not have such negotiating capabilities. The independent properties with 10 – 15 rooms might get closed in large numbers pan India. Such professionals will be left with no alternative but to close the business and shift to other business or profession since to earn their livelihood.

This would result in mass job loss and unemployment. Most importantly it may be noted here that the hotels industry employs a large number of unskilled and semi-skilled workers who may not be suitable for employment elsewhere as they do not have any formal degree or qualification. It would be

difficult for such an employee to earn their livelihood when the hotels are closed in which they have been working. The impact on such people should also be taken into consideration.

With the increase in confirmed cases being reported daily, the COVID-19 pandemic would have a greater impact on travel and tourism sector whose effects would be continued into the second quarter of the calendar year 2020 (Lamba, 2020). The sector is currently in an extremely grim state, as the domestic flight operations have been suspended since March 25, 2020, and all other demand sectors such as MICE, business, social and sporting events have been cancelled or postponed until further notice. The damage to the travel and hospitality sector is such that various associations of the sector have made representations to the government at a different level and expect the government to announce some measures to revive and support the distressed sector.

Travel & tourism sector in India has been a significant contributor to the GDP of the nation (Singh, 2020). The sector generates a large number of employments. While, by, the popular tourist attractions in India started to close down, and the news on

cancellation of flight operations started circulating, by mid-March 2020, everyone started to predict the grim future of the tourism sector of India. Even, Taj Mahal, the iconic site of India which attracts millions of tourists each year, was closed for visitors on March 17, 2020. It was a clear indication to predict the impact of this pandemic which had just stated.

The Covid-19 pandemic has put the tourism sector under massive financial crisis which no one had ever thought. In the current situation of uncertainty, all industries are facing a difficult situation, however, but it is the tourism and hospitality sector has been hit the most since all the border are closed owing to lockdown (Dean, 2020).

Airlines, cruise operators and hotels have witnessed the impact of the pandemic instantly. The experts of this sector say that mutual collaboration, sharing of information and linking up efforts towards common goals is the most important factor in the current scenario. Riaz Munshi, President, Outbound Tour Operators Association of India (OTOAI) "The only thing we can currently do is to stay united, remain safe and stand strong because we are all in this together".

Some other experts say that during the lockdown period the tourism professionals should develop some innovative ideas, attend webinars and augment their knowledge and skills. The current situation is not the end of the tourism sector but to learn from it become stronger. They further advised the tourism professionals to stay positive and to be prepared with innovative concepts to bounce back. However, the foremost priority for this sector would be the health and protection of everyone from COVID-19.

The tourism sector is an important sector as it contributes around 10% to the Indian GDP and offers more than 50 million employments. According to a report, the sector would witness a decrease of 12 to 14%. He further estimated the largest adverse impact would be in Asia continent and likely to recover in around 10 months. There would be a steep decline in revenue among the hotel chains, travel agents, tour operators, restaurants, and all the three modes of transportations due to COVID-19. The airline segment would bear a revenue loss of US\$ 61 billion in the second quarter and a decrease of 38% in the number of travelers worldwide (Sharma, 2020).

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) has issued advisories for international traffic related to COVID-19 pandemic and suggested that the sick persons, elderly people and people with chronic diseases should postpone or avoid travel to affected areas. All travelers should maintain personal hygiene, cough etiquette and keeping a distance of at least one meter from a symptomatic person.

It also suggested Perform hand hygiene frequently which includes either cleaning hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand rub. It further suggested covering the nose and mouth with a flexed elbow or paper tissue when coughing or sneezing and disposing immediately of the tissue and performing hand hygiene, refrain from touching mouth and nose and suggested to bear masks.

The Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC, 2020) in its report mentioned that the hospitality sector is facing a difficult situation due to reduced travel. Hospitality companies have witnessed a drop of 50% in bookings between March 2 and 9 within India. Large numbers of cancellations of bookings have also been reported.

Edelweiss Securities estimates the adverse impact on room occupancy as well as the tariff from March 2020 to June 2020. Airfares have dropped around 20-25% in certain domestic sectors and airlines are avoiding the increase in airfare due to reduced demand. Due to disruption caused by a coronavirus, the nationwide occupancy across the sector may decrease by 18-20 per cent, and average daily rates (ADRs) may be reduced by 12-14 per cent during the year 2020. The hotels would also face mass cancellations and reduced room rates.

The Indian tourism sector has been badly affected due to COVID-19 pandemic (Ravishankar & Christopher, 2020). India being an important tourism destination, it offers an array of niche tourism products such as historical sites, cruises, adventure, sports, medical, wellness, MICE (Marketing, incentives, conference and events), film, rural, religious tourism and eco-tourism. India is famous as a spiritual tourist destination for domestic as well as foreign tourists. Several efforts by the Indian government in branding and positioning India as a preferred tourist destination, such as "Incredible India!" and "Athiti Devo Bhava" have resulted in a targeted boost to tourism growth.

A new visa category - medical visa has been created to promote medical tourism in the country. The incredible India 2.0 campaign was launched in September 2017 and the "Incredible Indian Mobile App" was launched in September 2018 to provide assistance to the tourists and to showcase their travel experiences.

The travel and tourism sector has suffered a big loss due to coronavirus pandemic. There have been cancellations of around 90% of hotel bookings and flights tickets during March and April 2020 although it is supposed to be peak season for Indians after school holidays (Mishra A., 2020).

A large number of bookings for Cruises for Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia have also been cancelled which has resulted in huge loss. It is estimated that there would be a loss of around Rs 200-300 Crore in Delhi-NCR alone in the travel and tourism

sector. He also expressed that this sector would face challenges for the next six months nationwide as well as globally. He said that tourist number would fall in large numbers if a pandemic is not contained substantially.

## 2.1 The Indian Tourism sector: an overview

The tourism sector of India is active since its independence. The potential for Indian tourism sector was first recognized in 1948 with the setting up of a Tourist Traffic Committee which was an ad-hoc body, with the objective to suggest ways and means promote tourism in India. Based on its recommendations, a tourist traffic branch was set up the following year, with regional offices in Delhi and Mumbai, and in 1951, in Kolkata and Chennai. A separate department of tourism under the government was first created on 1 March 1958, which was put under the ambit of Ministry of Transport and Communications. Since then the sector has witnessed many ups and downs. The sector has faced difficult times during the sixties due to Sino-Indian War (1962), Indo-Pak war (1965) and war for the liberation of Bangladesh (1971). After 1971 the tourism sector gradually stabilized and since then it has made many remarkable achievements in terms of Foreign Tourist arrivals, domestic tourism and foreign exchange earnings.

India has received 10.56 million foreign tourists during 2018 (Ministry of Tourism, 2019). Travel and tourism sector is the major source of Foreign Exchange Earning in India. There has been tremendous growth in foreign exchange earnings since the turn of the century. Contribution of travel and tourism sector in the growth of foreign exchange earnings was US\$ 28,585 million for 2018 (Ministry of Tourism, 2019).

Indians travel domestically 68 times more frequently than foreign trips. The nation wide spread rich heritage and culture the Indians wish to explore more of the architecture and culture through many tourist destinations. Domestic tourism grown continuously over the past decades and the number grew up to 1854.9 million during year 2018 (Ministry of Tourism, 2019). The outbound travel from Indian has grown to over 26.30 million in year 2018 from just 4.42 million departures in the year 2000 having a growth of about 10 % over the previous year (Ministry of Tourism, 2019).

## 2.2 Hospitality sector in India

Hotels and Restaurants play the vital role for growth of tourism sector of any country. There are certain Hotels and Restaurant which are classified

under voluntary scheme of Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India. However, there is large number of hotels and restaurants mainly in budget category which are not classified by Ministry of Tourism, still have a significant contribution on the growth of tourism sector of India. The number of approved hotels and hotel rooms as on 31.12.2018 (Ministry of Tourism, 2019) are as follows:

**Table 1: No. of approved hotels and hotel rooms**

S. No	Star Category	No. of Hotels	No. of Rooms
1.	One Star	9	348
2.	Two Star	37	990
3.	Three Star	535	18889
4.	Four Star	322	16451
5.	Five Star	181	22673
6.	Five Star Delux	170	37155
7.	Apartment Hotels	3	152
8.	Guest House	7	106
9.	Heritage Hotels	58	1843
10.	Bed & Breakfast Est.	639	2983
11.	<b>Total</b>	<b>1961</b>	<b>102490</b>

Source: Ministry of tourism annual statistics 2019.

### 2.3 Tour Operators and Travel Agents in India

Agencies working in travel and tourism sector are classified under different categories. Most of the agencies are working under Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) category baring few large companies. Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India has a scheme for providing approval to such agencies under different category which is a voluntary scheme. The number of agencies approved by Ministry of Tourism as on 31-05-2019 (Ministry of Tourism, 2019) is as follows:

**Table 2: No. of Approved Agencies**

S. No	Type of Agency	No.
1.	Travel Agent	222
2.	Inbound Tour Operator	516
3.	Tourist Transport Operator	114
4.	Adventure Tour Operator	57
5.	Domestic Tour Operator	152
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1061</b>

Source: Ministry of tourism annual statistics 2019.

### 2.4 Spread of COVID -19 in India

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), "Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several corona-viruses are known to cause

respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. COVID-19 is now a pandemic affecting many countries globally."

The first case of the COVID-19 pandemic in India was reported on 30 January 2020, in the state of Kerala, originating from China. On February 05, 2020, Govt. of India had already issued Travel Advisory for travel to China in the wake of the outbreak of the pandemic in Wuhan, China. (NCDC, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India, 2020).

The outbreak has been declared an epidemic in many states and union territories. The educational institutes and many commercial establishments have been closed till further notice. All tourist visas for travel to India have been suspended since most of the confirmed cases were either from foreign countries or linked to them. Preventive measures were already commenced in January 2020 through thermal screening of passengers arriving from China at major airports of India. By the end of February, the screening was extended to passengers from Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea, Nepal, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia.

By mid of March 2020, the government had already drawn up plans to deal with the pandemic which was growing rapidly in the country. All the concerned ministries of the government were working together to set up additional quarantine and treatment facilities across the country. Besides, States and other ministries were working towards the containment plans, plan to avoid a panic-like situation, availability of protective and medical materials, availability of essential medicines, availability of food supplies and other essential items.

All visas were suspended on March 13, 2020, by the Government except for diplomatic and other official visas. The visa-free travel for Overseas Citizens of India was also cancelled. Indians returning from COVID-affected countries were asked to undergo 14 days' quarantine. Further, the Government of India issued an advisory regarding social distancing as a preventive measure on 17 March 2020. The government also set up a COVID-19 Economic Response Task Force.

On 22 March 2020, India observed a 14-hour voluntary public curfew on the call of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. The complete "Lockdown" was

declared the next day by the government and all the activities were suspended. Around 1.3 billion people of India were asked to confine at their home. This was extended till May 31, 2020.

In a live telecast on May 12, 2020 PM Modi announced an economic package of Rs. 20 trillion (US\$ 280 billion) for 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) which was around 10% of the country's GDP (Mishra U., 2020). The special economic package was for to support the labourers, farmers, MSMEs and other industries to overcome the impact owing to the pandemic.

### 3 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TOURISM SECTOR OF INDIA

Since the spread of news of COVID-19 in Wuhan province of China, many countries started to issue travel advisories and the pandemic commenced impacting travel and tourism sector globally. Govt. of India issued its first travel advisory regarding COVID-19 on January 17, 2020, for the traveler to China (Bureau of Immigration, 2020). The further travel advisory was issued for traveler from China, Singapore, Republic of Korea, Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy and Japan till February 2020. All Visas granted to nationals of Italy, Iran, South Korea, and Japan issued on or before 03.03.2020 and who have not yet entered India, was suspended with effect from March 03, 2020.

By March 10, 2020, the pandemic had already spread in around 100 countries worldwide. Taking this into consideration additional travel advisory was issued by Government. Further, all passengers having travel history to China, Hong Kong, Republic

of Korea, Japan, Italy, Thailand, Singapore, Iran, Malaysia, France, Spain and Germany were recommended for quarantine of 14 days from the date of their arrival (Bureau of Immigration, 2020). By the passing of time, the pandemic spread in most of the countries and Govt. of India suspended all scheduled international commercial passenger aircraft since March 22, 2020. Further Govt. of India resorted to the complete "Lockdown" with effect from Mar 23, 2020.

#### 3.1 Impact on Hotel sector

Hotels across the country were closed after the declaration of lockdown in the country with having zero revenues while having to bear with fixed costs. Hotelivate, the hospitality consulting firm has estimated the total number of hotel rooms in India as 2.72 million as of September 2019 and out of which around 72% of the inventory belongs to the Independent / Unbranded segment (Hotelivate, 2019).

Other accommodations such as Home Stays,

Guest Houses, Backpackers Hostels, etc. contribute another 15% of the total number of room inventory, which means that 87% of the total number of rooms today is being managed by independent / small hotel operators.

The existing branded hotel rooms supply in India grew by 5.4% to 1,33,359 in the period 2018-19 compared to last year. This number is also of significance when we consider the amount of employment this category generates, Hotelivate estimates that close to 2.4 million people are employed in this sector in total out of which almost 81% are employed by the independent/unbranded category (Hotelivate, 2019).

According to the article published in BWHotelier, the Indian hospitality sector paid the GST collections of around Rs 6,709 crores between July 2017, 2020 to March 2018, 2020 out of which almost 38% came from the independent/unbranded segment (Jain & Jain Prateek, 2020). Therefore, the contribution of small hotel operators is definitely significant; hence, this segment should not be ignored. The Central and state governments should work to protect this segment which is completely closed due to COVID-19 pandemic. Closure of this sector would eventually lead to a massive loss of tax revenues as well as employment.

The other report published in BW Hotelier, the Indian hospitality sector was doing well in January 2020, after a record year in 2019 (Lamba, 2020) . However, the sector commenced feeling the impact of the global COVID-19 turmoil by the end of February 2020, which aggravated further at the beginning of March 2020. Occupancy of the hotels in major cities dropped swiftly. They further estimated that the hotel occupancy has declined by almost 45 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year. The sector had never been witnessed such a swift decline in such a short span of time. The report predicts also predicts the worst for the second quarter.

Hotels would not be able to maintain rates and may have to offer deep discounts to attract business. The report further estimates the decline of 16.7 – 20.5 per cent in the occupancy of branded hotels segment in 2020 while ADRs are estimated to decline by 7% to 8% for the year 2020. As a result, RevPAR will witness a significant decline of 31% to 36.2%.

According to an article in The New Indian Express (Apr 19, 2020), the Indian hospitality sector is expected a revenue loss of Rs 90,000 crore in the year 2020, due to closure of hotels owing to lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19 (The New Indian Express, 2020). Out of these losses, big brand hotels are projected to lose over Rs 40,000 crore. The hotel occupancy has fallen by 53% during March 2020



compared to March 2019. According to the report, the annual decline would be of 48 per cent for the calendar year 2020.

According to report published in Travel Trend Today (T3) magazine, in case the viruses impact is severe for the next two to three months only, then it is estimated that the nationwide occupancy (in the calendar year 2020) would be reduced by 18% to 20%, while the Average Daily Rate (ADR) may be reduced by 12% to 14% nationwide (Travel Trends Today, 2020).

Reduced revenue from the room, restaurant and MICE business would have an adverse impact on hotels across India. The total revenue loss has been estimated for around 140,000 branded hotel rooms nationwide between US\$ 1.3 billion to US\$ 1.55 billion which is a loss of 27% to 32% compared to the previous year (Hotelivate, 2019).

Moreover, these branded hotel rooms represent only about 5% of the total accommodation in India. The remaining are unorganized and unbranded hotel rooms such as Homestay establishment, Guest Houses, and small properties. Hospitality sector altogether has been projected to bear a revenue loss of between US\$ 4.2 billion to US\$ 4.7 billion.

### 3.2 Impact on Travel & Tour operators

According to an article published in 'Economics Times of India' (April 3, 2020), the COVID -19 would have a devastating impact on travel and tourism sector of India with an estimated loss of Rs 5 lakh crore and 4 to 5 crore people would lose employment (Chaturvedi, 2017). As reported in the article, the estimated loss of around Rs 1.58 lakh crore would be borne among the branded hotels, tour operators, travel agencies, etc. It further estimated the loss for the branded hotel as Rs 1.10 lakh crore, online travel agencies Rs 4,312 crore, tour operators (inbound and domestic) Rs 25,000 crore, adventure tour operators Rs nearly 19,000 crore and cruise tourism Rs 419 crore."

In the article published in 'The Hindu' (May 06, 2020), the tourism sector in India as estimated by Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) would bear the revenue loss of Rs 10 lakh crore which would be a loss of 10% gross domestic product (GDP). The sector anticipates a complete standstill for a minimum of six months before the domestic travel commences for short-distance.

Because of travel restrictions forced COVID-19 pandemic across the globally, forward bookings for various conferences and leisure travel bookings to overseas destinations have already been cancelled.

Summer holiday bookings have also been mostly cancelled, which has impacted domestic tourism severely (The Hindu, 2020).

According to tourmyindia.com (Singh, 2020) Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the Indian tourism and hospitality sector is anticipated to lose employment of around 38 million people. In the third week of March 2020 itself, the hotels witnessed a drop of more than 65% in occupancy levels compared to March 2019. Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) estimates the tourism and hospitality sector may suffer a loss of around Rs 85 billion altogether since the travel has been restricted for foreign tourists.

The restaurants in India had zero revenue during the lockdown, and a drop of 50% is expected in the coming months. At least 30 per cent of the revenue of the hotel and hospitality sector could be impacted if the pandemic continues beyond the end of June 2020.

There is a threat of job loss of nearly 15% in the hospitality sector after the cessation of lockdown. The aviation sector in India could incur the loss of Rs 27,000 crore (US\$ 3.3 to 3.6 billion) in the first quarter of the financial year 2020-21. The passenger growth of airlines is likely to fall sharply to a negative 20-25% growth for the F. Y 2020-21.

According to an article published in Business Standard (Dash, 2020), the Indian tourism sector is estimated to bear a revenue loss of Rs 1.25 trillion during the year 2020 due to shutdown of hotels and flight operations owing to COVID-19 pandemic. During the first quarter of FY 2020-21, the Indian tourism sector is expected to book a revenue loss of Rs 69,400 crore, which is around the loss of 30 per cent compared to the previous year. The most visible and immediate impact of Covid-19 has been witnessed in the hospitality and tourism sector in all its segments such as inbound, outbound and domestic. International Travel is expected to be most severely affected in the next quarters.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) estimated that there would be a reduction of 55% in airline business revenue worldwide amounting to US\$ 314 billion during the year 2020 (IATA, 2020). According to IATA, the global travel industry is currently passing through a very difficult phase due to the fear of the Corona Virus. It has adversely impacted the financial condition of the airline sector globally whose effects can be seen for a considerable amount of time. According to a report published by Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC, 2020), the Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTA) has reduced by about 67% in the January-March quarter, while domestic tourists visits have reduced by around 40% compared to the same period in the previous year.

The report further mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected the domestic tourism sector since the bookings for hill stations and adventure activities during summer have been cancelled. According to a report (Gandhi F. 2020), the number of visitors at Statue of Unity in Gujarat reduced by more than 38 per cent during January-February 2020, and the revenue has reduced by ₹5 crores. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), has also reported huge revenue loss across 3,691 sites registered with it, of which 38 are world heritage sites since the sites have been closed for visitors during the lockdown. Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation India (CAPA India) in a report had said that the Indian aviation sector, excluding Air India, would incur losses of \$500-600 million in Q4 of FY20 because of the pandemic (CAPA, 2020).

According to FICCI, the tourism sector expects the situation to further deteriorate in March and in the forthcoming summer season i.e. April-June. Usually, the number of Indian travelers to both domestic and international destinations peak during the months of March and April 2020 (FICCI, 2020).

However, this time around 90% bookings of hotel and flights been cancelled during this period. Cruise bookings for destinations such as Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia have also been cancelled by tourists in large numbers. This would have a negative impact on employment in the sector. Medical tourism also has been affected severely.

#### **4 SUGGESTIONS FOR REDEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT TO THE INDIAN TOURISM SECTOR**

After a detailed analysis of the various aspect of the loss borne by the travel and tourism sector in terms of revenue and employment, different associations and trade bodies have expressed their deep concerns.

Various recommendations have been suggested by various organizations such as Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH), Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), Indian Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI), etc.

Keeping these recommendations in view, the following suggestion may be made as a measure for redevelopment and providing support to the Indian travel and tourism sector, in order to overcome the impact of COVID-19 pandemic:

- Travel and tourism sector including the hospitality sector has seen the biggest crunch during the lockdown. Hotels have to pay heavily on taxes

and to acquire various licenses such as trade license, bar license, property taxes, etc. Therefore, it is suggested to waive off the fees for the renewal of all licenses and permit for the hospitality and travel sector across states. The validity period of the taxes and licenses should be extended by at least one year without any payment.

- The tourism sector should be given a deferment for one year on all statutory dues such as GST, Advance Tax, PF, custom duties, excise fees, water and power charges, licenses, bank guarantee, etc.
- Service Exports from India Scheme (SEIS) scrips for duty credit of 10% should be restored for Tourism, Travel & Hospitality sector in India.
- An interim relief should be provided companies of the tourism sector to pay EMIs, and remuneration to their staff for at least six months.
- A moratorium for one year on all principal and interest payments on loans and overdrafts should be provided.
- GST holiday should be given for tourism, travel and hospitality sector for at least a year for the recovery of loss.
- Banks should expedite the process of clearance of credit to the companies related to the tourism sector. Tourism Finance Corporation of India should play a major role in this regard.
- A large number of employees have either lost their job or not getting their salaries. The government should provide funds from the MGNREGA or any other scheme to provide remuneration to the staff of the tourism sector.
- In order to provide support to the tourism sector during this crisis and to avoid further unemployment a mechanism for fundraising and its distributions should be established. There should be provision for transfer of amount directly from this fund to each company which is financially suffering in order to assist them till they achieve break even. The government may provide a major contribution to this fund.
- A national task force consisting of the Ministry of Health, Finance, Home, Civil Aviation, External Affairs and Commerce with the representatives of Travel & Tourism sector should be formed to look after the issues related to situation post-COVID- 19 and to recommend measure to support the sector.

- The government should work towards finding opportunities for the employees of the tourism and hospitality sector who have lost their jobs. Such employees may be considered for employment as “Tourism Police” in each state.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

This study tried to analyze the preliminary impacts of COVID-19 on the travel and tourism sector of India including hospitality. The pandemic seems to have left a devastating impact on this sector in the form of revenue loss and loss of employment. The travel tourism including the hospitality sector consists of a lot of small business units, standalone properties, home stay establishment, guest houses, etc. Many of such units or agencies are facing closure permanently or temporarily in the lack of business and persistent overhead expenditures.

The tourism sector would take a considerable time to redevelop and back to profitability again since there is no timeline for the vaccine to be available to counter the pandemic as off now. There would be a decline in foreign tourist arrival as well as domestic tourist visit in large numbers. However, domestic tourism would be the immediate focus to redevelop the tourism sector in India.

All efforts should be made to revive this sector as soon as possible by various associations as well as the governments at both center and state level. The tourism entrepreneurs as well as the government should take all steps to avoid unemployment of the staffs and to provide possible financial support to employees who have lost their job. The stakeholders of the travel and tourism sector should consider the health and hygiene of the tourists as their prime concern post- COVID-19.

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