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## To be a tourist or not: After effects of COVID on tourism

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### Abstract

Terror of covid has led in reduction of tourism around the world, it has changed the way people used to travel, sanitizers and masks are few essential add-on to the luggage. Tourism is not just travelling and exploring new places it also helps people to connect to different cultures. Along with other sectors tourism industry was struck badly and saw huge downfall. Post covid every countries are working on their policies to reboot the tourism. Specifically if consider India, several states are preparing framework for example Jammu & Kashmir "Paradise on earth" has chosen 181 villages with scenic beauty and cultural significance to become tourist destinations. This move will significantly boost the rural economy and give young people and women more options for direct and indirect employment. During covid all the religious places in India were closed which are often visited while people are travelling for leisure, now they are open for public. Hotels, restaurants, home stay and other accommodation facilitator's business was severely impacted and post covid they too have to take extra care of sanitization and other safety measure for ensuring safety to the tourists. In this paper we will try to analyse the effect on tourism industry in Rishikesh post covid by collecting information from various government department and also try to understand what is Indian government is doing to reboot the industry

**Keywords:** Post Covid, Tourism, Religious Places, Safety measures

### Introduction

#### Importance of tourism

In addition to its financial contributions, tourism affects the social and cultural aspects of a society. As an important economic sector, tourism creates jobs, generates foreign currency for the country, and develops the local community. The benefits of tourism are well known. "The ability of tourism to generate economic benefits to host destinations is particularly well documented," state Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert and Wanhill (2018) <sup>[2]</sup> and that these benefits can be greater when a destination has natural or cultural attractions. Tourism enables people from diverse cultural backgrounds to come into contact with one another and to learn about one another's customs and traditions. Through a more informed understanding of different cultures, tourism fosters harmony and tolerance. Tourism can be an important mechanism to help maintain and develop national heritage. Tourism provides a forum to display traditional music, dance, and other cultural practices; thus, maintaining and developing these customs for the next generation.

Tourism has long played a significant role in the development of many economies and societies throughout the world. Tourism contributes to creating employment opportunities, to earning foreign exchange, and to facilitating cross-cultural exchanges (Page & Connell, 2019). Furthermore, Murphy and Murphy (2021) <sup>[8]</sup> argue that tourism has the potential to support sustainable development through supporting local communities and conserving natural and cultural resources while promoting peace and understanding among peoples of different cultures. Moreover, tourism can also encourage entrepreneurship, enhance infrastructures, and foster investments in local industries; therefore, contributing to the broader economic development of a region (Hall, 2019) <sup>[3]</sup>.

By stimulating the local economy through tourism, the number of small businesses in a local area may grow, the demand for local products will grow, and the amount of taxes collected

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for local governments will grow and will allow for the funding of social programs for residents.

Responsible and sustainable tourism practices can be promoted through tourism to further support sustainable development. Examples include the promotion of environmentally friendly travel, reducing waste and carbon emissions, and supporting conservation efforts. Additionally, tourism can give residents better access to basic necessities like infrastructure, healthcare, education and other social services. Furthermore, tourism can support equity, social mobility and the reduction of poverty in local communities.

### **The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Tourism Industry**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on global travel.

**Travel Restrictions:** Travel restrictions were implemented by many countries in order to slow down the spread of the virus and included mandatory quarantines for travelers and closing borders. These restrictions resulted in a sharp decrease in international travel resulting in a loss of revenue for the tourism industry. There was a huge drop in demand due to uncertainty of travel restrictions and fear of contracting the virus. Many individuals canceled or changed their travel plans as a result of the lack of clarity around travel restrictions and fear of getting the virus. The tourism industry lost millions of dollars.

**Business Closures:** Due to the decreased demand many tourism related businesses closed either temporarily or permanently. Hotels, restaurants and tour operators were among the businesses that were closed resulting in a large number of job losses and financial distress.

**Shift to Domestic Tourism:** With the restrictions on international travel many countries saw an increase in domestic tourism however this did little to replace the lost revenue from international travel and many businesses were still experiencing financial difficulties.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many changes in traveler behavior with the primary focus now being on safety and health rather than other factors. The pandemic has increased interest in sustainable tourism and outdoor/nature based tourism.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in the tourism industry becoming more digitalized as a result of the increased use of online booking platforms, virtual tours, and contactless check-in and payment systems.

### **Objective of the study**

This paper is designed to investigate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry in Rishikesh, India and to identify the key factors that affect tourists' travel decision-making processes within a post-pandemic environment. A series of specific questions are addressed in this paper as follows:

- What is the status of the tourism industry in the post-pandemic era in Rishikesh?
- What are the factors that have impacted tourists' travel decision-making processes in the post-pandemic world?
- How did the pandemic-related changes in travel behavior and the resulting changes in the way tourism

industry practices operate influence the overall quality of the tourist experience?

- What are the possible long-term implications of the pandemic on the tourism industry in the post-pandemic world?

By answering these questions, this paper will provide insights into what the future of the tourism industry may look like in the post-pandemic world in Rishikesh and will enable tourism stakeholders, such as the government, local tourism boards, and tourism businesses to create effective recovery and growth strategies.

### **Research Methodology**

**Methodology:** Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are used in the research methodology to collect data via surveys and to evaluate the findings from the data.

**Sample selection:** Random sampling is employed in the study to select 100 tourists from diverse areas of the world to ensure a representative sample of the population.

**Data Collection:** Primary data are collected via a survey utilizing interview schedules to measure travel mindset, perception of safety, and attitudes toward tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey instrument will be pilot-tested to assure that it is user-friendly and will be easy to complete. Secondary data will be collected from reports produced by the government and from the Internet to gather information related to the selected factors of the study.

**Ethics:** All ethical considerations will be followed in conducting the research and participants will be informed of the purpose of the research and their rights as participants of the research. Confidentiality and anonymity of the study participants will be assured throughout the duration of the research.

**Limitations:** Limitations of the study include response bias, and the use of self-reporting methods to collect data. The study's findings may not be generalized to other populations beyond the geographical area of the study.

**Significance:** Findings from the study will assist in understanding traveler trends in a post-COVID-19 world and aid tourism professionals in developing strategic marketing plans.

Findings

### **Statistics illustrating a decrease in tourism activity during the pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on the tourism sector, which led to a significant decline in international tourists and in tourism expenditure.

**International tourist arrivals:** According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international tourist arrivals declined by 73% globally in 2020; there was 1 billion fewer international arrivals than the number of international arrivals in 2019 (UNWTO, 2021).

**Tourism revenue:** The UNWTO also noted that the revenue generated from international tourism decreased by 64% in 2020, representing a loss of \$935 billion in export

revenues for international tourism due to the pandemic (UNWTO, 2021).

**Loss of employment:** In addition to the huge decline in tourism arrivals and spending, there were significant job losses in the tourism sector. The ILO noted that the pandemic resulted in the loss of 114 million jobs in the tourism and hospitality sectors (ILO, 2021).

The impact of the pandemic was not uniform across all of the regions of the world. The UNWTO noted that the Asia and the Pacific region experienced the largest decline in international tourist arrivals, with a 84% decline in 2020 relative to 2019 (UNWTO, 2021).

**Predictions for recovery:** The UNWTO predicted that it will take between 2 and 4 years for international tourism to return to its pre-pandemic level (UNWTO, 2021).

**Effects of Travel Restrictions and Border Closures on Tourism**

The travel restrictions and border closures implemented by many governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the tourism sector.

**Decrease in tourist arrivals:** Due to travel restrictions and border closures, there was a substantial decrease in the number of tourists visiting numerous locations. Strict quarantine regulations or the closure of borders resulted in a decrease in the number of foreign tourists arriving at many countries.

**Economic Impact:** The decline in the number of visitors resulted in a considerable financial impact on the tourism sector, which resulted in a number of hotel, airline, and restaurant companies experiencing a decline in income.

**Tourism job loss:** In addition to job loss, the pandemic has led to tourism-related job loss due to reduced tourism activity. Many businesses have closed as a result of reduced income.

Domestic tourism is now generating more revenue than international tourism was prior to the pandemic, and people are traveling locally rather than internationally since the pandemic.

**Unpredictability and Uncertainty:** Tourism is experiencing unpredictability and uncertainty due to the constant changes to travel regulations and border closures. Businesses find it difficult to budget and invest in the future under this uncertainty, which contributes to economic uncertainty.

These findings suggest the degree to which the travel industry views the impact of travel restrictions and border closures on the economy. When countries begin to open again and eventually lift travel restrictions, the travel industry should anticipate a slow and incremental recovery.

**Economic Impact of COVID-19 on the Tourism Industry**  
COVID-19 has negatively impacted India's tourism sector economically. The following are some ways the virus has negatively impacted the sector:

Visitor numbers to India dropped dramatically as a result of the pandemic. During the first year of the pandemic, international travelers visiting India fell by 73.7 percent compared to the first year of the preceding decade (Ministry of Tourism, 2021).

The tourism sector in India experienced significant financial losses due to a reduction in the number of visitors. As a result of the downturn in visitor numbers, the Indian Association of Tour Operators estimates that the tourism industry lost approximately \$20 billion in the first quarter of 2020 (India Today, 2020).

The decline in tourism activity resulted in job losses in the industry. It is estimated that by 2020, the tourism and hospitality industries may experience as many as 38 million job losses due to the pandemic (CII, 2020).

**Problems affecting small businesses:** Small businesses in the tourism industry, including tour operators, travel agents, and home-stay operators, have particularly felt the effects of the pandemic. Because of the decrease in revenue and lack of government aid, many of these companies have found it challenging to survive. Because of continuing travel limitations and the uncertainty related to the pandemic, the recovery of India's tourism business will continue to be sluggish and slow. For the tourism business to attract customers, the tourism business will have to adopt new technologies and marketing strategies as well as adjust to changes in customer preferences.

### **Consumer behavior and preference changes COVID-19's influence on traveler behavior**

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly influenced the travel industry worldwide. Travel restrictions and social distancing requirements were implemented, and as a result, many tourists canceled or postponed their planned vacations. The pandemic has also altered the behavior of tourists; many individuals have chosen to travel domestically, or at least within their own country, rather than traveling across international borders.

There are several ways in which the pandemic has influenced tourist behavior. First, the pandemic has modified how tourists plan their trips. Many tourists have become more cautious when selecting their travel destinations, and are choosing to visit places where the number of COVID-19 cases has been reported to be lower. Second, the pandemic has also modified the activities that tourists participate in while on vacation. Many tourist attractions, museums, and restaurants have been closed, and tourists have had to modify their plans accordingly. Finally, outdoor activities like hiking, camping, and beach trips have increased popularity due to their inherent social distancing features.

In conclusion, the pandemic has greatly influenced tourist behavior in terms of caution when planning trips, modifying tourist activities, and shortening or delaying trip lengths due to travel restriction uncertainty and COVID-19 case uncertainty.

### **New Trends in Tourism and Travel Post-Pandemic**

The Covid-19 Pandemic has significantly impacted the travel and tourism sector and thus introduced many new trends in travel post-pandemic.

**Domestic Travel:** As many countries closed borders to international travel to limit spread of the virus and for traveler safety, many travelers chose to stay at home and travel domestically. Many people traveled by car to local destinations and engaged in outdoor activities.

**Traveler Health and Safety:** Travelers today consider health and safety of destinations, lodging establishments and

tour activities first when deciding on destinations, where to stay and what activities to do. Hotels, airlines and tour operators are putting additional protocols into place to create healthy environments and regain the publics' confidence and trust.

**Sustainable Tourism:** The pandemic has also created an increased awareness and emphasis on sustainable tourism. Travelers are looking for environmentally friendly and responsibly operated travel experiences; examples include eco-lodges, carbon neutral tours and ethically operated animal encounters.

**Workation:** With the increased use of remote work during the pandemic, many individuals began to combine their work and leisure travel into one trip. As a result, bookings for longer-term stays and accommodations that provide high-speed internet and work areas are increasing.

**Touchless Technology:** The pandemic has forced travel related companies to implement touchless technology to minimize the potential for viral transmission; for example, mobile check-in, digital room keys, and contactless payment systems.

Government Policies Supporting Recovery of the Tourism Industry India has taken several policy actions to assist the tourism industry recover from the pandemic. A few of the most important ones are listed below:

**Resumption of Tourist Visas:** The government resumed issuing tourist visas so that foreign tourists can again come to India. The e-visa program was also expanded to allow nationals of even more countries to apply for e-tourism visas to facilitate travel to India.

**Safe Tourism Program:** The Indian government has established the Safe and Secure program to help promote health and safety in the tourism sector. The program has issued guidelines for hotels, restaurants, and tour operators to follow to ensure safe travel experiences for tourists.

**Destination Development:** The Dekho Apna Desh (Discover Your Own Country) campaign has been launched by the government to encourage domestic travel and get Indians to travel to other parts of India. Plans have also been announced to develop 17 popular tourist sites throughout India, including the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort.

**Infrastructure Development:** The government has allocated money for the development of tourism infrastructure, including building and improving roads, airports, and tourist routes. The government has also announced plans to improve tourism related infrastructure in the northeastern part of the country.

**Tax Relief:** The government has provided tax relief to the tourism industry, including a reduction in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate for hotels and tour operators. Financial assistance has also been offered to the tourism industry through the Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self Reliant India) program.

### Survey Findings

One of the most serious consequences of the pandemic on Rishikesh's tourism industry has been a decline in the number of visitors. Due to the closures of tourist attractions

and a decrease in available accommodations, many tourists decided against traveling to this region. In addition, travel restrictions and a decrease in both air and road transportation to Rishikesh made it much more difficult for tourists to reach the area and therefore resulted in a considerable drop in the number of visitors to Rishikesh.

In addition, many of the tourists that did visit Rishikesh while the pandemic was ongoing reported changes in their travel behaviors and preferences. Some tourists reported being much more careful and concerned about health and safety issues than before, and therefore wore masks and practiced social distancing. Other tourists preferred outdoor activities and nature-based tourism experiences because they believed these types of experiences were safer and more enjoyable during the pandemic.

The pandemic also had a negative economic effect on the tourism industry in Rishikesh. Many tourism-dependent businesses, such as hotels, restaurants and tour operators, lost revenue due to the decreased number of visitors to the area and ultimately lost jobs and contributed to reduced economic activity in the area.

However, there is optimism that the tourism industry in Rishikesh will see an upswing in business. The introduction of vaccines and the easing of travel restrictions allowed the number of tourists to begin growing again. Additionally, government agencies and organizations involved in tourism marketing have promoted Rishikesh as a safe and appealing tourist destination. New tourism experiences and products are being developed to attract tourists.

### Conclusion

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on behaviour relating to travel, many individuals are questioning the safety and morality of travel as a tourist. Consequently, many have chosen to delay their travel plans for a later time; while some have opted to select alternative options for travel - e.g., choosing to remain in your home town (staycation) rather than traveling elsewhere.

A variety of factors are influencing this decision-making process; e.g., the concern for health & safety; the impact of tourism on nearby communities; and the moral implications of traveling when there is an epidemic occurring. The potential positive impacts of responsible tourism, on both local economies and local communities, can be achieved; however, they can only be realized if tourists are aware of their influence on those destinations and attempt to mitigate any negative influences.

Overall, the pandemic presents opportunities for the tourism industry to re-evaluate its structure and strive toward a more sustainable and ethical form of travel, focusing on the development of communities, cross-cultural understanding and the preservation of the environment. In summary, the decision of whether to travel post-pandemic will be a personal decision and should include consideration of multiple factors, including, but not limited to: health & safety concerns, the moral implications of traveling and the impact on local communities.

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