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A Descriptive Study Of The Impact Of Covid-19 On Perception And Destination Choices Of Foreign Tourists In India Post-Covid-19 Lockdown.

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Abstract: Covid-19 has undesirably affected the lives of people together. The COVID-19 epidemic is anticipated to have a tiring effect on the Indian trip and tourism diligence, which directly impacts hotels, travel agencies, tour operators, diners, and sightseer destinations and has a circular impact on land, air, and sea transportation. The foreign sightseer comings and foreign exchange earnings have declined since March 2020. Still, the current studies are concentrated substantially on the consequences of COVID-19 on profitable factors, adaptability, and revising tourism (Goodell, 2020; Nicola et al. 2020). This study aims to identify the impact of Covid-19 or Coronavirus in India and the perception and destination choices of foreign sightseers based on secondary data. The findings in this study will help to know further about the post-pandemic choices and situation of excursionists arriving in India.

Keywords: Foreign Sightseers, Tourism, Travel Behavior, Tourist Perception, Destination Choices, Covid-19 Epidemic.

Introduction:

Travel and Tourism is one of the critical sectors in the global economy (which accounted for US\$ 2.9 trillion to GDP in 2019) and has the highest economic contribution in developing and developed countries, And India is one such country. The Indian tourism and hospitality industry has emerged as a vital pillar of development through employment, gains in income, growth of other indigenous sectors, foreign exchange earnings, infrastructural development, etc., which it necessitates. It has culturally diverse experiences, rich heritage, and natural beauty, and has always been an attractive tourist destination. However, in early January 2020, coronavirus (COVID-19) triggered a worldwide concern and by the end of March 2020, the outbreak infected several people globally. COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) is a disease originated lately in December 2019 in Wuhan. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the universal outbreak of this virus as an epidemic on the 11th of March 2020. Immediately after the announcement more or less all economic activities were closed. Many countries and regions enforced quarantines, entry bans, or other restrictions for citizens who are recent travelers.

The lockdown impacted tour operators and travel agencies with both current bookings and future bookings being badly affected and ban of international flights and Visas. The Indian domestic travelers and FTAs (foreign tourists' arrivals) witnessed a substantial deterioration in 2020. In India, as the contagious was emerging, the authorities executed travel restrictions, social distancing, and lockdown, 'stay at home' norms that wholly brought India's tourism sector to recession. Therefore, this study aims at assessing and assimilate the overall impact posed by this pandemic to the Indian tourism industry and FTAs. Also, this study finds the impact of Covid-19 on tourists' destination choices and their perception in the post-pandemic era.

Objectives of the study:

However, an outbreak of Covid-19 has been considered a seminal moment for economic activities and industrial sectors which severely affected the tourism and hospitality industry in India. The objective of this study is to recognize the influence of the happening of the coronavirus on the travel industry in India and foreign tourists' arrival. Specifically, the important objectives of the paper are:

1. To study the impact of COVID-19 on Indian tourism and foreign tourists' arrival.
2. To assess the influence of COVID-19 or coronavirus on tourist perception and destination choices.

3. To understand the post-COVID preferences of consumers by tour operators or tour related service providers to design the future strategies

Methodology

The research paper has implemented a secondary research methodology. This paper comprises a complete examination of the tourism industry information pre-COVID-19 and post-COVID-19. This secondary data set evaluation includes literature reviews which include textbook reviews, encyclopedia, and journal article reviews. Besides this, news articles and web pages have been referred for investigation for the research study.

Research limitations/implications:

The COVID-19 epidemic is a unique and current crisis for the universal tourism industry. Hence, the current paper serves as an introduction to a comprehensive conversation within the tourism dissertation and offers a hypothetical route for upcoming tourism studies.

Literature review:

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2020), by the 14th of April 2020, the COVID-19 virus had spread to over 180 countries, contaminating an estimated 1.98 million people and accounting for 126 753 deaths worldwide. The travel and tourism industry – much like in the case of the SARS epidemic – is broadly measured to have been the route for the worldwide spread of the COVID-19 virus and has almost ground to a standstill, resulting in severe financial losses in the industry due to country lockdowns and rigorous travel boundaries applied to restrict the spread of the virus (Arezki and Nguyen, 2020; Novellia et al., 2018; Stezhko et al., 2020; Yanga et al., 2020).

Initial economic modeling characteristically suggests a substantial reverse association between the COVID-19 virus and tourism demand (Yanga et al., 2020). Compared to the largely localized economic influence of earlier health crises on tourism – SARS in China, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (USD\$7.7bn); Ebola in Sierra Leone and Guinea (USD\$152m); MERS in Saudi Arabia (USD\$2.4bn) and; H1N1 with a universal economic influence of between USD\$45 and USD\$55bn – the influence of the COVID-19 virus is expected to be extraordinary (Global Rescue and World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019; Nicola et al., 2020). Conventional estimations project that in 2020, the international travel and tourism industry is likely to shed at least 75 million occupations in the short term and experience a tourism uncultured domestic product contribution shortage of up to US\$2.1tn (WTTC, 2020).

Remarkably, Novellia et al. (2018) detect that health-related emergencies have archaeologically caused “unscientific” and uneven international answers that have been frequently harmful to the tourism industry. Additionally, the World Bank has also warned that up to 90% of all economic losses linked with epidemics and outbursts are a result of, “[...] ungrateful and illogical energies of the public to avoid contamination” (Global Rescue and WTTC, 2019). However, despite this observation, recovery from exterior shocks associated with cases of epidemics and outbreaks are projected to take an average of 19.4 months and meaningfully impose on international demand for travel and tourism (World Economic Forum, 2019; Global Rescue and WTTC, 2019). Therefore, of particular interest to tourism scholars is the effect of the current public health emergency of COVID-19 on the risk perceptions of customers, and more significantly how risk perceptions will possibly affect the post-crisis recovery travel behavior of tourists. What is exceptional about the COVID-19 situation is that the international epidemic has particularly affected popular universal tourism destinations including Germany, Spain, France, China, the USA, the UK, Iran, and Italy, which presently account for at least 77% of all infections (WTTC, 2020). Thus, the consequences for global tourist travel behavior within the brief to intermediate term are both mysterious and possibly disastrous.

Of specific concern to the future of the universal tourism industry are the enduring effects of the epidemic on travel and tourism in the form of perceived risk linked with travel and tourism in the post-COVID-19 period. While there may be a possible link between perceived risk and the travel purposes of tourists within the current post-COVID-19 universal tourism market, this link is justifiably yet to be recognized. Additionally, post-health emergencies in tourist behavior are comparatively under-researched. Thus, there is slight observed evidence modeling the actions of tourists after deadly universal events such as an epidemic. In an effort to address this gap, the current paper – as an introduction to further experiential study – offers a serious obligation of the probable impact of sharp post-crisis tourist perception and destination choices.

The influence of COVID-19 on the Indian tourism industry and foreign tourists' arrival:

Tourism is responsible for millions of jobs in the hospitality sector and contributes nearly 7% to India's GDP. With its rich terrain and history, India offers a large number of sightseer lodestones similar to the Taj Mahal monument, temples and castles, the snowy mountain peaks of the Himalayas, and the white flaxen strands in the west and south. The easing of restrictions on the foreign trip also coincides with the onset of India's peak trip season, sparking expedients of reanimation of the stressed tourism industry. A report on covid impact reflected that in India, the utmost of the summer vacation bookings (for the countries of Kerala, Rajasthan, and Goa) was canceled (about 40-50 percent), thereby impacting domestic tourism. India's total foreign tourist arrivals (FTA) stood at 10.9 million and the foreign exchange earnings (Figure) stood at Rs 210,971 crore during 2019, with Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi counting for about 60 percent of foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs). According to World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), International tourism endured a 4% increase in 2021, 15 million further transnational sightseer advents (overnight callers) compared to 2020 (415 million versus 400 million). Their study on international tourism suggested that still, the ongoing tourism recovery in numerous requests, coupled with the wide vaccination rollout and a major coordinated lifting of trip restrictions, could help to restore consumer confidence and accelerate the recovery of transnational tourism in 2022. Intriguing and forecasting models, machine and deep learning styles were used by experimenters to forecast international tourism demand. An exploration work by Dilip Modi (the Founder of Travel Union) says that despite the fact the last two years have been a rough lift for the trip

and tourism sector, with COVID restrictions being lifted, the sector has been witnessing a good grip with the onset of the gleeful season. A maturity of visitors is embarking on pilgrimages, a trend which will further boom in the post-COVID world, as people move far away from short-haul megacity breaks towards smaller breakouts and longer passages with a way of purpose. Also, a new conception is introduced and being passed around- 'revenge traveling', 'which principally means, after being drilled up inside our houses for months, people will now travel indeed more and would be down from their homes more frequently.

The Covid-19 epidemic has greatly affected travelers' travel threat and operation perception. The lockdown and thus the trip ban has had a significant impact on the income of foreign tourists into India. According to the Ministry of Tourism, foreign sightseer incomings in March 2020 were nearly 66 lower than the number of foreign tourist arrivals in March 2019. It was estimated that around 40–50 million people employed in this sector could lose their jobs due to this pandemic which is up to 57% of the workforce of the sector. However, the situation is getting better and post-pandemic, the restrictions are being removed and the tourism industry is getting advanced. The COVID-19 pandemic has reversed the method of living. Now that the reduction at the state borders has been uplifted tourism may observe some growth. Social distancing has turned into a new normal for the present generation. Hotels, Restaurants, airlines and aviation businesses, and other businesses associated with the tourism sector have executed all the possible sanctuary protocols (safety measures), computerized methods for checking – ensuring minimal proximity and reducing wait time. The Indian railways have done advancements like hands-free amenities copper-coated handrails, latch plasma air purification, and titanium dioxide coating for minimizing restraint.

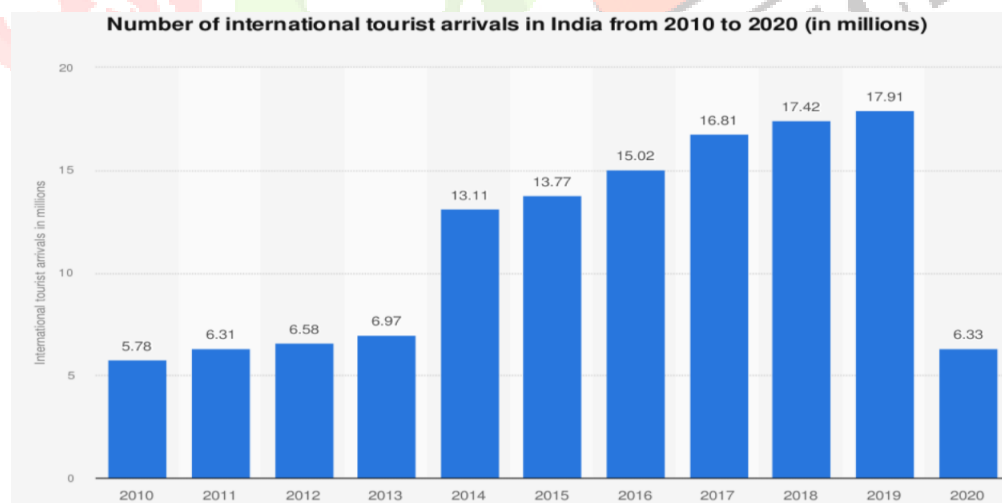
TABLE 1

Inbound Tourism: Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs), Arrivals of Non-Residents Indians (NRIs) and International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs) 2001-2020

Year	FTAs in India (in Million)	Percentage (%) change over previous year	NRIs arrivals in India	Percentage (%) change over previous year	International Tourist Arrivals in India (in Million)	Percentage (%) change over previous year
2001	2.54	-4.2	-	-	-	-
2002	2.38	-6.0	-	-	-	-
2003	2.73	14.3	-	-	-	-
2004	3.46	26.8	-	-	-	-
2005	3.92	13.3	-	-	-	-
2006	4.45	13.5	-	-	-	-
2007	5.08	14.3	-	-	-	-
2008	5.28	4.0	-	-	-	-
2009	5.17	-2.2	-	-	-	-
2010	5.78	11.8	-	-	-	-
2011	6.31	9.2	-	-	-	-
2012	6.58	4.3	-	-	-	-
2013	6.97	5.9	-	-	-	-
2014	7.68	10.2	5.43	13.11	-	-
2015	8.03	4.5	5.74	5.7	13.76	5.0
2016	8.80	9.7	6.22	8.5	15.03	9.2
2017	10.04	14.0	6.77	8.8	16.81	11.8
2018	10.56	5.2	6.87	1.4	17.42	3.7
2019	10.93	3.5	6.98	1.7	17.91	2.8
2020	2.74	-74.9	3.59	-48.6	6.33	-64.7

figures updated as in June 2021

Source:(i) Bureau of Immigration, Govt. of India



Sources: UNWTO; Ministry of Tourism (India); Bureau of Immigration (India) Statista 2022

Additional Information: India; Bureau of India (India); 2010 to 2020

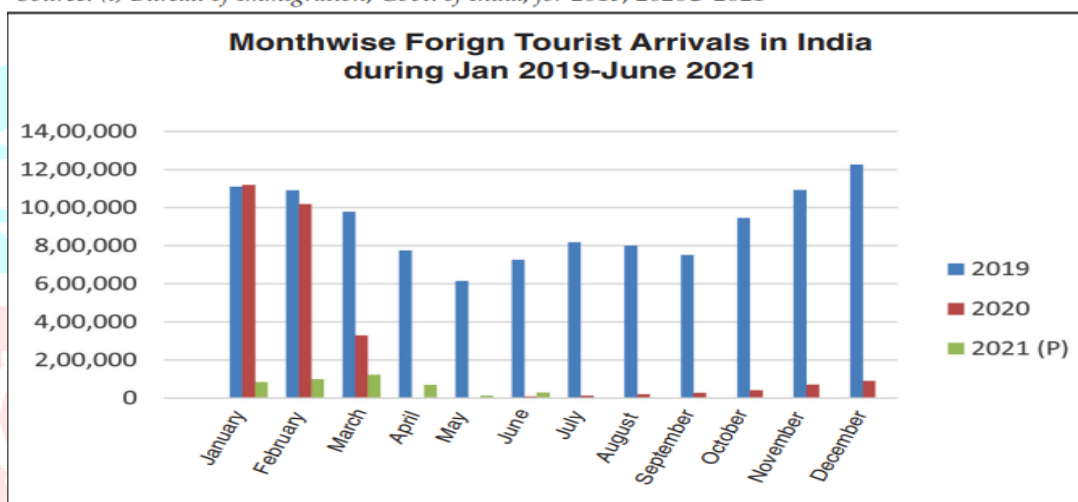
TABLE 2

Month-wise Foreign Tourist Arrivals in India, Jan 2019-June 2021 (Provisional)

Month	Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India				
	2019	2020	2021 (P)	Percentage (%) Change	
				2020/19	2021/20
January	11,11,040	11,19,250	83,822	0.7	-92.5
February	10,90,516	10,18,440	99,640	-6.6	-90.2
March	9,78,236	3,28,304	1,23,179	-66.4	-62.5
April	7,74,651	2,820	69,442	-99.6	2362.5
May	6,15,136	3,764	13,307	-99.4	253.5
June	7,26,446	8,590	29,397	-98.8	242.2
July	8,18,125	12,655			
August	8,00,837	19,761			
September	7,51,513	28,167			
October	9,45,017	41,494			
November	10,92,440	70,977			
December	12,26,398	90,544			
Total (Jan-June)	52,96,025	24,81,168	4,18,787	-53.2@	-83.1@
Total (Jan-Dec)	1,09,30,355	27,44,766		-74.9	

P: Provisional, @ Growth rate over January-June of previous year.

Source: (i) Bureau of Immigration, Govt. of India, for 2019, 2020 & 2021



As per data of Bureau of Immigration, Govt. of India, from 2010 onwards there is positive growth in foreign tourist arrivals up to 2019 but during 2020 FTAs in India was 2.74 million showing a negative growth of -74.9% as compared to 2019 (Table 1). In between January 2020 and June 2020, the number of FTAs in India was 24,81,168 as compared to 52,96,025 in January- June 2019 registering a negative growth of -53.2% whereas in between January 2021 and June 2021, the number of FTAs in India was 4,18,787 as compared to 24,81,168 in January- June 2020 registering a negative growth of -83.1% (Table 2). In 2020, approximately 6.33 million international tourists and non-resident Indians arrived in India, down from about 18 million in 2019. Tourist Arrivals in India averaged 468412.48 from 2000 until 2021, attaining an all-time high of 1226398 in December of 2019 and a record low of 2820 in April of 2020. In 2020, the coronavirus global pandemic heavily affected the tourism sector. India has seen a two-stage lockdown since March 24th and passenger train services and international and domestic commercial passenger flights have been suspended since then. The data, sourced from the Bureau of Immigration, however, showed that on a month-on-month basis in 2021, there's a rise in inbound tourists. In fact, for the primary time in months, FTAs crossed the 1 lakh mark in September. The reducing number of covid-19 cases and the rising number of eligible vaccinated people is one among the explanations for this rise. Subsequently, in November end, India introduced a graded relaxation of its visa and travel restrictions for more categories of foreign nationals and Indian nationals. As per recent reports, India Visitor Arrivals grew 140.4% in Jan 2022, compared with an increase of 235.5 % in the previous month.

The influence of COVID-19 on tourist perception and destination choices:

Domestic tourists are the network of the Indian tourism industry, and it's a stylized incontrovertible fact that the increasing size of the middle-income group and their income extend their support for the event of the tourism sector. Unfortunately, COVID-19 entered the tourism map of India and therefore the system collapsed. The fear of getting infected from Covid-19 has impacted the travel and tourism industry of the country domestically and internationally. Foreign travelers of many nations had canceled their bookings. Thus, seating capacity was reduced, which increased the flying cost, and for this reason, the travel cost also increased. The risk related to the COVID-19 pandemic is predicted to possess a far-reaching influence on travel intentions. These influences would vary from person to person, having different socio-cultural backgrounds. Tourists often experience an excellent degree of severity, anxiety, and efficacy to epidemic and pandemic outbreaks when traveling internationally. Research on The Effects of

COVID-19 Risk Perception on Travel Intention revealed that international travelers are more concerned about their safety. It shows that people pay more attention to their family, friends, and near circles in making decisions. Also, various studies reveal that sufficient tourist services are an important perception indicating tourism infrastructure, activities, and entertainment programs satisfying all the family members. Self-efficacy on travel and susceptibility perception were also observed indicating tourists traveling within their nation. The potential tourists generally wish to hunt destinations' safety and hygiene, cleanliness, established infrastructure, and high-quality medical facilities during the Covid-19 pandemic. The prevailing study results identified that the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic has greatly affected risk management, service delivery, travel pattern, channel, avoidance of overpopulated destinations, and hygiene and safety through the tourists' travel risk and management perceptions. It's been seen that the choice of destination will change drastically after COVID-19. The choices have been impacted at all levels but the most changed has been domestic tourism. In 2021, Domestic tourism continued at a quicker pace than international tourism. Going on a long-haul vacation was still complicated. According to a study conducted by Booking.com, 53% of travelers wanted to take quicker holidays in 2021 than in 2019. People were less likely to travel remote away from their home. They were tending to travel closer to home, exploring the adjacent, low-risk, areas. The demand for domestic travel was on the escalation. Some results show that those who were negatively affected economically by the pandemic will likely change their travel habits and destinations. This could manifest during a higher demand for reasonable, last-minute options and domestic trips within a brief distance. Overall factors for destination choices include most importantly safety, good previous experience, and a safe environment.

Conclusion and Suggestions:

Firstly, India should responsibly start again travel as many other countries move towards opening up. It is significant to do this in a phased way keeping in mind comprehensive guidelines for travel and stay. It has been observed that maximum countries are at diverse stages of vaccinating their inhabitants, international travel will need travelers to be completely vaccinated. Henceforth, the need to launch rules gains significance. Launching and following protection rules go a long way in promising the traveler that his travel and stay would be at reduced risk levels. The post-pandemic period will see a move in destination demand and may also throw up fresher arrangements of travel such as nearer and briefer holidays, need for safe stays, self-guided or self-drive travel campaigns, etc. Custom-made travel practice—this will be a more favorite choice of the tourists in the post-Covid period as more tourists will prefer private travel style, boutique hotels with a specific private food menu to evade any well-being danger and crowd for social distancing standards. Therefore, tourism establishments need to rearrange their existing approaches to rouse demand in categories that were perhaps unnoticed in the past.

Retrieval in a justifiable means cannot happen without the synchronization of all the agencies involved, tourism operatives, hospitality associates, local travel agencies and local, state and central governments need to put effort in coordination to confirm an even evolution of the tourism industry to a post-pandemic phase. It is apparent that the tourism industry is heading towards a 'new normal' and phases to operationalize the same through greater authorization to the tourist and providing tailored travel involvements could be the key to quicker and more justifiable retrieval. The tourism industry also needs to notice and nurture fresher options in terms of evolving niche tourism and promoting the previously weak areas of medical and wellness tourism, spiritual tourism, etc. Lastly, emerging digital initiatives through the acceptance of artificial intelligence, data analytics, etc., could go an extended way in supporting the sector over the extensive period.

Domestic tourism continues to drive recovery in an increasing number of destinations, particularly those with substantial domestic markets, even while international tourism recovers. Domestic tourism and close-to-home travel, as well as open-air activities, nature-based products, and rural tourism, are among the key travel trends that, according to experts, will continue to shape tourism in 2022. Establishing and adhering to safety measures goes a long way toward convincing tourists that their trip and stay will be risk-free. The post-pandemic age will see a shift in destination demand, as well as emerging travel formats such as shorter and faster vacations, the requirement for safe accommodations, self-guided or self-drive travel arrangements, and so on. As a result, tourist organizations must rethink their current strategy to boost demand in previously underserved sectors. High earners are going to be more concerned with health and hygiene factors and low-income counterparts were highly influenced by accessibility and discounting factors despite the worldwide health emergency. The path to normalcy is far from the near, but gradual restoration of tourism will re-install the faith and confidence among Indians for the commencement of travel. The effect of Covid-19 has and will continue to evolve the way one travels, impacting travel choices and decisions in the present and near future. The new normal is the new launch of the period post-COVID-19 epidemic which will integrate new habits of living and working. For travel and tourism, this would mean recognizing and fostering new choices for the industry such as niche tourism, nature and well-being tourism, medical tourism and spiritual tourism. While these choices have always happened in the past, it is now time for the tourism industry to use this prospect to alter itself by providing the potential tourist an excess of choices.

Advancement of new destination which will get more consideration after COVID-19 epidemic will be with more three-dimensional distance and fewer population, closer to the natural environment. Destinations that will have exclusive structures like natural beauty, seashore, mountains or wildlife charms, adventure activities and offers benefits such as individual stays, relaxation facilities, encouraging protection and cleanliness measures will be attracting new tourists. The destinations can also have the following rules such as control size to achieve social distancing.

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