



“A Study On Challenges And Problems Faced By Tourism In Kerala During Covid19 With Special Reference To Ayurvedic And Heritage Resorts”

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Abstract

Ayurveda, the ancient holistic system of medicine, is integral to Kerala's cultural heritage, promoting health and well-being. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted Kerala's Ayurvedic tourism sector, impacting both wellness resorts catering to international tourists and hospitals treating local patients. This study explores the effects of COVID-19 on Ayurvedic and heritage resorts in central Kerala, focusing on the challenges faced, measures adopted to mitigate the impact, and the current state of the industry.

The research employs a quantitative methodology, collecting primary data from 100 entrepreneurs and managers across Kottayam, Ernakulam, Alleppey, and Idukki districts. Secondary data from various sources supplement the analysis. Tools such as percentage analysis and the chi-square test interpret the data, with findings presented through various charts.

The study's objectives include assessing the perception of resort entrepreneurs towards COVID-19, identifying the challenges faced, analysing the measures taken for business continuity, and evaluating the current state of the resort industry. Findings indicate significant disruptions, including reduced revenues and changes in business operations. The study provides insights into the resilience of the Ayurvedic tourism sector and proposes strategies for recovery and sustainable growth in the post-pandemic era.

Keywords: *Ayurveda, COVID-19, tourism, Kerala, resilience*

Kerala, renowned globally for its natural beauty, backwaters, and rich cultural heritage, has established itself as a premier tourist destination. The state's tourism sector, particularly Ayurvedic and heritage resorts, has been a significant contributor to its economy and employment generation. However, the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic inflicted a severe blow to this thriving industry.

This study aims to delve into the multifaceted challenges and problems encountered by the tourism sector in Kerala during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on Ayurvedic and heritage resorts. By examining the specific impacts on these segments, this research seeks to understand the extent of the crisis, the strategies adopted by stakeholders to cope, and the potential implications for the future of Kerala's tourism industry.

The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, industry practitioners, and researchers to develop effective strategies for the revival and sustainable growth of Kerala's tourism sector.

1 Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the Ayurvedic and heritage tourism sector in central Kerala, leading to significant disruptions in business operations, reduced revenues, and challenges in maintaining service quality. This study aims to investigate the specific challenges faced by Ayurvedic and heritage resorts in the region, assess the measures adopted to mitigate these challenges, and analyze the current state of the industry. The research seeks to provide insights into the resilience of this sector and propose strategies for its recovery and sustainable growth in the post-pandemic era.

2 Scope of the study

The scope of this study is limited to the Ayurvedic and heritage resorts located in the central Kerala districts of Kottayam, Ernakulam, Alleppey, and Idukki. The research focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these resorts, particularly in terms of the challenges faced, measures adopted to cope with the pandemic, and the current state of the industry. The study involves a critical evaluation of the experiences and responses of 100 resort entrepreneurs and managers within these districts. The analysis is confined to quantitative data collected through surveys, supported by secondary data from relevant literature. The findings and conclusions are specifically applicable to the Ayurvedic tourism sector in central Kerala and may not be generalized to other regions or industries.

3 Significance of the study

This study holds significant importance for the Ayurvedic and heritage tourism sector in central Kerala, providing essential insights into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these industries. By critically analyzing the challenges faced by Ayurvedic and heritage resorts, as well as the measures adopted to sustain operations, this research offers valuable information for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and stakeholders in the tourism and wellness industries. Understanding the disruptions caused by the pandemic and the strategies implemented for recovery helps businesses make informed decisions to enhance resilience and sustainability.

The study also contributes to the broader knowledge base on the effects of global crises on niche tourism sectors, offering lessons that can be applied to similar contexts worldwide. Additionally, the findings can guide future strategies for crisis management and recovery, ensuring that the Ayurvedic tourism sector can adapt and thrive in a post-pandemic era. This research is particularly significant for those involved in tourism and wellness, as it highlights key areas for improvement and innovation, ultimately contributing to the sustainable growth and development of the industry.

4 Literature Review

Shilpa Nair Anand (2020) in her work “COVID-19 has changed how Ayurveda centres administer treatments” explains about the ayurvedic treatment in the post covid era. The process of treatments has also got longer. Not only do therapists have to gear up in masks and face shields, treatment rooms are disinfected after each session, temperature checks done on the patients, daily temperature checks for therapists etc. Likewise, all the process of treatments in the post covid era is marvellously explained.

David W. Knight, Lina Xiong, Wei Lan, Jian Gong (16 November 2020) clarifies about the impact of COVID-19: research note on tourism and hospitality sectors in the epicentre of Wuhan and Hubei Province, China. The purpose of this paper is to present initial findings from a vulnerability assessment based on the perceptions of practitioners working in four tourism and hospitality sectors in Wuhan and Hubei Province, namely, cruise lines, hotels, travel agencies and touristic attractions.

J Bus Res. 2020 September in “Tourism and COVID-19: Impacts and implications for advancing and resetting industry and research” aims to critically review past and emerging literature to help professionals and researchers alike to better understand, manage and valorize both the tourism impacts and transformational affordance of COVID-19. To achieve this, first, the paper discusses why and how the COVID-19 can be a transformational opportunity by discussing the circumstances and the questions raised by the pandemic.

5 Objectives of the study

1. To understand the problems faced by the resort industry on account of Covid-19.
2. To analysis the measures adopted by the industry to overcome the situation and retain work.

6 Research Methodology

Research methodology is systematic way to solve the research problems. The methodology which will be used for carrying out the project will be discussed as follows.

6.1 Research Design

This study focuses on challenges and problems faced by the tourism in central Kerala during Covid-19 with special reference to Ayurvedic and Heritage resorts.

6.2 Sources of Data Collection

The data used will be

- Primary Data

The main source of data for this study is primary source. The entrepreneurs and top managers of the ayurvedic and heritage resorts are the respondents.

- Secondary Data

Secondary data needed for the study has been collected from the following source:

- ☐ Journals
- ☐ Books
- ☐ Magazine
- ☐ News papers
- ☐ Studies undertaken by various research institutions.
- ☐ Websites

6.3 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

- ☐ Sample Design

A Sample of 100 individuals is selected from Central Kerala including Kottayam, Ernakulam, Alleppey and Idukki District on convenient sampling basis.

- ☐ Sample Size

Sample size for data study was 100, which comprise entrepreneurs and managerial representatives from Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam and Alleppey District.

6.4 TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

- ☐ Percentage Analysis

A percentage frequency distribution is a display of data that specifies the percentage of observations that exist for each data point or grouping of data points. It is a particularly useful method of expressing the relative frequency of survey responses and other data.

- ☐ Chi – Square Test

χ^2 is a statistical test, which tests the significance of difference between the observed frequencies and the corresponding theoretical frequencies of a distribution, without any assumption about the distribution of the respondent's chi-square is one of the simplest and most widely used non parametric tests in statistical work.

6.5 Tools for Data Collection

Structured questionnaire is used for personal interview, Google forms and telephonic interview. Published and unpublished reports, journals, internet, etc will be used for collecting secondary data.

7 Hypothesis of the Study

Null Hypothesis: H0- There is no significant difference between the problem faced by the male and female entrepreneurs.

Alternative Hypothesis: H1 There is significant difference between the problems faced by the male and female entrepreneurs.

TABLE NO 7.1

CHALLENGES FACING HOTEL RE-OPENINGS

SL NO	CHALLENGES	N.O. OF RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
1	Employment	13	13
2	Low occupancy	21	21
3	Safety	22	22
4	Budgets and operational issues	36	36
5	Technology	8	8
	TOTAL	100	100

Source: Primary Data

TABLE NO 7.2

PLANS FOR RECOVERY

SL NO	PLANS FOR RECOVERY	N.O. OF RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
1	Review business plan and budgets	17	17
2	Protect occupancy	22	22
3	Develop an AC (after COVID-19) plan	22	22
4	Build trust and confidence	31	31
5	Focus on short term plans	8	8
	TOTAL	100	100

Source: Primary Data

HYPOTHESIS

H_0 : There is no significant difference between financial crisis faced by male and female entrepreneurs.

H_1 : There is significant difference between financial faced by male and female entrepreneurs.

TABLE 4.34

TABLE SHOWING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FINANCIAL CRISIS FACED BY MALE AND FEMALE

	FINACIAL CRISIS					
	VERY LOW	LESS	MODERATE	HIGH	VERY HIGH	TOTAL
FEMALE	11	8	8	17	20	64
MALE	1	4	18	10	3	36
TOTAL	12	12	26	27	23	100

Source: Primary Data

DECISION TABLE

Since the computed value is greater than the table value. H_0 is rejected. It is clearly defined that there is significant relationship between the significant difference between financial faced by male and female entrepreneurs. If H_1 was rejected then it means there is no significant difference between financial crisis faced by male and female entrepreneurs.

TEST	COMPUTED VALUE	DEGREE OF FREEDOM	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE	TABLE VALUE
CHI SQUARE	21.75873776	4	0.05	9.488

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H0: There is no significant difference between financial crisis faced by male and female entrepreneurs.

H1: There is significant difference between financial faced by male and female entrepreneurs.

O	E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
11	7.68	11.0224	1.435208333
8	7.68	0.1024	0.013333333
8	16.64	74.6496	4.486153846
17	17.28	0.0784	0.004537037
20	14.72	27.8784	1.893913043
1	4.32	11.0224	2.551481481
4	4.32	0.1024	0.023703704
18	9.36	74.6496	7.975384615
10	9.72	0.0784	0.008065844
3	8.28	27.8784	3.366956522
TOTAL			21.75873776

$$X^2 = \frac{\sum (O-E)^2}{E}$$

$$\text{Expected value} = \frac{\text{Row total} * \text{Column total}}{\text{Grand total}}$$

$$\text{Computed value} = 21.75873776$$

$$\text{Table value} = 9.488$$

Since the computed value is greater than the table value. H₀ is rejected. It is clearly defined that there is significant relationship between the significant difference between financial faced by male and female entrepreneurs.

SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

- ✓ Majority of the respondents are age group 20-40 which means there is a potential market of this business in the young generation. So they should be provided assistance to bring back normalcy.
- ✓ Cancellation policies have a greater impact on attracting customers. This encourages people to prefer resorts still during this pandemic.
- ✓ There are many organizations where employee strength doesn't affect them so many hotels should continue with minimum staff.
- ✓ Thoughts and worries had created problems in many respondents, so even in this situation; one should find positive methods to keep the business going.
- ✓ It is very happy that every respondent follows precautionary measures it should continue for the safety of all.
- ✓ Only a small amount of respondents choose short-term plans but irrespective of other factors survival is the primary factor so they should focus on short-term plans also.
- ✓ Besides focusing on dismissals shift working should be considered as the primary method.
 - ✓Frequent sanitization should be given priority without considering monetary benefits.
 - ✓ Connecting customers should be done for safety considerations.
 - ✓ The government has been a support throughout this phase, maintaining coordination is very important.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation measures the challenges and problems faced by tourism in central Kerala. Tourism constitutes 10 percent of Kerala's GDP, as per official statistics, and reportedly contributes around 23.5 per cent to the total employment in the state. Just like the pandemic hit the entire life of the people and all the sectors of the economy, it also affected the tourism industry. While the hospitality industry is slowly recovering, the COVID-19 crisis continues to exert profound impacts on how hospitality businesses operate. Hospitality businesses are expected to make substantial changes to their operations in the COVID-19 business environment in order to ensure employees' and customers' health and safety, and enhance customers' willingness to patronize their business. This pandemic is also likely to have a significant impact on the research agenda of hospitality marketing and management scholars. With unprecedented challenges faced by the hospitality industry in the COVID-10 era, hospitality scholars are expected to shift their research focus to develop solutions for the industry. So to know the problems faced in the ayurvedic tourism and to understand about the situations will be the most relevant study during this period.

The tourism sector plays an important role as a driving force of *economic* development. During the pandemic time, it affected the industry financially and psychologically. In the initial stages, there was confusion and slowly it got reduced. There were many problems like employee strength, availability, lack of customers, payment default etc. But gradually they understand the circumstances and coped up along with obeying rules and orders by the government. Precautionary measures were used to avoid the dangerous effects of the pandemic spreading. The industry introduced many recovery plans and they are trying to evolve from the trash.

They got hope from the government, the latest technologies, management cooperation and even through beliefs and prayers.