



Government Intervention To Promote Indian Tourism In The Post-Covid Era

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Abstract:

India is a country that attracts millions of tourists every year and is considered one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Tourism is seen as an important tool for bringing socio-economic development to the people of the country. Not only this, the tourism industry provides employment opportunities to many people from different parts of the world. Tourism is also a major foreign exchange earner for India. According to WTTC, India is ranked 10th among 185 countries in terms of travel & tourism's total contribution to GDP in 2019. During 2019, the contribution of travel & tourism to GDP was 6.8% of the total economy, which is Rs. 1,368,100 crore (US\$ 194.30 billion). The sector was also one of the largest foreign exchange earners (FEEs). In 2019, FEEs from tourism increased by 4.7% that is 1,94,881 crore (US \$ 29.96 billion) over the previous year. In 2019, the Indian Travel & Tourism sector accounted for 40.10 million jobs, which was 8.4% of the total employment in the country. But the outbreak of the epidemic has seriously affected the economy of India. As a result of this pandemic, Government imposed many restrictions like quarantine, entry ban and other travel restrictions. These restrictions have adversely affected the tourism sector. According to the Ministry of tourism, the total foreign tourist arrivals in the state slumped by -74.9% from 10.93 million in 2019 to 2.74 million in 2020. Consequently, the total earnings from tourism declined by -76.84%, the revenue generated from tourist footfall were 50,136 crore in 2020 as compared to Rupees 2,16,467 crore in 2019. In order to revive the tourism sector, the Central Government has announced various initiatives. In this context, this study analyzes the economic impact of the COVID-19 on the tourism sector in Indian economy and also describes the important initiatives taken by the central government to revive the tourism sector. This study is based on secondary data.

Index Terms - Atmanirbhar Bharat, SAATHI, NIDHI Scheme, Dekho Apna Desh,

INTRODUCTION

Tourism sector is a key driver of socio-economic progress in many countries through the creation of jobs and enterprises, export revenues, and infrastructure development. Over the past few decades, tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification to become one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. As a worldwide export category, tourism ranks third after chemicals and fuels and ahead of automotive products and food. In many developing countries, tourism is the top export category. It contributes about 12% of the total world exports. Prior to the pandemic, Travel & Tourism accounted for 1 in 4 of all new jobs created across the world, 10.6% of all jobs (334 million), and 10.4% of global GDP that is US\$9.2 trillion (**WTTC Report 2021**). But the impact of the corona virus pandemic has hit the tourism sector hard. The corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic has triggered an unprecedented crisis in the tourism economy, given the immediate and immense shock to the sector. Governments around the world have taken various measures to prevent the spread of the virus such as restrictions on travel, business activities, and people-to-people interactions etc have paralyzed the tourism economy. As the spread of the virus intensified, it caused many job losses and unemployment, halted production and made life unbearable for many people. Major tourism related industries like tourism Food services, transportation, entertainment and hotel business are facing the crisis mostly. So COVID 19 has had significant macro economic

repercussions in countries where this sector supports many jobs and businesses. Every government is trying to stimulate the need for tourism in many ways. The most important of them are-

- Lifting of Travel restrictions
- Implementation of new health protocols for safe travel
- Diversification of tourism markets
- Restoration of confidence of travelers
- Implementation of Safe and clean labels
- New Information apps for visitors
- Promotion of Domestic tourism campaigns
- Preparation of comprehensive tourism recovery plans
- Reconstruction of destinations
- Encouragement of innovation and investment
- Rethinking of the tourism sector

METHODOLOGY : The present study aims to present steps taken by the central government to boost tourism in the post-COVID period. Secondary data is used as the main data source. The secondary data is collected from various books, magazines, journals, periodicals, press reports and websites. This study is mainly a descriptive one.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyze the performance of Indian tourism industry before and after the pandemic.
2. An overview stimulus packages announced by the Government of India to revive tourism industry.

Tourism performances in India before and after the pandemic

This section furnishes an analysis of the tourism performances in India before and after the pandemic (2018-2022). This has been performed by focusing attention on two important aspects of tourism as:

- 1) Trends in tourist arrival to India
- 2) Foreign Exchange Earnings from tourism

Trends in tourist arrival to India

As a favorite tourist destination, India receives both foreign and international tourists. Table 1.1 explains the trends in foreign arrivals, non-residents Indians arrivals and international tourists' arrivals during 2018 to 2022. It also depicts the percentage variations of tourist arrivals over previous years.

Table 1.1 Tourist Arrivals in India during 2018 to 2022

Sl. No.	Tourist Arrivals in India	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1	Number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals in India (In millions)	10.56	10.93	2.74	1.52	6.19
	Annual Growth Rate (In percentage)	5.20	3.50	-74.9	-44.5	305.4
2	Number of Non-Residents Indians Arrivals (In millions)	6.87	6.98	3.59	5.48	7.89
	Annual Growth Rate (In percentage)	1.40	1.70	-48.6	52.6	43.9
3	Number of International Tourist Arrivals in India (In millions)	17.42	17.91	6.33	7	14.33

Annual Growth Rate (In percentage)	3.70	2.80	-64.7	10.6	104.43
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Source: India Tourism Statistics at a Glance- 2023

The table 1.1 shows the number of foreign tourist arrivals in India increased from 10.56 million in 2018 to 10.93million in 2019 with annual growth rate of 3.50 percent. But it decreased to 2.74million in 2020 with -74.9 % growth rates. The same trend has been seen in case of Non-residents Indians arrivals and international tourist arrivals. Number of foreign tourist arrivals again increases to 6.19 million in 2022 at a growth rate of 305.4%.

2) Foreign Exchange Earnings from tourism

Table 1.2 throws light on the earnings from tourism in India from 2010 to 2021.

Foreign exchange earnings from tourism in India 2018 - 2022

Year	Earnings (US\$ million)	% change	Earnings (₹ crores)	% change
2018	28,586	4.4	1,95,312	9.61
2019	30,058	7.54	2,16,467	10.83
2020#2	6,958	-77.35	50,136	-76.84
2021#2	8,797	26.43	65,070	29.79
2022#1	16,926	92.41	1,34,543	106.77

Source: India Tourism Statistics at a Glance- 2023

1 : Provisional estimates, # 2: Revised estimates.

In 2019, FEEs from tourism increased from 1,95,312 crore to 2,16,467 crore (US \$ 30,058 million) with 10.83% increase over the previous year. It can be observed that percentage change in FEE over the previous year turned out to be as negative in 2020 (-76.84) because FEEs decreased to 50,136 crore in this year. However, it was positive for all other years under consideration. In the year 2021 foreign exchange earnings was rupees 1,34,543 crore and percentage variation became 106.77%.

Government's Intervention on Tourism Sector against COVID-19

The tourism sector has been hit hard by the COVID-19, since it has direct effect on employment and livelihood of people involved in the sector directly and indirectly. In a bid to revive the Country's travel and tourism sector, the Central Government has announced various stimulus packages.

1, Atmanirbhar Bharat is one of the stimulus packages announced by the Government of India to revive the economy and tourism industry. It made available collateral-free automatic loans of up to Rs 3 lakh crore to MSMEs. This has benefited the entrepreneurs of tourism sector which falls under MSME. The loan had 4-year tenure and had 12-month moratorium.

2, Ministry of Tourism constituted a Task Force under the Chairmanship of hon'ble Minister of Tourism to address the challenge posed by the outbreak of COVID-19 and prepare appropriate recommendations/measures for the revival of tourism. The task force included State Tourism Ministers, Joint Secretary level officials of concerned Union Ministries, representatives of associations like FICCI, CII, ASSOCHAM, WTCII and heads of tourism and hospitality associations.

3, System for Assessment, Awareness & Training for Hospitality Industry (SAATHI): The Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with the Quality Council of India (QCI), has implemented the SAATHI initiative to assist the hospitality industry in maintaining safe operations and mitigating risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative is in line with the Atmanirbhar Bharat project. The idea is not only to make the industry aware of the government's COVID regulations, but also to build confidence among the hospitality

unit staff and guests. The intention was to ensure safety and hygiene in the workplace. SAATHI was developed based on the Kovid-19 guidelines issued by the Union Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. 10 components of SAATHI;

1. Management Commitment
2. Hygiene and Hygiene
3. Waste Management
4. Communication, Training and Awareness
5. Preventive Measures
6. Transport Management
7. Vendor Management
8. Safety Advice in Hotel Operations
9. Ventilation
10. Control over these discriminatory activities

4, National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry (NIDHI Scheme): On June 8, 2020, the Ministry of Tourism launched the National Integrated Database of Hospitality Industry (NIDHI) Scheme, an Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative. NIDHI is a technology driven system to facilitate digitalization and promote ease of doing business for the hospitality & tourism sector. It serves as common repository of data about unclassified tourist accommodation units in the country, help tourists to find information about accommodation at any destination, assessing the carrying capacity of various destinations, assessing the skilled human resources requirements, facilitating preventive measures and establishing adequate security measures to deal with adverse events.

5, 'Dekho Apna Desh or 'see your country': The outbreak of corona virus absolutely disrupted the travel activity of India, so in order to promote domestic tourism MOT launched a webinar series called 'Dekho Apna Desh (DAD) Or 'see your country' to attract tourists. The aim of this webinar series is to create and promote awareness about unknown places in the country and lesser known aspects of popular destinations. The webinars also aims at enhancing the information of virtual tourists on different cities of India, including their rich heritage, culture, cuisines, folk arts, natural landscapes and festivals and so on. The Virtual tourist can access MoT's social media accounts such as Incredible India Instagram and Incredible India Facebook to learn more about their destinations in India. To create mass awareness, the Ministry has also launched online pledge and Quiz on DAD on MyGov.in platform.

6, The Ministry of Tourism has extended the accreditation of travel agents, tour operators and tourist transport operators by six months. Those who applied for the Ministry's approval were granted provisional approval for a period of six months pending the completion of necessary procedures.

7, Bharat Darshan tourist trains: In view of the declining number of corona virus cases across the country, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) is launching a series of Bharat Darshan tourist trains with the aim of taking people to various pilgrimages across the country. Under this, IRCTC will run the Bharat-Darshan special train from August 24 to September 5, 2021. By this train, travelers can visit seven Jyotirlingas in the country, including Omkareshwar, Mahakaleshwar, Bhimashankar, Trimbakeshwar, Grishneshwar and Somnath.

8, The Ministry of Tourism has launched the Incredible India Tourist Facilitator (IITF) Certification Program – a digital initiative that aims to create an online learning platform with the aim of creating a pool of well-trained professional tourist facilitators across the country. This creates employment opportunities at the local level and in remote areas of the country with tourism potential.

9, The Ministry has focused on domestic tourism through several innovative measures such as promoting the country's products, festivals and cuisines on its social media handles. Activities were also organized to promote the concept of Ek Bharat Shrest Bharat. It has circulated aerial photography of several cities during the lockdown to promote the destinations.

Through these initiatives, the Government of India has provided an environment to recover from the crisis during the COVID period and restart tourism activities.

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