A Study on Indian Tourists Behaviour During and Post Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to comprehend the typical travel behaviour of Indians both during and after the Coronavirus outbreak to tourist places both inside and outside of India. Numerous nations around the world rely on tourism to maintain and expand their economies. According to a review of the literature on the effects of COVID-19 on the tourism sector, it is necessary to analyse and forecast potential changes in future tourist behaviour in order to create tourism related goods and services. The main goal of this study is to better understand how Indians generally behave when visiting tourist locations both inside and outside of India, both during and post covid-19. The study is to explain the behavioural traits of Indians in relation to their readiness to travel for tourism purposes and their choice of destination (domestic or abroad). The research is descriptive in nature. According to the report, Indian visitors are currently undecided on whether to travel or not. It should be highlighted that the correct stimulation in the form of motivators like heightened safety concern, hassle-free travel, and inexpensive tourism options would draw the domestic tourists back to tourist locations in India. The study made an effort to comprehend the variables that affected the choice between domestic and international travel for tourism-related purposes. Additionally, it is also discovered that the development of a vaccine would have a favourable effect on tourists' eagerness to travel.

Keywords: Travel, Tourism, Tourist Behaviour, Covid-19

Introduction

The lives of humans are impacted by viral illnesses. In 2020, the world was dealing with the Corona Virus Pandemic (Covid-19), which had its beginnings in Wuhan, the Chinese province of Hubei. On December 31, 2019, the Chinese government submitted its first coronavirus report to the WHO. The WHO labelled this infectious disease as pandemic on March 11, 2020, less than three months after it first emerged. With 15,012,731 cases worldwide and 619,150 recorded fatalities [Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) Situation Report 185, 2020], it is still unclear how this illness will affect the global economy and society. Numerous nations around the world rely on tourism to maintain and expand their economies. For a successful tourism operation, a variety of stakeholders are involved, not just limited to travellers, but for locals, hospitality businesses, airlines, cruise lines, and the government. The tourism industry has experienced lower revenue due to viral illnesses (Karim & Haque, 2020). The prognosis for the sector has decreased as a result of the fact that airplanes and cruise lines have served as viral transmission gateways in several nations. Since

a few decades ago, the Indian tourism industry has been growing steadily. Millions of tourists have been attracted to India by the country's unique cultures, geography, cuisine, and diversity (Himanshu & Jeannie, 2013).

In 2019, 17.91 million foreign tourists arrived in India, and 2321.98 million domestic tourists visited all States and Union Territories, according to statistics released by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, 2020). According to estimates, India earned 211661 crores in foreign exchange from tourism in 2019, an increase of 8.6% annually. However, the ongoing pandemic would result in a sharp decrease in foreign profits in the 2020–21 fiscal year. A speedy recovery in the form of a Covid-19 vaccine is crucial for the tourism sector, and numerous vaccines are currently undergoing clinical trials in various nations.

The stakeholders place a lot of emphasis on increasing tourism to support the industry, but factors like the fear of disease, quarantine requirements, and time-consuming procedures deter people from traveling for leisure, placing a great deal of strain on the tourism and hospitality industries (Gössling et al., 2020). Even domestic travellers have drastically decreased in number, and the fact that the majority of tourist attractions will continue to be closed for a while keeps domestic travellers at bay. Despite the challenges, the industry is making every effort and using every available resource to stay afloat for the time being (Kaushal & Srivastava, 2020). Given that it would take longer duration for cross-border travel to resume its pre-covid levels, the tourism and hospitality industry have to heavily depend on domestic tourists for their survival in these hard times.

Transformational reforms and paradigm shifts are required for the industry to grow and get back on track. This may also be a chance to make structural changes and emphasize sustainability more, which might have long-term and significant effects on the tourism sector in the years to come. In order to ensure that their experience is easy and secure, it's also important to comprehend how domestic visitors behave. By addressing their worries, we can put ourselves back on the path of progress and development.

Research Objective

This study is to comprehend the typical travel behaviour of Indians both before and post covid-19 pandemic, both within and outside of their home country. The study's objective is to examine the patterns of behaviour that Indian tourists formed regarding their readiness to travel both during and post pandemic. Their preferred location and the elements influencing their decision.

Review of Literature

Recent research has shown that the tourism sector is extremely susceptible to changes in the outside environment. Tourism is greatly impacted by international geopolitics, economic conditions, natural and man-made calamities, and public health crises. Such a crisis has a negative influence on tourism at the global, macroregional, and national levels (Kushniruk & Rutynskyi, 2020). China has international tourism and commerce all over the world which has harmed due to the pandemic (Polyzos et al. 2020). Within a few months, the Coronavirus Disease - 2019 (COVID-19) went from being a typical viral outbreak to becoming a pandemic. 213 nations and territories have so far reported verified instances of COVID-19, according to the Worldometers report 2020. Research by (Farzanegan et al. 2020), there is a significant link between the number of visitors and confirmed coronavirus illnesses, and related fatality, in a region. This study is significant because it casts doubt on the preparedness of stakeholders who serve as the nation's entry points, such as airlines and cruise lines. The governments of all affected countries are working hard to 'flatten the curve' and stop the spread by enforcing NPI (Nonpharmaceutical Interventions) techniques, placing travel bans, quarantines, and maintaining social isolation among their citizens. Lockdowns were

implemented by the government in numerous nations, raising concerns about oncoming financial disaster. In India, the tourism industry created 4.2 crore jobs as of 2019, accounting for 8.1% of all occupations in the nation (Kumar Patel et al., 2020). Actions are taken to strike a balance between the economy's health and the safety of their countrymen. All businesses, whether they are multinationals or small businesses, strive for survival as governments take every step possible to lessen financial losses and to reopen borders and (tourism) businesses and set up strategies to resume operations and get back on the path to growth (Sigala 2020). Both large and small businesses are struggling with a lack of liquidity and are in danger of going bankrupt. According to (Qiu et al., 2020), recovery and stimulus plans must to be implemented with consideration for the entire society as opposed to only huge corporations.

Domestic Tourism

Numerous scholars have acknowledged the significance of domestic tourism growth for the resurgence of the travel and tourism sector (Kumar Patel et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2020). India as a nation provides travellers with a variety of possibilities, from beach tourism to medical tourism, adventure tourism to spiritual tourism. Both domestic and international travel has become easier with advent of automobile technology and other infrastructure like four-way lanes, rail and airways. The Indian travel and tourism industry is dominated by domestic travel (Sridevi, 2019). Many persons connected to various tourist destinations have experienced a direct loss of income as a result of the decline in visitor numbers (Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020; Kumar, 2020). It should be emphasized that a number of small enterprises depend on these tourist attractions.

High tourist arrivals ensured the welfare of the locals in towns that are home to UNESCO World Heritage monuments (Lviv, for instance), and the economy of the locals, family enterprises that catered to these visitors was affected badly (Kushniruk & Rutynskyi, 2020). The tourism industry has historically overcome fears about health crises like SARS, MERS, Ebola, and Zika, but this time the virus is spreading across a far larger geographic area and has already had a significant impact. Therefore, overcoming this pandemic will require more preparation and work from all government and private players involved. Several authors (Arora et al., 2020; Gössling et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2020; Mattiuzzi & Lippi, 2020; Rutynskyi & Kushniruk, 2020) support the theory that 21st century would witness more such pandemics and the occurrence of SARS (2002-2003), Swine Flu Influenza (2009), MERS (2012), Ebola (2015), Zika (2015) in the early 21st century points towards awful future.

Tourist Behaviour

Studies examining and comprehending consumer psychology, as suggested by (Sigala, 2020), sheds light on tourist behaviour and the effects that Covid-19 has had on visitors' quality of life. A difficult task for all researchers in this field is to compile detailed consumer behavioural data, synthesize it, and then evaluate it to derive insightful conclusions. Some projected changes in tourist behaviour include a preference for local tourism, a dislike of group tours, and a preference for less crowded locations (Wen et al., 2020; Romagosa, 2020). Tourists' perception of a location's safety is crucial for tourism to resume normal operations. The choice of destination was influenced by perceived risk for comfort and well-being, according to studies by Anthony and Thomas (2010). It is necessary to investigate how the COVID-19 modifies images of specific destinations because prior research has shown that images of places can change over time (Sebastian Zenker, 2020).

Technology

India is one of the leaders in the use of digital tools for travel planning and booking in this era of digital transformation (Kumar Patel et al., 2020). Several researchers (Gretzel et al., 2020)

also opine that e-Tourism is currently at a turning point. The second path takes a critical stance toward how things were done in the past and predicts a better future. One path focuses on current scientific paradigms and conventional concepts of technology that bring back growth in tourism with revolution in technologies. Technology can be used to lessen the effects of COVID-19 and create a model that can hasten the recovery of the economy. The usage of technologies like AI, IoT, and 5G can bring about disruptive developments in the sector, according to (Buhalis, 2019). An illustration would be the adoption of contactless services by the hospitality sector, which would lower the danger of disease transmission through touch. The ramifications of comparable potential technological uses must be examined in research.

Sustainability

While many believe that the current epidemic was an unforeseen phenomenon, there is another, far more hazardous phenomenon called "climate change" for which predictions have been made but for which we are yet unprepared. Although other authors claim that climate change is a much larger threat to mankind, since the threat is not urgent, action is still being put off. The need for sustainable tourism is unavoidable given the increasing dangers and existential crisis that climate change and exposure to zoonotic diseases represent, according to (Prideaux et al., 2020; Scott & Gössling, 2015). However, there is controversy around the disconnect between consumer claims of "green ethic" and their desire to buy "green tourism products" (Williams & Ponsford., 2009). It is time to reevaluate game eating in tourism, according to studies by (Ying et al., 2020), not only from the standpoint of wildlife conservation but also from the health perspective and risks connected with the intake of novelties from exotic species. Business travel is anticipated to recover more quickly than pleasure travel, although the frequency will be significantly limited to just necessary trips (Sharma & Nicolau, 2020; Hall et al., 2020). According to studies conducted in this regard (Sharma & Nicolau, 2020), COVID-19 has had a considerable influence on the travel, lodging, cruise, and automobile industries. The travel and tourism sector must evolve according to (Kumar, 2020), who offers a hopeful view, this pandemic should be exploited as a chance to advance staff knowledge and enhance skills in digital platforms and improve service quality.

Research Gap

According to a study of the literature on the effects of COVID-19 on the tourism sector, it is necessary to assess and forecast potential changes in future visitor behaviour in order to create tourism-related goods and services. There is a need to investigate the likelihood of a structural change in the tourist business, as mentioned by a number of writers. It is necessary to do research to create more environmentally friendly tourism and strategies that place more of an emphasis on local supplier networks and use technology to add value for customers. There is a need for empirical research based on primary inputs from diverse stakeholders as recent studies on the impact of COVID-19 on tourism are based on secondary research.

Research Methodology

The main objective of this study is to comprehend the typical travel behaviour of Indians both during and post Covid-19 outbreak to tourist locations both inside and outside of India. The study's goal is to explain the behavioural traits of Indians in relation to their readiness to travel for tourist purposes, their choice of location (domestic or foreign). The research is descriptive in nature. Two specific hypotheses were developed from this research topic in order to conduct the study.

- H1: Indian visitors would favour local destinations over foreign destinations when travel resumes after COVID-19.

• H2: Indian travellers will be less eager to go for tourism when travel restarts after COVID-19.

A survey employing a self-administered questionnaire is the research methodology employed. This makes it possible to efficiently collect data from India's many geographical regions. People who are Indian citizens or have lived in India for more than five years were the study's target audience and anybody who is at least 16 years old and has travelled for leisure or who aspires to do so. The influence of the COVID-19 pandemic is the study's independent variable, while its impact on Indian people's general travel willingness, location preferences. Closed-ended questions with a semantic scale to gauge respondents' openness to travel and a Likert scale rating method to assess the strength of their attitudes, views, and perceptions made up the questionnaire. The questions were designed to elicit information on (a) their fundamental characteristics and travel experiences, (b) their preferred modes of transportation, and (c) their willingness to travel, perceived significance of doing so. The sample size was 200, with a mean age of 26.68 years, a 95% confidence range of 26.70±1.69, and a standard deviation of 11.30. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were done using the data analysis toolpak and data analysis was completed using Microsoft Excel. The samples were drawn from 20 different states (including Union Territories).

Data Analysis
Demographic Description

A total of 200 responses were collected from 20 different Indian states and union territories to the questionnaire. 50.8% (96) of the respondents were men, and 49.2% (93) were women. The responses mostly came from 5 main occupational categories: students, salaried workers, professionals, retired people, and self-employed people. 75% of the respondents were between the ages of 16 and 26, 18% were between the ages of 27 and 55, and the remaining 5% were over age 56 and 2% less than the age 16. 96% of the respondents had gone for tourism within India, while 48% have visited tourist locations outside of India at least once. The mean age is of 26.70 years ±1.69 at 95% confidence level, and a standard deviation of 11.30 with a standard error of 0.86.

Willingness to Travel

In two separate scenarios—the present, when there are no completely tested vaccinations, and the future, when vaccination is discovered—information was gathered concerning people's desire to travel for tourism-related activities. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 denotes a "highly unwilling" attitude toward travel and 5 denotes a "highly willing" attitude towards travel, the respondents were asked to rank their willingness. 30% of respondents expressed a "highly unwilling", 21% an "unwilling", 17% and 8% of respondents indicated they were "willing" and "highly willing" respectively, while 24% of respondents had a "neutral" stance in the first scenario.

After vaccination is invented, the respondents to the second scenario were questioned about their willingness to travel for leisure. Their willingness was assessed on a similar scale of 1 to 5, with 1 denoting "highly unwilling" and 5 denoting a "highly willing". After a vaccination is developed, 50% of respondents said they are "highly willing" to go for tourism, while 28% said they would be "willing" to travel for tourism. 13% of people had a "neutral" response towards traveling, while 5% and 4% were "unwilling" and "highly unwilling" respectively. In the 16–26 age range, it is shown that 42% of respondents are unwilling to travel in the present situation, and 3% are unwilling when a vaccine is developed. In the age range of 27 to 40, 67% are resistant under the existing conditions, and 8% are resistant following the development of the vaccine. 89% of respondents in the 56 and older age group said they would avoid traveling in the current climate, and 44% said they would avoid it even if a vaccine were to be developed. In contrast to the current situation, where only 36% of respondents in the 16–26 and 8% of respondents in the 27–40 age

groups showed a want to travel, it was seen that the readiness to travel grew dramatically with the potential scenario of vaccine development. Respondents in the age ranges of 41 to 55 and 56 and older had expressed their willingness to travel at 43% and 56% respectively.

Destination Preferences

When questioned about their preference of vacation destinations when tourism operations begin post-Covid-19, respondents indicated that 71% of them would first want to visit a domestic tourist spot. The most frequently cited reasons for this preference were the safety of domestic travel (45%), domestic travel involves lesser formalities (33%), cost- effective (18%), industry to survive and overcome this pandemic (4%) and help locals who depend on tourism for a living.

29% of respondents said they would like to visit a foreign country when travel resumes after COVID-19. They cited their interest in international travel (58%), as well as their perception that a foreign country would be safer than India (21%), as the main justifications for their decision. Exploring different cultures (16%) and thinking that other nations have superior crisis management systems (5% of respondents) were some justifications offered.

Data Interpretation

The outcomes of the data analysis are listed above. Two alternative hypotheses were created from the study topic.
• H1: Indian visitors would prefer domestic tourism locations over overseas destinations when travel starts post-Covid-19.

This theory is supported by the fact that 71% of respondents said that they would travel to local tourist locations first after COVID-19, as opposed to 29% of respondents who favoured foreign tourist destinations. The perceived degree of safety, the lack of procedures, and the affordability of domestic destinations were the main justifications given.
• H2: Indian tourists will be less eager to go for tourism when travel resumes post-Covid-19.
• 25% of the respondents had a neutral perspective on traveling in the current situation,

25% of the respondents indicated their readiness to travel, and 50% of the respondents were hesitant to travel. The median value of 3 and the mean value of 2.53 both point to a neutral strategy. This demonstrates the uncertainty in tourists' perceptions given how changeable the present situation is. The development of a vaccination would be one important aspect that would affect their desire to travel. When asked whether they would be willing to go once a vaccine had been developed, the respondents gave a more optimistic response, with 78% saying they would.

Table 1 Indian Tourists: Willingness to Travel

Present Scenario		After Vaccine Discovery	
Mean	2.534391534	Mean	4.142857
Standard Error	0.092043369	Standard Error	0.076721
Median	3	Median	4
Mode	1	Mode	5
Standard Deviation	1.265387114	Standard Deviation	1.054733
Sample Variance	1.601204548	Sample Variance	1.112462
Kurtosis	-1.030425079	Kurtosis	0.909673
Skewness	0.280083486	Skewness	-1.22418
Range	4	Range	4

Minimum	1	Minimum	1
Maximum	5	Maximum	5
Sum	479	Sum	783
Count	189	Count	189

In the current scenario, it is evident that people are less willing to travel for tourism- related reasons as they get older. In the 56 and older age group, 89% of all respondents said they were unwilling to travel, compared to 42% of those in the 16 to 26 age group. In the events of invention of a vaccination, the study revealed that there is a considerable rise in the perceived willingness to travel by the tourists in all age categories. The majority of respondents said they would like to travel first to domestic locations because they believe domestic locations to be safer and more affordable. It is acknowledged that a tourist's decision to visit a certain location is significantly influenced by the perception of the location's safety. Budgetary restrictions are another significant aspect; it is believed that initially, travelers would be more price sensitive and seek for more affordable solutions. It was also noted that respondents, regardless of their age, had a strong concern about safety.

Discussion and Conclusion

This analysis was done during the difficult times between September 2020 to May 2021, and gives a basic picture of the changes in tourist behaviour to accommodate into the new environment. According to the report, Indian visitors are now undecided on whether to travel or not. It should be highlighted that the correct stimulation in the form of motivators like heightened safety concern, hassle-free travel, and inexpensive tourism alternatives will draw the domestic visitors back to tourist locations in India. The study made an effort to comprehend the variables that affected the choice between local and travel abroad for tourism-related purposes. Additionally, it was discovered that the development of a vaccine would have a favourable effect on travellers' eagerness to travel. This period should be used to make structural adjustments and accommodate more recent technologies that still have a ways to go, as indicated by the other writers (Buhalis, 2019; Kumar, 2020). In order to understand and affect changes in the tourism sector to meet the evolving demands of Indian visitors, stakeholders in the industry, academicians, marketers, and other researchers may find this study to be useful.

Limitations

With the following restrictions on this study was conducted. The study was quickly completed to assess the current situation and produce a fairly accurate estimate of the tourist behaviour of Indians. A number of countries have been able to contain the virus and return to normalcy, while others are still fighting it out and unsure of when it will peak, and still other nations are dealing with a second wave of the virus hitting the nation and are being forced into yet another lockdown. The study's findings should be interpreted with this in mind. Since the study worked with an infinite population in order to provide a representative figure about the tourist population in India, this had an impact on the study's findings and their generalizability. The paper's purpose is to offer a bird's-eye view of the current situation. Other internal and external factors (besides COVID-19) might also affect visitors' decisions, but it is outside the purview of this study to take such into account. Another significant drawback is that the study was only conducted in India, but the country's tourism sector depends on visitors from many other nations for its income. It should be kept in mind that, given the dynamic environment in which things are changing swiftly, a component that is regarded important now could not be so important even in the near future.

Managerial Implications

This study can assist marketers and other tourism sector players in getting ready for tourist activities when and if they restart. It appears that the themes of tranquillity and freshness are at the heart of the reasons given by tourists for selecting a place. Tourists prefer a place with different viewpoint, to feel refreshed, and find inner harmony and tranquillity. Managers may use this as a guide to ensure that visitor demands are met and that the necessary stimuli are provided for visitors to return to tourism by taking proactive measures.

The study's conclusions can be utilized to develop advertising strategies that address the worries of tourists. It should be mentioned that conditions are rapidly changing, making it crucial to adapt to the new setting and adopt newer technology in order to thrive over the long run and survive in the near term.

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