

Tourism Industry – A Pandemic Struggle of Sustenance

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ABSTRACT

Kerala Tourism Industry is struggling to come back with value addition on available resources. This study aims to determine how the tourism industry can be better targeted to improve the situation. The study indicates the COVID-19 crisis impact and measures taken by the stakeholders. The main income of Idukki has declined. Measures were taken by the hospitality industry, food, and beverage, or the spice industry defined as the extent to which tourists feel the desire to travel Idukki. To test the hypothesis direct interview method was used. Respondents were randomly divided into hotels, resorts, spice farmers, and tourist guides and asked to respond on the impact of Covid-19 and measures taken by them to improve the situation. The results showed a drastic decline in income since 2020 while the industry is coming back. These results suggest that any business needs preparation for the uncertainty both short term & Long term. Businesses always should consider multiple income sources.

Keywords: *Tourism; Industry; Pandemic; India; Covid, Kerala.*

1.0 Introduction

Overall tourism industry sustains millions of livelihoods directly or indirectly. Tourism plays in progressing the Justifiable Development including its association with conservational goals and culture. Therefore, any hit on the industry impacts the livelihoods of concerned people and their families associated with the industry.

The crisis showed the industry the opportunity to reconsider how tourism networks in societies, other commercial segments, and our natural resources and ecologies; to quantify and manage it better; to safeguard a reasonable supply of its benefits, and to develop the transition towards a nature friendly and resilient tourism industry.

The brief provides recommendations in five priority areas to cushion the massive impacts on lives and economies and to rebuild tourism with people at the center. It features examples of government support to the sector, calls for a reopening that gives priority to the health and safety of the workers, travelers, and host communities, and provides a roadmap to transform tourism.

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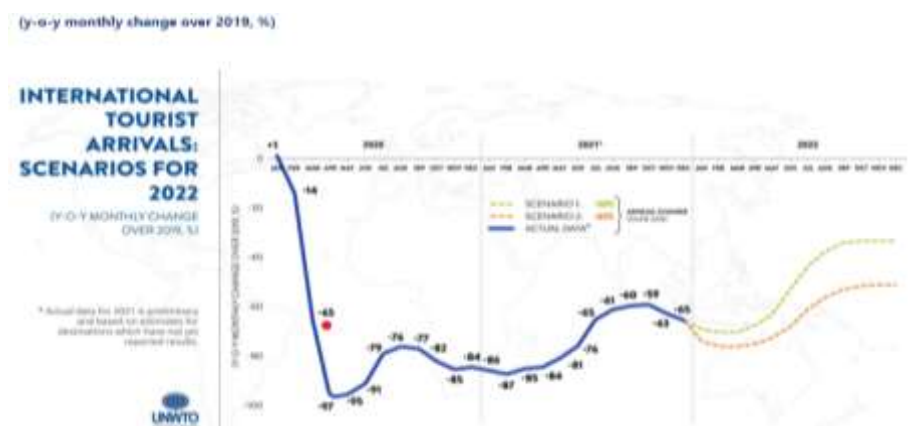
2.0 Economic Impacts (Ref – UNWTO)

- Tourism is one of the world's major economic sectors. It is the third-largest export category (after fuels and chemicals) and in 2019 accounted for 7% of global trade.
- For some countries, it can represent over 20% of their GDP and, overall, it is the third-largest export sector of the global economy.
- Tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, impacting economies, livelihoods, public services, and opportunities on all continents. All parts of its vast value chain have been affected.
- Export revenues from tourism could fall by \$910 billion to \$1.2 trillion in 2020. This will have a wider impact and could reduce global GDP by 1.5% to 2.8%.
- Tourism supports one in 10 jobs and provides livelihoods for many millions more in both developing and developed economies.
- In some Small Island Developing States (SIDS), tourism has accounted for as much as 80% of exports, while it also represents important shares of national economies in both developed and developing countries.

3.0 Impact on Livelihoods

- As many as 100 million direct tourism jobs were affected, in addition to sectors associated with tourism such as labour-intensive accommodation and food services industries that employ 144 million workers worldwide. Small businesses (which shoulder 80% of global tourism) are particularly vulnerable.
- Women, who make up 54% of the tourism workforce, youth, and workers in the informal economy are among the most at-risk categories.
- No nation will be unaffected. Destinations most reliant on tourism for jobs and economic growth are likely to be hit hardest: SIDS, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and African countries. In Africa, the sector represented 10% of all exports in 2019.

Figure 1: International Tourist Arrivals in 2020 and 2021 and Scenarios for 2022



Source: UNWTO Statistics

4.0 Indian Perspective

The Ministry of Tourism is promoting the development of domestic tourism. The Tourism Authority has launched the Dekho Apna Desh initiative which has developed various promotional activities like webinars, online pledges, and Quiz programs to generate awareness among the public about the country and its tourism destinations/products. The initiative also is keen on promoting lesser-known destinations. DekhoApnaDesh is aiming for a mass reach via social media platforms and the website of the Ministry and also by the Domestic India Tourism offices.

Table 1: Foreign Tourists' Arrival – India 2021

Month	Foreign Tourists Arrivals 2021
Jan	83822
Feb	99640
Mar	123179
Apr	69442
May	10307
Jun	29397
Jul	64566
Aug	84955
Sep	106704
Oct	181325
Total	856337

Source: Tourism Statistics – Incredible India – www.tourism.gov.in

The India Tourism Statistics 2022 is expected to release soon on the Ministry's website. Below are the statistics of India Tourism Statistics 2021

The total number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) in India in 2020 was 2.74 million, with an Annual Growth Rate of -74.9%

Figure 2: Number of foreign tourist visits in India in 2020, by leading states (in millions)

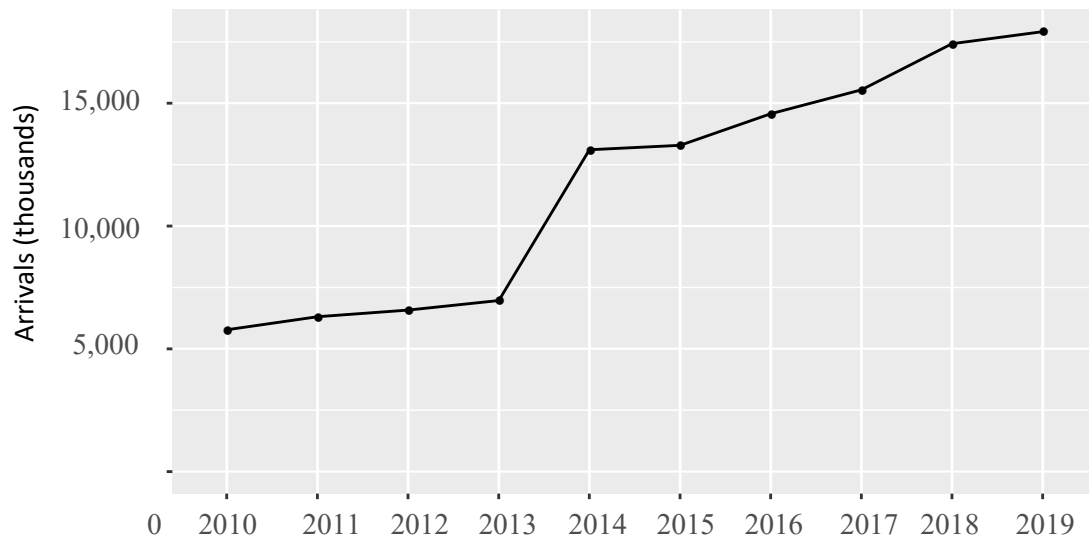


Source: Tourism Statistics – Incredible India – www.tourism.gov.in

The total number of Indian Nationals Departures from India in 2020 was 7.29 million with an Annual Growth Rate of -97.3%

The estimated foreign exchange earnings from Tourism in INR is 50136 Crore with an Annual Growth Rate of -76.3% and in US\$ is US\$ 6.958 Billion.

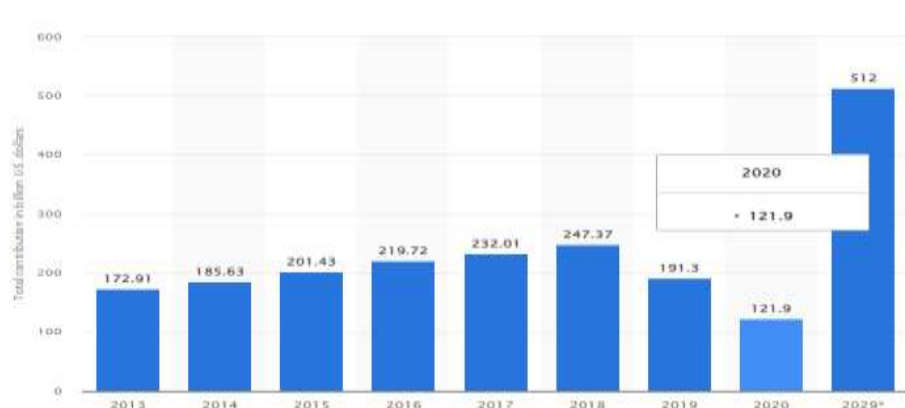
Figure 3:



Source: Tourism Statistics – Incredible India –www.tourism.gov.in

In 2020, the state with the highest number of foreign tourists in India was Maharashtra, with over 1.26 million visits. In the same year, the number of foreign tourist arrivals in India was around 71 million.

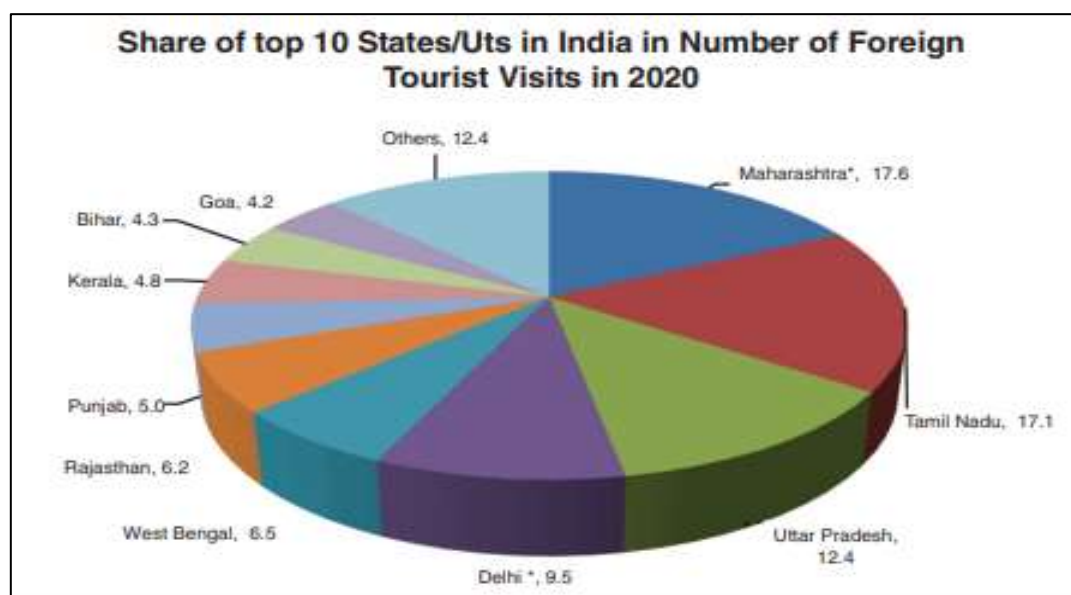
Figure 4: The Total Contribution of Travel and Tourism to GDP in India from 2013 to 2020, with an Estimate for 2029(in Billion U.S. Dollars)



Source: Tourism Statistics – Incredible India – www.tourism.gov.in

In 2020, the travel and tourism industry in India contributed around 122 billion U.S. dollars to the country's GDP. In 2017, the country welcomed over 10 million foreign tourists, generating foreign exchange earnings of over 27.31 billion U.S. dollars.

Figure 5: Kerala Significantly Contributes to the Indian Revenue from its Tourism Sector



Source: Tourism Statistics – Incredible India –www.tourism.gov.in

5.0 Contribution of Idukki District in Kerala Tourism

The district has tremendous tourist potentialities and revenue earning possibilities. The Periyar Wild Life Sanctuary at Thekkady is in the district and it ranks the foremost among the places of tourist attractions in Kerala.

Situated around Periyar Lake, is a paradise to tourists situated in the jungle of the Western Ghats. The wildlife sanctuary spreads around 673 sq. km and is located at a height of 900 to 1800 meters above the mean sea level area.

The wild animals generally seen are elephants, bison, sambur, monkeys, and wild bear. Tigers are foraging in the area but to have a glimpse of them is a matter of luck for the visitors.

Side attractions are tea gardens are located around this place. Peermade, 43 km. below Thekkady on the road to Kottayam. The Tourist Bungalow at Peermade offers excellent facilities and good cuisine. The destination is perfect to hike and trek

Kerala's Tourism Development Corporation has provided different types of accommodation for visitors.

Table 2: Attractions in Idukki

1	Hill View Park	13	Meesapulimala	25	Pothanmedu View Point
2	Kulamavu Dam	14	Ayyappancoin Hanging Bridge	26	Eravikulam National Park
3	Idukki Arch Dam	15	Malankara Dam	27	Cheeyappara Waterfalls
4	Painavu	16	Valara Waterfalls	28	Vagamon
5	Nandukani	17	Anchuruli Waterfalls	29	Paruthumpara
6	Anakkara	18	Cheruthoni Dam	30	Kanthalloor
7	Keezharkuthu Falls	19	Panchalimedu	31	Vattavada
8	Periyar National Park	20	Ramankalmedu	32	Kuttikanam
9	Thommankuthu Falls	21	Anamudi Shola National Park	33	Chathuranga View Point
10	Mangaladevi Temple	22	Powerhouse Falls	34	Chathurangapara
11	Murikkady	23	Anamudi Peak	35	Suryanelli
12	Thumpachi Kalveri Samuchayam	24	Mattupetti Dam		

Source: Department of Tourism, GoK

Table 3: Kerala Tourism at a Glance

Domestic Tourist Arrival (Nos) in 2020	49,88,972
Domestic Tourist Arrival (Nos) in 2019	1,83,84,233
International Tourist Arrival (Nos) in 2020	3,40,755
International Tourist Arrival (Nos) in 2019	11,89,771
Total arrivals (Nos) in 2020	53,29,727
Total arrivals (Nos) in 2019	1,95,74,004
Total Earnings Generated (crore) in 2020	₹11,335.96 crore
Total Earnings Generated (crore) in 2019	₹45,010.69 crore
Foreign Exchange Earnings (crore) in 2020	₹2799.85 crore
Foreign Exchange Earnings (crore) in 2019	₹10271.06 crore
Earnings from Domestic Tourists (crore) in 2020	₹6025.68 crore
Earnings from Domestic Tourists (crore) in 2019	₹24785.62 crore

Source: Department of Tourism, GoK

Ernakulam is the leading district based on foreign tourist arrivals to Kerala with a contribution of 41.58%. The leading district of Ernakulam and second-standing district Thiruvananthapuram contribute 80.11% of the total Tourist Arrivals to Kerala. Other leading districts are Idukki, Alappuzha, and Kottayam. Tourist arrivals to these five districts constitute 93.81% of the total arrivals to Kerala.

The tourism sector rebounded strongly in 2019 after the 2018 floods and witnessed 8.52 percent growth in foreign tourist arrivals and 17.81 percent growth in domestic tourist arrivals as compared to 2018 figures. The foreign exchange earnings from tourism in the year 2019 was ₹10,271.06 crore and domestic tourist earnings was ₹24,785.62 crore. Total earnings including direct and indirect means in 2019 was ₹45,010.69 crore showing an increase of 24.13 percent over 2018. One of the sectors that are the hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic is the tourism sector. The loss in earnings in tourism is in the range of ₹20,000 crores to

₹25,000 crores over the nine months of 2020. The Government announced a Covid loss assistance scheme to support the stakeholders in the tourism industry for the revival of the tourism sector.

The State Government has announced one-time financial assistance of ₹10,000 to 328 tourist guides who are rendered jobless because of the pandemic and a one-time maintenance grant of ₹80,000 to ₹1.20 lakh to houseboats based on the number of rooms in them. The relief was also provided to the homestays, which have been moved from the commercial category to the residential category. This allows the facility some relief in the house tax amount to be remitted to the local bodies. Administrative sanction of ₹32.80 lakh had been given to assist approved tourist guides. After construction works were allowed as per the guidelines, there was a concerted effort to complete the infrastructure creation project at major tourism.

6.0 Crisis Managed Well

The pandemic had forced the industry stakeholders to discover and analyze other suitable technologies to restart the industry and aim to get consumer trust. Initially, along with the industries, even the Government was in a shock and was vigorously struggling to bring in strategies to improve the situation. Confidence was that the tourism industry has previously been quick to bounce back from the shocks of epidemics, pandemics, and global crises. However, governments soon realized that the impact of COVID-19 is one of its kind and there is no evaluation to a future date that could say that the industry will come back to the same capacity as in past. It was a phase when the concerned authorities were on the notion that the pandemic is causing a permanent setback for the industry.

The measures Government and the authorities collectively took to build an atmosphere in which they attract investors. Bringing out the dead funds was one of the strategies. Investors got a variety of opportunities such as relaxing related laws, funding of loans for special projects, etc. Governments realized the importance of including and promoting the local businesses by infusing their business to the tourism businesses. This improved the feeling of belongingness to the local vendors and Small-medium businesses. It was observed that local economies proactively contributed by working together and through social work for the betterment of their locality. Be it Cleaning the premises to rebuilding and restructuring the business to improve, attract, and built confidence among the customers. On that note, the rural segment of the industry saw a better phase of recovery as compared to the urban segment.

The support from the government, and more importantly the role of the local businessmen with local belongingness, showed a new way for the transformation of the tourism industry. The challenge for large-scale industries was to connect with local supply markets to minimize the costs. Their overall operations on the other hand had to revive. This included sourcing more resources locally, be it food, raw materials, service providers, or the

composition of the workforce. Now the focus of the tourists is less popular, less inhabited regions that gave a sense of safety as far as the pandemic spread is concerned.

Flexibility from all sides of the value chain changed the tourism industry into the version that elements sustainable tourism, climate action, societal well-being, and involvement of local people. COVID-19 has to lead to positive outcomes for the tourism industry.

Post-Covid relaxation in the imposed restrictions is helping the industry to come back at a faster pace. The issues faced were somewhat handled by the stakeholders. Restrictions on overseas travel for international students, business travelers, political leaders, etc., were solved using technologies like video-conferencing.

Concerning NCBI article published in December 2020 ref below figure. Future researchers may test the resilience-based framework. More or less the study talks about the revival of the tourism industry where the major lockdown and restrictions are a boon to the industry and not a curse. It's only that the industry came to a halt but in many ways, the industry has transformed into a post-pandemic version of itself giving way to the small-scale business which is the major part of the industry.

The tourism industry is always considered a major cause and carrier of the novel coronavirus that triggered the outbreak of COVID-19. The unmanageable practices of the industry didn't help the cause of justifiable living worldwide. The pandemic had nearly brought the global tourism industry to a pause. All stakeholders in the industry worked together to make the industry adequately strong to deal with the disaster. Based on the studies conducted to understand the tourism industry in the context of COVID-19, NCBI proposed a resilience-based framework for the industry. Through such frameworks, researchers were confident that the suggested resilient approach from governments, market players, technology innovators, and the workforce employed in the industry, the tourism sector may end up evolving in a much more sustainable way post-pandemic. The statement is true to that fact that considering same factors with the current development the Kerala tourism has shown. The involvement of local communities was immensely critical in this journey, as the restrictions on international travel took a longer halt than anticipated. Such developments had widened not only the base of the tourism industry but also opportunities for less-developed tourism spots to grow further. The large-scale tourism segment needed a restart to survive in post-pandemic times. Still, acting in line with our resilience-based framework, small-scale players certainly emerged victoriously and ensure the well-being of the society at large while also facilitating sustainable tourism.

A resilience-based framework for the new global economic order suggested after a study by NCBI

7.0 Few Things the Industry Learned During the Crisis

7.1 Budgeted branding

While many industries are prioritizing cutting budgets to reserve finance, they might forget that marketing needs to be funded. Travel entities essentially should continue to show

presence in the market. Any activity can be emotionally marketed to stay in minds of the customer.

7.2 Easy channel for contact

As travelers around the world, are messed up with their travel plans. It is important to have an easy channel for contact so that clients reach them easily.

- Consider Competition and Collaboration: The businessmen, directly and indirectly, a part of the tourism industry should join hands together to cooperate, create strategies, etc to attract and serve the travellers.
- Easy contactless transactions: Easy contactless transactions in terms of reservations, delivery, etc to be considered.
- Digital media: Using digital media for marketing, payments, etc. is considered to be the reliable safe, and cheap medium for transactions.
- Emotional Marketing: The business units have learned to do emotional marketing and have learned to open up their stories to clients. This gives a personal touch to the traveler's memory.
- Learning and strategy building: The pandemic lockdown has given way for businessmen to think differently and strategize plans like to invest in one place or different areas to have a plan to move forward and the tools to make an impression and stand out in the crowd.
- Safety, Hygiene, and Health: As we are aware health and its safety must be the prime factor to consider hereafter.
- Online presence: The market is at your fingertips. Presence online is essential to brand, to know client behavior, Target audience, Competitor actions, and so on.
- Regular touch with Government or commercial assistance: There is a need to cut down expenses and also avail Government schemes that are beneficial for business.
- Partnering with influencers: As social media marketing is in trend and is much more efficient to reach the target audience. This is one of the options.

8.0 Role of Kerala Government

The State Government has announced one-time financial assistance of ₹10,000 to 328 tourist guides who are rendered jobless because of the pandemic and a one-time maintenance grant of ₹80,000 to ₹1.20 lakh to houseboats based on the number of rooms in them. The relief was also provided to the homestays, which have been moved from the commercial category to the residential category. This allows the facility some relief in the house tax amount to be remitted to the local bodies. Administrative sanction of ₹32.80 lakh had been given to assist approved tourist guides. After construction works were allowed as per the guidelines, there was a concerted effort to complete the infrastructure creation project at major tourism spots.

9.0 Conclusion

Kerala Tourism has much more to offer after a comeback right from the variety of cuisines on the plate to the revamped thought of warm hospitality and emotional connection with the traveler. Indeed, the industry is open for all and the God's own country has started to yield with the new thinking.

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