

# Assessing the Effects of Covid-19 on Hospitality and Tourism Employment

Siddharth Bedi<sup>1</sup>, Anjali Xess<sup>1</sup>, Anup Kumar<sup>1</sup>, Gurjeet Kaur<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Chitkara College of Hospitality Management, Chitkara University, Rajpura, Punjab (India)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, P.G. Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, GGSDS College, Chandigarh (India)

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## ABSTRACT

The hospitality and tourism sector is a significant economic driver in developing countries like India. However, its growth also increases vulnerability to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. This study examines the impact of the pandemic on India's hospitality and tourism industry, focusing on existing conditions, challenges, and prospects. Using secondary research methodology, data were collected from various sources, including books, journal articles, and government documents. The findings indicate that COVID-19 has had a substantial impact on the industry, resulting in the cancellation of hotel and flight reservations, significant job losses, and economic and social distress. The study's insights can inform recovery efforts and support industry stakeholders in mitigating the pandemic's long-term effects.

**Keywords:** Hospitality, Tourism Industry, COVID-19, GDP, Employment, Aviation Industry

## INTRODUCTION

The green economy relies heavily on the hotel and tourism industries for a more environmentally friendly development strategy (Pan et al., 2018). It has been the most important and most dynamic area of the global economy in recent years. In 2019, it accounted for 10.3% of global GDP and 330 million employments, both directly and indirectly, in terms of GDP (Balan, 2021). Despite surviving multiple crises and calamities, the global economy has had such a big and positive impact.

Armed conflicts, environmental dangers and pollution, and pandemics are the principal types of crises that can hurt the hospitality and tourism industry.

In addition, Kaushal and Srivastava (2021) stated that pandemics have repeatedly presented the hospitality and tourism industry with unusual obstacles, such as limiting both the demand side (freedom of movement, fear of infection, and so on) and the supply side (the number of people willing to go) (closure of accommodation and leisure facilities, etc.). As a consequence of this, it is challenging to speculate on how the tourism industry would evolve over this period. Author Toubes (2021) analyses, early approach and marketing strategies of tourist features that match the new standards, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, are clearly demanding. This is because the requirements have been updated. These

factors call for extensive research that concentrates on the impacts, changes, and awareness of the phenomenon.

COVID-19 has had an effect on economies all across the world. In 2020, the global GDP is expected to shrink by 5.2 per cent (Khan et al., 2021). The hotel and tourism industry in nations like India has been particularly hard hit by this pandemic. To keep the spread of infection to a minimum, several hospitality establishments have had to close for some time. This includes lockdowns and social distancing, house orders, travel bans, and travel limitations and travel bans. In addition, the demand for enterprises that are permitted to continue has drastically decreased. COVID-19's impact on the hospitality and tourism industry is summarised as "uncertainty and chaos."

India, like other developing countries, relies heavily on the hospitality and tourism sector for long-term economic growth. According to The Times of India (2025), the travel and tourism sector contributed nearly \$194 billion, around 6.8% of GDP<sub>2</sub> during calendar year 2019. India ranked 10th out of 185 economies in terms of travel and tourism spend in 2019, with the industry contributing \$194 billion to the country's GDP. The lockdown in India, which began on March 25, 2020, and ended on May 31, 2020, further exacerbated the situation, with foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) declining significantly: a 50% decrease in January-February. 70% decrease in March, almost 0% in the April-June quarter.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the sector, with a predicted loss of INR 1.25 trillion in 2020, representing a 40% decline in revenue from 2019. The Indian government's initiatives, such as "Dekho Apna Desh" and "Incredible India," aim to promote domestic tourism and support the industry's recovery. World Travel and Tourism Council (2024), The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) also highlights the importance of Travel and Tourism's economic impact, contributing 10% to the global economy and supporting 357 million jobs worldwide. Domestic visitor spending reached \$5.3 trillion, marking a 5.4% growth from 2023 levels. Meanwhile, international visitor spending saw an 11.6% increase, totalling \$1.9 trillion.

On June 8, 2020, the hospitality industry's lockdown was lifted, allowing hotels, restaurants, temples, and other tourist attractions to reopen. Despite this, estimating the economic impact of the COVID-19 epidemic in the zone is impossible because the epidemic wave and longevity are yet to be undetermined. To put it another way, it is unlikely that the sector's favourable signals will return any time soon. As a result, the impact of COVID-19 on the Indian hospitality and tourism industry must be thoroughly studied and analysed.

This study aims to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the Indian hospitality and tourism sector, investigate the economic effects, changes, and awareness of the phenomenon. By examining the existing literature and data, this research seeks to provide insights into the industry's response to the pandemic and identify potential strategies for recovery. The research seeks to provide insights into the broader implications of pandemics on Indian society and economy.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of pandemics on societies and economies has been a subject of interest for researchers across various disciplines. While numerous studies have explored the effects of pandemics globally, there remains a notable gap in the literature concerning the specific context of India. This gap underscores the need for focused research on how pandemics influence social and economic structures within the Indian framework.

COVID-19 has been linked to a significant number of worldwide health problems, as well as an anticipated shift in the global economic order (Ibn-Mohammed et al., 2021). According to Ravallion

(2016), the World Bank will have long-term social and economic consequences. Many countries and regions have had to reevaluate their GDP projections due to the dramatic decline in domestic demand and service supply. Blockades imposed by countries and regions have also been documented by the International Labour Organisation (Yu et al., 2021). Non-essential goods and services are being produced at a higher rate. In countries that rely heavily on exports, falling goods prices have damaged the economies and diminished jobs in exporting countries (Leibovici and Santacreu, 2020). Importing basic commodities and services has become challenging for developing economies because of trade imbalances and massive capital outflows. There had already been an overcrowding problem in tourist spots like Venice, Barcelona, and Kyoto before the outbreak of COVID-19 (Koh, 2020). COVID-19 hurt the tourism and hospitality industry because visitors from both local and foreign countries began cancelling their excursions (Song et al., 2025). Across the globe, airline and transport company employees are being asked to take paid or unpaid leave and accept compensation reductions as a result of the current economic climate. COVID-19 has also had a big impact on the hotel industry. As a precautionary measure, municipal and federal governments have enforced bans on pubs, cafes, and hotels.

Camilleri (2025) commented that Europe's hotel industry is expected to lose almost a third of its business. Booking cancellations across the United States are expected to lead to the loss of approximately four million jobs. There has been a substantial impact on the region's meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibits (MICE). Many airlines, including Indigo and Emirates, were forced to reduce employee compensation and lay off workers (Gautam, 2021). Airline revenues were expected to face significant challenges, and according to a 2020 report by The Economic Times, a 44% fall in revenues was predicted for that year compared to the previous year. However, more recent data suggests the industry has been working towards recovery.

India's hotel and tourism sectors, like those in many other countries, have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It can be seen in the country's incoming, outbound, and domestic tourism statistics (Sharma et al., 2025). Tourism and hospitality workers stand to lose up to 70% of their jobs as a result of the current economic climate (Liu-Lastres, 2023). The Indian tourism industry is expected to suffer losses of up to US\$150 billion as a result (Hussain et al., 2020). Researcher Smith (2020) added that lockdown procedures were put in place as soon as the outbreak started. While the number of COVID-19 daily cases has decreased after September 16, alternative methods such as social distancing, mask-wearing, and avoiding social gatherings have been urged. These policies have had a significant impact on the tourism and hospitality industries. Even if a vaccine is created, its positive impact on the industry will be delayed for a long time due to the lack of assurance surrounding effective vaccines and medicines, as well as the difficulty in distributing vaccines to such a huge population (1.3 billion people).

## METHODOLOGY

This study relies on secondary research data to support its findings. Information was gathered from various sources, including literature, journal articles, government reports and press releases, newspapers, online platforms, temple websites, advertisements, and more. The study concludes that COVID-19 has significantly impacted India's hotel and tourism industry. While the International Air Transport Association (IATA) has provided data on the airline sectors most affected, there is a noticeable lack of data concerning the hotel and other related sectors.

### 3.1 Impact on the hotel sector

India's hotel industry and overall economic development suffered greatly as a result of the COVID-19 closure. Between 2013 and 2017, approximately 1.43 million people were employed in India's hotel industry (Kesavaraj, 2020). International hotel chain Carlson now operates 94 properties in India and expects to build another 30 by the end of 2023 (Nandwani and Bhatnagar, 2023). Major industries in

lockdown saw declines in growth of 39.3% in the manufacturing sector; a reduction of 47% in the commercial and hospitality sectors, and a loss of 50.3% in construction. Agricultural output increased by 3.4% in 2019 over the previous year, only during the monsoon season (Biswas et al., 2021). The hotel industry has been adversely affected due to the cancellation of domestic and international flights by Indian travellers, along with train cancellations, hotel booking withdrawals, the shutdown of travel agencies, suspension of transportation services, and the closure of artisan shops

Nearly all of India's hotels were not fully operational until December 2020. With discounts up to 60%, hotel chains such as Trident and Hyatt are enticing new customers (Gautam, 2021). Approximately 40 million workers in India's hospitality business lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19, according to HAI Vice President K.B. Kachru (The New Indian Express, 2020). Due to the lockdown imposed by COVID-19, the TATA Group's premium hotel business is likewise looking for ways to cut expenses. "The business has never suffered such a fall in revenue in the last 100 years," said Puneet Chatwal, CEO of Indian Hotels Co Ltd. (Business Standard, 2020). The iconic Taj brand of the corporation, which manages The Pierre in New York City, has not reduced hotel employment but has been staffed elsewhere in the TATA Empire. As of September 30, 2020, the corporation had incurred losses of \$51 million. With a 60% salary drop for the company's founders and a 40% pay cut for its managers, the Treebo hotel chain is encouraging its 400 employees to leave on their own will. As of April 15, Oyo had laid off 5,000 employees (Sain, 2022).

Razak (2020) COVID-19 hurts medical tourism because it has a direct impact on luxury hotels and travel companies. Lockdowns and the temporary suspension of domestic airline services have made medical tourism to India difficult. Still, the majority of the articles are focused on hotels that fall into the medium and large categories.

### **3.2 Impact on jobs in hospitality**

Skare et al. (2021) noted in their study that, based on data from the World Travel and Tourism Council, the COVID-19 pandemic could result in the loss of 50 million jobs globally in the travel and tourism sector. Asia is expected to be the most severely impacted region, and findings indicate that the industry may face prolonged disruption. A significant number of workers are unable to get to or perform their occupations as a result of travel bans, border closures, and quarantine measures, which hurts their revenue. Businesses are likely to put off investments, purchasing, and employment because of the current climate of fear and apprehension. According to research, the impact on India's hospitality industry could result in the loss of employment for the vast majority of the country's workforce. According to Hamid and Bano (2023), the Indian tourism industry is bracing itself for widespread bankruptcies, business closures, and a spike in unemployed workers as a result of this pandemic.

As a whole, Leung (2021) added that hotels and restaurants may become more efficient and leaner, requiring a balance between smart and competent employees. As a result, a large number of workers are heading back to their home countries, meaning many front-line hotel employees will now be based there. With hospitality companies struggling to reduce expenses, temporary staff are likely to be the first affected by job cuts, followed by permanent employees if the situation doesn't improve. This could lead to a huge number of people switching industries to get their hands on more money. This global migration in search of better financial opportunities has led to a talent drain, and as a result, the talent pool may not recover until employers take action. A humane approach by firms is the only way to save the workforce (Ewers et al., 2022).

### **3.3 COVID-19 and its disruptive effects on Indian air travel**

The COVID-19 epidemic is likely to have the greatest impact on Indian aviation services. Low-cost airlines are likely to enhance domestic tourism in 2019. The aviation industry in India has substantial

fixed expenses, amounting to 35-40% of total revenue. The costs of leasing, renting, employee compensation, and interest are all included in this category (Shah and Chugan, 2019). The Ude Deshka Aam Naagrik (UDAN) plan envisions low-cost aircraft connecting the country's regions and promoting domestic tourism (Iyer and Thomas, 2020). In addition, India's airport authorities hoped to begin operating 250 airports around the country by the year 2020. As of 2019, there were 132 airports in India. During the 2018-19 fiscal year, the number of domestic and international airline passengers in India grew by 14.1% and 3.4%, respectively. It was predicted that the number of people using Indian airports would reach 450 million by 2020. COVID-19 has severely disrupted aeroplane service. Low profit margins, liquidity difficulties, fixed costs, and mounting debt have made fragile airlines vulnerable to a two-month lockout (Kizildag, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also impacted airline employees. Due to the economic downturn, Air India withdrew job offers for approximately 180 trainee cabin crew members (Scott, 2020). Due to a lockout, Indigo, India's largest airline, has halted flights for several months. It has announced that it will lay off 10% of its workforce to combat weak revenue. Gautam (2021) stated that the airline, which employs 24000 employees, would lose roughly 2400 jobs as a result of this 10% reduction. Several other smaller airlines have faced similar difficulties and are preparing to take similar steps to prevent going out of business as well. In addition, based on international comparisons, Indian airlines place a high emphasis on the danger of going out of business. It's possible that by 2020, it will only account for half of an airline's income, putting the entire aviation industry at risk and putting airline jobs at risk.

"2020 is the worst year in aviation history; airlines are in survival mode," said Conrad Clifford, IATA's Asia Pacific Vice President. COVID-19 is predicted to have the highest impact on airlines in the Asia Pacific, with yearly losses of almost US\$29 billion, more than one-third of the total US\$84.3 billion in aviation sector losses worldwide, as a result. Furthermore, the region's passenger demand is predicted to fall by 53.8%.

### **3.4 Challenges and recovery strategies for the tourism sector post COVID-19**

The COVID-19 outbreak has caused severe damage. As a result of COVID-19's economic devastation and social upheaval, the world economy is in tatters (Makengo, 2021). Businesses' existence and long-term viability will be much more jeopardised in the wake of such a pandemic. It's a tough moment for hospitality businesses, including the aircraft and hotel industries. The aviation industry, as previously noted, will suffer the greatest loss in 2020, totaling \$84.3 billion, the highest loss in aviation history. More than three-quarters of Asia Pacific countries' tourism workers are employed in low-wage jobs, making them particularly exposed to the COVID-19 crisis's negative effects (Dempster and Zimmer, 2020).

After the COVID-19 disaster, stakeholders need to focus on lowering losses rather than increasing earnings to recover. Having no workers in their field will make it more difficult for the economy to recover after the pandemic. So, some precautions should be taken, and the sector's employees should not be restructured at this time. Workers in the hotel industry could be affected by COVID-19 even after the pandemic has ended. Due to the lack of workers, the economy may not recover as quickly as it should. Additionally, to ensure a smooth transition for workers in the hotel industry after the outbreak is over, the tourism industry must be safeguarded with great care (Wong, 2021).

COVID-19 is finished, and the tourism industry is recovering, so the tourism sector needs to be bolstered. The future of the tourism industry hinges on the ability to foster mutual trust among visitors and all other stakeholders. As soon as feasible, begin the process of welcoming visitors. This necessitates financing for the tourism industry, as well as assistance and thoughtful preparation. At that time, tourism circuits with friendly neighbouring nations might be created by the various stakeholders. India is still a popular

destination for medical tourists from throughout the world. However, Pulla et al. (2022), due to the pandemic, medical tourism are presently on hold. Despite the challenges, the medical tourism industry is expected to bounce back soon because patients continue to come from all around the world—places like Europe, the Middle East, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and the United States. As a result, even after the pandemic, it's thought that reviving Indian medical tourism to its former levels will be a major challenge in the future (Dash and Sharma, 2021).

This may significantly affect destination marketing efforts, especially since the development of medicines and vaccines is likely to take a while. As a result of social distancing, luxury hotels and travel will take some time to resurgence. It's now possible to keep your social distance and limit the risk of viruses by staying in domestic boutique hotels, homestays, and other types of lodgings. For this kind of domestic tourism, the government is regarded to be necessary. It will be difficult to resuscitate the tourism industry until medicines and vaccinations are properly developed and efficiently distributed to the population.

## **STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT AND REBUILD INDIA'S TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRIES**

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a detrimental impact on India's economy, which puts a strain on the country's hospitality and tourism industries, threatening the jobs of many. To get the industry out of crisis, some recommendations should be made to the national and provincial governments of India (Sharma et al., 2020). Using these methods, one can conquer the COVID-19 pandemic's challenge.

1. First, give daily workers like taxi drivers and porters immediate support and tax exemption.
2. Loans for infrastructure equipment in the hotel business should be provided at low or simple interest rates.
3. Increase tariffs, all statutory obligations, and license costs from six to twelve months in duration.
4. Ensure that the organization has a well-structured support strategy and a pay support plan.
5. Support for airlines directly (ground processing fees, airport fee diplomas, parking fee diplomas, landing fee exemptions).
6. Term loans and working capital loans can be quick, interest-free, or low-interest loans for reorganizing businesses.
7. Set up a separate tourism fund from the Ministry of Tourism, which intends to provide a 10-year unsecured credit for industrial infrastructure. For the first two years of the loan, interest-free and at a minimal interest rate for the next eight years, are in place.
8. Solutions in the aviation, travel, and transportation industries are intertwined with the travel and leisure industry
9. Employee salary assistance schemes and insurance fee reduction policies should be devised and implemented.
10. The 'Incredible India' campaign is designed to increase beach tourism investment, marketing, and promotion of specialized products.

## **4.1 Reversing the impact on the talent pool**

By cutting back on current employees and allowing them to retrain, front-line workers will have a better chance of getting a job when the economy improves. A reduction in specialized workers could reduce mass migration to other industries, which could lengthen the gestation period of the hospitality market's recovery.

## **4.2 Opportunities to upgrade the skill set**

### **4.2.1 Up-skill**

In a time when layoffs are to be expected at all levels of the hotel industry, providing hotel employees with the opportunity to improve their skill sets could help instil trust in the industry. Many people will lose their jobs because of the popular asset-light model, in which a significant number of working units can be written off at once. Many workers in the hospitality industry will be displaced, further complicating an already challenging market.

### **4.2.2 Re-skill**

If competent front-line hospitality workers are given options like 'Recognition of Prior Learning' chances, they will be more prepared for roles in hotels and other hospitality-related activities in a lean but highly skilled environment.

### **4.2.3 Other innovations in continuous education**

Both students and institutions stand to gain significantly by conducting online classes to compensate for lost time during this period. There is a chance that institutions may reorganize and conduct live sessions, which would ensure some cash flow and lessen the strain on the plans of its cohorts. Content can be hosted and delivered remotely via a simple self-learning technique or in the form of a classroom-style presentation. The current state of technology provides for a wide range of innovative approaches to ensuring learning continuity, all of which will no doubt be implemented in the future as a result of the constant need for new solutions.

It has never happened before in history that firms in nearly 200 countries were stopped by a single factor. To stay relevant in the hospitality sector, we must think outside the box and come up with new ideas. The internet is awash in information about worldwide hospitality trends, which can inspire new ideas. However, the market's embrace of these concepts will be critical to finding the end of the tunnel. Retaining most of their employees reduces the burden on HR and gives companies and governments a competitive edge by keeping them connected and concerned about their resource allocation.

## **CONCLUSION**

COVID-19's impact on the Indian hospitality and tourism industry was examined in this study. A considerable impact on India's tourism industry, particularly in the aviation and hotel sectors, as well as on residents' day-to-day lives, has been verified as a result of this epidemic. As a result of the government's lockdown and travel restrictions, employers and employees in the tourism industry are in danger. The world is seeing this unprecedented situation, which is not limited to India alone.

Revenues in India's aviation sector had been momentarily halted, but have since restarted. We were able to verify the airline sectors' losses, but we were unable to collect comprehensive hotel sector losses.

However, it may take some time for the hospitality industry to recover. After the pandemic, India's government and tourism industry players face problems in reviving the economy. For this reason, it's felt that a plan to deal with these challenges is in order. Even more importantly, the author's recommendation and the FICCI report to India's Government may be crucial in restoring the hotel and tourism business. Any country with a common economy and set of societal ideals might use this technique.

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