

# Domestic Tourism: A Panacea for Global Disasters

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**Abstract:** - Disasters and pandemics have from time immemorial wreaked havoc on tourism industry worldwide. Recently tourism has been badly affected by the impact of Corona virus and the worst hit would be international tourism industry. In the wake of the threat of corona virus looming large, international tourism is bound to fall back into oblivion due to uncertainties involved. Although this pandemic has spelt disaster for tourism industry globally, domestic tourism worldwide could emerge as a ray of hope in such grim scenario. This paper is an attempt to project domestic tourism as the way forward during crises or global pandemics.

**Key words:** Disasters, pandemics, domestic tourism, international tourism.

## I. INTRODUCTION

World due to its dynamic nature is very diverse and complex and is witness to many disastrous events (Richardson, 1994). These disasters may be natural or manmade. Disaster events resulting from natural and human-made hazards are frequent occurrences throughout the world (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2006). Latest one such disaster to hit the world is COVID-19. This deadly pandemic has in many ways devastated the lives of people globally and wrecked havoc on humanity. As per Maslow's hierarchy of needs Maslow, 1954), physiological needs are the most basic needs followed by the needs of safety and security. Tourism activities fall under higher order needs. Tourists would not want to climb up the ladder of hierarchy of needs if their lower and the most basic needs are compromised. Therefore the growing numbers of disasters and such unforeseen events/crises (Paraskevas et al., 2013) have an adverse impact on the tourism demand.

The disease had its origin from Wuhan, Hubei Province of central China. It first emerged in December, 2019. Chinese are the world's top outbound travelers. Since tourism involves movement of people, tourism activities were considered as stimulating factors that had contributed to the spread of virus. The nature of the tourism products are such that these services cannot be brought to one's door steps. A person willing to consume tourism services has to visit a particular location to avail these services (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2007). Many travelers, who travelled to and from China, became the carriers of this deadly virus, resulting in the spread of this disease all across the globe. Unfortunately even the most developed countries of the world are unable to deal with this virus or to find a cure. In these trying times when most of the countries have opted for 'lock down' or 'social distancing', economy worldwide is heading for the biggest recession of all times which is likely to last for many years to come. Tourism industry is the hardest hit industry during these tough times.

When the survival of humanity is at stake, tourism would be the last thing to consider. Almost all the countries have put a ban on tourism related activities since January, 2020. International tourism would be considered a highly risky venture in modern world's uncertainties for some time to come. However, Some scholars have opined that disasters do not have lasting impact on the economy of a destination (Cavallo et. al., 2013). Tourism is a very resilient industry and has the capacity to bounce back. Many researchers suggested ways for revival of tourism industry through varied innovative measures.

Keeping in view the uncertainties and dangerous nature of the deadly virus, an attempt has been made in this paper to focus on the growing need of strengthening, promoting and projecting domestic tourism as a panacea for ailing tourism industry of the world.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study relies on the secondary data. Many researchers have studied impacts of pandemics on tourism and have suggested a way forward. Many web sites have also been consulted in this study.

### *Disasters, Crises and Domestic tourism*

There is not much literature available on the impact of crises on tourism. Very few researchers have studied the impacts of disasters on tourism industry (Faulkner, 2001).

Travel, in general is governed by Push and pull factors. Whereas 'push' factors are intrinsic in nature and indicate personal needs, such as relaxation or breaking the monotony by taking to travel and tourism activities, 'pull' factors present the attributes of a destination (Dann, 1977, p.187). Modern world is full of complexities. Disasters or crises could happen anywhere across the globe.

Natural disasters (like earthquake, typhoons, floods, droughts), climate change and global epidemics by a new types of influenza or other unknown diseases have been identified by Prideaux (2003) as events requiring more attention and in depth studies from tourism perspective for such events may cause the most frequent and serious losses at tourism destinations. Disaster occurrences not only affect the safety of local residents and tourists, they also give rise to negative tourism images and have serious impacts on tourism development (Stylidis, Biran, Sit, & Szivas, 2014).

Tourists may have a firsthand experience or learn through media about a destination's approach /unpreparedness to deal with such crises or disasters. It would result in creating

negative image of a destination leading to avoidance of visiting that particular destination. In the wake of such eventuality, unforeseen circumstances and uncertainties tourism industry is always the first one to suffer and invariably the last one to revive. People would also have concern about travelling to the countries where health care system is compromised or not up to the mark. It has emerged from the previous studies that when image of a tourist destination is low owing to its safety or health measures, chances of revival of economy are also very low as tourists would not wish to visit such a destination (Walters et al., 2015, p.111). Therefore, riskier destinations may be omitted from the destination choice set (Crompton, 1992; Sönmez & Graefe 1998a, 1998b). When traveling internationally, tourists often experience a great degree of anxiety (Korstanje, 2011). Risk perceptions, whether real or perceived, can potentially become the dominant factors in travel related decisions, particularly in the international context (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998a; Sönmez, 1998). Air transportation is the basic element of international tourism. This may prove to be a risky proposition as infections may be spread on the aircraft through close contact and large droplets (Mangili & Gendreau, 2005); airborne spread through small-particle aerosols, as in the case of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) (Olsen et al., 2003); or even through contaminated food, (Eberhart-Phillips et al., 1996; Widdowson et al., 2005). Risk perceptions associated with international travel may vary depending on the geographic region (Sönmez & Graefe, 1996). Furthermore, risk perceptions seem to have a great effect on avoidance of geographic regions and destinations (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998b). The same has been suggested by Gunter and Smeral (2016). They opined that such unforeseen situations and disasters create uncertainties with consumers, to which they react by reducing international travels and substituting it with domestic tourism, necessities to fulfill basic needs and increased savings for emergencies. Domestic tourism and regional tourism may be marketed and promoted as an antidote for survival and revival to sail through such turbulent times. Domestic tourism is the travel of residents within their own country for tourism purposes (Middleton, et al., 2009). Similarly, Hall & Lew (2009) defined domestic tourism as the tourism of resident tourists within the economic territory of the country of reference. Furthermore, Horner & Swarbrooke (2005) defined domestic tourism as a tourism activity when residents conduct holiday tours wholly within their own country of reference. Over the past 25 years a number of tourism researchers have emphasized upon the need for more scholarly attention to be devoted to domestic tourism (Jafari, 1986; Pearce, 1996; Ghimire, 2001; Gladstone, 2005).

Taine (2014: 46) opined that domestic tourism particularly in developing countries had been awarded relatively little attention compared to international tourism. Scheyvens (2007: 308) pointed about an insidious perception that domestic tourism had invariably been the 'poor cousin' of the more glamorous international tourism market, and that domestic tourism could not bring the same range of development benefits to a

country. In the recent years much emphasis has been given to international tourism over domestic tourism in most developing countries. (Jerenashvili, 2014; Scheyvens, 2007; Mazimhaka, 2007).

However, importance of domestic tourism cannot be undermined, more so in the prevalent uncertain situation. Domestic tourism is the largest and the most significant form of tourism when compared to its international counterpart (UNWTO, 2012). It has been observed that countries such as Brazil, India, Indonesia and South Korea promote domestic tourism as a vehicle for national integration and nation building seeking to channel local tourists to destinations of collective symbolic significance (Ghimire, 2001; UNWTO, 2012; Kang et al., 2014).

#### *International Tourism a treacherous endeavor in the times of pandemics?*

Tourism worldwide has suffered a lot from covid-19 pandemic and is not likely to recover in the coming years. In the current scenario, when thought of crowded airports is a cause of grave concern, travel for the purpose of exploring and enjoying foreign destinations will cease to be a source of joy and pleasure. During such treacherous times domestic tourism may emerge as a less risky alternative.

Experts have predicted a grim future for tourism industry across the globe. It may take from a few months to years for tourism industry to recover from the impact of Corona virus. People may not be willing to undertake international travel and tourism activities for the risk and uncertainties involved. There has been a growing concern among the natives with regard to foreigners or even their own nationals who had travelled abroad. Non natives are scrutinized with suspicion. The whole outlook towards travel and tourism activities took a U-turn. All across the globe, people who were travelling or had travelled recently have been treated like untouchables for the obvious reasons. Majority of the countries globally have opted for 'lockdown' for months altogether. The worst hit in this exercise were tourists who were stranded in foreign lands with limited means. There were travelers who were stuck in cruise ships with the fear of corona virus looming large. Many of them became infected with the deadly virus. Thus tourism related activities have instilled fear and anxiety in the minds of future travelers as well. However, due to these trying times tourism should not be labeled as a dangerous activity. Tourism is a highly resilient industry. These times should be seen as an opportunity to develop and promote domestic and regional tourism. This can prove to be as an antidote to cure ailing tourism industry globally. Studies have revealed that domestic tourists are not much affected by the global upheavals. Domestic tourism has the capacity to spring back on track quickly compared to international tourism as the fear or anxiety factor of venturing within one's own country is significantly less.

*Socio-economic implications of domestic tourism*

Dynamism is inherent in mankind urging to find ways to explore and discover. Road ahead for tourism should be to discover their own countries or undertake regional travel as this may be considered less risky. Efforts should be made to connect people to their roots by encouraging them to travel to undiscovered or lesser discovered destinations in their own countries. This may emerge as a safeguard against spatial disparities in tourism. Moreover this would also ensure somewhat equal distribution of tourism earnings to far flung areas by reducing congestion of tourism in some well defined pockets.

Domestic tourism can also prove to be instrumental in stopping rural exodus. This type of tourism may encourage rural population to develop means to engage in ethnic handicraft/souvenir production, and also explore the possibilities of experimenting with local cuisines for the use of tourists. Fairs and festivals of ethnic communities should be promoted as rich and knowledgeable cultural products. This could be promoted among the tourists as an added touristic appeal.

There are many distant and lesser explored destinations that remained virus free even during the peak of pandemic. These unexplored remote areas having a great potential for nature, cultural, adventure, spiritual and wellness tourism should be identified by the developers and marketed among the domestic tourists with the help of local communities.

Domestic tourism is as important for a country as international tourism. During the uncertain times, domestic tourism can give a thrust to economic growth in the holiday regions and may give a fillip to ethnic art and craft. This may even help in filling up the void created by the lack of international tourist visitation. In one of the earliest studies conducted on domestic tourism. Archer (1978: 127) stresses its positive impacts for bringing about “a spatial re-distribution of spending power” as well as “an inter-mingling of people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds”. Domestic tourism ensures a steady flow of currency and keeping it within the country. It keeps a check on inflation and also proves to be a steady source of income and employment for locals. The same fact is also emphasized by Kang et al. (2014), according to them, continuing recognition among government agencies of international travel as more significant from an economic perspective since at the national level inbound international tourism represents a form of income whereas domestic tourism represents the recycling of monies within the nation. (Kang et al., 2014: 3). During the times of crises and disasters domestic tourism assumes tremendous importance as foreign tourists shy away from crossing international boundaries. Studies revealed that domestic tourism contributions, when compared with international tourism, are as high as 60% of the overall tourism income and up to 80% of tourism arrivals (Boniface and Cooper, 1994 cited in Ghimire, 2001). The robust domestic tourism could also be used to alleviate financial

outflows (Ranjanthran & Mohammed, 2010), to iron out seasonality (Kruger & Douglas, 2015) and the uncertainty of the tourism industry (Okello, Kenana, & Kieti, 2012). Domestic tourism expands and diversifies the tourism industry (Mazimhaka, 2007), generates employment, enhances economic growth, and overall tourism industry development (WTO, 2006). Domestic tourism is widely recognized as a wonderful ‘crisis shock-absorber’ (Mazimhaka, 2007) counterbalancing the uncertainties of international tourism owing to varied reasons such as pandemic threats, threat to safety and security, less promotional effort or lack of requisite infrastructure for international tourists. Furthermore, domestic tourism inculcates a sense of pride among natives for their culture, creates employment and entrepreneurship avenues for them, aids in economic development and promotes travel culture among the residents (Mendiratta, 2011).

This has also been observed that if a destination has negligible number of domestic tourists’ visitation, it is not even popular among international tourists. Therefore generally domestic tourists are instrumental in discovering a destination and making it popular among tourists. Domestic and international destinations exceedingly depend on each other (Malska, Hudo, & Cubuh, 2005). If domestic tourism in the country has low number of tourists, this destination has also low attractiveness for international travelers. And vice versa, if country has high number of international arrivals it means that this destination is also attractive for local citizens (Djachenko, 2007). Therefore importance of domestic tourism cannot be undermined.

The global domestic tourism is lead by the United States and followed by China, India, Brazil, and the United Kingdom (Bigano, et al., 2007). Following an increase of middle income earning people and the spread of globalization, travel for the pursuit of pleasure by nationals within their own country has shown significant growth in the third world countries (Scheyvens, 2007).

*Marketing as an effective tool for promoting Domestic tourism*

International tourism has generally been assigned much importance than domestic tourism by most of the developing countries. Despite the fact that domestic tourism represents approximately 80 percent of world tourism flows, within tourism scholarship domestic tourists are given far less attention than their inter-national counterparts (Scheyvens, 2002; Canavan, 2013). Post COVID this trend needs to be changed. It has been observed there is an esteem and prestige value attached to foreign visits by developing countries’ nationals. Many of the high spender tourists who undertake international visits have yet to explore their own countries. Since international travel would not be considered safe for quite some time post COVID, therefore such potential tourists could be motivated to discover their own countries by engaging in travel to farthest unexplored corners. One effective way to attract potential tourists to these virgin native destinations

could be by posting beautiful pictures of scenic locations and tranquility on social media/websites while the world erstwhile was ravaged by the deadly virus. Various tour packages like adventure, nature, rural, health and wellness, cultural, ecological etc. can be prepared for the varied categories of tourists.

#### Way forward

Post COVID efforts should be made to attract tourists to those destinations that have not been affected or very less affected by this corona virus, so that tourists feel safe to visit these destinations. It is also important to safeguard these destinations against any future virus threat. Tourists should not act as carriers of this deadly virus. Therefore entry of tourists should be subject to their production of covid-19 free certificate.

Fairs and festivals of a destination should be promoted as year round attractions for tourists. Remote and unexplored destinations should be marketed as destinations abundant in natural beauty along with added touristic appeal of wellness, spiritual and cultural destinations. This has to be done with the active support of native community. Community approach can prove to be the most effective and positive during the times of crises. Community through its cumulative efforts can deal with the disasters by way of providing medical services, provisions for food and safety or housing the people in need. The same has been emphasized by Yamamura, 2016, in the study conducted on the impact of the Great Hanshin-Awaji earthquake in Japan in 1995.

It could be inferred from the after effects of pandemics that social distancing could emerge as the new norm. This aspect should be accorded due attention by the tourism developers as well. Many service providers such as restaurants have started experimenting with social distancing while serving their guests. A restaurant in New Zealand has been offering beverages to its guests using lumber (<https://www.republicworld.com>).

Some of the countries have used the lockdown period to promote tourism virtually with the help of social media. Tourism ministry of India has launched ‘dekho apna desh’ (discover your own country) webinar series to motivate people to travel across India. This webinar series has been providing an in-depth knowledge of Indian destinations and also urging them to explore their own countries after the lockdown period ( <https://www.incredibleindia.org> ). The same could be adopted by other nations too where their natives could be encouraged to explore own country by ‘venture within’ or ‘discover your own country’.

### III. CONCLUSION

Scholars suggested governments, researchers, and tourism business sectors to prioritize domestic tourism for diversifying the country’s tourism industry (Mazimhaka, 2007), for a more socially and economically sustainable development of less developed regions (Seckelmann, 2002), in addressing the

spatial uneven tourism development (Rogerson, 2015), for the recovery of the tourism industry (Bulin, 2015), for the development of non-industrialized areas to reduce economic disparities (Xu, 1999).

It has been observed that Domestic tourists are frequent travelers than international tourists (Eijgelaar, et al., 2008), and the growth of domestic tourism is steady and rarely affected by situations of the international market. Moreover, it minimizes seasonality of tourism; spread tourism activity; creates awareness (UNWTO, 2012); brings better tourist security (Mendiratta, 2011); solidarity among people (Mendiratta, 2011); sustainable development (UNWTO, 2012); retain the tourism spending within the nation; it can be developed without huge investment and so on (Som & Al-Kassem, 2013). Furthermore, providing job opportunities, rectifying the rural exodus, and revitalizing the economy, the impact of domestic tourism is dynamic for the overall economic, social, cultural and political goals of the nations (Mazimhaka, 2007; UNWTO, 2012). Hence, tourism trends are definitely slated to hit for a change for times to come. In order to revive tourism industry, it is desired to promote domestic tourism as a less risky, safe and gratifying alternative over international tourism.

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