

# Business Opportunities And Challenges For Women In The Travel And Tourism Industry During Pandemics Covid-19

Dr. Nisha Sharma<sup>1</sup>, Anil Kumar Yadava<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Mohd Aarif<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Harishchander Anandaram<sup>4</sup>, Dr. Ali Alalmi<sup>5</sup>, Chandradeep Singh<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant professor, Dept of History, Invertis University [recruitemisha@gmail.com](mailto:recruitemisha@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Engineer, Public Works Department, Uttar Pradesh (UPPWD), Lucknow (U.P. India)  
[akyadava.thesis@gmail.com](mailto:akyadava.thesis@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor (Visiting), Dept of Management, JJT University Rajasthan, India [drmohd03@gmail.com](mailto:drmohd03@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup>Assistant Professor, Centre for Excellence in Computational Engineering and Networking Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

<sup>5</sup>Dept of Tourism and Management, Jazan University, Jazan Saudi Arabia.

<sup>6</sup>Project Associate, Tourism, IITM Gwalior.

## Abstract

COVID-19 was a pandemic that decimated the tourism industry in the 21st century, making it one of the world's largest markets. Using text mining techniques, this study tries to show how travellers reacted to pandemic tendencies. A total of 23,515 cases from TripAdvisor forums in the United States, Europe, and Asia will be analysed between December 30, 2019, and March 15, 2020.

The travel and tourism industry is a significant contributor to the economy of the entire planet. According to the WITC's Economic Impact 2019 report, the travel and tourism sector's contribution to India's GDP grew by 4.9% in 2018, making it the third biggest in the world behind China and the Philippines. In the tourism sector, entrepreneurship is usually acknowledged as a best practice since it fosters an environment that is free-thinking and open to new challenges. Within this sector, women hold a position of utmost significance. Their contributions are not limited to working as workers; rather, they are equally important in business and in starting their own businesses. The current study was carried out with the goal of gaining a better understanding of the potential available to women entrepreneurs in this industry as well as the problems they confront. The travel and tourist business has been hit hard by the breakout of pandemic COVID 19, which has caused widespread illness. Problems relating to expansion or diversification, limited opportunities for diversification, the requirement of professional expertise, a lack of guidance, direction, and support from the government are just some of the challenges that entrepreneurs face. Other obstacles include a lack of available financing, the pressure of domestic responsibilities, fierce competition, problems with expanding or diversifying the business, and so on.

According to the findings, global crises have a significant impact on the tourism industry. Almost immediately as the news breaks, travellers opt to postpone or cancel their trips. Trip insurance and refunds due to travel cancellations were among the topics that emerged from further in-depth research. Providing vacation packages that include travel insurance may help resurrect the business, since it has become a hot topic.

**Keywords:** Women Entrepreneurship, Coronavirus, COVID-19, Pandemic, Text mining, Travel and tourism industry, Pandemic covid- 19, Revival Strategies

## 1. Introduction:

The best method to meet new people and discover new locations is to travel, provided that the journey is devoid of illness, crime, and calamity. Most of the time, the dangers can be managed or mitigated, and the travel diaries will be filled with amazing adventures. In terms of travel or planning, the news of pandemics and epidemics is among the scariest. Often, it is impossible to avoid the disease in such instances. There is also a danger to other people they meet throughout their travels. Travelers are a major factor in the spread of epidemics or pandemics. Recent months have seen an increased attention on outbreak prevention due to the appearance of a novel coronaviral strain in humans.

It is essential to work toward achieving economic independence for women if a nation is to have growth that is both inclusive and comprehensive. According to research conducted by Brush and Cooper (2012), female entrepreneurs make up one of the most rapidly expanding populations of business owners worldwide. In every economy, women make major contributions to the fields of invention, employment, and the accumulation of wealth. According to Heilman and Chen (2003), the rate at which women start businesses is increasing at a rate that is twice as fast as the rate at which males start businesses, and their growth rate of employment and revenue has exceeded the growth rate of the economy. The travel and tourism sector are one of the industries in which the number of female entrepreneurs is rapidly increasing. The travel and tourism industry are a significant contributor to the economy of the entire planet. According to the report "World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Economic Impact 2019,"

India's travel and tourism sector's contribution to the country's gross domestic product increased 4.9 percent in 2018, making it the third biggest in the world after China and the Philippines. The travel and tourism industry in India contributed \$121.9 billion, which is equivalent to 4.7% of the country's overall GDP. In 2020, the industry was responsible for 31,785,200 jobs accounted for 7.3 percent of the total occupations available. In the year 2020, despite the pandemic, international tourists spent a total of 890.7 billion rupees on

travel, while domestic tourists spent a total of 7201.4 billion rupees (WTTC Economic Impact Report, 2020).

Epidemics and pandemics are sparked by newly discovered coronaviruses. Highly contagious and rapidly evolving, viruses pose a serious threat. New epidemics can arise at any time because of this. Most coronaviruses enter the human body through animals. In 2002, a bird-to-human transmission of the SARS virus was most likely the source. Camels were the source of the 2012 discovery of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) virus. Droplets or smear infections can then spread the virus to new victims.

Women's economic empowerment is essential to a nation's overall progress and inclusiveness. One of the fastest increasing entrepreneurial groups in the world is that of women businesses, according to Brush and Cooper (2012). Innovation, employment and income production can all be attributed to women. Women-owned businesses are outpacing the overall economy, according to Heilman and Chen (2003). Women-owned businesses are increasing at a rate two times greater than that of men. There is a significant increase in the number of women entrepreneurs in the travel and tourism industry.

The global economy relies heavily on the travel and tourism industry. After China and the Philippines, India ranked third in the World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTTC) Economic Impact 2019 report for Travel and Tourism GDP growth. The travel and tourism industry in India generated \$121.9 billion in revenue, or 4.7% of the country's total GDP. It employs 31,785,200 people and accounts for 7.3% of total employment in 2020. International visitors paid Rs. 890.7 billion and domestic visitors spent Rs. 7201.4 billion on travel in 2020, despite the epidemic (WTTC Economic Impact Report, 2020).

Global travel and tourism were severely impacted by the abrupt emergence of the novel corona virus, Covid-19. Foreign visitor visits in Asia and the Pacific fell by 82% between January and October 2020. In the first ten months of 2020, the Middle East fell by 73%, while Africa fell by 69%. During this time, there was a 68% drop in Europe and the US.

## 2. Background of the Study

- a) A case study has been conducted with two women entrepreneurs in travel and tourism industry
- b) An online form was filled by women working in travel and tourism industry.

### 3. Literature Review

One of the most important factors in making a travel decision is considering the specific travel motifs of each individual prospective traveler (Bieger, 2008). Although there are an almost infinite number of destinations to choose from when it comes to modern travel, many people choose their destination based on their perception of how safe and secure they feel while there. According to (Kuschel & Schröder, 2002)

Tourism, being an open system, is distinguished by the extensive degree to which it networks with the surrounding environment. Not only do the myriad contacts with the various facets of the outside world influence the tourist system in and of itself, but they also influence the surrounding environment. A holistic view of the environment can be broken down into its component parts, which include the sociocultural, political, economic, and ecological spheres. Because of the multiple interconnections, tourism in its entirety, including all its components, is very sensitive to shifts in the environment across all its dimensions. Haedrich G., Kaspar C., Klemm K., Kreilkamp E., editors. *Tourismusmanagement: Tourismus-marketing und fremdenverkehrsplanung*. Walter de Gruyter; 2010.

Mobility of travelers can also be significantly impacted by a wide range of external factors, including but not limited to the following: These potential external aspects can be summed up in two broad categories: the natural offer of the destination, and the potential danger of crises based on the many environmental characteristics. Both of these categories can be broken down further into more specific subcategories.

Frequently, crises in the tourism industry are split based on distinct characteristics to facilitate comprehension. The most popular methods of differentiation include categorizing crises according to their geographical scope and distinguishing between endogenous and

external crises. According to the spatial dimension, crises are divided into local, regional, national, international, and global geographical ranges. An example of a local catastrophe is water damage in a resort or hotel, which is isolated to this and has no important, related effects. The impact on the region is already catastrophic. A striking illustration of this is a region that is impacted by flooding. Somalia's civil war serves as an illustration of a national crisis. It refers to Somalia as a whole, but not to other countries in the region. In contrast, the Kosovo crisis is defined as international since it obviously transcended national borders and directly impacted multiple nations (Dreyer et al., 2010). The 9/11 terrorist attacks and the 2008 financial crisis had a significant impact on the worldwide tourism industry due to the decline in tourist movement.

This research focuses on medical risks, which can be evaluated through two primary risk factors: the dangers that an individual traveler can come into contact with through his travel activity, and the epidemics, which can spread significantly more easily and faster due to the mobility associated with modern, international tourism. As a result of the behaviors around travel that are always being refined, an ever-increasing percentage of people are going to locations that are further away and more exotic. There are a lot of countries in the third world and emerging countries that are becoming popular travel destinations in the modern tourism industry. However, many of these countries do not meet the standards that are common in the countries that travelers are coming from in terms of the hygienic and medical conditions that are present on-site. In spite of the fact that tourists are provided with pertinent information by tour operators prior to the conclusion of the contract regarding health-related formalities, such as vaccination regulations, a significant number of tourists do not take adequate preventative measures in advance of such trips in order to protect themselves from the medical risks that are present in the destination areas.

### Objective of the Study

- a) The current study was carried out with the goal of gaining a better understanding of the potential available to women entrepreneurs in this industry as well as the problems they confront.

- b) To study the business strategies adopted by these women entrepreneurs during the worst affected pandemic times to revive their business and do well.
- c) To study government policies to support and boost travel and tourism industry.

### Primary Challenges of the Business

It is imperative that certain actions be taken in order for the tourism industry to be able to maintain its dynamic model in terms of the production of income and jobs. These actions must guarantee quality services and continue to make people's lives better. In order to accomplish this objective, it is vital to determine the difficulties that the tourism industry is currently experiencing and, more importantly, what tourism businesses need to do in order to overcome these difficulties.

The need for professional expertise, the absence of guidance, direction, and support from the government, the seasonal nature of employment, the absence of a reliable and fixed income, the definite compulsion to earn profits within a short span of time, and the lack of mobility are some of the challenges. Other challenges include a lack of availability of financing, the pressure of domestic responsibilities, stiff competition, and problems pertaining to expansion and diversification. Less scope for diversification, the requirement for professional expertise, stiff competition, and problems

It has been suggested by Fasci and Valdez (1998) and Birley (1989) that a woman's ability to juggle various duties may result in her devoting less time to her commercial endeavors than her male peers. Due to the fact that they are primarily responsible for their children, their homes, and other elderly family members who are reliant on them, very few women are able to devote their full time and energy to their businesses (Starcher, 1996).

It has been observed over the years that women's business networks are not developed very well as social assets; however, it has also been observed that effective networking can provide significant advantages for female entrepreneurs by assisting in the provision of a competitive edge in the business world (Miller et al, 2007).

### Challenges due to covid-19

In 2020, the sector's overall contribution to India's GDP was 36.3% lower than in 2019, when compared to the previous year. The Indian government imposed a number of measures, including lockdowns, travel restrictions on both local and international routes, and social distancing policies, which were the primary factors contributing to this fall. Additionally, employment in the sector dropped by 20.8% by the year 2020.

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the global pandemic, the first of its scale in a new era of interconnectedness, has put 100 million jobs at risk. Many of these jobs are in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, which employ a high share of women, who account for 54 percent of the workforce in the tourism industry. There is a potential loss of between 100 and 120 million jobs directly related to tourism. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) anticipates a loss of between 1.5 and 2.8 percent of the world's GDP.

Both Durga and Bihu, entrepreneurs, saw their businesses suffer severely as a direct result of the combined effects of all of these issues. Throughout the entire lockdown, they were only able to maintain a minimal level of commerce. The unexpected termination of flights and shutting down of train lines led to a significant financial loss for the company.

**Table 1 displays Bihu's annual turnover as well as the number of full-time workers throughout the course of the past three years, from 2018-19 to 2020-21.**

Year	Annual Turnover (Rs.)	Number of Employees
2018-19	1,54,00,000	17
2019-20	1,30,00,000	15
2020-21	63,00,000	12

From the above data, it is observed that the company had to suffer a sharp decline in turnover during 2020-21 from Rs.1.54 crores to Rs. 63 lakhs. The total number of employees was reduced from 17 to 12.

Year	Annual Turnover	Number of Employees
2018-19	1,99,99,951	4
2019-20	73,69,814	4
2020-21	10,00,000	1

Table 2: Durga's turnover and number of full-time employees during last three years from 2018-19 to 2020-21.

Durga's business too witnessed a sharp decline in annual turnover during 2020-21 mainly due to travel restrictions in many countries and safety concerns after the sudden outbreak of novel corona virus covid-19.

### Revival Strategies

It was astonishing that both of these business owners were able to begin revitalizing their operations within such a short period of time after the entire lockdown was removed and the new business strategies they implemented.

Both of these businesspeople have come up with innovative ideas, such as "staycations" and taking further precautions to ensure their safety when on short excursions, in order to not only revitalize their companies but also thrive in the midst of the epidemic.

Both of these businesspeople started concentrating on shorter journeys that could be easily travelled by roadways as a result of the travel restrictions that were in place outside of a state because the majority of the air and train lines were shut down ensuring a risk-free journey was the first priority.

As a result of the effects of the entire lockdown on people's mental health, people found that even brief car rides were like breathing oxygen to them.

The new venture that Bihu started to explore Molai Forest and to offer home stays there has been quite successful.

### Government Policies to Revive Tourism Industry

The government of India has introduced a number of initiatives, which will be carried out by a variety of ministries between the years

2020 and 2021, with the goal of enhancing the country's travel and tourist industry. The Ministry of Tourism has developed a set of policies to assist the creation of new tourism products, such as the promotion and growth of caravan camping parks and caravans themselves.

A new program, known as the All-India Tourist Vehicles Authorization and permission Rules, 2021, has been implemented by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in order to provide assistance to this industry. A tourist vehicle operator can apply for and acquire a "All India Tourist Authorization/ Permit" online through this program within thirty days of filing their request for the permit.

On June 28, 2021, the Union Finance Minister announced relief packages to revitalize tourism in the country. These packages include financial support for Travel and Tourism Stakeholders (TTS) and registered Tourist Guides, according to which eligible TTS can obtain a loan of up to Rs. 10 lakhs. These loans will have the government's backing thanks to the provision of guarantees.

The Indian government would waive the visa fee for the first 5 lakh foreign visitors to the country. It is anticipated that the implementation of these steps will result in an increase in liquidity sufficient to support operations in the near future.

The prohibitions on travel to Covid-affected areas will be lifted on November 1, 2021, as a result of an improvement in the pandemic situation. This is one of the steps that the government of Assam is doing to try to revitalize the tourism industry. In addition to this, it is working hard to guarantee that the greatest possible number of individuals receive vaccinations. The Chief Minister of Assam has launched a rescue package that will reward 142

tour operators with Rs. 2 lakh each and 605 guides with Rs. 25000 apiece in order to help them make up for the losses they have sustained as a result of the pandemic. (Sept. 20221 edition of *The Economic Times*).

### **Inferences and Teaching Lessons**

The travel and tourism industry is responsible for around 10 percent of the world's gross domestic product, as stated by the World Travel & Tourism Council. It has the potential to contribute 12 trillion dollars to the expansion of the world economy by 2025. (McKinsey Global Institute Report,2020). It has developed into one of the industries that is expanding at the quickest rate across the world.

The tourist industry in India has the potential to be a driver of economic expansion, and it also has the ability to not only pull women out of poverty but also to offer them with respectable and sustainable work opportunities. There appears to be an upward trend in the number of women who start their own businesses related to travel and tourism. This has been spurred by a number of factors, including assistance from the government, increased efforts to educate women, a desire to achieve economic independence, and so on. Due to a lack of empowerment, confidence, gender-centric factors, lack of internal/external support and cooperation, and the fact that women entrepreneurs do not feel confident about their performance, women have lagged behind in terms of profits, market share, contribution, and sustainability, among other metrics.

In India, there is a significant amount of room for growth in the realm of female entrepreneurship in the travel and tourist industry. The government ought to direct its attention toward the establishment of essential infrastructure, such as women-centric incubator models at the college, university, industry, and government levels. It ought to offer start-up capital to female entrepreneurs operating in this sector.

The findings of this study demonstrate that successful business models are constantly adaptable and changeable in response to shifting market conditions. People tend to favor going to locations that are less crowded now

that the new normal has been established. These days, staying at someone's home rather than a hotel is becoming increasingly common. They are the ideal accommodations for travelers in search of emotional solace; hence, they encourage women business owners to form partnerships with them and also solicit their assistance in promoting regional cuisine and culture.

### **Conclusion**

Modern service and industrial society's cultural and social shifts, as well as its technological and economic advancements, particularly in the transportation sector, have influenced visitor demand enormously. Another explanation for an overall growth in international tourism is due to variables such as increasing geopolitical stability and the opening of numerous national boundaries (Franklin, 2003; Weaver, 1998). Tourists were one of the fastest-growing markets even if growth rates were declining, until the world encountered a new brand epidemic in the twenty-first century.

Because of pandemic patterns, this study attempted to show the activities of individual tourism actors and tourists. This research aimed to find out how the COVID-19 epidemic affected travel and tourism around the world based on feedback from tourists and travel planners.

Tourism is very vulnerable to global crises, according to the findings of this study. Travelers began to focus on the COVID-19 disaster as soon as it emerged, even though it was still a local issue. It is almost the same day that travelers decide to postpone or cancel their visits because of the widespread dissemination of information. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic declaration, many tourists decided to cancel their visits right away, and they began to debate travel assurance issues.

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