



The COVID-19 Pandemic and Sustainable Tourism Development

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ABSTRACT

The Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic situation has posed a significant effect on the tourism industry. Tourism destinations have accepted emergency health care measures and restrictions imposed on human movement around the world. Beaches and resorts are empty, peoples' movements are stopped, and traveling between territories is strictly controlled. The COVID-19 lockdown around the world has imposed a negative impact on the livelihood of people and the world economy as well. The goal of the current study is to determine the potential for sustainable tourism growth in the near future given the social, economic, and environmental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

INTRODUCTION

More than 200 countries around the globe are affected by the Corona Virus (COVID-19) pandemic. The situation has been regarded as a symptom of discrimination and a deficit of social advancement in the affected countries. It also creates a social, economic, and political crisis in the infected territories (Chakraborty & Maity 2020). Walker et al. (2020) have estimated that the Coronavirus pandemic will be infecting 7.0 billion people and cause 40 million deaths worldwide. Most countries in the world have implemented lockdowns of cities, closure of borders, and other essential health measures to prevent the pandemic (Zhang et al. 2020a). The COVID-19 pandemic has created several uncertainties in global phenomena, such as negative effects on GDP (Baker et al. 2020), the relation between globalization and the pandemic (Zimmermann et al. 2020), effects on international business and trade (Bekkers & Koopman 2022), and the emergence of a crisis in the global value chain (Pahl et al. 2022). In the year 2020, the COVID pandemic reduced the world GDP by 4.2% (UNCTAD 2020). The indicators of the macroeconomy, such as employment, foreign investment, GDP, and health care system have been affected due to the lockdown and uncertainties during the lockdown situation (Idris & Oruonye 2020).

Tourism is one of the most negatively affected sectors by the COVID-19 pandemic globally. The pandemic situation has affected massively domestic and international travel,

accommodations, cruise lines, entertainment, restaurants, and other related segments in the tourism sector (Assaf et al. 2022). Most countries have taken various actions like lockdowns, travel bans, restrictions on movement, and quarantine which have had a significant impact on the global tourism industry (Gossling et al. 2021). For several weeks, there appear to be no formal activities in the world, which has a negative impact on every aspect of life. The pandemic situation has affected tremendously the tourism industry worldwide. Faus (2020) estimated that the tourism industry needs at least one year to recover the losses in the present situation. Most of the destinations in the world have embraced coronavirus-related restrictions.

In 2020, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) predicted that there will be 1.1 billion foreign tourist visits, down from 8.5 million in 2019. Due to this reduction, the global tourist industry has lost \$300 to 450 billion in revenue and five to seven years' worth of growth. During the first 8 months of 2020, tourism activities have decreased by 70% compared to the same period in 2019 in the globe. The pandemic situation has decreased US\$ 910 million to US\$ 1.2 trillion in export revenue and 100-200 million jobs around the globe (UNWTO 2020). According to World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the pandemics COVID-19 situation has cut about 50 million jobs and about 75 million jobs are at risk worldwide. It is predicted that the tourism industry needs at least 10 months to recover after the outbreak of the

pandemic situation. The COVID-19 condition has affected Asia worst and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) has been impacted heavily because of their high reliance on tourism for economic growth (WTTC 2020).

Several crises like economic rescission, environmental degradation, and political instability have influenced tourism demand (Cró & Martins 2017). But present COVID-19 pandemic makes it difficult to manage and needs long-term survival approaches like the Ebola-related tourism crisis in African countries (Novelli et al. 2018). Moreover, Jiang et al. (2017) emphasized macro-level research to provide guidelines for crisis orientation in tourism. COVID-19 has negatively impacted the livelihood of people and economics around the world. During this pandemic span, social, economic, religious, and cultural activities have been disrupted due to maintaining physical and social distances. Furthermore, Dwyer et al. (2016) suggested that future research will be concerned to incorporate the measure of sustainability in terms of social, economic, and environmental aspects. The goal of the current study is to determine the potential for sustainable tourism growth in the foreseeable future given the social, economic, and environmental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Payne et al. (2021) emphasized policy response to mitigate negative impacts on the economy and focus on crisis management to overcome permanent shocks and changes in the pandemic situation. Government interventions are necessary for policy support and to restore the tourism sector to a pre-pandemic position (Payne et al. 2021). Assaf et al. (2022) have identified COVID-19 impacts in the tourism sector in terms of consumer behavior, demand and forecasting, destination and facility management, information technology, quality of life, and sustainability. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic is creating challenges for transformative impacts and practices in the future tourism sector. Kock et al. (2020) emphasized on possible positive settlement situation in tourism after the pandemic impacts future growth and competitiveness.

Fig 1 highlights the COVID-19 pandemic and sustainable tourism development in terms of social, economic, and environmental aspects. This pandemic situation is affecting the three aspects positively and negatively. The research initiatives in COVID-19 have covered two areas. Firstly, qualitative approaches are highlighting the management aspects to the policymakers so that they can prepare for future crises and pandemic situations (Gossling et al. 2021). Secondly, quantitative approaches are providing guidelines to analyze impacts in different aspects like social, economic, and environmental (Pham et al. 2021). Wut et al. (2020) argued that tourism has suffered as the most vulnerable sector worldwide during this pandemic situation. They have emphasized discovering the impacts of a pandemic to recover the situation.

Due to the pandemic situation, Gossling et al. (2021) urged for the resetting of the sustainable tourism model in place of the conventional model for embracing the tourism sector. They compared the COVID-19 impacts with the previous pandemics and events. They revealed travel pattern is responsible for the spread of the coronavirus and it creates significant impacts globally. Due to the correlation between opportunities, uncertainties, and crises, Hall et al. (2020) emphasized identifying strategic solutions for specific cases related to pandemics. It is necessary to find out the strategic responses in the tourism sector to recover from the crisis of the pandemic. Effective planning and guidelines are giving support to the tourism sector in terms of resistance and recovery of the losses as well as the transformation of this sector. These initiatives are helping the tourism sector collaborate with the other business sectors to recover from the losses of the pandemic (Do et al. 2021). Chen et al. (2022) identified several effects of the pandemic on the tourism sector in China, such as tourists' emotions, tourism venue management, national intention, and local reaction, conflicts in tourism activities, corporate initiatives in tourism, government support, tourism product, and post-crisis activities.

Dolnicar & Zare (2020) argued that due to the pandemic situation, the tourism industry needs innovative strategies to recover from economic damage and physical changes as well as achieve sustainable development. The tourism sector

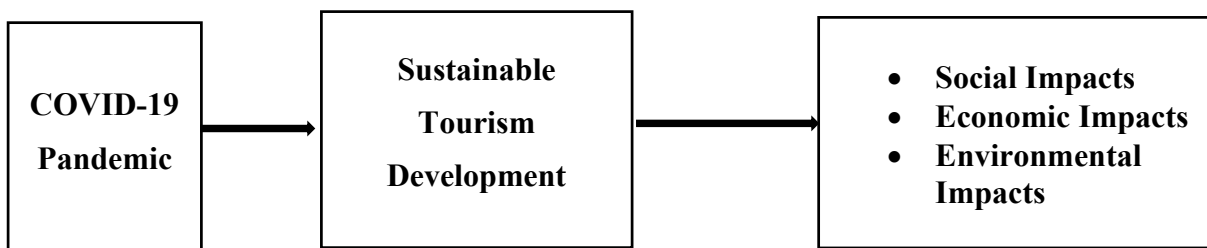


Fig 1: COVID-19 pandemic and sustainable tourism development.

has faced several crises due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic which impacted the social and economic dimensions. Utkarsh & Sigala (2021) argued that the future of tourism research after post-COVID-19 depends on sustainability. Moreover, most of the research initiatives have emphasized responsible and sustainable post-pandemic tourism activities in the post-pandemic situation. Jones & Comfort (2020) emphasized sustainable tourism development with safe and clean consumption to remedy the damage in the tourism sector due to pandemic effects. According to Fennell (2021), the pandemic period's sustainable tourism activities and consumption were not identified. To manage the tourism sector in light of the pandemic recovery situation, Benjamin et al. (2020) emphasized sustainable tourism policies and practices, enforcing sustainable consumption, and ensuring economic benefits. The pandemic situation has caused social, economic, cultural, and psychological impacts on the different tourism stakeholders and they have suffered for a long time (Abbas et al. 2021). From the above discussion, it is indicated that the pandemic situation has affected immensely the tourism sector due to the spread of the infection. For the tourism sector to recover after the post-pandemic, ensuring sustainable tourism development is essential. It is necessary to identify the pandemic impacts from the perspective of social, economic, and environmental aspects and suggest necessary recommendations in this regard.

SOCIAL IMPACTS AND TOURISM

COVID-19 becomes a major cause of infection and death of people in all age groups in the affected countries. Due to mass gatherings and panic, various social, cultural, political, and sports events have been canceled and some international occasions like Hajj, Umrah, Olympic Games, summits, conferences, and exhibitions are suspended for an indefinite time (Chakraborty & Maity 2020). The social, religious, and economic transformations face challenging circumstances in mass occasion arranging countries (Yezli & Khan 2020). Saudi Arabia has attracted 10 million pilgrims every year for Hajj and Umrah (Yezli et al. 2017). The maximum number of pilgrims will lose to the pandemic infection. The COVID-19 circumstances bring social and cultural changes in the world that lead to social segregation. This pandemic also has changed travel behavior and intention to travel willingness (Zhang et al. 2020b). Tourists have canceled their travel trips during this pandemic to ensure the safety of their health (Li et al. 2020).

Travel opportunities help people to fulfill their mental happiness and social well-being. The pandemic damaged the social fabric of people due to social distance, lockdown, and quarantine rules. The COVID situation made worse

different social problems like social and mental unrest, loss of freedom, isolation, and uncertainty in life (Saladino et al. 2020). The pandemic situation is affecting the behavior and well-being of tourists. Most of the destinations have ensured a travel ban for preventing the transfer of viruses among the local communities. Abbas et al. (2021) have identified several consequences in the tourism sector due to COVID impacts. The social consequences are health and mental issues for tourism workers, the virtual environment, human resources, social cohesion, tourism enterprises, and economic conditions.

The COVID-19 pandemic situation suggested avoiding mass gathering functions like conferences, sports events, business meetings, fashion shows, and marriage ceremonies, which have a great social impact (Ali & Alharbi 2020). The lockdown conditions worldwide have influenced labor productivity and caused lower tourism outputs. Tourism demand also decreased in this situation due to health risks to human mobility (WTO 2018). Sigala (2020) revealed that COVID-19 has impacted tourism at the employee, organization, and industry levels. This pandemic created significant losses in tourism employment which affected negatively livelihoods and societies. Nannia & Ulqinaku (2020) have suggested virtual tours for tourists in parks, museums, and other attractions due to COVID-19 lockdown circumstances. Tussyadiah et al. (2018) pointed out that virtual visits create a positive intention for tourists to visit a place physically. Ulqinaku and Sarial-Abi (2021) have suggested interactive tours through technological adoption when mortality threats increased.

The pandemic situation has created several social impacts on the tourism sector. Several factors can contribute to the development of sustainable tourism from a social perspective. The mentionable social aspects are guest-host interaction (Giovanardi et al. 2014), social motivation (Xing et al. 2014), social experiences (Nordvall et al. 2014), community perception (Kim et al. 2015), and socio-cultural impacts (Getz & Page 2016). Again, Nannia & Ulqinaku (2020) have suggested tourism development in experimental approaches, causal effects, virtual tours, and attitudes of tourists during the COVID-19 situation. Al-Mughairi et al. (2021) have identified some social impacts of a pandemic on the tourism sector in Oman, such as anxiety, irritation, depression, and stress among the tourism stakeholders regarding the possible consequences.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND TOURISM

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has had a significant impact on the aviation sector globally. Major international airline companies have deferred their flight operation. All airlines

have reduced air travel in this uncertain global situation. Other modes of transportation such as road, rail, and water were also hampered in this COVID-19 emergency (Goodell 2020). Millions of dollars have been lost in the aviation and tourism sectors in the related nations as a result of the travel ban. This also created shortage of medicines, agricultural products, food supply, and other commodities in affected countries (Ali & Alharbi 2020). As a result, the people related to tourism, aviation, and transportation are suffering extreme difficulties. Skare et al. (2021) conducted research on COVID-19 impacts on global tourism based on panel data from 185 countries. The research revealed that the pandemic caused a US\$ 4.1 to US\$ 12.8 trillion decline in tourism GDP, a decrease in jobs from 164 to 514 million, a loss of US\$ 4.8 billion to US\$1.9 trillion, and reduced investments from US\$ 362 billion to 1.1 trillion. The research recommended several initiatives for the recovery of the tourism sector such as policy support in public and private coordination, capacity building, and sustainable operation.

According to OECD Assessment, COVID-19-affected countries are facing high inflation and unemployment problems due to expenditure on treatment and rehabilitation of people (OECD 2020). Again, the affected countries have a lost 2% of their annual GDP growth every month during the pandemic. The tourism sector has faced a decrease in output from 50% to 70% (Chakraborty & Maity 2020). The outbreak control situation increases costs in the health sector, decreases the productivity of employees, and reduces economic activities as a whole. Yang et al. (2020) revealed that pandemic situations are causing several changes in the tourism industry, including market behavior, and economic transformation which is creating immediate impacts on the economy. Al-Mughairi et al. (2021) have revealed that the COVID pandemic created a negative impact on tourist demand, products and services, tourism supply chain, financial loss, distribution system, and relationships among the tourism stakeholders in Oman. Abbas et al. (2021) identified several economic impacts due to the COVID-19 situation such as job opportunities, tourism education, training, marketing support, sustainable opportunity, and required skills.

The continued social distance between people in this environment hinders tourism activity (Goodell 2020). Many Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia have invested a huge amount of money to develop the country as a tourism hub within Vision 2030 (KSA 2016). Their investment and vision fulfillment have been hampered by this pandemic situation. Moreover, investment in tourism-related amenities such as recreation centers, restaurants, coffee shops, museums, fitness clubs, shopping malls, swimming pools, and cultural centers is also affected by the pandemic condition (Yezli &

Khan 2020). In this pandemic condition, the output and labor productivity in the tourism sector are lower and the risk of health crises is higher (Yang et al. 2020). Subsidizing travel expenses and receiving financial aid from other industries will be crucial in the post-pandemic period for the tourism sector's recovery (Yan & Zhang 2012).

The COVID-19 pandemic situation has created great impacts on the tourism sector and the overall economy of the country. Future tourism development will be based on the evaluation of the different stakeholders-local communities, tour operators, accommodation owners, food businessmen, tour guides, and transportation providers' perceptions and aspects of tourism impacts (Dwyer et al. 2016). Moreover, several macro-level impacts such as the impact of climate change on tourism, and the effect on GDP, taxation, economic welfare, and employment in tourism (Dwyer et al. 2016) are also be considered in near future. Again, the post-pandemic situation will require sustainable tourism development based on tourists' behavior, destination choice, and tourism planning and strategies in new consequences (Wang & Ritchie 2012).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND TOURISM

Within the context of the major global negative challenges, the COVID-19 situation generates certain positive situations. Environmental matters like pollution, global warming, climate change effects, and change in ecosystem and biodiversity are showing positive landmarks in this period due to less human pressure on the environment (Bremer et al. 2019). The pollution in natural tourist attractions such as forests, beaches, hill areas, and water bodies also decreases during this pandemic situation.

Beaches are a valuable natural resource that many nations rely on to support tourism, recreational activities, and the survival of the livelihood of coastal communities (Zambrano-Monserrate et al. 2018). However, the irresponsible use of these beaches by communities and tourists has resulted in pollution issues. (Partelow et al. 2015). The beaches around the world have decreased the arrival of tourists to maintain social distancing. As a result, the reduction of waste generation and beach clean-up activities can enhance during this pandemic period (Zambrano-Monserrate et al. 2020). Moreover, less waste generation also creates a positive impact on environmental issues such as water, soil, forest, and air (Schanes et al. 2018).

Noise pollution is one of the main sources of environmental degradation and cause health problem for people and disturbs the natural coherence of the ecosystem (Zambrano-Monserrate & Ruano 2019). The decrease in transpor-

tation use in tourist attractions is contributing positively to the reduction of noise (Zambrano-Monserrate et al. 2020). Moreover, some other aspects are suitable for post-pandemic tourism research such as tourism events and environmental consequences, event sustainability (Pernecky & Luck 2012), willingness to pay, and carbon footprint analysis (Andersson & Lundberg 2013). Abbasi et al. (2021) revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected some global challenges which are influencing the global tourism sector. The challenges are carbon emission, renewable energy, industrialization, and the service industry.

The pandemic situation has created positive impacts on the environment due to maintaining social distance, lockdown conditions, producing less pollution, and limited use of natural resources. Future tourism development should consider various environmental aspects such as pollution, ecosystem and biodiversity, use of natural resources, recreational activities, and waste management. Table 1 highlights the future scope for sustainable tourism development related to the COVID-19 impacts with different themes in three areas- social, economic, and environmental.

Table 1: The COVID-19 pandemic impacts and sustainable tourism development.

Areas	Themes
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis management and strategies • Emergency tourism package • Travel facilitation • Diversified tourism products and services • Tourism governance • Human capital development • Social distance and tourism • Knowledge management • Postponed tourism events • Stress among the population
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment and livelihood • Taxes and subsidies • Transportation • Consumer protection • Tourism investment • Stimulate demand • Tourism supply chain • Poverty and tourism • Sustainable profit • Tourism productivity • Loss of tourism demand • Slow revenue growth and poor cash flow
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable tourism • Sustainability and recovery • Embracing SDGs • Environmental pollution • Climate change impact • Energy efficiency • Carbon emission

Sources: Adapted from UNWTO (2020), Haleem et al. (2020a), Haleem et al. (2020b)

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 lockdown around the world has imposed a negative impact on the livelihood of people and the world economy as well. The pandemic crisis also opens up new opportunities for sustainable tourism growth in the foreseeable future because of its effects on social, economic, and environmental factors. Foo et al. (2020) identified that government subsidies have stimulated the tourism sector during the pandemic situation. Ugur & Akbiyik (2020) suggested insurance packages for the recovery of the tourism sector due to the pandemic crisis. Sigala (2020) claimed the pandemic situation was a transformational opportunity for the tourism sector. The research recommended government efforts such as tax holidays, subsidies, and stimulus packages for enhancing alternative opportunities in tourism such as virtual services and e-tourism.

In the post-COVID-19 pandemic situation, sustainable tourism development will require studies on mortality conditions, pandemics, natural disasters, and economic crises (Ritchie & Jiang 2019, Nannia & Ulqinaku 2020). Ritchie & Jiang (2019) suggested on several aspects such as management strategies for post-crisis, tourism disaster lifecycle, micro-level emergency management, hospitality, small and medium enterprises (SME), technology trends, and knowledge management would be vital for sustainable tourism. Moreover, Getz & Page (2016) pointed to special interest tourism, impact assessment, and sustainability issues, and Yeoman et al. (2014) highlighted trend analysis for future tourism development.

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