

VULNERABILITIES OF 'RESILIENT TOURISM' AND EMERGING TRAJECTORIES: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Sutheeshna Babu S.*

Abstract

The business of tourism is woven around creating longing consumer experiences through a variously connected chain of divergent spatially fixed tangible and intangible assets. Relentless pursuits of the visitors for novelty and uniqueness drive the business forward with great momentum and enhance its resilience. However, the natural and anthropogenic stressor events push the vulnerabilities of tourism and destinations, often making it very fragile and struggling to withstand the effects of the onslaughts. This paper has been scoped to map the vulnerabilities of tourism in Indian context and to elucidate the perspectives for a resilient tourism. The results suggests that domestic and outbound tourism sectors in India have been seen largely resilient in the 21st Century while FTA's did face setbacks during the global level disasters. Building resilience is a multi-faceted praxis and its effectiveness demands involvement and integration of key stakeholders at all levels- destination, industry and establishment.

Keywords: *Vulnerability, Resilience, Disasters, Economic Recession, Sustainable Tourism, COVID-19*

CONTEXT

The known history of tourism is saddled with multitudes of instances to suggest that tourism is no stranger to downturns and adversities; whether it is natural, political, terror threats, war, social or economic. The New Millennium (NM) itself has been witnessing to a continuum of global crises in succession, onsetting with the spread of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in 2002 and prolonged until 2004, costing the global economy of an estimated US\$5 4 billion. Indeed, the first decade of NM was crisis-ridden but culminated to witnessing the resumption of the global economy post the recession eventuated from the tremors of sub-prime crisis. The tourism economy globally saw a robust growth in the subsequent decade of 2010-2019 but fell quickly to the clutches of COVID-19 Pandemic that shook the humanity as never before by March 2020.

Among the economic sectors, tourism was most affected and forced to ground with frequent lockdowns, mobility restrictions, closing of the international borders and the borders within the countries at different administrative levels from the State/provincial to the district and local jurisdictions. The magnitude of the impacts has been such that most tourism establishments remain locked whereas the passenger airlines and other modes of public transport continue to stare at stringent operational restrictions. As the signs of mobilities gaining momentum in the immediate future turned bleak, accommodation segment responded

with lockdowns and employee retrenchments. While a gasping tourism sector negotiate the multiples of harsh and unforeseen realities, the key losses are mounting and millions of jobs and trillions of dollars in revenue lost already.

Subsequent to almost every major crisis in the past, exceedingly faster recovery of tourism sector and its sustenance was evident and that prompted the admiration for a 'resilient tourism' where the contested propositions received lesser traction. However, lingering of severe crisis eventuated from the COVID-19 Pandemic and its marauding effects on the people, economic structures and its functioning put a 'resilient tourism' to serious test. Specifically, holding an optimistic view on faster rebound of tourism is at stake and the emerging scenario pose questions on the prudence of relying past experiences to rationalize a faster recovery narrative.

Tourism industry in India was robust until the Pandemic gripped in March 2020, but the sudden turn of events brought the entire range of economic activities including tourism to a standstill for the next many months. The National and State governments responded together and took the industry partners to embark on various measures and restrict the spread of virus while ensuring support mechanisms to the people, especially the socially and economically vulnerable sections. Unlike other industry segments, tourism suffered most and continues to bear the brunt since predominant segments of tourism service providers- establishment operators and workers- are also vulnerable socio-economically.

* Nodal Officer, National Institute of Watersports, Goa, India. Email: babspillai@gmail.com

The multi-faceted and impactful tourism warrant resilience since it is a key tool to achieve at least 4 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) viz. good health and well-being, decent work and economic growth, industry innovation and infrastructure, and partnerships for achieving the goals. Thus, reducing the vulnerabilities of tourism to adverse natural and anthropogenic events by way of pre-empting steps and actions backed by the mitigating mechanisms should form integral to handling of the crises being underway. However, hardly specific studies exist that specifically address these concerns in Indian context. Thus, current paper emerges from an attempt to map the dimensions of potential vulnerabilities of a 'resilient tourism' in India and the bearing of those stressors in jeopardizing the cause of tourism as an enabling mechanism in achieving the socio-economic development goals in the country.

CHARACTERIZING 'RESILIENT TOURISM'

Resilience as a concept differs depending on the context and the discipline under which it is approached. However, it can in general be defined as 'the ability of a system to absorb distractions and learn to adapt when there is turmoil to grow and become more dynamic' (Holling, 1973, 1996). While undergoing changes, resilience enables to retain essentially the same function, structure, identity and feedbacks' (Walker et al., 2004) that existed before the disturbance began. In other words, it is the ability to withstand adversity and bounce back from difficult life events (Orchiston et al., 2016) or effectively adapt and overcome difficult conditions. Perhaps the definition advanced by Rockefeller Foundation is more encompassing and it denotes to 'the capacity of

individuals, communities and systems to survive, adapt, and grow in the face of stress and shocks, and even transform when conditions require it. Building resilience is about making people, communities and systems better prepared to withstand catastrophic events— both natural and manmade—and able to bounce back more quickly and emerge stronger from these shocks and stresses (Rockefeller Foundation, 2016).

The concept can also be understood in different types and dimensions viz. social, community, organizational, development and disaster. At the community level, Sharifi and Yamagata (2016) talks of '4 abilities' that deal with the ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and successfully adapt to adverse events. In business context, it signifies the ability of organizations to rapidly adapt, respond and withstand all types of risks and adversities that might affect its business processes and growth prospects. In a socio-ecological context, it can be approached as the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while undergoing change so as to retain essentially the same function, structure, identity and feedbacks' (Walker et al., 2004).

The demand side of tourism indeed gave credence to the advocacy for pitching the cause of tourism arguing that tourism is largely resilient to the adverse events and its ability to recoup and normalization is faster. For, the first decade of 21st century in particular has been witnessed to some of the pan-global challenges in SARS, Bird Flu, Ebola and the great economic recession of 2008-2009. Notwithstanding the fluctuations, UNWTO data would reveal that the global tourist arrivals in the first decade have recorded nearly 41.2% increase from 674 million in 2000 to 952 million arrivals in 2010 which further increased by 53.6% to 1462 million in 2019 (Fig.1).

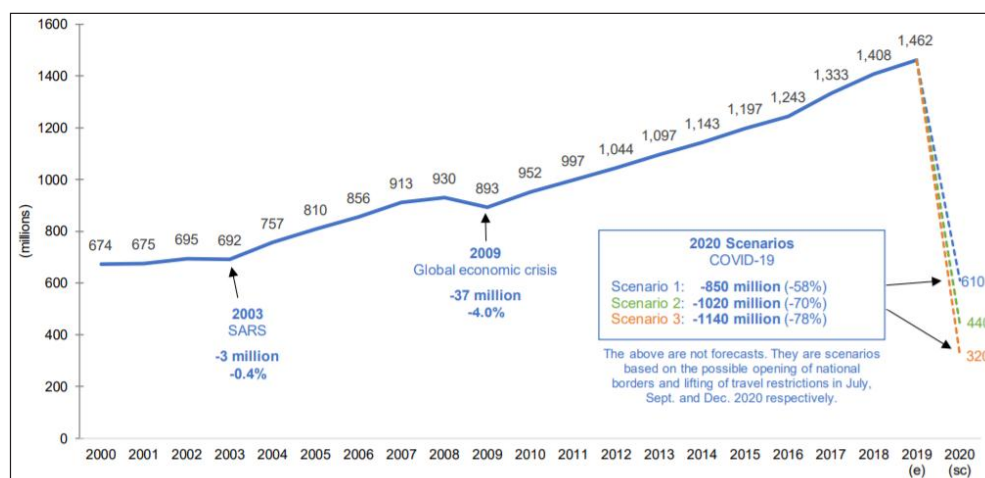


Fig. 1: International Tourist Arrivals - 2000-2019 (millions) and Scenarios for 2020

Perhaps, the growth in global earnings from tourism was remarkably faster at 97.4% during 2000-2010 and another 51.5% during 2010-2019, taking the total earnings to US\$

1480 billion in 2019 (Fig. 2). However, the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic were such as the arrivals in 2020 fell by almost three-fourth to 393 million in 2020.

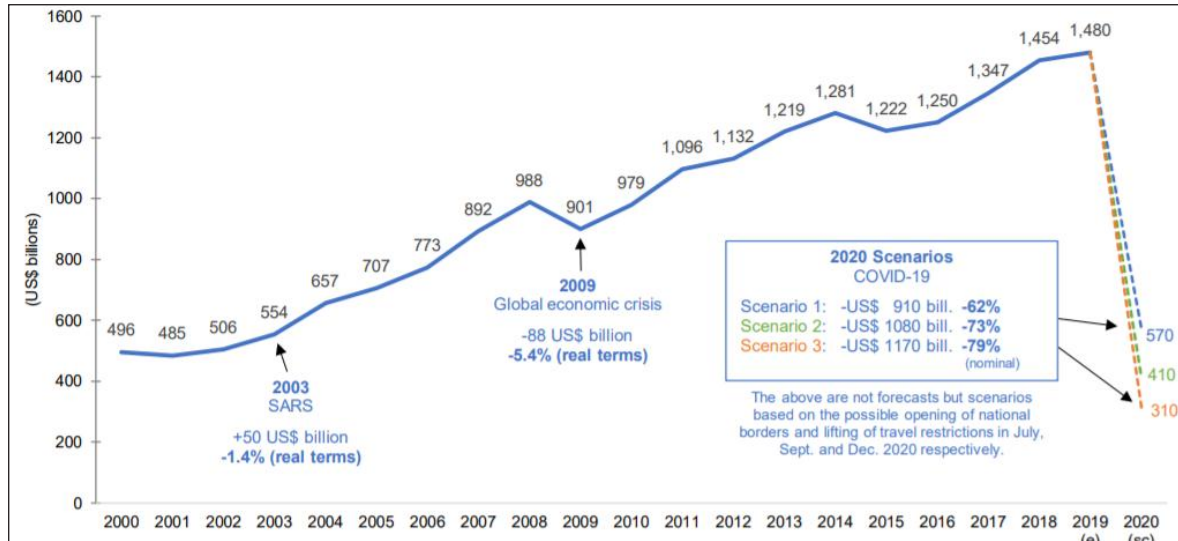


Fig. 2: International Tourist Arrivals - 2000-2019 (US\$ billion) and Scenarios for 2020

UNWTO World Tourism Barometer May 2020

Source: <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284421817>

However, for the effective resilience practices to work, the studies suggest for the imperative of endeavoring a systemic approach that breaks down a socio-ecological system into components to better understand the interactions (McLeod, 2020). In tourism context, understanding of the subject is rather limited and the application of resilience framework in the field is also relatively a recent development. Of late, as noted by Lew (2014) and Lew et al. (2016), resilience research in tourism sector is gaining prominence and that could benefit the policy formulations and planning for tourism destinations. Notably then, more than half of all writings on resilience and tourism had been conducted post-2010 (Hall et al., 2019).

The early writings on resilience in tourism domain were focused in an economic context (Selya, 1978, Holder, 1980, Rensel, 1993), whereas, the ecological dimensions were first addressed arguably by Lovejoy (1994) and evidently established the links that tourism has on ecosystem resilience. In ecotourism context however, Tyler and Dangerfield (1999) were the first to suggest ecological resilience as a means for tourism-oriented resource management. A review by Hall (2019) revealed that almost half of the papers relating to tourism and resilience were related to the economic dimensions of tourism viz. a). Specific to the resilience of tourism or specific tourism destinations; b). Effects of tourism on the resilience of economies and places with major thrust on the communities, policy and planning or sustainable development.

A resilient industry would mean that it ‘increases competitiveness by minimizing losses and damages and achieve continuity and growth in the face of ever more frequent and intensifying disasters’ (World Bank, 2020). Contextualized, it amounts to the ability of tourism establishments to remain/increase competitiveness against the adversities emanating from evermore frequent and intensifying disastrous events, while minimizing the losses and damages and achieve continuity and growth. Similarly, resilience must encompass all levels from the human to organizational processes of different levels and the society at large; for it is essentially a defense mechanism that prepares the people and organisations to develop capabilities to withstand the adversities.

While the resilient mechanisms of larger organizations are fairly documented, the smaller ones are regarded as being less investigated and understood though it is vital as it has direct linkages with the livelihood endowments. In a predominantly micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME’s) centered tourism and hospitality sector, understanding the resilience of small businesses in a disaster-driven context is vital given its immense contribution to the economic livelihood opportunities of many divergent communities and social settings. Further, the dimensions to demanding attention are the prevalence of resilient practices, revenue loss, damages caused to services, bearing on local communities, supply chain capacity and business capabilities. In the context of 2011 London riots for instance, Doern (2016) observed

that drawing on and adapting past experience as well as anticipation and containment processes are significant, the small businesses have to equally look at the attitudes and behaviours of individuals and communities.

Tourism resilience thus is primarily about improving sustainability after an ecological or environmental disaster that in turn could result alternatives to sustainable development (Lew, 2014, Dahles & Susilowati, 2015). Resilience also demands successful adaptation mechanism that can negotiate through the risks and difficulties, thereby also presenting solutions to the shocker events and eventual losses. For tourism to function as foundation for the development of sustainable livelihoods, it is imperative to reduce the vulnerability of those involved in tourism (Baker & Coulter, 2007). It thus necessitates striving for adaptability, opportunity to change, creating strong social networks, healthy social and natural capital, harnessing economic potential through diversification, suitable governance conditions as well as enthusiastic local leadership.

VULNERABILITIES OF 'RESILIENT TOURISM'

Unlike most economic activities, vulnerabilities of tourism are higher and amplified given that the industry and tourism consumption profiles revolve around the immovable and spatially fixed assets and resources. Specific to the 21st century, innumerable instances are there to reveal the vulnerabilities of both the tourism demand and supply, whether it is natural disasters or those induced by human actions such as armed conflicts, terrorism, toxicity, nuclear disasters, unscientific construction practices etc. Inquiries have also marked the growing recognition of tourism destinations vulnerability to socio-economic and environmental shocks in rapid-onset events and stressors as slow-onset events (Sharpley, 2005). Its degree however could vary from place to place depending on the socio-ecological characteristics that each place embodies and the changes those elements undergo over the time and space. Thus, understanding vulnerability and resilience of the destinations as well as its analysis required a tourism system approach that integrates the societal and ecological structures with the spatio-temporal dynamics.

As per the United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) framework, vulnerability means 'the physical, social, economic and environmental conditions which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards' (<https://www.undrr.org/terminology/vulnerability>). Turner et al. (2003) took a systemic approach and defined it as 'the degree to which a system, subsystem, or system component is likely to experience harm due to exposure to a hazard, either a perturbation or stress/stressor'. They documented three

categories of sensitivity factors that determine vulnerability to perturbation or 'surprise' events: a). Physical, social or institutional exposure to stress; b). Sensitivity to the stress or perturbation including the ability to anticipate and cope with it; c). Ability of a system to recover, based on existing structures and to adapt these structures to withstand future perturbations more successfully (resilience).

Vulnerability is multi-dimensional and embrace the physical and human components of the spatial systems. Specific to destination systems, it can be on account of varied factors viz. political unrest and terrorist attacks (lively & Coulter 2007, Mansfeld, 1999; Richter & Waugh, 1986), economic downturns (Prideaux, Laws & Faulkner, 2003), health epidemics (Miller & Ritchie, 2003; Tarlow, 2009), global environmental change and natural hazards (Cioccio & Michael, 2007; Hay & Becken, 2007; Meheux & Parker, 2006), climate change (Scott, Hall & Gössling, 2019), cyclones and hurricanes (WTTC, 2018), Tsunami (ADB, JICA, and World Bank, 2005; Jayasuriya, Steele, and Weerakoon, 2006), flood (World Bank, 2012), earthquake (Herrschner & Honey, 2017; Orchiston & Espiner 2017; van Strien, 2018), volcanic eruption (Eurocontrol, 2010) etc. The studies have also highlighted the threat of sea-level rise on tourism infrastructure in low-lying and coastal areas (Scott & Verkoeyen, 2017; Snoussi, Ouchani & Niazi, 2008).

The vulnerabilities of destinations can be seen can amplified by tourism and related developmental activities as well. For instance, overdevelopment and lack of planning pose cumulative challenges to destination's longevity and host communities especially those dependent on verdant natural environments (Burak, Dogan & Gazioglu, 2004; Cohen, 2008; Mihalic, 2020). Tourism is also highly carbon-intensive and the sector's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions is estimated at 8% in 2013. Given the consistent increase in the demand for both international and domestic travel, the UNWTO (2019) project the transport-related emissions from tourism to grow from 5% to 5.3% of all emissions by 2030 being driven primarily by increase in air transport- both international and domestic tourism.

The nature of tourism entrepreneurship is another major factor from vulnerability angle. For, tourism industry is predominantly constituted by micro, small and medium enterprises (SMTE) and in Indian context, the study of Babu and Gupta (2010) found the firms having as investment base of above Rs. 50 crores constitute just about 7%. The SME's reportedly generate at least 60% of tourism jobs in many countries (OECD, 2010), whereas, 54% of the workforce is reportedly women and they make up a large proportion of the formal tourism workforce (UNWTO, 2019). Further, SMTE's participate in global value chains through the online means such as online travel aggregators (OTA). For instance, the home-stay and bed-and-breakfast (B&B) units entering the supply-chain through OTA's such as Airbnb, booking.

com etc. are millions in count. These informal or loosely regulated units suffer from limited capacity to invest in the infrastructure and business continuity or contingencies in the event of disasters. Becken et al. (2018) also observed that these units do not form part of the local emergency and disaster management systems, raising the exposure to risk.

ECONOMIC COSTS OF TOURISM VULNERABILITIES GLOBALLY

Depending on the nature and degree of vulnerabilities, the impacts of disastrous events on tourism sector vary in both the scale and manifestations. Economically, it can be disastrous to the communities especially of their livelihood and wellbeing as well as regional and national economies alike while its damaging effects on the physiography and ecology have also accrued adequate documentation. In 21st Century for instance, the SARS epidemic first reported in February 2003, brought tourism in the East and S.E. Asia to a standstill. By that year end, PATA estimated the decline in international visitor arrivals to the tune of over 15 million and a loss in tourism revenue by over US\$ 11 billion (quoted in Yates 2006). However, the economic losses were of much higher magnitude when the tourism industry negotiated a severe global economic crisis that lasted for 15 consecutive months of negative growth until October 2009. It has led to a decline of over 4% in the international tourist arrivals and marked 6% decrease in international tourism revenues in 2009 (UNWTO & ILO, 2010).

The Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 was another drastic occurrence having pan-Asia ramifications and many countries in the region including the tourism industry were devastated as a result. In case of Sri Lanka for instance, the tsunami directly impacted 25% of registered hotels whereas half of its 105 medium-sized and large hotels suffered huge damages (Jayasuriya, Steele & Weerakoon, 2006). The projected total losses in tourism were placed at US\$ 250 million (ADB, JICA & World Bank, 2005). However, the economic costs of terrorism are estimated as much more severe, encompassing and lasting. First and foremost is the immediate loss from the massive hotel and airline booking cancellations where the demand also to remain suppressed

for a longer period due to perceived threats and images. Other costs to account are huge expenditure towards security measures at the establishment and the federal government levels; loss in investments especially FDI; increased costs of doing business in terms of higher insurance premiums, expensive security precautions, larger salaries payable to employees at-risk etc.

The vulnerability of tourism to terrorism was most evident in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the World Trade Center, New York. In that year, international tourist arrivals globally declined substantially and the South Asia (24%), Americas (20%) and Middle East (20%) suffered the most (Evans & Elphick, 2005). In the first two weeks post the aftermath, the US tourism industry reported a US\$ 2 billion loss and the employment rate fell by 5%. Domestic airlines lost over 100 million US dollars. The severe drop in tourism expenditure resulted in a GDP loss of 27.27 billion dollars (Blake & Sinclair, 2003). According to ILO estimates, tourism-related businesses shed some 6.6 million jobs worldwide during 2001 and 2002, putting one out of every 12 workers in the sector out of a job (ILO 2003). Huge chunks of it were reportedly in the U.S (approx. 1.1 million) and European Union ((approx. 1.2 million). Further, during 2001-2002, job loss in the US accommodation and airline sectors were estimated at 141,000 and 93,000 respectively (Blake & Sinclair, *Ibid*).

Among the segments of tourism, accommodation is more vulnerable to the economic stressors like the recession and that can be inferred from hotel occupancy rates. The STR Global and Deloitte analysis (Cited in WEF 2015) reveals how the increased price sensitivity triggers a decline in demand, leading to fall in occupancy levels and hoteliers discount prices to try to secure bookings. Across the regions, marked decrease in occupancy rates were demonstrative (Fig. 3) during 2001-2014, moving closely with economic recession of 2001-2003, 2008-2009 and Eurozone recession in 2012. Fluctuations in occupancy were sharp in the African regions perhaps owing to its dependance on the European and North American tourist markets when tourists from the later regions preferred short-haul destinations.

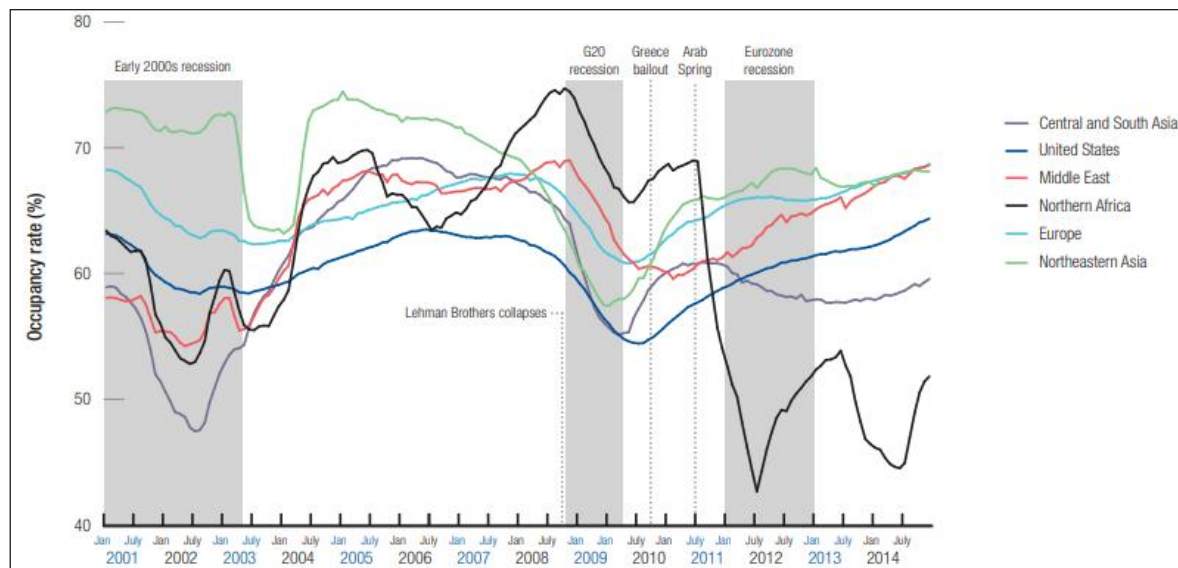


Fig. 3: Economic Cycles and Demand Trends (Occupancy) by Region

Source: STR Global and Deloitte analysis, strictly illustrative (Cited in WEF 2015).

In the functioning of the budget and lower-priced accommodation units, bearing of disasters in general is grave. In Indonesian context for instance, the adverse impacts of disasters were starkly evident in the international tourist arrivals, income from tourism and hotel occupancy of the star and non-star hotels during 1997-2016 (Rindrasah et al., 2019). Notably, the stressor events also had spill-over effects on the near-by regions where the occurrences in one island resulted an increase in the tourist arrivals and earnings in other islands after every event.

Spatio-temporally, tourism demand can be seen bounced back rather more quickly after the global recessions, natural disasters, pandemics and epidemics like severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Ebola and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). The results of a Global Rescue and World Travel & Tourism Council (2019) study on the impact of 90 crisis cases at the national and city levels between 2001 and 2018 are indeed revealing. It reports measurable impacts in lost arrivals and visitor spending in 92% of case studies, but more striking was to note significant fall in the recovery duration from 26 months to 10 months during the time frame of 2001-2018. Other major trends worth mapping here are the dramatic increase in both frequency and magnitude of natural disasters and epidemics and its outbreaks turning as the new normal. The recovery

from natural disasters took 16.2 months on average whereas the same in case of the disease cases was 19.4 months on average. Notably, civil unrest and political instability cases had the longest recovery time as compared to other disasters including terrorism; average being at 22.2 months, with recovery ranging from 10 months to 44.9 months.

Nevertheless, the vulnerability of tourism has never been exposed to such grave magnitudes and prolonging as to the devastating COVID-19 Pandemic that gripped the world in December 2019. According to UNWTO (2020a), by April 06, 2020, 96% of all worldwide destinations have introduced travel restrictions. Of this, around 90 have completely or partially closed the borders to tourists, while a further 44 are closed to certain tourists depending on country of origin. By mid-May 2020, 100% of all destinations worldwide continue to have some form of COVID-19-related travel restrictions in place, whereas, 75% continued to have their borders completely closed for international tourism. Going by the UNWTO regions, on an average of more than 65% of their destinations completely closed to tourism; highest being in Americas (86%) followed by Asia and the Pacific (67%), Europe (74%), Africa (74%) and the Middle East (69%). The magnitude of fall in international travel during 06 January to October 2020 over the same period of previous year has been sharp and the highest being in Asia Pacific (Fig. 4).

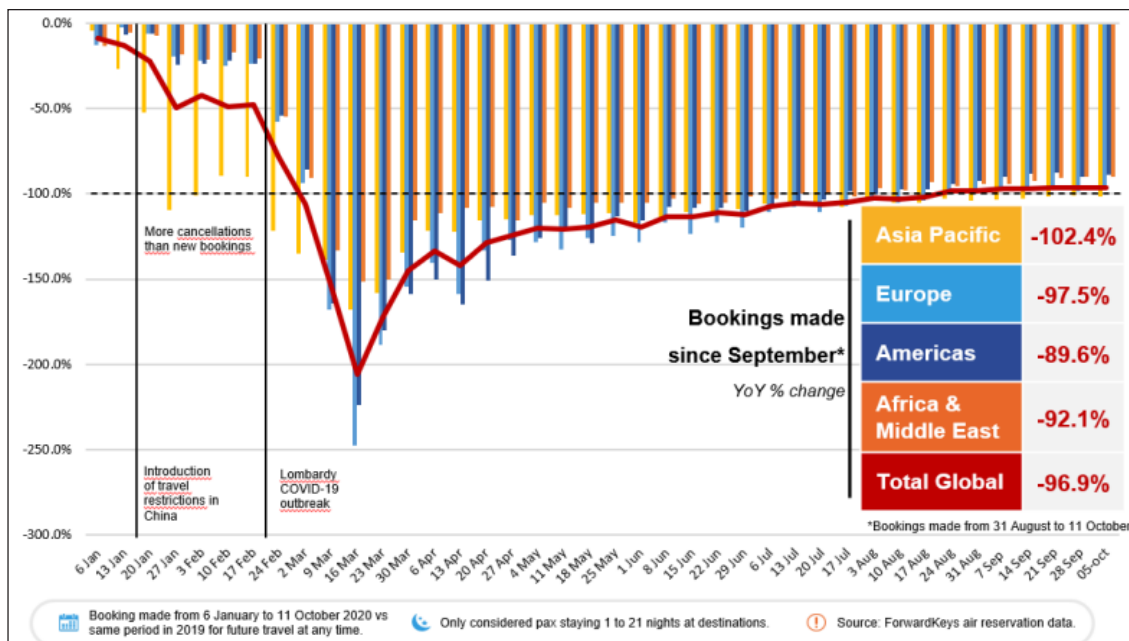


Fig. 4: Bookings Made for International Travel by Region (06th Jan to 11th October 2020 over 2019)

Source: UNWTO Barometer, Volume 18 (Issue 6, October 2020).

By November 2020 however, 152 destinations have eased restrictions on international tourism, whereas, 59 destinations still kept the borders closed for tourists and a marked improvement in number was evident over 93 countries in September (UNWTO, 2020b). It was interesting that the ease in travel restrictions and it's speeding up was observed in those destinations with higher scores in health and hygiene indicators as well as on the environmental performance index and vice versa. These are found increasingly applying differentiated, risk-based approaches to implementing travel restrictions such as negative PCR test results, 'travel bubbles'/travel corridors etc. Countries in Europe were faster in easing the restrictions followed by the Americas whereas the countries in Asia and the Pacific recorded fewest relaxations. Many of these countries belonging to the SIDS (small island developing states), LDCs (least developed countries) or LLDCs (landlocked developing countries).

The damages emanating from the pandemic control measures were such that the international tourist arrivals globally declined by 74% in 2020 over 2019 level and in many developing countries, the fall was in range of 80-90% (UNWTO Tourism Dashboard). The global receipts from tourism plunged by an estimated 64% in real terms (local currencies, constant prices) in 2020 or loss of US\$ 930 billion. The biggest challenges to the recovery of international tourism are ongoing travel restrictions, slow virus containment and low consumer confidence.

The UNWTO Confidence Index for the period of 2003-2020 is revealing of the prevailing confidence crisis with

the onset of the Pandemic (Fig. 5). While the economic recession of 2009 largely had a 'worse' confidence rating, the scenario emerged from the Pandemic is rated as 'worst' and the confidence level is only falling from what was initially expected. The reasons attributed to this were the lack of a vaccine, continuance of travel restrictions in all forms especially partial or full border closure, compulsory quarantine requirement and the likes. The countries of Europe remain the most pessimistic (89%), followed by the Asia and the Pacific (82%),

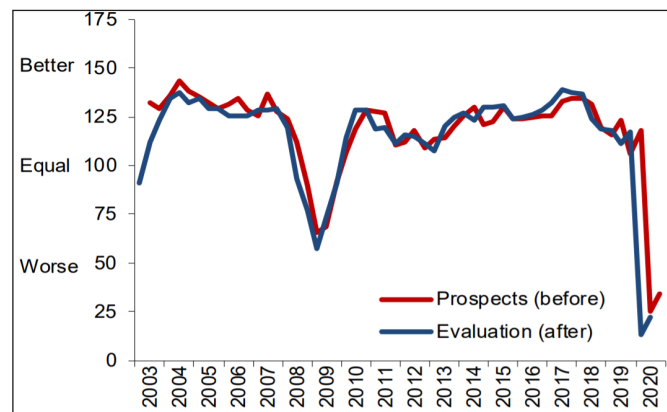


Fig. 5: World Tourism Confidence Index - 2003-2020 (UNWTO)

Source: UNWTO <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/wtobarometereng.2020.18.1.6>

The experts do not foresee the demand returning to pre-pandemic 2019 levels before 2023 (UNWTO, 2020c). However, faster revival of tourism is expected in those countries ripe with a strong domestic demand and less dependent on international inbound tourism.

TOURISM VULNERABILITIES IN INDIAN CONTEXT

The sub-continental nature and India's divergent seismic, physiographic and climatic zones make it vulnerable particularly to disasters of varying types and magnitudes, ranging from the devastating floods, landslides and massive

earthquakes to tsunami and cyclones. The country is prone to 32 types of disasters. As per the National Disaster Management Authority, 58.6% the landmass in India is prone to earthquakes of moderate to very high intensity; 12% prone to floods and river erosion; 68% vulnerable to droughts, landslides and avalanches and nearly 5,700 km of coastline is prone to cyclones and tsunamis. Globally, India is third on account of the disaster occurrences (UNDRR, 2020) with 321 events during 2000-2019, whereas the most affected countries were China (577 events) and the United States of America (U.S) respectively. Hydrological disasters were highest in India, followed by the meteorological, climatological and geophysical occurrences (Fig. 6). India is also reported as second most flood-affected country after China.

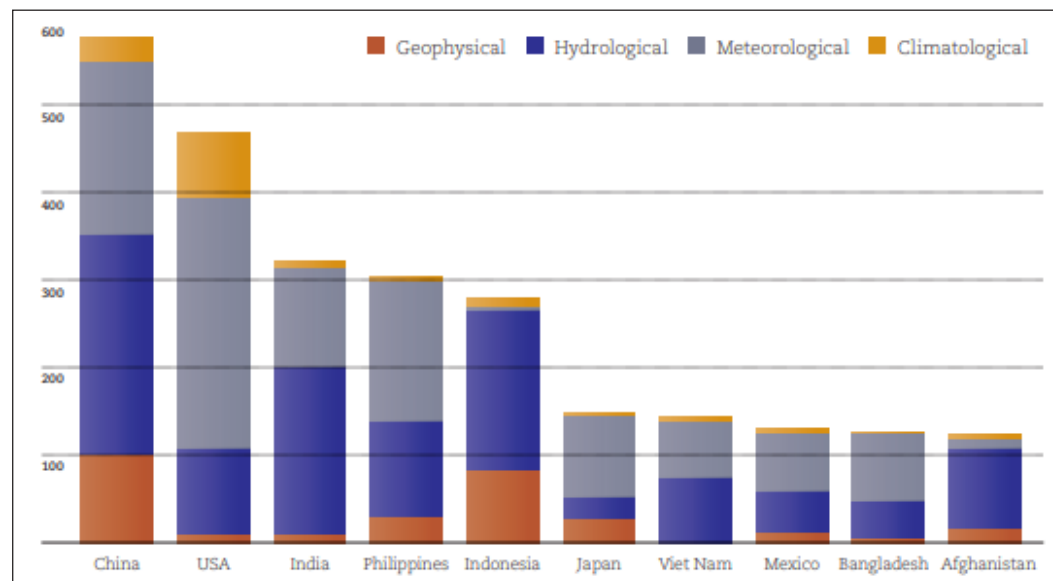


Fig. 6: Top 10 Countries by Occurrence of Disasters - 2000-2019

Source: UNDRR (2020).

The disaster risk index of INFORM-2021 ranks India at 31st with a risk rating of 'high and decreasing' (European Union, 2021). State-wise, Uttar Pradesh topped the vulnerability index in India, closely followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat (NDMI, 2018). As per the UNDRR (2020), total population affected by the disasters and total deaths in India during 2000-2019 were 1083 million and 79,732 respectively. Further; a). Most impactful years in the 21st Century were 2002 and 2015, where 300 million and 330 Million people respectively were affected by the widespread droughts. The severe draught in 2015 took 2,248 lives; b). India is the 2nd most flood-affected country globally with an average of 17 flood events each year and impacts around 345 million people. The floods in June 2013 caused 6,054 deaths. The Indian

subcontinent is also exposed to nearly 10% of all tropical cyclones occurring globally (NCRMP, 2019).

The economic costs of disasters are huge to both the economy and the individuals especially in countries such as India where the disasters amplify the sufferings of the socio-economically vulnerable sections. Here, the extreme weather events are estimated to have resulted the economic loss of US\$ 79.5 billion in absolute terms and that is primarily attributable to the floods (UNISDR, 2018). In the years ahead, the weather-related vulnerabilities are going to increase further and bring more people and places drawn in to the risk zones. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction seeks to substantially reduce the economic losses from disasters by 2030 but the major challenge is that 63% of disaster reports contain no economic data. However,

though tourism and hospitality sector is directly impacted by the disasters of different kinds, its economic costs and especially income and employment losses, were not reliably estimated.

Amidst multitudes of vulnerabilities however, tourism in India witnessed to have reasonably negotiated through the spirals of epidemics and economic recessions that the world encountered in the first decade of the 21st Century. The onset of SARS caused a decline in foreign tourist arrivals (FTA's) in India by -4.2% and -6% respectively during 2001 and 2002 but rose to 14.3% in 2003 (Fig. 7). But, the impacts were comparatively much less in magnitude to major East and S.E. Asian countries. This can largely be attributed to the dominance of FTA from the Europe and North America where the SARS infection was relatively much less. Further, FTA's in India affected much less at -2.2% in 2009 and the arrivals bounced back by 11.8% a year later. However, the recession had severe impacts on tourism globally and decline of 4% in international tourist arrivals and a decrease of international tourism revenues by 6% in 2009 (UNWTO & ILO, 2013).

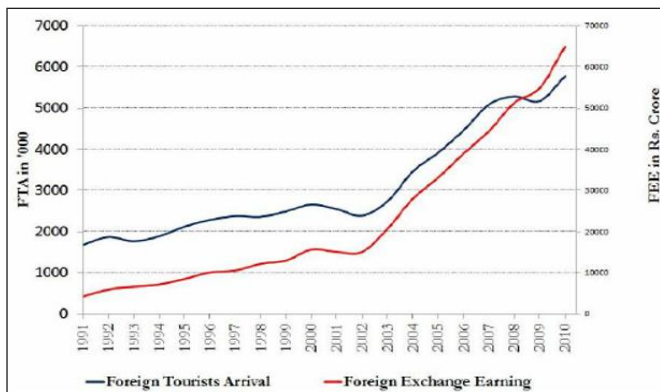


Fig. 7: Foreign Tourist Arrivals in India - 1991 to 2010

Source: Tourism Statistics, Ministry of Tourism.

In terms of foreign exchange earnings (FEE), decrease in 2001 and 2002 were -3.5% and -0.1% respectively, whereas in 2009, it remained positive at 4.8%. However, post-2010 have experienced consistent increase in both the arrivals and earnings until 2019. The outbound travel from India also grew appreciably on y-o-y basis during 2000-2010 and remained positive, though marginally at 3.2% in 2001 and 1.8% in 2009. But, the distinct manifestations of resilience in India have been the domestic tourism, recording very strong y-o-y growth during 2000-2019. Notably, even during the SARS years of 2002-2003, domestic arrivals grew by over 14% and in the recession year of 2009, the growth rate was even higher at 18.7%.

The study of Barbhuiya and Chatterjee (2020) statistically established the consistency in the pattern of growth of

both the domestic and foreign tourist arrivals in India. Their findings further indicate that natural disasters do not affect domestic tourism demand but it does have negative effects on foreign tourism demand. Specific to political unrest, it adversely affects the domestic arrivals but not foreign arrivals. In terms of recovery of FTA's, the durations (years) were typically higher for FTA's than domestic tourist arrivals, ranging from 1 year for Odisha and 9 years for Punjab. State-wise, volatility in foreign tourist arrivals has also been greater as compared to domestic tourist arrivals in 22 states.

With huge surges anticipated, domestic tourism segment is poised exert greater influence in the time ahead as can be inferred from the figures of FICCI (2020) that the share of the segment in India's tourism and travel economy would increase from 83% in 2019 to 88.85% in 2028.

'RESILIENCE SHOCK' OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The tremor effect of the Pandemic on tourism in India has been unprecedented and it took a buoyant industry to complete collapse eventuated from the cycles of prolonged lock-downs, ban on tourist Visa and closure of international arrivals and above all the fear of infection. While the brunt of it was worse across the industry segments, the small establishments and predominant chunks of 39 million workers including the women continue to remain as the worst suffered even after many months in to the Pandemic. According to the Ministry of Tourism data for January-March 2020, FTA's encountered substantial fall and squeezed tourism activities in India. Foreign tourist arrivals (FTA) in February and March 2020 were fell by -6.9% & -66.4% respectively. While the foreign exchange earnings (FEE) witnessed an increase of 9.9% in January 2020 over same month in 2019, decline in February 2020 was evidently at 0.9% but it was drastic by -66.3% in and March 2020 when stringent lock-down cycles heralded globally.

The disruptions created by the Pandemic is grave and prospects of tourism sector for 2020 is seen as very bleak in India. According to FICCI (2020), the industry could face an overall loss of USD 16.7 billion and risk up to 50 million jobs (both direct and indirect). In the aviation sector alone, estimated loss in revenue is USD 11.2 billion and jobs up to 2.9 million, whereas, the hotel industry revenue could dump in tune of USD 6.3 to USD 14 billion by 2020 end. The damages due to COVID-19 being anticipated by the Indian Railways is worth INR 17 billion.

Even when the fear of infection looms large, people still choose to travel and the tourism scene in Goa is more than revealing of this. After five months of lockdown from April 2020, Goa Government relaxed the norms and opened the

tourism sector though very cautiously. The bookings have increased and Ixigo, an online travel agency, reported 74% increase in the bookings for Goa in October 2020 and the inquiries increased by 66% (Business Today, 2020). As a result, the fall in arrivals in Goa was proportionately much less at around -50% as compared to the national average and most Indian States, the numbers being 35.59 lakhs tourists in 2020 as against 71.27 lakhs tourists in 2019.

PATHS AHEAD

With tourism slowly picking up around the world, the recovery of the demand is being forecasted but it continues to remain very fragile and uneven especially given the rising concerns over the mutated variants driving several countries to reimpose restrictive measures. The volatility and lack of clear information on entry requirements across the countries in the Northern Hemisphere could weigh high on the visitor's mind when look for the ensuing tourist season. However, many countries are taking the advantage of the vaccination and working out the strategies to receive the tourists and deploying the digital tools. However, the global uncertainty over a faster recovery of tourism is ripe and according to UNWTO, about 49% of its experts panel view the return of international tourism to pre-pandemic 2019 levels in their countries by 2024 or beyond, and another 36% hold this to realise by 2023 (UNWTO, 2021c). Regionally, sense of uncertainty is seemingly higher in Asia-Pacific with 56% holding the pre-Pandemic stage to reach by 2024 or beyond and another 31% expect it to happen by 2023.

Given such uncertainties over the prospects of international tourism, the hopes are pinned around the domestic travel and that is found gaining certain momentum to provide some impetus to the survival of industry in many destinations, especially those countries with a large domestic market such as China, India, U.S etc. Against this, certain specific trends being observed during the COVID-19 period are: preference for closer destinations, increase in 'staycations', growing consumer concerns on health and safety measures, worrying cancellation policies of tourism supply chain players, preferences for nature, rural tourism and road trips, increase in the last minute bookings as against advance travel plans, change in demographics as being seen in the increase in travel of more resilient youngsters and a definite revealing of the growing sense of responsible travel.

However, the main factor weighing heavily in tourism recovery is the prevailing travel restriction and uncertainty over the entry/Visa requirements. Other major factor being accounted for slow recovery are slow virus containment, absence of coordinated responses between the countries, yet to be recovered consumer confidence, slowly recovering global economy and the flight restrictions. To negotiate a

faster recovery, the Indian government and tourism industry recognise domestic tourism's potential as a tool to drive the economy. Besides pushing the vaccination to complete within minimum time possible, steps are being taken to enhance the destination awareness through the *Dekho Apna Desh* initiative of the Ministry of Tourism. Measures to enhance the tourist confidence on safety and health, attractive pricing and packages, promotion of less-crowded rural, nature and adventure tourism-based destinations around major urban hubs and cities have been pursued in an ongoing basis. During the Pandemic, it is crucial to add emphasis on the youth travel and promote offerings and products that would attract the youths. Similarly, the outbound travelers of India would defer their plan because of the Pandemic and they can also be positioned as a significant target group for domestic tourism promotion.

Equally, resilience of tourism would depend on the response of local, regional and national governments especially the policy prescriptions towards development construction, environment and fiscal and monetary regimes. The governments have to come forward and aid the industry's recovery by attracting investors in strategic areas through tax breaks and other fiscal and monetary measures and incentives. The intensity of crises occurrences and its implications are such that the crisis preparedness and preventive mechanisms to assume the core of response strategies. Here, the governments are required to increasingly engage with the private sector and work towards trust-based coalitions for every facet of the crisis handling viz. improved crisis preparedness, recovery plans, management and monitoring.

The significance of technology's enabling role has been more than evident during COVID-19 Pandemic and its vigorous adoption including the possibilities of artificial intelligence (AI) and forecasting in resilience schematics is needlessly one of the ways forward. Enhancing the local belongingness and boosting the consumer vs. employee and local community confidence are also significant for a struggling tourism sector. The efforts towards securing tourism from the vulnerabilities would be inadequate if the climate change challenges are not incorporated in the resilient strategies for tourism sector. The resilience measures must eventually assume transformative roles and lead to sustainable tourism, well-being of the society and active engagement of the local communities.

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