

A PLAN OF ACTION FOR TOURISM SECTOR TO RETRIEVE FROM THE COVID – 19 CRISIS

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ABSTRACT:

This paper explores the association between the plan of action to be taken for tourism industry to retrieve from the coronavirus pandemic and whether tourism industry will be last to recover as compared to other industries. For this, a hypothesis testing was conducted to confirm the association which proved affirmative, viz. there is an association between the two variables mentioned above. The data collection is based on primary as well as secondary data collected by the researchers. Questionnaire was administered and the analysis was inferred in the case of primary data. In the case of secondary data, data was collected from business papers and through authorized sites over the internet. The different types of plan for action variables used were providing financial funds; sanitization of tourist destinations; awareness towards domestic travel; going niche, from which awareness towards domestic travel is the most important plan for action as per the respondents. The researchers have collected data from a heterogeneous age group between 18 - 60. Chi square test was used in the analysis of data. The data collected was from 63 sample and is a quantitative study.

Keywords: Plan for action, awareness for domestic travel, tourism industry, going niche, COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has hit all the sectors in the country, but tourism and hospitality sector were the first to fall and will be the last to recover from the same. It will almost take about a year to for the industry to make up for the losses and get back in the game. With the monetary help of government and few strategies towards a better comeback can make the industry retrieve faster. 10.89 million International tourists visited India in 2019, whereas 50 million Indians travelled abroad in the same financial year ,ET Bureau(2019). If that amount of Indians simply went on vacations visiting domestic destinations rather that foreign after the situations start to normalize, that can definitely energize India's slowing economy. But for people to do so, tourism sector and government needs to work on providing safe and better travel opportunities with an awareness and importance of domestic travel.

The tourism sector of any country not only generates revenue and drives development but also supports numerous types of businesses right from large scale to startups such as catering, travel agencies, homestays, drivers, guides and other small traders. That means tourism sector provides a wide range of employment which adds up to GDP. Statistics showed that tourism made up 15.7% of total employment in Iceland, 13.5% in Spain, 10.3 in Ireland, 10% in Greece, 9.8% in Portugal and 8.1% in India (World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), 2018).

Tourism sector is among the first to be affected and the last to recover during this Pandemic. In recent years India had showed an exponential growth in tourism industry. But FAITH, a policy Federation of Association of Tourism and Hospitality industry has estimated a loss of around 10 lakh crore rupees for the industry due to Covid19.

In past couple of months, most of the countries have taken steps to make the most of the situation every economy is facing and help the tourism sector to make a comeback. The European Union (UE) has provided liquidity support fiscal relief for all those in tourism business and is working on a tourism industry recovery plan. The French government has announced a plan for tourism sector of eighteen billion euros called “Marshall Plan for tourism”. Whereas South Africa has initiated a relief package of \$11 million especially for the MSME’s in the tourism sector. While, Italy being one of the most affected country by the crisis has already announced to incentivize domestic tourists to spend holidays on home soil (Business World, Oct 2020)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

India has a robust domestic market which has the capability to soften the impact of the pandemic which has made a direct impact on states like Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Sikkim and other north eastern states which extensively depend on tourism for state revenue, with few right steps towards a comeback can make a huge impact on bringing the industry back on the track with necessary modifications.

Steps to be undertaken to mitigate the downfall of tourism industry and develop a market for domestic tourism

1. Providing financial aids:

The CAPA (Corrective Action and Preventive Action) India recently in a statement has said that a revenue loss of US \$600 million to the Indian civil aviation industry was estimated. Working capital of most tourism companies is hit by almost 60 percent whereas the other small corporations by almost 80 percent. The Tourism Industry has received a loss of 5 lakh crore while dropping 4-5 crore people unemployed, which was estimated by The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

The Federation of Associations of Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH), has already asked for the constitution of A Joint Tourism Crisis Management Task Force headed by the Prime Minister.

The ministry of tourism and ministry of finance can work out together to resolve the issue of this setback. One thing they can do is include tourism sector under Priority Sector Lending (PSL) until the conditions of sector gets better.

2. Sanitization of Tourist Destinations:

Tourism sector is driven by the psychology of people and is very sensitive to safety and security aspects. Government will have to regain trust of people in the recovery period so that people are convinced to travel again after the pandemic. If we try to look at it with a positive aspect, this is an excellent time that the tourism sector can develop a common safety and sanitation standard for serving its customers. It is quite evident that

the tourism sector in India needs a renewed push for its revival in the post Covid19 world.

And hence it is essential to develop infrastructure and effective systems for monitoring to make sure that hygiene and sanitation standards are maintained all across the industry. A holistic effort will bring in the desired change in the sanitation value chain as inconsistent sanitation standards will have a negative impact which will add up to the downfall of the industry.

The efficient use of water in the tourism sector, coupled with appropriate safety measures and technology efficiency to reduce touch points by providing contactless services can be key to safeguarding one of our most important economy generator sector.

3. Awareness towards Domestic travel:

There has been growth in domestic travel in India in the past decade, but after the hit of this crisis it's a necessity that the government promotes domestic tourism to increase the monetary flow inside the country. As we can say that whether people spend on a pilgrimage to Kedarnath or skiing in Kufri or sun bathing in Goa or a world heritage site, until and unless it's within the country it all adds up to the GDP.

Travelling for tourism in India is more of a luxury thing, one that you only do if you can afford it. People hardly save to go on vacations as they often do to renovate house or for big events like marriage or for education. In India any expenditure related to travel is considered as consumption and not investment even though research shows that travelling can help you be productive, creative and reduce stress. In fact, in many European countries organizations cease for about a month every year so that their employees can go on vacations. The pandemic has offered us an opportunity to change an overview of people towards tourism sector which not only pushes people towards domestic travel but will bring in a different perspective of travel in the country.

There are so many Indian historical sites that haven't been excavated while some are hard to visit. These heritage sites fall under the Archeological Survey of India (ASI), but ASI is hardly provided with funds, the monuments are hard to be taken care of and are left to decay. Initiatives to restore these sites should be taken on a larger scale now. A little bit of awareness and importance of this will make the tourism sector good to go.

4. Going Niche:

India offers a heterogeneous portfolio of niche tourism products such as cruises, adventures, art, spiritual, film, culinary, medical, wellness, sports, ecotourism, rural and religious. Tourism companies and workers may need to move from mass tourism to more niche travel concepts which provide more customized products, as Mass tourism will decline hugely due to obvious reasons caused due to pandemic.

Basically, Niche tourism will introduce to how a specific tourism aspect can be tailored to meet the needs of market segment, which is interested in something particular or distinct. The concept focuses on how experiences of tourists can be customised to meet the needs and be more personalized for the different types of audience in the market.

Reasons why Niche Tourism can take a hype in upcoming years.

1. Stands out from the crowd.

2. Tailor made travel.
3. More customer referrals on customised products.
4. Impactful and Satisfactory experiences.

Now that we have an opportunity to divert people towards traveling on home soil, the tourism sector can make the most out of it by providing experiential tourism which gives you a deep understanding of the place, culture, food, people and its history. And since people are happy to run towards niche products considering the safety measure, this small sector of experiential travel can be developed on a large basis.

HYPOTHESIS:

H₀ : Type of plan for action to be taken during the crisis and opinion of whether tourism industry will be last to recover are associated

H_A :Type of plan for action to be taken during the crisis and opinion of whether tourism industry will be last to recover are not associated

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Source of data was Primary as well as Secondary. Primary research was done by preparing a questionnaire, though 77 respondents were sent, after data cleaning sample size reduced to 63. Secondary data includes data collected through different websites over the internet. Sampling method was simple random. The study was conducted from 3rd November, 2020 to 17th November, 2020. An exploratory approach is used to validate the research hypothesis and answer the following four questions

The kind of preferred tourist destinations and to what extent they are preferred.

- To know whether tourism sector is most affected industry due to COVID-19 and to what extent if affirmative.
- To know whether tourism industry will be last to recover as compared to other industries.
- To know the best plan of action to come out of this crisis.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Status	O	E	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
Most imp plan for action 'Sanitization of tourist destinations'and last industry to recover 'Yes'	21	17.8961	3.103896	9.634171	0.538339
Most imp plan for action 'Awareness of domestic travel at this time' and last industry to recover 'Yes'	27	30.28571	-3.28571	10.795918	0.356469
Most imp plan for action 'Providing financial aids' and last industry to recover 'Yes'	3	3.441558	-0.44156	0.1949739	0.0566528
Most imp plan for action 'Going niche' and last industry to recover 'Yes'	2	1.376623	0.623377	0.3885984	0.2822838
Most imp plan for action 'Sanitization of tourist destinations'and last industry to recover 'No'	5	8.103896	-3.1039	9.634171	1.188832
Most imp plan for action 'Awareness of domestic travel at this time' and last industry to recover 'No'	17	13.71429	3.285714	10.795918	0.7872024
Most imp plan for action 'Providing financial aids' and last industry to recover 'No'	2	1.558442	0.441558	0.1949739	0.1251082

Most imp plan for action 'Going niche' and last industry to recover 'No'	0	0.623377	-0.62338	0.3885984	0.6233766
Total					3.9582638

LoS = 5%

Degrees of freedom = 3

Chi-square value = 3.9582638

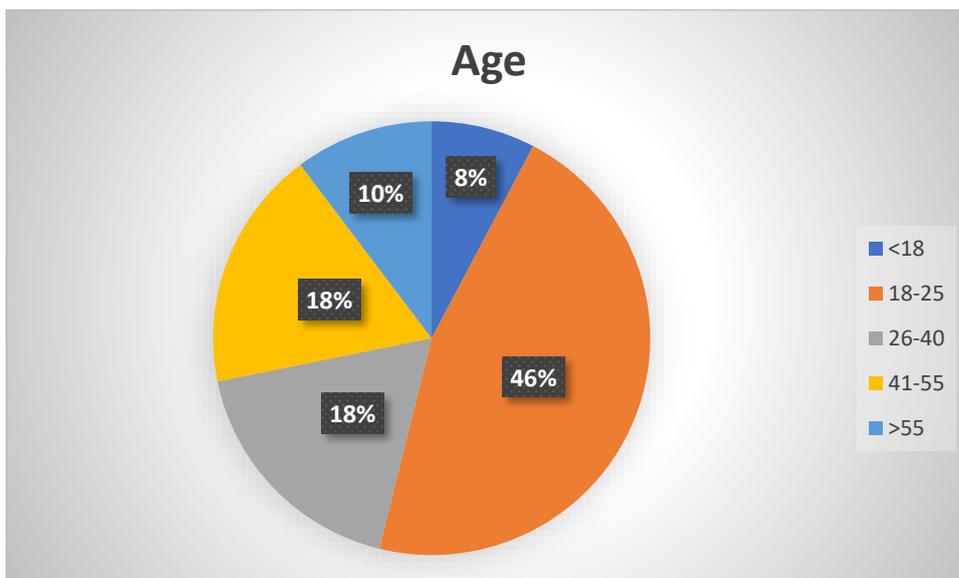
Table value = 12.8

Hence H0 is accepted

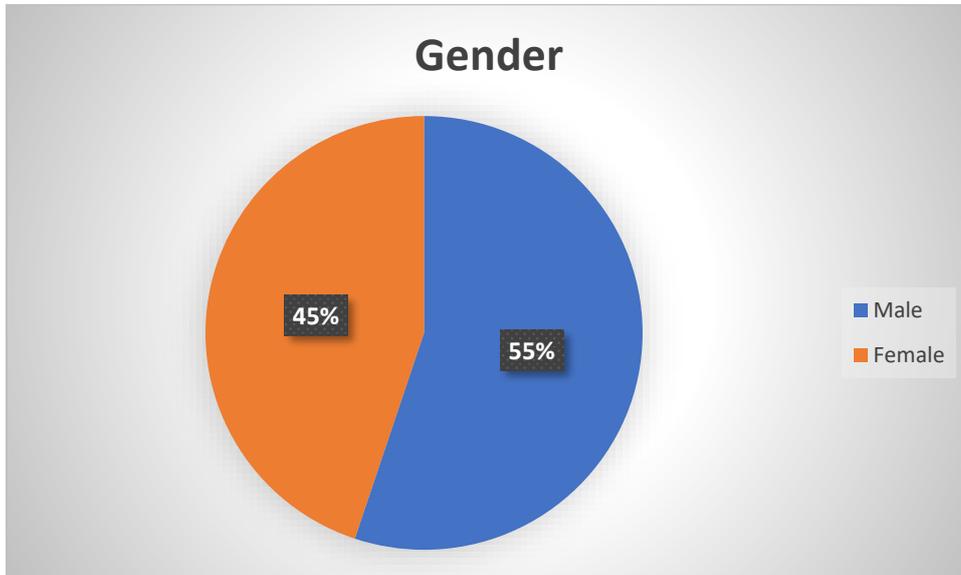
Chi-square test was conducted to assess the significance level at 0.05%. Pearson Chi Square Significance value is 3.9582638 ($p > .05$) therefore we accept the Null Hypothesis. In this case there is an association between the plan of action to be taken for tourism industry to retrieve from the coronavirus pandemic .

Data Analysis

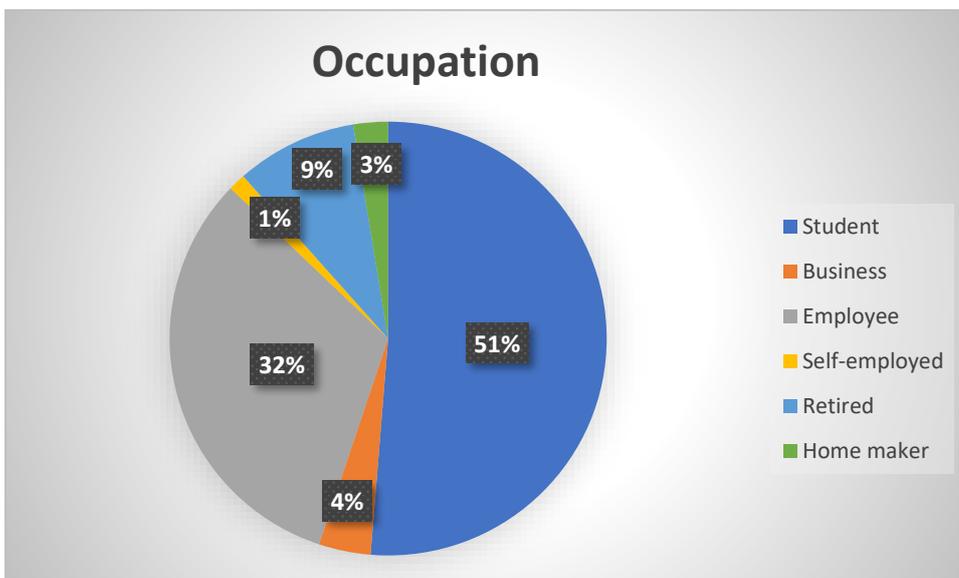
Age wise Distribution:



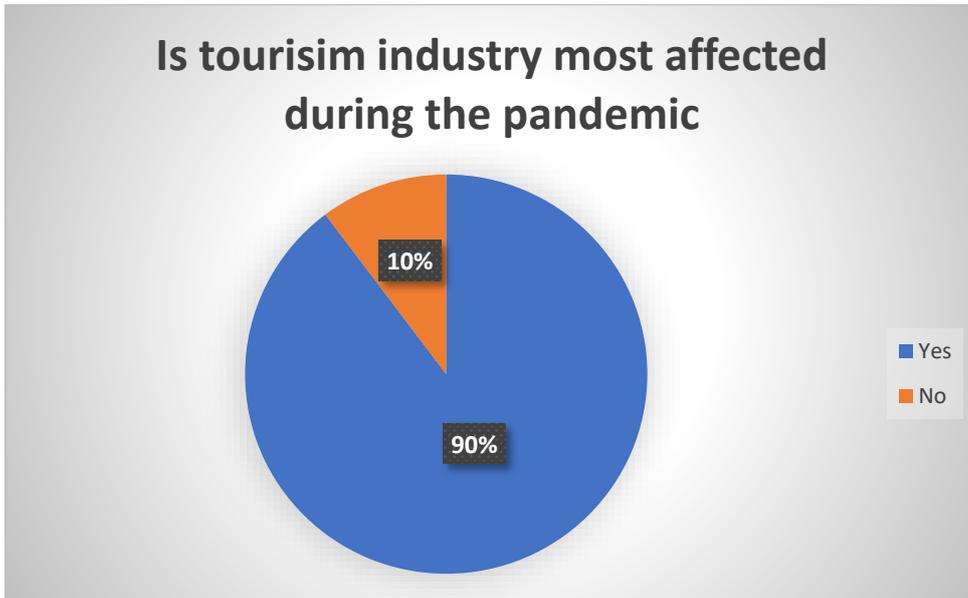
Gender wise Distribution:



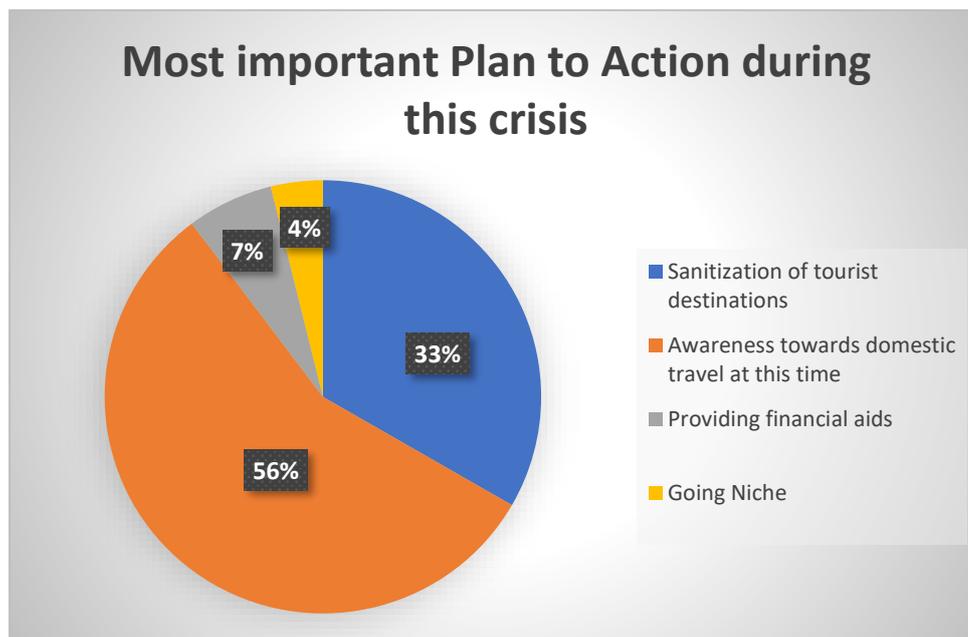
Occupation:



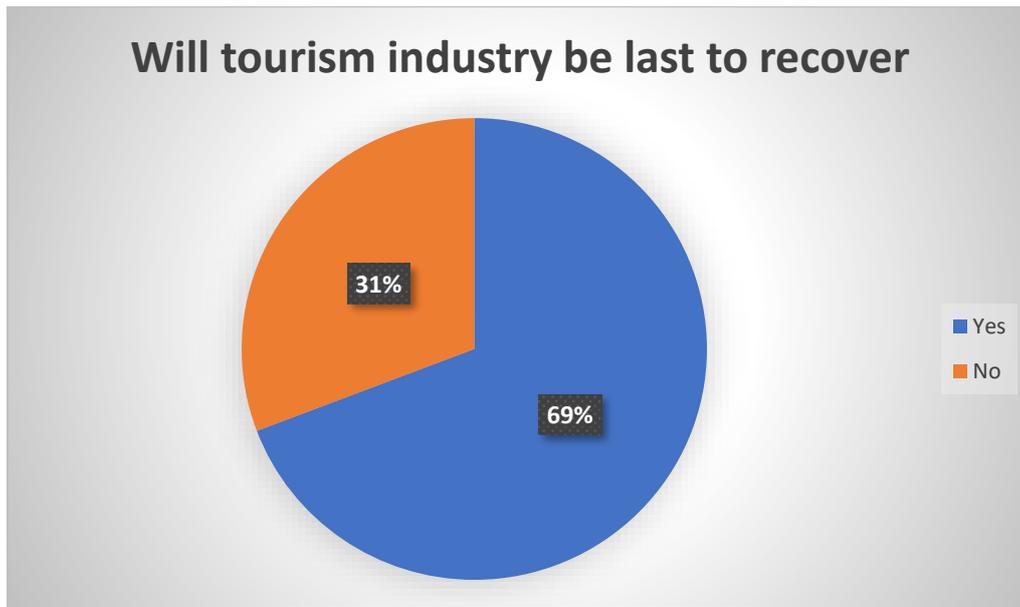
Whether tourism industry is most affected industry during the pandemic:



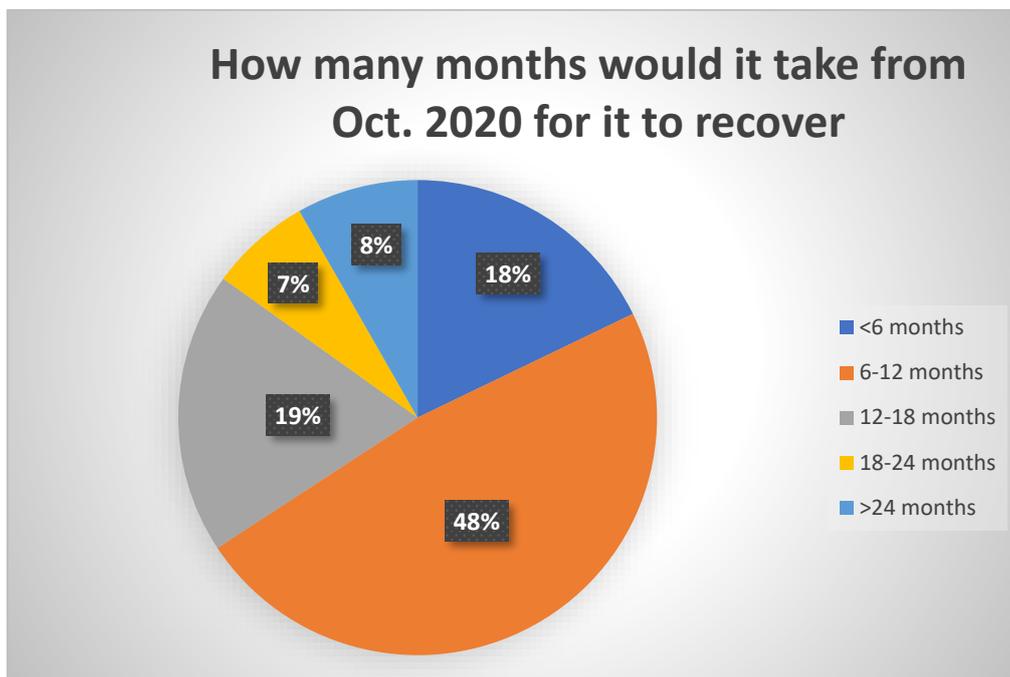
Most important Plan to Action during this crisis:



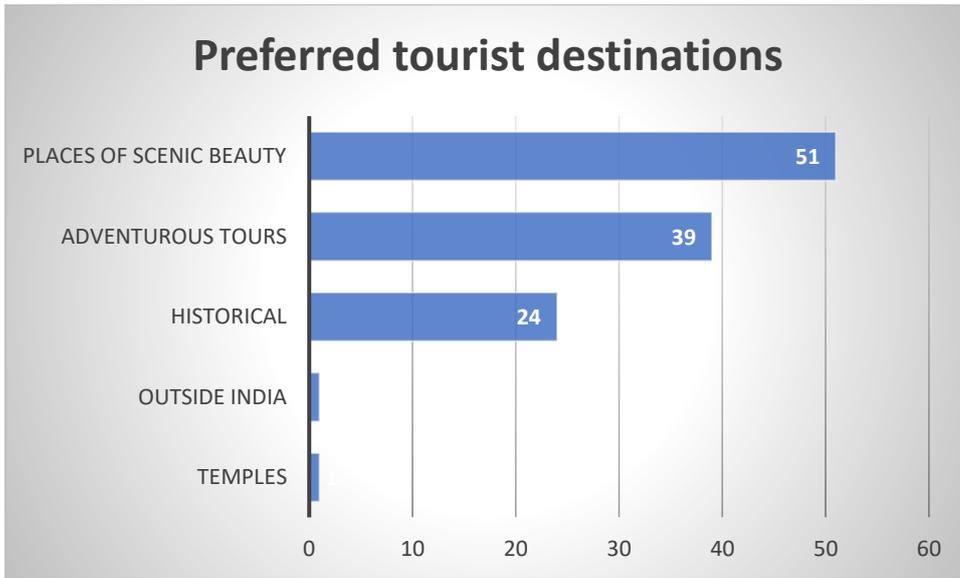
Opinion on whether tourism industry will be last to recover:



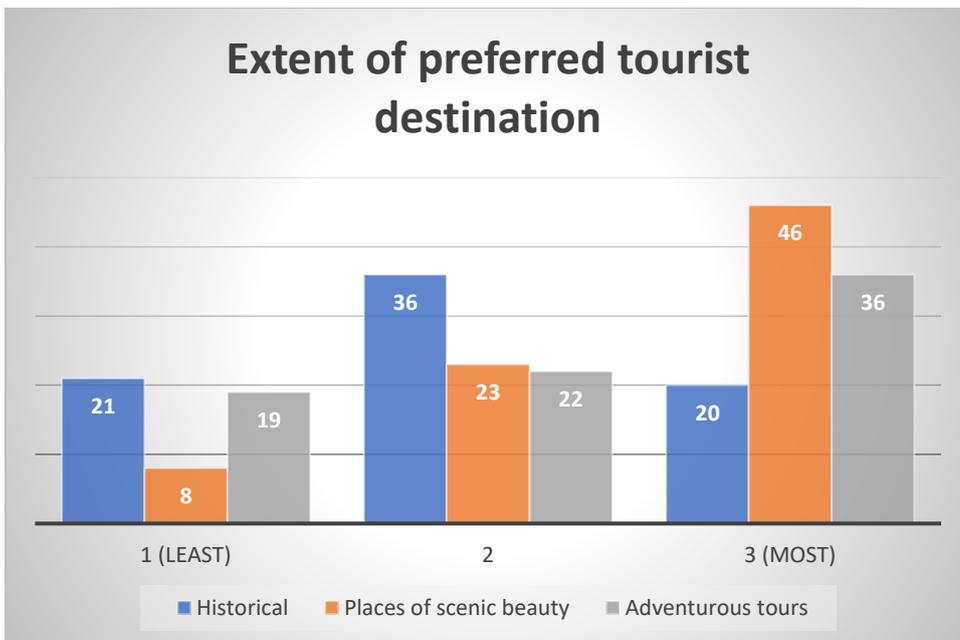
Number of months from Oct. 2020 for tourism sector to recover:



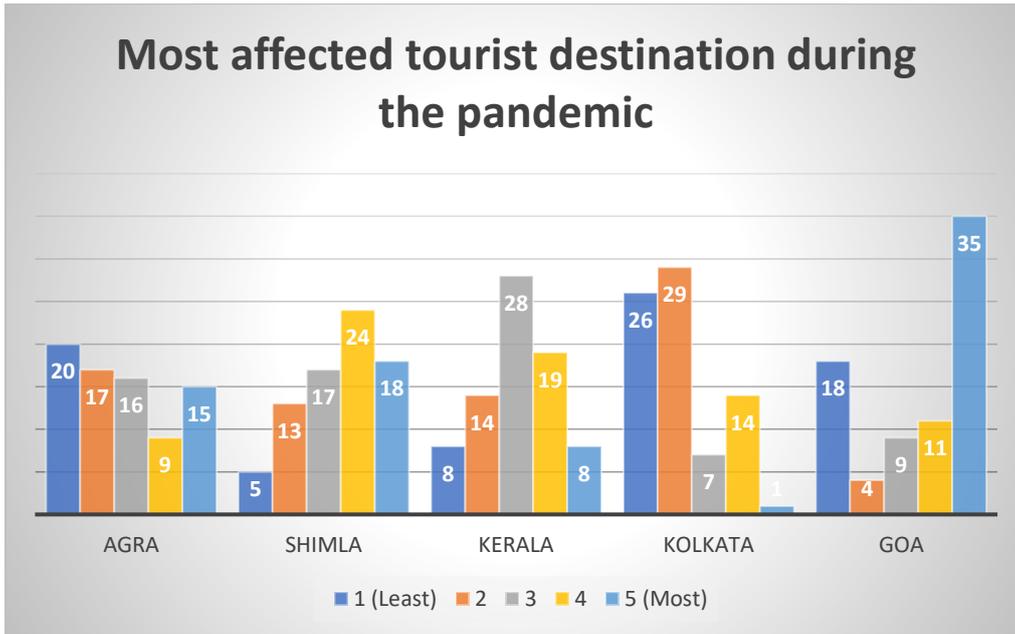
Preferred tourist destinations of respondents:



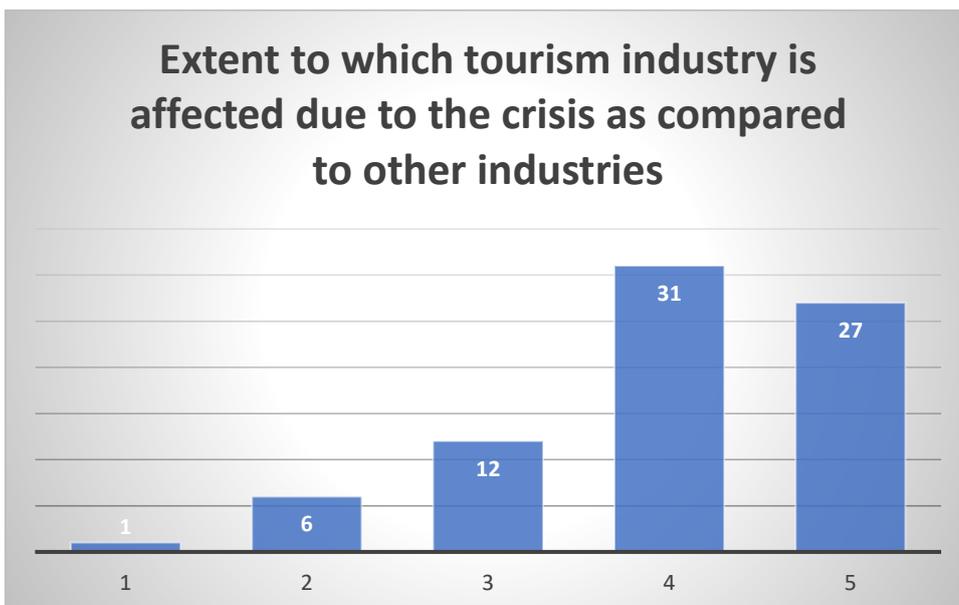
Extent of visiting preferred tourist destinations:



Most affected tourist destinations during the pandemic:



Extent to which tourism industry is affected due to the crisis as compared to other industries:



DATA INTERPRETATION

- 90% of the population from the conducted survey feel that tourism industry would be most affected and only 10% of respondents are against the same. As we all know people are restricting themselves from moving out of the house as much as possible and the stoppage of public transport, the above response was more obvious as even if things get better tourism will be a second thought to many. What goods or services people or consumers buy, that industry does good. Pharma industry has done best over the months.
- When it comes to most important plan to action, here we have categorized it into four types; Sanitization of tourist destinations, Awareness towards domestic travel at this time. Providing financial aids, Going niche. From the responses received it has been observed that more than half viz. 56% of the population feel that awareness towards domestic travel during this time is the most important plan to action. This is mainly because many people residing in India do not know to the fullest the dos and dont's during this crisis. Educating people to not take this virus lightly and be at home is a challenge as India has a huge and diverse population. Next plan to action to follow are sanitization of tourist destinations (33%), providing financial aids (7%) and the least going niche (4%).
- When we come to the analysis part of whether tourism industry will be last to recover as compared to other industries, 69% of the respondents agree on the same and 31% of the respondents are against the same. The reason maybe that traveling and tourism includes lot of people in and around which is risky with respect to pandemic. Even if the tourism industry begins its activities people would still think twice. Hence it maybe appropriate to interpret that tourism sector will be functional but may still be last to recover to function as before.
- When we come to the interpretation of how many months it would take for the tourism sector to recover from October 2020, 48% of the respondents which is close to half of the population feel that it will take 6 to 12 months to recover. The next highest is 19% of the population that feel the tourism industry will take 12 to 18 months to recover. Collectively when we analyse, we can understand that on an average it would take around an year for the tourism industry to recover and function as before.
- The effect of tourism industry can be understood as when analysed through a scale of 5 where 1 was least affected and 5 was most affected, it can be seen that collectively 58 out of 77 respondents have marked on 4 and 5 respectively. This makes it clear of how much affected the tourism industry is as compared to other industries.

CONCLUSION:

From the above hypothesis testing it can be understood that there is an association between the type of plan to action to be taken and opinion of whether tourism industry will be last to recover amid this pandemic. As we all know tourism industry is one of the important industry that generate huge revenue and plays a major role in the economy of the country, the analysis we concludes that tourism industry will take time to recover, but when it comes to plan to action, awareness of domestic travel is most important and vital.

As this was basically a study of plan to action for tourism sector to retrieve from this crisis, we also tried to understand how much the tourism industry has been affected, tourist destinations which are affected the most and how much time it would take for the tourism sector to completely recover.

“The comeback should always be stronger than the setback”. Tourism Industry Growth in any country is prone to the changing economic conditions. In the event when a country is passing through a low phase or an individual's job is at stake, not many people choose to travel.

With few proper efforts and right support, the sector will find its way back on the right track.

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