



Impact of COVID-19 on Education Tourism

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Abstract

Tourism and the field of education were the worst affected sectors during the pandemic of Covid-19. The reduction inflow of students not only impacted the educational institutions from other countries globally but brought about a complete transformation of education systems resulting in the emergence of newer methods of teaching-learning programs. The changes led to shifting of class rooms to the place of the students, use of modern technology and reduced travel. The resultant effect brought about heavy economic loss in some sectors globally, like tourism education, and education in general. The impact of Covid-19, is predicted to cause more changes in all sectors connected to education and tourism for which we must prepare new strategies.

Keywords: Tourism, education, Covid-19, impact, international, students.

Introduction

Tourism involving travelling to other places for the sake of studies or getting a training comprises Education tourism. The time period involving such a travel varies with the kind and duration of the study. Travel for education not only encompasses migration to a distant land but also could be travelling to shorter distances in one's own country or state. Exemplary cases mostly seen in India show the shifting of youth and students from rural regions to urban areas, in search of better opportunities in education, and training. The shift in rural population has occurred both in educated as well as in uneducated families where parents are illiterate. The education tourism results in both permanent and ad-hoc migration of students to other areas, albeit, may be for a short duration only (Ankomah and Larson, 2018).

The tourism conducted for the purpose of studies falls in different categories and varies in its measures from a short journey to a long or permanent shift in residence. Primary group involved in education tourism comprises those whose goals are well organised and performed based on "conducted organised education tours", whereas the other kind of education tourists belong to the group of individuals undergoing training sessions for specific kind of programs in universities or

colleges. Accordingly, education tourism can be either a primarily tourism based or education based (Haukeland, Vistad, Daugstad, & Degnes-Demark, 2013).

Education tourism has been prevalent since many centuries. Instances of travel to distant universities and gurukuls by ancient people all over the globe has been recorded in every region. In modern times, the scale of education travel has been taken to a new level with thousands of students travelling to different parts of the globe every year (Kumari, & Kumar, 2015).

Covid-19 and its impact

Covid -19 disease is a highly infectious, communicable disease caused by the pathogen named “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 or SARS-Cov-2, a family of RNA coronaviruses” (Lupia, 2020). The Covid-19 virus equipped with high infectivity, and transmissibility turned into a global threat causing a great pandemic of the century, with high morbidity and mortality rates (Chinazzi et al., 2020; WHO, 2020) and was declared a pandemic by WHO in March 2020 (World Health Organisation-Europe, 2020). The disease originated though in China, led to the epicentre in Europe by March 2020 thus resulting in mass stagnation of total life on earth. The pandemic led to closure of all activities, commercial as well as academic including tourism, education, in both government and private sectors. A small minute germ brought down the entire world to a full stop (McKibbin & Fernando, 2020).

As per the report of UNESCO (2020), the pandemic of Covid -19 resulted in an extreme negative effect on the educational scenario leading to closure of all schools, from the grassroots, the kindergartens to the highest seat of learning, the universities, bring the learning activity to a zero. The higher density of students in schools and colleges, make the younger population highly vulnerable to Covid-19 spread. Reports show that around 56.6% of students from 130 countries were totally affected in their education due to the Covid pandemic.

(UNESCO, 2020).

The covid 19 pandemic has brought a total disarray in to the lives of the people all over the world. The impact on the tourism industry has been drastic causing heavy economic loss to almost all countries, the effect all the more pronounced in the field of education (Jamal & Budke, 2020). Several discussions have been done by the electronic and print media as well as the academicians through their research studies. Seraphin & Yallop, (2020) have opined that “whenever the tourism industry is affected by major external factors such as over tourism, literature (either academic or news media) are essentially focusing on the industry, forgetting that tourism is also a field of study”. Further it has been noted that changes that affect the tourism industry also disrupt the educational equally, as was evident by the impact of COVID-19 in the last two years.

The effect of Covid -19 on the tourism and hospitality industry has been enormous leading to the limiting of visiting areas and or their closure followed by brief spans of re-opening, affecting the “areas of economic activity “drastically. The resulting events have caused impacts that are noted as “catastrophic” indicating that tourism was one of the most affected fields all over the globe

experiencing extreme losses in terms of economy, travel, hospitality, and saw a total closure of all activities (Nikos et al., 2021).

According to the survey results given by Nations World Tourism Organisation the total loss to the tourism industry stands at 850million to 1.1 billion in inflow of the tourists globally (UNWTO, 2020). The report by World Travel and Tourism Council projected a loss of 50 million jobs all over the world in the tourism sector due to Covid-19 (WTTC,2020). It has been predicted by IATA that the numbers of tourist travel will not resume normality for another two years, viz., upto 2023.

Owing to this, IATA showed concern that the tourist numbers may not reach the level of 2019 until 2023–24 (IATA, 2020).

Effect on tourism education

It has been noted by several investigators that the developments in the tourism industry have greatly impacted the nature and kind of methods in teaching techniques in the educational curriculum, (Camargo &Gretzel, 2017; Hales & Jennings, 2017). The design and content of the curriculum in the various courses in universities have changed accordingly to cater to the newer needs of a changing world.

Studies by other scientists have revealed that Covid -19 has resulted in drastic changes in the field of academics, ranging from lowered research in academic fields to reduction in student admissions worldwide. The effect, though much seen in every field of education, is more pronounced in specific fields like tourism taken as a study, and similar fields. Though tourism education was much lower in the times before Covid, studies in the field of “tourism marketing, destination management, tourists’ behaviour, and related topics” need more attention, and were drastically affected (De Gruyter, 2020). Keeping in view, education in the realms of tourism and hospitality industry, very few studies have been conducted in this field (Baum et al., 2020). Not much studies have been reported with respect to Tourism education and Covid-19, though the impact is very conspicuous.

Reduction in number of students travelling for the purpose of education

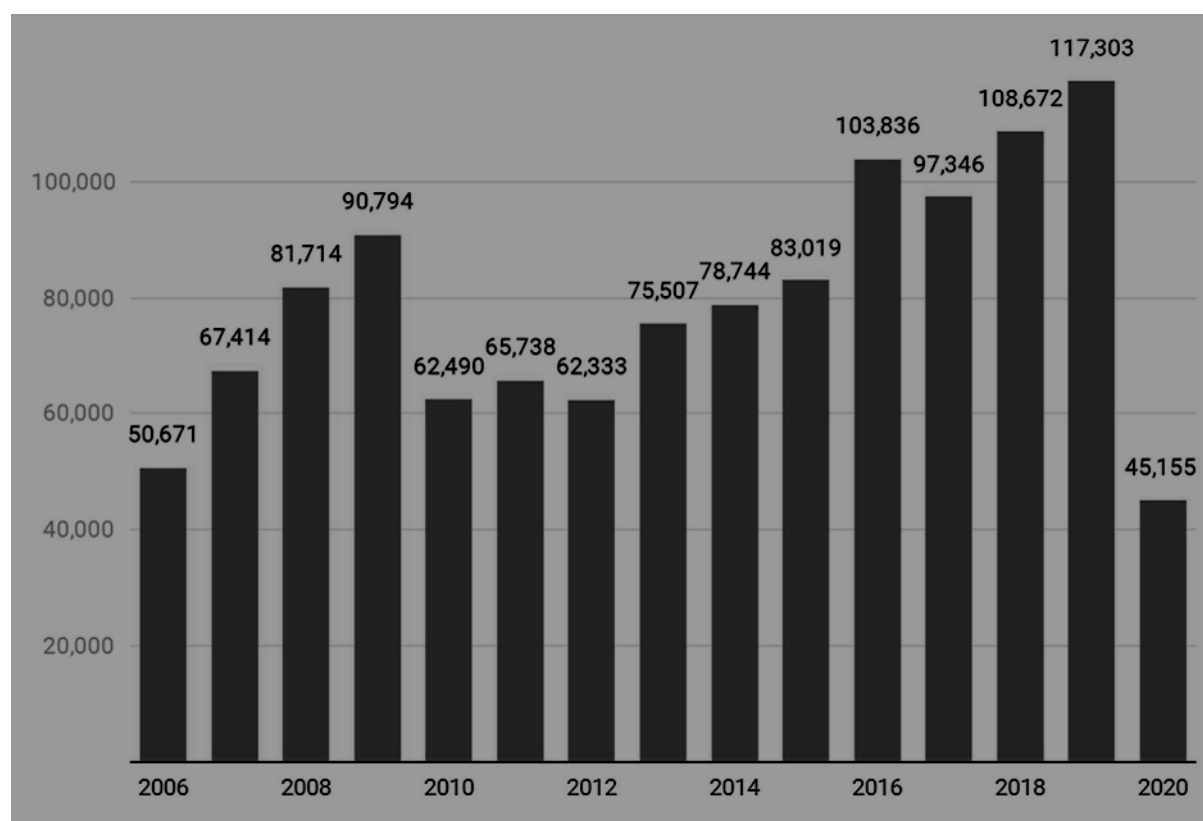
As per the directives of the WHO, the member countries of WTO imposed restrictions on travel and movements across the borders in order to prevent the transmission of Covid-19. This resulted in a tremendous effect on the trade and business transactions, gradually, bringing about more specific regulations aimed at restricted movements of only essential foreign travellers and creation of “travel bubbles”. Such regulations created a significant impact on specific segments like tourism and educational sectors, which led to unforeseen losses for the tourism department worldwide. It has been noted that the losses incurred in the tourism industry during 2020 was the heaviest after the 1950 devastation. Admissions in international students in many countries have been shown to be affected as much as 75%. The heavy economic instability caused by Covid -19 pandemic has made online teaching- learning platforms to open up in many universities (Financial Times, April 2020; WTO, Aug 2020). It has been stated in Financial Times that “University systems in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, which

have invested in attracting a growing number of foreign students, are especially vulnerable to the crisis, with some institutions preparing for a potential drop in international student enrolment”, (Financial Times, April 2020).

Long term effects of the pandemic caused predict a greater level of “uncertainty surrounding the evolution of the pandemic” leading to the implementation of newer methods of travel bans and restrictions which may profoundly cause steep fall in the number of students travelling to other countries for the sake of education. It was predicted in April 2020 by American Council of Education that “international enrolment would drop by 25 per cent” (NYT, May 2020; WTO 2020).

There has been a steep reduction in the number of visa applications by the students intending to study abroad. Australia has recorded a fall of nearly 90% in visa applicants among the student sector since the pandemic began. Hurley (2020). states in his report that

“There are approximately 210,000 fewer international students in Australia than would otherwise be expected. From the 29th of March to October 25th 2020, there was a reduction of around 75,000 currently enrolled international students. As of October 25th 2020, there were approximately 135,000 international students outside Australia and 400,000 in Australia”





Source: Department of Home Affairs (2020a), Australia. (Hurley, 2020)

Figure 1. Student visa applications for April to June (financial quarter 4) 2006 to 2020

The information on the travel movements of international students to Australia and different countries have been denoted in Figure 1 and Table 1.

Table 1.Reduction in enrolment of international students in different countries

Country of citizenship	29 March 2020			25 October 2020			Total Change
	Outside	Inside	Total	Outside	Inside	Total	
 China	66,928	106,796	173,724	84,688	81,220	165,908	-7,816
 India	5,743	91,994	97,737	8,665	78,659	87,324	-10,413
 Nepal	1,259	44,052	45,311	1,345	39,480	40,825	-4,486
 Vietnam	2,894	19,434	22,328	3,522	17,311	20,833	-1,495
 Malaysia	1,664	17,352	19,016	2,975	13,231	16,206	-2,810
 Brazil	2,627	16,843	19,470	1,599	13,809	15,408	-4,062
 Colombia	1,940	15,914	17,854	1,600	13,379	14,979	-2,875
 Philippines	883	14,667	15,550	1,309	13,225	14,534	-1,016
 South Korea	1,733	14,424	16,157	3,088	10,941	14,029	-2,128
 Indonesia	1,446	14,568	16,014	2,854	11,377	14,231	-1,783
Other	29,657	141,450	171,107	25,005	110,400	135,405	-35,702
Total	116,774	497,494	614,268	136,650	403,032	539,682	-74,586

Source: Mitchell Institute report, 2020

The figures and the statistics clearly indicate a drastic fall in the number of students travelling to Australia, in particular, during the pandemic of 2020, owing to the heavier restrictions by the government. The reduction in the movement to other countries has been affected likewise as seen from Table 1. The information indicated a greater change for countries like India (-10,413) and China (-7,816) showing record decrease in number of students from other countries.

The large reduction in the incoming students from other countries makes up for a considerable change in the other sectors like real estates, renting out of residential buildings, reduction in trade for commercial and consumer products, and a significant fall in the floating population of certain cities in some specific countries like Australia, USA (Mitchell Instt). In countries where the international student inflow contributes significantly towards the economy of the state, the effect is seen on the overall financial conditions too.

Change in mode of imparting education- Emergence of online teaching mode

The resultant effect of the pandemic has been seen on the educational modes in the tourism education sector too. Changes have been imminent in order to maintain the functionality of the teaching -learning programmes and thus, the deviation in the mode of teaching from regular classes to online education programmes has produced a few benefits. The conduction of classes, conferences, symposiums and training programmes in online mode has been the way of working in education tourism as well, reducing the direct contact thus following Covid-19 directives (Nikos et al, 2021).

The information and communication technologies (ICTs) based courses in the field of education and tourism have been extremely helpful since many years (Goh & Sigala,2020). The ICTs have

transformed the educational field by imparting educational programs through the use of technology and computers. The online mode of teaching has a better edge for both teachers and students, bringing classrooms into the vicinity of the students (Sigala, 2013). The advantages of the ICT courses lie in the fact that the content quality of teaching programmes is well maintained along with the use of technology to ensure proper delivery of the lectures, thus enhancing the interaction between the students and the teachers and bringing forth the creativity to the higher level (Goh & Sigala, 2020).

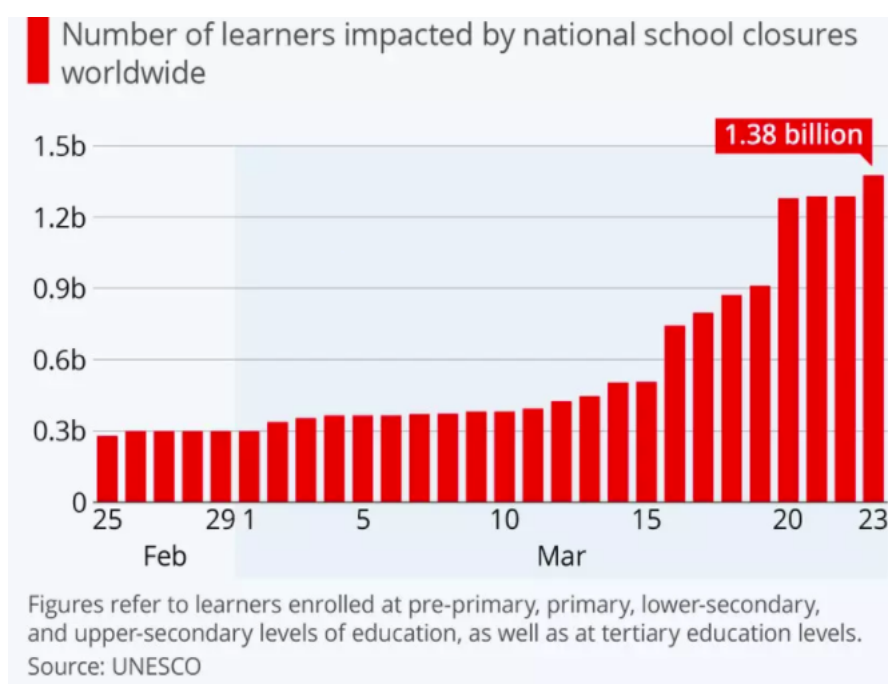
According to the authors,

“Online courses and resources provide hospitality and tourism students time and space flexibility “(Goh & Sigala, 2020); the courses being in collaboration with the industry, have been received well by professionals (Sipe & Testa, 2020).

Distant learning programs

In contrast to the regular mode of learning, the online class rooms and distance learning modes have taken the education sector by storm during the pandemic. Most of the countries have instructed their educational bodies to resort to online teaching mode during the pandemic in order to bring continuity in the field of education. Most of the teaching learning programs are run online through internet usage, on personal computers, mobiles and tablets. Textbooks have been replaced by digital files. Onscreen time of the students have increased. These programmes are accessible to students across the globe, thus, preventing travel to different countries for the sake of education.

It has been recorded that certain online learning platforms have shown a 200% increase in the enrolment of students since the Pandemic began, as was seen with ‘BYJU’S, a Bangalore-based educational technology and online tutoring firm founded in 2011’, (Li and Lalani, 2020).



Source: UNESCO, WEF

Figure 2. Impact on enrolment of students in different classes worldwide during pandemic

It has been established that around 1.38 billion students studying in different levels of education have been affected by the pandemic in a serious way, leading to discontinuation of education caused due to closure of schools (Figure 2). As a result, several institutions have resorted to the online mode of teaching during the pandemic to sustain the continuation of classes.

Education system which was already at cross roads before the pandemic has been tremendously affected. According to scholar Yuval Noah Harari (2019), in his book *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, quotes that

“How schools continue to focus on traditional academic skills and rote learning, rather than on skills such as critical thinking and adaptability, which will be more important for success in the future”.

Hybrid mode of teaching

Many institutions that were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic have transformed their teaching to “hybrid system of learning”. This method has been seen as a better option to continue education in many countries. It has been shown from several studies done that “classroom learning is not just source of education acquisition but to learn the basic tenants of socialization” (Calogiannakis & Eleftherakis, 2012). But it was impossible for the conventional mode of learning and teaching to happen due to sudden lockdowns and restrictions on the movement, at the same time, there were several hurdles and challenges to overcome in a completely newer digital program for teaching. As a result, several institutions opted for the hybrid learning modes where a mix of both classroom teaching was done with digital learning using modern technology so as to complete the educational programs in line with the conventional curriculum standards. Though such programs have shown to cause a higher stress level amongst the students in certain regions and families (Islam, Barna, RaihanKhan, & Hossain, 2020; Resnchuk and Tanyova). Therefore, a much deeper study is required to fully understand the importance and effects of these hybrid mode of education in institutions and look into the possibilities of adapting them in a wider manner for the future education programs.

Conclusion

The effect of Covid -19 pandemic has been seen universally in almost all fields of our lives in the last two years. The impact has been more profound in some sectors especially, in the education and the tourism sectors. In the combined field where tourism is considered with the need for education, the impact is all the more, resulting in heavy economic losses to both educational institutions and tourism industry across the globe. The change in teaching modes in many countries have been implemented, though that does not ensure inflow of students from other countries for education. It has been predicted that if normal travel conditions are not returned, the numbers of students travelling for education is going to face a steep downhill trend in future years. Everything depends mainly on how and when the pandemic ends and what alternative modes can be sought in both education and tourism.

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