

Events Tourism and Sustainable Development with Respect to Covid-19

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ABSTRACT

Events are widely recognized as essential components of global tourism. Due to the rapid transmission of the deadly coronavirus, the tourism industry including events tourism felt disrupted. WHO officially announced the outbreak of COVID-19 as the worst pandemic that mankind has ever faced. These disruptions manifest in the way of event suspensions or rescheduling. The present study examines three segments of event tourism, namely, corporate events, religious events, and sports events. The first objective is to conduct a concise review of the pre-COVID-19 condition of events tourism. The inquiry into the persistence of events as a significant determinant within the framework of the pandemic has been delineated as the second objective. Finally, the last objective pertains to the evaluation of the ramifications of the pandemic on the events tourism. This study conducts a comprehensive analysis of scholarly articles to examine the recent advancements in various worldwide events with respect to the pandemic, as well as the consequences of the outbreak on the field of event tourism and event management. Thus, COVID-19 has resulted in an unprecedented decline in events tourism, giving a hit to overall sustainable development.

Keywords: Events Tourism; COVID-19; Corporate Events; Religious Events; Sports Events.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Travel and tourism industry is widely acknowledged as a burgeoning sector that made a substantial contribution of about 10% (equal to 8.9 trillion US dollars) to the worldwide GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in the year 2019. Moreover, this particular sector has contributed to the creation of job prospects for around 330 million workers, representing a significant proportion of the global workforce, with one out of every ten jobs being directly or indirectly associated with it. The Travel and tourism sector constituted 6.8% (equal to 1.7 trillion US dollars) of global exports, with total investments in this sector representing 4.3% (equivalent to 940 billion US dollars) of the overall global investment volume. [1]

Events are of great importance in the tourism industry since they act as crucial determinants in both the instigation of travel (push factors) and the allure of visitors to a particular tourist location or event (pull factors) in the promotion and sustainable development of the tourist destination. Also, events possess a wide array of attributes that can be categorized based on their intrinsic properties, scope, level of proficiency, and magnitude. In recent years, there has been a discernible inclination among tourism service providers and organizations to prioritize the strategic development and implementation of unique events, such as community fairs and local festivals. The primary objective of this strategy approach is to attract the attention and engagement of both domestic and foreign visitors, resulting in socio-economic benefits and sustainable development for the local communities. [2]

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a great impact on the travel and tourism industry along with different global events, leading to a range of adverse outcomes. The unexpected outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had significant and far-reaching impacts on a range of international events, including but not limited to the “Summer Olympics” held in Japan, the “Cannes Film Festival”, the “Wimbledon tennis tournament” in the United Kingdom, and the “Metropolitan Opera” in the United States of America. The cancellations and postponements mentioned in the literature [3] resulted in notable socio-economic and geopolitical ramifications.

Although there exists a considerable amount of scholarly material pertaining to tourism and event management with the rise of transmission disease outbreaks, there has been a lack of focus on the management of events during such outbreaks. [4] Limited research has been conducted on the specific management of events within the framework of infectious disease outbreaks. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the extent of the effect caused by COVID-19 exceeds that of earlier outbreaks of coronaviruses, such as SARS and MERS, as evidenced by studies conducted by [5] and [6]. In light of the intricate implications at hand, the current situation calls for a thorough analysis of the manifold impacts that COVID-19 has exerted on the domain of event management. The investigation holds significant importance in ensuring proper preparation and mitigation of potential risks for both participants and event coordinators following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main aim of this study is to fill the research gap described earlier by the implementation of an extensive literature review focused on the subject of COVID-19 and its impact on event management. This study investigates two fundamental characteristics of event tourism. The first objective deals with a succinct overview of the condition of events tourism before the

onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The second objective of this study is to investigate the role of events in shaping the course of the COVID-19 epidemic. The third objective is to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry, specifically events tourism.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Due to the unpredictable outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the literature related to its impact on different events is scarce. Thus, the present study adopted an exploratory research method and relied on “grey literature”. Though “grey literature” refers to published as well as unpublished studies from different journals [7], it provides valuable information. To support the study with strong pieces of evidence, an in-depth search was conducted with the help of pre-determined parameters related to the impact of the pandemic on the sustainable development of events tourism. The secondary data for the study was collected from local and government agencies, international survey reports, pre-prints, press releases, and newspaper articles. The keywords generated from academic articles and search engines were analyzed using the thematic content analysis technique. Finally, the paper was drafted and errors including typographical and grammatical errors were eliminated.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Events are commonly acknowledged as substantial factors in the dissemination of infectious diseases. Therefore, within the framework of a pandemic, the ideal course of action is generally deemed to be the cancellation or postponement of events. According to [8] and [9], festivals that are not organized with adequate regulation possess the potential to evolve into events characterized by "super spreading" phenomena. With the recent outbreak in action, India has felt a notable increase in the prevalence of COVID-19 infections. This rise has been principally linked to the insufficient execution of preventive measures during religious congregations, notably the Tablighi Jamaat. [10]

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government expeditiously enacted rigorous regulations aimed at curtailing travel and mitigating the occurrence of large-scale gatherings. The aforementioned result resulted in irreversible damage to the tourism industry, specifically to events tourism. In accordance with a study conducted by [11], the “MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions)” industry, which plays an important role in promoting sustained economic development, encountered an exceptional increase in the number of events being cancelled or rescheduled. In accordance with governmental

guidelines, the event organizers made the decision to either cancel or reschedule a diverse array of activities, encompassing exhibits, concerts, conferences, athletic events, weddings, and trade shows. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant influence on various events taking place globally, encompassing cultural, business, sports, and large-scale events such as the “Olympic Games 2020”, “Indian Premier League (IPL)”, “The International Indian Film Academy Awards (IIFA)”, “ITB-India”, “India Fintech Festival”, “Ultra Festival”, “Goa Fest”, “FDCI India Fashion Week”, “Marathon”, “META Theater Awards”, “E3”, and “SXSW tech event”. [12]

Business and corporate events hold considerable importance within the travel and tourism industry. These events necessitate a comprehensive list of services, encompassing conference and exposition halls, a broad selection of lodging furnished with banquet services, and a multitude of public and private amenities. [13] asserts that a considerable share of business events occurs at the municipal level on a worldwide magnitude, mostly driven by the accessibility of services. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial influence on business events, leading to the disruption of almost all services as a result of the implementation of preventive measures. Upon the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments worldwide swiftly enacted various measures, including the imposition of travel bans on both international and local routes, as well as the temporary suspension of large-scale gatherings. [14]

The worldwide occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly and adversely impacted religious events on a global scale. However, as a result of the inherent inflexibility of religious events, organizers frequently encountered challenges in accommodating the potential need for rescheduling or termination. Various religious events were observed by a restricted number of adherents, while others were celebrated in a solitary context.

The sports industry, which has an approximate yearly global value of US\$ 756 billion, faced a significant threat presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The protracted nature of the epidemic has led to significant economic consequences, with numerous employment opportunities being jeopardized not only within the sports business but also across various related sectors. [15] Further, different sports firms and organizations have faced financial and economic difficulties that may result in the discontinuation of their activities. The authenticity of sporting events played without spectators, colloquially known as "ghost games," has been under scrutiny during the ongoing global pandemic. Scholars have posited that the absence of

fan support not only exerts an influence on the results of these games but also carries financial ramifications for both the teams and the broadcasters. [16]

4. CONCLUSION

Events tourism has emerged as the most successful node in the travel and tourism industry. However, with the high rate of transmission of COVID-19, the events tourism felt a huge setback. Many events including corporate, religious, and sports events were cancelled and re-scheduled due to the “mass gathering” characteristics of the event. Thus, the study concluded that events tourism faced a great loss in terms of corporate and sports events, though religious events were conducted with preventive measures.

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