



IMPACT OF COVID-ON TOURISM IN MYSORE – CHALLENGING THE ODDS

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Abstract

This paper focuses on impact of COVID-19 on Tourism activities in Mysore district. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the whole world reel under various degrees of unconstructive influences. Tourism and hospitality sector is the worst hit sector because it is a service sector and it involves profound congregation and movement of people. The tourism in Mysore district specially is hit by the COVID -19 pandemic as Mysore is known for its scenic beauty , heritage destinations, temples , places of natural beauty and annual Dussera grandeur celebration. It attracts nearly 10 lakh people comprising both domestic and foreign tourists every year. Mysore is a tourism friendly destination for domestic tourists and foreign tourist feel Mysore cool and attractive. But COVID -19 pandemic has made busy Mysore to become isolated and secluded. People fear to take up any travelling fearing health grounds. This has affected the tourism related economy in Mysore and Small and medium sized business enterprises have completely shut down. Lakhs and lakhs of tourists who flocked to visit the Mysore palace , Vrindavan garden , Mysore Zoo etc have stayed away from travelling. But the release of Lock down phase 1,2,3,4 has made movement of people more easier , still the health precautions are the primary cause of holding people from travelling. But the economy has to gear up to meet the new challenges and the necessity to frame new policies and monitor their implementation is the need of the hour.

Key words: Tourism in Mysore, COVID-19 spread , impact, new policy demands

Introduction

Mysore has a recorded history dating back to almost 1000 years. This city of Mysore rose to prominence when it was the capital city of Feudatories of Vijayanagara Empire under Chamaraja Wodeyar in 1584 AD. In 1610 he shifted the capital to Srirangapattana Hyder Ali who was a commander in the army assumed power in the late 18th century when the then Wodeyar proved incapable of administration and protection of the state from British invaders and instead preferred to indulge in Luxuries. Hyder Ali was succeeded by his son Tipu sultan who fought and defeated British and was finally killed by British The British then restored the throne to Wodeyar making him as the puppet ruler as it suited their commercial interests. The Wodeyar has substantial internal autonomy and Princely state of Mysore moved towards modernity. Mysore has evolved from being a quiet and prosperous city to a city of tourist destinations.

Despite many challenges surrounding interstate travel amidst COVID pandemic the Mysore palace has seen a big jump in tourism footfall since last august. This has brought cheers to tourism stake holders in Mysore district . Tourism industry is picking up after a gap of six months. The Mysore palace is shut since 90 days and

even the rules were relaxed tourism was given the last preference because once the tourist places are open people would naturally crowd the places increasing the risk of pandemic. Subsequently the union government announced some relaxations including opening up of a few places of tourism to improve economy. Accordingly the Mysore palace and Sri Chamrajendra zoological gardens were allowed to open but with strict guidelines and social distancing measures.

This kind of response was expected as the country was seeing an unprecedented spike in virus infection. The foot falls gradually improved from two digits to four digits thus bringing smile on the faces of authorities.

While over 2012 tourists visited the palace in June it plummeted to 725 in July due to sudden increase in COVID-19 positive cases. However the total number of tourists visiting the palace touched 10537 in August. In current month already 13,091 tourists have visited the palace till Sept 14. This has come as a breather for everyone as tourism is slowly picking up in city. Not much foreign tourists are coming to the palace visit due to the virus threat and also due to a ban on international travel.

In August 2020 only 22 foreign nationals visited the palace when compared to a minimum of 1000 during normal days. Till September only 13 foreign nationals visited Mysore. It is known that Mysore attracts close to 35 to 40 lakh tourists a year. Tourism and hospitality is the main industry of Mysore and surrounding areas as there are not many manufacturing and service industries around. The economy is either directly or indirectly related to tourism and hospitality and the sector employs over 25 thousand persons.

Safety protocols at Mysore palace

Any visitor to the palace has to undergo safety protocols. The palace authorities have taken all precautions like

1. Compulsory maintenance of safe distancing among tourists
2. Checking Use of Face masks at the entrance
3. Thermal scanning at the entrance door
4. Compelling Hand sanitizer for each and every visitor
5. Sanitization is done at regular intervals inside the palace to make the visit safe for all ages of tourists.

In Mysore, Destinations where accommodation hygiene and sanitation medical care and water quality are of a medium standard, pose relatively serious risks to the health of travelers.

The mode of transport duration of visit and the behavior of the traveler are important which can affect the exposure to infectious diseases and will influence decision

Health precautions for tourists in Mysore

1. **Washing hands frequently**- This minimizes the chance of contracting the CORONA virus. Each traveler has to make sure those just rinsing hands with soap and water is not enough. They have to wash hands for 20-30 seconds. They have to be careful while accessing public spaces public transport. It is advised that each visitor has to carry his own hand sanitizer. It is recommended to use a sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol content. Hence it is advised that they have to wash the hands frequently and thoroughly.
2. **Avoiding touching face with unwashed hands**- Each traveler to Mysore needs to understand the very important fact to avoid touching face with unwashed hands. It has been found that the novel corona virus

stay on surfaces for hours after it has been touched by an infected person. It can easily spread to someone who comes in contact with the object through their mouth nose or eyes.

3. **Keeping distance** - The symptoms of Corona virus diseases are similar to that of common flu or cold. Hence it is advisable that when seeing someone is coughing sneezing or has any common signs of flu try to stay at least three feet away from that person. It is possible to contract the virus through respiratory droplets by cough or sneeze.
4. **Good hygiene place**- Tourists in Mysore need to understand the health precautions of searching for a safe place with good hygiene and cleanliness. hotel accommodations and safe lodging is necessary for every traveller. It is always better to check in with the hotel staff and management to ensure hotel room is thoroughly cleaned. It is also advised that each traveller needs to know that he himself has to sweep frequently touched objects with a disinfectant or cleaning spray to ensure 100 percent hygiene.
5. **Avoiding crowds**- Crowds are the most vulnerable places during a corona virus spread. It is advised to avoid places in Mysore such as Mysore Palace, Zoo, Brinadvan gardens, Dussera celebrations etc.
6. **Research** – visitor to Mysore has to remember that it is necessary to make some research about places of visit in Mysore. Checking the health bulletin, Checking the Corona spread data, Each tourist needs to check about the virus spread containment zones and seal down areas.
7. **wearing medically tested mask**- Traveller to Mysore needs to know that wearing a clinically tested mask is very much necessary. After travelling to any place in Mysore if a traveller develops some symptoms he has to be ready to isolate him and seek medical help immediately.

Conclusion

Thus, CORONA pandemic has highly impacted the tourism and hospitality sector in Mysore. The tourist destinations which were bustling with lakh of tourist every day, have become silent and crowd less. The tourism and hospitality sector in Mysore can be revived with precautionary measures and each tourist needs to understand his role in containing the epidemic spread. He has to join hands with government in keeping the city clean through following healthy preventative measures.

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