

Crisis in Tourism Before and After the Pandemic

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Abstract

Tourism is an industry that reacts very quickly to change. When people stop travelling, the effects are immediately felt by hotels, transport services, travel agencies, and local communities. Before COVID-19, tourism faced several difficult situations, such as natural disasters, political problems, economic slowdowns, and health scares. These situations reduced tourist movement, but recovery usually happened within a short time.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a completely different situation. Travel stopped almost everywhere, borders were closed, and tourism businesses were forced to shut down for long periods. Millions of people working in tourism lost their income. This paper looks at tourism crises before the pandemic and compares them with the situation during and after COVID-19. It explains how travel patterns, business operations, and recovery processes changed and highlights the lessons learned from this experience.

Keywords: Tourism crisis, COVID-19, pandemic, tourism recovery

1. Introduction

Tourism plays an important role in the economy of many countries. It provides employment, supports small businesses, and contributes to regional development. For many destinations, tourism income supports daily life and community well-being. However, tourism is also highly sensitive to problems. Any event that creates fear, uncertainty, or travel restrictions can reduce tourist movement within a very short time.

Before the pandemic, tourism problems were usually caused by events such as terrorist attacks, political unrest, natural disasters, or financial crises. These events affected only certain destinations. Tourists avoided those places for some time but continued travelling to other regions. As conditions improved, tourism activity slowly returned.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed this situation completely. Travel restrictions were introduced across the world at the same time. Flights were cancelled, borders were closed, and people were advised to stay at home. This paper compares tourism crises before the pandemic with the crisis during and after COVID-19 in order to understand how the tourism industry has changed.

2. Review of Literature

Many researchers have pointed out that tourism is one of the sectors most affected during times of crisis. Faulkner (2001) explained that even the fear of danger can discourage people from travelling. Ritchie (2009) noted that destinations that prepare in advance and respond quickly are able to recover faster.

Studies on natural disasters, political conflicts, and economic problems show that tourism usually experiences a sharp fall in visitor numbers. However, recovery often begins once safety improves and confidence is restored. Marketing efforts and government support play an important role in this process.

Earlier health-related crises, such as SARS and Ebola, reduced travel for limited periods and mainly affected specific regions. Tourism activity returned once these outbreaks were controlled. In contrast, studies published after 2020 describe COVID-19 as the most serious crisis tourism has ever faced. Gössling, Scott, and Hall (2020) stated that the pandemic brought tourism to a near standstill worldwide.

Recent research also shows changes in tourist behaviour after the pandemic. Travellers became more careful, preferred nearby destinations, and paid greater attention to cleanliness and safety. There is also growing interest in nature-based travel and responsible tourism.

3. Methodology

This study is descriptive and is based on a review and comparison of existing academic literature. It does not involve surveys, interviews, or statistical analysis. The aim is to understand how tourism crises occurred before the pandemic and how the situation changed during and after COVID-19.

Information for the study was collected from books, research articles, and reports related to tourism crisis management and pandemic impacts. These sources were used to understand common experiences and responses discussed by earlier researchers.

The study compares three phases of tourism: before the pandemic, during the pandemic, and after the pandemic. Simple graphs are used to explain general trends such as decline, disruption, and gradual recovery. These graphs do not show actual numerical data and are used only for explanation.

4. Tourism Crisis Before the Pandemic

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism problems usually occurred due to sudden events in specific places. Natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, cyclones, and tsunamis often lead to temporary travel cancellations. Political issues, terrorist attacks, and protests also reduced tourist arrivals because of safety concerns.

In these situations, tourism did not stop everywhere. Travellers avoided the affected destinations and chose other places to visit. As a result, the impact, though serious, was mostly short-term. Once conditions improved, tourists gradually returned.

Governments and tourism authorities supported recovery by repairing infrastructure, improving security, and promoting destinations through advertising. Tourism businesses helped recovery by offering discounts, changing travel packages, and focusing on domestic tourists.

Workers in tourism often faced temporary job losses or reduced income, but employment usually improved as tourism activity returned. Overall, tourism showed the ability to recover, and such crises were seen as short-term problems.

5. Tourism Crisis During the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic created a crisis that tourism had never experienced before. Travel stopped suddenly across the world. Countries closed their borders, flights were cancelled, and hotels and tourist attractions were shut for long periods.

Unlike earlier crises, there were no alternative destinations. Every country faced the same problem at the same time. Tourism-dependent regions lost their main source of income almost overnight.

The impact on workers was severe. Many people employed in hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, transport services, and tourist sites lost their jobs. Small businesses suffered the most because they had limited savings and ongoing expenses.

Families that depended on tourism income struggled to meet daily needs. The uncertainty about how long the pandemic would last made recovery very difficult. Tourism was no longer facing a temporary slowdown but a long-lasting crisis.

6. Tourism After the Pandemic

As travel restrictions were slowly lifted, tourism began to recover, but in a careful and limited way. Domestic tourism returned first because people felt safer travelling within their own country.

Short trips, road travel, and visits to nearby destinations became more common. Tourists preferred places that were less crowded and closer to nature, such as hills, beaches, villages, and open areas.

Cleanliness, safety, and flexible booking options became important factors in travel decisions. Many travellers avoided large crowds and busy tourist centres.

Technology became more common in tourism after the pandemic. Online bookings, digital payments, and contactless services were widely used. There was also greater interest in responsible tourism, where visitors respected local communities and the environment.

7. Discussion

A comparison of tourism before, during, and after the pandemic shows clear differences in how the industry responds to the crisis. Earlier problems were usually limited to certain destinations and lasted for a short time. Tourism was able to recover once confidence returned.

The pandemic exposed serious weaknesses in the tourism system. Many destinations depended heavily on tourism income and were not prepared for a long shutdown. This situation highlighted the need for better planning and support measures.

Tourists have also changed the way they think about travel. Safety, cleanliness, and flexibility now play a major role in decision-making. Trust has become an important factor in tourism.

8. Conclusion

Tourism has faced many challenges over the years, but the COVID-19 pandemic was the most damaging. Unlike earlier crises, it affected all destinations at the same time and continued for a long period. The sudden stop in travel showed how vulnerable tourism-dependent economies can be.

The comparison of tourism before and after the pandemic shows clear changes in travel behaviour and business practices. Tourists are now more careful, and tourism businesses pay more attention to safety and flexibility. Governments have also realised the importance of planning for future crises.

The experience of the pandemic provides valuable lessons for the tourism industry. Better preparation, balanced growth, and responsible tourism practices can help tourism face future challenges with greater confidence.

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