

TREND DYNAMISM OBSERVED IN THE TOURIST MARKET OF ORISSA POST THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

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ABSTRACT

This paper sets to find out the dynamic changes that have affected the market post the nation-wide lockdown that was implemented due to the pandemic caused by the COVID virus. Whether good or bad, have the trends succumbed the market towards a standstill or have they opened the potential gates towards a very new market as well as demand, now that the sector has been unlocked, would be some of the things on priority that the paper will intend to find out. Orissa, the best kept secret of India has huge potential for tourism, considering great settings of lush forests which are matched with temples and river bodies to be abstract. As per the Annual Statistics Bulletin 2019 by Odisha Government an 8.74% increase, from 1,41,11,243 in 2017 to 1,54,22,765 in 2019. The main Objective of the paper would be to track the trends that have been introduced post the COVID-19 lockdown, as well as to see the new opportunities it has opened due to such dynamism in the trends. Empirical structuring was adopted due to the nature of the paper, and chain-referral sampling scheme was adopted due to the exclusivity of the officials involved with the Odisha Government, 150 of which were approached but due to various constraints, 86 samples consented to be included in the study.

Key Words: *Market trends, Tourism, Odisha Govt., Dynamism, COVID-19 lockdown.*

INTRODUCTION: COVID-19 an abbreviation used for the virus Novel Coronavirus, an acute respiratory syndrome which infects people if they are in close proximity i.e. standing close to each other. As of today the tally of total infections as of 17th March, 2021 stands at 12,12,78,482 and the total deaths clock at 26,82,258, a massive figure for a virus that has wreaked losses and depressions since its inception. (Worldometers, 2021) Wuhan, a city in the Hubei province of People's Republic of China was the epicentre of the virus. The source of the virus is yet unknown, with a lot of theories running wild, two of the most credible were that one, it was transferred to the humans via bats and the second and more credible one being that it had originated in a Wuhan's wet market, a place which sells a lot of living sea creatures as food. As these places are usually very crowded, and do not maintain temperatures where bacteria does not multiply thus during one such interaction, it got carried to a human which then infected people around him(er) while going about regular business. (Readfearn, 2020) Tourism and Hospitality industries were one of the worst hit sectors, along with the aviation industry as the countries closed their geographical borders in order to contain the virus more efficiently (Jain, 2020). COVID-19 Pandemic has brought huge losses to the industry, which was already facing problems due to the economic slowdown. Adding a lockdown, which was implemented to control the spread of the virus, which ultimately resulted in a huge market dip? (Goswami&Soundararajan, 2020) It was also observed that United Nations of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) concluded that 100% of the tourist destinations imposed travel restrictions for the first time across the globe due to the Pandemic (Balakrishnan, 2020)

The tourism sector in Odisha, also known as '*India's Best Kept Secret*' possesses great potential towards providing good employment opportunities as the sector of tourism and hospitality sectors amalgamate a lot of tourist products like hotel accommodations, gastronomical offerings, shopping for local and artisanal products as well as transport. Talking about some facts, there are around 92,206 people involved in a direct manner and 276,618 people are in an indirect engagement in the tourism and hospitality sector of Odisha as recorded at the year end of 2012. (Das, 2013)

LITERATURE REVIEW: Tourism has many faces, adventure tourism being one of the most popular, with a CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) of about 46% making it not only popular as discussed above but also one of the fastest growing. Over the past 3 years, there has

been a steep rise in the demand of adventure activities by 178% along with a 42% increase in the excursion activity trend and demand. Lastly, there are around 57% of the travel enthusiasts within India that have an interest and patronize towards Adventure travel activities. The Madhya Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation has erected facilities and centres at its tourist spots for better facilitation and convenience to its patrons, places which had roughly 8,39,69,799 domestic tourists as well as 3,75,426 international tourists. (Nautiyal, 2020)

The state of Odisha intends to gradually increase the tourist's inflow, with sustainability & safety protocols with heightened measures. In its mission to ensure nothing but supreme standards of safety & hygiene of the tourists, the department is collaborating extensively with the Odisha state hospitality & tourism sector through intermediaries and groups like the Hotels & Restaurants Association of Odisha (HRAO). Ensuring a prepared approach towards COVID protocols, the top management, executives as well as grass-root level service providers in the tourism industry are being acclimatized to everything COVID-19 Protocols for being prepared for the Tourist Destinations that has been issued by the Department of Tourism. Prime hotels and resorts in the state have also put in place exhaustive and technology-leveraged sanitisation mechanisms to implement Safety & Hygiene Protocols and Operational Recommendations for Tourism Service Providers issued in May 2020 by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. (PTII, 2020) Odisha Tourism also has innovated a new method to attract more tourists to the state. As the air & rail commute has been adversely affected because of the pandemic, the state department of tourism is intending to publicise road trips in the state of Odisha, with the campaign named *Road Trip to and through Odisha*, which will be effectively promoted, provided the situation works out better till the October end of this year. (Travel News, 2020)

Structuring: This study adopted an empirical structuring due to the nature of the topic, which was strictly data driven to reach the conclusion and also which had an exclusive opinion collection options, and mainly because of this, chain referral sampling method was selected, also called snowball sampling, the samples being the government officials belonging to Odisha Tourism. Another reason for adopting snowball sampling was that the authors met only a few of them while deputed on destination based skill development programmes, and requested them to forward the questionnaire.

Sampling: Out of 250 samples intended to be included in the study, 207 samples consented to their inclusion, bringing the overall response rate for the study to 82%. The study as written in the topic itself was conducted in the state of Odisha with a lot of sub-districts approached due to the nature of questionnaire being online, which had close ended questions as well as tools like a Likert's Scale to quantify the data and have better analysis to have a proper meaning derived out of it.

Collecting: Data was collected through a close ended questionnaire which had tools like a Likert' Scale to quantify and further analyse the data. The samples responses was recorded in the analysis section, and to further verify and make the data relatable, secondary set of data was sourced from journals, proceedings as well as online sources.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To know the tourist market as well as tourist offerings of Odisha
2. To Analyse the dynamism of demand witnessed post COVID Lockdown
3. To understand the reasons of the current tourist market trends of Odisha

ANALYSIS: As discussed earlier, the closes ended questionnaire was set keeping in mind of then non-approachability aspect due to the COVID distancing regulations, and a likert scale was also added for better analysis and quantification of the data. Following were the responses received:

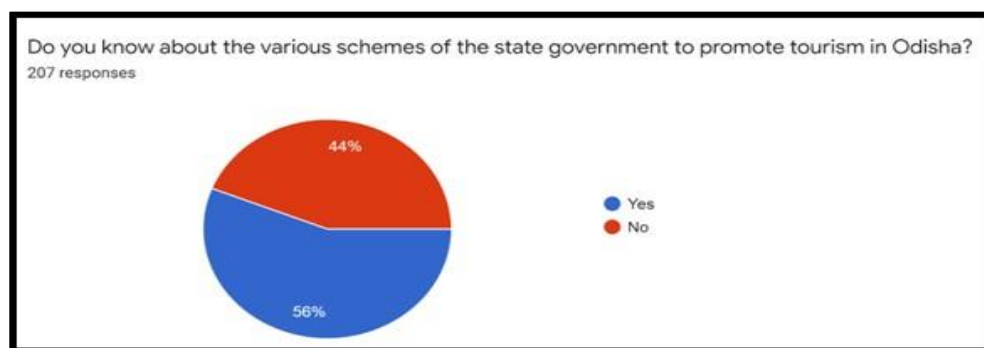


Figure 01: Awareness about various govt. Schemes (Source: Author)

This question aimed to know about the awareness of various state govt run schemes to promote tourism in Odisha. Out of 207 responses 56% already knew about the different schemes of the

state govt and 44% didn't know about it. To conclude, the majority of sample population already knew about the state government schemes.

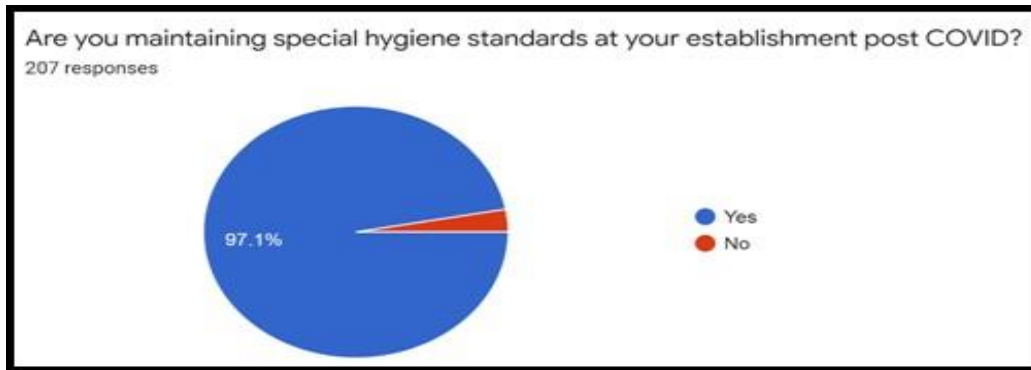


Figure 02: Enquiring the hygiene following in establishments (Source: Author)

Out of 207 responses 97.1% are maintaining special hygiene standards at their establishment and the rest 2.9% are not maintaining them. A majority here towards the yes side shows a positive approach towards following COVID protocols so as to win public confidence.

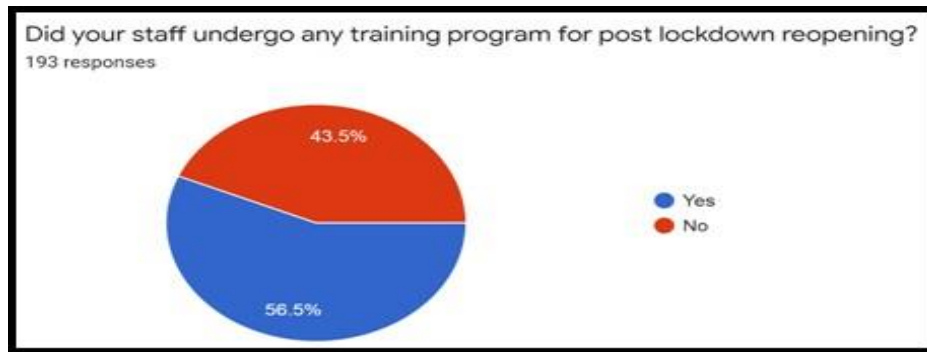


Figure 03: Whether the staff went COVID training or not (Source: Author)

This question had 193 responses rather than 207 like in earlier sample responses from the base, which may reflect hiding of information as they might be embarrassed to provide the actual data and opinions. The response rate fell from the original 82% to 77.12%. 56.5% of this sample base made their staff undergoes special training for post COVID operations which of course was majority but considerations of 14 samples who did not respond to the survey also has to be kept in mind, whereas rest 43.5% did not undergo any special training.

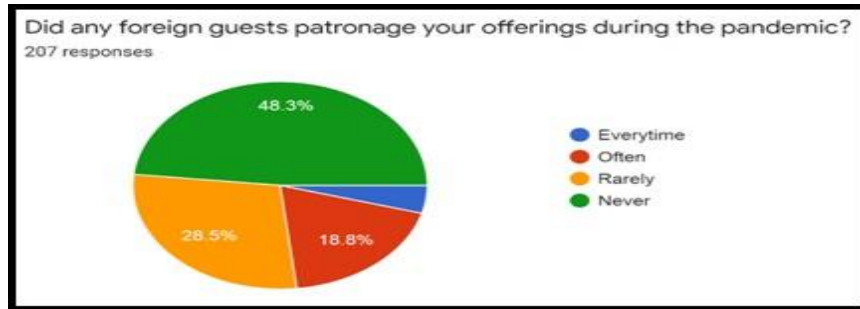


Figure 04: Trend analysis of foreign clientele post COVID in Odisha (Source: Author)

Out of 207 responses, a meager figure of 4.3% had them every time, thus showing the foreign trend still on the decline, followed by 28.5% share of the total sample base telling they had them rarely, again proving the point which was analysed a sentence before. 18.8% of the sample base often had them and lastly 48.3%, a majority of the sample base never had any foreign guests thus concluding that domestic industry is picking up but not the International.

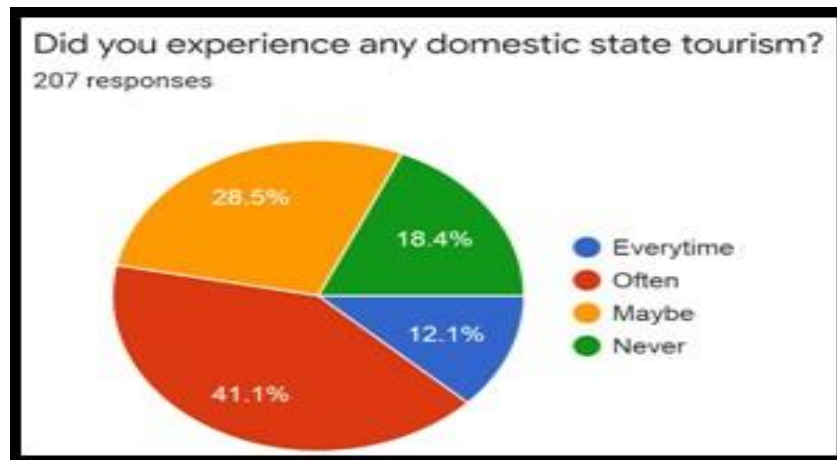


Figure 05: responses from the expectation exercise conducted (Source: Author)

An expectation exercise was conducted wherein the sample base was asked about their expectation of receiving the domestic tourist, as the foreign clientele was asked and analysed a question earlier. Out of 207 responses, 12.1% experienced domestic tourism every time, 41.1% experienced it often, 28.5 selected maybe, while 18.4% never did thus showing that of course the trend is coming back to track but the pace of its return is very slow and cautious, as people are still scared as to what will happen in the future and lockdowns may begin again, which will hamper their experiences of the place.

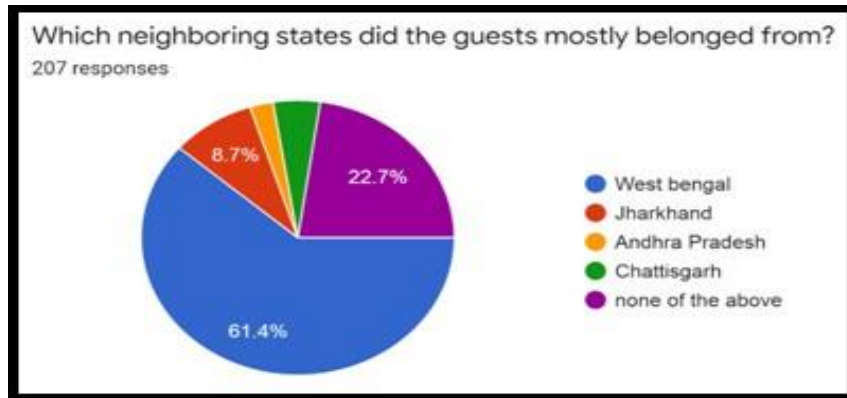


Figure 06: Awareness about the clientele's origin (Source: Author)

The question here gathered the data on the origin of the guests coming to Odisha. Out of 207 responses, 61.4% guests were from West Bengal, a neighbouring state, 8.7% were from Jharkhand, another neighbouring state, 2.4% were from Andhra Pradesh followed by 4.8% from Chhattisgarh and lastly 22.7% were from other states except these. It was done so as to know whether people are ready to move to far away laces or not. The responses proved otherwise i.e. the people are not ready to move away further than their state of origin.

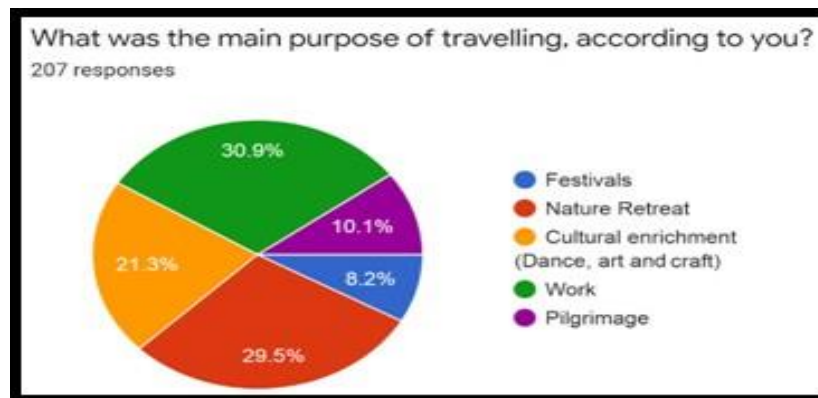


Figure 07: Analysis on the purpose of travelling as per the samples (Source: Author)

The following question enquired about the purpose that the samples have while travelling. Out of 207 responses, 8.2% travelled for festivals, 29.5% did for nature retreat, 21.3% selected cultural enrichment, 30.9% travelled for work, and the rest 10.1% travelled for pilgrimage. It was a perspective-collecting question to show diverse expectations of tourists.

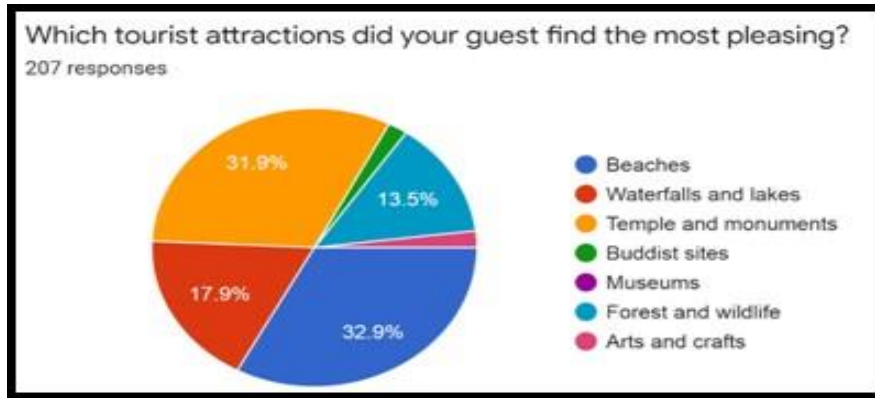


Figure 08: Favourable experiences as recorded by the samples during travelling (Source: Author)

The next question discussed the type of attractions people find attractive while travelling for a destination. It was done so that new tourist products can be formulated post COVID travel as these responses were also collected post COVID. Out of 207 responses, 32.9% selected beaches, 17.9% selected waterfalls and lakes, 31.9% selected temples and monuments, 1.9% selected Buddhist sites, no responses for museums, and 13.5% selected forest and wildlife, while the rest 1.9% selected arts and crafts. Water bodies would be a preferable destination as concluded from question and tourist providers can focus on this to create new tourist products.

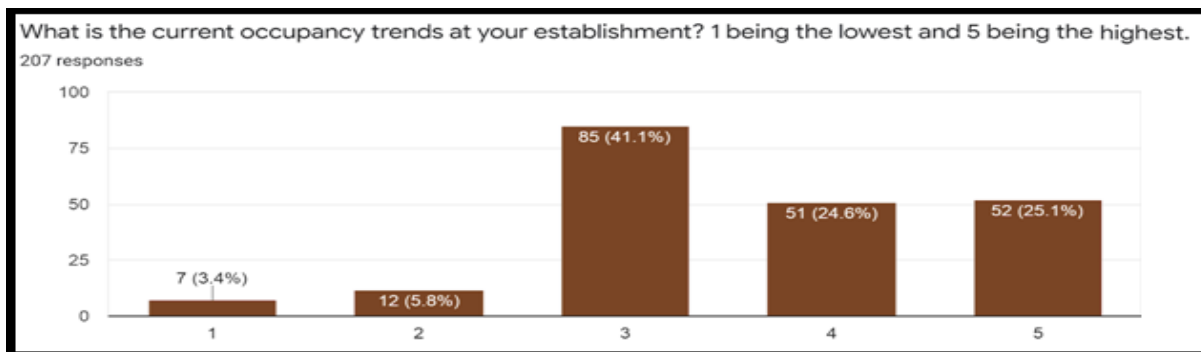


Figure 09: Likert's Sale responses (Source: Author)

Out of 207 responses 3.4% of the total hotels considered had the lowest occupancy, 5.8% or 12 hotels selected 2 out of 5 as their current occupancy levels, majority of the hotels i.e. 85 or 41.1% selected 3 which was a neutral choice out neither 5 showing not a heavy demand for occupancy nor a less demand. It was somewhere in between. Following this, 51 samples or 24.6% of the total share selected the scale point 4 on the Likert's Scale, showing a good

response. It shows that occupancy is returning back towards the higher side, showing good potential of the sector and the demand getting back on track. Lastly, 52 samples or 25.1% the 2nd highest number of the samples out of 207 said that the occupancy levels are the highest and it is a very positive reflection of what is to come.

CONCLUSION & DISCUSSIONS: Odisha as a state has many avenues for tourism and hospitality industry, which is accordingly being developed by the state govt. Many schemes and programs are now being implemented to showcase the nascent beauty of Odisha to the world. Many Eco tourism locations, Nature camps, State guest houses etc, are now being trained for post COVID operations. Domestic state tourism is booming while neighbouring states like West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh etc, are also contributing in the Odisha Tourism sector. People travelled for work and nature retreat was followed by cultural enrichment and pilgrimage.

Beaches were the most attractive destination for which tourists came to Odisha followed by lakes, waterfalls, temples and forest wildlife retreat. Occupancy was average most of the days some days being fully occupied. Through the test of time Odisha has still maintained its innocence by harbouring many ecosystems and wildlife as secrets encased in its bosom. It still needs much infrastructural development as most areas are still suffering by not being discovered as they are remote and really hard to reach. The wild untamed beauty still needs the recognition it deserves. Post Lockdown Odisha is preferred more in terms of tourism as it offers many offbeat locations that not many people know of yet.

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