

Impact on Travel Behaviour Before & During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

To restrict the spread of COVID-19, governments suggested or enforced several measures. Such metrics have a major impact on travelers' travel habits. On the other hand, people have a wide range of travel demands, from grocery shopping to work. This research looks at how travel behavior changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data were collected by talking with people about the purpose of the trip, method of transportation used, and distance traveled before and during COVID-19. One hundred fifty answers were gathered from visitors visiting Himachal Pradesh & 50 were gathered from other states. The findings revealed that the journey, method of transportation used, and distance traveled were considerably different before and during the pandemic.

Furthermore, throughout the epidemic, the bulk of travels were conducted for shopping. There has been a considerable shift away from public transportation and toward private transportation and non-motorized modes. When it came to picking a mode during the epidemic, people prioritized pandemic-related issues over general ones.

Keywords: COVID-19, Travel Behaviour, transportation, mode choice, Travel pattern.

Introduction

Previous research has shown that human movement and interaction patterns play a direct role in transmitting infectious illnesses, particularly during pandemics. As a result, travel is generally limited during pandemics. Furthermore, to restrict the virus's spread, numerous control and preventative measures have been proposed or enforced by governments worldwide, depending on local governance, socioeconomic conditions, and cultural context. School closures, remote or online teaching, working from home, shop and restaurant closures, restrictions on public gatherings, social events, and meetings, locking down countries or cities, imposing curfews, suspending public transportation and taxi operations to limit travels, imposing social distancing norms, closing international borders and airports, and so on are examples of such strategies. They are working from home and reducing consumption, as well as restricting community ties and international travel. However, these regulations may impact not just people's travel habits but

also their health and well-being. People perceive a higher risk for trips during pandemics and avoid traveling to locations with a medium to high danger. Nonetheless, individuals have various travel demands during pandemics, ranging from regular grocery shopping excursions to work travels. The current study aims to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human travel behavior.

Statement of Problem

The features of changes in travel behavior before and during COVID-19 and the variables affecting such changes are investigated. Himachal Government continues imposing the restrictions due to a boost in tourism in the state even after some relaxation of lockdown. Opening and closing times of shops are from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. About 10000 people applied for an E-pass to visit the city on 23 June 2021. How traveling style of people has been changing after the COVID-19 pandemic.

- How are people traveling?
- Impact of COVID-19 on tourism?
- Impact on COVID-19 tourism compare to last year?
- Which cities are people visiting more?
- Management and restriction are effective, which is done by the government.

Objectives of the study

During pandemics, different governments imposed varying degrees of restrictions to prevent and control viral transmission. Such limitations might have a significant impact on people's lifestyles, social relationships, and economic situations. Human travel and outdoor activities, in particular, might be substantially impacted. Fear of infection and perceived danger, on the other hand, may influence travel behavior and mode selection. People avoid air travel and domestic land travel owing to the perceived risk of catching the diseases. The current study aims to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on human travel behavior.

Review of literature

COVID-19 and travel restrictions have significantly impacted the tourism sector, especially in Himachal Pradesh's tourism industry. The tourism industry accounts for 7% of the state's GDP, and approximately 2 million visitors visit the state each year. The Himachal administration has prohibited tourists from entering the state, suffocating the state's main source of revenue. Not only hoteliers but also guides, explorers, and taxi drivers have been adversely impacted. Travel across India was prohibited due to the lockdown and COVID-related restrictions, yet this did not deter people's desire to visit new locations.

Himachal Pradesh has seen a surge in tourism since the state government relaxed COVID-19 restrictions during the lockdown. Also, "Almost 10,000 people applied for COVID-19 e-passes." "There are no limitations on tourists visiting Himachal& other cities, but they must register

online to obtain a COVID e-pass.” Thousands of people have flocked to Himachal Pradesh’s tourist destinations since the state government reduced COVID-19 regulations. Meanwhile, the state administration has alerted tourists, urging them to adhere to COVID-19 standards. “It’s noteworthy to note that 65% of respondents stated they are comfortable flying or driving outside their states, and over 90% are happy exploring quirky spots in the mountains.”

This study will focus on how the lifestyle of people after the pandemic has been changed, and because of that way of traveling has also been changed 90% of people want to visit hill stations. Himachal Pradesh is one of them, which is on priority right now. Now people prefer to travel by their vehicle instead of public transport. They are free to travel, but still, they are not free; because of COVID-19, they have to follow all the government norms and take precautions. Due to pandemics, they have to think many things; they are traveling freely but also bound to many personal responsibilities. How are they managing it? Do they still feel the same when there was nothing like a pandemic, and they go for a trip? How are things changed, and at what aspect has it been changed?

Hypothesis

The COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on general commuting habits

The majority of respondents (40 percent) stated that they do not go to the workplace or school and work or study from home. About 10 % mentioned that nothing changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on main outdoor activities

The principal reason for traveling/outdoor trips is that individuals travel in their daily lives and on family vacations. For some, it may be their job; for others, it may be their studies, and for still others, it may be something else. This research focuses on outdoor journeys, particularly since they are undertaken out of need, and an individual may not have complete control over them. It is all because people think now that they can take all the precautions related to COVID 19 and save themselves, so they are free to go on outdoor trips. Under some conditions, such as a pandemic, the purpose of travel, distance traveled, and mode of transportation may alter. Prior to COVID-19, the majority of respondents (50 percent) traveled primarily for business. During COVID-19, however, it was decreased to only 30%. On the other hand, shopping & trips became the primary purpose of traveling for about 44% of the respondents during COVID-19.

Mode of operation for primary outdoor trips

Outdoor travel mode shares before and during COVID-19 Before COVID-19, the majority of respondents stated that they used public transportation as their primary mode of transportation. During COVID-19, there was a significant decrease in public transportation use, with just a small percentage of respondents using it. Private automobile use, on the other hand, surged before and during COVID-19. During pandemics, individuals generally avoid taking public transportation.

Authorities, on the other hand, have halted public transportation operations to restrict the spread of infections. As a result, individuals prefer to rely more on private cars since they are safer than private transportation or other options such as taxis, autos, etc. It's worth noting that walking (as a main method of transportation) rose by 7% during COVID-19 compared to pre-COVID periods.

Discussion & Conclusion

It is hypothesized that travel habits and mode preferences change significantly during pandemic conditions compared to normal situations, owing to limitations imposed by the government and individual fear of infection. This study reported the findings of an investigation on the changes in travel habits caused by the current COVID-19 epidemic. It concentrated on primary travel during the pandemic since primary journeys are made out of need. Some of the study's major findings are presented here.

During COVID-19, it was noted that shopping and vacation were the major reasons for traveling. The considerable shift from work, education, and other activities to shopping and vacation suggest that they require special care during a pandemic. Authorities' mandated self-isolation or lockdowns might restrict trips for employment or study. However, regardless of the restriction, i.e., total, partial, or smart lockdown, shopping, and vacation may be the major reasons individuals need to make excursions during a pandemic.

This study's findings also explained why travel lengths get greater and trip become more frequent during pandemics. Because most responders traveled for shopping and vacation during the epidemic, social separation will be necessary for an extended period. Also, most people traveled by their personal vehicle instead of public.

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