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Rajasthan Tourism Industry & Covid-19: An Analytical Study

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Abstract:

The Covid-19 has impacted the tourism industry due to the resulting travel restrictions as well as slump in demand among travelers. The Rajasthan tourism industry has been massively suffering from the spread of Corona Virus, as many countries in an effort to contain its spread. Tourism industry has been defined as a leisure industry and smokeless industry. This industry is taken into account one among the traditional industries of the planet and primarily, tourism was only confined to Rulers or Kings of the nations and a few enterprising men travelled in search of God or for pilgrimage purposes. The concept of recent tourism is comparatively new in its approach. With the expansion of science and technology and revolutionary changes that are taken place within the field of transportation and communication have contributed massively to the event of tourist trade all over the world. Tourism industry in Rajasthan is on a great boom at the moment. Rajasthan has tremendous potential to become a major global tourist destination and Rajasthan tourism industry is exploiting this potential to the hilt. Rajasthan has all the ingredients and elements to become a model state for tourism in the country. My research paper analyzes the impact of Covid-19 on Rajasthan tourism and the conditions arising thereafter.

Keywords: Thar Desert, Manganiyars, Kalbelia, Mehrangarh Fort, Udaipur, Udaipur, Bikaner

Introduction:

Tourism is a triadic composition of social, natural and the cultural phenomenon, which is emerging as the world's largest employment generating industry. Indian tourism offers many unique products that make India as an ultimate tourism place in world map. Tourism in Rajasthan offer many unique products like forts and palaces, heritage hotels, colorful fairs and festivals, local art and handicrafts. No doubt tourism industry in Rajasthan suffer some social and environmental problems like poor infrastructure, damage to heritage and pilgrimage places,

environment pollution, lack of connectivity and shopping malpractices. Though it's true that government of Rajasthan has made many efforts to extend tourism within the state and check out to enhance various tourist services to supply good tourist facilities.¹

Rajasthan has emerged together of the favored tourist destinations in India for both domestic and foreign tourists. The number of tourist arrivals within the state has increased fourfold within the last thirty years. The state is understood for its diversity in terms of natural resources, cultural heritage, historical also as archaeological wonders and rare wild life. The forts and palaces, heritage hotels, colorful fairs and festivals, local art and handicrafts, etc. has been a singular selling proposition for tourists coming to the state. The desert environment within the western parts of the state is additionally a serious attraction for visitors, particularly the foreign tourist.

Four decades ago tourism in Rajasthan was small industry that was largely confined to the elite foreign tourists and domestic pilgrim traffic. Tourist arrivals were restricted to a couple of thousand tourists annually and were primarily recorded in select places like Jaipur, the capital, Udaipur and Jodhpur (for foreign tourists) and the pilgrim centers of Ajmer, Pushkar and Nathdwara (for domestic tourists). The employment within the sector and therefore the sector's contribution to the state economy, also as employment potential were limited. Rajasthan also mentioned as 'Rajwarra', 'Raethan', and 'Rajputana' within the past, is synonymous in popular perception because the land of rajas and maharajas, chivalry, forts and palaces, the fabled Thar desert, and hardy folk, ordinary men and women, with a treasure-trove of ancient lore, music, dance, ballads and myths. Rajasthan, 'The Land of Kings, Palaces, Valor and Sacrifices'. Rajasthan derives its name from "Rajah" "Sthana", which accurately means home of Kings. Rajasthan being situated within the Northwest a part of India, may be a land of majestic Aravali Hills, crowned with sand dunes of Jaisalmer and Bikaner, Scenic and serene beauty and warrior princes – the land of regal creatures bird watcher and lots of more. The formation of Rajasthan in its present form has come in gradual states after the independence of the country. The present state of Rajasthan is effectively a union of twenty-two former princely states. Rajasthan has a total area of 0.342 Sq. Kms, making it geographically the most important state within the country. The state shares its geographical boundaries with the states of Punjab, Haryana, UP, MP and Gujarat in India and also has a long 1070-Kms west boundary with India's neighboring country Pakistan. The topography of Rajasthan mainly comprises of three regions, namely, the Aravali hills range, the good Indian Thar Desert and therefore the Eastern a part of the state. The principal language of the state is Rajasthani, the four important dialects being Marwari in the West, Dhundandi in the East, Malwi in South-east and Braj in North-east. Hindi is widely spoken and is rapidly replacing Rajasthani language.

Rajasthan is a land of great beauty and diversity. From the Thar Desert within the west to the fertile Southeastern plains, Rajasthan's topography too shares during this diversity. It is popular for its culture, from the lively folk dances to the many schools of Indian classical music. The main cities in Rajasthan are Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Mount Abu, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Chittor, Bharatpur, Shekhawati and Alwar which enjoying benefit of tourists attraction. The customs and traditions, fairs and festivals, handicrafts, art and music reflect the very broad spectrum of the Rajasthani culture where much of the Rajasthani thought, philosophy and culture is being reflected all over the state. 2

Tourism industry in Rajasthan may be a vital breath within the economic activity. Tourism has direct and indirect impact on financial, social and cultural lifetime of people. This industry is considered as leisure industry with many economic benefits like foreign exchange earnings, regional development, promotion of local handicrafts and artisans, infrastructure development and increasing standard of living. The government has already realized the potentials of this industry for the economic development within the state and has adopted vital measures to market tourism within the state adopting schemes like “Padharo Mhare Desh” means “Rajasthan Invites You”.³ No doubt officials of Rajasthan tourism are very enthusiastic about this welcome development and pitching with their efforts to make Rajasthan a most preferred destination in the world. There are good reasons to believe why tourism in Rajasthan is being accorded the priority it deserves? Rajasthan Government has declared tourism together of the key area of economic development and termed this sector because the “Hope Sector” for Rajasthan. No wonder that Rajasthan has been called the “Designer State” as far as tourism is concerned because of its people, culture, cuisine, costumes, clothes and its numberless art forms. In the end it are often said that tourism is poised to become a people’s industry in Rajasthan by 2010. Really for Rajasthan Tourism sky isn't the limit”. Tourism in Rajasthan is a major source of revenue earnings and it contributes about 15 percent of the economy of Rajasthan. Rajasthan contributes about 11.2 percent and three .3 percent share in India's foreign and domestic tourist arrivals respectively. To enhance the role of tourism in the state the Rajasthan government has brought down the luxury tax from 10 percent to 8 percent to boost the tourism industry in the state. Hence the state Rajasthan has all potential to draw in more number of tourists by providing various sorts of tourism facilities which play a crucial role for growth of the economy. Rajasthan may be a popular tourist spot in North India and emerged together of the favored tourist destinations in India for both domestic and foreign tourists. The royal land dotted with numerous tourist attraction sites. The rich tourist attractions of Rajasthan includes numerous forts and palaces, monuments and structures, lakes and mountains, sand dunes and desert beauty, national parks and wildlife destinations. Even the cities and towns of Rajasthan are worth

exploring. The state is understood for its diversity in terms of natural resources, cultural heritage, historical also as archaeological wonders and rare wild life. The forts and palaces, heritage hotels, colorful fairs and festivals, local art and handicrafts has been a singular selling proposition for tourists coming to the state. The desert environment within the Western parts of the state is additionally a serious attraction for visitors, particularly for foreign tourist. Rajasthan has emerged as one of the leading state in India and Rajasthan was the third preference of tourist after Goa and Kerala as travel destination in India.

However, over the previous couple of decades, thanks to the focused efforts of Rajasthan Tourism, various government agencies, select entrepreneurs / individuals, tourism has grown from an elite and pilgrim phenomenon to a mass phenomenon putting Rajasthan firmly on the foreign and domestic tourist map. Also, as compared to the past, where the tourism within the state meant desert tourism, heritage tourism (forts, palaces, etc.) and pilgrim tourism, today the tourists have a good canvas of places, attractions and activities to settle on from within the state, which reinforces the general tourism experience.

The industry today employs over one lakh people directly and over three lakh people indirectly. Its contribution to the State economy is estimated to be over Rs 2000 Cr. presently. Given the increasingly important role that the world plays within the overall socioeconomic development of the state, the government of Rajasthan has accorded an industry status to tourism from the year 1989.

Tourism in Rajasthan extends almost through the whole state, though tourist activity is concentrated around six main cities, which function 'tourist hubs' for places of tourist attraction in and around these 'hubs'. These tourist 'hub' cities are Jaipur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Udaipur and Mount Abu. Almost every tourist (with the possible exception of pilgrim traffic) who visits Rajasthan would visit one or more of these 'tourist hub' locations as part of his / her tourist itinerary.

There are nine tourist circuits as identified by Rajasthan Department of Tourism, based on their geography, attractions and coverage by independent / group tourists.⁴ According to Rajasthan Department of tourism, there are nine tourist circuits in Rajasthan.

(1) Thar Desert Circuit: Jodhpur-Jaisalmer-Bikaner-Barmer

The Desert circuit includes the popular tourist locations of Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Barmer and Nagaur. The Desert circuit is fashionable both foreign also as domestic tourists. The circuit is a part of the great Indian Thar Desert and is characterized by the sand dunes spread across the region. The climate is that the hot and dry for many a part of the year apart from a brief monsoon period. Hence, tourism is seasonal with the season extending from October to

March.

(2) Mewar Circuit: Udaipur-Rajsamand-Chittaurgarh-Bhilwara

The Mewar circuit offers a mixture of faith and history. Udaipur is that the tourist hub of this circuit, other key tourist locations during this circuit being Chittaurgarh, Nathdwara and Kumbhalgarh. Other places of tourist interest, though less frequented are Jaisamand Lake, Jagat, Rikhabdeo, Eklingji, Haldighati, etc. Mewar region falls within the Aravalli range that encompasses lakes, beautiful hills and deep valleys. The climate in the region is pleasant for most part of the year except the summer months from April to June. The tourist activity is high during the months of September to March. The region being popular amongst domestic tourists, also receives tourists from the neighbouring states, like Gujarat and MP, during vacation months in summer.

(3) Vagad Circuit: Dungarpur-Banswara

Vagad region comprises the southern tip of the Aravalli range and lies on the Rajasthan-Gujarat border. The region encompasses wild and rugged terrain within the northeast to soil within the southwest. The Vagad circuit offers a mixture of tribal culture and history. Although a separate circuit by itself, Mewar Circuit is most often the hub for this circuit. This circuit is comparatively unexplored thanks to its proximity to the recognition of the adjoining the Mewar circuit. Other key tourist locations during this circuit are Baneshwar, Deo Somnath, Arthuna, Galiyakot and Mahi Dam. The climate within the region is pleasant for many a part of the year except the summer months from April to June. The tourist activity is high during the months of September to March, peaking during the Baneshwar Fair (Kumbh of tribes) in February.

(4) Dhundhar Circuit: Jaipur-Dausa-Tonk

The Dhundhar circuit is spread around Jaipur and is understood for its rich blend of culture, history, architecture and religion. Besides Jaipur, it includes tourist locations such as Samode, Abhaneri, Sambhar Lake, Hawa Mahal, Tonk and Ramgarh. The Dhundhar circuit lies between the northern Aravalli range and shut to the Sambhar Basin. The climate in the region is extremely hot during the peak summer months of April – June. As a result, the height tourist season extends from September to March. Being the capital city and therefore the main gateway into the state, Jaipur and therefore the region also experiences some tourist arrivals during the holiday months.

(5) Godwar Circuit: Sirohi-Pali-Jalore

The Godwar circuit has the sole hill station in Rajasthan - Mount Abu. The beautiful temple town of Ranakpur is that the other important attraction within the circuit. The former is extremely popular leisure destination with the tourist coming from Gujarat, whereas the latter

is fashionable both the domestic also as foreign tourist. Although a neighborhood of the Aravalli range, Mount Abu is detached completely from it by a narrow valley and therefore the highest point is situated at its northern end. As the only hill station within the state Mount Abu may be a popular summer retreat, and therefore the tourist season extends from February to June and within the vacation period from September to December. Located nearby are the famous Delwara Jain Temples, which are renowned everywhere the planet for his or her exquisite stone carvings.

(6) Merwara-Marwar Circuit: Ajmer-Nagaur

The Merwara-Marwar Circuit is that the heart of pilgrim activity in Rajasthan. Ajmer and Pushkar are the important pilgrim centres for tourists from everywhere India. Pushkar is internationally known for its annual camel fair held in November with an outsized number of foreign tourists visiting the fair per annum. Other locations within the circuit, Merta and Nagaur are relatively less popular. The circuit falls in the Sambhar Plains. The tourist season is spread out evenly during the year although the tourist arrivals are very high during the annual Urs at Ajmer and the Pushkar Fair.

(7) Brij-Mewat Circuit: Alwar-Bharatpur-Karauli-Dholpur-Sawai Madhopur

The Brij Mewat circuit is extremely fashionable wildlife enthusiasts. The region also features a justifiable share of places of historic and archaeological importance. The circuit covers locations bordering Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh and includes Alwar, Sariska, Deeg, Bharatpur, Karauli and Sawai Madhopur. Although termed as a circuit these tourist locations are covered as daily excursions from Jaipur or enroute Jaipur from either Delhi or Agra. Sawai Madhopur is additionally covered as a standalone circuit by the domestic to tourist. The tourist arrivals at these locations are the utmost during the winter months from October to February. The main attractions within the Brij Mewat circuit are the National Parks at Sariska, Bharatpur and Ranthambhor.

(8) Shekhawati Circuit: Sikar-Jhunjhunun-Churu

The Shekhawati region in Rajasthan is known for its fresco-painted havelis built by the former rich merchants of the region. The Shekhawati region is popularly called the ‘open art gallery’ of Rajasthan. This region includes numerous small towns like Mandawa, Nawalgarh, Sikar, Jhunjhunun, Fatehpur, Churu, Mukundgarh, Dundlod, Chirawa, etc. each having their share of such beautiful havelis. The circuit attracts primarily the foreign tourists arriving into the state. The tourist season extends from September to March.

(9) Hadoti Circuit: Kota-Bundi-Jhalawar

The Hadoti circuit is amongst the smallest amount explored regions of Rajasthan. This circuit includes the districts of Bundi, Kota and Jhalawar. Places of tourist interest within

the adjoining Baran district also are covered as a neighborhood of this circuit. The tourist season within the region extends from September to March. The main attractions within the Hadoti circuit are the palaces at Kota and Bundi. The Hadoti circuit also has several places of spiritual interest, especially for domestic tourists coming back from Madhya Pradesh. Jhalawar is also well known

for its annual fair.⁵

Impact of Covid-19 on Rajasthan Tourism:

There is hardly any industry or person who has escaped the disruption caused by the continued public health emergency. But the tourism industry has been the most important casualty primarily because, despite the lifting of the COVID-19-induced lockdown, connectivity hasn't been fully restored. Travel remains restricted to urgent matters leading to a pointy decline in tourist footfall across the country. Rajasthan is one among the foremost popular tourist places in India due to its vibrant landscape and royal heritage as seen in its historic forts and palaces, centuries-old temples and Thar Desert.⁶

However, the tourist influx since March within the desert state has been considerably low. The data on tourist arrivals from the Rajasthan tourism department shows that in 2020, the state has seen a fall of 69.3% in Indian tourist arrivals. Last year, 3,96,85,822 Indian tourists had visited various places in Rajasthan while this year, the quantity stood at 1,21,75,524. Similarly, this year, the foreign tourist arrivals also dropped by 59.54%, as compared to 2019. Last year, 10,92,724 foreigners had visited the state while only 4,42,011 foreigners could arrive this year, that too before the national lockdown was imposed in March. Between January and March this year, Indian tourist arrivals stood at 1,14,26,296 (93.84%) out of the 1,21,75,524 cumulative Indian tourist arrivals till September in 2020. The foreign tourist arrivals during this era stood at 4,39,689 (99.47%) out of the 4,42,011 total foreign tourist arrivals till September this year.⁷ The significant low inflow of tourists has left a deep impact on the hospitality industry which is grappling with little or no demand. According to Owners of resorts in Rajasthan's, the opening of resorts and hotels after the lockdown was lifted proved to be a good bigger loss for them thanks to very low footfall. Due to connectivity issues, potential tourists from Delhi, Mumbai and West Bengal are also unable to achieve Rajasthan. Even, the state tourism department is promoting tourism only from nearby areas. The 'Short Stay, Safe Stay' concept is supposed to make sure that travel enthusiasts from nearby states can come to rejuvenate during a safe and secure ambience.

This pandemic features a far-reaching impact on local folk musicians like Manganiyars in Rajasthan who were totally hooked in to tourists and other upper caste households for monetary and nutritional support. Manganiyars are a little Muslim community of hereditary professional

singers who perform at nearly every local occasion including marriage ceremonies. To keep Rajasthani art and culture alive, wealthy landlords and upper-caste Hindu families (Jajmaan) have supported the Manganiyars for generations. Every Manganiyar is related to a family within the village who gives them food and a few money.⁸

To welcome guests, hotels and resorts organise performances by Manganiyars involving ethnic music and Kalbelia dance. They are given a monthly stipend ranging between Rs 20,000 and 40,000. However, thanks to low turnout of tourists this year, many of them have lost this source of income. Rajasthan, referred to as the Land of Kings, is anxiously expecting tourists to arrive in large numbers but encircling the dismay of corona virus in Rajasthan, the numbers of tourists have witnessed a massive drop.

During this point of the year, cities in Rajasthan like Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Jaipur, and Bikaner wont to be brimming with tourists from all across the planet. But considering the rise of corona virus in Rajasthan and cancellation of visas by the government, travelling to Rajasthan or any other part of the country has been restricted. Apart from corona virus, Rajasthan tourism saw a huge downfall because of several reasons. To top this downfall, the corona virus pandemic outspread has taken the entire world by storm. With the total number of positive cases of corona virus in Rajasthan reaching up to 69, the state government of Rajasthan clearly has its hands full in dealing with this menace. On one hand, the govt has been trying to make sure that the outspread is contained while on the opposite, they're also concerned about the autumn of the tourism sector of the state, following the shutdown of airlines and railways. With flights and trains being restricted to curb the outbreak of corona virus, several airlines across the world are and will continue to incur huge losses. Retail and hospitality also are taking a serious hit because the government authorities and a number of other lockdowns across the planet have led to a decline within the number of purchases, apart from essential amenities.

Various sectors in Rajasthan, especially the hotel, food, jewellery, handloom and handicraft industries depend heavily on the arrival of tourists from various parts of the planet. But, amidst this nation-wide lockdown, the travel and tourism industry is taking the most important hit. Several historical places of Jaipur, Udaipur, Bikaner, etc. that wont to be a tourist hub, including the Amer Fort, Lake Pichola, Mehrangarh Fort, Bikaner Fort, etc. have been ghosted due to the corona virus scare. Not only the travel industry but also educational institutions, manufacturing and repair sectors, show business like movie theatres and shopping complexes are pack up .⁹

Rajasthan, being one among the foremost visited places in India is witnessing a huge downfall in terms of travel and tourism. Amidst the various days lockdown, the whole economy is suffering huge losses. But, with government planning and a number of other initiatives being

put into motion especially for the daily wagers, hopefully, after the lockdown, the economy will slowly devour the pace and Rajasthan tourism are going to be up and running in no time.

Conclusion:

Tourism may be a triadic composition of social, natural and therefore the cultural phenomenon, which is emerging because the world's largest employment generating industry. Indian tourism offers many unique products that make Rajasthan as an ultimate tourism place in world map. Tourism in Rajasthan offer many unique products like forts and palaces, heritage hotels, colorful fairs and festivals, local art and handicrafts. No doubt tourism industry in Rajasthan suffer some social and environmental problems like poor infrastructure, damage to heritage and pilgrimage places, environment pollution, lack of connectivity and shopping malpractices. Though it is true that government of Rajasthan has made many efforts to increase tourism in the state during Covid-19 problem and try to improve various tourist services to provide good tourist facilities.

The tourism sector in Rajasthan is getting momentum again after facing hamper thanks to the COVID 19. After the lockdown and other restrictions being relaxed now most of the tourist places in the state are buzzing with tourists. The Rajasthan government opened its tourist destinations for tourists in June after the lockdown, but tourist footfalls remained low till September-October 2021 due to third wave of COVID 19. Tourism activities started getting momentum from October, which increased rapidly in November and December 2020. More than 2 lakh 33 thousand tourists have visited the forts, palaces and museums of the state thus far within the current month. According to the Archeology and Museum Department of Rajasthan the arrival of domestic tourists is increasing rapidly. The Amber and Nahargarh Forts of Jaipur are the primary choice of tourists, besides these, tourists have also visited Chittorgarh Fort in large numbers. However, compared to 2020 year, about 65 percent lesser tourists visited in February this year. Despite it, there is hope from the increasing number of tourists that the tourism industry will become free from the impact of Corona and will touch new heights in the coming days. As Rajasthan goes into lockdown mode to combat the outspread, the present scenario doesn't look so good. But, it's expected that during a few months after things is in check, the travel and tourism sector will devour the pace.

Events and cultural programs will happen as scheduled and other people are going to be allowed to go to the Land of Kings to get the distinct culture and taste the local cuisine, most of which individuals long for when in Rajasthan. Rajasthan, being one among the foremost visited places in India is witnessing a huge downfall in terms of travel and tourism. Amidst the long day's lockdown, the entire economy is suffering huge losses. But, with government planning and a number of other initiatives being put into motion especially for the

daily wagers, hopefully, after the lockdown, the economy will slowly devour the pace and Rajasthan tourism are going to be up and running in no time. Till then, support the government in the fight against corona virus. Let's put this outspread to a stop. Stay home, stay safe!

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