



## CRISIS-LED TRANSFORMATION OR NO TRANSFORMATION AT ALL? A MULTIFACETED INQUIRY TOWARDS DESTINATION RECOVERY

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### ABSTRACT

Though there has been an upward rise in the number of publications on COVID-19, tourism and hospitality, researchers have turned a blind eye towards conducting a multifaceted stakeholder assessment of its impact on a given destination and the possible effects of recent developments on the destination's recovery. To address the latent gap, this study first attempts to assess the impact of COVID-19 on various aspects of a destination's businesses, workforce and the local community. Taking into consideration the recent pharmaceutical developments and ease in travel restrictions, it then explores the effects of such an intervention on the destinations' recovery process. 142 valid questionnaires were collected from employees of travel agents, tour operators, transport operators and hotels in the northern part of India. Subsequently, PLS-SEM (partial least squares structural equation modeling) was applied using SmartPLS to test the proposed hypotheses. Through two individual studies in September 2020 and November 2021 i.e. at different stages of the pandemic, this study not only offers insights into the current status of destination recovery but also tests the validity and applicability of recent publications, their proposed recommendations and future practices. Recovery at a destination was found to be a result of the recovery of its businesses, workforce and community. These factors also had positive and negative impacts on each other. The article further suggests the low transformational ability of the pandemic in the context of tourism and hospitality. It is amongst the first few studies to have carried out a temporal assessment of stakeholders for an investigation into the pandemic's impact on destinations in addition to their recovery.

### KEYWORDS

destination recovery, COVID-19, crisis, transformation, stakeholders

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

While numerous reports (Gopalakrishnan, Peters, Vanzetti, 2020; Vanzetti, Peters, 2021) and studies (Abbas et al., 2021; Foo et al., 2021; Jaipuria, Parida, Ray, 2021; Škare, Soriano, Porada-Rachoń, 2021) have reflected upon the economic impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry, they have primarily taken a bird's eye view (overall and cursory) without a real-time assessment of the businesses, workforce and communities contributing to a destination's success. While it is logical that an understanding of economic disruption would reveal the magnitude of the impact on the industry and a given destination, it is only through a multifaceted study that we can understand the profound nature of disruption with an emphasis on the stakeholders' approach in dealing with it (Chong, Io, 2021). In other words, it is the translation of numbers that would help us understand all that has changed or remained for tourism businesses, the workforce, communities and destinations. In their critical commentary on the impact of crises on tourism, Hall, Scott and Gössling (2020) cast doubt upon the pandemic's ability to transform the tourism system by reflecting upon past trends of crisis-led transformations. On the other hand, several researchers have distinguished this crisis and have predicted a complete evolution of the tourism and hospitality sectors (Brouder, 2020; Gani, Singh, Najar, 2021; Haywood, 2020; Ioannides, Gyimóthy, 2020; Sharma, Thomas, Paul, 2021). What warrants further research on stakeholders' behavioral, emotional, psychological and ideological reactions is the fact that "the nature and degree of crises-led transformations depend on whether and how these stakeholders are affected by, respond to, recover and reflect on crises" (Sigala, 2020, p. 313). A complete shutdown of the tourism industry in the early stages of the pandemic, the recent pharmaceutical interventions (vaccines etc.) and easing of travel restrictions call for a comprehensive assessment of the current state of destinations to understand what lies ahead for the industry as a whole. More specifically, this study attempts to empirically test a path to destination recovery (adverse effects) based on the recovery (adverse effects) of its businesses, workforce and community. It also attempts to encapsulate the many aspects of stakeholders' well-being (economic, social, emotional and psychological). Such an investigation becomes even more necessary in developing countries where the quality of service is often questioned (Malhotra et al., 2004) and unorganized aspects of the service sector are apparent.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. BUSINESSES AND THE TOURISM DESTINATION LANDSCAPE

Businessmen (Hall, 2005) and "entrepreneurs act as key 'tourism influencers' that are highly influential at given points in time, inherently dynamic, capable of creating and supporting culture for tourism, and of having long-lasting effects on shaping the fortunes of a destination over time" (Ryan, Mottiar, Quinn, 2012, p. 119). Before such an inference was made in the context of small firms and entrepreneurs (Mottiar, Tucker, 2007), Britton (1991), through the exemplar of a hotel, demonstrated how the construction of such an establishment signaled confidence in the chosen location and acted as a trigger for further development at the destination in question. Research has shown that small, medium and large firms epitomize the tourism sector (Thomas, Shaw, Page, 2011) and play a key role in employment generation (Wanhill, 2000), destination development, competitiveness (Johns, Mattsson, 2005; Manhas et al., 2021), and the creation of social benefits (Kokkranikal, Morrison, 2002). In an attempt to better understand the functioning of businesses in the context of destinations, Thomas, Shaw and Page (2011) reflect upon the multifarious role and significance of networking and adopting certain practices for development. Following suit, Ryan, Mottiar and Quinn (2012) postulate that the influence of entrepreneurs not only goes beyond infrastructural development and marketing but also prompts large businesses to act and depend on small businesses for various aspects of the tourism product. At the most elementary level, tourism and hospitality businesses play a crucial role in the economic prosperity of a destination (Kozak, Rimmington, 1998). Given the low barriers to entry in the tourism and hospitality sector, a constant supply of new businesses adds an element of dynamism to the industry (Gavron et al., 1998). Based on the findings of Gavron et al. (1998), Chell and Pittaway (1998) and Kozak and Rimmington (1998) postulate that small business proprietors in the tourism and hospitality sector may not always be motivated to improve or expand a business that is already yielding profits.

### 2.2. WORKFORCE AND THE TOURISM DESTINATION LANDSCAPE

Destinations "seeking to develop quality tourism will strive to provide an overall product that combines high-quality facilities, amenities, infrastructure and service with cultural or educational experiences likely to attract the 'quality' tourist" (Sharpley, Forster, 2003, p. 688). However, the service aspect of a destination depends on its extant businesses. Given the intangible

and heterogenous nature of the tourism industry, employee ability is often the first line of service-judgement for consumers (Tajeddini, 2010). In this context, the translation of an organization's strategy into results depends upon its employees' actions, as they themselves are the service (Cadwallader et al., 2010). O'Cass and Sok (2015), in their study, further reflect upon the need for tourism service providers to demonstrate their ability to translate strategy into results by proposing a comprehensive model for value creation. Given the orientation and dependence of the tourism and hospitality sectors on service delivery, it becomes imperative for firms to uphold a certain standard in their offerings to consistently attract consumers. Sharpley and Forster (2003, p. 688) propound that "the success of any quality initiative depends upon the willingness and ability of staff to respond and adapt to demands for increased quality in the delivery of services". As such, the workforce's attitude, behavior and motivation is a fundamental aspect of quality management in tourism (Witt, Muhlemann, 1994). Training plays a significant role in ensuring the success of culture change and employee commitment. Interpersonal skills and personal judgments are particularly of great relevance to service providers in this context (Witt, Muhlemann, 1994). In terms of motivation, Sharpley and Forster (2003) found that most tourism and hospitality sector employees are driven by the money being offered and not by their commitment to the service. This was followed by the sense of being valued at the establishment, i.e., the management culture. Businesses with the lowest staff turnover were organizations where customers experienced the most superior service (Hope, Muhlemann, 1998). At the same time, these were also the establishments where implementing an inclusive culture was the most challenging task. In other words, high staff turnover acts as a barrier to the development and existence of a quality service culture amongst employees (Sharpley, Forster, 2003). Through the notion of adverse effects on the workforce and their recovery (encompassing the above aspects), this study investigates its impact on tourism destinations.

### 2.3. COMMUNITY AND THE TOURISM DESTINATION LANDSCAPE

By bringing tourists with money to spend on local goods and services, tourism links communities to the global economic system (Roe, Urquhart, 2004). "The living local culture, the fabric of the lives of local communities, constitutes a significant part of the product sought by domestic and international tourists" (Goodwin, 2002, p. 339). While tourists are sold a limited experience wrapped up in the tangible aspects of a destination's geography, it is the local people who complete the

sought-after product (experience) through their everyday lives in exchange for money. For instance, in locals' words, Chen, Huan and Bao (2016) reflect on how tourists show interest in renting out the boats of fishermen in Yalong Bay, China. As such, understanding their attitude is key to tourism development at any given destination (Gursoy, Chi, Dyer, 2010). Studies (Bao, Sun, 2006; Chen, Huang, Bao, 2016; Li, 2006) have found economic benefits to be a dominant factor guiding local community's behavior. As asserted by Chen, Huang and Bao (2016, p. 13), "tourism has been the major or even the only income source for the local community" in destinations around the world. Economic gains are what locals can realistically expect from their direct or indirect participation in tourism development (Chen, Huang, Bao, 2016). However, this does not mean that they are unaware of tourism's adverse effects on a destination (Goodwin, 2002). In reality, residents of a destination were found to have positive perceptions of tourism's economic impact, if most of the services were offered and controlled by them (Nejati, Mohamed, Omar, 2014). "Local communities seek to attract tourist dollars by providing additional excursion opportunities (visits to caves and guided walks often to viewpoints including a wildlife viewing opportunity or canoeing), handicraft sales and homestays, camping and picnic sites" (Goodwin, 2002, p. 341). The provision of these services often leads to the locals' entry into tourism businesses like guesthouses, travel agencies, restaurants (Lacher, Nepal, 2010), etc. In tourism-dependent destinations, locals show greater interest in providing services that complement tourist experiences (cooking meals for tourists at their homes, music and dance performances). However, such income is highly seasonal depending upon the destination in question (Goodwin, 2002; Luo, Bao, 2019). Regarding employment, people from the local community are often found at low occupational positions which in some way offers them job security (Goodwin, 2002). Furthermore, tourism provides ample opportunities for women in labor-intensive small-scale businesses (Luo, Bao, 2019). Local residents also act as critical suppliers for businesses at tourist destinations. Goodwin (2002) found that hotels depend on the local community for milk, dairy products, vegetables and the employment of domestics in his study at Bharatpur, India. This not only indicates the reliance of locals on tourism but also the dependence of businesses on the local community.

### 2.4. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Ever since the Coronavirus outbreak, the number of publications pertaining to the pandemic and tourism increased with the growing restrictions on travel. For the most part, these publications were conceptual and

prognostic in nature. As mentioned earlier, while a few researchers cast doubt upon the transformation of the tourism industry post COVID-19, many predicted changes in tourism as a result of the pandemic. Table 1 represents the works that envisioned transformation for tourism suppliers post COVID-19. This empirical study attempts to validate these predictions through primary data collected in a country (India) that at one point had the greatest number of COVID-19 cases (Phartiyal, Pal, 2021) and subsequently, the greatest number of vaccine doses (Das, 2021). India was considered an ideal location for this study as it is a major hub for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and also houses the second largest labour force in the world (World Bank, n.d.). With the COVID-19 pandemic, India started seeing a decline in tourist arrivals starting February 2020 with the trend reaching its peak on the declaration of nationwide lockdowns in March 2020. This was followed by a second wave of infections between April and May 2021, when the tourism industry was hoping for a revival. The National Council of Applied Economic Research (2021) in India reported an overall economic loss of INR 11.6 trillion during the course of the pandemic.

Based on the above literature review, the inter-relationships discussed (businesses, workforce and community with that of the tourism landscape) and the unfolding of events during the pandemic (lockdowns, vaccines etc.), the following assumptions were formed along with a conceptual framework (Figure 1). Split in two stages, the conceptual framework adopts items through deductive and inductive reasoning (MacCarthy, 2021). While exploring the effects and recovery of stakeholders in the tourism supply chain, this study also explores their inter-relation with destination effects and recovery.

H<sub>1</sub>: The effects of COVID-19 on businesses (business adverse effects) have negatively affected the tourist destination (destination adverse effect).

H<sub>2</sub>: The effects of COVID-19 on the workforce (workforce adverse effects) have negatively affected the tourist destination (destination adverse effect).

H<sub>3</sub>: The effects of COVID-19 on the community (community adverse effects) have negatively affected the tourist destination (destination adverse effect).

H<sub>4</sub>: The effects of COVID-19 on businesses (business adverse effects) have negatively affected the workforce of the tourism and hospitality industry (workforce adverse effects).

H<sub>5</sub>: The effects of COVID-19 on businesses (business adverse effects) have negatively affected the community (community adverse effects).

H<sub>6</sub>: The effects of COVID-19 on the workforce (workforce adverse effects) have negatively affected the community (community adverse effects).

H<sub>7</sub>: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on businesses (business recovery) have positively affected destination recovery.

H<sub>8</sub>: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on the workforce (workforce recovery) have positively affected destination recovery.

H<sub>9</sub>: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on the community (community recovery) have positively affected destination recovery.

H<sub>10</sub>: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on businesses (business recovery) have positively affected workforce recovery.

H<sub>11</sub>: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on the workforce (workforce recovery) have positively affected community recovery.

H<sub>12</sub>: The effects of pharmaceutical intervention and ease in travel restrictions on businesses (business recovery) have positively affected community recovery.

Table 1. Research predicting pandemic-led transformations for tourism suppliers

Authors	Transformation envisioned post COVID-19 (reset/restart)
Sigala (2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- crowd management and social distancing practices</li> <li>- redesign of tourism experiences</li> <li>- re-engineering business operations</li> <li>- contact free business models</li> <li>- rethink of business ecosystems and partnerships</li> <li>- new cleaning and hygiene protocols: protective equipment, masks, sanitizers, disinfecting wipes</li> </ul>
Lew et al. (2020)	- 'Alternate Realities' (including new business models, government policy)
Sharma, Thomas, Paul (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new business models</li> <li>- proximity tourism</li> <li>- hostility from locals (need for sustainable practices)</li> <li>- reduced carbon footprints</li> </ul>
Kuščer, Eichelberger, Peters (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- innovation</li> <li>- modified products and quality improvement</li> <li>- employee empowerment (training and education)</li> <li>- digitalization</li> </ul>
Orîndaru et al. (2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new/modified products (innovation and empathy)</li> <li>- safety assurances</li> <li>- local tourism</li> <li>- cheaper T&amp;T products</li> <li>- reinventing communication systems</li> <li>- appreciate and build customer's loyalty</li> <li>- comply with health standards</li> </ul>

Source: authors.

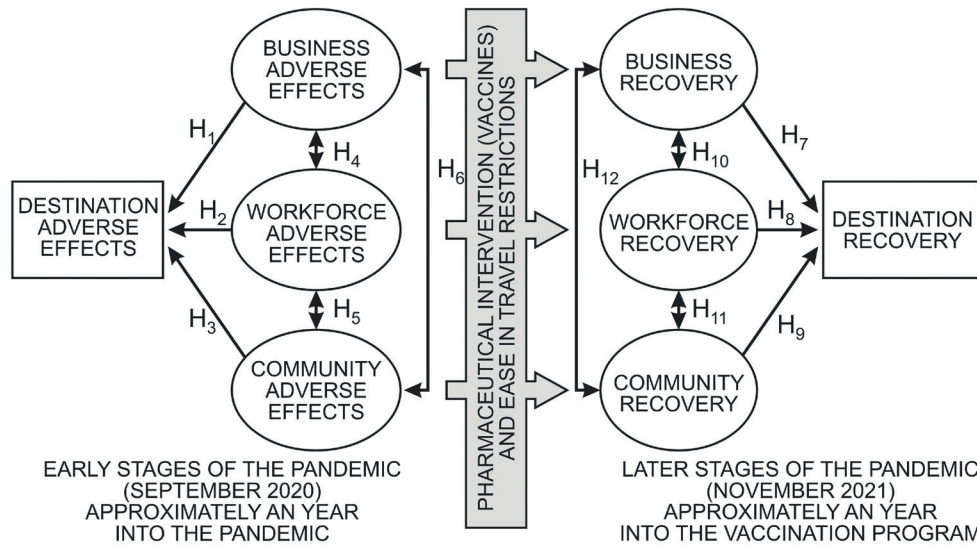


Figure 1. Conceptual framework  
Source: authors

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Given the objectives and the proposed relationship amongst factors in the hypotheses of this study, partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was found to be the most suitable analytical tool (Peng, Xiao, 2018). To analyze the impact of COVID-19 and vaccinations on businesses, workforce, community and subsequently a destination, it was imperative to choose places that were tourism-dependent (Dogra, Karri, 2021) along with a sample population that could well be in a position to reflect on all the factors taken into consideration. For this purpose, employees of inbound tour operators, travel agents, transport operators and hotels were consulted across various destinations in India. These were

essentially responses from the northern part of the country (a largely tourism-dependent region). As illustrated in the conceptual framework, this study was conducted in two phases, i.e. the early stages of the pandemic and the later stages of the pandemic. The first phase was carried out in September 2020, wherein a google form (questionnaire 1) was developed (see Table 2) and shared amongst participants through e-mail and WhatsApp groups. In that, 147 valid responses were received from employees of different tourism businesses. Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Data was subsequently analyzed for the validation of hypotheses pertinent to that phase. For the second phase of this study, data was collected in a distinct google form (questionnaire 2, see Table 3) from the same respondents (from phase one) through e-mail and WhatsApp groups in November 2021.

Table 2. Items designed to measure factors in the early stages of the pandemic

Factors	Code	Items
Business adverse effects	BAE1	COVID-19 has caused a reduction in the number of customers to our firm
	BAE2	COVID-19 has led to an increased cost of operating a business, like buying technology or following new standards of procedures, etc.
	BAE3	COVID-19 has caused an increase in preventive measures against a probable crisis in our firm
	BAE4	COVID-19 has caused a reduction in revenues for our firm
	BAE5	COVID-19 has caused rapid cancellations of bookings at our firm
	BAE6	COVID-19 has caused the non-availability of raw materials and production activities
	BAE7	COVID-19 has caused a change in the work culture of our firm
	BAE8	COVID-19 has led to a reduction in costs of our products
	BAE9	COVID-19 has forced our firm to move into a new field of operation
	BAE10	COVID-19 has led to a loss of skilled workforce at our firm
	BAE11	COVID-19 has affected our firm's service quality

Table 2 (cont.)

Factors	Code	Items
Workforce adverse effects	WAE1	COVID-19 has caused stress to be built up among our employees
	WAE2	COVID-19 has caused significant layoffs and furloughs for our employees
	WAE3	COVID-19 has caused a reduction in training resources for our employees
	WAE4	COVID-19 has caused wage/salary cuts for our employees
	WAE5	COVID-19 has caused a reduction in the motivation of our employees due to fears that they might be left unemployed in this crisis
Community adverse effects	CAE1	COVID-19 has caused the threat of labor shortage/supply of migrant workers
	CAE2	COVID-19 has affected the usage and purchase of locally produced goods and services associated with our firm
	CAE3	COVID-19 has affected the livelihood of locals associated with our firm
	CAE4	COVID-19 has affected tourism and hotel associated community businesses
	CAE5	COVID-19 has affected collaboration with the firm's pre-pandemic contacts due to business diversification/shutdown etc.
	CAE6	COVID-19 has instilled a hostile attitude amongst locals towards tourists
Destination adverse effects	DAE1	COVID-19 has affected our destination's tourism and hospitality industry in a negative manner
	DAE2	COVID-19 has resulted in the loss of customers to the destination's tourism and hospitality industry
	DAE3	COVID-19 has affected the overall revenue contribution of tourism and hospitality to our destination of operation
	DAE4	COVID-19 has caused social disruption in our destination of operation
	DAE5	COVID-19 has affected the growth of our destination in terms of tourism
	DAE6	COVID-19 and its outbreak has negatively affected our destination's image
	DAE7	COVID-19 reduced the pollution levels (or other environmental effects) at our destination

Source: authors.

Table 3. Items designed to measure factors in the later stages of the pandemic

Factors	Code	Items
Business recovery	BR1	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have improved the revenue of our firm compared to that of last year
	BR2	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in an improvement in the number of stays/trips/tours
	BR3	Vaccination has caused a reduction in the preventive measures against probable crises at our firm
	BR4	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have increased the number of bookings
	BR5	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reduced the cost of operating business like getting rid of new standard procedures that were in place when vaccines were not available etc.
	BR6	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have allowed the resumption of raw materials and production activities
	BR7	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have helped us return to our earlier business model that was much efficient and cost-effective compared to the model our hotel adopted when vaccines were not available
	BR8	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resumed bookings for events, conferences, weddings, etc.
	BR9	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the return of pre-pandemic tariffs

Factors	Code	Items
	BR10	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the removal of our firm's self-imposed restrictions like limited intake of bookings etc.
	BR11	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have negated/reversed the need for business innovation adopted in face of the pandemic
	BR12	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have brought back our pre-pandemic plans of expansion
Workforce recovery	WR1	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have relieved stress built among employees of our firm
	WR2	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in reinstating employees who were laid off or furloughed
	WR3	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in the recruitment of new employees and interns
	WR4	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed salary cuts for employees and workers that were made last year as a result of the pandemic
	WR5	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have eased employees' mental stress regarding employment, job security, salary, etc.
	WR6	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reduced concerns about employees' exposure to the disease
	WR7	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to employees resuming work in a pre-pandemic fashion
Community recovery	CR1	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed the effects of COVID-19 on the livelihood of locals associated with our firm
	CR2	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to a resumption in purchases of locally purchased goods and services that might be economically or environmentally friendly.
	CR3	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed the effects of COVID-19 on firm associated community businesses
	CR4	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have removed the threat of labor shortages/supply of migrant workers
	CR5	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to collaboration with our hotel's pre-pandemic local contacts
	CR6	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have brought back vendors and others who contributed to our customer's experience
	CR7	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reinstated feelings of friendliness in locals towards tourists
Destination recovery	DR1	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have negated/reduced the negative effects of COVID-19 on our destination's tourism and hospitality industry
	DR2	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have improved sales within the tourism and hospitality sector of our destination
	DR3	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have put the growth of our destination with regards to tourism back on track
	DR4	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have settled the disruption caused by COVID-19 at our destination
	DR5	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the resumption of services that were halted
	DR6	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have improved the profitability of the hotel industry
	DR7	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have corrected the affected rate of revenue contribution from the tourism and hospitality sectors to our destination of operation
	DR8	Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the return of pre-pandemic pollution levels (or other environmental effects) at our destination

Source: authors.

#### 4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Table 4 showcases the demographic profile of the respondents consulted for this study. The sample included a broad mix of employees at different

occupational levels from different types of firms and contracts.

This further helped in effectively capturing the transformational ability of COVID-19 in the context of tourism and hospitality.

Table 4. Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	male	82	55.8
	female	65	44.2
Age	20–29 years	25	17.0
	30–39 years	75	51.0
	40–49 years	26	17.7
	50 above	21	14.3
Current position/level	top level senior manger	33	22.4
	mid-level manager	68	46.3
	supervisory level	29	19.7
	other	17	11.6
Status of employees	on roll of the chain or company	33	22.4
	off roll	70	47.6
	management contract	25	17.0
	other	19	12.9
Work experience	less than three years	38	25.9
	4–7 years	43	29.3
	8–11 years	38	25.9
	more than 11	28	19.0
Type of firm	travel agent	35	23.8
	tour operator	27	18.4
	hotel	55	37.4
	transport operator	30	20.4

Source: authors.

##### 4.1. FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS

Factor analysis was done on 22 items pertaining to the early stages of the pandemic. Principal components analysis and varimax rotation (vertical rotation) were then used to determine the factor structure and obtain significant interpretable factors. Only the data with an eigenvalue higher than one and a factor loading higher than 0.50 were considered (Girden, 2001). Among the 22 independent variables, three were deleted because of the cross-loadings viz. BAE9, BAE 11 and CAE6. The values of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin were 0.890, and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity (chi-square = 1577.585;  $df = 171$ ;

$significance = 000$ ) indicates the data's adequacy for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The extracted factors accounted for 66.37% of the variance.

Similarly, factor analysis was conducted on 26 items pertaining to the later stages of the pandemic. DR8 was the only item to be eliminated, given its low communality value (below 0.50). The remaining items were extracted into four factors. The value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin was 0.867, and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity (chi-square = 1234.57;  $df = 136$ ;  $significance = 000$ ) indicates the data's adequacy for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). The extracted factors accounted for 77.42% of the variance. The results of factor analysis are shown in the table 5.



Table 5. Results of factor analysis

Business adverse effects	Loadings	AVE	Mean	SD
COVID-19 has caused a reduction in the number of customers to our firm (BAE1)	0.768	28.94%	4.16	1.497
COVID-19 has led to an increased cost of operating business, like buying technology or following new standards of procedures, etc. (BAE2)	0.726		4.13	1.420
COVID-19 has caused an increase in preventive measures against a probable crisis in our firm (BAE3)	0.738		4.04	1.587
COVID-19 has caused a reduction in revenues of our firm (BAE4)	0.747		4.11	1.486
COVID-19 has caused rapid cancellations of bookings at our firm (BAE5)	0.825		4.22	1.451
COVID-19 has caused the non-availability of raw materials and production activities (BAE6)	0.797		4.11	1.509
COVID-19 has caused a change in the work culture of our firm (BAE7)	0.818		4.18	1.457
COVID-19 has led to a reduction in costs of our products (BAE8)	0.776		4.16	1.460
COVID-19 led to a loss of skilled workforce at our firm (BAE10)	0.820		4.17	1.468
<b>Overall mean</b>			<b>4.14</b>	<b>1.160</b>
<b>Workforce adverse effects</b>				
COVID-19 has caused stress to be built up among our employees (WAE1)	0.896	18.25%	4.57	0.794
COVID-19 has caused significant layoffs and furloughs of our employees (WAE2)	0.770		4.51	0.961
COVID-19 has caused a reduction in training resources for our employees (WAE3)	0.801		4.54	0.916
COVID-19 has caused wage/salary cuts for our employees (WAE4)	0.764		4.49	0.961
COVID-19 has caused a reduction in the motivation of our employees due to the fears that they might be left unemployed in this crisis (WAE5)	0.898		4.63	0.769
<b>Overall mean</b>			<b>4.54</b>	<b>0.87</b>
<b>Community adverse effects</b>				
COVID-19 has caused the threat of labor shortage/supply of migrant workers (CAE1)	0.769	19.18%	4.31	0.866
COVID-19 has affected the usage and purchase of locally produced goods and services associated with our firm (CAE2)	0.777		4.07	1.092
COVID-19 has affected the livelihood of locals associated with our firm (CAE3)	0.713		4.10	1.186
COVID-19 has affected tourism and hotel associated community businesses (CAE4)	0.810		4.16	1.051
COVID-19 has affected collaboration with the firm's pre-pandemic contacts due to business diversification/shutdown etc. (CAE5)	0.844		4.33	0.894
<b>Overall mean</b>			<b>4.22</b>	<b>0.72</b>
<b>Business recovery</b>				
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have improved the revenue of our firm compared to that of last year (BR1)	0.772	35.36%	4.16	1.497
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in an improvement in the number of stays/trips/tours (BR2)	0.779		4.13	1.420
Vaccination has caused a reduction in the preventive measures against probable crises at our firm (BR3)	0.783		4.04	1.587
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have increased the number of bookings (BR4)	0.767		4.11	1.486
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reduced the cost of operating business like getting rid of new standard procedures that were in place when vaccines were not available etc. (BR5)	0.798		4.22	1.451
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have allowed a resumption of raw materials and production activities (BR6)	0.758		4.11	1.509

Table 5 (cont.)

Business adverse effects	Loadings	AVE	Mean	SD
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have helped us return to our earlier business model that was more efficient and cost-effective compared to the model our hotel adopted when vaccines were not available (BR7)	0.816		4.18	1.457
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resumed bookings for events, conferences, weddings, etc. (BR8)	0.716		4.16	1.460
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the return of pre-pandemic tariffs (BR9)	0.788		4.17	1.468
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to the removal of our firm's self-imposed restrictions like a limited intake of bookings etc. (BR10)	0.754		4.01	1.417
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have negated/reversed the need for business innovation adopted in the face of the pandemic (BR11)	0.777		4.07	1.375
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have brought back our pre-pandemic plans for expansion (BR12)	0.774		4.00	1.575
<b>Overall mean</b>			<b>4.32</b>	<b>0.98</b>
<b>Workforce recovery</b>				
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have relieved stress built among employees of our firm (WR1)	0.755		4.14	1.493
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in reinstating employees who were laid off or furloughed (WR2)	0.778		4.11	1.415
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have resulted in the recruitment of new employees and interns (WR3)	0.773		4.04	1.587
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed salary cuts for employees and workers that were made last year as a result of the pandemic (WR4)	0.796	23.00%	4.11	1.486
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have eased employees' mental stress regarding employment, job security, salary, etc. (WR5)	0.815		4.22	1.451
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reduced concerns about employees' exposure to the disease (WR6)	0.769		4.11	1.509
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to employees resuming work in a pre-pandemic fashion (WR7)	0.831		4.18	1.457
<b>Overall mean</b>			<b>4.41</b>	<b>0.70</b>
<b>Community recovery</b>				
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed the effects of COVID-19 on the livelihood of locals associated with our firm (CR1)	0.860		4.57	0.794
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to a resumption in purchases of locally purchased goods and services (CR2)	0.792		4.51	0.961
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reversed the effects of COVID-19 on firm associated community businesses (CR3)	0.848		4.54	0.916
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have removed the threat of labor shortages/supply of migrant workers (CR4)	0.722	19.05%	4.49	0.961
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have led to collaboration with of our hotel's pre-pandemic local contacts (CR5)	0.873		4.63	0.769
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have brought back vendors and others who contributed to our customer's experience (CR6)	0.790		4.48	0.960
Vaccination and/or ease in travel restrictions have reinstated a feeling of friendliness in locals towards tourists (CR7)	0.836		4.44	0.952
<b>Overall mean</b>			<b>4.35</b>	<b>0.56</b>

Source: authors.

#### 4.2. RELIABILITY TEST

Reliability analysis was then conducted to check the reliability of each dimension and their Cronbach's alpha coefficient (see Table 6). The results of Cronbach's alpha were found to be above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 6. Results of reliability test

Dimensions	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value
Business adverse effects	09	0.913
Workforce adverse effects	05	0.876
Community adverse effects	05	0.858
Destination adverse effects	07	0.898
Business recovery	12	0.769
Workforce recovery	07	0.806
Community recovery	07	0.789
Destination recovery	07	0.756
<b>Overall</b>	59	0.809

Note: Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) for all the constructs is above the threshold level 0.60.

Source: authors.

#### 4.3. MEASUREMENT MODEL

In the measurement model, item loadings were found to be above the recommended value of 0.60 (Chin, 1998). Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to check the convergent validity of the constructs. Both the values were above the recommended values of 0.07 and 0.50 (Hair et al., 2006), thereby holding convergent validity. Lastly, discriminant validity was assessed. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is upheld when the square root of each construct's AVE (diagonal values) is larger than its corresponding correlation coefficients. The values of the square root of AVE were more significant than the values of the correlation coefficients, thereby presenting the proof for discriminant validity. The overall results of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are shown in Table 7, while the discriminant validity is shown in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 7. Confirmatory factor analysis results

Factor	Item	Indicator loadings	AVE	CR
Business adverse effects	BAE1	0.768	0.609	0.933
	BAE2	0.726		
	BAE3	0.738		
	BAE4	0.747		
	BAE5	0.825		
	BAE6	0.797		
	BAE7	0.818		
	BAE8	0.776		
	BAE9	0.820		
	BAE10	0.820		
Community adverse effects	CAE1	0.769	0.615	0.888
	CAE2	0.777		
	CAE3	0.713		
	CAE4	0.810		
	CAE5	0.844		
Workforce adverse effects	WAE1	0.896	0.916	0.685
	WAE2	0.770		
	WAE3	0.801		
	WAE4	0.764		
	WAE5	0.898		
Destination adverse effects	DAE1	0.906	0.950	0.731
	DAE2	0.858		
	DAE3	0.816		
	DAE4	0.892		
	DAE5	0.813		
	DAE6	0.877		
	DAE7	0.817		
Business recovery	BR1	0.772	0.947	0.599
	BR10	0.754		
	BR11	0.777		
	BR12	0.774		
	BR2	0.779		
	BR3	0.783		
	BR4	0.767		
	BR5	0.798		
	BR6	0.758		
	BR7	0.816		
	BR8	0.716		
	BR9	0.788		

Table 7 (cont.)

Factor	Item	Indicator loadings	AVE	CR
Community recovery	CR1	0.860	0.934	0.670
	CR2	0.792		
	CR3	0.848		
	CR4	0.722		
	CR5	0.873		
	CR6	0.790		
	CR7	0.836		
Workforce recovery	WR1	0.755	0.920	0.622
	WR2	0.778		
	WR3	0.773		
	WR4	0.796		
	WR5	0.815		
	WR6	0.769		
	WR7	0.831		
	Destination recovery	DR1		
DR2		0.838		
DR3		0.786		
DR4		0.762		
DR5		0.823		
DR6		0.825		
DR7		0.768		

Source: authors.

4.4. HYPOTHESES TESTING

After confirming the measurement model, the present study tested the proposed hypotheses through partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). SmartPLS software was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The results of structural equation modeling, along with the path coefficient, are shown in Figures 2 and 3. Inference for each hypothesis is given in Table 10.

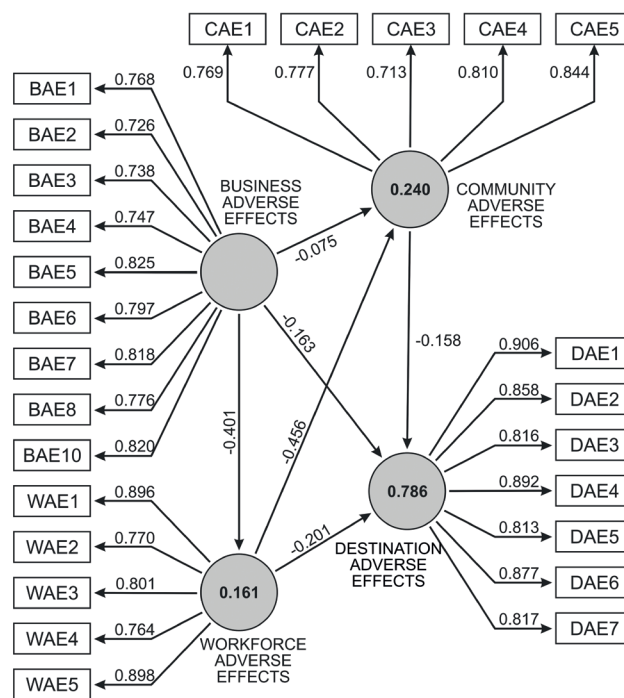


Figure 2. The estimated SEM path model of early pandemic stages  
Source: authors

Table 8. Discriminant validity results (early stages of the pandemic)

	Business adverse effects	Community adverse effects	Destination adverse effects	Workforce adverse effects
Business adverse effects	<b>0.780</b>	-	-	-
Community adverse effects	0.257	<b>0.784</b>	-	-
Destination adverse effects	0.203	0.019	<b>0.854</b>	-
Workforce adverse effects	0.401	0.486	0.189	<b>0.828</b>

Source: authors.

Table 9. Discriminant validity results (later stages of the pandemic)

	Business recovery	Community recovery	Destination recovery	Workforce recovery
Business recovery	<b>0.774</b>	-	-	-
Community recovery	0.375	<b>0.819</b>	-	-
Destination recovery	0.452	0.585	<b>0.789</b>	-
Workforce recovery	0.991	0.368	0.439	<b>0.789</b>

Source: authors.

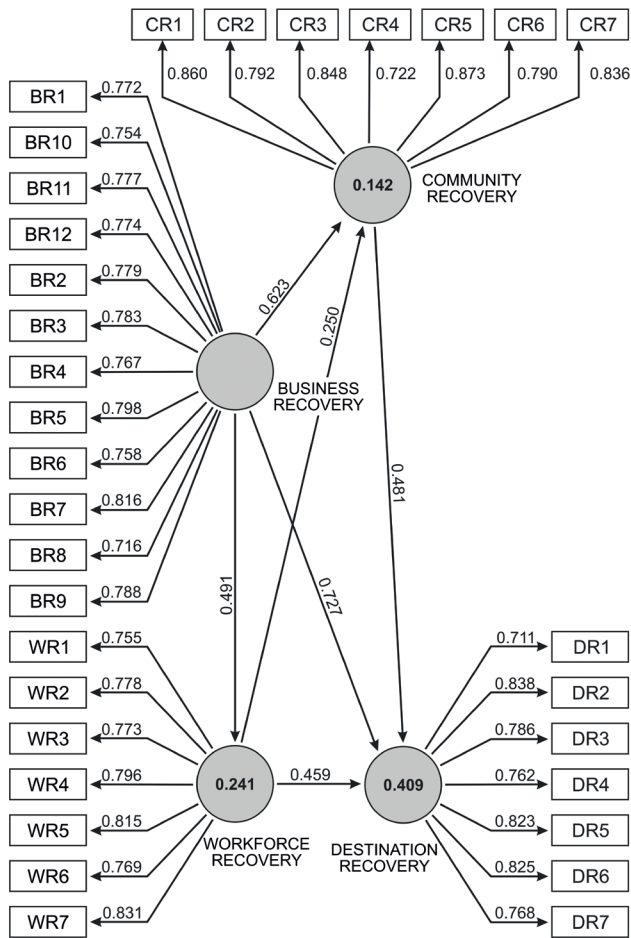


Figure 3. The estimated SEM path model of later pandemic stages  
Source: authors

### 5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As mentioned earlier, this study has tried to examine a path to destination recovery (adverse effects) based on its businesses, workforce and community’s recovery (adverse effects). With an underpinning objective of assessing the transformative potential of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study inquired into the many aspects of stakeholder well-being. To the best of the authors’ knowledge, it is amongst the first few studies providing insights into the nature of tourism through a temporal investigation of the tourist destinations’ condition (pre and post pandemic). To undertake such an investigation, 12 hypotheses were developed centered around pharmaceutical developments (vaccines) and easing of travel restrictions (Figure 1). Stakeholders (inbound tour operators, travel agents, hotels, transport providers) from several destinations in India were consulted as India was the nation with the highest number of cases and subsequently, vaccine doses. A total of 61 items encompassing varied aspects of well-being (economic, social, emotional and psychological) were constructed across eight factors to test the proposed hypotheses. From the examination of path coefficients, it was discovered that the impact of COVID-19 on businesses has negatively affected the destination, its workforce and the community while they have also affected each other independently. Subsequently, the effects of vaccine availability and the ease in restrictions on businesses led to the recovery of the destination, its local community and workforce while also contributing to each other’s recovery.

Table 10. Hypothesis testing results

Path coefficients	Path coefficient	t-statistics	p values	Inference
Business adverse effects → community adverse effects	-0.075	0.821	0.412	not support
Business adverse effects → destination adverse effects	-0.163	2.878	0.000	supported
Business adverse effects → workforce adverse effects	-0.401	4.108	0.000	supported
Community adverse effects → destination adverse effects	-0.158	3.855	0.000	supported
Workforce adverse effects → community adverse effects	-0.456	3.566	0.000	supported
Workforce adverse effects → destination adverse effects	-0.201	2.138	0.000	supported
Business recovery → community recovery	0.623	2.409	0.000	supported
Business recovery → destination recovery	0.727	5.239	0.000	supported
Business recovery → workforce recovery	0.491	5.958	0.000	supported
Community recovery → destination recovery	0.481	4.789	0.000	supported
Workforce recovery → community recovery	0.250	2.585	0.000	supported
Workforce recovery → destination recovery	0.459	4.774	0.000	supported

Source: authors.

While the former findings were well established in the COVID-19 literature, the latter empirically validates a path to destination recovery based on the recovery of its businesses, community and workforce. More importantly, the findings suggest the pandemic to have simply been a magnification of seasonality nuances that service providers on the ground have always been facing. Given the low barriers to entry and the reduced cost of setup in the tourism industry (Quinn, Larmour, McQuillan, 1992), businesses lack financial backing and expertise (Welsh, White, 1981), tending to fail more often than those in other industries. Gavron et al. (1998) comment that about 64% of the UK's small businesses shut down within four years of inception. In the same vein, Chell and Pittaway (1998) found that about 50% of restaurants were shut down within the first two years of running the business. This study, therefore, postulates the extension of Darwin's evolutionary theory, i.e. *survival of the fittest* to the likes of tourism and hospitality. Going by past trends, inefficient small businesses have been continually shutting down in this industry. In that, the pandemic happened to play a facilitator's role in the closure of these businesses at an earlier stage. This study also points towards the relevance of measures like lay-offs and cost cuts for businesses to stay a-float during a crisis. It can be noted that businesses which implemented such measures were able to survive the crisis and recover well after the crisis was gone.

Despite recent lockdowns during the most catastrophic wave in the country (April–June 2021), destinations showed early signs of recovery in a relatively shorter period (five months, based on the time of data collection). Vaccines and ease in travel restrictions led to the undoing of practices adopted during the surge, bringing in an element of normalcy in the region. Respondents agreed to the reduction in preventive measures (BR3), cancelling of the new standard operating procedures (BR5), switching back to previous business models (BR7), resumption of bookings for MICE (BR8), return to pre-pandemic tariffs (BR9), removal of booking caps (BR10), reversal on product alterations and business innovation (BR11), pursuing the pre-pandemic plans for expansion (BR12), reduction of mental stress amongst employees (WR1), reinstating furloughed employees (WR2), reversal on salary cuts (WR4), resumption of purchases from locals (CR2), an appropriate supply of labor (CR4) and the homecoming of vendors (CR6). With restrictions still in place for international tourism (in the investigated region), the industry has heavily relied on domestic tourism for the past two years. While the prognosis of Orîndaru et al. (2021) and Sharma, Thomas and Paul (2021) regarding the rise of proximity and local tourism is reasonable enough, there seems to be no signs of transformation with

respect to the operational aspects of destinations. With tourists showing an interest in traveling further away (Bhargava, Chandra, 2021), Farmaki (2021) reflects upon their forgetfulness, evidenced by their post-crisis travel patterns. In addition to that, findings of this study suggest the abating of economic, social, emotional and psychological effects of COVID-19 on a destination's workforce and the local community. With no change in the way tourism products are consumed, there is little scope for a change in how they are produced and offered. This study, thereby, contributes to the ongoing debate of crisis-led transformation in which it provides evidence for the continuance of pre-pandemic practices that have been there for a longer period of time. In other words, it substantiates the prognosis of Hall, Scott and Gössling (2020) in which they cast doubt upon the transformational ability of the pandemic. However, the pandemic, as predicted by Orîndaru et al. (2021) and Sharma, Thomas and Paul (2021), has led governments and tourism authorities to realize their domestic tourism potential. Given the rise in the above-mentioned forms of tourism, tourists have expanded their basket of alternative destinations. With the greater need to capitalize on the economic recovery of destinations, authorities in countries like India should continue to promote domestic tourism at a larger scale, emphasizing environmental sustainability, responsibility and community integration. At the same time, local authorities should try to differentiate their destination from that of another given the rise in competitiveness and accordingly frame policies that cater to both international and domestic tourists.

## 6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Similar to any empirical research, this study too had several limitations. Given that it was carried out in India, the findings and implications of this study might not be applicable to a different geographical location. That is, where business, workforce and community recovery were found to affect destination recovery in India, this might not stand true for a different geographic location. Therefore, an international study in this regard, may yield generalizable results. Furthermore, this study did not consider destination recovery as a formative construct in its PLS path model, as there might be other constructs that lead to destination recovery in general (Hair et al., 2006). Future studies may dwell upon the other factors that contribute to destination well-being and incorporate them in their assessment of destination recovery. While this work provides evidence for the notion that crises such as the pandemic fail to bring long-term changes to the system, future studies should explore the nuances within the crisis that

may induce change. If not for a crisis, how do systems change? The identification of a catalyst, such as the internet or the pandemic (in the case of the education sector) that brings a revolution, becomes necessary for a better understanding of the sector in question.

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