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**Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Specific Sectors of Spiritual  
Tourism Industry of Rajasthan: An Empirical Study**

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**Abstract**

India is a country rich in culture, tradition, beauty, and cultural variety. India is exceptional and unmatched for its incredible diversity of faiths, civilizations, and languages. If one is seeking a real Indian perspective, they should not miss any of the country's numerous spiritual sites. India is truly a land of holiness, with lavish mosques and temples alongside breath-taking cathedrals, tranquil retreats, and gorgeous gurdwaras promote tourism to a worldwide audience, the government has repeatedly developed a variety of initiatives and campaigns. The tourist sector in India has undoubtedly suffered from the coronavirus. It is important to take urgent action to provide relief and to provide accommodations for those who are more severely afflicted. A thorough socioeconomic development plan, which is like an ecosystem for it, is necessary to rebuild any nation's economy. The researcher had considered 223 people (tourists, vendors, service providers and hotel owners) to know the Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Specific Sectors of Spiritual Tourism Industry of Rajasthan and concludes that there is significant Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Specific Sectors of Spiritual Tourism Industry of Rajasthan.

**Keywords:** *Covid-19, Spiritual tourism, Economy, Pandemic, Tourism industry.*

## Introduction

Spiritual tourism is a growing trend in leisure travel. It is described as tourism that is marked by a self-aware endeavour for spiritual advancement. A limited number of academics have made both direct and indirect comments on it, and it is evident from these accounts that there are several different practises in many different parts of the world. The phenomenological taxonomy of spiritual tourist experiences has not yet received enough scholarly attention, in part because different people have different ideas about what the phrase means. It is feasible to develop a taxonomy that is empirically based and applicable to a wider range of tourist studies by putting out a narrow but flexible frame of reference for the word. In order to better understand wider social currents in Western nations, this essay contends that spiritual tourist experiences should be loosely divided into five varietal types: healing, experimental, quest, retreat, and collective. A person's search for the sacred is a process by which they attempt to understand, preserve, and modify everything they consider important in their life as necessary. In line with this tendency, spiritual tourism is described as "a physical travel in quest of truth, in search of what is sacred or holy." "The Vatican for Catholics, the Ganges, temples and ashrams in India for Hindus, Mecca, and Sufi shrines for Muslims", are just a few examples of sacred locations that are connected to spiritual tourism. Other scholars disentangle religious context from spiritual tourism. Some people, for instance, consider spiritual tourism to be a spectacle in freedom of travel that entails in enlightens of a cognisant quest for advancement of spiritual needs. In the modern world, there are people who have been dubbed "spiritual tourists" who engage in a wide range of activities or actions that they deliberately see as contributing to their sense of identity and purpose as being good for their health and welfare (Buzinde, 2020).

The number of workers taking spiritual holidays is rising around the globe. They get serenity, tranquillity, and relaxation while they contemplate and are left alone. They get better at making choices and exercising leadership. Some nations only have a reliance on tourism since it accounts for a sizable amount of their GDP. For instance, Thailand, Malaysia, and the Maldives are among the nations that rely substantially on tourism. However, there are currently no successful solutions to brand and sell spiritual tourism. Therefore, it is vital to brand and sell spiritual tourism on a worldwide scale. One of the travel niches with the highest growth, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), is spiritual tourism. Branding and marketing spiritual tourism becomes crucial. Branding shapes desirable impressions of certain locations, aid in memory of tourist places, and is spread by word-of-

mouth(Fathi, et. al, 2019). For a wandering lusting spiritual soul, India is the ideal location. It is abundantly dotted with spiritually magnetic locations, people, and traditions, from the edge of the earth at Kanyakumari to where the earth meets the heavens in the Himalayan peaks. People who want to satiate their spiritual curiosity come to our region and its people because of the mystical traditions that have survived the test of time to immortalize our centuries-old customs. India is a place of mysticism and spiritual awakening. Given India's reputation as a place of spiritual awakening, visitors come to revitalize, practice mindfulness, and improve their spiritual wellbeing. The practice of mindfulness has grown in popularity as a positive response to adversity.

In India, spirituality is ingrained in every facet of life. Many individuals who set out on expeditions in pursuit of enlightenment and spiritual enlightenment would choose a nation as their final stop. When the Beatles toured Rishikesh in 1968 to practice Zen Buddhism at Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's ashram, they managed to put India on the map of the globe. Travel agencies and hotel chains are increasingly recognizing the tremendous possibilities for growth that exist in the rapidly evolving field of spiritual tourism today. Faith and spirituality are commonly confounded, and the phrases "spiritual" and "religion" are commonly used indiscriminately. Visitors who pursue spiritual tourism may or may not subscribe to a single faith or denomination in order to ascertain the true meaning of life and achieve inner peace via ego and personal development. People go throughout the country to locations like Rishikesh, McLeod Ganj, Vakala, Mount Arunachala, Auroville, Tiruvannamalai, Shirdi, and Bodhgaya for this reason.

## **Literature Review**

Hotels in India, in a post Covid-19 scenario are consistently reaching record occupancy rates above 80%, turning away guests during special occasions like Dev Deepavali. Banaras has a little under 400 branded rooms, compared to roughly 550 in Tirupati. It is also fascinating to note that Rishikesh, the world's capital of yoga and the birthplace of yoga, lacks even a single branded hotel. As a result, there seems to be an obvious advantage for organizations to join such untapped sectors and profit from one of the most well-liked ecotourism in the nation.

The impacts of the virus on tourism have been discussed where it is important to take urgent action to provide relief and to provide accommodations for those who are more severely afflicted. Additionally, it has been revealed which medium-term and long-term measures are required to resurrect and energize the economy following the pandemic problem. A thorough

socioeconomic development plan, which is like an ecosystem for it, is necessary to rebuild any nation's economy. To build a robust and sustainable economy, these programmes promote entrepreneurship **(Dash, & Sharma, 2021)**.

Tourism is a major employer and source of revenue in many countries. It generates employment, income, tax money, and earnings in return. To make effective strategic and operational decisions in the face of rising competition in the tourism industry, an accurate estimation of tourism demand is essential. The selection of attractions, transit options, housing, and tourist promotion are all strategic choices that require significant financial outlay. The amount of parking spots, parking attendants, and shuttle. Attraction placement, mode of transportation, housing, and tourist marketing are all strategic choices that need significant investment. On the other hand, operational issues include the availability of parking places, workers, shuttle services, clinic hours, and employment policies. Accurately predicting a growth in tourism demand is a challenging task **(Sharma, et. al, 2020)**.

The hospitality and tourism sector has had a rocky two years, but with the lifting of COVID limitations and the start of the holiday season, the industry is seeing some good traction. In the post-COVID future, pilgrimages will become increasingly popular as people move away from brief city vacations and toward fewer flights and lengthier journeys with a clear purpose **(Mukherjee, et. al, 2022)**.

Travelers come from all over the world to India to visit these places in search of tranquillity and solitude. The rise in talks about mental health in the post-pandemic environment is a good development. People are taking concrete steps to battle stress and anxiety as these conditions are becoming more prevalent for various reasons. In urban India, discussions of mental and physical health have gained importance. Short spiritual getaways are popular among those who want to rediscover their connection to nature and unite their body, mind, and soul for inner serenity. These excursions and retreats help people achieve perspective and comprehensive knowledge of their own life. The emergence of destination weddings in spiritual sites is another development connected to spiritual tourism in India **(Shah, et. al, 2021)**.

One of India's most popular tourist attractions, for both domestic and international visitors, is Rajasthan. Within the previous 30 years, the state has seen a fourfold rise in tourist arrivals. The state is renowned for its range of natural resources, cultural legacy, cultural wonders, as well as archaeological treasures, and unique wild animals. For visitors to the state, the forts and palaces, historical monuments, vibrant fairs and festivals, local art and handicrafts, etc. have all

been unique selling points. Furthermore, a noteworthy draw for tourists, particularly those from abroad, is the state's western desert region (**Gupta, et. al, 2021**).

It is understandable why Rajasthan has earned the nickname "Designer State" in the tourism industry given the diversity of its population, culture, cuisine, garb, and art forms. In conclusion, it is frequently claimed that Rajasthan's tourist sector is set to develop into a people's business by 2010. Really, the sky is the limit for Rajasthan tourism. About 15% of Rajasthan's GDP is derived from tourism, which is a significant source of revenue. About 11.2 percent and 3.3 percent, respectively, of domestic and international tourist arrivals in India are attributable to Rajasthan (**Yadav, 2020**).

There is evidence that individuals' current routines, travel choices, and preferred destinations are influenced by their religious beliefs. Religious visitors attend holy sites for a number of reasons, including adoration of nature, relaxation, and personality, as well as intellectual and cultural enhancement. Travel regarding religious purposes is linked with positive motives (i.e., religious authorities). Travelers who identify as religious make destination decisions based on their beliefs and are connected by common religious practises (**Solanki, & Mathur, 2020**).

One of the world's major religious gatherings is the Hajj. Around 2.5 million pilgrims conducted the Hajj in 2019. While the Saudi government only permitted 1,000 pilgrims to conduct Hajj in 2020 rather than two million owing to COVID-19, foreign pilgrims were not permitted to travel to Saudi Arabia to undertake Hajj. Along with Mecca, Medina is significant to Muslims as the location of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's grave. During the Hajj, pilgrims also travel to Medina. Historians claim that the Hajj was first postponed in AD 967 because of a plague epidemic, and that it was again postponed in AD 1048 because of starvation and drought (**Gautam, 2021**).

In light of the fact that Rajasthan is known for its vibrant cultural offerings as well as its natural desert resources and capacity to draw large numbers of tourists, the pandemic COVID-19 outbreak here is a serious threat and a difficult challenge that must be overcome as soon as possible. Otherwise, this industry will suffer a severe decline and reduction in base rate terms once it has started to shut down. Along with the above scenario, data from this study's research collection also shows indicators of a decline in the number of state travels and travel plans as a result of the widespread COVID-19 anxiety (**Vats, 2021**).

Due to government regulations, the renowned Desert Festival has already been postponed, and no Christmas or New Year's celebrations or activities will be held this year. On Christmas and

New Year's Day, hundreds of activities take occur around the state, especially in places like Jaipur, Jaisalmer, and Jodhpur, but not this year. Jaisalmer, Mount Abu, and Ranthambore have seen a surge in visitors, yet these three locations are unable to give the sector significant relief. Not just Jaipur has experienced such a sharp decline in tourist numbers. Between March 2020 to the present, individuals lost an average of Rs. 10 to 12 lakhs. These covers paying off debt in instalments, rent, taxi gasoline, power bills, etc. When asked if he has ever experienced a crisis like this, he recalls the era of "demonetization," but claims that even then was not as awful (Shinde, 2015).

## Objective

1. To know the Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Specific Sectors of Spiritual Tourism Industry of Rajasthan.

## Methodology

The researcher had considered 223 people (tourists, vendors, service providers and hotel owners) to know the Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Specific Sectors of Spiritual Tourism Industry of Rajasthan. The survey for this empirical study was conducted with the help of a questionnaire. The researcher had collected the primary data through random sampling method and analysed it using mean and t test statistical tools.

## Findings

Table below is sharing respondent's general details in which it is found that in total 223 respondents males are 63.7% are females are 36.3%. 33.2% are below 38 years of age, 41.7% fall in the age category of 38-42 years and rest 25.1% are above 42 years of age. 18.4% of them are vendors, 14.4% are small shop owners, 24.2% are hotel owners, 17.0% are service providers, 19.7% are in travel agencies and rest 6.3% are engaged in other tourist related occupation.

**Table 1 General Details**

Variables	Respondents	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	142	63.7
Female	81	36.3

<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age (years)</b>		
Below 38	74	33.2
38-42	93	41.7
Above 42	56	25.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation</b>		
Vendor	41	18.4
Small shop owner	32	14.4
Hotel owner	54	24.2
Service providers	38	17.0
Travel agency	44	19.7
Others	14	6.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2 Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Spiritual Tourism Industry**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean Value</b>	<b>t value</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
1.	Tourist from all over the world were restricted for spiritual tourism	3.16	2.496	0.007
2.	Local and international tourism-related events are postponed or cancelled	3.13	2.041	0.021
3.	Direct or indirect impact on people engaged in tourism industry	3.15	2.392	0.009
4.	Hotel owners and service providers not able to pay their employees	3.12	1.875	0.031
5.	Restrictions to famous religious places and monasteries for public gatherings and religious visits	3.10	1.583	0.057
6.	Loss in business due to major drop in visitors at tourist places	3.20	3.123	0.001
7.	Shutting down of many sectors due to Government limitations and restrictions for tourist places	3.18	2.837	0.002
8.	Travel agencies shut down due to travel restrictions	3.17	2.700	0.004

9.	Limitation showed negative effect on money exchanges	3.26	4.067	0.000
10.	Local vendors and artisans are stocked with their stuff	3.14	2.228	0.013

Table above is showing Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Spiritual Tourism Industry. The respondent says that limitation showed negative effect on money exchanges with mean value 3.26, Loss in business due to major drop in visitors at tourist places with mean value 3.20, Shutting down of many sectors due to Government limitations and restrictions for tourist places with mean value 3.18 and Travel agencies shuts down due to travel restrictions with mean value 3.17. The respondent also shared that tourist from all over the world were restricted for spiritual tourism with mean value 3.16, Direct or indirect impact on people engaged in tourism industry with mean value 3.15, Local vendors and artisans are stocked with their stuff with mean value 3.14 and Local and international tourism-related events are postponed or cancelled with mean value 3.13. It is also found that hotel owners and service providers not able to pay their employees with mean value 3.12 and Restrictions to famous religious places and monasteries for public gatherings and religious visits with mean value 3.10. The value under significant column for all the statements related to Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Spiritual Tourism Industry are significant with value below 0.05 after applying t-test except Restrictions to famous religious places and monasteries for public gatherings and religious visits (0.057).

## Conclusion

According to the company's stakeholders, the pandemic's effects and limitations have severely hurt the sector. Usual practise was for planning to start two months prior to Christmas / New Year's. In the past, hotels operated at full capacity throughout the season, which begins in October. Parties, campers, trekking, and safaris were formerly commonplace, but this year all of that has altered as a result of the epidemic. The limitations have had a significant negative impact on money exchanges, tour operators, vendors of handmade goods, hotels, resorts, pubs, folk artists, and event planners. Many people are now without jobs, and several businesses are losing money. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the tourism industry and the number of visitors to the state. The economy of Rajasthan is mostly based on tourism, accounting for about 15%. After the agricultural and textile industries, tourism is an important economic employer in Rajasthan, and while it has a multiplier impact on income, revenue, investment, and employment creation, the current phenomenon of this disease's expansion



indicates certain degrading elements in this framework. Government efforts to mitigate the impact of covid on spiritual tourism in Rajasthan by large-scale attention to sanitation and safety, promoting the use of locally made crafts and representation Covid-19 has compelled nations to develop plans for eco-friendly travel. Standardised Practises, Ongoing Audits, And Monitoring. The Indian companies that offer online travel are associated with an auditing company that keeps track of numerous SOPs. Motivating persons engaged in tourism-related jobs, such as employees, agents, and network operators. The hotel and tourism sectors rely heavily on contract workers, thus financial support is crucial.

Present study was conducted to know the Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Specific Sectors of Spiritual Tourism Industry of Rajasthan and found that limitation showed negative effect on money exchanges, Loss in business due to major drop in visitors at tourist places and shutting down of many sectors due to Government limitations and restrictions for tourist places. The study concludes that there is significant Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Specific Sectors of Spiritual Tourism Industry of Rajasthan.

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