

Research Article

## Addressing the effect of COVID19 pandemic on the Tourism Industry in Haridwar and Dehradun Districts of Uttarakhand, India

Ashish Kumar<sup>1</sup>, Ajay Bhardwaj<sup>1</sup>, Umakant Indolia<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Tourism Management, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalya, Haridwar, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism Management, Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalya, Haridwar, India

\*Corresponding author. Ashish Kumar.Email: [ashish.pawar@dsvv.ac.in](mailto:ashish.pawar@dsvv.ac.in)

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**Abstract.** The World Travel and Tourism Council has said “The coronavirus COVID19 epidemic is putting up to 50 million jobs in the global travel and tourism sector at risk, with travel likely to slump by a quarter this year, Asia being the most affected continent”. The predictions being flashed by the world economic forum about the travel & tourism industry is also reflected in North India tourism industry. Hence, the study aimed to address and evaluate the effect of COVID19 on Uttarakhand tourism, especially, on the site of Haridwar and Dehradun as they are the entry to the gateway of Major *Char Dham Yatra* of Himalaya, and where all India tourists arrive since centuries. The prime focus of the study was to review and investigate the people's reaction towards the pandemic situation and how it had affected the working as well as livelihood of people associated with Tourism and hospitality in this region of Uttarakhand. The study did a online survey through self-prepared 20 questions questionnaire. The study indicates before and COVID19 pandemic affected nearly 60% respondents for their professional working and many were affected with payment schedules. The majority of the respondents (78.4%) were very much positive and had faith for the bright future besides happy to spend time with family. In addition, the study showed a strong response from participants for the need of the change in the service of the tourism industry indicating a change for its survival with the present threat possibly through finding solutions such as local tourism, spiritual collective effort and support.

**Keywords.** COVID19, Tourism, Hospitality, livelihood, business, revival



## Introduction

COVID19 pandemic has severely impacted the tourism sector globally including India. By affecting millions of people and claiming over a million lives till in first six months of the year 2020, tourism is clearly one of the worst hit sectors of economy. According to research by the UN body, more than 90% of all worldwide destinations have introduced travel restrictions. COVID19 has impacted travel and tourism like no other event had done it before in the history. In Asia, 100% of destinations have adopted restrictions related to COVID19 since January, 2020 (1).

In India, Indian Associations of Tour Operators (IATO) estimated the hotel, aviation and travel sector together may incur loss of about 85 billion due to travel restrictions. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) estimates the crisis to cost the tourism sector at least US \$22 billion, resulting in a loss of 50 million jobs. On account of COVID19, the Indian tourism and hospitality industry will face a job loss of around 38 million. According to the statistics published by Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), there has been seen a reduction in foreign tourists arrivals as well as in domestic tourists.

A study by S Choudhury et al. (2020) explained that every year around 9.6 million foreign tourists visit India, which make it about 26000 per day; with no available substitute in lockdown and restrictions, unfortunately, it is the tourism sector which has to face the most severe consequences. The industry which contributes 9% to the GDP of India has to bear the loss of around 1.3 trillion in 2020, not only in the term of revenue but also in the form of employment as it accounts for around 52% of employment in the country and hence the potential job loss of around 38 million, which is 40% of total workforce (2).

In the study by J Koirala et al., (2020) indicated that the outbreak of novel Corona Virus (COVID19) from Wuhan has isolated millions of population from regular activities. The spread is so much viral

that it is almost unstoppable. It is important to understand the role of Government, Business Houses and Development Partners in understanding the effectiveness in immediate preparedness and response of the situation (3). Also Y Hong (2020) mentioned that after the outbreak of COVID19 (especially in the stage of tourism recovery), the bed and breakfast (B&B) tourism industry faced big challenges in improving its health strategies. B&Bs are very important for the tourism industry in China and many other countries (4). In addition, a study indicated that around the world, almost all countries have sought to stop the spread of the COVID19 by lockdown and quarantine protocols, implemented from local to the national scale, hence impact on the tourism industry is easily understood (5).

Tourism and Hospitality are one of the most affected sectors among all, especially in the Uttarakhand state of India, whose 80% economy and employment is based on tourism. Tourism sector of Uttarakhand has got a huge blow when COVID19 pandemic entered in India. A state with a population of more than 1.17 core was brought to a sudden stand still and tourism was one such sector which came under direct influence of the immediate lockdown.

Considering the global impact of COVID19 pandemic, the study aimed to observe and reveal COVID19 pandemic impact on Uttarakhand tourism especially in Dehradun and Haridwar. The study also aimed to evaluate the need of the changes in tourism industry's service due to pandemic along with status of work environment and governmental support. The objective of this research was to find the impact of COVID19 on people associated with tourism industry in Uttarakhand through their personal lives, livelihood and future expectation.

## Methods

A questionnaire for the survey for qualitative study was self-prepared and responses of selective 111 respondents in the City of Haridwar & Dehradun districts of Uttarakhand were taken. The participants of the study were from different sectors and were



directly or indirectly associated with tourism and hospitality business i.e. resorts, hotels, restaurants, tours and travel agencies, academicians, transportation, tourism professionals and industry experts etc. The questionnaire contained 20 questions, and data was collected online through Google form.

The responses of participants were collected in the month of May 2020 in which the whole state was under lockdown. The unlock process of self-quarantine was started gradually in/after May 2020 in the state.

The questionnaire PDF is provided as supplemental figure 1. The 20 questions were divided into 4 sections 1) demographics of participants, 2)

employment and work-environment during pandemic, 3) governmental support and medical facility available during pandemic, 3) livelihood status and financial security, 4) personal impact and family life during pandemic.

*Demographic of the participants*

Figure 1 demonstrated the demographics of the participants. In this section demographic and working data is presented, including age, gender, working status, residential locations and category of organization. More than 60% respondents were of age 15-30 and Urban with nearly equal gender ratio (Figure 1A-C). Participants were from different sectors i.e. governmental, non-governmental, other sectors such as self-own, etc with employed and unemployed status (Figure 1D-E).

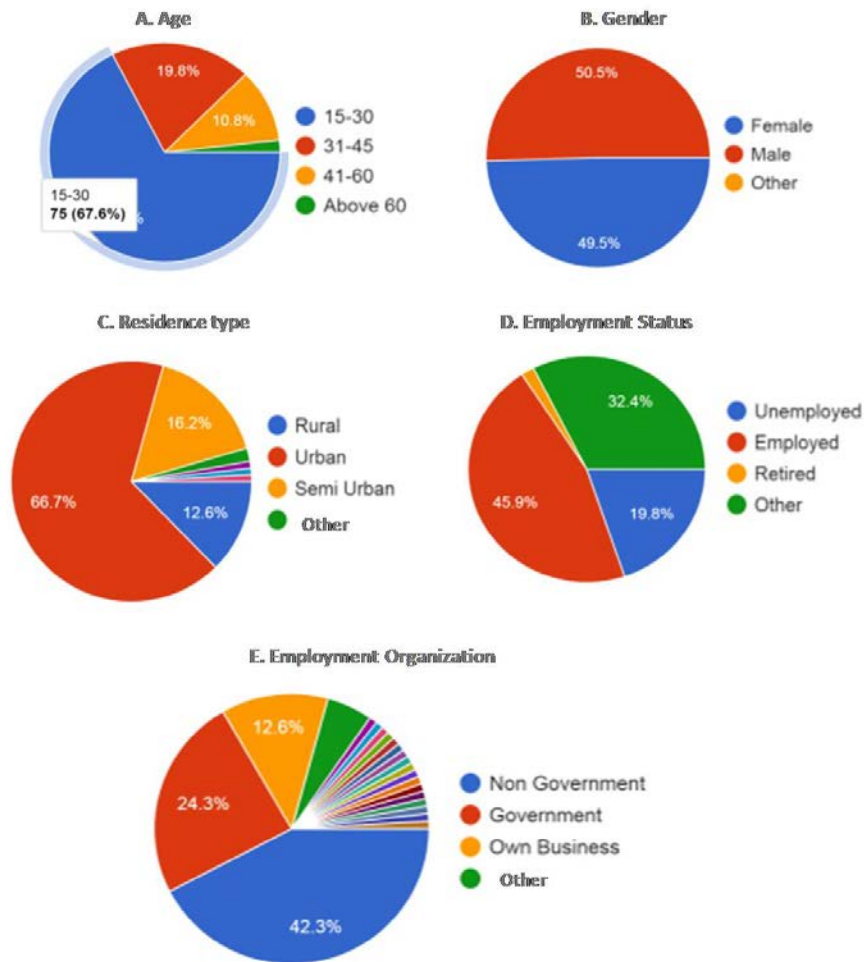


Figure 1. Demographics of the respondents



### *Impact of COVID19 on Employment and work-environment*

In this section, the respondents were asked four questions to evaluate their employment status and work-environment and results were depicted in the Figure 2 with mean and standard error on the linear scale. Majority of the respondents indicated the work is impacted in COVID19 pandemic i.e. 55.9% strongly agreed), while only 16.2% showed that their work was unaffected. During pandemic, there were mixed responses of regularities in payment by their employer i.e. 37.8% responses agreed while 30.6% strongly disapproved of it (Figure 2A).

When people were enquired about whether the management has shared the information regarding the business situation, 37.8% strongly agreed while 18.9% strongly disagreed indicating a mixed response from their management. In addition, regarding the need and importance they felt for the change in the service standards in tourism industry after corona virus, their opinion was very strong (64%) indicating the upcoming challenges in tourism industry post COVID19 pandemic (Figure 2A).

### *Government support for business and medical facility during COVID19 pandemic*

Besides business environment, the study also evaluated the government support and medical facility available during pandemic. The results indicated unawareness among people regarding the governmental support for business (mean was at linear scale 3), while regarding medical facilities being provided in COVID19 situation (mean was at linear scale 4), there were more satisfactions

indicating the active role of government in the pandemic time (Figure 2B). In addition, the local administration was extremely supportive during the difficult times of pandemic i.e. 45.9% respondents strongly agreed with the administrative services (Figure 2B).

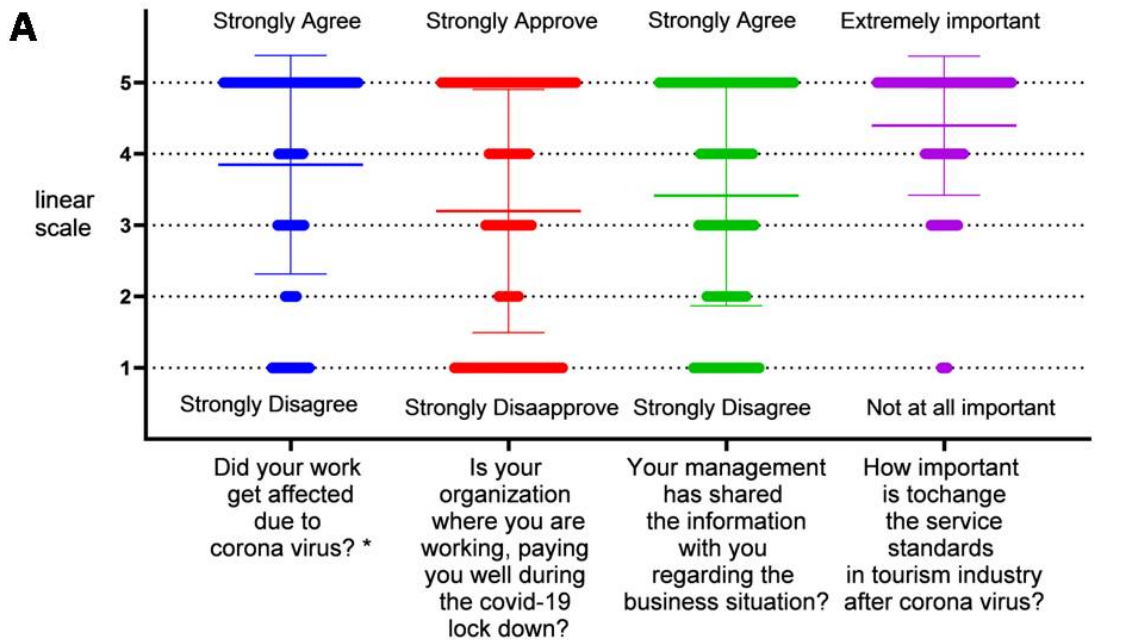
### *Impact of COVID19 on livelihood and financial security*

In the present study, the questions on livelihood and financial security for future were also evaluated. In the question regarding the security in the employment post COVID19 pandemic, the respondents were hopeful, had some plans about future employment, and hopeful of recovery of loss occurred in pandemic as scale mean was between 3 to 4. Interestingly all respondents were very hopeful and had strong faith for their bright future as mean of the linear scale was between 4 to 5 in the 5 point scale (Figure 3A).

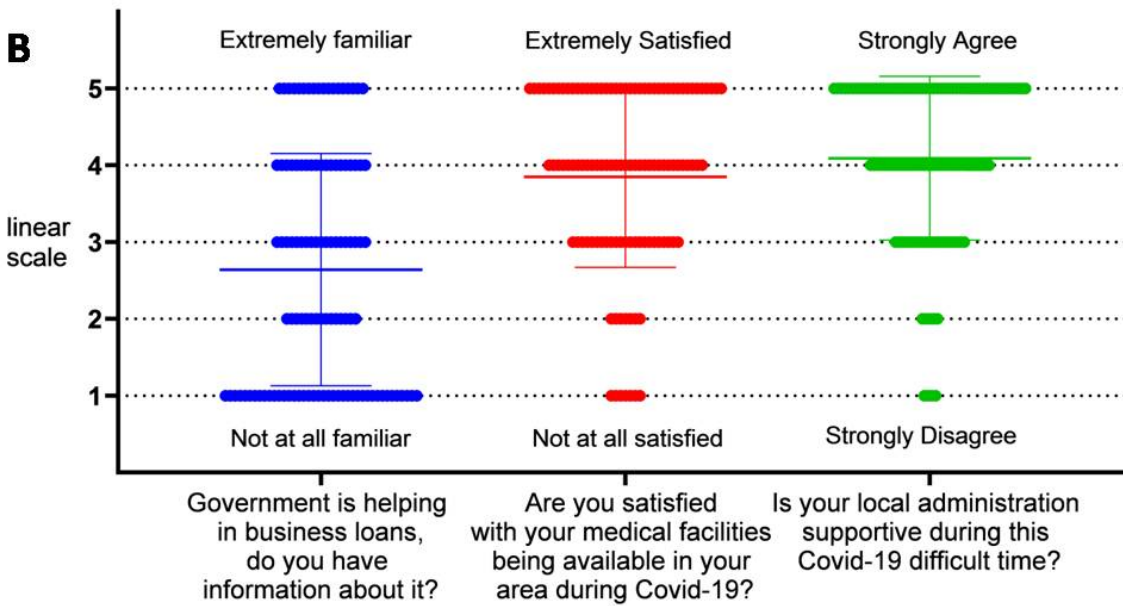
### *Impact of COVID19 on Personal & family life*

Almost all of the respondents (67%) had never experienced such a disaster in the life before (mean scale between 1 to 2 point on 5 point scale), while many of them agreed and many did not agreed that it had caused stressed in their life (the mean linear scale were nearly in middle giving mixed results). Interestingly, on the positive side of the pandemic, majority (73.95) believed that the pandemic has given them a break and time to spend with family (mean linear scale was between '4' to '5' on the 5 point scale) (Figure 3B).





**Impact of COVID19 pandemic on Employment & Work-enviornment**

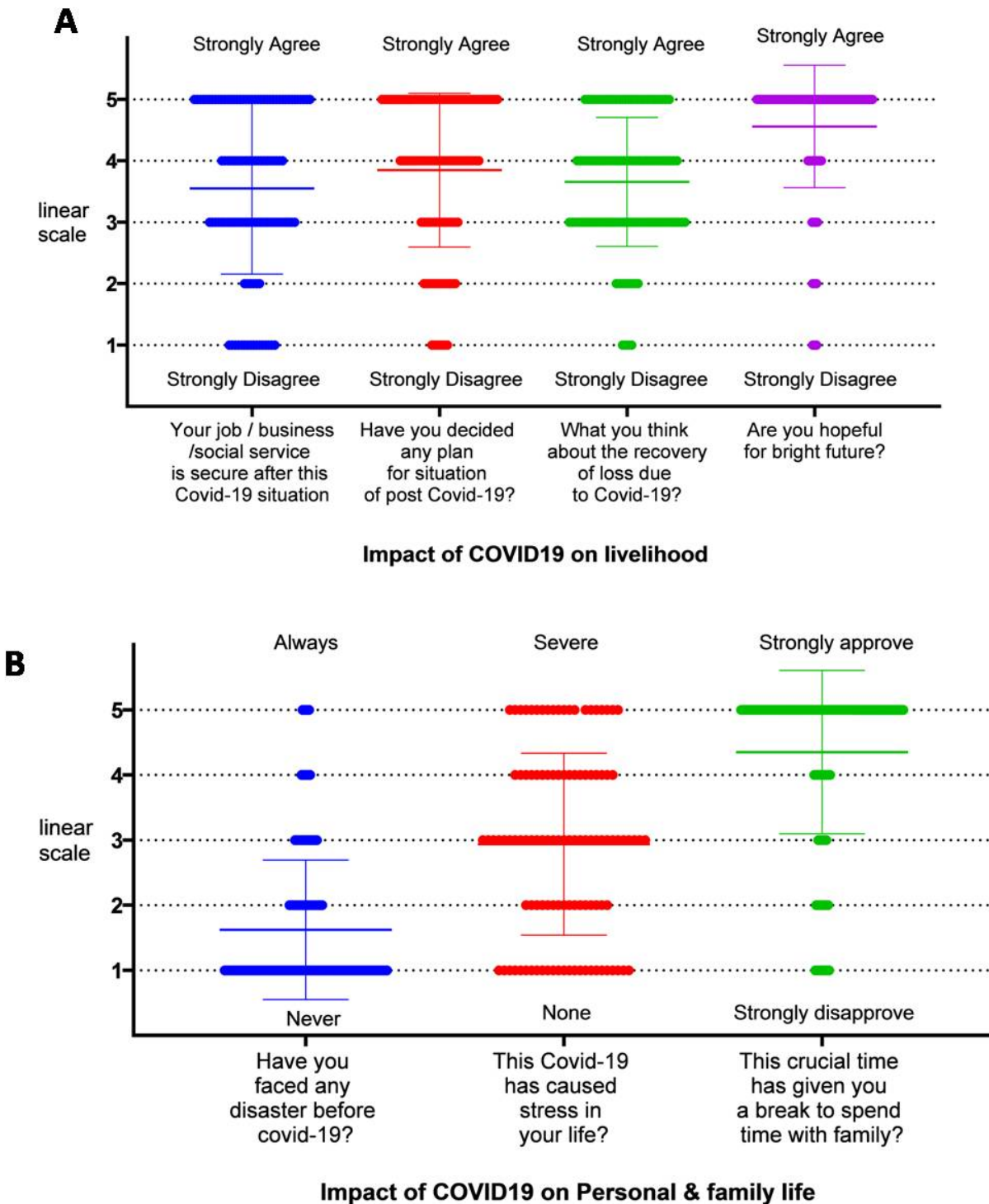


**Government support for business and medical facility during COVID19 pandemic**

**Figure 2.** Impact of COVID19 on Employment and work-environment (A), and on the support for business and medical facility from government (B) in the COVID19 pandemic in the respondents from Uttarakhand.







**Figure 3.** Impact of COVID19 on livelihood, and financial security (A), and on personal and family life in the COVID19 pandemic in the respondents from Uttarakhand.



## Discussion

This research was based on the impact of COVID19 pandemic on the Tourism Industry in Haridwar and Dehradun Districts of Uttarakhand, India. The study was conducted in the month of May 2020. The study was divided into four parts to access the impact of COVID19 pandemic i.e. demographics of respondents (figure 1), employment status of participants (Figure 2A), Government support in business & medical facility (figure 2B), livelihood and financial security (Figure 3A), and personal & family life (Figure 3B).

The COVID19 impact on the tourism industry is the highest affected sector at present time. The study indicated the COVID19 situation whether faced by people earlier or not; the response was 67.655 people never seen or faced such situation of COVID19 earlier, indicating a novel situation arising. Apart from that COVID19 pandemic affected nearly 60% respondents for their professional working and many were affected with payment schedules. However, the result indicated that people have faith for the bright future and happy to spend time with family.

In addition, the study showed a strong response from participants (figure 2A) for the need of the change in the service of the tourism industry indicating a change for its survival with the present threat. One of the strategies for the revival of the tourism industry in India especially in COVID19 pandemic time, it seems, is that the promotion of domestic tourism. Each state can promote the most important specialties of their particular region through social media platforms till this COVID19 scenario and when the situation starts getting back to normal, later tourism can be started and gradually increased thereby contributing in balancing the industry.

Northern India has enormous possibilities of tourism as the northernmost states i.e. Uttarakhand, Himachal, Jammu, are already a hot destination. Uttarakhand as a tourist destination has lots of prospects and can prove to be a pure goldmine. It can use its rich cultural heritage and the breath-

taking natural beauty to its advantage. During the lockdown period, there were many ecological beneficial outcome has happened which can be later promoted to attract tourist after lockdown is over with more care to maintain sustainability i.e. 1) with reduced carbon footprints and human interference, which has added more to Himalayas virgin beauty, 2) environment has become so pollution free that Himalayan Peaks are visible from Saharanpur, a heavily populated area of Uttar Pradesh State, 3) in an interesting observation during lockdown, water of the revered river Ganga was found to be most cleaned in past many decades at Haridwar location, for which Governmental bodies were spending ample amount of money but could not achieved it, 4) also various varieties of Birds and animals were seen back in Rajaji national park area of Haridwar; thus indicating the need of sustainable and environmental friendly approaches in tourism industry in the upcoming time along with focus of its revival.

Besides, a collective human effort will be required for the revival of the industry as a study by Porwal (2020) mentioned that "tourism unites, and Yoga provides health, happiness and harmony". In addition concepts like Yoga-tourism in promoting healthy life style, holistic approach for happiness and global harmony (6) along with sustainable business in hospitality and tourism (7) could be of more important in reviving tourism post COVID19 era. In addition, majority of the businesses are not able to meet their day to day finances, they have exhausted their savings, and some of the businesses have taken loan to fulfill the requirements. Also some of the businesses are not able to pay the salaries to their employees and hence philosophy of spiritual tourism (8) imbining spiritual combine effort would help survive and grow together.

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