

COVID-19 Pandemic and Tourism Industry in Himachal Pradesh: An Economic Analysis

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Abstract - The emerging infection of COVID-19 pandemic was initiated from Wuhan, China got spread to more than 200 countries around the globe including India. The COVID-19 pandemic is not only dangerous for our health but for the health of the nation also. Indian economy is highly affected due to the lockdown. A large segment of the Indian population lost their livelihood due to shutdown of trades, travel and tourism, commercial and other business activities during the lockdown. In India, the various measures adopted to control this deadly virus had a wide- ranging impact on the various business activities in general and Tourism and Hospitality Industry in particular. Tourism Industry is the backbone of the economy of Himachal Pradesh and provides employment to larger section of the society directly or indirectly. During COVID-19 pandemic, the Tourism Industry has experienced negative growth rate and affected a larger section of the society. This paper made an attempt to study various impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the Tourism sector of Himachal Pradesh.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Tourism Industry, Tourist Inflow, Growth rate, Employment Multiplier

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism was one of the first sectors to be deeply impacted by the pandemic, as measures introduced to contain the virus led to a near-complete cessation of tourism activities around the world. The sector also risks being among one of the last to recover, with the ongoing travel restrictions and the global recession (OECD, 2020). The WTO has researched and found that nearly 120 million tourism jobs could be lost during the pandemic, which has never happened before in the history. This could implore US \$1.2 trillion loss of income in the tourism industry due to 850 to 1.1 billion lesser tourist arrivals in 2020. On an average, tourism industry contributes almost 4.4 per cent of GDP in developed nations and it generates almost 7 per cent direct jobs (Haritha *et al.*, 2021).

Bangladesh has experienced an adverse impact on inbound and outbound tourism. The amplification of COVID-19 pandemic is predicted to cause a long-run adverse impact on tourism in Bangladesh (Deb and Nafi, 2020). The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has hugely and adversely impacted tourism in Malaysia and also the numbers of tourists have declined due to the Malaysian government imposing travel restrictions and bans (Foo *et al.*, 2020). The arrival of foreign tourists to India from different parts of the world has

reduced by 68 per cent in March 2020 (Jaipuria *et al.*, 2020).

India has been no exception. The decline in tourist arrivals or movements in India started in February 2020 itself. However, this trend reached its trough when the lockdown was declared by the Central and State Governments in late March 2020. Besides, tourists from around the world started cancelling their travels due to the fears of Coronavirus infection. India's GDP is estimated to have contracted by 8.0 per cent in real terms in 2020-21 because of the pandemic in the country. This implies an overall economic loss of Rs. 11.6 trillion (NCAER, 2020). Job losses have also been inevitable in both the formal and informal sectors. A large number of households in various states of the country depend completely on earnings from tourism related activities for sustenance.

The outbreak and spread of COVID-19 pandemic had empirically shown the rapid negative impact on the country's tourism and hotel industry. It is feared that the volume of revenue loss may affect the ability of most of the industries and businesses in hospitality and tourism sector and stop them to return back to normal operations after the COVID-19 pandemic without appreciable financial support from the government (Bhattacharya, 2021). We have witnessed several outbreaks of pandemics in the past but not a single incident had alike repercussions on the economy as the COVID-19 outbreak. Travel and Tourism Industry has been the hardest hit segment of the economy with aircrafts putting off their flights, hotels and accommodation shut and bans on mass gatherings affecting the events industry in almost all corners of the globe (Panda, 2021).

In 2020, the Tourism Industry in India has faced a revenue loss to the extent of Rs. 1.25 trillion due to the close of hotels, railway suspension, road and flight operations since the spread of the COVID-19 Virus infection (Haritha *et al.*, 2021). The Country's Travel and Hospitality industry, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is losing five trillion in revenue next year while 35-40 million jobs both direct and indirect are endangered (Bhat and Beigh, 2020).

Tourism in India is a growing sector and has become immensely important for the country's economy. The World

travel and Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated Rs. 16.91 lakh crore which is 9.2 per cent of India's GDP, in 2018 and supported 42.673 million jobs that being 8.1 per cent of the country's employment. Unfortunately, the coronavirus pandemic would have harmful impact on the tourism sector with the industry in India estimating overall loss of Rs. 5 lakh crore and job cuts to about 4-5 crore people (Das, 2020).

Aviation and Tourism is the first and foremost severely hit industries. India has the fourth largest aviation market in the world and is going through major losses internationally. According to International Airport Transport Association the travel sector has shrunk up by 25 per cent in 2020 and it is estimated that there is a loss of US \$ 252 billion to the industry. This has resulted in a loss of 50 million which is about 70 percent of total work force (Arora and Gupta, 2020).

In India, the Tourism industry has been massively affected by the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, as many countries have introduced travel restrictions in an attempt to contain its spread. 38 lakhs people lost their job at that time and also large amount of income and revenue lost by government. Experts believe that tourism industry likely to take a massive hit and it could end up crippling the industry for the foreseeable future (Khatik and Patel, 2021). Tourism remains the main source of revenue generation and employment in the economy of Himachal Pradesh. The COVID-19 pandemic forced lockdown caused the worst hit upon the tourism industry of the state. Negative growth rate is observed in many sectors but the highest of all is Tourism and Hospitality sector with negative growth rate of 81.33 per cent (Bains, 2022).

Himachal Pradesh is a fast-growing tourist destination that draws visitors from across the globe. Tourism sector contributes considerably to the growth, development and economy of the state. The contribution of the tourism sector to the State Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is about 7 per cent which is quite significant. However, the economy of the State was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic in the year 2020-21. After emerging from this pandemic, the state was able to attract about 52 lakh tourists during 2021. It is important to mention here that there are 4011 Tourism Units, 828 Restaurants, 4400 Travel Agents and 2934 Home Stays registered in the department of Tourism and Civil Aviation (Economic Survey of Himachal Pradesh, 2021).

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In this paper, an attempt is made to assess the direct and indirect impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the Tourism Industry in Himachal Pradesh. More specifically, the main objectives of the paper are as follow

1. To examine the trend of tourist inflow in Himachal Pradesh.

2. To compare the trend of Indian and Foreigner tourist inflow in Himachal Pradesh.
3. To quantify the direct and indirect impacts of tourism activities on the overall economy of Himachal Pradesh; and
4. To propose appropriate policy measures for providing support to the tourism sector.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on secondary data, published in the various reports of National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), Tourism Department of Himachal Pradesh and Economic Survey of Himachal Pradesh. As the NCAER started publishing its reports from 2008 onwards, therefore the study covers the time period of 14 years, i.e., from 2008 to 2021. Bar and line diagrams have also been used for making comparison annual growth rate of inflow of domestic and foreigner tourists. For studying the annual growth rate of tourists and impact of employability of tourism sector in Himachal Pradesh, the following tools have been used.

1. Annual Growth rate of tourist inflow is measured by simple percentage change year over year number of tourist visited.

$$\text{Growth Rate} = \frac{Y_1 - Y_0}{Y_0} \times 100$$

Where Y_1 = number of tourist visited in the current year
 Y_0 = number of tourist visited in the previous year

2. Employment Multiplier (K_e) = $\frac{\Delta N}{\Delta N_1}$

Where K_e = Employment Multiplier
 ΔN = Increase in total employment
 ΔN_1 = Increase in primary employment

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Himachal Pradesh is a very beautiful state in India. Large numbers of tourists visit the state for pilgrimage, peace and for good climatic conditions. Tourism plays a very vital role in the economy of Himachal Pradesh. Table I shows the growth rate of tourist inflow from India and from abroad in Himachal Pradesh. The growth rate of tourist inflow from India was the highest (17.76 per cent) in 2008, after that it was decreasing year by year. A negative growth rate was also experienced in the years 2013 (-5.94 per cent), 2018 (-15.88 per cent) and 2020 (-81.16 per cent), respectively. In 2013 flash floods and landslides had left hundreds of tourists stranded in Sangla valley (Kinnour district) after which tourism industry witnessed a slump as tourists cancelled bookings for fear of getting trapped due to bad weather. In 2013, Thalout (Mandi district) incidents took place where 24 engineering students from Hyderabad were washed away in Beas river. This Incident gave blow to tourism in H.P. in 2013 (Times of India, 2014).

In 2018 rains caused landslides and flash floods in many parts of the state. Swelling Beas river washed vehicles away in Manali. Most of the highways were blocked. Massive landslides took place in Shimla, Kinnaur and Kullu districts. These landslides hampered vehicular traffic. 343 deaths during monsoon due to flash floods, landslides and cloud bursts and other weather related road accidents were reported. Above all there were water crisis in Shimla in 2018 (Indian Express, 2018). In 2020, the highest negative growth rate was (-81.16 per cent), because of COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdown is the reason behind the huge downfall of Indian and Foreigner tourist inflow in Himachal Pradesh. In 2021, when things were normalized and restrictions were over, tourist inflow increased to a very high level of 77.63 per cent.

TABLE 1 TOURIST INFLOW FROM INDIA AND FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Year	Indian	Foreigner
2008	93,72,697	3,76,736
2009	1,10,36,572 (17.76)	4,00,583 (6.33)
2010	1,28,11,986 (16.09)	4,53,616 (13.23)
2011	1,46,04,888 (13.99)	4,84,518 (6.81)
2012	1,56,46,048 (7.12)	5,00,284 (3.26)
2013	1,47,15,586 (-5.94)	4,14,249 (-17.20)
2014	1,59,24,701 (8.21)	3,89,699 (-5.92)
2015	1,71,25,045 (7.53)	4,06,108 (4.21)
2016	1,79,97,750 (5.09)	4,52,770 (11.50)
2017	1,91,30,541 (6.29)	4,70,992 (4.02)
2018	1,60,93,935 (-15.88)	3,56,568 (-24.29)
2019	1,68,29,231 (4.57)	3,82,876 (7.37)
2020	31,70,714 (-81.16)	42,665 (-88.85)
2021	56,32,270 (77.63)	4,832 (-88.67)

Source: Himachal Pradesh Tourism Statistics, various issues
 Note: Figures in the parentheses show the growth rate over the previous year value

The negative growth rate of tourists inflow observed in 2013 and 2018 was because of weather related problems. But in 2020 highest negative growth rate was because of spread of Corona Virus. This deadly virus affected entire world.

All sectors of the economy got affected by COVID-19 pandemic but tourism industry got affected like any anything. The economy of Himachal Pradesh depends heavily on tourism sector and it was affected badly in 2020.

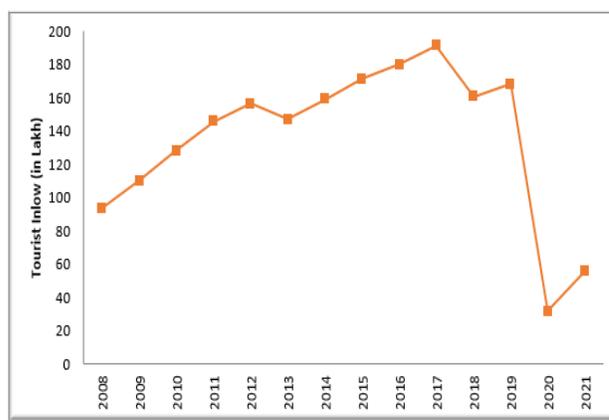


Fig. 1 Indian Tourist Inflow in Himachal Pradesh

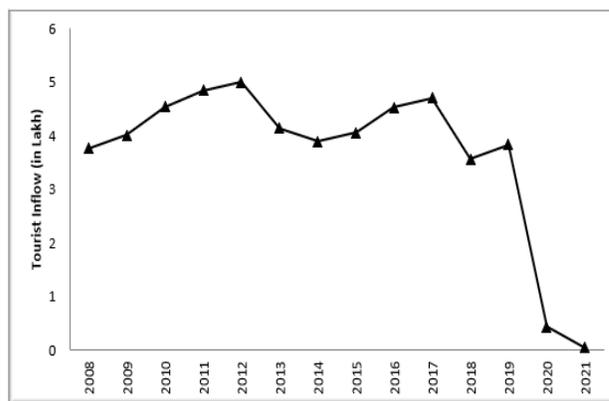


Fig. 2 Foreigner Tourist Inflow in Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh attracts not only Indian tourists but Foreigners as well. Himachal Pradesh is very well known for its beauty as well as for its rich culture. Himachal Pradesh is heaven for the tourist; most tourists came here for inner peace. The inflow of foreigners is very beneficial for the Himachal Pradesh economy. Almost similar trend is observed as far as inflow of foreigner tourist is concerned. The growth rate was 6.33 per cent in 2009 and was the highest in 2010 with 13.23 per cent which came down in the next few years.

In 2013 and 2014, the growth rate became negative, i.e., (-17.20, -5.92 per cent) respectively. The growth rate of tourist inflow improved in 2015, 2016 and 2017. In 2018, once again the growth rate became negative, i.e., (-24.29 per cent). In 2019, this growth rate improved but in 2020, because of ban on international flights and other lockdown restrictions, the growth rate of foreigner tourists was (-88.85 per cent). In 2021, although inside restrictions were removed but still international flights were banned and even in 2021 inflow of foreigner tourists was negative (-88.67 per cent).

A. Comparison of Indian and Foreigner Tourist Inflow

Himachal Pradesh situated in the heart of the western Himalaya, identified as 'Dev Bhumi' and is believed to be the abode of Gods and Goddesses. The entire State is

punctuated with stone as well as wood temples. Indian as well as Foreigner tourists visit this state to get inner peace. The comparison of Indian and foreigner tourist inflow is depicted in Table II. In 2008, as many as 93.73 lakh Indian tourists came to Himachal Pradesh. The number of foreigner tourists in the same year was 3.77 Lakh. After going through the data, it is interesting to observe that the absolute number of Indian as well as foreigner tourists kept increasing from 2008 to 2012. In 2013, there was fall in the inflow of Indian as well as foreigner tourists. During this year flash floods and landslide had left hundreds of tourists stranded in Sangla Valley, after which tourism industry witnessed a slump as tourists cancelled bookings, for fear of getting trapped due to bad weather (Time of India, June 22, 2014). From 2014 to 2017, again inflow of Indian tourists kept increasing but there was fall in the inflow of foreigner tourists in 2014 also but from 2015 to 2017 increase in inflow of foreigner tourists continued.

In 2018, there was fall in the inflow of both types of tourists. In this year there were heavy rains which caused landslides. Highways were blocked and vehicular traffic was hampered badly which resulted in fall of inflow of tourists. There was an acute shortage of water in summer, some Shimla residents went on social media telling tourists to keep off (Indian Express, December 30, 2018). In 2019, again there was rise in the inflow of Indian as well as foreigner tourists. But in 2020, the Coronavirus affected all places of the world and there were restrictions all over the globe to control this deadly virus. The sharp decline in the inflow of Indian and Foreigner tourists is observed. In 2021, restrictions were relaxed and there was slight improvement in the inflow of Indian Tourists but things were not same around the world and international bans were still continuing and very few foreigner tourists turned up.

TABLE II COMPARISON OF INDIAN AND FOREIGNER TOURIST INFLOW IN HIMACHAL PRADESH (IN LAKH)

Year	Indian	Foreigners	Total
2008	93.73	3.77	97.49
2009	110.37	4.01	114.37
2010	128.12	4.54	132.66
2011	146.05	4.85	150.89
2012	156.46	5.00	161.46
2013	147.16	4.14	151.30
2014	159.25	3.90	163.14
2015	171.25	4.06	175.31
2016	179.98	4.53	184.51
2017	191.31	4.71	196.01
2018	160.94	3.57	164.51
2019	168.29	3.83	172.12
2020	31.71	0.43	32.13
2021	56.32	0.05	56.37

Source: Himachal Pradesh Tourism Statistics, various issues

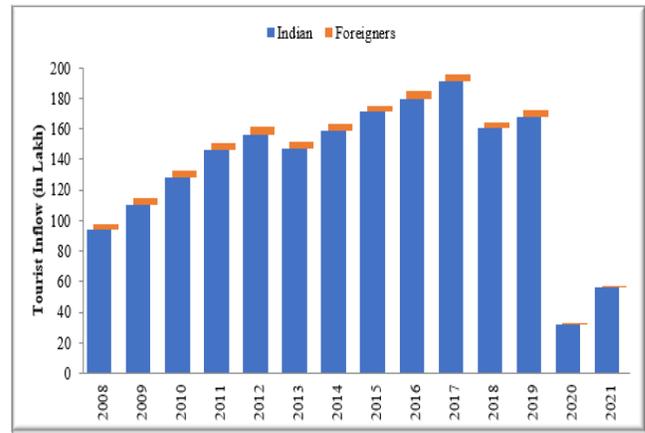
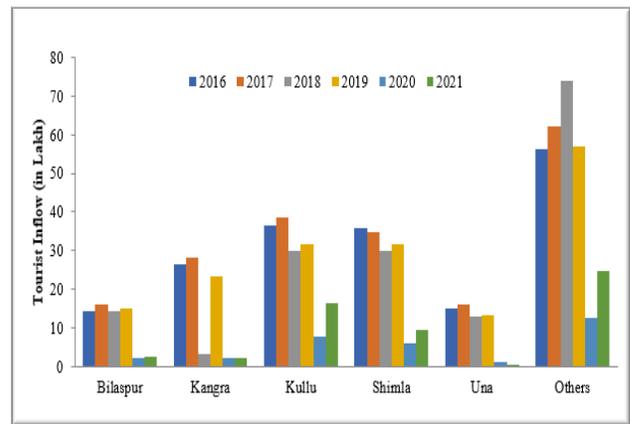


Fig. 3 Comparison of Indian and Foreigner Tourist Inflow in Himachal Pradesh

B. Mostly Preferred Districts by Tourists in Himachal Pradesh

The main districts in Himachal Pradesh, which are mostly preferred by Indian and Foreign Tourists during 2016 to 2021 is presented in Fig. 4. The top five districts catering to larger percentage of the total tourist arrivals in the State during this period are Kullu, Shimla, Kangra, Bilaspur, and Una.



Source: himachaltourism.gov.in

Fig. 4 Most Destination Districts in Himachal Pradesh

In the above figure five districts preferred by the Indian and Foreigner tourists have been shown. The state capital of Himachal Pradesh is one of the most popular hill stations in India (www.himachaltourism.gov.in). The spectacular cool hills accompanied by a structure made during the colonial era create an aura that is very different from other hills. Basking in the grandeur of the British Era with apparent influence in its architecture, Shimla did charm the British colonizers of the 19th century.

This place is also famous for its beauty, architectural buildings, wooden craft, and apples (www.hpshimla.nic.in). Kullu is one of the famous districts in Himachal Pradesh and is also known as the “Valley of God” (*Devtas*). In the Kullu district, the Beas River attracts travellers, connoisseurs, photographers, and honeymooners around the

year. Manali is a popular destination in Kullu, it is a cool escapade for the tired soul. In October Kullu Dusshera festival is held (www.hpkuulu.nic.in).

Kangra is the largest region of Himachal Pradesh. The natural beauty of the land gave refuge to art and artist who fled many royal courts after *Mughal* in the 17th Century. The economy of the Kangra district consists mostly of agriculture and farming. Tea cultivation plays a vital role in the economy. “Kangra Tea” is famous worldwide for its rich aroma, color, and taste. As Himachal is known as “*Dev Bhoomi*”, there are various temples of *Devi’s and Devta’s*. District Kangra is blessed with many temples of the goddess (known as *Shaktipeeths*).

Dharamshala is one of the most popular destinations in the Kangra district, which is famous for the International Cricket Stadium, the beautiful view of Dhauladhar Range, and the Dalai Lama's home (www.hpkangra.nic.in). Bilaspur district is famous because of Bhakra Bhand, various places of Pilgrimage and it is centrally located. Una district is also famous for various places of pilgrimage. This district is having borders with neighbouring states.

C. Tourism Economy during Normal Situation

The tourism sector is one of the important sectors which provides employment and also helps on raising foreign exchange earnings in the economy. The Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) is an important tool for estimating these contributions to the economy. These TSAs estimate both the direct and indirect contributions of tourism to the country’s GDP. The indirect contributions result from the spill-over effects of an economic activity owing to its inter-linkages with all the other economic activities. According to the Regional Tourism Satellite Account, Himachal Pradesh, the direct and indirect contributions of the tourism sector to the country’s total GDP were 9.12 and 7.53 per cent in 2015-16 and 2018-19 respectively. The corresponding figures for the direct shares for these years were 3.94 and 3.46 per cent respectively. The table further reveals that the direct and indirect shares of tourism employment to the total state employment were 14.27 per cent in 2015-16 which increased to 14.42 per cent in 2018-19. The corresponding figures for the direct shares for these years were found to be 2.68 and 3.89 per cent respectively (Table III).

TABLE III CONTRIBUTION OF TOURISM SECTOR TO ECONOMY OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

Year	Share of Tourism in GVA		Share of Tourism Employment to Total State Employment	
	Direct (%)	Direct and Indirect (%)	Direct (%)	Direct and Indirect (%)
2015-16	3.94	9.12	2.68	14.27
2018-19	3.46	7.53	3.89	14.42

Source: Regional Tourism Satellite Accounts, Himachal Pradesh 2015-16 and 2018-19

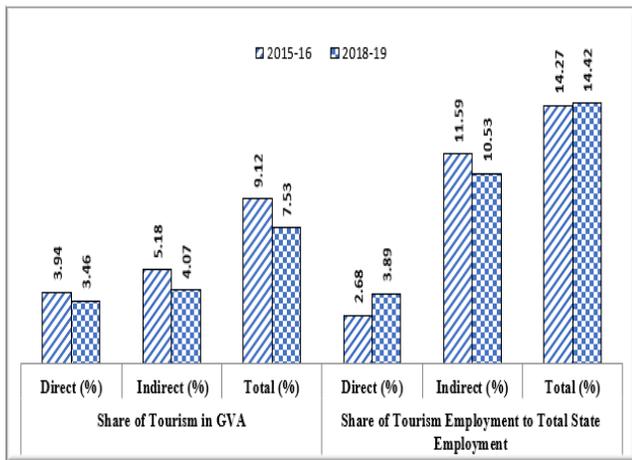


Fig. 5 Contribution of Tourism Sector to Economy of Himachal Pradesh

D. Tourism Economy during the Covid-19 Pandemic

This section presents the estimated impact of the pandemic and its after-effects on the tourism sector of Himachal Pradesh. The pandemic not only resulted in restrictions on the movement of people, especially during the lockdown period, but also caused huge losses in the demand for tourism, as generated by tourists while they were on a trip. Manufacturing and industrial sectors were affected badly as

there were restrictions all around the world especially from China which was originator of the coronavirus. There was shutdown of factories which continued to affect badly all those who were associated with these sectors directly or indirectly.

During COVID-19 pandemic, there were many layoffs and reduction in salary of employees, income of daily wage earners also got affected because of lockdown. During COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment had reached to a very high level which further resulted in fall in income. Priorities of the people got changed during this time period. There was huge cut on the expenditure done on leisure and enjoyment because of which hospitality sector got affected badly. There were travel restrictions which led cancellation from business travels as well as tourists. These developments impacted both transport sector and hospitality sector.

E. Share of the Tourism Sector in GVA and Estimated Loss in Jobs

Tourism in India is growing sector and has become immensely important for the country’s GVA and employment share. As per Tourism Satellite Accounts, the total share of tourism in the State GVA is estimated at 7.53

per cent and the total share in the number of jobs in the State is estimated at 14.42 per cent. However, after the spread of Coronavirus, a fall in the Tourism Direct Gross Value Added (TDGVA) has been observed. TDGVA is the part of gross value added generated by tourism industries and other associated industries of the economy.

According to the International Airport Transport Association, it is estimated that there is a loss of US\$ 252 billion to the industry and the travel sector has shrunk up by 25 per cent in 2020. This has resulted in a loss of 50 million jobs (Arora and Gupta, 2020). Experts believe that tourism industry likely to take a massive hit and it could end up crippling the industry for the foreseeable future. About 38 lakhs people loss their job at the time and also a large amount of income and revenue lost by the government in India (Khatik and Patel, 2021).

F. Values of Various Multipliers in Himachal Pradesh

The tourism Output Multiplier, GVA Multiplier and Employment Multiplier in Himachal Pradesh are presented in Table IV.

TABLE IV VALUES OF VARIOUS MULTIPLIERS IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

Types of Multipliers	Values
1. Output Multiplier	2.1819
2. GVA Multiplier	2.1791
3. Employment Multiplier	3.7075

Source: NCAER computations

The value of Output Multiplier (2.1819) and GVA Multiplier (2.1791) indicate that if the final demand of the tourism sector increases by one unit, then the overall output (and GVA) of the entire economy is estimated to increase by 2.1819 (and 2.1791) units, owing to the inter-linkages among the sectors of the economy of Himachal Pradesh. Similarly, an Employment Multiplier of 3.7075 signifies that with one additional job created in the tourism sector, a total of 3.7075 jobs are created in the entire economy of Himachal Pradesh.

V. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

History shows that tourism industry quickly bounces back after natural disasters. It has happened in the past during epidemics like Ebola, SARS and other natural disasters like earthquakes or floods. But the damage done by the Coronavirus is different from all the previous epidemics because now the movement from one country to another is faster than the previous times and restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of this virus, seized all major activities across the globe. It requires special attention of the Central and State Governments. Tourism sector should be given prime importance in Himachal Pradesh as it is considered to be the backbone of its economy because tourism remains the main source of revenue and employment generation in

the state ((Economic Survey of Himachal Pradesh, 2021). The recovery strategies require effective and timely coordination, implementation of relevant crisis management. Some key elements relating to the recovery of tourism industry are very important. These are quick responsiveness by the government in case of emergency, technological innovation for safety and security of tourists, local belongingness to the tourists by the locals, enhancement of confidence among the customer-service providers etc.

Some other measures can be adopted by the Government of Himachal Pradesh to address the tourism recovery process. These are protecting the livelihoods of workers engaged in tourism sector by granting of monetary financial to help the millions of workers facing severe financial difficulties. The State Government can provide fiscal support by giving interests free loans to global travel and tourism companies as well as to millions of small and medium sized businesses. This will inject liquidity and cash in the economy and will be having multiplier effect as tourism sector is inter-linked with various others sectors of the economy.

Government of Himachal Pradesh should increase security measures to win the confidence of tourists during bad weather conditions. As the study concluded that the percentage of foreign tourists is comparatively very low so there is a need to provide more facilities to tourists especially to the remote areas of the state as foreign tourists prefer visiting such areas if facilities are provided in those areas. The study also concluded that larger percentage of tourists prefer only five districts of the state. Therefore, both central and state governments should develop other tourist destinations in other districts as well.

VI. CONCLUSION

The above discussion and analysis can be concluded that the growth of tourists inflow both Indian as well as foreigner, reduced significantly after the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in Himachal Pradesh. A negative growth rate of tourist inflow has been observed in 2020. Although negative growth rate of tourists inflow (both Indian and Foreigner) were also observed in 2013 and 2018 but that was because of either flash floods or because of landslides and other poor weather conditions etc. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on tourist inflow was the highest and incomparable in 2020. The most preferred five tourist destination districts in Himachal Pradesh are Shimla, Kullu, Kangra, Bilaspur and Una during the last five years from 2016 to 2021 by the Indian and foreigner tourists. These places are either known for scenic beauty or they are famous places of pilgrimage. It can also be concluded that tourism sector has been significant contributor to the employment and thereby to the state GDP. The value of output multiplier in the state is found to be 2.18 and GVA multiplier is 2.17. These values indicates that if the final demand of the tourism sector increase by one unit, then the overall output of the state's economy is estimated to increase by 2.18 units. This shows

the inter linkages of tourism sector with other sectors of the economy. The value of employment multiplier is 3.71 which indicates the significance of this sector in the economy of Himachal Pradesh. But during COVID-19 pandemic, this sector got affected badly and its impact on the entire economy of the state was also very large. The study suggests various important policy implications to support the tourism sector in the state.

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