

Crafting a Sustainable Framework for the Service Industry in India: A Comprehensive Examination of Implementation Strategies for Tourism

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Abstract: Like any other industry, COVID-19 has affected the activities of the tourism industry due to government-imposed restrictions and worldwide lockdowns. The vital objective of this paper is to determine how to develop a sustainable working system in India's tourism industry in the post-pandemic environment. The primary qualitative research method with the help of an interview has been identified as significant for this research. Therefore, an interview with 14 respondents has been conducted and 5 questions have been asked to the participants. Moreover, the NVivo analysis of the qualitative data has been performed. It has been found that sustainable working systems such as flexible working hours, hybrid working models, and health policies have been introduced in the workplace of the tourism industry after COVID-19. Managers have a key role in strategic planning along with managing sustainable performance in the post-pandemic era. The study's findings will give insight into the business practices of the Indian tourism industry.

Keywords: COVID-19, negative impact, safety practices, sustainable working system, tourism industry.

1. Introduction

A radical transformation has been observed in the last three decades in the workplace of every industry throughout the world. Due to COVID-19 and its impact on changes in the workplace and its working pattern in the last few years. The life cycle of many tourist destinations has been studied during the 20th century, but the twenty-first century has provided an alternative way for these conventional tourist destinations (Butler 2004). Because of changes like globalization and others that have developed new characteristics of globalization, tourism and its destinations are becoming more sophisticated and valuable (Butler 2004; Hall and Butler 1995; Russell 2005; Russell and Faulkner 2004). The result of globalization has left an impact on the growth and development of globalization companies working in different industries (Yang *et al.* 2022). As a service industry, tourism uses large amounts of natural resources, while having an impact on the communities in popular tourism destinations. The terror attacks of 2001, the epidemic caused by SARS, the global economic crisis of 2008-2009, and the COVID-19 pandemic have all wreaked havoc on the destination halt (Aldeo *et al.* 2022). The 2003 SARS pandemic affected five times as many international passengers

as the 9/11 attacks (UNWTO, 2020a). However, the current COVID-19 is seen as a swan and may well be the event with the greatest impact in tourism history. (The New Yorker, 2020). To enhance business robustness at a certain stage during a pandemic crisis, entrepreneurs have used a variety of strategies. Three levels of resilience activity have revealed both internal and external resilience variables (personal, regional, and governmental) (Aldao *et al.* 2022). The level of community concern and sustainability concerning tourism activity were defined. Sustainability management in the working system is important enough for the betterment of the tourism sector. Many of these effects are reflected in the idea of sustainable tourism which casts a negative light on travel (Lew, 2020). Tourism is changing the economy and landscape, and it is thought that overcrowding is an economic activity that has a detrimental impact on sustainability. In response to the local population's concerns about the effects of tourism, priority measures to improve the level of sustainability of the destinations have been established. Nevertheless, After COVID-19 employees have become aware of the safety and sustainability management in the workplace (Sigala, 2020). Moreover, a higher rate of job loss has been observed in the tourism industry all around the world. This research study will provide enough details about the management of the sustainable working process in the tourism sector that helps in growth, which is crucial after the loss during the post-pandemic era This paper also describes how technology was used to maintain a sustainable working process in the Indian tourism industry, particularly in the post-Covid era.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Formulation

According to experts, the tourism industry is considered to be a vital sector for a nation's economic growth is tourism, and it is ranked third in terms of size and has contributed around 7% to world trade (Unwto, 2022). Right from the outbreak of COVID-19 in China, the impact on it the tourism industry has been underestimated. Among the various industries comprising the economy of any country, the tourism industry is one of the most complex ones (Kumar 2020). Specifically, the most affected industry is the hospitality sector, as tourism businesses

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face most difficulties in restarting their normal services (Katrin 2022). On the other hand, argued that COVID-19 has contributed to the growth of the concept of green and sustainable tourism which has proved to be beneficial for both the tourism industry as well as the environment (Kaushal and Srivastava 2021). India's tourism sector is looking to accelerate the sustainability working system, which is a popular concept, especially among nature, wildlife, and adventure enthusiasts, to respond to the adverse impact of COVID-19. It has become important for the sector to incorporate sustainable and safe practices and strategies. As a result of post-Covid, business now uses technology more frequently visitors are more accepting of robots (Zhong *et al.* 2022). Most travel agencies in India fall within the SME category (SMEs) and implement smart working in the future, which might potentially become their competitive edge and help them keep bright personnel. The immediate recommendation of research (Girish, 2022) is to finance smart working, which can increase job satisfaction, employees' creativity, and quality of life. According to Sarkis (2020), a sustainable economic, social, and environmental imbalance in global supply chains is the consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The hospitality and tourism industries can address the COVID-19 challenge, build resilience, and ensure survival after the pandemic with sustainable innovation (Elkhwesky, 2022). The acts of a reasonable working framework in the travel industry might chip away at influencing the existence of the populace alongside society (Kumar 2020). It is only possible to achieve sustainable development if it is incorporated into the identity and daily work lives of individuals (Galvani *et al.* 2020). Moreover, the tourism industry of India needs to focus more on safety practices that can help in developing a sustainable working system along with contributing to the life of the employees. Shifting to post-pandemic activities includes the management of the emotional activities of the tourists through which the betterment of the functionalities can be possible. According to Hsiao *et al.* (2022), management of the emotional aspect of the tourist in the post-pandemic era is supportive enough through which the betterment of the sustainability of the tourist can be possible. Resilience management in the post-pandemic is an important aspect through which the betterment of activities can be possible. In contrast, Velte (2021) has argued that managers can help manage resilience throughout the tourist business in a post-pandemic situation which can help in the betterment of the functionalities. Therefore, technology must be focused on dealing with the adverse effects of the pandemic on the tourism industry. Managers have a vital role in maintaining sustainability in the tourism business, especially in post-pandemic situations. Maintenance of the integral strategy of business along with the management of robust methods of tourism business can be supportive to deal with sustainability (Aldao *et al.* 2021). Managers need to implement the employee retention process, and health management process along with the tour safety and risk management process to deal with sustainability issues in the post-pandemic. Contrastingly, Puig-Cabrera *et al.* (2022) have opined that the support of insurance for employees, especially during the pandemic is another

challenge that has caused issues for organizations in maintaining growth. Therefore, it is obvious from this fact that such challenges of health condition management of the employees and tourists in India during the pandemic have strongly created the possibility of maintaining sustainable growth. Unemployment is a serious issue in the improvement of the tourism sector in India during the pandemic situation. According to Alegre *et al.* (2019), a higher level of job cutting from the tourism sector along with issues with the management of the health of employees are the main factors of the reduction of the growth rate of a business. Such a higher rate of unemployment during that pandemic era has strongly influenced the growth of the tourism business. Contrastingly, have opined that innovation in the tourism sector is crucial enough using that the development of growth can easily be possible (He *et al.* 2022). Therefore, it can be concluded that the strategy of reducing the unemployment rate can contribute to improving the growth rate of the Indian tourism industry. The health and well-being strategy development of the employee is an important aspect for which better planning along with infrastructure management is required in tourism during the pandemic. The well-being strategy development for employees is important as it helps in improving the rate of employee retention (Sirgy 2019). Management of the health of employees during the pandemic can strongly influence their level of motivation of them. The gap in this research indicates that the absence of an in-depth analysis of the topic using this article has created the gap. Sustainability management in tourism is important enough for which the selection of proper agenda is important (Alonso-Muñoz *et al.* 2022). Henceforth, the strategy of sustainability implementation is not properly mentioned in the previously published literature has created a gap. Issues with the absence of secondary data have further created a gap in this study that has sometimes influenced in the maintenance of accuracy in results. From the above literature researcher developed the following objectives of the research to study the impact of COVID-19 on tourism in India. The second research objective is to assess the possibilities of implementing a sustainable work system in the tourism industry after COVID-19. The third research objective is to investigate the challenges experienced by employees working in the tourism sector after COVID-19. The last research objective is to Conduct primary research to recommend strategies for addressing the challenges of current work in the tourism sector.

3. Research Methodology

Primarily this research is purely qualitative and thematic in nature. In this study, qualitative data were gathered through interviewing participants. Moreover, conducting an interview allows the opportunity to dive deep into the research problem statement and gather a wide range of knowledge (Saunders and Bezzina 2015). For any study looking to unearth something through interpretations, thematic analysis is the most appropriate approach. It provides a relational basis between the frequency of a theme to the content as a whole (Alhojailan and Ibrahim, 2012). An interview with 14 participants as a sample from the tourism sector of India has been conducted for this

study. The participants are those who are directly associated with the tourism industry of India, mainly, professionals in the position of managers in various tourism-related services. Prior permission was taken through the mail before conducting the interview and identity was not disclosed. Purposive sampling has the advantage of selecting participants from a small group of the population who contribute to the positive outcomes of research (Campbell *et al.* 2020). Therefore, a purposive sampling method has been followed for chosen 14 participants who have similar characteristics like knowledge of the various aspects of the tourism sector. The selected participants are relevant to this research as they can deliver information about the processes that were implemented in the tourism industry during the lockdown and also those after COVID-19 for maintaining sustainability in the workplace. The interview has been conducted face-to-face and each of the participants has been asked 5 questions (Questions developed from an extensive literature review) that are related to the research objectives. Informed consent, transparency, and anonymity have been maintained throughout the data collection process. Interview transcript analysis has been used in this research which has helped in understanding the responses of the interviewees. NVivo analysis has been conducted to extract valuable information from the interview transcript. NVivo analysis comes with the opportunity to effectively work with qualitative data (Phillips, 2018). Therefore, different nodes have been coded with the help of this tool and the nodes have been further utilized for the development of themes. Moreover, the developed themes have been critically described with the incorporation of interview data as well as external data. In the end, the researcher used the NVivo software to evaluate the problem to achieve research objectives.

4. Data Analyses & Results

Theme-based analysis of the data has been selected here regarding the determination of the result in its study. Thematic analysis is determined as an important aspect through which the vast amount of data can easily be managed (Kumar, 2018). In NVivo, thematic coding is as simple as a section selection of text from a document of source, such as an image, an interview transcript, or any other type of source document, and then tagging it with a node (Dhakal 2022). Therefore, the codes that are generated from the answers of the respondent have helped in determining the themes for analysis of this selected topic. The codes that are collected from this NVIVO analysis have helped in maintaining the themes through which the accuracy of the result has been managed. Thematic style of data analysis has helped in maintaining a more accessible style of analysis, through which detailed concept gathering has been possible. Further, flexibility along with maintenance of the simplicity using this thematic style of analysis have helped in maintaining the accuracy of its data analysis process.

A. NVIVO Coding

Figure 1 & 2 represents the coded nodes from the interview transcript. There are a total of 28 nodes and 174 references. Among all the nodes 5 are mother nodes and the rest are child

nodes. These nodes have been used for the development of the themes. The hierarchical structure of the mother nodes and the child nodes has been represented in figure 3.

Figure 4 is the word cloud which refers to the highest number of repetitive words by the interviewees in the interview response.

Nodes			
Name	Sources	References	
Challenges in tourism industry	1	1	1
Shift and night work		1	9
increased unemployment	1	1	11
safety of employees	1	1	10
unnecessary spreading of the virus	1	1	8
COVID-19 impact on tourism sector	1	1	1
COVID-19 froze the tourist sector	1	1	13
Indian and World tourism industry	1	1	5
India's GDP	1	1	10
caused great losses	1	1	6
Health and wellbeing of the employees	1	1	1
current pandemic situation	1	1	4
Employee engagement	1	1	5
political changes	1	1	6
unprecedented impact	1	1	7
well-being is important	1	1	8

Fig. 1. Coding of the nodes; adapted from NVivo

Nodes			
Name	Sources	References	
Sustainable working system	1	1	1
sustainable travel	1	1	8
work challenges	1	1	4
social protection	1	1	5
global inequalities	1	1	9
Technology development	1	1	7
Tourism-related transportation	1	1	5
Unemployment	1	1	1
diversified portfolio	1	1	6
domestic travellers	1	1	4
employment	1	1	14
travel and tourism globally	1	1	5

Fig. 2. Coding of the nodes; adapted from NVivo

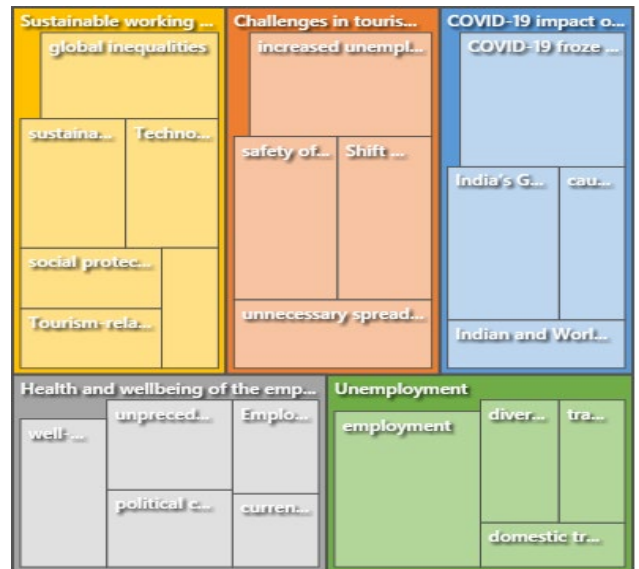


Fig. 3. Hierarchical presentation of the coded nodes; adapted from NVivo



Fig. 4. Word cloud; adapted from NVivo

B. Thematic Analysis

1) Theme 1: COVID-19 has had a negative impact on India's tourism industry

The travel and tourism industry of the countries plays a significant role in contributing to GDP growth. Nevertheless, as a consequence of COVID-19, the tourism industry of India has experienced cancellations in domestic as well as international flights which result in reducing the number of travellers (Pathak and Joshi, 2021). It has been found that the arrival of international tourists in the nation reduced to 67% and the number of domestic travellers reduced to about 40% (Kumar, 2020). In this context, the opinion of P4 can be highlighted which is as follows-

P4: "The Indian and World tourism industry seems to be entering into a great crisis which is also establishing a stock market crash in all the segments"

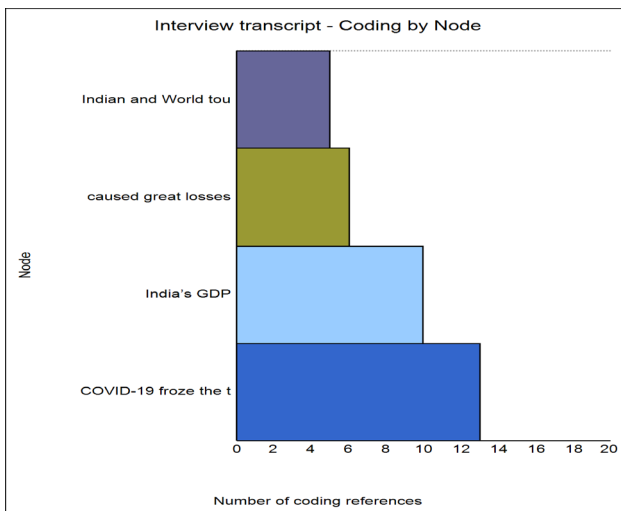


Fig. 5. COVID-19 impact on the tourism sector; adapted from NVivo

Figure 5 represents the impacts such as GDP slowdown, travel restrictions, and cuts in revenue that have been experienced by the industry amidst COVID-19. Furthermore, the mental and physical breakdown of the human resource of the organisation is another challenge that impacts the services of the industry. Covid-19 has strongly influenced the Indian tourism sector as the lockdown issue has influenced international tourism. According to Duro et al. (2021), a vulnerability in the tourism sector is determined as an important aspect for which proper strategic planning implementation is an

important aspect. The presence of vulnerabilities in the economic system, infrastructure development along with the management of the safety of tourists have strongly influenced the tourism sector in India. Contrastingly, Girish et al. (2022) have opined that improper management of smart working of the agencies can be determined as another important part of the reduction of the enhancement of the tourism sector of India. Therefore, it is obvious from this fact that the pandemic has strongly influenced the tourism sector by reducing its growth for a longer period.

2) Theme 2: Growth of job loss and unemployment rate in the tourism sector of India amidst COVID-19

The Indian hospitality industry is responsible for contributing to the employment of people. However, the government-imposed restrictions caused the cancellation of reservations and revenue loss in the tourism industry resulting in job loss for thousands of people (Gupta et al. 2021). A piece of recent news published by The Economic Times highlighted that the total three waves of COVID-19 resulted in 21.5 million job losses in the tourism industry of India (Economic times, 2022). Similarly, P5 highlighted that-

P5: "The rapid blowout of the coronavirus pandemic froze domestic as well as international activities"

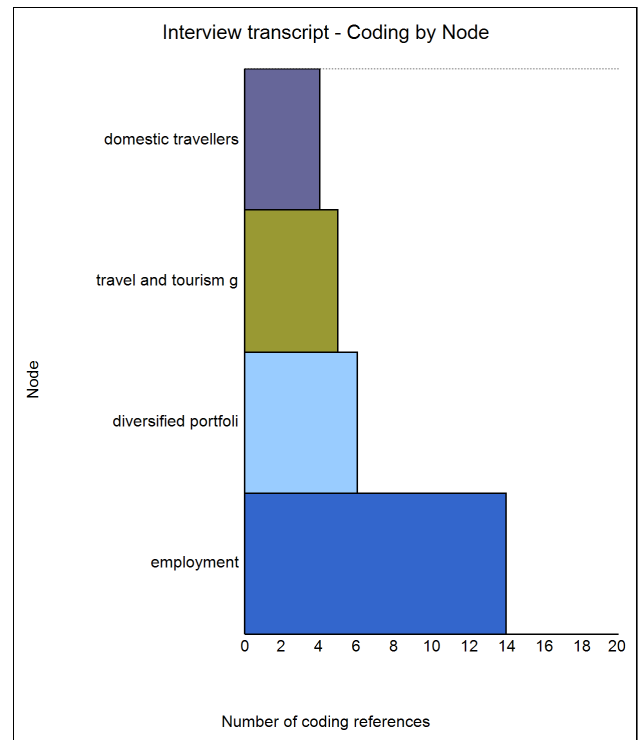


Fig. 6. Unemployment in the tourism industry of India; adapted from NVivo

Figure 6 represents the factors that have contributed to enhancing unemployment and job loss in the tourism industry of India. It has been found that due to the breakout of COVID-19, the richer economies experienced poor labour supply whereas developing economies like India experienced poor revenue and as a result job cuts employees.

3) *Theme 3: Difficulties in maintaining the health and well-being of employees result in increasing challenges*

The tourism industry of India has experienced issues in maintaining the health and well-being of employees amidst COVID-19. According to Davahli et al. (2020), transparent communication and appropriate selection of technologies need to be maintained in the organisation for accelerating the health practices of the employees. However, lack of safety procedures, insufficient employee engagement, and poor available PPE have resulted in increasing employee health issues. In this respect, the opinion of P5 is like this-

P8: *“Many tourism workers are at risk of suffering long-term consequences throughout their working lives, including in terms of labour market participation and career development”*

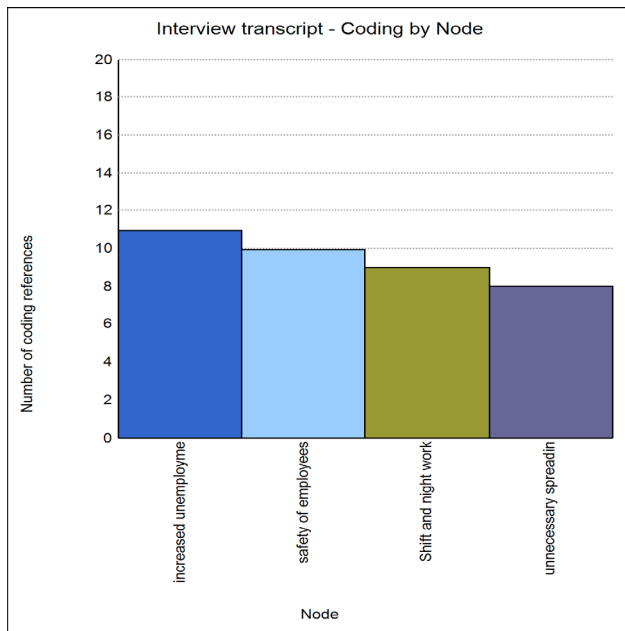


Fig. 7. Challenges in the tourism industry presented by COVID-19; adapted from NVivo

Figure 7 shows the issues like underemployment and unemployment that have become a rising challenge due to COVID-19. In addition to that, negative working culture at the workplace rumours spread over social media further impacted the mental health of the employees working in the services industry.

4) *Theme 4: A hybrid working culture and employee safety policy have been adopted in the tourism industry after COVID-19*

Occupational health and safety policy is considered a significant aspect of the tourism industry which ensures the prevention of workplace injury and fair compensation. The hospitality industry must embrace sustainable working practices in order to overcome the disastrous effects of COVID-19 (Kumar et al. 2020). In this respect, flexible working hours can be allocated by the managers of the industry to the employees who can help them in coping with the transforming environment. For instance, the response of P2 can be highlighted-

P2: *“Shift and night work, seasonality, temporary or part-*

time employment and increasing outsourcing and subcontracting rates are common in tourism”

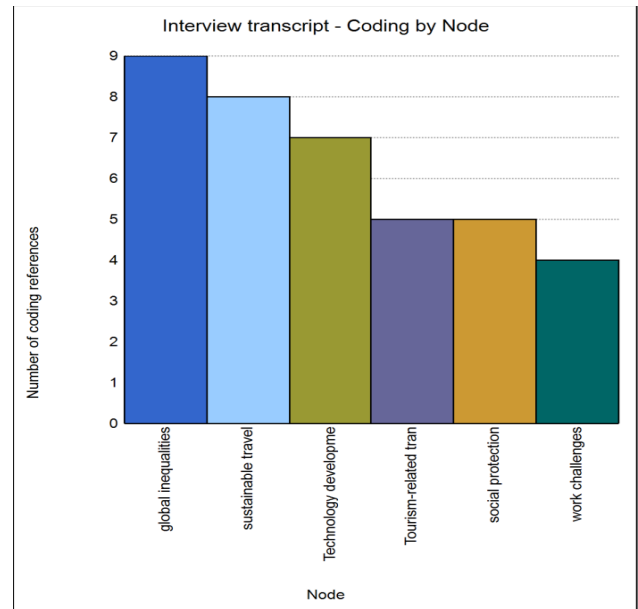


Fig. 8. Factors contributed to sustainable work system in the tourism industry; adapted from NVivo

Figure 8 shows that changes in the role of HRM professionals can help in accelerating safety practices in the tourism industry. Moreover, other practices such as role changes of the managers, empathy with the employees, and integrating green policy with tourism activities can also help in implementing a sustainable working system.

Implementation of the hybrid working culture in the tourism industry is important enough for which strategy development by the managers is important. According to Arieli et al. (2020), managers have a key role in the maintenance of innovative planning in the tourism industry’s growth. Managers can strongly innovate the functionalities, manage the productivity of employees, and maintains creativity in tourism handling along with plans for financial management.

P11: *“Away from cities, many hotels and lodges are investing in renewable sources of energy.”*

In contrast, Zhong et al. (2022) have argued that implementing the technology acceptance strategy in tourism can be supportive enough for which managers need to plan properly. Therefore, it is obvious from this fact that managers have a key role in managing the functionality of the tourism sector in India post-pandemic.

5) *Theme 5: Safety practices positively contributed to a sustainable working system*

Safety practices at the workplace help enhance the confidence among the employees regarding health and wellbeing practices at the workplace. A report from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has highlighted the introduction of safe and sustainable workplace practices after the COVID-19 pandemic for ensuring labour market productivity (Ilo, 2022). Similarly, P3 mentioned that-

P10: *“The current business climate of needing to do more with less can pose significant challenges for HRM professionals*

in contemporary organisations”

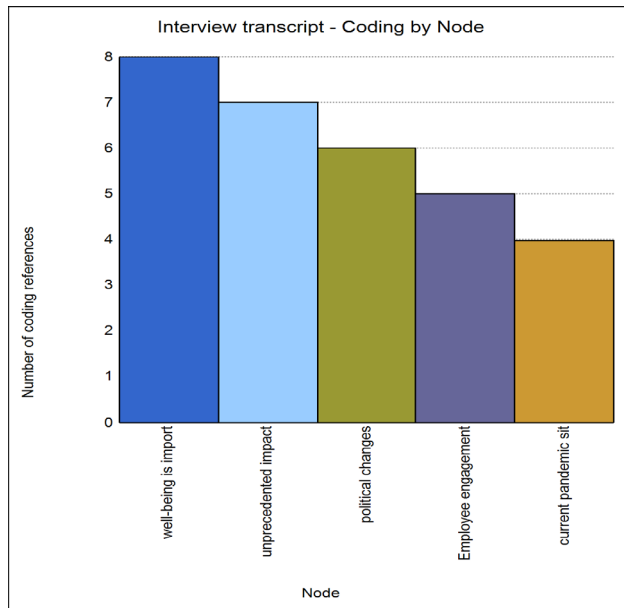


Fig. 9. Sustainable practices in the workplace after COVID-19; adapted from NVivo

Figure 9 depicts the reduction of inequalities, human-centric policy, and regulations in enhancing sustainability in the tourism sector of India. In addition to that, appropriate human resources retention strategies also need to be adopted by organizations for retaining critical talents.

Safety practices for the employees in tourism during the pandemic are necessary enough. According to Spenceley *et al.* (2021), safety practices strategy management is important planning for the manager through which the employees can maintain safety inside the tourist places. Sustainability management is the utmost aspect for managers for which the health management of employees is important to maintain the continuous growth of the business.

P13: Engaging in sustainable tourism has many benefits, the three main being supporting the local community, the environment and the economy of the destination.

Contrastingly, Oliveira *et al.* (2022) have opined that safety practice process implementation by managers helps in maintaining proper sustainability in the tourism sector. Therefore, it is obvious that safety practices and training strategies by managers can be vital enough regarding the betterment of the tourism business in India.

5. Discussion & Conclusion

This study's findings are in conformity with that of existing literature in supporting the conclusion that effective and responsive governance (Bramwell & Len 2011) and the role of technological innovation do play a significant role in sustainable tourism (Li *et al.* 2022). Sustainable tourism can improve through multiple processes, provide direction, and provide the means to achieve concrete progress. The results from the interview have highlighted the need for safety practices in the workplace for ensuring a sustainable working

system. In this respect, the initiations that have been adopted by the tourism industry of India include the integration of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) with their day-to-day activities. It has been found that SOP is a government-imposed rule after COVID-19 in India that needs to be maintained by all the hotels and hospitality units in the country (Mohfw, 2021). Other initiatives of the sector include the introduction of technology in practices which has ensured the safety of the guests as well as the employees (Li *et al.* 2022). In this context, the role of robotics technology can be mentioned which has helped in reducing human interactions in the tourism industry (Tussyadiah, 2020). Furthermore, a transformational approach has also been followed by the industry for creatively maintaining the footprint of the industry and leaving a positive impact on the planet and the community.

Covid-19 has negatively influenced tourism growth as it has created issues in maintaining the functionality of the business. According to Elmo *et al.* (2020), the implementation of innovation along with technology especially during any crisis can help in overcoming the risk factors in business. Data indicates from the date findings that the GDP rate has gradually decreased due to the influence of less tourism during the pandemic in India. Contrastingly, Hsieh *et al.* (2020) have opined that the strategy development of managerial planning and implementation regarding sustainability management in tourism can be supportive enough to tackle such risk factors. Henceforth, it is obvious that the Indian tourism industry has enough potential despite the pandemic influence as it has implemented technology to manage growth in the post-pandemic era along with sustainability management.

Employment strategy implementation can be determined as another important aspect through which sustainability in the post-pandemic era can be possible in the tourism sector. According to Liu *et al.* (2022), management of the attitudes of tourist areas is essential for which the maintenance of managerial planning is important. Henceforth, it can easily be determined that managers in the tourism sector of India in post-pandemic have a key role to play regarding the betterment of the business.

This study has concluded the strategies that have been adopted by the tourism industry of India for the development of a sustainable working system post-COVID-19. It has been found that the incorporation of government support in the tourism industry of India has gone a long way in helping the industry to bounce back from the havoc wrought by COVID-19. In addition to that, the incorporation of flexibility in work has also been accelerated after COVID-19. Moreover, reconstruction of the organizational priorities has also been observed which includes the safety of workers at first in the post-pandemic era. It has been identified that primary qualitative data can help respond to the research questions of this study. This research is helpful for the tourism industry of India to accelerate its future practices and transform the working system by the adoption of various strategies by destination management organizations. Tourism service providers can enhance various skills and training programs for their employees especially the adoption of technology which

helps in maintaining a sustainable workforce in the long run.

The result indicates that the pandemic has strongly influenced the community of India regarding creating barriers to the maintenance of collaboration with each other. However, the resultant aspect indicates that the pandemic situation has strongly influenced the functionalities of workers and maintenance of government planning along with other organizations regarding maintenance of the planning in tourism. The result of this study has strongly correlated with sustainability management in tourism, as employee safety, collaborative culture, and strategic planning of managers are important to eliminate risk in tourism in a post-pandemic which also supports existing research. The use of only primary data has limited the development of new insights regarding the research area. Moreover, conducting interviews with only fifteen participants has resulted in limiting information availability. Besides that, as interview-based data is subjected to the interviewees' opinions, the data collection has lacked accuracy.

Future researchers can develop an in-depth understanding of the strategies followed by the tourism industry of India for implementing a sustainable working system. Furthermore, future research on this topic will be conducted using a mixed data collection approach that is beneficial for ensuring reliability and validity.

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