

Innovations

Impact of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic on Economy of Tourism and Hospitality industry and Mitigation Mechanism in Bahir Dar City, Ethiopia

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Abstract : *The purpose this study is to explore the severity of COVID-19 pandemic on the economy of Tourism and Hospitality industry in Bahir Dar City and Mechanisms taken to Mitigate and then. This research used secondary data sources and, expert interview. Besides, data was collected from Stakeholder participants during panel discussion about the issue of COVID-19 to get a better understanding of its economic impact. Qualitative analysis method was employed to reach in to conclusion. Textual description was used to present the results of the study. The finding illustrates pandemic has highly affected tourism and hospitality industry to lose huge revenue than other economic sectors. Many establishments were not able to cover operational cost as well as employees' salary. Hence they partially or totally locked down their businesses. Consequently, large numbers of employees were displaced from the job and remained out of work. However, government recognized that will take long time to recover from such economy crisis. Hence, it decided to gradually re-open everything in order to adjust the situation. As result, tourism and hospitality businesses are opened gradually. Finally, government and stakeholders are recommended to take the lesson from current situation and develop the different mitigation strategies. Government should support this sector in various ways in order to recover from economic crisis and toreta in their employees.*

Keywords: 1. Corona Virus Pandemic (Covid-19), 2. Impact, 3. Economy, 4. Tourism Industry

1. Introduction

According to the [UNWTO \(2020\)](#), the international tourism has shown continues growth for the ten consecutive year reporting 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals in 2019 and forecasted to be 1.8 billion by 2030. In recent times, tourism becomes a major source of income and employment contributing greatly to the GDP and economic development for many countries of the world([CSEA 2020](#)). However, this increasing figure can be affected directly or indirectly crisis, terrorism, war, epidemic and Pandemic diseases than other businesses([Ritchie, B. & Jiang, Y., 2019; Lee & Mc Kibbin, 2004](#)).COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the international economic activities of travel and tourism including developed countries than other epidemics and pandemics ever the world has experienced in the last 40 years ([Mc Kibbin, W., & Fernando, R., 2020;Sharmin Sultana et al., 2020](#)) International, regional and local travel restrictions are declared including closing of borders or introducing of quarantine periods. Public transport, hotel, restaurant, cafes and other tourism and hospitality services are restricted. International travel, domestic tourism, day trips, multiple flights, hotels bookings, conventions and meetings are cancelled. Festivals, holidays, cultural events, educational trips and events, sport events, family events etc. are postponed. As result, many establishments lacked the market and have partially or totally locked down their businesses ([Gossling and Scott, 2020;STR., 2020; UNECA et al.,2020; IATA Economics, 2020, March 24](#)).Cumulative effect has collapsed global economy of tourism sector([UNWTO, 2020; UNWTO, 2021](#)).In 2020, the Travel & Tourism industry lost almost US\$4.5 trillion with decrease in GDP by 49.1% compared to 2019. This contributed the global economy to decrease by 3.7% GDP. The Virus has caused hotel occupancy in US to drop by 53% ([WTTC, 2020](#)).Besides, ([WTTC, 2020](#)) estimated that, 75 million global jobs of tourism industry particularly those Small and Medium Sized Enterprise such as travel agents; restaurants and tour operators are at a great risk.

Concern the impact of Covid-19 on the tourism industry there are numerous studies. For instance, [Ashikul Hoqueetal.\(2020\); Gossling , Scott and et al. \(2020\); CSEA \(2020\); Fan, Y. Y., Jamison, D. T., & summers, L. H. \(2018\);FAO \(2020\); Food safety in the time of COVID-19; Forbes.\(2020\); Jamal, T. & Budke, C. \(2020\)](#).They viewed in different , methodology, scope and approach.

The spread of the disease has also shown serious challenges on sustainability of Africa economy. Its effects have already showmen decline of demand for Africa's raw materials and commodities in global market. Besides, Africa's access to industrial components and manufactured goods from other regions of the world has been hampered. Ethiopia also faced the challenge of economic instability ([Gössling, S., Scott, D., & Hall, C.M.,2020; Jamal, T. & Budke, C.; 2020; Mc Kibbin, W., & Fernando, R., 2020](#)).To limit further spread of covid-19, the government of Ethiopia quickly declared restriction measures including

limitation on Public transportation and public gatherings, closing of borders, social distancing, staying at home, and introduction of quarantine periods. These measures deteriorated spending power of potential travellers. Hotels, restaurants, café, night clubs, travel agents and tour operators have partially or totally lockdown their businesses ([Kalle Hirvonen, 2020](#); [Job Creation Commission, 2020](#)).

However, there is no any finding that shows impact of COVID-19 on the tourism and hospitality industry and mitigation mechanism in Bahir Dar City that provide comprehensive information and recommendations for concerned bodies of the sector to overcome the crisis. Hence, the main objective of this study is to investigate the economic impact of COVID-19 on tourism and hospitality industry of Bahir Dar City and mechanisms taken to mitigate the crisis with specific objectives:

- To assess impacts of COVID-19 on tourists flow and recites.
- To assess impact of COVID-19 on businesses activities of tourism and hospitality businesses.
- To assess impact of COVID-19 on employment of tourism and hospitality.
- To assess the mitigation mechanism used in tourism and hospitality industry to overcome the crisis of Covid-19.

2. Literature review

WHO reported first outbreak of COVID-19 infectious disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus in Wuhan city, Republic of China, on 31 December 2019, and then it suddenly spread out to Hubei and other Province of China showing a number of cases with serious public health implications ([WHO \(2020\)](#)). It also rapidly speeded out to across 218 countries and 2 international conveyances in short time and affected greater number of people. It is primarily transmitted through droplets of saliva or discharges from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Besides, it spreads due to personal touch and closeness each other. If anyone touches anything contains that virus and touches his face, eyes, nose or mouth, he/she may be affected by COVID-19 ([World meter, 2020](#)). Some experienced serious and others mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. People with medical problems and old aged are more likely to develop serious illness such as infected with cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer. In addition, Due to very limited or unavailability of testing, asymptomatic transmission is thought to be substantive in many countries, ([Li et al., 2020](#)).

The best measure to prevent and slow down transmission is to be well informed about the causes of its transmission and implementing preventive mechanisms such as staying safe at home, physical distancing in public or wearing using face mask to prevent spread of the virus through speaking, coughing, or sneezing, frequently washing or rubbing

hand through sanitizer, taking care to touch the face, as well as practicing respiratory etiquette for example, by coughing into a flexed elbow (WHO, 2020; Hopkins, J., 2020; Fan, Y. Y., Jamison, D. T., & Summers, L. H., 2018).

COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the global socio-economic activities (Bai et al., 2020; Rothe et al., 2020). The problem is severe in tourism and hospitality industry than other economic activities (Gossling and Scott, 2020). The international tourist arrivals were decreased much faster in 2020 than 2019 due to COVID-19 pandemic (UNWTO, 2020). It has been highly impacting many countries including developed in tourism and hospitality industry such as Italy, Spain, Mexico, China, Australia, Germany, United Kingdom, United States, France, Brazil, Japan, India, Canada, Russia and South Korea. Italy and Spain are among most vulnerable countries in tourism economic activity due to the pandemic since they highly rely on travel and tourism. Some countries faced more challenges than others due to their high reliance on the tourism and hospitality economic activities. For instance, in 2019, travel, tourism and hospitality contributed 14.3% to Spain's and 13% to Italy's GDP which further resulted spill over effects of billions of dollars. Similarly, travel, tourism and hospitality contributed 8.6% of GDP and 16.8 million direct employments to United States in 2019 (WTTC, 2020).

It is predicted that travel and tourism industry will lose 300 to 450 billion US\$ in international tourism receipts (Paola Maniga (April 29, 2020)). COVID-19 has impacted the business of major airlines and tour operators (Business Insider, 2020). It led British airline to bankruptcy on 5 March 2020 (Gössling, S., Scott, D., & Hall, C.M., 2020). Scandinavian Airlines on 17 March 2020, Singapore Airlines on 27 March 2020, Virgin Airlines on 30 March 2020, as well as tour operators including German TUI on 27 March 2020 have already requested tens of billions of US\$ in state aid (Gossling and Scott, 2020; WTTC, 2020).

1. Research Methodology

This research used secondary data sources and expert interview. The first step of the work was review of related literatures on economic-impacts of Covid-19 and its associated vulnerability and resilience factors. Hence, related articles, report of culture and tourism bureau, organizational statistics of COVID-19, newspapers, website materials, and data from World Economic Forum, World Tourism Organizations and World Health Organization were used. This assisted to collect data and construct the concept in order to assess the extent of economic impact and associated vulnerability and resilience factor. This was supplemented by expert interview culture and tourism bureau on various policy issues and interventions. Besides, data was collected from Stakeholder participants during panel discussion about the issue of COVID-19 to get a better understanding of its economic impact. Qualitative analysis method was employed

to reach in to conclusion. Textual description was used to present the results of the study.

4 Results and Discussions

4.1 Impact of Tourism on Tourists Flow and Receipts before COVID-19 out Break at Bahir Dar city

Table1: Tourists Flow, Recites and Income before COVID-19 out Break at Bahir Dar city

Year	Domestic Tourist	International Tourist	Total Tourists	Total Receipt (USD)
20006	16,442	8,777	25,219	242,581
2007	23,561	10,083	33,644	259,599
2008	26,761	11,769	38,530	335,858
2009	28,542	12,613	41,155	978,103
2010	42,709	17,042	59,751	1,511,245
2011	30,885	17,901	48,786	1,511,245
2012	42,930	25,721	68,651	2,692,813
2013	88,899	45,731	134,630	7,219,702
2014	97,663	41,148	138,811	6,139,619
2015	226,449	43,045	269,494	8,756,558
2016	278,228	43,045	321,273	11,309,866
20117	274,976	17,393	292,369	10,990,430
2018	322,305	27,203	349,508	10,990,430
2019	417,626	35,808	453,434	13,946,948
2020	336,475	39,355	375,830	12,923,863

Source: ANRS, 2021

Tourist arrivals and receipt of Bahir Dar City has been increasing from time to time. The total tourist arrival in 2006 was 25,219 while the receipt was \$242,581. In 2019, however, the total tourist arrivals and receipt was increased to 453,434 and 13,946,948 respectively. However, the number of international visitors and receipt from travel and tourism industry is highly decreased in the city due to COVID-19 outbreak. The tourist arrivals in 2020 decreased to 375,830 from its forecast of 1,000,000 while the receipt per year declined by \$1,023,085 compared with the last year and by \$19,549,821 from its plan (Table 1).

4.2 Impact of COVID-19 on the Income and employment of Tourism and Hospitality Businesses

The first COVID-19 pandemic case in Ethiopia was confirmed on 13 March 2020 at Addis Ababa. After three days of first case, the Government of Ethiopia declared five-

month state of emergency to control the spread of Covid-19 and its impact (WHO, 2020, MOH/EPHI, 2020). The measures imposed a number of travel restrictions and social distancing policies on activities and movement of People. Stay at home policy was stated; All cross-country as well as national and regional public and private transportation was restricted; the carrying capacity of public transportation was reduced by half; schools were closed; public gatherings and sporting activities that encourages physical contact were banned to maintain physical distance; travellers from abroad were put into mandatory quarantine for 14 days to protect from expansion; bars and night clubs were closed (MOH/EPHI, 2020; Solomon Mequanent Biwota, 2020).

Besides, the Government of Ethiopia recognized airline flight as the main source of transmission of COVID-19; and since April 2020, the government declared to close airline transportation except the commodities and material in order to prevent an imported transmission. This influenced the entire supply chain market of the country as well as flow of people and goods and services to and from the country (UNECA et al, 2020). These circumstances highly affected the economy of Ethiopia (Kalle Hirvonen; 2020 UNICEF, 2020). Tourism and hospitality industry is highly affected than other economic sectors since it is largely globally connected (Job Creation Commission, 2020; Solomon Mequanent Biwota, 2020).

Table 2: Impact of COVID-19 on the Income of Tourism and Hospitality Businesses

Service Category	Number of Hotels	Total monthly income in Birr, (Ethiopian Money)			
		Before COVID-19 Outbreak	During COVID-19 Crisis	Difference	
				Number	Percent
Star rated hotels	12	19,539,118.00	2,325,226.00	17,213,892.00	88%
Proposed hotels to star standard	21	20,779,545.00	4,040,435.00	16,739,110.00	80%
Basic hotels	9	5,724,497.00	1,693,429.00	4,0310,680.00	70.42%
Sub Total	42	46,043,158.00	8,059,090.00	37,984,070.00	82.5%
Boat services	54	4,540,000	0.00	4,540,000	100%
Tourist Guides	76	379,734.00	0.00	379,734.00	100%
Tourist Car rental	38	90,000.00	0.00	90,000.00	100%
Sub Total	168	5,009,734	0	5,009,734	100%
Grand Total	210	51,052,892	8,059,090.00	42,993,802	84.21%

Source: ANRS, 2021

The effect also stroked the business of tourism and hospitality industry of the Bahir Dar City. Travel agencies cancelled travel booking, limited promotion and sales of flight ticket through intensive media outlets. Hence, some of tourism and hospitality

businesses lacked customers and totally or partially locked their businesses. This resulted in severe economic impact on players of the tourism and hospitality industry. Since March 2020, monthly income of boat services, tourist guides and tourist car rental reached to 0%. Hence, they totally closed their businesses while hotels lost 82.5% of monthly income due to cancellation of rooms and conference bookings (Table 2, 3). Besides, hotels, restaurants and other dining establishment lost millions of dollars due to decay of fresh food stocks like vegetables, fruits, meat, fish, poultry, milk and milk products which are difficult to keep in stock as demand fluctuates since bookings of rooms and conference schedules were postponed or cancelled entirely. This enforced most of the hotels and restaurants to decide on temporary suspension of normal operations. Covid-19 has also seriously affected the bars, night clubs, casinos, football, athletic, film industry, and other entertainment activities of the city. Some of them suddenly shocked and temporarily shut down their business while others have been postponed for indefinite period of time. (MoCT, 2020).

Table 3: Impact of COVID-19 on Hotels to pay for Bank loan

Service Category	Number of Hotels	Total Monthly Payment for Bank loan in Birr, (Ethiopian Money)			
		Before COVID-19 Outbreak	During COVID-19 Crisis	Difference Number	Percept
Star rated hotels	12	4,503,831	----	4,503,831	100%
Proposed hotels to star standard	21	7,396,918	----	7,396,918	100%
Basic hotels	9	2,368,251	----	2,368,251	100%
Sub Total	42	14,269,000	-----	14,269,000	100%
Boat services		No any loan	No any loan	No any loan	No any loan
Tourist Guides		No any loan	No any loan	No any loan	No any loan
Tourist Car rental		No any loan	No any loan	No any loan	No any loan
Sub Total		-----	-----	-----	-----
Grand Total		-----	-----	-----	-----

Source: ANRS, 2021

Due to high decrease in income, all of hotels were unable to pay bank loan on time. However, boat services, tourist guides and tourist car rental were not encountered with such situation since they don't have any loan.

Tourism is labour intensive service sector that creates significant employment opportunity to different persons extending from unskilled to high skilled employees in transportation services (airlines, cruise ships, and taxis); hospitality services (all types of accommodations services including hotels and resorts, restaurants); and entertainment venues such as amusement parks, shopping malls, night clubs, bars, casinos, football, athletic, music venues, theatres, film industry, and other entertainment activities (UNWTO 2020). In this concern, the industry plays a crucial source of employment to Bahir Dar City. In 2020, however, tourism and hospitality organizations faced with difficulty to pay employees salary and benefits due to outbreak of COVID-19. As a result, they reduced number of their employees. This affected employees to lose their jobs. Boat services of Lake Tana, tourist guides and tourist car rental forced to totally close their businesses. Hence, they totally stopped to pay salary for their employees until their business revive since their monthly income reached to 0%. The estimated data of job losses from selected hotels also shows that there is reduction of employees by 21.28% (Table 4).

Table 4: Impact of COVID-19 on Hotels to pay for Employee Salaries

Service Category	Number of Hotels	Total Number of Employees and Monthly Salary							
		Total Number of Employees		Monthly Salary in Birr (Ethiopian Money)				Difference	
		Before COVID-19 Outbreak	Before COVID-19 Crisis	During COVID-19 Crisis	Before COVID-19 Crisis	During COVID-19 Crisis	Number	Percent	
Star rated hotels	12	4,503,831	1040	870	1,778,581	1,487,851	290,730	16.35%	
Proposed hotels to star standard	21	7,396,918	1224	928	2,119,720	1,607,108	512,612	24.18%	
Basic hotels	9	2,368,251	431	317	522,296	385,041	137,255	26.28%	
Sub Total	42	14,269,000	2695	2115	4,420,597	3,480,000	940,597	21.28%	
Boat services		No any loan	56	0	28,000	0	28,000	100%	
Tourist Guides		No any loan	160	0	60,000	0	60,000	100%	
Tourist Car rental		No any loan	9	0	21,600	0	21,600	100%	

Sub Total		-----	225	0	109,600	0	109,600	100%
Grand Total		-----	2,920	2115	4,530,197	3,480,000	1,050,197	23.18%

Source: ANRS, 2021

Consequently, large numbers of employees were displaced from the job and remained out of work. As result it has caused severe problem in livelihoods of workers to lead their life and families. Due to this reason, some of them went to their families and some others divorced their marriage and interrupted from their families. Low-skilled employees took higher share of vulnerability. Besides, there was no opportunity for new employment and casual workers. Self-employed people in micro and small-scale establishments of tourism and hospitality business sesas well as street food venders lost their job sand faced with the incidence to pay home rent and other expenditures. This time was slack season for many of organizations; the number of customers and income level decreased in many folds. However, the overall decline in employment rates seems to have been short-lived mainly, from March, to May. In July on wards however, the recovery rate of tourism and hospitality businesses employment gradually increased than previous months.

4.4 Mitigation Mechanisms taken to combat from crisis

Government of Ethiopia taken many measures to restrict expansion of COVID19 since the first COVID-19 pandemic case was confirmed in Ethiopia. It declared travel restrictions including closing of borders and introducing of quarantine periods. Hence, public transport, hotel, restaurant, cafes and other tourism and hospitality services are restricted. International and domestic travel bookings, as well as reservations for hotels, conventions and meetings services are cancelled or postponed. Festivals, holidays, cultural events, educational trips, sport events, family events etc. are cancelled or postponed. Many establishments lacked the market and were not able to cover operational cost as well as even employees' salary which is difficult to stay open. They have partially or totally locked down their businesses. As result, massive unemployment rate was recorded in the tourism and hospitality businesses.

To combat and protect tourism and hospitality industry from such sever crisis, Government of Ethiopia has taken different economic recovery measures. The closed doors of tourism and hospitality businesses have been reopened gradually to recover form crisis. They are taking promotional measures. They are promoting that as 'they are offering the service with high safety precautions to both employees and guests. Hence people started travelling while maintaining minimum precautions like wearing masks, washing hands and using sanitizer frequently.

Regulation to support companies to report VAT and TOT at the end of the year instead of per month and quarterly was established. The government of Ethiopia prohibited companies from unethical firing of their employees by encouraged retaining workers. Besides, companies are allowed to pay employees income tax as salary for workers instead of remitting to revenue authority, forgiving tax debts for those companies operating, etc.

The prime Minister office and National Bank of Ethiopia declared to inject USD 456 million as liquidity for private banks to enable the rescheduling of debt with a potential interest holiday and additional loans with below market rates to clients, so business can endure cash flow.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The first COVID-19 pandemic case in Ethiopia was confirmed on 13 March 2020. To limit further spread and its effect, the government of Ethiopia quickly declared restriction measures including limitation on Public transportation and public gatherings, closing of borders, social distancing, staying at home, and introduction of quarantine periods. Hotels, restaurants, café, night clubs, travel agents and tour operators have partially or totally lockdown their businesses. The se circumstan ces influenced the flow of people as well as goods and services to and from the country. As result, tourism and hospitality industry is highly affected and faced with huge economic losses than other economic sectors since it is highly dependent on movement of people and largely globally connected by nature. Many establishments lacked the market and were not able to cover operational cost as well as employees' salary which is difficult to stay open. They have partially or totally locked down their businesses. Consequently, hotels were not able to pay bank loan, large numbers of employees were displaced from the job and remained out of work. This has caused severe problem in livelihoods of workers to lead their life and families. The situation was worse in March to June. However, government recognized that will take long time to recover from such economy crisis. Hence, it decided to gradually re-open everything in order to adjust the situation. Tourism and hospitality businesses are opened gradually. They are taking promotional measures. Hence people started travelling while maintaining minimum precautions like wearing masks, washing hands and using sanitizer frequently.

COVID-19 pandemic may continue in the future and its crisis on the economic wellbeing of the tourism and hospitality industry may be long-lasting. Therefore, the government should take the lesson from current situation and develop the different recovery strategies to decrease over all consequences on the economy. Government should support this sector in a various ways In order to recover from the crisis, retain their employees as well as to prevent the owners from bankruptcy. This could be implemented through Tax suspension, dealing with private and government bank to

decrease or to cease interests, giving loans and decreasing rate of interest for those previously on loan. If the virus prolongs, the government should allocate extra budget.

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