

Covid-19 Pandemic on tourist bus operators with special reference to Ernakulam District

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Abstract: Covid-19 related restrictions have badly affected the tourist bus operators. The study attempts to analyse the impact of covid-19 pandemic on tourist bus operators. The research study provides an indicator to establish a relationship between covid-19 and life style of tourist bus operators. Descriptive research was used for the present study. Study is mainly based on primary data. To analyse the data, percentage method and chi-square test were used. It is found that majority of the tourist bus operators are facing various problems such as travel restrictions, tax liabilities, repayments of loans etc. due to the pandemic situation. They found various alternative jobs to overcome the crisis. The study concluded that the tourist bus operators should get proper consideration from the government.

Keywords: Covid-19, impact, tourist bus operators, satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Kerala Tour bus is the most leading affordable tourist bus rental service in Kerala. Covid has brought many down to their knees. One such group is the tourist bus operators in Kerala. While most of the industries have resumed operations after the State Government relaxed lockdown norms, the travel sector especially tourist vehicle operators, stare at a bleak future. The delay in re-opening the tourism sector following the pandemic outbreak has paralysed the business of hundreds of tourist bus operators in Ernakulam District. For over two years, they have been finding it hard to mobilise the funds for vehicle maintenance, tax liabilities and repayment of bank loans. The purpose of the study is to identify the impact of covid-19 pandemic on tourist bus operators.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As the world is facing an unprecedented global health, social and economic emergency with the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism is among the most affected sectors. As a result of the pandemic, many countries and regions have imposed quarantines, entry bans or other restrictions for citizens of or recent travellers to the most affected areas. Together with a decreased willingness to travel, the restrictions have had a negative economic impact on the travel sector. This impact continues to affect the livelihood of tourist bus operators in Kerala badly. It is because of this, a study is conducted on Covid-19 Pandemic on tourist bus operators.

Most studies do not analyse the impact of pandemic situation on tourist bus operators, but explore the impact on other areas. Against this background, this topic have been taken up. It is identified that there is a need for research study to fill the gap by studying the impact on aforesaid field.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the impact of covid-19 pandemic on tourist bus operators.
2. To study the relationship between covid-19 pandemic and life style of tourist bus operators.
3. To understand the satisfaction level of tourist bus operators towards the strategies adopted by the Government.

METHODOLOGY USED

Descriptive research was used for the present study. It has met the requirements of research study. Study is mainly based on primary data. Primary data collected from various tourist bus operators in Ernakulam District. Secondary data was also collected from books, journals, magazines, newspapers, research articles and websites. Population of the study includes tourist bus operators in Ernakulam District. The sample size selected is 100 for the study. For the study purpose, a set of questions have been prepared to collect information relating to the topic of the study. In this study, a structured questionnaire has been used with different types of questions such as multiple choice questions.

Statistical Tools

For the data analysis, percentage method was used. For testing of hypothesis, Chi-square were also used.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table I

Problems faced by tourist bus operators due to covid-19

	No. of respondents	Percent
Travel restrictions	25	25
Tax liabilities	15	15
Repayment of bank loans	15	15
Falling number of bookings	10	10
High interest rate levied by private finance	4	4
Sale of tourist bus to pay huge debt	10	10
Highest cost of fuel	6	6
Poor consideration by the Government	15	15
Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

The above table depicts that out of 100 respondents, all the respondents are faced problems due to covid -19. 25% of the respondents are faced travel restrictions due to covid 19. Most of the respondents are suffered to pay their tax liabilities and bank loans.15 % opined that they are getting poor consideration from the Government which is the major problem.

Table II

Response regarding whether they found any other source of income to overcome the situation

	No. of Respondents	Percent
Yes	80	80
No	20	20
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

When questioned by the researcher whether they found any other source of income to overcome the situation, 80% opined positively, whereas 20% differed.

Table II.I

Alternative sources of income during pandemic

Source of income	No. of respondents	Percent
Using tourists bus for hospital trips	8	8
Autorikshaw made a living	72	72
MSME interest free loans	4	4
Other jobs	16	16
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

It is inferred from the table II.I that majority of the respondents made autorikshaw a living as an alternative source of income. Some of them are used their tourist bus for hospital trips to meet their financial and personal needs.

Table III

Satisfaction with present income

	No. of Respondents	Percent
Yes	15	15
No	85	85
Total	100	100

Source: Primary data

It is revealed that 85% of the respondents were not at all satisfied with the present income.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between covid -19 and life style of tourist bus operators.

Table IV

Covid- 19 Vs Life style of tourist bus operators

Lifestyle of tourist bus operators	Whether Covid Affected?			Chi-square Value	Degree of freedom	Table Value
	Yes	No	Total (Percent)			
Income	38(34.3)	6(9.7)	44	9.235	1	3.841
Family Status	6(6.2)	2(1.8)	8			
Children's education	6(4.7)	0(1.3)	6			
Duration of working hours	6(6.2)	2(1.8)	8			
Job stress	22(26.5)	12(7.5)	34			

Source: Primary data

As the calculated chi-square value (9.235) is greater than table value (3.841) at 5% level of significance for 1 degree of freedom, hypothesis is rejected. It could be concluded that the association between covid -19 and life style of tourist bus operators is significant.

Table V

Overall Satisfaction Level with the strategies adopted by the Government

	No. of respondents	Percent
Highly Satisfied	4	4
Satisfied	8	8
Dissatisfied	16	16
Highly Dissatisfied	72	72
	100	100

Source: Primary data

It is evident from the table V that 72% of the respondents are highly dissatisfied with the strategies adopted by the Government. Only 8% are satisfied.

FINDINGS

- In the study, out of 100 respondents, majority of them are facing problems due to the pandemic situation.
- 25% of the respondents are facing travel restrictions.
- Most of the respondents opined that they are getting few consideration from the Government.
- It is observed that 80% of the respondents found alternative source of income to overcome the crisis.
- It is found that 72% of respondents made autorikshaw as a living.
- From the study researcher can know that 85% of them are not satisfied with the present income.
- Majority of the respondents are totally dissatisfied with the strategies adopted by the Government.

FINDINGS RELATED TO HYPOTHESIS

- To analyse the influence of covid-19 on lifestyle of tourist bus operators, the researcher has used chi-square test. The hypothesis has been accepted as there is relationship between the above two.

**CONCLUSION**

Covid has brought many down to their knees. One such group is the tourist bus operators. The lockdowns implemented recently caused them massive harm as some package tours of 8-10 days were affected. Given that they pay hefty road tax, the tourist bus operators are definitely facing a crisis. The operators urged the government to take steps to waive the tax and to extend term of insurance policies.

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