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## Trends Of Tourists visitors During Pre And Post Covid-19 to Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

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### Abstract

Banaras which is also known as Varanasi and Kashi. It is the significant place of pilgrimage. Banaras is also famous for its spiritual knowledge hence a place of attraction for the tourists. Tourism in Varanasi is considered as one of the productive industries. Generally, tourists visit to Varanasi for spiritual experience. Not only from different parts of the country but from various parts of the world tourists visits to Varanasi. During pandemic period tourism industry remains the worst hit. Due to strict lockdown in India, the number of the tourists drastically reduced. This paper tries to understand the scenario of tourism in the religious city of Varanasi during pre and post pandemic period.

**Key words :** Banaras, Tourists, Pandemic

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### Introduction

Human beings visit to any place either for entertainment or for peace and knowledge. Varanasi also known as Kashi is the cultural and religious capital of India. Kashi is such a place which remained a great centre of peace and knowledge. Generally, people visit to Varanasi for gaining spiritual experience and for attaining peace. Since time immemorial this place remained a place of attraction for the visitors. The location of Varanasi on the bank of holy Ganga River makes it a place of attraction. Religious & spiritual tourists from all over the world visits to Kashi in all the seasons. Hence the tourism in Varanasi is considered as one of the famous industries. Since the purpose of tourism varies from person to person. Tourism can be defined as people “travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment” for purpose of fun, work, or anything else (UNWTO). Tourism can also be defined as the travel which last for more than 24 hours and not last for more than one year. Tourism is also related with the service sector. The growth of tourism is associated with the growth of some other sectors. The tourism has emerged as

one of the fast-growing industries in the recent past. “The tourism has become the world's fourth largest export industry after fuels, chemicals and food” (Tugcu, 2014; Balli, Curry & Balli, 2015). Surprising Indian tourism is also growing very fast. The Indian tourism and hospitality industry has emerged as one of the key forces of growth among the services sector in India.

The culture and historical heritage of India has the potential to attract the tourists from all over the world. India's foreign tourist arrival (FTA) is also increasing. The variety in ecology, terrains and places of natural beauty spread across the country. In India, there are 40 World Heritage Sites, including 7 natural and 32 cultural as per available data of the year 2022. Tourism in India is emerging as one of the largest industries which is not only a source of foreign exchange for the nation but also creates jobs for the local people. Varanasi is one of the significant places of attraction for the tourist. The tourism of Varanasi is unique in itself where people visited for spiritual experience and peace.

The tourism industry of the whole world was adversely hit by the pandemic lockdown including India. The Indian state of Uttar Pradesh is home to numerous historic and sacred sites. The Coronavirus pandemic outbreak had a significant impact on Uttar Pradesh's tourist industry. The impact of lockdown on the tourism was quite severe on some tourist places like Varanasi. As per one estimate in India, the tourism industry created 4.2 crore jobs in the year 2019, accounting for 8.1 percent of all jobs in the nation. The number is expected to increase by 2 percent in the year 2028 but the sudden imposition of lockdown severely hit the tourism industry in the country. As per World Travel and Tourism Council, tourism in India would support 32.1 million jobs and generate 13.2 lakh crore foreign exchange in the year 2021 but due to pandemic lockdown the nation's economy sharply declined and tourism industry face a sharp decline during corona period. India was placed at 34<sup>th</sup> rank in travel and tourism index during 2019 but after pandemic lockdown a significant drop has been seen and it is placed at 54<sup>th</sup> rank in 2021. The ranking and scoring are based on the industry's enabling environment, policies, infrastructure, demand drivers, and sustainability. Such type of decline is observed in various place of tourism. Varanasi is among those places where the impact of the pandemic lockdown is quite severe on its tourism. This paper tries to understand the tourism in Varanasi in the pre and post pandemic lockdown period. As per one estimate over 3 million domestic and 2 lakh foreign visitors come to Varanasi each year. The present paper is based on the tourism of Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh, India. Varanasi serves as a major destination for Indian tourists and pilgrims. It is one of the main destinations for spiritual pilgrimage in India. The number of the tourists both Indian and International greatly impacted due to pandemic lockdown in India.

**Objective of the Study:**

To understand the tourism in Varanasi in the pre and post pandemic lockdown period.

**Research Methodology:**

The present research paper is descriptive in nature where both qualitative and quantitative research techniques are used. For secondary data, other researches, journals and books are consulted. Various reports published by the Directorate of tourism, Government of Uttar Pradesh and Govt. of India are used. Various internet sources have been used to collect the data pertaining to the tourism in Varanasi.

**Study Area:**

Varanasi also known as Banaras or Benares and Kashi. Varanasi which embraces the essence of Indian spiritualism and mysticism, it is also known as the city of lights. Varanasi is important religious place for both Hindu and Buddhists. The holy Ganges and Ghats (riverbanks), ancient artefacts and temples, winding serpentine streets, Indian spiritualism and mysticism, Indian classical music and dance, meditation, handicrafts, etc. are some of Varanasi's most important tourist attractions. More than 100 Ghats in Varanasi show how timeless this ancient city is, and the temples constructed all over the city symbolise Hinduism's spirit. Varanasi is often referred as one of the oldest surviving cities in the globe (information bulletin, Varanasi U.P tourism 2022; times group publication, 2004). Varanasi city is located on the left bank of holy River Ganga. Geographically, Varanasi city is located between 25<sup>o</sup>00' to 25<sup>o</sup>16' North Latitude and 82<sup>o</sup>50' to 83<sup>o</sup>10' East Latitude.

**Results and Discussion:**

Varanasi is the second most visited tourist city in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Tourists' statistics shows that October to March is the busiest time of the year from tourism point of view. It is observed from the available literature that education and research are the top priorities for the international tourists whereas pilgrimage/spiritual is the main reason that attracts maximum percentage of domestic tourists. Data pertaining to the tourists visited to Varanasi is shown in table-1.

**Table-1**  
**Varanasi**  
**Number of Tourists in pre and post pandemic period**

Year	Number of Tourists
2017	6282063
2018	6444860
2019	6797775
2020	982492
2021	3078479

Source: Department of Tourism, Uttar Pradesh

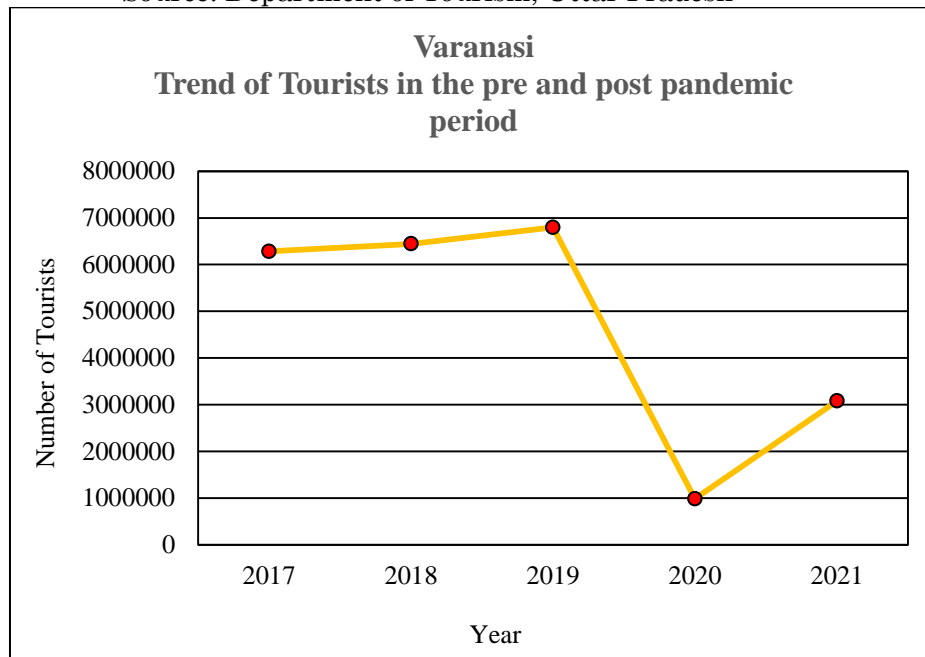


Figure-1

It is observed from table-1 that during 2017 total 6.28 million tourists visited to Varanasi. The number of the tourists increased to 6.44 million in 2018. Further the number increased to 6.79 million in 2019. From 2017 to 2019 there is continues increase in the number of the tourists. From 2017 to 2017 the increase is 1.62 lakh whereas the increase is double from 2018 to 2019 i.e., 3.52 lakh. From 2017 to 2019 is the period of pre pandemic period. Figure-1 clearly show the increase in the number of tourists from 2017 to 2019 to Varanasi. It also clearly shows the sharp decline in the number of the tourists from 2019 to 2020. The year 2020 is marked as the outbreak of corona pandemic. The strict lockdown during the year 2020 hamper

the movement of the people. The tourism industry is the worst hit industry during that period. The number of tourists sharply fall to less than a million i.e., 0.98 million during the year 2020. Table-1 and figure-1 shows that during 2021 the number of the tourists increased from 0.98 million in 2020 to 3.07 million. The increasing trend is seen because during 2021 little relaxation was given for the movement of people.

Table-2 shows the number of the Indian and foreign tourists visited to Varanasi from 2017 to 2021. It is observed that during 2017 total Indian tourists who visited Varanasi are 5.94 million which further increased to 6.09 million in 2018 and further to 6.44 million in 2019 which shows increasing trend.

Table-2

## Varanasi

## Number of Indian and Foreign Tourists in the pre and post pandemic period

Year	Indian Tourists	Foreign Tourist
2017	5947355	334708
2018	6095890	348970
2019	6447775	350000
2020	876303	106189
2021	3075913	2566

Source: Department of Tourism, Uttar Pradesh

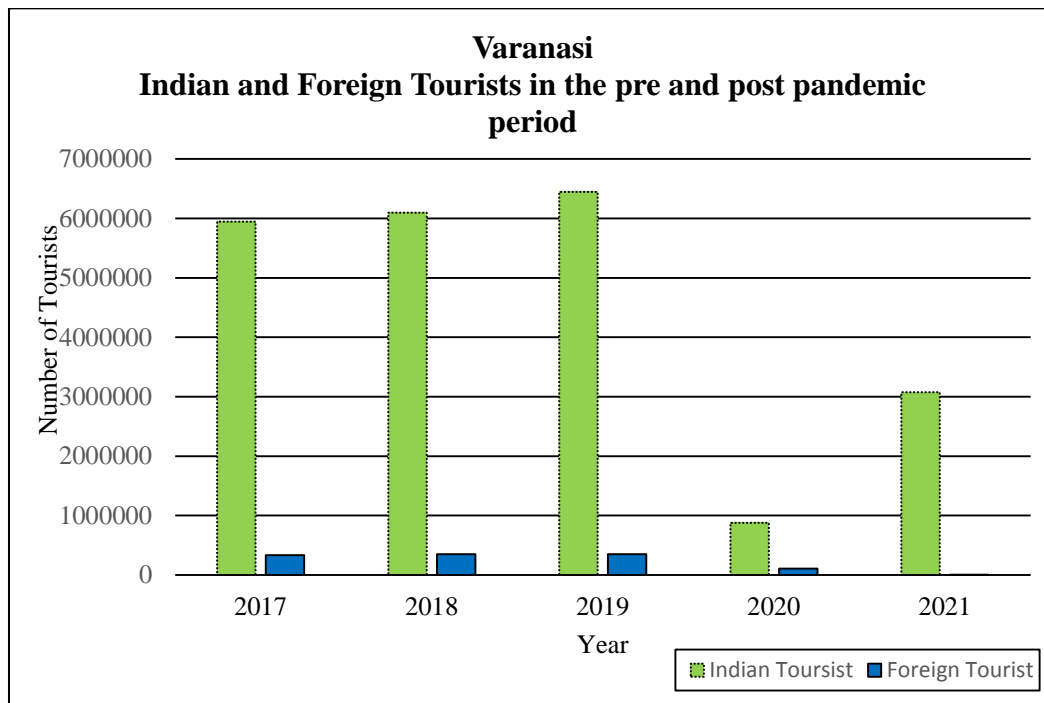


Figure-2

On the other hand, the foreign tourist also increased from 2017 to 2019 which is pre pandemic period. Since Varanasi is a spiritual and pilgrimage centre of India hence the foreign tourists also visited to city. The number of the foreign tourists was 3.34 million during 2017 which increased to 3.48 million in 2018 and further to 3.50 million during 2019. This shows picture of pre pandemic period. Whereas the picture during pandemic lockdown period is quite different. The number of the Indian and foreign tourist sharply decreased during pandemic period (figure-2). Nearly 5.57 million Indian tourists decreased from 2019 to 2020 and foreign tourists decreased by 2.43 lakh from 2019 to 2020. Furthermore, in the subsequent year 2021 the number of the Indian tourists increased from 876303 in 2020 to 3.07 million in 2021. This is a quite high increase in the

number of the Indian tourists to Varanasi despite the fact that pandemic lockdown was in force but with limited restrictions. Contrary to this the number of the foreign tourists shows further decreased from 1.06 lakh in 2020 to only 2566 in 2021. This shows a sharp decline in the number of foreigners visited to Varanasi.

#### Conclusion

Varanasi is one of the main centres of attraction for tourists. The present paper tries to understand the tourism in Varanasi during pre and post pandemic period. It is clearly evidenced from the available data that number of the tourists sharply decreased during pandemic lockdown period. Both Indian and foreign tourists could not travel to Varanasi due to complete shut of transportation. Millions of Indian tourists and lakh of foreign tourists visited Varanasi

in the pre pandemic period from 2017 to 2019. The sharp decline is observed in the number of the Indian and foreign tourists during pandemic period. The imposition of strict lockdown to stop the spread of corona virus govt. suspended all the modes of transportation which severely affected the movement of people not only within the country but also from other countries. After pandemic Govt. is promoting to increase the tourism industry in Varanasi.

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