

Reflecting on the Impact of COVID-19 on Tourism in Italy

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Abstract

Italy was the first major western country to face the viral disease, which originated in China late last year and has spread around the world. Italian authorities have recorded some 2,29,858 confirmed cases and 32,785 death. Tourism is known as one of the most growing sector in Italy which is encouraging economic growth and development by giving employability of large sector of the working population. This paper is focusing on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and its impact on Tourism Industry of Italy after a complete lockdown. In this paper we will come to know about popular tourist places in Italy and how they are affected after lockdown which has affected the economy of the country to a large extent. This paper also focused on why Italy was adversely affected due to Coronavirus and reasons behind it. Government has also taken various decisions for removal of COVID-19 and its impact on tourism industry of Italy.

Keywords: COVID-19, Tourism, Government

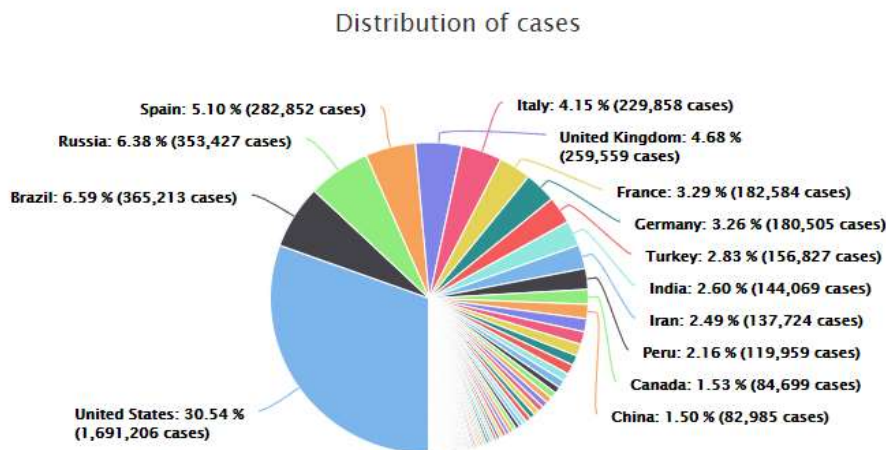
Introduction

The novel coronavirus outbreak, which began in Wuhan, China, in December, has expanded to touch nearly every corner of the globe. Hundreds of thousands of people around the world have been sickened and thousands of others have died. The World Health Organization has declared the virus a global health emergency and rated COVID-19's global risk of spread and impact as "very high," the most serious designation the organization gives.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was first confirmed in Italy on 31 January 2020, when two Chinese tourists in Rome tested positive for the virus. After that one week later an Italian man came back to Italy from the city of Wuhan, China and he was hospitalized which was the third confirmed case in Italy. After those cases of coronavirus has been spreading across the nation. Italy imposed nationwide lockdown rules in early March after it became the first country outside Asia with a major outbreak of coronavirus. The infections, first limited to in Northern Italy, have eventually spread to all other regions. Many other countries in Asia, the Americas, and Europe traced their local cases to Italy. Many Italian visitors also were diagnosed coronavirus-positive in foreign countries. As of 25 May 2020, Italy has 56,594 active cases, Overall there are 2,29,858 confirmed cases and 32,785 deaths, while 1,40,479 recoveries. Top five regions which were affected in Italy are Lombard, Piedmont, Emilia Romani, Veneto, Tuscany. The high number of coronavirus infection cases in Italy may be explained by the expanding air travel with China.

Italy is the European nation with the highest number of air connections with China. Italy signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with China in early January 2020 to expand the air links between the two countries in order to expand tourism. The Italian government imposed strong measures in the northern

regions but not in the rest of the country much earlier. Underestimating how far the coronavirus could reach in the absence of wider measures is evident in the cases recorded pan-Italy.



Source: Worldometers(2020)

The most coronavirus-affected cities and regions early in Italy are Lombardy, followed by Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Marche, and Piemonte. Milan, the second most populous Italian city, is located in Lombardy. Other areas in Italy with coronavirus included Toscana, Campania, Lazio, Liguria, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Sicilia, Puglia, Umbria, Abruzzo, Trento, Molise, Calabria, Sardegna, Valle d'Aosta, Basilicata, and Bolzano. Within days of stating that coronavirus was just limited to 11 towns in just the northern part of the country, the Italian government realized that it underestimated the situation as the pandemic quickly spread across the country. Italy is 19th among the top 30 countries receiving airline travellers from high-risk cities from coronavirus in China. The median age of people infected by the virus is 69 years and 47% of people who were infected required hospitalisation, of which 18% required intensive care. Each infected person spread it to 3.1 people, which started decreasing by end of the third week of February

Objectives of The Study

To know why Italy is among the worst-affected country with coronavirus.

To know the effects of COVID-19 on tourism sector of Italy.

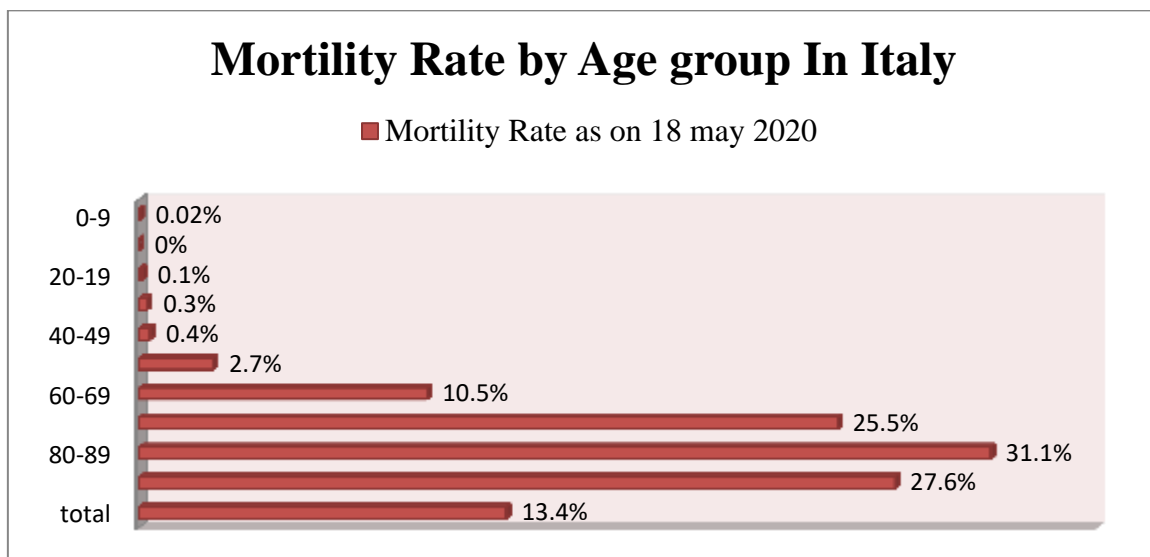
Research Methodology

This paper has adopted a secondary research methodology which includes journal article review, news articles, web pages, textbook reviews.

Statement Of The Problem

Even after being geographically far from China, why Italy has been worst affected. Italy, which has one the world's oldest populations, could be facing a higher mortality rate as a result of its above-average elderly population. As the population of Italy is 6crore. In Italy, 23% of the population is over age 65, where 60% of the people in Italy are over the age of 40. Italy has a life expectancy of 82.54 years. Since coronavirus poses relatively more threat to elderly people who are likely to have pre-existing medical conditions, more people from Italy developed serious cases from COVID infection. In Italy, 85.6% of those who have died were over 70 further illustrating that those whose immune systems have declined with age, appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill after contracting the virus. This resulted in a sudden spike in demands for intensive-care units in hospitals and thus overwhelming the capacity of Italy's health care system. Italy is also very densely populated: Rome has 5,800 people per square mile, and Milan packs more

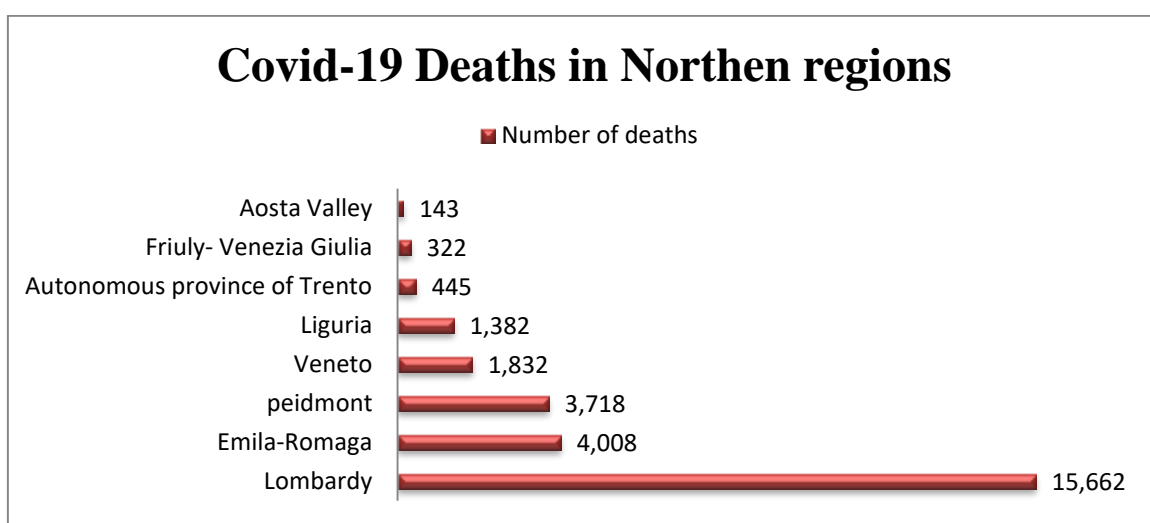
than 19,000 people into every square mile. Hence making people more susceptible to catching COVID-19 from local transmission. Casani, the health director of a clinic says that pollution in northern Italy could be a factor in higher death rates. According to a report by the Swiss air monitoring platform IQAir, 24 of Europe's 100 most polluted cities are in Italy. "Studies have shown a high correlation between mortality rates from viral respiratory conditions and pollution," Casani says.



Source-statista

Another reason why Italy has worst affected because Northern Italy is a business hub, Milan, in northern Italy, is the country's financial capital, and has close trade and educational connections with China. The whole region of northern Italy is home to offices for many multinational corporations. Workers travel from all over the world to attend meetings and conventions in northern Italy. An infected person not only could infect others, but those people could rapidly spread out across the entire country. In the given chart, we can see that how number of deaths by covid-19 affected badly in Northern regions of Italy. Lombardy is main city-hub for Italians, therefore number of death are also high there.

Region wise deaths in North Italy as of 19 may 2020

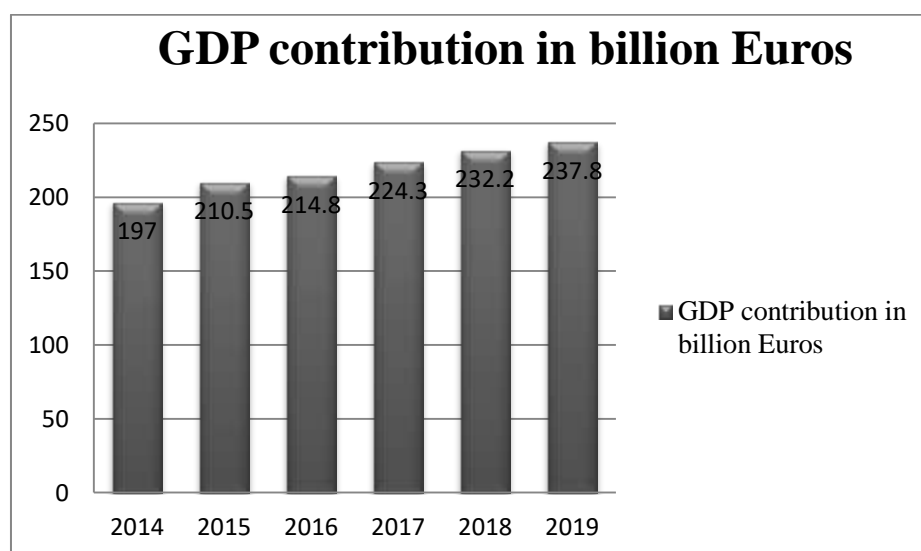


Source-statista

Second objective of this paper is to know the effects of Covid-19 on tourism in Italy. As Italy ranked 5th in the world with the largest international tourist arrivals. The Tourism sector is currently one of the hardest-hit by the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), with impacts on both travel supply and demand. To

contain the virus and slow the spread many of destinations have implemented a lockdown and travel restrictions. This means tourism destinations which are tourism reliant are no longer having these tourists enter the country. Thus, tourism reliant destinations will experience an economic decline. The country depended on its visitors with approximately 4.2 million of the population employed in the tourism sector, making up 12-13% of the country's GDP. In 2019, the country welcomed over 216 million tourists - a considerably high number for its 60 million population. Confturismo, the country's tourism association, stated that Italy already lost 30 million tourists between March and May. In Italy, almost 90% percent of hotel and travel agency bookings for March 2020 canceled in Rome and up to 80% in Sicily (Federazione Italiana del Turismo, 2020). As numerous coronavirus cases in other European countries are traced back to Italy, travel warnings for eleven more Italian towns thathave been on lockdown have been issued. This impact does not even include the damage that other related businesses, such as restaurants or small shops, had to suffer. By the end of the year, the total loss is expected to exceed 200 billion euros. In Italy inbound Tourism Expenditure over GDP and inbound tourism expenditure over export of goods and services are 2.5% and 7.8% respectively. The contribution of travel and Tourism in Italian GDP calculated to 237.8 billion Euros that is around more than 13 % in 2019.

Total contribution of tour and travel sector in Italian GDP since 2014



Source- World bank data

Its gives the employment of around 4.2 million people in Italy. In 2018 Italy ranked in the 10th position among the list of countries in the world which have the largest expenditure in international tourism. According to global data which indicate that in the month between March and April in 2019 Domestic and outbound trips jumped by 4.5 million. Italian tourism association Assoturismo Confesercenti reported that the travel and accommodation booking worth of 200 million have been cancelled after the country severely hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and also down sharply until June. Vittorio Jessica stated that Italian tourism has never experienced the crisis like this pandemic. The impact is also hurting areas of Italy barely touched by the virus. Italy's tourism federation announced that damage to the tourism sector is estimated at 200 million for the first quarter of the year. School trips and conferences across the country were also called off. Lombardy, which includes Milan, accounts for over half of the cases while Veneto and Emilia-Romagna have 15% and 17%, respectively. It lost 1.2\$ billion between March and April since this pandemic has begun. A study done by national tourism industry shows that it is expected this sector will not be fully recover from this pandemic until 2023.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Coronavirus puts a furrow on the Italian tourism industry. Airlines Companies are cancelled due to the spread of this harmful virus. Northern Italy is known as one of the best tourist places that were worse-affected by COVID-19. Italy has already declared that it would shut the tourism industry until the end of this year 2020.

This research paper has examined the greater impact that is being created by the virus on tourism and why Italy has suffered so much. It also showcased the ultimate harm it created on economy of the country. It is being thought that this impact will continue for some more time and that is much more of concern in recent times. The travelling agencies are seen to be impacted by COVID-19 as the lockdown situation is established by the Italian government. There is a need for effective recovery strategies for upliftment of tourism industry.

Policymakers need first and foremost address the health emergency with sufficient resources. After that, fiscal resources will need to provide direct support to the individuals and sectors most affected. Government must give relaxation on the charges force on the tourism industry and to allocate specific relief funds for the survival of the tourism and hospitality industry.

The aim is to protect otherwise productive capacity so it continues to exist after the shock. Italy has struggled and is continuing to fight against an unprecedented crisis that found dangerously fertile ground in elements of the country's demographics, business, geography and culture. After experiencing one of the worst economic blows in the history of the country, the Prime Minister has announced that the country will start easing lockdown restrictions on May 4 to avoid irreversible damage to the economy. In this way for revival of the economy, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's had announced a 25 billion-Euro relief package on 25th March. Further government has also approved a second stimulus package worth 55 billion Euros to its economy. On Social media #TravelTomorrow campaign has had a huge impact which is operated by World Tourism Organization. This campaign has summarized the current critical situation and also enlarging the voice of tourism.

However, it might take time, but we hope that Italy will come out of this unprecedented situation and the Tourism industry will be able to re-establish itself.

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