Assessing the choice of supplementary accommodation for the new normal urban areas in West Bengal, India

DR. DEBASISH BATABYAL¹, MR. PRATIM CHATTERJEE², DR. ABHIJIT PANDIT³, SHATRAJIT GOSWAMI⁴, DHARMENDER KUMAR⁵

¹Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Travel & Tourism, Amity University, Kolkata, India
²Assistant Professor, Amity School of Hospitality, Amity University, Kolkata, India
³Assistant Professor, Amity Business School, Amity University, Kolkata, India
⁴Associate Professor, SRM University, Gangtak, Sikkim
⁵Ph.D. Scholar, Amity Business School, Amity University, Kolkata, India

Abstract: Objectives: To measure the factors responsible for or contributing to the choice of accommodation in urban areas during and immediately after COVID 19 pandemic, with an increasing importance of location and its shifting perception for confidence building and future marketing.

Method: Principal Component Analysis and Chi-Square tests are found useful for analyzing the primary data collected from the urban areas in West Bengal

Results: COVID 19 risk perception and resultant behavior could not supersede purchasing power in the study area while location is playing a critical role. This study also projected a sustainability-safety-sustainability diaspora exhibiting future trends for supplementary accommodation sector with new-normal sustainability orientation in the area.

Practical Implications: COVID 19 measures with more investments does not enhance confidence among urban dwellers in the study area, rather price and location play critical role with new COVID 19 orientation for supplementary accommodations.

Social Implications: Risk perception, safety measures and actual availing of accommodation services are experiencing a wide gap as never before owing to this COVID 19 outbreak. This study focuses on this area with a future scope for supplementary accommodation.

Value: This study redirects the future marketing, financial and entrepreneurial policy issues for supplementary accommodation sectors

Keywords: Supplementary accommodation, Mainstream accommodation, Principal component analysis, COVID 19, Sustainability diaspora, Travel intensity

INTRODUCTION:
COVID 19 outbreak has brought about a new emergency and accessibility has reduced as never before. Health emergency has brought about several other emergencies viz., economic, social, geo-political and behavioral. Whom to offer hospitality and overnight accommodation, if tourists are not able to visit tourist destinations? With reduced accessibility, entire hospitality sector is ought to depend on local market around the world. The latest edition of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer computed a 98 per cent fall in international tourist numbers in May, 2020 when compared to 2019. It also found a 56% year-on-year drop in tourist arrivals between January and May. This results a fall of 300 million tourists and US$320 billion lost in international tourism receipts –three times more loss than during the Global Economic Crisis of 2009. The noticeable fall in international tourism places results millions of livelihoods at risk, including in developing countries. The entire value chain linked to the tourism and hospitality sector has lost almost around Rs 5 lakh crore or $65.57 billion (Industry chamber CII and hospitality consulting firm Hotelivate). The loss in organized sector alone is likely to be $25 billion. The shut down and slowdown which was initially forecasted to influence revenue streams till October have now been signaling otherwise.

Amidst this period, an extensive support framework is needed in liaison with the recent development and medical inventions which is proved to be the most powerful agent of change in intensity of this crisis. In a broader sense, the research problem is designed keeping in view the competitive advantages of either side of mainstream accommodation sector and emerging popular supplementary accommodation sector with a seer attraction features and actual availability. While the most structured institutionalized form of accommodation sector is offering itself with most modern and the best possible COVID 19 measures, supplementary
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accommodation units are projecting and promoting small group accommodation structure, remote location, less fear of crowd etc. Therefore, this study has adopted a reflective approach to identify and exhibit the factors or issues critical in purchase or booking decision during these new-normal conditions. In doing so, an extensive review of literature was conducted, and research gap came into light exposed a new orientation of opting supplementary accommodation beyond its most important previous trend of approaching and adopting sustainable issues and challenges. After this COVID 19 pandemic, safety issues have been the utmost priority and as such future survival-revival strategy issues and confidence building, safety is the most credible option for the industry. This study also addresses sustainability-safety-sustainability diaspora in and after COVID 19 pandemic as a recently emerging issue. Following is the flowchart exhibited as a proposed model for the future offering of supplementary accommodation sector in recent time.

Figure 1: Proposed reflective model for offering supplementary accommodation amidst COVID 19 pandemic
REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Arguments in favor of supplementary accommodation

Overnight accommodation experience offered by supplementary accommodation units and standard hotels are different. The findings of Bastakis, C., Buhalis, D., & Butler, R. (2004) also pointed out that hotels were clearly supplemented by small alternative accommodation and this phenomena was clearly observed in the accommodation sector during those days. Throughout the world, the popularity and huge increase in the number of these small scale alternative accommodation has been observed since the past twenty years (David L. Jones & Jing Jing Guan, 2011) and now its importance has increased manifold in continuation with the earlier trends. During much earlier of the COVID 19 pre-pandemic period Flognfeldt, T., &Tjorve, E. (2015) tried to understand the preference of tourists which was increasing after the growth and prosperity of the supplementary accommodation as number of nights spent in camps and home stays were found more interesting and preferable than hotels. Along the same line, It is obvious that the sense of belongingness, relaxed and homely accommodation experience is the main reason of the popularity of the home stays (Kulshreshtha , S. &Kulshreshtha, R.; 2019). In another study Kourgiantakis, M., Apostolakis, A.,&Dimou, I. (2020), studied Crete, Greece during the year 2019 and observed that people preferred to stay in supplementary accommodation rather than in the hotels keeping in mind the measure of social distance. In their study, Xie, K., Kwok, L., Chen, Chien.C. & Wu, J. (2020) found that tourists prefer the uncommon to have a new taste amidst this COVID 19 outbreak as the engagement in local activities and warm interaction with local host makes their experience a memorable one. Home stay, the most popular among all forms of supplementary accommodations, were giving the tourists an experiential and totally new form of service than those of the familiar concept of hotel. In continuation with this previous trend, the home stay industry would be flourishing more, even with the help of little promotion, once the pandemic is over (Yan Honge et al., 2020). Gunasekaran,N.&Anandkumar, V.(2012) advocated and positioned homestays and guest houses for the future generation, owing to the homely atmosphere, cordial guest host relationship, local experience and good value for money. Based on the findings of an empirical study 'Pandemics, tourism and global change: a rapid assessment of COVID-19’, Gössling, S., Scott,D., &Hall, C.M. (2020) exhibited the increasing roles and potentiality of domestic and rural tourism during or post pandemic time for the revamp of the tourism and hospitality industry world wide. It has been observed that right after the SARS i.e from 2004-2005 the expansion of home stays and small scale accommodation units proved to be very popular. Providing simple and modest accommodation at an affordable price was the success factors of these home stays. (Hanqin Qiu Zhang, Lianping Ren, Huawen Shen &Qu Xiao, 2012). Within the tourism industry alternative, bed & breakfast or small scale accommodation is having a huge impact as personalized services is offered in small and homely environment (Yu-Chin Hsieh & Yueh-Hsiu Lin, 2010 ). Kusumaningrum, D. A., &Wachyuni, S. S. (2020) focused on the shifting trends in travelling after the COVID 19 pandemic and found a comparatively lower risk associated with domestic tourism as it had been possessing a minimum travel time and distance. They suggested not to opt mass tourism even in the post Covid-19 period. In the same context alternative accommodation would be proved to be a safer option to the tourist than the regular stay in hotels. Value for money, homely atmosphere and other factors like location, cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation are considered as major factors which affects the choice of accommodation of the tourists. Among these, the most differentiating factor between hotel and home stay are the homely atmosphere (Sha Wang & Kam Hung,2015 ). Bose, J., & Biju, M.K. (2020)served that tourist lodges and home stays offered the highest social interaction and culture to the tourists. They found that Home stays was the highest among different variable to provide memorable tourism experiences. If the new normal tourism development continues from the local to regional to international, then the most noticeable trend would be a crisis or non-availability of enough accommodation units, and larger hotels are not going to supplement that with huge investment. Therefore, the scope for supplementary accommodation during new-normal conditions with ease of lockdown continues to increase. Again, hospitality Industry can encourage and focus on remote areas and remote accommodation centers to provide an innovative and distinctive flavor to the tourists. International Labor Organization (2020) accepted the profound effect of Covid-19 outbreak on the choice of tourist destinations around the world and identified an increasing preference of short stay accommodation and social distancing at tourist places. The non-availability or insufficient overnight room facilities are expected to enhance supplementary accommodation on rise of nearby excursion or tourists’ destinations due to limited and drastically rescheduled transportation system to be available for coming years. Tourist prefers alternative accommodation or second homes over mainstream accommodation or hotels to maintain the physical distancing in the times of pandemic. Even unlike hotels the popularity of mobile and semi mobile accommodation will be on the rise because tourist will definitely prefer less crowded areas for their safety and also enjoying the nature (Volkan Zo_gal, Antoni Domènech&Gözde Emekli, 2020). According to the study conducted by Karim, A. (2020), alternative accommodation is gaining popularity and as such sustainable rural tourism in the form of tourism village is highly recommended for its promotion and development. Airbnb guest choose it as a substitute of mid range or budget hotels. A few also consider it in the same line with hostel,
bed and breakfast and other supplementary accommodation (Daniel Gutten tag, 2017). Domestic tourism is that area of tourism which will first gain the confidence of the tourists, however tourists while making their accommodation choice will consider hygiene and sanitation as the most important factor (Albert Assaf & Raffaele Scuderi, 2020).

On the other hand, Sigala, M. (2020) found that during the Covid-19 pandemic people are very conscious about social distancing measure and expected to be choosing tourist destination and types of accommodation in remote places which will be not congested. Therefore, COVID 19 outbreak has resulted in a new urge for supplementary accommodation that is in continuation with the previous trends of an increasing soft corner for supplementary accommodation, lesser known places and small group formation for travel and tourism. Yet another noticeable trend is through financial compulsion, budget and non-selected destinations in official tours, VFRs and medical treatments. Tourists are willing to pay more and choose such type of accommodation as they find providing a strict hygiene measure. Post pandemic they will choose destination and accommodation if it can give them confidence (Dogan Gursoy & Christina G. Chi, 2020). Confidence building is a sincere effort as it incorporates lot of technical and behavioural issues after pandemic.Jamal, T., & Budke, C. (2020) suggested a wide-ranging information for all its stakeholders including the tourist and the local to assure a responsible hospitality in future.

Arguments in favor of mainstream accommodation and associated risk perception
It has been considered that mainstream accommodation may be preferred than alternate accommodation mainly because of safety measure. The standardization of the safety measure and communication of the same to the guest will also be easier for the mainstream accommodation than the alternate accommodation (Marnie Hunter, 2020). It is found that one of the main reasons for preferring home stays for accommodation is for higher experiences of local culture (Shen & Liu, 2015). According to the findings of Deloitte (2010), inexpensive, dependable, homely atmosphere and proper hygiene and sanitation are essential for the success and of budget hotels and alike. Hygiene and cleanliness are the main important factors to select the accommodation. Jiang, Y & Jun Wen, J. (2020) also claimed that the tourist will expect the lodging establishment to implement higher safety related measures. Shari, N. S., Yazid, M. F. M., & Shamsudin, M. F. (2020) advocated for ecofriendly hotels as an effective promotional tool for the tourism and hospitality industry while analyzing the post pandemic travel preference of domestic tourists as the cost and price of the accommodation became the most important factor and tourists intended to prefers cheap accommodation like home stays in comparison to hotel.

Wachyuni, S. S., & Kusumaninggrum, D. A. (2020) put forward unanimously opined that the main factors to determine a tourist destination during this COVID 19 pandemic are safety and hygiene factors. During and post pandemic choice of accommodation will depend on different factors like safety and sanitary standards, tourism based on necessity and social distance measures (Chia-Lin Chang, Michael McAleer & Vicente Ramos, 2020). In the research study of Xie, K., Kwok, L., Chen, Chien C., & Wu, J. (2020) peer to peer accommodation, as compared to hotel, are mostly preferred by leisure travelers. They highlighted the different factors like location, price, cooking facility and customer reviews as influencing factors to the tourists for the alternative accommodation.

Tourist will find natural tourism, alternative accommodation and short duration of stay safe in this pandemic. Li, Z., Zhang, S., Liu, X., Kozak, M., & Wen, J. (2020) found out that the choice of tourist destination and accommodation would be highly influenced by the associated perceived risk factor. The tourism and hospitality industry in Spain have shown growth in the mainstream as well as supplementary accommodation. Promoting this country as a safe and secure destination in the pandemic and maintaining that is need of the hour (Rodriguez-Antón, J. M., & Alonso-Almeida, M. D. M.; 2020). Lapointe, D. (2020) focused on the development of local community and their needs and preferences for domestic and international tourism satisfaction as the pandemic wreaked havoc.

Objectives:
Basic research question in the study is what the factors are influencing the choice of accommodation in the study area. The factors incorporated in the study are based on an extensive review of literature. Apart from this, which type of accommodation people are interested in is examined in the study. Based on the review of literature before and after COVID 19 outbreak, the research gap found in the study is whether the tourists are planning to opt supplementary accommodation instead of worldwide mainstream accommodation units and what are the factors important now in this new normal world. Based on this, the research objectives considered for the study are
1. To measure the important components for the recent growth and market development of accommodation in the study area.
2. To examine whether the COVID 19 measures prevail over price and location of an accommodation unit amidst COVID 19 outbreak.
The associated queries are to know about Does COVID 19 outbreak assure a uniform branding for chain of properties or recommend a reorientation of property specific branding or promotion for large chain of hotels in the study area. Also, the study enquires about the perceptual association between not letting others making decision for destination accommodation and availing of alternative / supplementary accommodation during the post COVID scenario.

**METHODOLOGY:**
This study is based on primary data collected from various urban areas of West Bengal. Various district head quarters and important cities are being considered for collecting opinion of the present or potential tourists participating or planning for trips. Out of total population of about 9.03 crores in West Bengal, 31.87% people live in urban regions. A total of 320 questionnaires collected from various district head quarters of all 23 districts in which 276 are found usable.

As the present study moves towards identifying and analysing implications or outcomes responsible for recent growth and future development of accommodation sectors in the study area the principal component analysis (PCA) has been found the convenient way. This technique usually discusses in terms of scores of factor and loadings i.e. the weight by which each standardized original variable need to be multiplied to get the factor score. If these scores are standardized to the square of standard deviation, loadings must incorporate the data variance in them. If component scores are not standardized, then loadings must have to be unit-scaled or normalized and these weights are called eigenvectors. If a multivariate data-set is envisioned as a set of coordinates in a high-dimensional data space (1 axis per variable), PCA can provide the user with a lower-dimensional picture, a protrusion of this object when considered from its most informative viewpoint.

PCA also upgrades the data to a new coordinate system in such a way that the greatest variance by some scalar projection of the data comes to lie on the first coordinate. This is called the principal component and it goes on in the principal way from first to second and so on.

Consider this \( n \times p \) data matrix, \( x \), with column-wise zero empirical mean (the sample mean of each column has been shifted to 0), where each of the \( n \) rows shows a different recurrence of the experiment, and each of the \( p \) columns results a definite kind of aspect.

Here, the change or transformation is defined by a set of size \( \mathbf{W} \) \( p \)-dimensional vectors of weights or coefficients \( w_{ik} = w_{1k}, \ldots, w_{nk} \) that map each row vector \( x_i \) of \( X \) to a new vector of principal component scores \( t_{i1}, \ldots, t_{ip} \) given by

\[
t_{ik} = x_i^T w_k \quad \text{for } i = 1, \ldots, n, \quad k = 1, \ldots, p.
\]

In such a way that the individual variables \( t_{1k}, \ldots, t_{pk} \) of \( t \) considered over the data set successively inherit the maximum possible variance from \( X \) with each coefficient vector \( W \) constrained to be a unit vector. A standard result for a positive semi-definite matrix such as \( X^T X \) is that the quotient's maximum possible value is the biggest eigenvalue in the matrix, which occurs when \( W \) is the corresponding eigenvector. With \( w_{i1} \) found, the first principal component of a data vector \( x_0 \) can then be provided as a score \( t_{i1} = x_0^T w_{i1} \) in the reconstructed co-ordinates, or as the corresponding vector in the original variables, \( \{x_0^T w_{i1} \} w_{i1} \).

### Data analysis and discussion
While the COVID 19 measures are believed to have been predominating all other components, the actual reality is found different and affordability of tourists is still the most important one. Another noticeable trend is the emphasis on group formation while travelling instead of hotel’s or accommodation sector’s promotional campaign with all possible precautionary measures taken, may be through new modus operandi or installation of machines even during this economic recession in tourism and hospitality worldwide.

Principal Components for Choosing Accommodation amidst COVID 19 Outbreak

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>6.87552</td>
<td>4.50124</td>
<td>0.2865</td>
<td>0.2865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying with small group</td>
<td>2.37427</td>
<td>.706955</td>
<td>0.0989</td>
<td>0.3854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinct location</td>
<td>1.66732</td>
<td>.0898198</td>
<td>0.0695</td>
<td>0.4549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote location</td>
<td>1.5775</td>
<td>.433165</td>
<td>0.0657</td>
<td>0.5206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience on local community, culture etc.</td>
<td>1.14433</td>
<td>.0720477</td>
<td>0.0477</td>
<td>0.5683</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Locally built accommodation | 1.07228 | .160994 | 0.0447 | 0.6130 |
Scope for interaction with locals | 0.911291 | .0463481 | 0.0380 | 0.6509 |
Human orientation | 0.864943 | .0972029 | 0.0360 | 0.6870 |
Homely atmosphere | 0.76774 | .0327102 | 0.0320 | 0.7190 |
More scope for exploration | 0.73503 | .0403105 | 0.0306 | 0.7496 |
Ecological orientation | 0.694719 | .0423809 | 0.0289 | 0.7785 |

Components 2, 3, and 4 are wholistic orientation for accommodation distancing from the customers’ side. Third important aspect is previous knowledge about the local community, culture etc. while choosing accommodation. Tourists are intended to choose such destinations as are found to have been visited earlier or retrieving more information about them. The fourth aspect is locally build accommodation towards which the entire accommodation market was alternatively concentrating. It is also clear that all significant components from 1 to 6 are exhibiting the emerging scope for supplementary accommodation units which are small scale, non-mass, non-consumptive, ecofriendly in nature. Incidentally the COVID 19 outbreak has brought about a new trend of strengthening

The study also found a very high degree of perceptual association between those are not allowing tour operators or package tour sellers making choice on behalf of the tourists and availing of supplementary accommodation in their future visit. Here, the value of probability is found 0.00 in Pearson’s Chi square test (54.9493).

**Sustainability-safety-sustainability diaspora**

As the COVID 19 pandemic has brought about a stand-still situation in all walk of life and activity, everything is revolving around safety. No doubt, Safety issues superseded sustainability for the time being or till the intensity of the pandemic is over. Measures for travel risks associated with COVID 19 outbreak, safest-transport provision, welcoming and hospitality norms, dining etiquettes and above all travel behaviors have been emerging areas of redefining travel-tourism sustainability.

As the COVID 19 pandemic is highly impactful, the behavioral issues and risk perceptions are not suppose to change soon. But, considering the contemporary trends and associated improvements in health issues, following hypothetical travel intensity-sustainability model highlights the overall direction towards future choice of accommodation products in the area.

**CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE**

COVID 19 risk perception and resultant behavior could not supersede purchasing power in the study area while location is playing a critical role. As the study area is one of the thickly populous regions in the world, location of the accommodation sector is found to be playing this critical role. Tourists are interested in and travelling with small groups. A tailormade orientation in designing and participating in trip is evident with a winning
belief and faith in accommodation units. Still, non-classified hotels and small accommodation units will continue to improve, even though branded properties are gaining more confidence of tourists in the study area. This study has exhibited a new question for the future research as whether the importance of supplementary accommodation is in continuation with the previous trend for sustainable principles or some new inputs are derived from the impacts of the COVID 19 outbreak in the study area.

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