



Title: Exploring Resilient Hospitality Practices in Odisha's Unconventional Tourism Sector: An Empirical Analysis of Crisis Preparedness and Service Innovation

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Exploring Resilient Hospitality Practices in Odisha's Unconventional Tourism Sector: An Empirical Analysis of Crisis Preparedness and Service Innovation

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Abstract

The tourism and hospitality sector is more vulnerable to various types of crises such as natural disasters, health crisis, and regulatory crises, and therefore the issue of resilience is of high significance in sustainable development. This paper will discuss resilient hospitality practices within the unconventional tourism industry in Odisha, particularly in the areas of crisis preparedness, health requirements, legal requirements, and service innovation. Being a state with a rich cultural tradition and various tourism products including eco-tourism, rural tourism and tribal tourism, Odisha is very susceptible to natural disasters like cyclones and floods which have severe effects on tourism activities and livelihood of the locals.

This paper is qualitative and analytical and relies on secondary data, such as scholarly articles, reports, and policy documents, to investigate how well hospitality stakeholders in unconventional tourism destinations are prepared to deal with crisis management and cope with changing circumstances. The results indicate that resilience awareness is on the rise, although there is still a lack of structured crisis management measures, especially among the small-scale and community-based tourism operators. Health and safety measures have been adopted more in the post-pandemic period, but there continue to be differences between formal and informal sectors. Moreover, the situation is characterized by inconsistency in legal compliance as the level of awareness is low, and technology adoption and innovations in services are in their infancy.

The paper is concluded by a conclusion that the resilient hospitality practices should be reinforced with the help of a holistic and integrated approach. It highlights the importance of capacity building, policy support, technological integration, and community involvement in order to improve sustainability and competitiveness in unconventional tourism sector in Odisha.

Keywords- Resilient Hospitality, Crisis Management, Unconventional Tourism, Health Protocols, Service Innovation, Legal Compliance, Odisha Tourism

Introduction

One of the rapidly developing sectors in the world is the tourism and hospitality industry, which plays a significant role in economic growth, creation of employment opportunities and cultural exchange. Nonetheless, the industry is extremely susceptible to external shocks including natural disasters, pandemics and socio-political upheavals, that can severely disrupt operations and demand patterns. Researchers have highlighted that tourism is especially susceptible to crisis because of its reliance on mobility, safety perceptions, and environmental conditions (Brent W. Ritchie and Jiang, 2021). Consequently, the notion of resilient hospitality has become relevant and emphasizes the capacity of organizations and destinations to respond, predict, and cope with crisis in an effective manner.

Resilient hospitality is a holistic model that incorporates crisis readiness, mitigation of risks, adaptive management and sustained innovation. Ritchie (2004) notes that crisis management in tourism necessitates the proactive planning, coordination and strategic communication between the stakeholders to reduce the effects of disruptions. Moreover, Jiang and Ritchie (2017) emphasized that the concept of resilience in tourism pertains not only to recovery but also to transformation and innovation in service provision. Resilient hospitality systems have included the implementation of strict health measures, digitalization, and contactless services as a hallmark in the post-COVID-19 world (Gössling, Scott, and Hall, 2020).

Besides crisis preparedness and health safety, service innovation has now become a strategic facility of improving resilience in the hospitality industry. The adoption of digital technologies such as artificial intelligence, mobile applications, and smart tourism platforms has enabled hospitality organizations to deliver personalized and efficient services while minimizing physical contact. According to Buhalis and Leung (2018), smart technologies are transformational in enhancing operational efficiency and customer experience in tourism. Sustainable practices are also considered as an area of innovation, such as environmentally friendly operations and community-based tourism frameworks, which would lead to long-term sustainability and competitiveness of the destination.

In the Indian context, the state of Odisha offers an interesting example to analyze resilient hospitality practices, especially in its unconventional tourism industry. Odisha is blessed with a variety of tourism resources including eco-tourism sites, tribal tourism trails, rural tourism projects, wildlife parks, heritage trails, and beaches. These new types of tourism become more popular because they are more sustainable, more culturally authentic, and more community-oriented (Mandal and Dey, 2024). These destinations however are usually vulnerable to external shocks by virtue of having limited infrastructure and resources.

The geographical position of Odisha on the eastern coast of India is predisposed to the occurrence of natural disasters, particularly cyclone and floods. These occurrences have in the past interfered with tourism activities, infrastructure damage and impacted livelihoods of local people depending on tourism. Research has shown that natural calamities have severe impacts on tourism facilities, inflow of tourists and livelihoods of locals in the coastal areas; hence the justification of resilience-based planning (Mandal and Dey, 2025). In this connection, Faulkner (2001) came up with a comprehensive tourism disaster management framework, which focuses on pre-event planning, emergency response, recovery, and resolution-stages that are more applicable to disaster prone destinations such as Odisha.

Although the role of unconventional tourism in Odisha continues to increase, the existing body of knowledge shows a big gap in comprehending how resilience is conceptualized in this domain. Current literature is mostly dedicated to tourism potential, cultural factors, and sustainability, and it overlooks the most significant areas of crisis preparedness and health measures, as well as legal adherence and service innovations (Mohanty and Samal, 2023). This disjunction is of special significance since informal tourist attractions locations do not have formalized systems, structured policies, and professional management, becoming more vulnerable to risks and disturbances.

Besides, the importance of local communities, small-scale hospitality providers, and informal tourism networks is at the heart of the unconventional tourism environment in Odisha. The community involvement increases the authenticity of the tourism experience and resilience through local ownership and adaptive capacity. Social capital and the community involvement is a key aspect of destination resilience as pointed out by Prayag (2018) especially in developing regions. The combination of these community-based strategies with contemporary management ethics, regulatory, and technological advancements can go a long way in enhancing the resiliency of the tourism industry.

Thus, the current research will examine resilience in practices of hospitality within the non-mainstream tourism industry of Odisha using an empirical investigation of crisis preparedness, health

measures, legal adherence, and innovation in services. Through the analysis of these dimensions, the research aims at giving a full picture on how hospitality stakeholders react to challenges and how they change their operations to achieve sustainability and competitiveness. It is hoped that the findings will make contributions to the existing body of knowledge and present practical implications to policymakers, tourism practitioners, and academicians who aim at achieving resilient and sustainable development of tourism.

Literature Review

1. Concept of Resilience in Tourism and Hospitality

The concept of resilience in tourism and hospitality studies has become one of the essential issues to address, especially due to the growing global uncertainties. It is defined as a capacity of a system, organization or destination to absorb shocks, adapt to changing environments and to recover effectively following crisis. Brent W. Ritchie (2004) defines tourism resilience as strategic preparedness, coordinated response mechanisms and adaptive recovery processes. Elaborating further, Hall, Prayag, and Amore (2018) believe that resilience is not only about relying on normalcy but changing systems to become more resilient to such disruptions in the future.

Additionally, Jiang and Ritchie (2017) highlight the significance of collaboration among stakeholders, leadership, and resource flexibility in establishing resiliency in the tourism systems. Another important aspect of destination resilience is the social capital, community engagement, and institutional support, which, however, is especially important with regard to developing areas (Prayag, 2018). All these views suggest that resilience is a multidimensional construct that comprises of economic, social, environmental, and institutional aspects.

2. Tourism Crisis Management

Resilient hospitality is based on crisis management. Natural disasters, pandemics, terrorism, and political instability are some of the crises that are very sensitive to tourism destinations. A common framework of tourism disaster management was developed by Faulkner (2001) and it included stages of pre-event planning, response to the disaster, recovery, and resolution. This framework points to the importance of active approaches and planned interventions to reduce the effects of crisis.

Ritchie (2004) also developed a strategic approach to managing crisis, in which they focused on the use of communication, coordination and leadership in risk reduction. Recently, Ritchie and Jiang (2021) have carried out an extensive review of research on tourism crisis and disaster management, which revealed several dominant themes, including preparedness, collaboration between stakeholders, and adaptive governance. Their research points to the increased significance of resilience integration into crisis management systems to contribute to long-term sustainability.

3. Health Procedures and Post-Pandemic Hotel practices

The COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the hospitality sector immensely, highlighting the health and safety procedures as the primary consideration in tourism activities. Gossling, Scott, and Hall (2020) state that the long-term effects of pandemics on tourism are to ensure strict hygiene requirements, risk management measures, and policies. Contactless services implementation, sanitation measures, and health certifications have emerged as critical in regaining the confidence of the travelers.

According to Sigala (2020), the pandemic has expedited digital revolution and innovation in the hospitality sector, which has given way to new service models that are safety-focused and efficient. Such developments have made it more important that health protocols are incorporated into the

overall context of resilient hospitality, and that organizations will be better equipped to tackle health crises in the future.

4. Hospitality Law and Regulations

Compliance with law is an important aspect in maintaining safety, standardization and accountability in the hospitality industry. Health, safety and labor laws, as well as environmental sustainability regulatory frameworks are vital in ensuring that there is integrity in operations and that stakeholders interests are safeguarded. Hall et al. (2018) identify effective governance and regulatory mechanisms to be essential elements of tourism resilience since they give underpinnings to the provision of a coordinated response to crises and recovery.

The aspect of government regulations in terms of safety measures and environmental laws is especially crucial to the tourism destinations that are susceptible to natural disasters in the Indian context. Nevertheless, research shows that numerous non-traditional tourism industries, particularly the rural and community-based ones, struggle to comply with formal regulations framework because of the lack of awareness and resources (Mandal and Dey, 2024). This underscores the importance of capacity building and policy support to enhance legal adherence in new tourism sectors.

6. Hospitality Innovation and Technology in Service

The hospitality industry has been transformed into resilience, with service innovation playing a key role in the transformation. The incorporation of novel technologies like artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and smart tourism platforms has helped organizations to optimize their operations and provide personalized customer experience. As Buhalis and Leung (2018) point out, smart hospitality ecosystems enable the real-time exchange of data, enhancing decision-making and service delivery.

Sigala (2020) also adds that the digital transformation has been fast-tracked during the post-pandemic period, resulting in the mainstreaming of online booking systems, contactless technologies, and virtual tourism experiences. Sustainable practices are also innovative in terms of sustainable operations and community-based tourism projects, which help in the long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

7. Unconventional Tourism and Resilience in Odisha

Eco-tourism, rural tourism, tribal tourism and festival tourism are unconventional tourism whose roles in ensuring sustainable and inclusive development are receiving growing interest. Odisha is a land of great opportunities due to its rich cultural heritage and a variety of natural resource that can be exploited in order to develop such segments of tourism. Mandal and Dey (2024) emphasize that the regenerative tourism practices in Odisha would be able to contribute to the sustainability and cope with the issues of the environmental and socio-economic interruptions.

The tourism industry in Odisha however, is very sensitive to natural disasters especially cyclones and floods that often damage tourism activities and facilities. Mandal and Dey (2025) highlight the necessity of resilience-based approaches, such as community engagement, management of resources sustainably, and adaptive planning, to reduce these issues. On the same note, Mohanty and Samal (2023) note that although Odisha has a high potential of tourism, there exists no proper planning and management of the emerging tourism segments.

8. Research Gap

Despite the existing literature offering a rich source of understanding of tourism resilience, crisis management and service innovation, the lack of empirical studies that involve the combination of

these aspects in the unconventional tourism industry, especially in the regional settings, such as Odisha. The majority of research has been conducted on these aspects individually, without taking into account their interconnections and overall effects on hospitality resiliency.

Also, the absence of empirical data regarding the practical implementation of resilience strategies by the small-scale hospitality provider and the local communities in alternative tourism destinations exists. This gap shows the necessity of a thorough study that would consider crisis preparedness, health protocols, legal compliance, and service innovation as an integrated approach.

9. Objectives

- Determine the extent of crisis preparedness of hospitality stakeholders in the unconventional tourism destinations of Odisha.
- Examine the application of health and safety measures in the post-pandemic environment in the hospitality industry.
- Assess the level of legal compliance and regulatory compliance among the tourism service providers in the non-mainstream tourism segments.
- Investigate how innovation in the service and adoption of technology can lead to increased resilience and customer experience.

Result and Analysis

Objective 1: Assess the Level of Crisis Preparedness among Hospitality Stakeholders

Preparation of crisis is considered to be one of the key elements of the resilience in tourism and hospitality. It encompasses planning of strategies, risk evaluation, an early warning system, and coordination with stakeholders to promptly address disruptions. Brent W. Ritchie and Jiang (2021) argue that tourism destinations are extremely susceptible to crises since they are influenced by external forces like environmental stability and perceptions of travelers. It is thus imperative that preparedness is applied to reduce operational disruptions.

Experience indicates that highly resilient organizations have organized crisis management strategies. A tourism enterprise study revealed a high positive correlation between organizational resilience and crisis preparedness, which indicated that contingency planning and emergency preparedness capacity is an important determinant of survival amidst crises ($R^2 = 0.671$, $p = 0.001$). Nonetheless, informal tourism businesses, prevalent in the unconventional tourism industry of Odisha, tend to lack formal preparedness frameworks and tend to adopt a reactive approach to planning as opposed to a proactive one.

Within Odisha, cyclones and floods are common, thus severely affecting tourism activities and infrastructure. Mandal and Dey (2025) emphasize the need to have localized preparedness plans in response to the recurrent natural disasters in coastal Odisha, such as community-based disaster management and ecosystem restoration. Nevertheless, preparedness measures in unconventional tourism settings cannot be effectively implemented due to the absence of institutional support, awareness and resource constraints. Therefore, crisis preparedness in Odisha is not balanced and there is apparent disparity between the policy-based structures and implementation at the ground level.

Objective 2: Evaluate the Practice of Health and Safety measures

Health and safety measures have become the key element of resilience in the hospitality industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has reshaped the operational norms. Gossling, Scott, and Hall (2020) assert that the pandemic caused hygiene-focused and risk-averse tourism practices to shift to a new paradigm. Sanitation, contactless services, and health certifications are measures that have become necessary in regaining the confidence of the travelers.

According to secondary studies, it is clear that there is a great difference in adoption of health protocols within various forms of tourism enterprises. Huge and structured hospitality business establishments use more uniform operational processes that are in line with international and national standards and regulations, and small-scale and informal operators may struggle due to financial limitations and technical incompetence. According to Sigala (2020), the pandemic increased the digitalization of the industry, making it possible to check-in without touch, pay online, and use automated services, thereby decreasing the physical contact and increasing the safety level.

The application of health measures in the unconventional tourism sector of Odisha is still developing. In most cases, rural and community-based tourism units do not have formal training and infrastructure to ensure high standards of hygiene are upheld. This brings about an imbalance between the practice of tourism in the city and rural areas. Moreover, there are no strict monitoring mechanisms, which restrict compliance. Nevertheless, the stakeholders are becoming increasingly aware of the value of health safety, especially when it comes to eco-tourism and homestay models, where personalized and safe experiences are becoming more and more demanded by tourists.

Objective 3: Assess Legal Conformity and Regulatory Conformity

Resilient hospitality demands legal compliance as a crucial element of ensuring safety, accountability, and standardization in tourism operations. Common regulatory frameworks in the tourism sector are health and safety standards, environmental policies, labor standards and licensing. According to Hall, Prayag, and Amore (2018), governance and compliance with regulations are crucial in enhancing destination resilience since it supports a coordinated reaction to the crisis.

Nonetheless, secondary sources show that the level of compliance differs widely among the various sectors of the tourism industry. Controlled hospitality organizations tend to maintain the standards of regulations because of the structured management systems and frequent checks. Conversely, the unconventional tourism industries, like rural tourism, tribal tourism, and informal homestays, also tend to struggle with compliance with regulatory standards because of poor awareness, financial limitations, and bureaucracies (Mandal and Dey, 2024).

The problem of legal compliance is especially pertinent in Odisha because the tourism destinations in this region are easily susceptible to environmental threats. Eco-sensitive regions and coasts demand the stringent enforcement of the environmental laws and disaster management rules. Nevertheless, research has shown that the enforcement systems are not very strong and most of the small-scale operators do not operate within the legal systems. Such noncompliance does not only predispose to crisis but also impacts on the quality of services and safety of tourists. Hence, regulatory awareness and streamlining the compliance procedures are key to increasing resilience in the unconventional tourism industry in Odisha.

Objective 4: Research the Impact of Service Innovation and Technology Adoption

Technological advancement and service innovation has become a major source of resilience in the hospitality industry. By integrating digital technologies, organizations can become more efficient in their operations, create a better customer experience, and adjust to evolving market dynamics.

According to Buhalis and Leung (2018), technologies of smart tourism ensure the exchange of real-time data and allow making decisions and providing services to individuals more effectively.

Contactless technologies, online booking systems, and virtual tourism experiences are some of the innovative service models, which were implemented faster due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sigala (2020) points out that digital transformation has been a strategic requirement and not a choice because it helps a business to stay afloat amid discontinuities. Moreover, sustainability in innovative practices, including environmentally-friendly operations and community-based tourism, will help to create long-term resilience and competitiveness.

Service innovation is slowly taking root in the Odisha context especially in the eco-tourism and community-based tourism projects. Mandal and Dey (2025) underline how regenerative tourism activities, including biovillages, and ecosystem restoration, contribute to the improvement of sustainability and resilience. Nonetheless, in most of the unconventional tourism sites, there are few cases of using advanced technologies because of the infrastructural obstacles and the absence of digital literacy.

In addition, small-scale operators usually stick to the conventional service models, which might not address the changing needs of the contemporary tourists. To close this divide, there is a need to invest in digital infrastructure, training, and policy support to facilitate innovation. Technology can be greatly utilized to increase the competitiveness and sustainability of tourism in Odisha by combining the local cultural and environmental resources.

Discussion

This paper examines effective hospitality practices within the unconventional tourism industry in Odisha under four key aspects: preparedness to crisis, health, legal, and service innovation. The debate incorporates the secondary literature understanding of how these dimensions work together to affect resilience and sustainability in tourism.

Preparedness to Crisis and Resilience

The results suggest that crisis preparedness is a supporting aspect of resilient hospitality, although its application is not uniform amongst tourism stakeholders. As noted by Brent W. Ritchie and Jiang (2021), preparedness is a key determinant of tourism system resilience to absorb and recover following shocks. But when it comes to unconventional tourism business in Odisha, readiness is usually a reactive but not a proactive action.

Literature indicates that resilience is necessary and requires structured crisis management frameworks, risk assessment, contingency planning and coordination of stakeholders (Faulkner, 2001). Although Odisha is susceptible to frequent natural calamities like cyclones, small scale and community-based tourism operators are not well prepared through formal mechanisms. The factors that can be cited as causing this gap include limited financial resources, training, and institutional support. As a result, there might be a gap between the strategic intent and the operational implementation with policy-level structures being weakly implemented.

Health Guidelines and Post-Pandemic Adaptation

COVID-19 has drastically transformed how hospitality is conducted, putting health and safety as the central part of service provision. The discussion shows that there is an unequal uptake of health protocols in the sector. Established and larger institutions have been in a position to adopt a uniform hygiene operation but the smaller and informal operators have been challenged by infrastructural and financial constraints.

According to Gossling, Scott and Hall (2020), health protocols have become the key to creating traveler confidence and business continuity. In Odisha, unconventional tourism, especially in rural and eco-tourist, environments, there is a problem of maintaining a consistent health standard.

Nevertheless, an apparent trend has been a shift towards awareness and slow uptake of hygiene practices. This denotes a transition period, during which the stakeholders are adjusting to the new standards although they need additional assistance in terms of training, observation, and the development of infrastructure.

Governance and legal Compliance issues

Legal compliance is a very important, but underdeveloped aspect of resilience in unconventional tourism. The debate shows that though there are regulatory frameworks, their implementation and acceptance is not uniform. According to Hall, Prayag, and Amore (2018), governance and regulatory compliance are crucial in the safety, accountability, and coordinated crisis response.

Odisha has numerous non-standard tourism businesses, including homestays and community-based tourism units, which are in semi-formal or informal locations. This restricts their compliance with legal requirements with regard to safety standards, environmental regulations and licensing. This is further complicated by the insufficient knowledge, cumbersome regulatory processes, and insufficient outreach by institutions. Consequently, non-compliance not only exposes tourism to more crisis but also impacts the credibility and quality of tourism services. Enhancing resilience through strengthening the governing mechanisms and easing compliance procedures are therefore critical.

Service Innovation and Technological Adaptation

The service innovation is a transformative factor that enhances resilience through the achievement of adaptability and customer experience. It has been discussed that the adoption of technology, such as their use of digital platforms, contactless services, and smart tourism solutions, has emerged as a crucial source of resilience in the hospitality industry. As Buhalis and Leung (2018) emphasize, technology can be used to improve the efficiency of operations and enable the delivery of personalized services.

Nevertheless, Odisha does not have much innovation in the unconventional tourism industry. Although there are some eco-tourism and community-based projects that have embraced sustainable and innovative practices, the degree of technological integration is low. Poor digital infrastructure, low technical expertise, and the financial factor are some of the factors that prevent the use of advanced technologies. However, the increasing need to have distinctive and secure travelling experiences introduces a possibility of incorporating innovation and local cultural and environmental assets.

How the Key Dimensions relate to each other

One of the critical findings of the discussion is that resilience in hospitality is not dictated by a singular factor but the interdependence of crisis preparedness, health protocols, legal compliance, and service innovation. The dimensions are interdependent and have an overall effect on the resilience of tourism systems. As an example, the legal frameworks should be followed to prepare well in case of a crisis, and service innovation should be used to implement health protocols and develop adaptive capacity.

According to the literature, destinations that have developed an integrated approach, which combines governance, innovation, and community involvement, are better placed to manage crises and continue in the development of tourism (Prayag, 2018). The absence of integration of these dimensions in Odisha reduces the efficiency of resilience strategies. Thus, a comprehensive and integrated strategy is needed to empower the tourism industry.

Implications of context in Odisha

The discussion indicates that the unconventional tourism sector in Odisha has a great potential in developing in a sustainable and resilient manner. The high levels of its cultural heritage, natural resources, and community-based tourism models offer a robust base on which it can be resilient. The industry has structural obstacles, however, such as poor infrastructure, formalization and exposure to natural catastrophes.

Mandal and Dey (2025) further stress that by embracing regenerative and community-based tourism practices, resilience can be improved through the fostering of sustainability and the involvement of locals. The sector can also be reinforced with integration of traditional knowledge and contemporary management practices, and technological advancements. Moreover, capacity-building, policy support, and stakeholder partnerships are necessary to overcome the current gaps.

Conclusion

The current paper has discussed resilient practices in hospitality in the non-mainstream sector of Odishi tourism by identifying four key aspects of resilience, such as crisis preparedness, health protocols, legal compliance, and service innovation. The results, which are founded on the analysis of secondary data, demonstrate that although the notion of resilience becomes increasingly significant in the tourism and hospitality sector, its application in unconventional tourism markets is still unequal and disjointed. There is much more stakeholder preparedness to crisis than preparedness to proactive crisis management especially by the small-scale and community based tourism operators. Although Odisha is prone to natural disasters like cyclones and floods, little has been done to use systematic crisis management systems at the grassroots level. This shows a disconnect between planning at the policy level and implementation at the ground level.

Another point that the study makes is that the adoption of health and safety measures has been enhanced during the post-pandemic period, but there will still be the gaps between organized and unorganized sectors. Although bigger facilities have focused on the practice of standardization, numerous non-orthodox tourism departments have not succeeded in their field due to inadequate resources and training.

One important issue especially in informal tourism is legal compliance and regulatory adherence. The low compliance rates are a result of weak enforcement mechanisms, absence of awareness, and complicated regulatory processes, which leads to vulnerability and influences the quality of services. Innovation in service and the adoption of technology have become the main drivers of resilience, but their infiltration into the unconventional tourism sector of Odisha has been only partially achieved. Although there has been some improvement in the area of eco-tourism and community-based programs, the wider implementation of the same is hampered due to infrastructural and skills-based limitations.

In general, the paper finds that resilient hospitality in Odisha needs a holistic and integrated strategy, where crisis preparedness, health regulations, compliance with the law, and innovation do not exist as independent entities but rather as integrated parts of a sustainable tourism system. The combination of these dimensions is crucial in enhancing the resilience, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability of the sector.

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